



JUKKA GRONOW AND SERGEY ZHURAVLEV

Fashion Meets Socialism

Fashion industry in the Soviet Union after the Second World War

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Jukka Gronow and Sergey Zjuravlev

1. Introduction

Fashion and Soviet modernity

Fashion and design would, in the West, commonly be seen as antithetical to the values of Soviet society. Awareness was, and is, high in relation to the accomplishments of the Soviet Union in the area of scientific progress in the late 1950s and early 1960s and even the leading powers in the West looked on sputniks and cosmonauts with envy and admiration. At that time overall economic growth in the USSR was quite impressive, and its leaders' pompous statements about overcoming the production levels of the USA in many basic industrial products and food-stuffs did not seem at all farfetched. What was less generally known however was that, during this period, the Soviet Union made major investments in fashion design. Promoting fashion and improving the standards of clothing was as important as the general politics of material culture in the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union has certainly never enjoyed a high reputation in the world of fashion. The standardized, industrially mass-produced clothes were held in low esteem by both Soviet consumers and foreign visitors. If anything, Soviet citizens were generally dissatisfied with the domestic supply of clothing. To foreign visitors, street fashion in Moscow, not to mention smaller provincial towns or the countryside, looked rather dull, uniform and grey. Interestingly at this time, the Soviet Union had one of the world's largest organizations of fashion design, all planned, financed and supported by the state. Thousands of professional, well-educated designers worked in the various Soviet institutions of fashion. They designed according to the annual plan thousands of new fashionable garments and accessories both for industrial mass production and for smaller fashion ateliers that sewed custom made clothes for their customers.

By the early 1960s, these institutions of fashion design had many accomplishments to be proud of. They promoted Soviet fashion by increasing the variety of industrially produced clothing as well as with their spectacular fashion shows, which were well received both at home and abroad. Thus, Soviet fashion contributed to the Soviet effort to nurture peaceful competition between the two world systems, socialism and capitalism. It became obvious during the 1970s that, in the end not even fashion and fashion design,

despite at times almost heroic efforts, could overcome the economic and bureaucratic limitations and inherent rigidity of the planned economy.

This book is the story of the emergence and establishment of the post-war Soviet culture of dress, the great expectations attached to it, its great achievements and the limitations that prevented it from revolutionizing the Soviet style of dress and culture of consumption in general. The reasons for the discrepancy between the 'input' and 'output' in the Soviet system of fashion provide an intriguing question to which we shall devote much attention in what follows. The serious shortages, issues of quality and limited variety of items regularly on sale in the Soviet shops were problems that plagued not only the fashion industry in the USSR but the production of consumer goods in general.¹ However, these problems probably beleaguered the clothes industry to a greater extent than other fields of consumption. The rapid, seasonal changes of fashion just did not fit into the planned economy.

Since the collapse of Communism historians have discussed to what extent the Eastern European socialist societies were modern. On the one hand, the 'modernists' like Stephen Kotkin, the author of the famous work *Magnetic Mountain*,² have emphasized that the building of socialism in the 1920s and 1930s shared many of the tendencies and aspirations essential to the project of modernity such as economic and scientific progress, urbanization, etc. On the other hand, the 'Neo-Traditionalists,' such as Sheila Fitzpatrick,³ have repeatedly pointed out that despite some of its seemingly modern features, the Soviet Union was more traditional than modern. She emphasizes for example the role of clientism and the importance of ascribed social statuses, both ethnic and professional, as well as the privileges and corruption following from them. The answer to the question undoubtedly depends on what one means by a modern society or modernity. One should distinguish on the one hand the process of modernization typically associated with social and economic progress based on the strong belief in science and progress and on the other hand the experience of modernity, closely associated with the individualization and detraditionalization of the society, which received its expression in the various forms of modern art at the turn of the 20th century. Michael David-Fox,⁴ commenting on the dispute between the modernists and the traditionalists, suggested that we should pay more attention to the concrete forms of cultural transfer between the capitalist West and the socialist East and to the various ways in which they were adapted and modified in their countries of destination.

In this book, we shall follow his suggestion by describing and analyzing one specific, important field of Soviet consumption: garment fashion. The above mentioned authors have mainly studied the pre-war years, which could be called the first peak of modernization. The second peak in the 1950s and 1960s coincided with de-Stalinization, Khrushchev's years in power. The second period has however so far received much less attention from historians of the Soviet Union than the pre-war period. Both periods were characterized by rapid industrial and technological progress as well as rapid urbanization. The Communist Party and the Soviet government also had a cultural mission, and the authorities made great efforts to educate the population in order to create a new cultured person better able to meet

the new demands of urban and industrial life. The establishment of the Soviet fashion institutions and the pro good taste propaganda in which they engaged was an integral part of the process of modernization led from above. The Soviet authorities thought rational and scientific economic planning inherent to socialism, would inevitably lead to the greater material abundance and human wellbeing as well as to the general beautification of human life. Progress in beauty would take place parallel to technical progress as an integral part of a modern socialist society.

If we are to believe Georg Simmel, the great sociologist of modernity, fashion, with its rapid and almost constant changes is perhaps more key to our experience of modernity than anything else.⁵ Fashion is always fleeting, rapidly changing, almost ineffable. It is also arbitrary: there is no fundamental reason why something should be in fashion other than the very fact that it is in fashion and is so as a result of appealing to people's taste at that moment.

As Simmel suggested, fashion can be compared to Charles Baudelaire's modern artist whose task it was to catch the moment of eternity in a world that was in a permanent flux without any steady focus point. Fashion had the honor of standing for the fundamental experience of ambivalence which in Simmel's opinion was typical of modern society in general. The very moment something became fashionable and popular among the mass of the population it disappeared and gave way to something else equally fashionable and novel.

Despite its seeming frivolousness fashion was to Simmel an extremely important social phenomenon worthy of the serious attention of the social scientist. In his interpretation it had an important social and cultural function – fashion could teach people in a relatively harmless way, and without giving rise to too much anxiety, how to live in a 'modern' world in which nothing was stable or taken for granted. Simmel claimed that fashion satisfies two basic human drives which are both equally strong, seemingly contradictory and operate simultaneously. The first is the drive to *identify* with others by imitating them as closely as possible and the second is the drive to *distinguish* ourselves from others and it thus emphasized our own taste and individuality. The distinctions can be large or small and sometimes they are almost unnoticeable to those who are not real connoisseurs of the relevant matters of taste.⁶

As we will see, fashion with its search for novelties for the novelty's sake and eternally repeated fashion cycles, caused quite a lot of anxiety among common Soviet people and worried the authorities almost continuously. It was quite difficult to see any real progress in the eternally changing fashion. Fashion was definitely not meant to be the primary social mechanism of collective identification in a socialist society where the expressions of one's individuality were expected to be directed to other areas of social life. In Russian just as in many other European languages, the word fashion usually refers to clothing. We talk about fashionable clothing referring both to its novelty and attractiveness.⁷ More generally fashion refers to the cyclical stylistic changes in almost any social and cultural phenomenon, discernible particularly in most fields of consumer goods. As a social form, fashion is

a matter of pure taste.⁸ It is always presented and experienced as something new and gets its special value and appeal from the very novelty which makes it desirable. Fashion in dress often stands for fashion in general for good reason, since the transformation of fashion with its regular seasonal cycles was institutionalized early in the history of European clothes manufacturing and trade. Simmel suggested that in order to decide whether it is possible to identify similar cyclical-slower or faster-changes in other fields of culture or consumption we should ask ourselves if things could just as well be otherwise. What is in fashion at any one time is arbitrary. The inspiration for fashionable designs or collections can sometimes come from some important historical events or parallel developments in other fields of art or culture. Fashion is a *Zeitgeist* phenomenon and as such it has no other reason for existence than its immediate appeal to the taste of those concerned, both fashion designers and customers.

Fashion in a centrally planned economy

The ideal of rapid economic, social and cultural change and progress was a central part of the doctrine of building socialism in the Soviet Union. The centrally planned economy aimed at modernizing the foundations of the whole society as quickly as possible. This rapid and continuous social change would not cease until the final stage of social development, communism, had been reached. Soviet citizens were therefore expected to adjust to this process of change which would create the conditions for a higher form of society. They were also expected to adapt to a new way of life that would fit into these new social conditions. This had serious consequences for the everyday behavior of ordinary people. The Soviet ideologists faced the important task of educating their fellow citizens in proper socialist manners and etiquette as well as higher standards of cultivated taste. It is understandable, that the dress code and the standards of sartorial taste were very important in this respect, clothes are, after all, the most visible exterior sign that ordinary people use in deciphering and interpreting the social status of their fellow citizens. Many Soviet citizens had quite recently moved from Russian villages, with traditional modes of behavior and values, to the new urban and industrial centers which presented quite new social demands. Instead of their close village neighbors and relatives they had to deal every day with numerous anonymous others. Because of its extremely rapid growth David Hoffmann⁹ called Moscow in the 1930s a peasant metropolis. Soviet urbanization continued intensively even in the 1950s and 1960s.

To the Soviet mind, modernization was closely connected to progress, which could best be promoted by rational planning and scientific-technical developments. In this respect it was antithetical to almost everything that the social phenomenon of fashion, with its contingent and irrational nature, represented. The Soviet authorities and ideologists, however, soon found through experience that they had to pay attention to fashion in planning clothing production and distribution. They thought that it was something that women in particular could not live without even under socialism. It

was also an important part of the Soviet post-war peaceful competition with the West which had a strong legitimating function inside the country. Fashionable clothing came as if into the bargain with other technical innovations that were considered progressive and copied from the West.

Fashion was like a natural force that the socialist planning agencies could not avoid and had to take into account in their calculations even if they would rather have forgotten about it altogether. Fashion brought a complicating element of unpredictability to both their annual and long-term plans. Despite repeated efforts they could not regulate fashion effectively, but instead had to try to learn how to live with it. Most often fashion was legitimated simply by the fact that it existed. Some Soviet theorists argued that in the same way in which there is progress in science and technology there is a progress of beauty in fashion. But even they had to acknowledge that this analogy did not really work. Last year's fashion was not necessarily less beautiful than this year's. It was rejected simply because it was not in fashion any more.

One can, with good reason, wonder to what extent the fashion of to-day is really in any way a genuine expression of the customers' taste. How much real choice does a customer have in markets dominated by a couple of big producers and trade chains with their own trademarks which they promote aggressively through worldwide marketing and advertising? The alternatives on offer in the Soviet clothing shops and ateliers were often admittedly even more restricted leaving the customers the choice of either buying whatever was available, regardless of whether they liked it or not, or to buy nothing in which case they could sew their own clothes or rely on the services of private tailors.

We shall describe both the establishment of the major social institutions and organizations of fashion and the development of the professional aesthetic and moral discourse around it as well as analyzed the etiquette which regulated and guided the ordinary Soviet men and women in their everyday relations with these institutions.

The Soviet authorities copied, often quite openly and without reservations, but always selectively, many of the basic social institutions and organizations from what they thought to be the most advanced countries in the West. This process started in Stalin's time and continued long into the Brezhnev era. In fashion, Paris haute couture and Christian Dior in particular acted as the absolute points of excellence.¹⁰ Their status remained largely unthreatened even though such 'harmful' Western influences were the target of political campaigns from time to time. Fashion was, however, by no means the only area of consumption where Western models played an important role, the most popular Soviet private cars produced on a mass scale, like Volga, Zhiguli and Moskvich, originated in the West too and had German, American or Italian cars as their models.¹¹ In culinary culture it is not as easy to name any such specific influences, but it is quite clear that French and continental 'haute cuisine' were the main sources of inspiration for the Soviet specialists, even though at the same time American fast food and snack bars (*Amerikanki*) also played a role.¹² Because Soviet luxury was ideally there for the people, everything was mass produced in millions of copies and available to all from the very start.

The founding of the Soviet Houses of Fashion

At the beginning of 1944, while the Second World War was still being fought on all fronts, the Soviet government and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union decided to open the House of Fashion Design of Clothes in Moscow (*Moskovskii dom modelei odezhd*).¹³ Soon after the war, several similar fashion houses were founded in the capitals of the Soviet Republics and other big cities of the Soviet Union. By the end of the 1960s, their number had reached almost twenty. The Moscow House of Fashion Design of Clothes became the All-Union House of Fashion Design of Clothes in Moscow (*Obshchesoyuznyi dom modelei odezhd*), that is, the central and leading fashion house in the country, soon after its founding in 1948. These fashion houses were by no means the only ones, with leather wear, shoes and knitwear all having their own specialized houses of fashion design from the 1960s onward as well as the majority of big department stores having their own ateliers and design units. The flagship of Soviet department stores, GUM, situated opposite the Kremlin on the Red Square, in Moscow had a huge department of fashion design, founded in 1953, which could almost compete with the All-Union House in size and significance. (Fig. 1.1.) However, these two chains of organizations, the houses of fashion design at the Ministry of Light or Consumer Goods Industry and the fashion departments at the department stores, were not the only ones active in Soviet fashion. In addition, thousands of local fashion ateliers belonged to the system of *Indposhiv* (sewing customized clothes to order for individuals) and had their own fashion designers or at least pattern constructors who remade and modified existing clothing designs to make them more practical for sewing under the prevailing conditions. Often they designed their own clothes too. In the 1960s and 1970s, big centers of everyday services (*Doma byta*) were built all over the Soviet Union in all the Soviet cities as well as bigger regional, rural centers. They worked under their own administrative unit, the Ministry of Everyday Services. They were an important step in the modernization of Soviet domestic life and reduction of the burden of housework on women. In addition to a hairdresser, a laundry, and a beauty parlor, centers of everyday services also had, as a rule, a fashion atelier at which the local citizens could order individually made clothing. In the Soviet Union, fashion ateliers had as a rule several tailors and dressmakers on their payroll who made all kinds of clothes to order, from male and female outerwear to underwear, from everyday clothes to formal suits and dresses, as well as all kinds of garments for children and adolescents. Their sizes varied greatly, from large buildings in the great cities with dozens or even hundreds of employees to smaller provincial ones with only a couple of dressmakers and tailors. These fashion ateliers were classified in hierarchy of quality and price with 'de luxe' ateliers at the top. Finally, a fourth ministry, the Ministry of Local Industry also had its own institutes of fashion design and ateliers.

As if this were not enough, at the end of the 1950s the Ministry of Light Industry opened a new central, experimental fashion institute in Moscow, the All-Union Institute of the Assortments of the Products of Light Industry and the Culture of Dress (VIALegprom) in a new nine-story building with



Fig. 1.1. An evening gown of synthetic silk designed at the Department of Fashion Design of the State Department Store at Moscow, GUM, 1965 (designer Ivanova).

hundreds of employees. Its main task was the general planning of future fashion trends (*perspektivy*) and the coordination of the work of the houses of fashion design under their ministry. In other words, VIALegprom engaged itself in trendsetting. Moreover, it coordinated the efforts of the other fashion institutes each working in their own field or branch of administration. VIALegprom had the important task of designing ensembles of dress, from accessories and textiles to shoes and hats.

In practice, three huge parallel organizations of fashion design thus existed in the Soviet Union from the 1960s onward. They belonged to different administrative branches and organizations which worked under different ministries. The houses of fashion design were under the Ministry of Light Industry; the fashion ateliers and their design units under the Ministry of Trade; and finally, the ateliers of custom made clothes (*Indposhiv*) at the houses of everyday services under the Ministry of Everyday Services. Some fashion houses and ateliers also designed shoes and other kinds of leather goods as well as millinery and lingerie, but separate design organizations also existed which specialized in these areas of dress.



Fig. 1.2. A boy modeling children's clothes designed by the All-Union House of fashion Design of Clothes, ODMO, 1970s.

In principle, a rather strict division of labor reigned between these numerous fashion organizations. Whereas the fashion houses designed clothes to be mass produced in bigger factories, the ateliers at the department stores as well as those belonging to the system of *Indposhiv* designed clothes to be individually sewn in their own ateliers. But this division of responsibilities did not quite hold. In fact, all the organizations took care of three main tasks, each to a varying degree. Both the fashion designers at the department stores and at the houses of design at *Indposhiv* often cherished ambitions to sell new designs for industrial production. Their clients were often factories of local industry or small cooperative manufacturers. All the fashion design units had an interest in designing, and attempted, at least at times, to design clothes in order to produce them in more experimental small series either in their own workshops or in cooperation with local industry. They also preferred to sell them in their own local shops. These series were usually very small, mostly consisting of a couple of hundred items and never exceeding two thousand. The houses of fashion design all over the Soviet Union were expected to serve the factories of their own republics or regions but other factories in other parts of the country could also order their designs—at least this was true of the more famous and successful ones. (Fig. 1.2.)

Fashion propaganda and the propaganda for fashion

The second important task of all these institutions was the propagation of fashion to ordinary Soviet citizens as well as general education in good taste and proper etiquette of dress. To make more fashionable and beautiful clothes available to the public at large was, of course, the most effective way of promoting the approved way of dressing among the citizens. But in addition, and often even more intensively, these fashion institutions propagated fashion in their numerous publications, fashion journals and albums, and in the fashion shows and exhibitions they regularly organized both on their own premises or by visiting their customers in their home towns, factories or kolkhozes. Both the central, regional and local press as well as the numerous Soviet journals, women's magazines in particular, with editions of millions of copies, followed and reported regularly and with great interest on both new fashionable items of dress and fashion trends. All these publications and fashion shows served an educational and entertaining as well as a very practical function. In addition to offering many delights to their numerous readers and spectators, the designs from journals or fashion shows could also be copied and sewn at home. Soviet women could also follow the instructions of the patterns published on separate sheets or in fashion albums, or order them from the local ateliers. Their neighbors, colleagues and friends who were particularly experienced and talented in sewing were also an important source of better and fashionable clothing. Almost all fashion institutes designed clothing patterns published and sold as attachments to fashion journals and albums as well as on individual sheets that served the practical purpose of fashion education even more directly. Many families considered these patterns to be their most valuable family possessions.

As already mentioned, the Moscow VIALegprom had, as its main task, to follow the international developments of fashion and set general trends in Soviet fashion. In modern terms, it would come closest to a fashion trendsetting agency, which became common in the West starting in the 1960s at about the time of the establishment of VIAlegprom.¹⁴

Despite its importance, the production of new designs for industry was often both economically and technically problematic and difficult for the fashion houses and institutions. First of all, the big factories had as a rule no incentives to regularly adopt the new and technically more complicated designs which the fashion designers offered to them. It was more comfortable and easier for the industry directors to fulfill their quotas by producing the same old standardized goods than to experiment with new, more expensive and complicated ones. Therefore they constantly simplified the designs sent to them from the houses of fashion design, which lead to regular complaints from designers. Since the factories were, as a rule, not very eager to produce more advanced and complicated models, to design industrially mass produced clothes could be a frustrating experience for any ambitious and creative fashion designer. Economically, the terms of trade were also unprofitable for both the factory and the fashion house. The Ministry decided the prices of all goods centrally according to a strict formula. The

price the factories received for their new models was not good enough to encourage taking them into the product *nomenklatura*. This followed from the general policy of keeping the prices of consumer goods as stable as possible. Therefore, introducing new clothes into the product assortment of a factory was not economically encouraged. Since the fashion houses worked according to a centrally approved plan, each year they had to produce and sell a certain preordained number of designs of certain categories whether they wanted to or not. In the 1980s, a new system of pricing was approved for the first time, after which the factories could sell their new, better quality more fashionable products for higher prices.

Partly because of the difficulties inherent in the design of industrially produced clothes, the houses of fashion design and many other fashion institutes concentrated their efforts on the general propagation of fashion. In their fashion journals and fashion shows, they could, relatively free from the economic and technical restrictions of industrial production, create more innovative and complicated clothing as well designs for special occasions. As a consequence, the gap between what was shown in the exhibitions and on the pages of the more advanced and popular fashion journals and what was in fact for sale in the local shops tended to increase with time.¹⁵ This frustrated the customers and was problematic for the authorities. What was the use of creating a demand, by propagating fashion, for a more advanced, varied and beautiful style of dress if such clothes were not available to the ordinary consumer? The fantastic creations in fashion shows would just lead to increasing frustration and general dissatisfaction among Soviet consumers and Soviet women in particular. The same problems were keenly felt in other fields of consumption, such as automobiles,¹⁶ but they did not have to try to follow the rapid changes of frivolous fashion to such an extent.

By the end of the 1960s at the latest, the Soviet system of fashion design had reached impressive dimensions, with hundreds of fashion institutes on different administrative levels under different ministries employing thousands of professional fashion designers and pattern makers. It is almost impossible to make any systematic comparisons in this respect with Western leaders in fashion design, like France and the USA. In the Soviet Union fashion designers were, like all other professionals, civil servants, and almost all the fashion institutes were financed and run by the state. Already quite early in the history of the institutes, most of their employees had formal educational qualifications, either from the state academies of art or from various technical institutes and universities. In the West, in contrast, fashion designers worked in private fashion houses or luxurious ateliers, or designed for big clothing and textile factories. The biggest Parisian fashion houses were, however – even by Soviet standards – enormous. In their best inter-war years, a single house could employ thousands of people.¹⁷ They had the whole international clientele of haute couture as their customers.

The professional qualifications and tasks of the main fashion industry occupations, like the designer and the pattern maker, probably differed to some extent in the Soviet Union from what was common in the West. The Soviet fashion institutions, fashion houses and ateliers all functioned continuously without any interruptions from their founding to the end of

the Soviet Union. Likewise, many of their employees and fashion specialists stayed in the same institution all their working lives, in many cases as long as forty years. In other words, the Soviet fashion system was very stable and continuous. Soviet labor law guaranteed fashion designers a permanent position just as it did all other professionals and workers. It was almost impossible to get rid of a worker even on grounds of incompetence unless he or she was guilty of serious breaches of work discipline. Designers and pattern makers very seldom changed their workplace geographically or between the institutes on the different administrative levels or in different departmental units. In the West, leading designers could establish their own fashion houses, but such private entrepreneurship was forbidden in the USSR. Leading designers became acquainted with high Soviet officials, including Leonid Brezhnev, for whom they designed and sewed clothes. This created possibilities for informal influence and status in the Soviet hierarchy, which designers could use to promote both themselves and the interests of their institutes.¹⁸

Fashion and the satisfaction of human needs

Despite the great efforts invested in fashion design, fashion remained an anomaly in the Soviet Union. It did not really fit into the centrally planned economy. In the Soviet economy everything down to the smallest detail, from buttons to the color of textiles was, at least in principle, planned years in advance. The government of the Soviet Union and the Communist Party promised its citizens increasing material well-being and gradual but steady rise in the standard of living. It quickly became clear that the more the economy produced, the faster the demands of the population rose. What was even more problematic was that the demand gradually became more individualistic and varied. No state or ruling party could possibly gratify all these eternally increasing and multiplying needs of its population. However well the socialist economy performed, its workers and employees were not satisfied.

The ideological solution to this problem was the concept of rational needs. The satisfaction of any possible need was not guaranteed automatically. Only those needs that were rational had the right to be satisfied. The state norms gave detailed instructions regarding, for instance, how many pairs of trousers or socks a man, woman or a child could reasonably expect to consume every year. These were by no means dictated by any existential minimum but did include a social and cultural element which had varied throughout history and was expected to increase with the gradually but steadily increasing demands of the Soviet person. Of course, the state and its planning organs and ideologists reserved for themselves the right to have the final say on which particular needs and in which order they should be satisfied. In doing so, they were certainly sensitive – at times, and in some respects almost oversensitive – to the various responses, complaints and wishes of the great masses of people as well as vulnerable to the “pressure groups” of experts and professionals. In most areas of consumption, however, the real levels

of production lagged seriously behind these officially accepted rational standards of consumption. For instance, in 1970, the per capita production of underwear, stockings and socks did not come near these standards.¹⁹

It would have been problematic to claim that people had a need for fashion, the seasonal change of styles and designs, in the same sense that they needed food, shelter and clothing. It was even more problematic to claim that such a need was totally rational. Was not fashion frivolous by its very nature? Fashion most certainly does not serve any practical purpose at all and as such is the very antithesis of functionality. As all Soviet economists and good Marxists knew, fashion makes perfectly usable clothing obsolete. From the standpoint of economic rationality and the satisfaction of needs, fashion was thus a total waste. Didn't it just make people throw away otherwise perfectly good clothes simply because they were no longer in style? Because they might just be the wrong color, be too wide in the legs or too long in the hem? As the Soviet Marxists knew, fashion was an essential part of the capitalist economic system. If anything, it only served the interests of profit by artificially creating the need for consumers to buy new clothes and spend their hard-earned money for no real purpose at all, thus creating an ever-expanding market for their products and brands. The Soviet economy which came into being in the 1920s and 1930s was the total opposite of all this. It did not serve the interests of the profit-hungry capitalists but the "real" needs of the working masses. Fashion should, therefore, have become obsolete under socialism.

The artistic vanguard movements of the 1920s in the newly founded Soviet Union reacted accordingly. They created anti-fashion, clothes that were functional and practical, in principle eternal once their perfect functional and aesthetic form and texture were found. These clothes were ideally unisex. In other words, they were uniforms for the workers and professionals adapted to the various fields of their work and even to celebrations. Many of these artistically ambitious experiments in clothing design have remained as highly appreciated artistic achievements in the history of applied art,²⁰ but they had little impact on how people actually dressed or wanted to dress themselves. Neither did they change the practice of the industrial production of clothes. They were forgotten in the Soviet Union soon after the 1920s, to be rediscovered by art historians later on.²¹

By the mid-1930s at the latest, the Soviet authorities and ideologists of culture took the existence of and the need for fashion, that is, regularly and seasonally changing clothing designs, for granted and no longer seriously questioned its inherent rationality. From time to time, some eager, overzealous propagandist or ideologist of Communist manners and morals might remind people of fashion's inherent folly. Otherwise, everyone seemed to acknowledge that women, in particular, needed fashion and were expecting new designs every season. Fashion was thus regarded as an external force of nature that the Soviet system could not possibly abolish or successfully fight against. Therefore, it had to be lived with. Male fashion changed more slowly and was thus easier to cope with within the conditions of the planned economy but even it demanded increasing attention and resources over time.

Even after the necessity of fashion was acknowledged, at least implicitly, many serious questions and problems remained: how much fashion, what kind and how rapidly should it change? In a centrally planned economy, these questions could not be left to the action of the market and individual consumers. Fashion, like all other issues relating to private consumption, was a state affair. Therefore, these and similar questions were repeatedly raised and discussed in various public fora and committees and, in particular, between the various experts in the field of fashion. These discussions were more common and heated in the 1950s and early 1960s, the years of Khrushchev's thaw after destalinization, than in the decades that followed²² It seems that, by the end of the 1960s, the discussions lost some of their urgency, or perhaps the answers just kept on repeating themselves. The system of fashion had become firmly rooted in Soviet society with all its ambivalences and contradictions.

The consensus that was reached early among the Soviet theorists of fashion was that, fashion in socialism might be necessary but, did and should differ quite clearly and distinctly, from its form under capitalism. The famous Soviet sociologist, Bestuzhev-Lada warned his audience at the All-Union scientific conference of fashion as late as 1979 that following the seasonal changes of Western fashion could provoke crisis-like phenomena in the Soviet planned economy. Therefore they should be avoided as far as possible. In Bestuzhev-Lada's opinion such problems inherent in fashion could be solved best by educating popular taste and by increasing the general cultural standards of the Soviet population.²³ When studied more closely, however, this difference between Western and Soviet fashion often proved to be less a qualitative difference than one of degree. The majority of the experts seemed to acknowledge at least implicitly that Soviet fashion more or less followed the bourgeois fashion of the West with its regular, seasonal changes. It also possessed the same self-motivating and mysterious dynamic force that the planners had to take into account and adjust their activities to. In contrast to capitalist fashion, however, Soviet fashion changed more slowly and was more restrained. As the Soviet experts claimed it was democratic by its nature and aimed at serving ordinary people, and therefore extravagance was totally alien to it. Soviet fashion was more practical and functional than fashion under capitalism. It was also important that fashion fulfilled the standards of modern hygiene and was medically approved. To sum up: the difference between Soviet and bourgeois fashion was, after all, only one of degree. Soviet fashion was a slowed-down -fashion.

It is difficult to say whether this solution to the problem of socialist fashion was only dictated by practical necessity. As the economic planners readily admitted, it took at least two years for a new fashionable design to reach Soviet consumers from the planning table of the fashion designer. The production of small experimental collections often proposed as a solution to make designing more flexible, did not fit into the planned economy either. Instead the Soviet system favored big units: the bigger the better. This meant large production units, huge firms with multiple functions which had almost a total monopoly in their own fields with large standardized production series. It was possible to speak of Soviet megalomania. Therefore,

the repeated experiments with small series always remained restricted in their scope before Gorbachev's perestroika in the 1980s.

Fashion and Soviet decency

To the extent that spontaneous changes of fashion took place in the Soviet Union, they were more prone to disturb the ordinary functioning of the system and were pushed to its periphery, towards the private or illegal economy. The general ideological stance emphasizing moderation and carefulness in fashion fitted well into the stoic morale expected from Soviet citizens in other respects also: one should absolutely not submit oneself to basic instincts or blindly follow the whimsical dictates of fashion. A mature citizen living under socialism should by all means follow and even enjoy fashion, but always with great moderation and reserve, strictly preserving his or her own personal style. She or he should not be a slave to fashion but instead make it serve his or her own socially accepted and personally approved rules of attractiveness and decency. This kind of advice, regularly found in the fashion columns of the popular Soviet press, had its parallels in the West where similar advice, advocating reserve, could be found in women's journals offering instructions on proper dress. In the Soviet Union and in the socialist economy such rules also helped to legitimate the shortcomings of the planned economy in satisfying the demand for fashionable clothing. They also undoubtedly had a restraining effect on the creativity of the fashion designers.

In the Soviet discussions of fashion *stiliagis* played an exceptional role. The word *stiliagi* referred originally to the young men who after the war in the end of the 1940s could be seen strolling the main streets of Moscow and Leningrad dressed in a style that their compatriots were not used to.²⁴ These *stiliagis* were said to dress in extremely narrow trousers and pointed shoes. Later they might be presented in trousers with extremely broad legs and a broad shouldered suit coat. Gradually, the word started to refer to all kinds of expressions of excessive or overly extravagant dress among Soviet youth, often claimed to have been adopted from the capitalist West and mostly associated with an extravagant urban life-style.

One of the common accusations directed towards them was that they copied their ideals from America, which should have been totally alien to any real Soviet Komsomol youth. Because the figure of *stiliagi* quickly acquired almost mythical dimensions in Soviet public discourse and was often pictured in a stereotypical outfit it is difficult to reconstruct what the real and early *stiliagis* really looked like and to what extent they shared a more or less uniform style and taste.²⁵ From the late 1940s to the mid-1960s the style underwent many transformations. Thus one can identify several generations of *stiliagis*. Moreover *stiliagies* living in different Soviet regions and cities could dress quite differently. It is likely that youngsters adapted the style and behavior publicly associated with *stiliagis* to varying degrees. In some cases we could probably speak of youth subcultures but in others it might have just been a case of dressing in a style that differed more or less radically from the officially approved. In the public propaganda they were

definitely treated as a subculture that was not restricted to dress style but also likely to give rise to many kinds of dangerous, anti-social behavior.

Some stiliagis have written memoirs.²⁶ In the absence of any more systematic evidence it would be daring to say anything definitive about how widely spread this stylistic innovation, or its later variations, were both socially and geographically among Soviet youth. Some scholars identify the origins of this movement among the rather narrow circle of the “golden youth” of the Stalinist elite in the Soviet capital²⁷ whereas others point out that stiliagis could evidently come from among the ordinary working class and had counterparts in some provincial towns too.²⁸ Stiliagis were usually male and while they had female counterparts these women, for some reason, never became as notorious or reached such stereotypical contours in the public imagination or press as their male counterparts.

More interesting to our purposes than the real history of this spontaneous Soviet sub-cultural phenomenon is however that the stiliagis had the questionable honor of standing all through the post-Second World War period as the prime example of bad taste. They represented the antitheses of Soviet good taste. The history of this stereotypical public figure is interesting. The Soviet journalists and educators of good taste raised their warning finger almost endlessly to remind their young readers that they should avoid everything that the stiliagis represented. The stiliagi came to stand for everything that was suspect and condemnable, both in the outer appearance and public behavior of a young man. Just as in many similar cases in the post-war West when a youth culture challenged the traditional norms of dress the confrontation did not restrict itself to aesthetics but also had a strong moral dimension. A deviant appearance was often in the post war years in the Soviet Union as well as in the capitalist West interpreted as a sign of moral depravity of character.

One of the last heated ideological discussions which the Soviet officials openly initiated about the appropriate style of dress went on in the Soviet press in the late 1950s and early 1960s.²⁹ In a manner typical of Soviet investigative journalism, these articles usually took the form of a report about an alarming event or a question directed to the editors concerning some particular feature of dress or a character trait associated with anti-social behavior. These reports often took up two concrete details in relation to clothing: the proper width of trouser legs for men and the issue of women wearing trousers in public.

The general advice given in these discussions was typical of all Soviet directives relating to fashion: one should always avoid extremes and all kinds of extravagance and dress oneself instead with moderation and harmony. Neither too narrow nor too wide trouser legs were to be recommended. You should learn to judge what best suited you, but within the confines of respectability. At the same time, Soviet etiquette also became gradually more liberal and informal. While wearing trousers in public was absolutely forbidden for women on all festive or official occasions like going to the city as late as the late 1950s, they were gradually tolerated starting from the early 1960s, though still not recommended on more formal occasions like going to the theater, the cinema or a concert, not to speak of a dinner or a ball.³⁰

These Soviet discussions about proper dress and its ethical connotations were reminiscent in many ways of the vehement debates about boys' long hair or girls' short skirts in the West at almost the same time. Contrary to the official ideals of increasing homogenization of aesthetic standards and living styles of *Homo soveticus*, the mores and manners of proper dress of different age groups, people in different social categories and religious communities as well as in urban and rural populations in fact probably varied even more in the Soviet Union than in the capitalist West in the 1950s and 1960s. Regional differences were also great between the Baltic republics in the European part of the country and its Central Asian republics. The pace of social change was also extremely rapid in the Soviet Union in the post-war decades. The eager Soviet propagators of taste faced an extremely important and demanding task in trying to consolidate all the different ideals and standards of taste. As this Soviet debate on style of dress and its moral connotations illustrated, a more tolerant and individualistic style gradually gained ground in Soviet culture as an important sign of the modernization of society.

Unfortunately, we do not have much systematic information about how the traditional conceptions of masculinity and femininity changed in Soviet society compared to the developments in the West or how such changes transformed fashion or influenced other tendencies in the culture of dress. We do not really know to what extent public opinion supported the official norms of decency in fashion design, or to what extent common opinion and attitudes played an independent role as opposed to being regulated by the Soviet state. In Dan Healey's opinion, the history of sexuality and homosexuality are both white spots in Russian history.³¹ These themes are even today marginal in Russian historiography.³² The lack of good representative sources certainly has a part in this. Many important documents are not available to researchers at all because many archival sources are secret. It is therefore very difficult to draw any general conclusion about the sexual morals and behavior of Soviet people. Our knowledge is so far mainly based on case studies, individual interviews and personal memoirs.³³

In order to understand the basic nature of the sexual culture in the USSR one has to bear in mind that it resembled in many ways that of pre-revolutionary Russia. At the turn of the century, when Russia started to modernize, it went through a stage of sexual emancipation which was, however, limited to urban, educated, middle class intellectuals.³⁴ After the Revolution, the general search for everything that was new and progressive in culture caused a sexual revolt as well. All kinds of experimentation in art and morality were typical and this unsettled traditional gender relations. In the early 1930s the tables turned.

Igor Kon has called the time which continued into the 1960s and more or less coincided with Stalin's reign, the period of sexual counterrevolution. Sexuality disappeared totally from public discussions and was referred only in narrow professional circles, in criminological, medical, and pedagogical-psychological literature. Paying attention to the contradictory nature of Stalin's times, S. I. Golod argued that new atheistic beliefs were promoted alongside Russian Orthodox religious principles, such as the need for sexual purity, the amorality of cross-dressing, and the legal repression of

homosexuality.³⁵ Tightening censorship, attempts to control private life and repress sexuality, and restrictions in sexual education for young people all drove sexual discourse underground and perpetuated double standards in morality.

The early 1960s marked a new period which Golod has called the sexual renaissance. It coincided with Khrushchev's thaw and the gradual liberalization of culture but continued until Gorbachev's perestroika in the second half of the 1980s. The 1960s saw the first sociological studies of Soviet sexuality since the 1920s. They showed that despite all the prohibitions and *taboos* the sexual behavior and morality of Soviet people did not differ much from the West. Even in the USSR sexual morality had become more liberal, sexual behavior more individualized, and women more sexually active. The ethical norms typical of a traditional society were weakening. Compared to the sexual revolution in the West in the 1960s this took place both with some delay and in more modest or restricted forms. The most significant difference was, however, that in the Soviet Union sex was never openly displayed or discussed. Nevertheless, many Soviet citizens experienced these processes negatively, as an irreversible decline in public morality.

Until the end of the 1980s the very word "sex" was associated with amorality not only in the official literature but also in public opinion of the USSR. Sex was understood to be purely physiological, antithetical to real love which was based on romantic feelings and the close relation between spiritual and intimate life within the walls of a family.³⁶ Despite the gradual liberalization of manners in the 1960s and 1970s, in many Soviet homes children were socialized into puritanical values typical of the traditional society. These emphasized the principle of modesty in external appearance and dress. The mass media, among them fashion and women's journals, contributed to the formation of a positive picture of a Soviet woman whose main occupation was the care of her husband, her children and her home. In this canonic ideal of a Soviet woman there was no place for sexuality. Sexual pleasure was not regarded as important in the marriage, and it enjoyed hardly any legitimacy at all within extra-marital relations. The norms of Soviet morality applied particularly strictly to the members of the Communist Party, who were supposed to act as positive role models to other Soviet citizens. In real life, among the youth in particular, it was common to break these official rules which again led to double standards in morality and behavior.³⁷

The 1960s witnessed the beginning of a radical break between the traditional sexual morals of the older citizens and the more liberal behavior of Soviet youth.³⁸ Since clothes are the most visible representation of sexuality it is no wonder that the Soviet discussion of fashion and culture of dress was quite heated at the same time. Fashion became legitimate in the USSR at the same time. However, a fashionable dress that fitted a woman, emphasizing her individuality and making her sexually more attractive, continued to raise many doubts in the Soviet society. Many experienced individual taste in dress, as well as the propaganda for bodily hygiene (regular physical activity, care of the hair, and complexion, etc.) as a radical break with the traditional norms previously sanctioned by state power. This led to sharpening of

generational conflict. Nevertheless, the liberalization of fashion opened a way for the liberalization of sexuality by encouraging its public presentation. The moral debate about the miniskirt, which conquered Soviet fashion in the 1970s, is a good example.

In the USSR, just as in pre-revolutionary Russia, sexuality referred exclusively to heterosexuality. Everything else was regarded both as deviant and unnatural. Both in Tsarist Russia and the USSR after 1944 sodomy between males was criminalized. The law was abolished first after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1993. In the USSR, homosexual behavior was interpreted either as a psychological deviance or a sign of moral deprivation typical of the man of the world who sought only after bodily pleasures. It could also be connected to the specific conditions of a life lived exclusively among males (e.g. in prison or monastery). Members of sexual minorities who undoubtedly existed within the fashion world in the USSR as elsewhere understandably did not advertise their sexual orientation for fear of social ostracism, and, in the case of homosexuals, of serious legal consequences. This is not matters that can be openly discussed even today. Therefore no reliable and systematic information is available about the role of lesbians, gay men and other sexual minorities, in the creation of Soviet fashion. The same is true of the question of whether gays or lesbians had any special fashion or style of their own in the USSR. If they did, it was entirely clandestine. It could not act as an inspiration to mainstream fashion as was sometimes the case in the West after the 1960s.

Inspirations and restrictions

Overall, three major factors influenced the development of Soviet fashion: 1) political ideology, 2) the centrally planned economy and 3) public opinion, which in many cases was quite traditional as far as proper dress code was concerned. Soviet fashion did show some general stylistic trends or traits that differed from its Western counterparts, including relative moderation, conservatism and adherence to the classical ideals of harmony and color scales. Sexual decency was also generally emphasized. Traditional strict gender roles preserved their value longer in the USSR than in the West. Miniskirts, women's trousers and bikinis, which the older generations met with disapproval everywhere, entered Soviet dress culture somewhat later than in the West. (Fig. 1.3.). From the 1960s onwards political and ideological issues did not play a very prominent role in Soviet fashion design. Fashion had to be politically correct but only in the limited sense that some motifs and colors with obvious nationalistic or religious connotations were strictly forbidden. These restrictions were relatively insignificant to the creativity of the fashion world, and fashion designers usually had no problems complying with them. The other side of the coin was that the ideology did not include any direct positive guidelines that could be followed.³⁹

In the end, Soviet fashion theorists named the same three sources of inspiration that were often referred to by their Western colleagues.⁴⁰ In order to create new fashionable clothes, the designers had to either study



Fig. 1.3. Designers at ODMO discuss a new design of a mini skirt in the beginning of the 1970s (Liudmila Turchanovskaya, the head designer of ODMO, second from left).

the history of fashion, its highlights in particular, or follow the trends of international fashion, or, finally, to study the ethnographic collections of clothes and dress styles. The use of folk styles was, in fact, often mentioned as the main source of inspiration for Soviet fashion and referred to repeatedly by fashion theorists from the 1920s onwards. Using folk styles was said to make fashion closer to the ordinary people. (Fig.1.4.) However, international fashion, and in particular Parisian fashion, was in practice often the main source of inspiration for Soviet designers. Many times they simply copied models from the French or other famous international fashion journals and slightly modified them to better suit the available raw materials as well as the more limited capacities of the Soviet garment industry. Designs that borrowed elements from folk dress and used them as their inspiration were definitely more original. They quite soon became an obligatory, even if only a minor, part of any Soviet collection of fashion put on display at home or abroad. This allowed and even encouraged the houses of fashion design of the Soviet republics and national regions, which otherwise followed the general stylistic guidelines and international trends modified and codified in Moscow's central fashion institutions, to distinguish themselves from each other by using the designs of the local folk dress-sometimes still



Fig. 1.4. A dress designed for the Soviet Collection demonstrated as a part of the Soviet Exhibition of Trade and Industry, London, August 1968.

in use in remote villages-collected in the ethnographic museums. It should be remembered, however, that folk dress became an international trend in fashion in the aftermath of hippie culture and 'flower power' almost at the same time that the Soviet fashion system reached its full maturity.

Because of the wide publicity which fashion received in the Soviet Union, through numerous fashion shows, exhibitions, journals and other publications, many fashion designers and models became national and local celebrities almost like movie stars or popular singers and performers. The name of the "author" of a design was, as a rule, conscientiously published in the journals or mentioned during the shows. Many designers, like Viacheslav (Slava) Zaitsev, became quite famous at home and even enjoyed an international reputation. The profession of a Soviet fashion model was quite ambiguous. On the one hand, a certain degree of glamor was associated with it. Their faces became familiar to everyone on the pages of journals or during fashion shows. They often socialized in artistic circles and could be seen in the company of famous actors, filmmakers, journalists and diplomats in the more luxurious restaurants and official receptions of all kinds. They also had personal access to fashionable clothing and could thus dress themselves fashionably in private too. The most famous models regularly traveled abroad with the fashion collections, a special and rare privilege for a Soviet citizen. (Fig. 1.6) This privilege also made them-along with the



Fig. 1.5. Soviet top models sightseeing in Montreal during the EXPO-67.

fashion designers-vulnerable to extra control and recruitment attempts by the KGB, whose representatives monitored all such foreign exchange. On the other hand, the work was hard and not very well paid. What was even more problematic was that the modeling profession was stigmatized: Party functionaries worried continuously about the decency of models' manners and mores. As in the rest of the world, only a small percentage of Soviet models were regularly employed by fashion houses and institutes; many more freelanced. Some stayed in the profession for the best part of their lives, some only for a short period of time. Several leading models emigrated after marrying a Soviet Jew or a foreigner. Even though Soviet ideals of a good model followed the international trends with some delay and moderation, it is obvious that the Soviet fashion houses used a wider spectrum of different types of models than Western fashion houses, representing the 'typical Soviet woman,' for instance heavier or older women.

Previous studies of fashion under socialism

Soviet fashion and its history did not generate much interest among scholars beyond the Soviet Union before the 1980s. The same is true to a large extent of Soviet historians. Most of the early and rather rare studies published in English were dedicated to the Soviet revolutionary avant-garde art of the 1920s, well-known in the history of art and design in general for its many remarkable artistic achievements. These works examined fashion as only

a minor part of the incredibly rich and innovative part of the production of all kinds of art in the 1920s. I. Yasinskaya's *Soviet Textile Design of the Revolutionary Period*⁴¹ as well as Alexander Lavrentiev's 'Varvara Stepanova', a portrait of one of the most famous textile designers of the 1920s, originally appeared in English as museum catalogues to exhibitions of early Soviet revolutionary art. Some works dedicated solely to Soviet fashion design and industry appeared in English: in 1989 an edited collection called *Revolutionary Costume: Soviet Clothing and Textiles of the 1920s*⁴², and in 1991 Tatiana Strizhenova's *Soviet Costumes and Textiles 1917–1945*⁴³ provided the first comprehensive history of the Soviet Fashion industry in English. Strizhenova ends her history with the Second World War and does not cover the post-war period. Recently Alexander Vasiliev has published two books, *Beauty in exile* (in Russian and English) about Russian immigrants' contribution to the Parisian fashion industry and *Russkaia moda: 150 let v fotografiakh* in Russian (Russian fashion: 150 years in photographs).⁴⁴ Vasiliev's book *Russkaia moda* is a highly informative work on the history of prerevolutionary and Soviet fashion. It introduces the reader to the main Russian and Soviet fashion designers and their achievements. However, even though it provides useful commentary on various aspects of Soviet dress and fashion it is mostly a book of photographs. Christine Ruane's comprehensive work on Russian clothing and textile industry covers the imperial period up to the Russian Revolution.⁴⁵

Larissa Zakharova⁴⁶ has studied many aspects of Soviet fashion – for instance, fashion as an important part of the cultural change occurring after Stalin's death as well as the Soviet-French cultural relations in the post-war world of fashion, in particular the important role that Christian Dior's Fashion House played for the Soviet fashion professionals. Ol'ga Vainshtein's⁴⁷ works on the ideology and inner tensions of the Soviet fashion industry – that is, the widely spread domestic production of clothes in a country which officially idealized industrial mass production – are also worth mentioning as is her book on the "universal" history of dandies which includes a chapter on the Russian and Soviet dandies.⁴⁸ Vainshtein places the legendary and almost mythical figure of Soviet *stiliagi* into the world-wide tradition of dandy.

Nataliya Chernyshova's monograph on the Soviet consumer culture during Brezhnev's times includes an interesting chapter on Soviet fashion and the consumption of clothes from the 1960s to the early 1980s⁴⁹ Olga Gurova has studied the impact of the Soviet past on the attitudes to fashion and practices of clothing in contemporary Russia.⁵⁰

The single work that comes closest to our own is Djurdja Bartlett's *FashionEast. The Spectre that Haunted Socialism*.⁵¹ The first part of Bartlett's work is an impressive study of the pre-war fashion industry in the Soviet Union. Its second half is dedicated to the post-war developments in the Eastern European socialist bloc as a whole. In fact, it pays more attention to five other East European socialist countries, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, GDR and Yugoslavia, than to the Soviet Union. With regard to the Soviet Union it covers mostly the main achievements of the two central Moscow fashion institutions, ODMO and VIALegprom of the Ministry of Light Industry in an East European comparative context and does not pay

much attention to the wider Soviet system of fashion. We can find many similarities in all the Eastern European socialist countries both in their aesthetic principles and in the education of taste as well as in the officially declared ambitions to regulate and plan fashion centrally. All these socialist countries copied, to varying degrees, the Soviet system of fashion in the late 1940s and early 1950s while preserving many of their own national features in their fashion system. However, in one respect they all differed from the almost totally centralized state-led Soviet model. In all these Eastern European countries, private entrepreneurs and fashion salons, and in some cases even small scale manufacturers, continued to operate during the post war years. They were also more open to the West, both through importing clothes and textiles and by allowing their citizens to travel, and even to emigrate, to the West in large numbers. The Western influence was thus felt much more directly and concretely in these countries which had become socialist after the Second World War, some 20 years after the Russian Revolution. East Germany was a particular case: as a part of divided Germany it faced competition from the capitalist West in consumer goods production and standards of living even more concretely and directly than the rest of the socialist bloc.

Stitzel's monograph⁵² on the history of fashion in East Germany should also be mentioned as a predecessor to our own work. Stitzel's research covers the whole post-war period or the "life span" of the GDR. Our books are similar in many ways, for example, in closely recording the emergence and development of the new socialist fashion industry as well as in analyzing in detail the almost continuous administrative discussions about the aesthetics of dress appropriate to the new socialist society. Stitzel pays relatively less attention to the practice of fashion design and the emergence of fashion designers and other fashion professionals and concentrates more on the economic and political conditions under which the system as a whole operated. The rather complicated and many-faceted state-owned fashion system of the Soviet Union was, however, quite unique even within the socialist world in the post war years.

During recent years the historical scholarship on socialist fashion has received an interesting new complement. There has been an increasing interest in the history of Chinese fashion which has already resulted in the publication of several monographs.⁵³ In the early years of the new Chinese People's Republic, before the schism between Mao and Khrushchev isolated China almost totally from the rest of the Soviet bloc, the Soviet system influenced the Chinese fashion industry. The cultural exchange and trade between these countries was quite significant. Soviet influence on Chinese fashion remained, however, short lived reaching its peak in 1956 when fashion shows and exhibitions widely demonstrated the new achievements and aesthetic ideals of Chinese fashion designers. The Chinese sartorial culture differed from the Soviet one because the old tension between the European and more traditional Chinese dress was quite acute in the new People's Republic. With the Chinese Cultural Revolution at the latest the Chinese fashion industry took a totally different turn, a direction which the Soviet Union might have taken too if its own cultural revolution of the 1920s

had been politically as dominating and long lasting. China actually realized in fashion design and industry what the Soviet radical designers of the 1920s only dreamed of. Following the principles of anti-fashion, they designed and produced industrially on a mass scale a few standard designs of male and female dress which used as their examples both military uniforms and national dress, and which remained more or less static over time. They were in practice the only garments available to the population on mass scale.

As the new Chinese fashion historians have concluded, this strict demand for uniformity and functionality of dress did not totally prevent individuals from distinguishing themselves and inventing their own small tokens of decoration by changing or adding some details to their dress, wearing scarves or turning their blouse collars over the collar of their coats. Thus, not even Mao's uniforms, well known from the numerous published portraits of Chairman Mao, could totally stand against the fashion cycles, even though these stylistic changes and innovations were extremely modest and hardly noticeable to an outsider.

The history of Western European and North American fashion has received much more attention and interest from historians and social scientists than Eastern European socialist fashion. This is particularly true of the leading nations of fashion design, like France, Italy and the USA. There are numerous books dedicated both to their haute couture as well as to the styles of dress of various sub cultures and their influence on street fashion. Numerous monographs analyze the works of famous designers or fashion houses.⁵⁴ More often than not these studies are written in the tradition of art history, which pays attention to the major stylistic changes and aesthetic innovations in the fashion industry and analyzes the creativity and originality of their designs. In recent years books have appeared which have a slightly different focus, concentrating more on the general economic, political or cultural aspects of fashion industry and design or the social and cultural aspects of the development of clothing culture in general. However, such works are relatively uncommon. Just to mention a few of them: Elizabeth Wilson's *Adorned in Dreams*⁵⁵ was among the first to systematically analyze fashion and gender, or women as producers and wearers of fashionable clothing. The institutional analyses in Diane Crane's *Class, Gender and Identity in Clothing* share the same kind of a thematic agenda as our study in analyzing the social institution of fashion.⁵⁶ Fred Davis' *Culture and Identity* is still, twenty years after its publication, exemplary in offering many systematic sociological interpretations of the role of fashion in society as well as interesting examples of several crucial stylistic changes and innovations with wider cultural meanings.⁵⁷

The plan of the book

The present book does not have any pretension to be a systematic analysis of the stylistic changes and innovations in the history of Soviet fashion. We touch on this topic too but the full history is yet to be written. We leave it to future professional design and art historians. Unfortunately, so many years

after the collapse of the Soviet Union it would have been an almost impossible task to draw anywhere near a complete picture of the everyday and festive dress styles or aesthetic tastes of the various social strata in the Soviet Union. For the same reason we have not tried to systematically study how either the common citizens or the Soviet elites dressed themselves in practice, or what kind of strategies they had at their disposal to satisfy their stylistic ambitions, under the conditions of an economy of permanent shortages.⁵⁸ We do, however, present some observations and comments on these issues.

This book presents, above all, a study of the establishment and development of the Soviet organization and system of fashion industry and design as it gradually evolved in the years after the Second World War in the Soviet Union, which was, in the understanding of its leaders, reaching the mature or last stage of socialism when the country was firmly set on the straight trajectory to its final goal, Communism. What was typical of this complex and extensive system of fashion was that it was always loyally subservient to the principles of the planned socialist economy. This did not by any means indicate that everything the designers and other fashion professionals did was dictated entirely from above by the central planning agencies. Neither did it mean that their professional judgment would have been only secondary to ideological and political standards set by the Communist Party and the government of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, as our study shows, the numerous Soviet fashion professionals had a lot of autonomy. They were eager and willing to exercise their own judgment in matters of taste and to set the agenda of beauty and style for Soviet citizens.

If the Soviet fashion industry and markets have been relatively little studied so far, the same can be said of other fields of the consumer goods industry and markets too. This is particularly true of the consumer culture of the post-war years. Some basic works, dedicated to the period between the two world wars, the NEP period in the 1920s and Stalin's period in power, have appeared in English.⁵⁹ The later post-war period until the end of the Soviet Union has on the contrary hardly been systematically studied from the perspective of fashion and consumption.⁶⁰ Natalia Chernyshova's study on Soviet consumer culture under Brezhnev's era and Lewis Siegelbaum's⁶¹ work on the history of Soviet cars are among the exceptions. They highlight the great efforts and hopes as well as the serious problems that followed the production of all kinds of consumer goods and their distribution from the very beginning to the final collapse of the Soviet Union.

The present book is the first systematic history of the development of fashion and fashion institutions in the Soviet Union after the Second World War. It paints an overall picture of the development of the numerous fashion houses, ateliers and institutes that existed in the USSR and their tasks, achievements and problems. It will also discuss the place and role of fashion in the economic, ideological and aesthetic programs and disputes of the Soviet authorities and specialists as well as the changing goals and standards of aesthetic education and cultivation of taste. It will also deal with Soviet public opinion towards fashion. Since fashion was an anomaly in the Soviet planned economy, it can, often in a pointed way, reveal many of the inner tensions and contradictions built into socialism.

The main sources for our study came from the state, party and departmental archives of the former Soviet Union. Today, they are mostly part of the state archives of Russia and Estonia. They are documents from all the numerous organizations, ministries, fashion houses and ateliers as well as department stores that took an active part in the design, planning and production of fashion in the USSR. In addition, we refer to numerous journals and newspapers that regularly wrote about and commented on fashion and the culture of dress. In this respect, we are in a privileged position because we found an almost complete collection of the articles and news on all kinds of fashion events published all over the Soviet Union, from Kaliningrad to Nakhodka, Arkhangelsk to Crimea during the period between the mid-1950s and late 1970s. It consists of newspaper clippings preserved in folders and collected by the former librarians of the All-Union House of Fashion Design in Moscow. Letters and comments from journal readers are preserved alongside these documents. This means that it is also possible, to study the popular ideas and conceptions of fashion in the different periods of post-war Soviet history.

We also make extensive use of oral history. During our research, between 2007 and 2009, we met and interviewed dozens of people who had, in Soviet times, taken active part in the fashion industry: in the propagation of the culture of clothing, in design and pattern making, in demonstrating new models, in the mass production of clothes, or who had otherwise worked in the fashion ateliers. Some of them started to work in fashion as early as the 1940s but most gained their experience during the period from the 1960s through the 1980s. Among them were directors and chief engineers of garment factories, administrators and artistic directors of the fashion houses, ordinary artists and designers, pattern makers, hairdressers, models, other workers from the fashion ateliers and garment factories such as economists. The great variation among the professional positions of these respondents in the Soviet system of fashion has an important, principally methodical, consequence. These people had differing views of and perspectives on the problems that we wanted to study. What some of them did not or could not observe from their own 'tower' was clearly visible to others. What some did not know was again quite well known to others because of their specific professional position and/or the nature of their work. What some did not want to talk about, others discussed freely and in great detail. Thus, the authors could also check the information received during these interviews and discussions by comparing them with other sources, both oral and written.

Our study makes use of rich empirical and historical material that has been made available for the first time for scientific analysis and discussion. The very process of the search for the documents used in this book could be the subject of a separate book. To take one example, we found the extremely valuable, large collections of the library of the ODMO, the All-Union House of Fashion Design in Moscow, in complete disarray in the store house of one of the clothing shops. They share the destiny of many similar valuable collections of historical documents from Soviet times, which have been severely neglected in the 1990s during the privatization and the closing down

of the previous Soviet houses of fashion design together with all the other state organizations of fashion.

The next chapter after this introduction gives a general outline of the development of Soviet fashion and the fashion industry in the interwar period after the Russian Revolution. This was the time when Soviet fashion and fashion designers, through many stages and experiments, gradually found their place in the new Soviet economic and political system. This was also the time when fashion and fashion designers faced their most serious ideological challenges. By the beginning of the Second World War fashion had more or less found its own place in the Soviet Union. The 1930s in particular are an important stage in the 'pre-history' of Soviet fashion which came into being in its mature form after the Second World War.

The Chapter Three is a short presentation of the Soviet economic system and its main post-war reforms. It also gives a picture of the general economic development and standard of living, which had a direct impact on the development of Soviet fashion and its various institutions. The Soviet system of fashion design was a response to the rapidly rising aspirations of material culture among the Soviet population.

The Chapter Four describes and analyzes the establishment of the first institutions of the Soviet system of fashion, which took place under quite exceptional war-time conditions. These institutions formed the historical starting point of the post-war system of Soviet fashion design. We follow their development and functioning up to the immediate post-war years.

The Chapter Five is a systematic and detailed description of the establishment, growth and basic functions of the four parallel organizations of Soviet fashion which worked under the Ministry of Light Industry, the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Everyday Services and, finally, the Ministry of Local Industry respectively. Special attention is paid both to their mutual division of labor and several overlapping functions. This as well as the following chapters will also dedicate much attention to the Soviet fashion designers and other fashion professionals like models by discussing the character of their profession and their achievements.

The Chapter Six examines closely one of the main flag ships of Soviet fashion design, the fashion department of the big State Department Store, GUM, at the Red Square, Moscow. This was one of the most privileged organizations of fashion design, the atelier of which had many Soviet dignitaries as its customers. By following its functioning we can, therefore, analyze the reasons for its great achievements and popularity as well as the many problems that even this key organization of Soviet trade faced during its history.

In the Chapter Seven we move from Moscow to Tallinn, the capital of Soviet Estonia. The Tallinn House of Fashion Design of the Estonian Ministry of Light Industry, *Tallinna moemaja*, was both a typical example of the houses of fashion design established in all the Soviet republics and larger industrial centers as well as one of the best known among them. We analyze its everyday activities and role in the Estonian and the All-Union fashion industry as well as the reasons for its exceptionally high reputation and popularity among the Soviet customers of fashionable clothing.

Chapter Eight is dedicated to Soviet fashion publicity and the press. By systematically analyzing both the specialized fashion publications and journals as well as the numerous writings dedicated to the propagation of fashion in the daily press and popular journals we can describe concretely how the Soviet press informed the public about seasonal fashion cycles, stylistic changes, and fashion trends as well as the achievements and importance of Soviet fashion in general. The writings published in these sources also give a good picture of the more general, ideological or principal disputes concerning the role of fashion under socialism in general as well as its various stylistic expressions regularly discussed in the press. As elsewhere, fashion was not just an aesthetic question but had direct moral connotations as well. The post-war decades were in the Soviet Union, just as in the developed countries of the West, times of rapid social change which raised many burning questions regarding the proper dress code and the decency of dress, not least the decency of women, men and adolescents. These were regularly discussed, often polemically and quite heatedly, in the columns and articles dedicated to fashion. We shall highlight some of the decisive moments and periods in the formation of the Soviet proper etiquette of dress.

2. The Formative Years of the Soviet Fashion Industry: from the Russian Revolution to the end of Stalin's Rule

The Revolutionary Background of Soviet Fashion and Anti-Fashion

Both theoretically and practically the foundations of Soviet fashion were created during the difficult and eventful years after the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the Civil War. Since these formative years of Soviet history in the 1920s to 1940s had such a great impact on almost all of the aspects of the establishment of Soviet fashion as well as on the public opinion about dress code and fashion, it is necessary to give a short account of this “prehistory” of the Soviet fashion industry in order to be able to understand and analyze the specificity of the post-war developments in the world of fashion.

In the beginning of the twentieth century, fashion and fashionable clothing were associated mainly with urban culture as well as with material well-being and one's closeness to the ruling estate, while the overwhelming majority of the Russian population lived in villages in the countryside. Ordinary people bought linen, which was more or less available in the shops or markets, and wore mostly homemade clothes. This was particularly true in the case of children and the casual dress of adults. Buying ready-made clothes was a special event which families reserved for the more festive moments of life. Clothes bought in a shop or in a department store were, as a rule, formal attire.

Due to high prices a fashionable suit was regarded as a luxury and a means of social distinction. The huge inequality between the classes, the poverty of the great masses of the population, the age old tradition of serfdom and the strict system of social stratification created by the tsarist regime greatly increased hatred against the “exploiters,” directed in particular towards their “frivolous” way of life with its accompanying dress code.⁶² As one of the famous Bolsheviks wrote, a deep abyss divided the two worlds of the “black” and the “clean” citizens, which was reflected in the wide spread resentment which ordinary people felt toward their “clean masters.”⁶³ Another eyewitness of the red mutiny who looked at the revolutionary events from the other side of the class barrier, the well-known attorney at law N. Maier, characterized the atmosphere of the times in the following manner: “The bitterness of the lower classes towards anyone who carried the outer signs of the privileged classes became accentuated to the extent that it was

impossible, for instance, to travel in the tram without becoming the target of cursing.⁶⁴

It is no wonder that the revolutionary masses who judged their fellow citizens on the basis of their outer appearance (clothes, eye-glasses, calluses on working hands, etc.) hardly recognized any difference between the various representatives of the upper classes in their clean and beautiful dress, whether they were land owners, capitalists, tsarist civil servants or ordinary members of the intelligentsia it was all the same to them. During the years of the civil war, characterized by many spontaneous outbursts of anger and aggression, clothing served as the main evidence of a person's social status. The Red Army Commander Semen Budennyi told a characteristic story in his memoirs. In the middle of the fighting with General Anton Denikin's "White Army," the Red guards arrested two "members of the bourgeoisie" wearing glasses, "dressed in long tailor-made fur coats." Because of their outer appearance the Red guards were ready to shoot them. The two well-dressed prisoners turned out in fact to be very high ranking Soviet leaders, the head of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee (VTsIK), Mikhail Kalinin, and the head of the Ukrainian Central Executive Committee, Grigory Petrovskii. All efforts to convince the soldiers of their real identities with the help of their mandates undersigned by Vladimir Lenin proved to be ineffective: the soldiers could not read and they had been used to judging their exploiters primarily all by their outer appearance and clothing.⁶⁵

When the workers' "revolutionary consciousness of right and wrong" was substituted for law and order, people's outer appearance played an important role. "It is enough to refer to his well-kept face and hands without any calluses to accuse some one of being a bourgeois"⁶⁶ proclaimed S. S. Zorin, a member of the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet. To appear on the street dressed in a top hat and expensive and fashionable dress which was typical of the members of the former ruling class, caused aggression and could cost one one's life. It was typical that it was not only the exploiters themselves who caused anger but also the attributes of the "cursed past" belonging to them: a costume with a waistcoat, a monocle, a fine fur hat, as well as, in the judgement of the ordinary man, luxurious living quarters-exquisite furniture, a home library, a grand piano, and so on.⁶⁷

At this time it would have been difficult to imagine that these hated objects, which in the eyes of the victorious proletariat symbolized the former luxurious life of the exploiters, would in less than 20 years turn into the cherished symbols of the real socialist culture legitimated by Soviet power. Nevertheless, the association between the social status of the citizen and his or her clothing, dress code, etc., which went back in history and was deeply rooted in the consciousness of the common man and woman, never totally disappeared in later Soviet times either.

It was no wonder that after the Revolution the old "bourgeois" fashion, as a part of the questionable cultural heritage of the past, became the object of keen discussions and disputes: should the victorious proletariat create its own "proletarian fashion"? If the answer was in the affirmative how it would in fact differ from "bourgeois fashion"? Did the social and cultural phenomenon of fashion have a right to exist at all under Communism? It

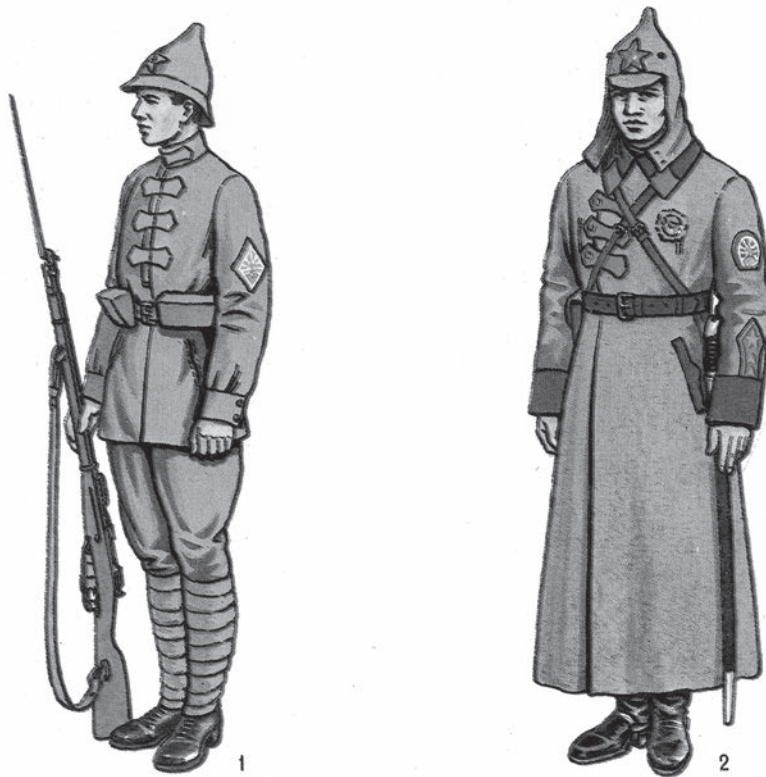


Fig. 2.1. Red Army uniforms designed by the artists Kuznetsov and Kustodiev in 1919.

was obvious to many that the drastic changes caused by the Revolution in life style should be followed by equally radical changes in the outer appearance of human beings. In some cases it was easy to see how the Revolution directly stimulated new fashionable tendencies: The leather coats of the commissars, the red cavalry head wear, *budennovki*, red ribbons, and other equally popular references to the attributes of the revolutionary Bolshevik era were often regarded by fashion professionals as examples of spontaneously created “revolutionary fashion.” Many idealists thought that the victorious proletariat would have a totally different relationship to the “world of things” and Maxim Gorky, the so-called stormy petrel of the Revolution, declared war against the petit bourgeois mentality, the well-known “human remnant of the old society” – the “thirst for the bait,” or the bourgeois submissiveness in the face of material offerings and comfort. (Fig. 2.1.)

During the cultural radicalism and the popularity of the ideals of the *Proletkult* movement in the 1920s when young revolutionary radicals suggested that all old bourgeois culture, including Pushkin and Raphael, should be thrown on the dung heap, fashion was also labeled a typical “remnant” of the aristocratic and bourgeois way of life not worthy of the new proletarian aesthetics. New proletarian culture was now to be created practically from point zero.⁶⁸ Fashion was obviously understood to be

a sign of the exclusive elitism which had been propagated by the fashion journals and albums of haute couture. It had nothing to do with the rags commonly seen in the working districts, which followed the changes of fashion, if at all, at a much slower pace and more spontaneously. Haute couture's exclusiveness was its most distinctive feature in the minds of its socialist critics. In accordance with the common understanding of those times, real fashionable clothes were, in contrast to the ones that were mass produced and could be bought in clothing stores, sewn by hand by a famous dressmaker or tailor at a fashion atelier. Thus they automatically carried an individual flavor which guaranteed their high quality and made them chosen examples of rare art. For the majority of the population they were simply too expensive, not available at all or too fine and impractical for everyday use. In the opinions of the representatives of the *Proletkult*, the creations that were born in the "inflamed" brains of the fashion designers were too "artificial" and suffered from their close resemblance to other items of "highbrow" art and culture. Being unavailable to the majority of the population, they were interpreted to as an expression of snobbery which artificially raised itself above the supposed "undeveloped cultural demands" of the common man and woman. The excesses of fashion, expressing the measuring stick of the old society, were undemocratic. Furthermore, with fashion's help the ruling class elevated their own tastes far above the tastes of the other citizens.

Soviet Russia had by the end of the 1920s firmly established itself on the world map and was even understood by many Western intellectuals to be the center of human progress, a real alternative to the rotten old world with its discredited moral and cultural values. Many expected that it would also become a real turning point in the history of fashion. The question of the reorientation of the "old" fashion, which had been produced only for a few select people, and the consequent democratization of the world of fashion, became important in the cultural politics of the first socialist country in the world. The new fashion should be democratic, reoriented according to the size of the wallet as well as other practical needs of the ordinary consumer.

Under these conditions, the representatives of the *Proletkult* continued their active propaganda for a functional, in essence practical, aesthetic style – a new ideal of beauty which would be to a greater degree in line with the goals of the new society. In the sphere of fashion this new style almost paradoxically took the form of an anti-fashion.⁶⁹ Its critique was directed at the whole system of fashion as such with its rapid changes of style. Old fashion in its bourgeois packaging was totally unnecessary and did not serve any real function in the new society. The new anti-fashion aimed at the ideal of a wholly functional dress, a uniform for different occasions and professions which would suit every individual despite differences in gender or age. Such a uniform would liberate everyone from the futile need to pay attention to individual differences. Taking stable and common human needs as a starting point one could annihilate all kinds of rapid and unnecessary changes in fashion and liberate human beings, women in particular, from the "slavery of fashion." The new vanguard of the proletarian aesthetics distanced itself, from the frivolous and whimsical nature of traditional fashion in general, and not only from its concrete creations.

Similar ideas regarding the creation of a new kind of clothing free of unnecessary details, trimmings and decorations, common in the 1920s in Soviet Russia, had been part of many previous utopian ideas of radically reforming the world. Many talented and progressively thinking people among artists, designers and intellectuals had defended such a position, at least for a time.⁷⁰ These ideals were thus by no means any real Soviet inventions. The Russian artistic vanguard of the beginning of the 1920s followed in this respect the radical European and North American arts and crafts movement with its ideals of the functionality of dress as well as the movement of “reform dress,” which had been popular at the turn of century and which the more radical feminism in particular supported and propagated in many Western European countries as well as in North America.⁷¹ What united them all was that they presumed that functional was beautiful and use came before aesthetics. Clothes should serve only natural and basic human needs and not be subservient to social competition or exhibition, which enslaved women living under capitalism in particular.

In Christine Ruane’s opinion, Russian fashion trends in the 1920s returned to some extent to their pre-war tendencies, which the outbreak of the First World War had interrupted, by integrating backward Russia into the Western and European culture.⁷² According to Ruane, anti-fashion movements had been popular among the Russian intelligentsia during the war. The rapidly growing consumerism was, in the minds of the radical intelligentsia, associated with fashion. As they argued “resources should be used for the betterment of society and should not be squandered on fashion.”⁷³ By demonstratively wearing simple peasant clothes they imagined themselves to be breaking social barriers and they encouraged ordinary people to reject fashion too. At the same time nationalistic circles rejected fashion as “Western or foreign business.” In June 1916 the import of luxury goods like fashionable clothes was banned as part of the wartime economic regulation. Similar legislation existed in other war waging European nations. Fashion magazines disappeared in Russia during the war too. As Ruane argued, the Bolsheviks transformed this pre-war anti-fashion discourse about the wastefulness of fashion and the following wartime ban on luxury goods into an attack against petit-bourgeois philistinism. Anti-fashion discourse was particularly strong during the New Economic Policy of the 1920s when the Bolsheviks had to deal with the problem of growing economic and social differences due to the partial rehabilitation of the market economy.

The New Economic Policy (NEP), which the Soviet government adopted in 1921, only helped to intensify the discussion about the nature and destiny of fashion in the coming society and raised a lively debate about fashion as a “hostile remnant from the class society.” During NEP in 1921–1928, due to a more open policy on small scale private entrepreneurship, Western influences reached Soviet fashion freely and rapidly. The broad masses of the population who earned their meager livelihood with hard work associated the fashion “explosion” of the 1920s not only with the “wild life” in the restaurants and clubs, but in general with the dissipation and lavish spending of the *nepman*, who had now quite suddenly become rich. More generally, social inequality increased again forcefully and the majority of



Fig. 2.2. Typical designs during the times of NEP published in the journal *Poslednie mody* (Latest fashion).

the population had no means of acquiring a share of this new “beautiful” and luxurious life. With NEP new fashion ateliers were opened in the cities again, as well as beauty salons and antique shops, which shocked the ordinary public with their pre-revolutionary styles imitating the lifestyle of the tsarist aristocracy. The profession of the milliner became, quite unexpectedly, popular again. Fashion journals started to publish in great numbers again, propagating festive clothing, etc. (Fig. 2.2.) While Russia had hardly recovered from the hard years of the Civil war and was still mourning its many dead, the “fashionable grimace” of the NEP was reminiscent of a feast in times of plague, thus creating a highly negative image around the cultural phenomenon of fashion. In his article “Moscow. From the way of life of the Nep-people,” the well-known lawyer Z. Rikhter described the social life of the Soviet capital in the beginning of the year 1923 as follows:

In the gilded-strawberry red lounges [of the Bolshoi Theater], on the first rows of the parquet – no workers’ shirts to be seen, as it was in 1918–1920, but instead bare shoulders and the arms of the ladies decorated with expensive jewels, straight combed male partings and tail-coats. This is the picture from the pre-war and pre-revolutionary times. The public is not less luxurious than before – but at a closer look, these are not the same people as before, not the ones with a permanent subscription to the tickets to all the premiers, but new ones, from

outside the town, so called *nep-people* and nouveaux riches. The old land-owning aristocracy and shop owners as well as the old literary-aristocratic people of Moscow are not there anymore. Only seldom, by chance, can one now meet some famous people from the old scene, from among the previous Moscow 'nabob,' or a once bright society lion. But how they have changed in the last five years! They have aged, got as bleak as the old curtain at the Bolshoi Theater with its muses and roses, and how they are now dressed, worse than their previous janitors and maids, wearing fine rags.

Nothing is left of the old society of Moscow, the famous Moscow tailor told me in the foyer of the Bolshoi theatre in whose salon the Moscow high society used to get its clothing made. My old customers have either emigrated or are dead. Only a few of the old Moscow elite is left and survived. Anyway, only seldom do any of the old ladies come to me in order to breathe a while in the lost paradise... To let me sew something is far too expensive for them now.

In the official register the *nepmen* are often "unemployed," some are even cunning enough and try to get social benefits. And these unemployed can earn hundreds of billions. Their apartments are full of unforeseen luxury. Atlas tapestry, artistic, decorative items of design and drawings; every room has its own style. Rare products of art.⁷⁴

The general critical attitude towards fashion and haute couture common in the NEP society in the 1920s was associated with luxury which had been earned by dishonest means or with nostalgia for tsarist times, and had obvious gender aspects too. The main consumers of fashion had traditionally been the well-to-do ladies from the higher echelons of society. At the same time, post-revolutionary Soviet Russia, declaring the equality of the sexes, made real progress in the area of liberating women from the slavery of housework and changing them into active members of society with equal rights, and had rather unexpectedly become the spearhead of women's liberation in the world.

At the same time new progressive ideas appeared that had an impact on the general conceptions of fashion and culture of dress. These conceptions were closely related to the international school of thought on the scientific organization of work, housework included, and leisure time, which was popular in the USSR particularly in the 1920s. The establishment of the Society for the Scientific Organization of Everyday Life was a good example of these tendencies. In it the Soviet youth searched for reconciliation to its new, Soviet outlook starting from the premise that the new Soviet way of life must somehow find corresponding new forms in the outer appearance of men and women. In the 1920s intense disputes were waged around such seemingly trivial questions as whether a Komsomol boy could wear a necktie or a suit, or if it was really allowed for a Komsomol girl to wear a fashionable hair-do or other kinds of decorations.

In the mid-1920s, the main youth newspaper of the country, *Komsomol'skaya pravda*, wrote in its editorial:

Having as its ideological basis the liberation of all the elements of contemporary everyday life from all the remnants of capitalist society that still tormented it and to reform it on the tested facts of exact science and Leninism, the society

sets its immediate task to cope successfully with the everyday hygienic situation, to produce a reformation of dress, furniture, bed, as well as to establish the right organization of rational leisure.⁷⁵

Even though the scientific bases of hygiene might be understandable, it was certainly more problematic to see how the joining of the forces of the exact sciences and Leninism could help to reform dress.

Despite the political support they enjoyed among many radical Bolsheviks, the radical vanguard of dress reform never in practice realized their ideals to any great degree and had a very restricted impact on the mass production of clothes. This was more the result of the many practical problems caused by the extremely bad state of the whole Soviet textile and garment industry than the lack of political will. However, even though these social and cultural experiments from the 1920s had been almost totally forgotten by the beginning of the 1930s and condemned as “anti-socialist,” they were by no means totally buried and, in fact, left deep marks in the social consciousness. The Soviet ideology of fashion, at least to some extent, remained indebted to the idea that fashion as such is something excessive and alien, and even more importantly, contrary to the laws of usefulness and necessity.

Where could one possibly find the basic principles for such a democratic uniform of the working class? To solve the problem, several institutions were established at once. The Central Institute of the Garment Industry was established in 1919 with the aim of coordinating and uniting all the sewing workshops as well as creating new forms of clothes “corresponding to the conditions of hygiene, comfort, beauty and durability.”⁷⁶ In 1922 the Center for the Creation of the New Soviet-or Revolutionary-Dress was opened in Moscow, and later on was turned into The Fashion Atelier of the Moscow House of Fashion Design. The famous painters Boris Mikhailovich Kustodiev, Igor Emmanuilovich Grabar’, Kuz’ma Sergeevich Petrov-Vodkin, the sculptor Vera Ignatyevna Mukhina as well as the future first director of the Fashion Atelier, Olga Dmitrievna Senicheva-Kashchenko, were among its founders.⁷⁷

The names of Varvara Fedorovna Stepanova and Liubov’ Sergeevna Popova are well known from art history. They represented the new radical proletarian aesthetics in the applied arts in general and in clothing design in particular in the early 1920s. They stood strongly for the abandonment of everything reminiscent of fashion in clothing and textile design. Their constructivist designs were guided by functionalist aesthetics. They relied on such genuine cubist devices as geometry and flatness in their vision of the dress appropriate to the New Woman.⁷⁸ Their main invention, which was in line with their self-understanding as artists serving the proletarian masses instead of the individual members of the bourgeoisie, was the design of *prozodezhda* (production clothing). The idea of *prozodezhda* came from the interpretation of functionality strictly in terms of the social division of labor. It linked the comfort and functionality of every dress to a specific productive function.⁷⁹ The prototypes of production clothing that Stepanova designed for the theater scene were genuine working uniforms that differed from each



Fig. 2.3. A dress design by Nadezhda Lamanova, 1920's.

other depending solely on the type of work performed in them. By the mid-1920s the constructivist designers together with the *Proletkult* movement had lost their political influence in the country.

One of the most famous fashion designers of those days was the former official provider of the Imperial court, Nadezhda Petrovna Lamanova (1861–1941), (Fig. 2.3.) who had a long career in the Soviet Union as well. She was a good friend of the French couturier Paul Poiret and had become well known for her luxurious clothes lined with golden embroidery made for the Tsarist family and the representatives of former high society (many are still preserved in the Hermitage Art Museum in St. Petersburg). Lamanova was also seriously inspired by the idea of “revolutionizing” dress. Thanks to the support given by Akeksei Maksimovich Gorky and in particular his wife Maria Andreevna Andreeva, an actress and Lamanova’s noble client, Lamanova could in 1919 with the permission of the Soviet regime organize The Artistic Atelier of Contemporary Dress, which was engaged in experimenting with the design of dress for the working masses. In 1925, in collaboration with the Soviet sculptor Mukhina, later to become famous for her art works which are often regarded as quintessential examples of socialist realism, she published the album *Iskusstvo v bytu* (Art in Everyday Life). It propagated the results of her dressmakers, presenting concrete projects of practical and comfortable working clothes for the workers created from simple raw materials but with real aesthetic appeal.

At the same time, Lamanova sewed clothes for the main figures of Soviet high society and world of fashion in the beginning of the 1920s, among them such figures as Lilia Yurievna Brik, Isadora Duncan and others. Arriving back in Paris from the Soviet Union, Elsa Triole, Louis Aragon's future companion, caused a real sensation by demonstrating at the International Exhibition of Arts and Crafts in Paris in the mid-1920s a dress sewn by Lamanova and decorated with lace from Vologda region. At this time, the idea of introducing folk motifs into fashion design inspired Lamanova. She was deeply convinced that such popular motifs as hand-made textiles and decorative details (like lace or embroidery) could make fashion more democratic, synthesizing folk dress with haute couture. In the 1930s, when Lamanova was working as the head of the atelier of *Mekhkombinat* (Fur Enterprise) she took the opportunity, with as much enthusiasm as she had for simple dress, to design luxurious clothes from fur. These were sold abroad for foreign currency. During the 1920s and 1930s, on invitation from the main theaters of the country, she worked with stage costumes too, in practice educating a whole generation of costume milliners for the Soviet theater.⁸⁰ After the radical constructivist movement in the mid-1920s Lamanova was the main theoretician of fashion in Soviet Russia. Gradually, she started to distance herself clearly from the idea of the creation of a "mass dress" suitable for all the workers as an alternative to "bourgeois dress." Lamanova came to the conclusion that the reform of dress and design should take totally different directions, closer to the needs of the concrete consumer, and in fact promoted the maximal individualization of dress. In 1923–1924 she published articles in which she criticized the absolutization of the idea of the democratization of fashion based on the industrial mass production of clothes by claiming that such an approach ignores all distinctions and does not, for instance, pay any attention to the differences in the bodily construction of human beings. She definitely shared with the constructivists the idea that the regular fashion cycles with their ageing of fashion should be totally abandoned. She disagreed with them, however, in arguing that fashion should not be substituted with the pure functionalist principle which remained eternally the same. Instead she argued for harmony in outer appearance and the creation of an individual dress with the taste and peculiarities of an individual human being in mind. One's dress should help one to better express one's genuine individuality and taste.⁸¹ Even though she criticized the unnecessary cyclical changes of fashion, in another sense she did not abandon the idea of fashion completely but attempted to reform it, by adjusting it to the new political situation. Her own creations, which acted as examples worth imitating to many coming generations of Soviet fashion designers, "involved a compromising symbiosis of fashionable modernist dress and traditional ethnic decoration"⁸² By adding hand-made decorations like embroidery to her otherwise stylistically simple and modernist dresses she created a compromise that did not have to give up the element of representational beauty in favor of the pure productive functions of dress. Lamanova came to create an aesthetic compromise adequate to the new cultural climate in the Soviet Union after the cultural radicalism of the early 1920s. In fact, the use of ethnic motifs as decorative

elements in more festive dress became a standard feature of Soviet fashion design after the Second World War. A major problem was that handmade embroidery was very labor intensive and was not suited for industrial mass production. Therefore Lamanova's dresses were mostly sewn in ateliers as unique examples. Lamanova's aesthetics did not solve the problem of how to produce beautiful, fashionable and cheap clothes in great quantities. Along with her other contributions, she also left this problem as a heritage to the future generations of Soviet designers and planners.

After the Second World War, the name of Lamanova, who died in 1941, as well as her theoretical constructions, became a subject of pride in the Soviet history of culture. They were taught to the young designers and studied in order to better understand the concept of Soviet fashion. Lamanova's student and follower, the designer Fekla Antonovna Gorelenkova, who had worked at Lamanova's atelier before the revolution, was appointed the head of the Department of Female Light (that is, indoor) Clothing in the recently organized All-Union House of Fashion Design in Moscow in 1949.

Despite their critique of traditional "bourgeois" fashion, in practice the leading Bolsheviks, who often came from educated families, never wholly denied its attractive sides. Many famous activists of the revolutionary movement followed fashion closely and allowed themselves its pleasures, including Inessa Fedorovna Armand, whom V.I. Lenin himself adored. We have already mentioned Gorky's wife, the actress Andreeva who protected Lamanova's talents before the new regime. Even though another famous revolutionary female figure, Larissa Mikhailovna Reisner, is best known as the "Red commissar," her attractiveness and ability to dress with style are often mentioned in her contemporaries' memoirs. Because of Vsevolod Vital'evich Vishnevskii's idealized picture of her in his "Optimistic Tragedy" she is best remembered as the "commissar in the leather jacket" with a revolver in hand...⁸³

Many admiring words have also been written about Aleksandra Mikhailovna Kollontai, a tsarist general's daughter who became a revolutionary and the first female ambassador in world history, the official representative of the Soviet Union in Sweden. Kollontai, who has gone down in history as a feminist propagator of "free love," was always well and fashionably dressed. The wife of the Soviet Prime Minister Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Molotov, Polina Semenovna Zhemchuzhina, was more closely than anyone else connected to Soviet fashion. In the 1930s and 1940s she acted as the deputy People's Commissar of Light Industry, the People's Commissar of the Fish Industry and the organizer and director of the Soviet perfume industry, *Glavparfumer*. She was a self-evident member of the artistic council of the Moscow House of Fashion Design. According to the memoirs of her niece, she even asked for a manicure on her death bed.⁸⁴

The living conditions in the homes of many Bolshevik leaders who had become used to domestic comfort before the Revolution were often far from the ideals of revolutionary asceticism. In his memoirs, *Belyi koridor*, the poet Vladislav Felitsianovich Khodasevich, who was a regular visitor at the homes of the Soviet elite, expressed his surprise when faced with the material opulence at the Kamenevs' and Lunacharskiis': "In those days the

Soviet ladies were eager for luster. They dressed at Lamanova's, patronized proletarian art, quarreled about cars and led salons...⁸⁵ He emphasized the generally prevailing mixture of the "old" and the "new" in the everyday lives of the representatives of the Soviet elite, in particular among its female half.

In the 1930s, the Soviet nomenklatura distinguished itself clearly from the ordinary citizens as far as their material provisioning and the availability of fashionable imported clothes were concerned. Recently published documents from the interrogation of the Soviet officials arrested by the NKVD in the end of the 1930s bear witness to the real material achievements of some high profile figures. For instance, the report on the search of the house of Deputy People's Commissar (Minister) of the NKVD, Genrikh Grigoryevich Yagoda, in 1937, preserved as an attachment to his interrogation, makes it clear that, in addition to having a right to a car with a chauffeur, Yagoda had bought a private car and a motor cycle with a side car. He also had a private film camera and a collection of films. His private clothes closet included, in addition to a great number of shirts, 21 overcoats and 22 suits, most of them of foreign make. He also had a collection of 1230 bottles of old, exclusive wines; and he collected coins, weapons, smoking pipes and a cigarette holder, antiques and rare tableware.⁸⁶ According to numerous witnesses, the children of the Kremlin leaders dressed well and fashionably in the 1930s among themselves, being careful, however, not to advertise their material achievements openly in front of the "ordinary audience." Their parents kept a close eye on them and made sure that they observed the rules of "Kremlin etiquette."

The novel ideas of the first half of the 1920s regarding the new proletarian fashion, and even more the doctrine of the individuality of design and construction of clothes, were quite utopian for a starving and ruined country which almost totally lacked any modern garment industry. The majority of the population simply had nothing to wear. Under these conditions, the task of providing the population more or less immediately with at least the minimal amounts of necessary clothing was deemed to be impossible to fulfil without the establishment of large garment factories and the industrial mass production of relatively good quality and cheap clothes. The reasons for favoring industrial mass production were not only dictated by necessity; ideological considerations played a role too. As is evident in recently declassified records, the Soviet leaders were eager to follow the, in their minds, successful example of American standardized industrial mass production as the most effective way to solve the problems of consumption in their country too.⁸⁷ This ideal of standardized, industrial mass production preserved its central role in the Soviet economic policy of growth until the very end of the Soviet Union. At the same time the Soviet government, however, kept on actively promoting and financially supporting state owned fashion ateliers and the availability of custom-made clothes to the population until the fall of socialism.

Despite many progressive ideas about the new proletarian or Soviet fashion and the consequent radical experiments with dress, in reality the Soviet population, consisting overwhelmingly of peasants, continued to live their lives following the traditions of their grandparents. Just as before

the Revolution, the majority of the population could not afford to buy industrially made clothes and most people sewed clothes for their families themselves. The traditional ethics combined with the rough conditions of life did not leave much space for fashion in its modern meaning. When not even basic needs can be properly satisfied, the social space for fashion undoubtedly gets narrower. In addition, a patriarchal conception prevailed in the social consciousness of the population in the 1920s and 1930s, according to which fashion was almost totally a female phenomenon and, even more concretely, a part of the festive recreation of unmarried girls. Married women with children and a household of their own had nothing to do with fashion, even less so after they had become “old women” upon turning 30. Even they could be beautifully dressed on some particular special occasions if they could afford it, but the style and cut of their clothes was traditional and not open to the caprices and rapid changes of fashion. Beauty in the form of minor decorations and trimmings on practical clothes was quite another thing.

The 1930s: The Reanimation of Traditional Fashion

In the end of the 1920s the question of the “mass fashion” of the victorious proletariat became a question of great social importance. The circle of the consumers of fashionable clothing remained very limited. The fashion designers and milliners serviced, in addition to the *nepmen*, the Soviet cinema and theater, which were on the rise at the time, as well as the rather few state organizations, like the People’s Commissariat of Foreign Affairs, who ordered their designs. It was no secret that almost all the leading Soviet specialists in the world of fashion were from among “people of the past,” specialists and professionals from pre-revolutionary Russia. In the end of the 1920s when the NEP came to an end and the state decided to take the trade and consumption of clothes under more direct control they faced hard times once again. The subsequent politics of the “great leap” forward in industrialization, collectivization and in cultural politics was followed by the propaganda of asceticism and communal living, militant atheism and the condemnation of all forms of individualism. All private enterprises, including hairdressers, small shops, restaurants, fashion journals and ateliers were closed. Only state enterprises were allowed to operate according to the new order. Even such a famous designer as Lamanova, who had succeeded in winning the trust of the new power after having spent some months after the Revolution in prison as a “non-working element,” or an “exploiter,” was stripped of her citizen’s rights and labeled as “disenfranchised” again because in the 1920s she had employed wage laborers in her sewing workshop.

It is evident from memoirs that after the end of the NEP and the consequent closing down of the private ateliers in the end of the 1920s even the members of the Soviet elite had problems getting their clothes made. In the beginning of the 1930s, for instance, Galina Sergeevna Kravchenko, an aspiring actress and Lev Borisovich Kamenev’s young daughter-in-law, visited the elite atelier belonging to the People’s Commissar of Foreign

Affairs on the Kuznetskii most in Moscow. Stalin's wife, Nadezhda Sergeevna Alliluyeva, was a regular customer in the same atelier.⁸⁸

The situation changed first with the rapid industrialization and urbanization of the country in the 1930s, including the opening of new and reopening of old textile and garment factories. Designers and pattern makers again became sought-after professionals. It became evident that the country needed to educate new cadres to these professions. During the first Five Year Plans in the late 1920s and early 1930s the big garment conglomerates and factories established their own artistic and construction workshops which started to work out new colors for textiles and new clothing designs. They became important centers of the professional experience of design. However, the strictly applied character of their work seriously restricted the creativity of the artist who had, above all, to comply with the demands of mass production in general and with the real, and often very limited, concrete possibilities of the factory and its workers as well.

The main factor that made the issue of clothing design in the beginning of the 1930s particularly pressing was the serious shortage of cheap industrially made clothes and the low income levels of the population. In 1930–1935, all the state-produced clothes and shoes were distributed according to the strict norms of rationing, just like bread and other food items.⁸⁹ Clothes and shoes were relatively expensive and bought mostly out of necessity and not because they went out of fashion. It was characteristic that when the general system of obligatory education was introduced in 1930 the main obstacle which prevented children from attending school was their lack of shoes and clothes, particularly during the winter. Compared to many more prosperous countries of the West, space for fashion was quite limited in the Soviet Union.

The situation started to change in the middle of the 1930s with the gradual rise in the living standards of the population, in particular among its rapidly increasing urban segment. The processes of urbanization and industrialization actively opened up the field for the impact of urban culture, including fashion. In addition, Stalin's famous slogan "life has become better, life has become more joyful" (1935) suggested that ordinary citizens should be able and were encouraged to feel in their own private lives the achievements of the first Five Year Plans, to learn how to enjoy life in their socialist fatherland and even get some satisfaction out of it. Citizens' dedication to the cause of socialism did not only demand sacrifice from them. They had a right to expect some real rewards from it too. This inevitably led to the diversification of the tastes and needs of the citizens. Part of the new political course in the mid-1930s, often referred to as NeONEP, consisted of the reanimation, on the initiative and under the control of the state, of the system of fashion, the publication of fashion journals and other periodicals, and the establishments of exemplary state department stores and the fashion ateliers attached to them in the big cities. The first Soviet House of Fashion Design was opened in Moscow on Kuznetskii most street in 1934.⁹⁰ Lamanova's niece and former pupil, Nadezhda Sergeevna Makarova, became the first director of this new house. The houses of fashion design existed side by side with the more ordinary system of both state owned and cooperative small tailors' and seamstresses' ateliers which sewed custom-made clothes.

In the middle of the 1930s, the question was raised of the specialization of fashion design in the garment industry and the creation of a unified system of designing fashionable clothes in the whole country. The house of fashion design in the capital city, which originally designed clothes only for the enterprises of the Moscow Sewing Company, was reorganized a few years later into the Central House of Fashion Design (*Tsentralnyi Dom modelei* or TsDM); regional houses of fashion design were opened at the same time in Leningrad and in other big cities at the end of the 1930s to satisfy the needs of local industry for new designs. All houses of fashion design were under the People's Commissar of Light Industry and designed clothes for industrial mass production. However, the establishment of a centralized system of fashion design was not completed before the war due to, among other reasons, internal competition among the different organizations in the branch. The big industrial enterprises and conglomerates were not the only ones that had pretensions of designing their own clothes; the organizations of trade also had their own interests in the matter. The influential People's Commissar (Minister) of Trade, Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan, actively and successfully lobbied for the interests of trade. He claimed that since trade was closest to the actual consumers it knew their demands better than industry or the planning office.

By February 1935, 11 exemplary department stores opened in the big cities of the USSR, all aiming at becoming leaders of fashion in the country. The Central Department Store, TsUM, which opened in Moscow in the same building next to the Bolshoi Theater which had hosted the famous pre-revolutionary store of Muir and Merilees, was typical in this respect. In 1934 its new fashion atelier, which took orders to sew clothing according to the individual measures of the customer made altogether 4500 garments in the product category "dresses and suits." According to the reports of its directors a good example of the growing interest in fashionable clothing among the Muscovites was the fact that during an ordinary week day about a hundred customers turned to it for its services. However, because of the limited number of workers it could only take 12–15 orders per day. It was easy to understand that the whole problem of good quality and fashionable clothing could not be solved with the help of such relatively small ateliers. It was also well known that many garments produced in the factories for sale were not at all fashionable and did not meet any demand. Therefore, the designers from the TsUM atelier started to design their own original patterns. As early as 1934, TsUM made a deal with some local factories, which started to adapt its designs into industrial production. For instance, in 1935, a whole factory of children's wear was attached to the atelier. As the director of TsUM reported, they received for sale "about half of all their linen from this factory."⁹¹

Alongside the design of its own clothes and their adaptation to the needs of the garment factories of the capital region, TsUM actively promoted the idea of organizing its own production units. Its designers now worked on three fronts at the same time: they made patterns for their own atelier, for industrial production and for production in small series by their own production unit. They sold their fashionable designs at TsUM and they were said to be in great demand.⁹²

The production units at the big department stores, referred to as industrial conglomerates (*promkombinaty*), themselves produced small series of clothes (from overcoats to linen) which were in high demand and also had a staff of their own designers. They could, at some stage, without doubt have presented a real alternative to the bigger garment factories working under the People's Commissariat of the Light Industry. They opened up again after the war, showing their vitality even under the new conditions of Soviet commercial trade.⁹³ However, from the mid-1950s onwards, their role started to diminish. Many experienced designers and pattern makers left them in order to start work at the newly opened Houses of Fashion Design at the Ministry of Light Industry. For instance, in the middle of the 1960s some specialists were invited from the production unit of the department store *Moskva* to work in the All-Union House of Fashion Design on Kuznetskii most street. The small production units continued to produce clothes even in the 1960s and 1970s but their share in the total production of clothes in the USSR, which was small from the beginning, drastically diminished in later years. Of all the big department stores in Moscow only the State Department Store (GUM), in operation since 1953, had a production unit of its own after the war.

These production units were good at turning out small series. They could change their product lines rapidly according to changing demand. As a rule, they decided independently what items and how much they would produce. On the other hand, even they depended heavily on the central state organizations for raw materials, machines and tools, etc. The units' fashionable products were mainly sold at the unit's own department store, which gave an extra stimulus to find a market for them. At the same time, the garment factories of the Ministry of Light Industry that engaged in mass production had, as a rule, better machines, enjoyed priority in receiving raw materials before others, and had a much higher productivity and effectiveness than the small workshops of the *promkombinates*. It was economically more effective for the state to provide the big garment factories with financial aid with their more rapid turnover of production which filled the market more effectively with good clothes. Thus they were heavily prioritized in the 1930s and 1950s. Moreover, department stores naturally existed only in the larger cities, out of reach of the majority of the population living in the villages. Both the logic of the central planning on the All-Union level and limited financial resources led to the heavy concentration of clothing production in big production units. The authorities put all their hopes in the further specialization and professionalization of the fashion designers in accordance with the needs of mass industrial production.

When the Communist Party and the state increasingly allowed their citizens to realize their dreams of the good life and even actively encouraged them in their efforts, the political leaders could hardly have imagined, first, how badly society was in need of the indulgence, and second, that people did not necessarily get their ideals of a good life and well-being from the foggy ideals of the Communist future-or from the uniform-like reform dress – but rather from the “cursed past” which they had seen with their own eyes. Those who had nothing to lose tried to achieve everything-as soon as possible.

To dress attractively and fashionably—once possible in Russia only for a tiny well-to-do part of society—became a sign of the “socialist culture” in the mid-1930s. On the 15th of September, 1934, the newspaper of the Central Committee of the Communist party, *Pravda*, reported on the establishment of the Fashion Atelier at the Electric Factory (Elektrozavod) in Moscow, which opened huge new vistas to the workers of dressing themselves according to the most exclusive fashion standards. The article, published in millions of copies, created an outcry among its readers with clear features of envy. The director of the factory *Magnezit* in the Urals (Chelyabinskii region) wrote to the Prime Minister, Vyacheslav Molotov, that his five thousand workers would also like to have good raw materials for their suits, to be able to get tailor-made fashionable overcoats and shoes, or to dress their wives and children in fur.⁹⁴ Access to fashion was thus used as an incentive to promote labor productivity and to attract a more competent labor force to factories.

The symbols and style of the good life had not changed much since 1917. Almost all Soviet novelties turned out to be examples of the “happily” forgotten old. The growth of the new Soviet chain of finer restaurants and cafes, the beginning of the mass production of perfumes and cosmetics, champagne, chocolate and other similar items quite obviously did not satisfy any primary needs but were closely associated in the public mind with the luxury and well-being of the previous ruling elite. The state actively promoted the establishment of fashion ateliers at the factories, the showcase department stores, and other locations. It also opened a system of ordinary ateliers in the mid-1930s as a “sign of social cultivation” and regarded custom-made clothes as the “norm of life.” This was a remarkable step in many ways. First, in practice, if not in theory, the state took the first steps towards the legitimization of more individual expressions of taste. Second, it gave the citizens a free choice: either to buy an industrially ready-made garment in a shop or order a custom made dress from the atelier or—and this was without doubt the most common option in the 1930s particularly in the countryside – to sew their clothes themselves. The second alternative was certainly slightly more expensive but usually of better quality too. Even though strongly prioritizing the industrial mass production of clothes, the Soviet state simultaneously had an amazingly positive relationship to custom made clothes and hand work.⁹⁵

The 1930s mainly reanimated the main symbols of traditional fashion as well as helped to invigorate the idea of fashion as a normal part of Soviet life. Even if not overtly enthusiastic about fashion – after all, it did not really fit into the system of the planned economy – the Soviet State still acknowledged it as a legitimate part of the society by establishing a whole system of organizations somehow engaged in fashion design, its propagation and distribution. At the same time, the rapid urbanization of the country created positive conditions for the increasing numbers of fashion conscious Soviet consumers.

The Impact of War on the Soviet Fashion Design and Industry

It is hard to imagine any other country in which fashion was created under such exceptional conditions as the USSR.⁹⁶ The numerous social cataclysms that the country experienced undoubtedly left their marks on the way in which society and the state related to fashionable and festive dress, thus also influencing the birth of the Soviet fashion industry. Just as the country started to recover from the tragic consequences of the forced collectivization of agriculture, with millions of deaths during the famine of 1932–1933, the threat of war changed priorities again.

The fashion ateliers and houses, as well as all the other institutes dealing with the beautification of the body, were closed during the war. Instead of civilian clothing the factories produced uniforms and military boots. The war had a clear impact on the outer appearance of the Soviet men and women. About half a million women served in the acting army alone, exchanging their fashionable civilian clothes for uniforms.⁹⁷ Hundreds of thousands of young girls who left for the front directly from the school bench, simply exchanging their school uniforms for military ones, hardly had any time to learn to dress like women at all. Millions of women who had remained behind the enemy lines had to work like men in heavy and often dirty work thus filling in for their husbands and fathers fighting on the front. The war made women more independent as they took over many



Fig. 2.4. Front page of the war time fashion journal *Kostium i pal'to* (*Costume and Overcoat*), 1942.

traditionally male professions en masse, changing the traditional division of labor between the genders. Trousers, quilted jackets and short haircuts characterized female fashion in the war. Work clothing and the elements of military uniform – concrete anti-fashion – became the norm. This had a great impact on the post-war trends of fashion in the USSR as well as in other countries. (Fig. 2.4.)

It is understandable that, among the Soviet generation who lived their formative years in between and during the two wars, fashion did not in general enjoy a high priority. It was not something that could give meaning to one's life. The Soviet philosopher and aesthetician Karl Moiseevich Kantor expressed this typical attitude in the beginning of the 1970s with the following words: "As if we would ever have any time to get engaged in fashion in earnest and pay any serious attention to it."⁹⁸ The great majority of the Soviet youth, who had by then grown up in the more prosperous post-war years, obviously had another opinion, which could at times lead to intense conflicts between the generations which, however, the Soviet leaders never openly recognized. One could speak of a sublimation of the tendencies of fashion in Soviet society until the early 1960s which led to a hidden suppressed accumulation of the demand for fashionable dress. The age old social control of decency and good manners, exercised both by the elders and the Party organs, started to give way to a more liberal cultural atmosphere during Khrushchev's "thaw" and the more prosperous conditions under Brezhnev. These changes became very visible in the special and slightly weird interest in Western fashion and in the high prestige enjoyed by all imported goods among the Soviet population.

3. Economic Development and Standard of Living in the USSR after the Second World War: A Consumer's Perspective

Economic growth and consumption

The foundations of the Soviet centrally planned economy were laid in the late 1920s and 1930s during the two first five year plans with their programs of agricultural collectivization and general industrialization. The basic principles remained intact until the fall of the Soviet Union. Despite some minor changes of emphasis in the economic policy, most notably in the 1950s and early 1960s after Stalin's death, investments in heavy industry, in the production of energy, and in metallurgy and machine building, enjoyed a high priority compared with light or consumer goods industries. Heavy industry was further favored in that its workers were better paid than the workers in light industry, trade or services. It was also prioritized when, for instance, new machines and technology were imported from the West. The textile and garment industry as well as the food industry, both of which made up a large share of the consumer goods (light) industry, suffered from all these systematic weaknesses. Soviet politicians and planners tried to compensate for this chronic lack of resources through rationalization and standardization. By producing highly standardized items in huge production units and in great quantities the authorities hoped to cope with the shortages and to gradually satisfy the population's basic needs. Such economic conditions and rules severely limited the fashion industry. On the other hand, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and its government promised its loyal citizens increasing well-being and they were encouraged to expect their standard of living to rise rapidly in the future. Soviet consumers therefore had a legitimate right to expect the production and distribution of better quality and more varied clothes in the future. The garment factories as well as the various trade organizations had to take demand more seriously and try to better satisfy their customers. Expectations were understandably particularly high after the victorious war, during which the population had been deprived of almost all the comforts of everyday life.

A large share of the production capacity of the USSR was destroyed in the war and an overwhelming proportion of its industrial production had been targeted for military purposes. A large portion of industrial capacity had also been lost, left behind in occupied territories. For instance, in 1942

agricultural production fell to 40 percent of the 1940 level and the population of the Soviet-controlled areas had fallen by only one third.⁹⁹ Many buildings and villages as well as industrial sites and factories were in ruins. People were living in dugouts and saunas. This was the context in which the Soviet Government and the Communist Party started planning the opening of new fashion houses.

Despite these heavy losses, the recovery of the Soviet economy after the war was rapid in some sectors. By the early 1950s pre-war levels of production had been reached in most areas of industry. The growth in the consumer durables sector was particularly speedy partly because many of the factories which had produced armaments and munitions now turned to peacetime production. As Davies concluded, “by the end of the fourth five-year-plan (1946–1950) industrial production considerably exceeded, and agricultural production slightly exceeded, the pre-war level.”¹⁰⁰ Agricultural production in particular suffered heavily from a reduced work force as a result of war casualties and men not returning to the villages after demobilization. Once again the heavy industry received the highest priority in investments just as it had in the 1930s. However, the last years of Stalin’s reign witnessed a gradual increase in the relative share of investments in the consumer goods sector.

The pre-war levels of consumption had been low in part as Davies claims, the “real income per wage earner outside agriculture may have fallen by nearly 50 per cent between 1928 and 1940.” However, since more people now lived in the cities and other urban settlements and had become wage earners they earned more and often lived better than the kolkhoz peasants in the countryside. A move from the kolkhoz to the city often increased the incomes of these families and thus raised the general living standards of the population. Due to rapid urbanization and also to the fact that very little new housing was built at all before the war, urban provision fell from 8.3 square meters per head in 1926 to 6.7 square meters in 1940. At the beginning of the war many people were living in rapidly deteriorating houses in the Soviet countryside. On the other hand, state expenditure on health and education increased rapidly during these pre-war years. Investment in the defense industry grew most rapidly in the 1930s.¹⁰¹

Despite the very modest-and at many times and in many areas, such as housing, practically non-existent increase in general living standards of the Soviet people the basic elements of the Soviet infrastructure of trade was created during the relatively short period in the second half of the 1930s and in the immediate post-war years.¹⁰² This included “commercial” food and other stores, department stores, restaurants, canteens and cafés. Alongside the “commercial” shops, in which people could buy food and other consumer goods at fixed prices with their own money earned as wages and salaries, consumer items were delivered and distributed to the population through various systems of closed outlets and rationing. This system of closed distribution and rationing reached its peak during the war years (such measures were typical in all the European nations engaged in the war) and varied in importance and extension in different periods of Soviet power.¹⁰³ At least locally and for shorter periods of time, rationing of basic food items continued through almost the whole Soviet period. The importance

of various closed outlets and distribution systems including fashion ateliers (access to which was often experienced as a special privilege among Soviet citizens) also varied across the period.¹⁰⁴ Exact figures or estimates for their increase are not available, but many observers state that their number grew rapidly during the 1970s and reached its peak in the last of the Brezhnev years. Paradoxically increasing production and availability of consumer goods and food items did not necessarily lead to the saturation of demand or to shorter queues in the shops. However well the Soviet economy seemed to function and the more it produced, the greater the discrepancy between supply and demand seemed to become. This was true in particular of the fashion and clothing industry.

There were two main reasons for this extraordinary phenomenon, which was a perpetual problem for the Soviet government and the Communist Party. The centrally fixed prices were one of the reasons. The state regulated prices of all consumer goods sold through the centralized trade system, food and clothes included: these were fixed and usually not allowed to rise. The products that the peasants sold on the kolkhoz markets were the only exception. The state strongly subsidized many products and services, like housing, basic food items, and children's wear as well as fashion ateliers producing custom-made clothes. When the wages and salaries increased at the same time as prices and the production figures remained constant or grew only moderately, demand tended to exceed supply. The Soviet economy suffered from hidden inflationary pressures which officially should not have existed at all in a centrally planned economy. Demand and supply should theoretically be in perfect balance in such an economy. The hidden inflation was among other reasons due to the lack of qualified labor and competition in the workforce. Wages tended to increase more rapidly than officially planned.

Another reason was the rising expectations among the population of higher living standards which were, in fact, strongly encouraged by state propaganda, which liked to compare all kinds of economic indicators with those of the most advanced countries in the West. This peaceful competition reached almost epidemic proportions during Khrushchev's last years in the early 1960's: everything was compared against the measuring stick of the USA, the most advanced capitalist country in the world, which the USSR was supposed to reach and overcome in the near future. The scientific institutes of The State Planning Committee, GOSPLAN, were ordered to study the secrets of American productivity and experience in order to help make the Soviet economy more competitive. (Cf. Khrushchev's most notorious promise of reaching the American production figures of beef in only a couple of years—with the help of, among other things, his forced program of cultivating maize and increasing chemical fertilization of farmed land.¹⁰⁵) (Fig. 3.1.)

Every Soviet citizen thus had the right to expect an improvement in his or her standard of living and in particular the improving availability of better and more varied consumer goods. They could complain to the authorities if they did or could not deliver what they promised. Complaining was in fact a legally guaranteed right of every Soviet citizen.¹⁰⁶

The people's voice was an essential part of the Soviet democracy as a weapon against the bureaucracy that threatened the Soviet system of



Fig. 3.1. Nikita Khrushchev with high COMECON officials at the exhibition of consumer goods, Moscow June 1962.

government. The authorities had the obligation to register and investigate all complaints, even anonymous ones, which were addressed to them in people's letters and reports. They encouraged people to submit their complaints not only in order to find scapegoats but also to correct wrongdoings and avoid negligence in the future. Consumer complaints could be addressed to several authorities using various means. Every shop and service center, like a fashion salon, shoe store, bank office or restaurant, had to have a notebook (*kniga zhalob i predlozhenii*) always at their customers' disposal in which they could write down their complaints and suggestions. They could suggest how to improve the situation either in a particular case or in the whole consumer market, for instance by changing opening hours, improving the qualification of the personnel, or sewing more fashionable clothes from modern fabrics with bright colors.

During the annual or seasonal inspections the state inspectors were obliged to get thoroughly acquainted with these books. The director of the establishment had to answer for the complaints and, if the complaints proved to be legitimate and well founded, explain in detail how his or her organization intended to improve the situation and correct their mistakes. A Soviet consumer who was dissatisfied either with the services or consumer goods available could also complain directly to higher authorities in the central administration of the industry, service or trade concerned. Such instances equally had an obligation to take all these complaints seriously and demand an explanation from their subordinates who were the targets of these complaints. Furthermore, the local Communist Party organizations and cells in the organization of trade and industry were another important address

for such complaints. Finally, consumers could always write complaints to the Soviet press. The newspapers were legally required to inspect, in every case, the cause of the complaint, demand an explanation from those concerned and give an answer to the person or persons who had submitted it, within a strictly limited period of time. Soviet newspapers often published their reader's letters and, if they thought that the problem had wider resonance, they might send an investigative journalist to the site to find out what it was all about. Readers' letters could address very concrete matters from the lack of the right size or color of summer shoes in the local shops to more general issues like the notoriously bad quality and limited variety of textile dyes produced in the whole country. Such complaints and reports were often one of the main topics in local evening newspapers. They were quite popular among readers and could fill up most of the columns of any single issue.¹⁰⁷ We shall study them in more detail in the last chapter of this book before the conclusion.

The most common focuses of complaints were transport, housing and all kinds of consumer goods, clothing naturally included. The individual complaints could address the limited availability or total non-existence of certain goods, their bad quality, rude service and the long time needed to queue for them. Many complaints targeted the misuse of favors and corruption common in the delivery of scarce goods, as the main villain.¹⁰⁸ Queues and queuing were particularly interesting topics since they were such an essential part of the Soviet culture of consumption. Queues had an informal ethical code of their own which in people's minds regulated the moral righteousness of the social relations among those queuing. Breaking these rules was an offence which gave rise to many indignant comments and laments addressed to the authorities and the press.

The social institutions of complaint had an important role as a safety valve to citizens' dissatisfaction, but complaining could give concrete results too. Individual consumers could in fact receive some goods or services to which they considered to have a legitimate right. They could get back the money they had paid for their new boots which had not lasted more than a couple of days, get a right to order a new suite from the tailor, or receive a better apartment or even a private car for which they had queued for years. Consumers' complaints, if collected and systematically analyzed, also acted as a substitute for market research since, in spite of their somewhat ritualized form, they included important information about citizens' genuine needs and wants.¹⁰⁹ There are good reasons to think that complaints became more ritualistic over time, and many common people lost faith in their effectiveness in reaching the hoped for results.

The authorities tried to cope with the discrepancy between their promises and the real achievements in several ways: by propagating the value of more modest and decent ways of life less concentrated on the acquisition of material goods, by promoting higher "spiritual" values, and through the education of taste and introduction of various models and standards of rational consumption. The education of popular taste in which the fashion organizations were all involved in the Soviet Union was an integral part in these efforts to restrain the demand for extravagant or exclusive clothes. At the same time, the Soviet authorities promised almost unlimited growth and

universal gratification of all the needs and demands of every consumer. As a matter of fact, this promise only concerned the so-called rational needs of man.

The concept of rational needs became an object of intense scientific research in the 1960s, after the approval of the Third Program of the Communist party of the USSR in 1961. Philosophers, psychologists, social scientists and economists joined forces to study the biological and social genesis of human nature.¹¹⁰ They also studied Western theories, such as Maslow's theory of the hierarchy of needs, with great interest. They all started from the presumption that human needs are not determined only biologically but always include important historical and cultural elements as well. Therefore, human needs are not stable and given once and for all but develop gradually alongside the general progress of society. An important conclusion for the economic planning followed from these considerations. The standards and goals used in planning the living standards of the Soviet citizens were not stable but had to be adjusted from time to time.

As a practical result of these studies the Soviet planners set concrete standards of rational needs for all fields of light industry. Such measures were, for instance, determined for the number of shoes and stockings each individual needed each year. The discussion of rational needs had direct implications for the politics of fashion as well. It was difficult to legitimate the change of fashion as answering any rational need. For instance, in 1969 the Soviet newspaper *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta* informed its readers that socialism had no real need for the rapid change of fashion: "Research has proved that in our country as well as in the other socialist countries the demand for approximately 30 percent of all fashion styles of clothes and shoes remains the same for the period of three to five years. They make up 60 to 70 per cent of the whole amount of production."¹¹¹ The All-Union scientific congress "Fashion and clothes design at the enterprises" which was held in Moscow in 1979 took up two actual topics: how to make the Soviet consumers' needs more rational and how to react to the changing international fashion trends.¹¹²

It is understandable that the standards of rational needs could not be purely objective but always included a strong element of political consideration too. Even though it was easy to admit that all human beings needed shoes and stockings to keep their feet warm, it was another matter to determine how many and what kind of shoes they in fact needed every year. In any case, these standards had an important practical and propagandistic role in Soviet economic planning.¹¹³ The standards used as targets in various fields of light industry were usually set somewhat higher than the prevailing standard of living but not too high. The behavior and the expectations of the Soviet youth were of special interest to the researchers of rational needs since they were thought to represent the future and could also be more easily molded with the help of education and propaganda.¹¹⁴

Stalin's death in 1953 and, in particular, Khrushchev's first years of power witnessed a remarkable reorientation in the economic policies of the country even though some tentative shifts had been noticed even before then. The most important change concerned the politics of agriculture: "Investment in

agriculture was sharply increased, and by 1958 reached 250 per cent of the 1953 level.¹¹⁵

These major investments in agriculture, together with improvements in the economic and social position of the rural population and peasants, were probably the most far reaching reforms. They proved to be irreversible. No political leader or regime after Khrushchev changed this basic orientation. Due to the “Virgin Lands” program, under which huge areas of previously uncultivated land were taken into agricultural use, mainly in Kazakhstan in Central Asia and the Altay region of the Russian Federation, the total area of land sown rose by 17 per cent during the period 1953–1957. The monetary incomes of collective farmers more than doubled between 1953 and 1958. These reforms had the desired effect, increasing agricultural output by 55 percent between 1950 and 1960.¹¹⁶ Khrushchev’s historical initiative to buy and import, for the first time in Soviet history, major amounts of grain from the West to combat the effects of a bad harvest in 1963 proved to be decisive. Due to these measures general famine did not plague the Soviet population after the 1950s—even though occasionally and locally the Government still had to take resort to food rationing even later. Due to the same measures the standard of living of the bulk of the population increased substantially for the first time since the 1920s. Income differentials, which had been very high even according to international (capitalist) standards, also leveled out during Khrushchev’s and Brezhnev’s early years in power, only to increase again in Brezhnev’s later period.¹¹⁷

One can agree with Davies’ conclusion that the “1950s and the early 1960s were the golden years of the Soviet administrative economy.”¹¹⁸ These coincided with the establishment of the Soviet system of fashion design and industry. According to Soviet statistics the real income of the population increased 2.5 times between 1940 and 1960 and 4 times between 1940 and 1970.¹¹⁹ The future of the Soviet economy looked bright. This was not only due to the rapid and promising economic growth and increase in the general standard of living—admittedly from a very low start—but also to the general optimism which permeated the society and its ruling circles. These were also the times when the Soviet economy could quite reasonably be thought to be in an orbit that would, not too far in the future, cross the trajectory of economic growth of the most advanced capitalist country, the USA. The Soviet citizens could also have faith in the fact that Soviet society was now really approaching its officially expressed ideals of socialism.¹²⁰ The authorities were fighting against corruption, income differences decreased, collective services and goods were promoted, housing stock increased rapidly, daily working hours were reduced, investments in education and health care increased, minimum wages and pension schemes were introduced, and so on. The acceleration of new housing construction had a direct impact on the general standard of living (the stock of urban housing more than doubled between 1950 and 1965).¹²¹ The gap between the production of capital goods and consumer goods was much narrower now than in the 1930s.

The rapid growth rates of the 1950s were, however, achieved at a high cost. The rate of investment was very high. As economic historians rather unanimously explain, the rapid economic growth that created great hopes

among the Soviet ruling circles as well as among the common people was based on the increase in the three main production factors, capital, labor and land, and much less, compared to the capitalist West, on the increase in productivity of these factors. In the 1950s, labor was available in excess through immigration from the countryside. When economic growth slowed down in the 1960s, only to become even slower in later Soviet times, it demanded even more investments to keep it going.¹²² In addition to natural factors like bad harvests, the main reasons for this slow-down seemed to be the following: the low productivity of labor in agriculture which demanded increasing investments in order to perform better or even as well as before, and the slowness to generate and introduce technical innovation which would have increased the productivity of labor and capital. In 1955 the State Committee on New Technology was created to promote the introduction of new technology into the Soviet economy. Khrushchev, and in particular Brezhnev, tried to combat the low rate of inventiveness and technological progress in Soviet industry by importing foreign technology and know-how. The buying of whole industrial complexes on a turnkey basis started with Khrushchev, who bought huge chemical plants from abroad in order to modernize the production of chemical fertilizers. The Togliatti car construction factory – bought from Fiat in Italy in the late 1960s – was the most spectacular and most advertised of these industrial mega-import projects.¹²³ This, as well as the increase-even though quite modest-foreign imports, food, clothes and textile included, tourism and other kinds of cultural exchange, opened the country in many ways to more direct foreign influences and Western models of consumption. In the beginning of the 1970s, after the oil crises and the rapid rise in the price of oil, the USSR income from its oil exports increased remarkably, which again allowed it to import more machinery and consumer goods, grain included.

In general the introduction of novelties was a bottleneck in the Soviet economy. It was not encouraged enough economically. On the contrary, it could often be economically quite disadvantageous to an enterprise. As Hanson put it, “the Soviet economy was particularly weak in two areas: agricultural production and the introduction and diffusion of new products and processes.”¹²⁴ It is understandable that fashion in particular, with its seasonally changing styles and repeated introduction of novelties, was a major problem in the centrally planned economy.

The Soviet authorities and experts tried to combat these problems. They talked about the necessity of changing from extensive economic growth to intensive growth by various measures and reforms and put great hopes in the capacity of science to generate technical innovations of a new kind and at a totally new level, or the scientific technical revolution as the Soviets called it. Systems theory and new big computers were expected to soon solve many of the technical problems of central planning. Some economists were convinced that with the help of systems theory they could learn to better plan and control even the fashion cycles by learning to better forecast and control trends in fashion.

Despite these economic problems generally recognized by the Soviet leadership and economic experts in the 1970s, no new major economic

reforms were suggested or tried after 1965 until Gorbachev's perestroika in the mid-1980s. (In practice and informally economic enterprises were nevertheless allowed more flexibility in their operations.) Hanson emphasized, however, the importance of another non-economic factor: the slackening of the control of the authoritarian state, which Khrushchev started and which was never seriously questioned by any of his successors. "He weakened the social control on which an authority-intensive economic system depended."¹²⁵ It is of course pure speculation to wonder whether the tightening of this social control – ideologically or by force – would have made the use of resources in the economy any more effective, in particular taking into account the multiplication of the economic units and the increasing complexity reached by the whole economic system in the 1960s. For instance, the authorities tried to cope with the problems plaguing the fashion industry by opening several parallel and partly competing fashion organizations, not by tightening their central control. The new demands of a more qualified, specialized workforce also made the old direct methods of command and control more problematic. As the permanent tensions between the tendencies of increased central control and the increasing independence of the economic units showed, detailed control from above of their all movements had become increasingly difficult, costly and often counter-productive.

Despite the gradual slowdown of economic growth after the second half of the 1960s, the general standard of living did improve even during those years, even though more slowly than before. According to Hanson¹²⁶ consumption increased quite rapidly even between 1963 and 1973, 3.9 per cent per annum per capita: "It was not, by West European or North American standards, a time of plenty, but it was unquestionably a time of real improvement."¹²⁷ The figures in some particular fields of consumer goods production prove that by the 1960s – and even more so during the 1970s – the major problems were no longer the quantities produced but their distribution, availability and quality. According to statistics collected by the CIA, hosiery and knitwear production increased from 17.74 million pieces and pairs in 1950s to 103.77 million in 1970.¹²⁸ The production of socks and stockings increased from about 500 million pairs in 1950 to 1,338 million pairs in 1970.¹²⁹ The amount of leather footwear increased from 272 million pairs in 1955 to 456 million pairs in 1962.¹³⁰ The share of import in the sales of these consumer goods was always quite modest. For instance only 8 per cent of all leather shoes were imported to the USSR as late as 1980.¹³¹ The Soviet Union exported only 2–3 per cent of the consumer goods it produced to other countries and imported – in different years in the 1960–1980s – from 12 to 18 per cent.¹³²

In some areas of consumer goods production the state provisioning was, however, rather successful, at least in quantitative terms, and did not lag much behind the capitalist West. In the late 1960s and 1970s some consumer durables and items of home technology that belonged to any standard household in the West, like sewing machines, TV sets, radio receivers, refrigerators and washing machines, had also become quite common in Soviet households. In 1973 the USSR had, per thousand people, 216 radios,

295 TV sets, 142 refrigerators and 173 washing machines.¹³³ Moreover, a large assortment of TV sets of various models and price classes, produced by a great number of factories, were available on the market – whether they really were available in practice at the same time and place to most of the customers is another question. Despite these achievements the Soviet Union clearly lagged behind leading Western countries in all these fields of consumer goods. In the USA almost every house hold owned one or even more TV sets, radio receivers and refrigerators and the most advanced Western European countries were following rapidly. The discrepancy in favor of the capitalist West was even more drastic in the number of private cars as well as in the general standard of housing. Compared to the average level of wages these durable goods, the possession of which the great majority of American households took for granted, were also much more expensive in the USSR.

The rapidly increasing production figures of textiles and clothing, as well as many other consumer goods, tell only part of the story. Due to the low quality of the consumer goods produced by Soviet industry and distributed to citizens a large percentage of the annual production was returned to the shops after purchase. According to a study of household budgets in 1986, citizens had made complaints about the quality of the things they had bought in about 20 per cent of the cases as far as knitwear was concerned, over 15 per cent in other clothes and as much as 35 per cent in shoes.¹³⁴ Boots and shoes were a particular problem since, unlike clothes, people could not make or repair them at home.

It was a generally known fact among the population and to a great extent acknowledged even by the authorities that the service sector remained underdeveloped all through Soviet times. There was a rapid increase in the post-war years but it did not grow much after 1965. For instance, the number of shoe shops increased from 295 in 1940 to 2583 in 1965 but remained almost the same after that. The same was true of clothing shops: their amount increased from a meager 173 in 1940 to 2701 in 1965 but had not reached even three thousand by 1980. The chain of shops selling knitwear, underwear, accessories and cosmetics grew more rapidly.¹³⁵ The share of workers in trade and public catering is even more telling of the low emphasis on services in the USSR. Only 6.6 percent of all those employed in the national economy worked in these sectors in the USSR in 1988. In the USA the corresponding figure was 16.7 and in Japan 16.2 percent.¹³⁶ 269 workers per ten thousand people worked in trade and public catering in the USSR, compared to 772 in the USA and 785 in Japan in the same year.¹³⁷ It was quite obvious that Soviet citizens were served by remarkably fewer (2–3 times fewer) personnel in trade and the service sector than was the case in the capitalist West. The salaries in the trade and service sectors were also lower than in most other branches of the Soviet economy, a sign of their low official status in the USSR.

At the same time, at the end of the 1980s, according to the official statistics, the Soviet Union had one barber's shop or hairdresser per 5.5, one photo studio per 18.4 and one dry cleaner's shop per 141.9 thousand inhabitants.¹³⁸ In the 1970s these services were increasingly concentrated in bigger cities and local centers in the houses of everyday services (*Doma byta*) under the Ministries of Everyday Services. These units were quite large,



Fig. 3.2. Working class women in Moscow district, in the middle of the 1960s.

with many employees. In many ways they followed the model well known from Western shopping centers or malls which combined several service and trade units of various kinds under the same roof. Soviet service centers also had, as a rule, a fashion atelier where the local customers could order custom made clothes. Just like many other enterprises of the service sector and trade, their number increased rapidly in the 1960s, from 24.000 in 1959 to 40.000 in 1970. After that their numbers hardly grew at all. The amount of shoemakers' shops in the whole country remained more or less the same, at about 30.000, during this whole period.¹³⁹

Despite these improvements the GNP per capita never exceeded much over 35 per cent of that of the USA. The best years in this respect were from the mid-1960s to mid-1970s. At the end of the 1970s and in particular in the 1980s the Soviet economy slowed down remarkably. Despite the slowing of its growth rates, the general material well-being of the Soviet population was highest in the 1980s. The Soviet consumer goods industry produced at that time three pairs of shoes, 27 square meters of cotton textiles, 2.4–2.7 square meters of woolen textiles and 7 square meters of silk per capita per year.¹⁴⁰ (Fig. 3.2.)

Economic-administrative reforms

In 1957, Khrushchev started a general administrative reform by creating *Sovnarkhozy* (Councils of the People's Economy), new kinds of regional organs of economic administration which replaced the previous ministries responsible for the administration of the various fields of industry on the All-Union level. This reform was motivated by the need for coordinating

economic management in the regions and directed against the excessive centralization of economic decision making in Moscow. The *Sovnarkhozy* had total economic jurisdiction within their region. The ministries of light, food and local industry were closed down and their enterprises converted to these new *Sovnarkhozy*. Under these circumstances Gosplan became more important as almost the only coordinating organ on the All-Union level. The whole territory of the USSR was divided into big economic-administrative regions on the basis of the former regions (*oblast'*) or Soviet republics. In 1957, 70 such regional *Sovnarkhozy* were established in the RSFSR, 11 in Ukraine, 9 in Kazakhstan, 4 in Uzbekistan and one for all the other, smaller republics. The three Baltic republics, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, formed one *Sovnarkhoz* each. Soon their overall number was reduced to 47. The purpose of this reform was to make the economy more effective by creating bigger economic production units and encouraging cooperation at the regional level. This was done by combining a large number of previously independent production units into a new, bigger complex enterprise that could better utilize the local resources and assets. In 1960, the third administrative system in the Soviet production of consumer goods, the cooperatives, was closed down. Thus the new *Sovnarkhozy* were, in the beginning of the 1960s, expected to administer all the enterprises of consumer goods industry in their own region of three previously separate administrative economic systems: the Ministry of Light Industry, the Ministry of Local Industry and the cooperatives. In practice, they were responsible for the future of tens of thousands of production units, which they centralized with a heavy hand into locally and regionally integrated big industrial conglomerates. The system of cooperative enterprises was now closed down. It contained 54,700 enterprises in 1956 which, according to different sources, employed together between 1.2 million and 1.8 million workers.¹⁴¹

The result of these administrative reforms was the creation of big "Soviet firms" or industrial conglomerates usually uniting one main big enterprise with several smaller or medium sized production units that fulfilled complementary functions and produced some smaller parts for the needs of the main firm. This could help the main enterprise to produce, for instance, more fine clothes with various accessories and details. The results were controversial. After Khrushchev resigned from power in 1965 the whole system was shut down and the old ministries, working in their functionally divided fields, were re-established. Everything was not restored, however. The structure of economic administration had changed for good. For instance, in Leningrad alone the total number of 400 enterprises of local industry had been reduced to less than half, 163.¹⁴²

When the old system of economic ministries was re-established in 1966 these big enterprises were mostly not dispersed. The enterprises of light industry were preserved in full state ownership and placed under two separate administrative systems, those of the Light and Local Industries. The decision to close down the system of the production cooperatives remained in effect and neither were many of the previous production units of local industry returned under the newly re-established Ministry of Local Industry.



Fig. 3.3. An assembly line of male suits at the big Moscow garment factory, Bol'shevichka, 1965.

They had either been totally liquidated or become an integral part of their new, large mother enterprises. The productivity of labor in the enterprises of local industry and the cooperatives was undoubtedly much lower than in the bigger enterprises of the Ministry of Light Industry.¹⁴³ This was not only the result of their smaller size but also the fact that they were, compared to the bigger “real industrial” units, as a rule underfinanced and did not receive modern machinery or technology from the state. Often they simply inherited old machines from bigger industrial enterprises. On the other hand, they often made use of the local raw materials and could produce consumer goods, clothes, dresses and accessories that were better adapted to the needs and habits of the various localities. By producing smaller amounts of each of their products they also acted as a welcome alternative to the highly standardized mass production of big industry.

However, the Soviet policy of consumption all through Soviet times prioritized the satisfaction of the basic needs of the population by producing in as great a number as possible a few standardized items. (Fig. 3.3.) The closing of many parallel, smaller units of local industry and cooperatives often totally stopped the production of many necessary and popular items of consumption – not to speak of their diminishing assortment – which the authorities regarded as less important or prestigious. It was not at all uncommon that, at the same time as new TV sets and refrigerators were on sale in the Soviet shops one often had to search for such “trivial” or “low-tech” goods as needles, threads, colorful ribbons. According to the established division of labor, local industry was mainly responsible for producing all such small and technically simple consumer goods since they were not regarded as profitable enough for bigger industry. Therefore it was difficult to guarantee their regular availability in shops all over the Soviet Union.

The reforms of 1965, often referred to as Kosygin's¹⁴⁴ reforms because the Soviet Prime Minister Aleksei Nikolaevich Kosygin was their main advocate, aimed at an increase in the productivity of labor in Soviet enterprises, this time by decentralizing economic decision making and by various kinds of economic stimuli attractive to both directors and workers alike. Kosygin had a background in the textile industry. Industrial enterprises could now earn bonuses for exceeding their sales and profitability targets, which produced higher payments into the bonus funds.¹⁴⁵ To make the planning more effective and flexible, the indicators of economic performance were limited to basics. The enterprises could also use their own production-development funds for decentralized investments. One of the purposes of the reform was to promote (direct, that is not authorized and controlled via Moscow planning offices) inter-enterprise trade.

This major economic reform experienced a destiny similar to the previous ones. It met a lot of resistance from various quarters. Its implementation took a long time and was at best only half-hearted; only part of the economy ever adopted it; the ministries neglected it and simply went on using the same indicators as before. Gradually, after a few years it was more or less forgotten—even though some parts of it prevailed, like the bonus systems.

As Hanson argued, the main reason for its at least partial failure despite many good intentions and ideas was that there was, after all, not much that an enterprise could decide on independently outside of the central plans and administration: "If nearly all the output of nearly all enterprises was covered by production and allocation plans, enterprises had next to nothing in which they could trade with one another ... all (or almost all) tools and building materials were pre-empted by existing allocation plans, they already had an address to go to."¹⁴⁶ In his opinion, "Only if enterprise output targets were done away altogether, and centralized supply allocations along with them, would it really have been possible to decentralize economic decision making."¹⁴⁷

These well-meant reforms stopped half way because their introduction brought to light problems and discrepancies that could not be handled as long as the main directives of the system, and in particular its totally centralized mechanism of price formation and allocation of financial and other resources, remained intact. To take orders for new, higher quality goods from the trade organizations, for instance, often proved unprofitable to industry. The strictly centralized system of determining prices was one of the cornerstones of Soviet planning which the authorities were not at all willing to abandon. As Hanson claimed such economic reforms, even if on the one hand badly needed and recognized as necessary both by the majority of the economic experts and the political leaders, often proved to be counterproductive and therefore did not reach their goals. In consequence, they were often totally abandoned or modified to a great extent. After all, "... the traditional Soviet economic system was a coherent whole; modifications to it that devolved decision making, bringing internal inconsistencies, were likely to worsen economic performance..."¹⁴⁸

The trade exhibitions organized annually from the early 1970s in the consumer goods industry are a good example of later and more limited efforts

to improve market relations between the Soviet firms. Instead of any large scale economic reforms, a more extensive and unofficial decentralization of economic control took place gradually in the USSR in the 1960s and increasingly during Brezhnev's later years in power in the 1970s and early 1980s. Western sovietologists referred to it as Brezhnev's "Little Deal" (introduced by James Millar in 1985 following Vera Dunham's already classical label for Stalin's "perestroika" in the early 1950s as Stalin's own "Big Deal"¹⁴⁹). The rapid growth and proliferation of unofficial economic activities, legal, half-legal and illegal, during Brezhnev's times are all evidence of this "Little Deal." As Millar argued,¹⁵⁰

Brezhnev leadership struck a new but tacit bargain with the urban population: to tolerate the expansion of a whole range of petty private economic activities, some legal, some in the penumbra of the legal, and some clearly and obviously illegal, the primary aim of which was their allocation by private means of a significant fraction of Soviet national income according to private preferences.

It is important to note that this reallocation did not concern only consumer goods and services but also trade and exchange between economic enterprises. An extensive network of *tolkachi*, commissioned middle-men or contactors employed directly by the factories and trade organizations, were active in helping the firms to find the right exchange partners to get their necessary production materials and machines. To a great extent they acted completely legally, but in the Soviet economic system the borders between legal, semi-legal and illegal were negotiable and changed from time to time. Informal rules and practices, tolerated and even encouraged by the higher authorities, were often more important. They were tolerated particularly if they were regarded to be beneficial to the functioning and stability of the system. Millar's main point is that during Brezhnev's reign these unofficial practices became more numerous and more flexible. This did not mean that directors or vice directors of economic enterprises could no longer be put on trial and severely punished for their illegal activities. On the contrary, such widely publicized show trials served as important examples in drawing the lines between what was politically tolerated and what was not.

Millar's original claim was, after all, rather hypothetical and rested more on theoretical reasoning about the functional needs of the system for more flexibility. It has also received empirical evidence in its support from, for instance, the analyses and comparison of the court cases publicized in the press and the publicly announced punishments in Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's times respectively¹⁵¹ as well as by the estimates of the rapid increase in income from the "shadow economy." According to Bokarev's estimates,¹⁵² illegal income increased more rapidly than the legal income of the population during the two post-war periods, the late 1950s and from the late 1960s onwards (his calculations end in 1974). Even though such calculations include many uncertainties, together with other similar evidence they make Millar's thesis of Brezhnev's Little Deal quite plausible.

According to Millar, as well as in the opinion of many other observers, semi-legal or illegal dealings involving private consumers were especially

common in many service activities, for example hairdressing, auto services, electric appliance repair and medical care, as well as in the fashion ateliers and other Soviet units of domestic services. According to some unofficial calculations, the share of the second economy was, in many fields of services like home renovation, house or car repair huge covering 80–70 per cent of the whole market in the 1970s.¹⁵³ The share of the second economy must have been equally large in the clothing industry. At the same time it is a good example of the principal difficulty in determining exact limits to the second economy, which could include everything from asking a favor from a neighbor or a friend known to be good at sewing clothes to the private services of the workers of the state owned fashion ateliers and workshops using the facilities and raw materials available at their work place. All the private persons operated illegally if they received any compensation for their work simply because they did not pay any taxes for their income. In this way the state lost huge amounts of potential income. The new service centers that the Soviet Government started opening in the 1960s regularly had a state owned fashion atelier. These were expected to gradually compete the private, small scale entrepreneurs out of business. Because of rapidly increasing demand they never seriously succeeded in threatening the status of the illegal or semi-legal business.

Almost everyone, including many prominent party members, KGB, and police officers, had obtained some goods this way, through relations or acquaintances, *po blatu*. From the point of view of formal legality, almost everyone was involved in illegal or at least semi-legal activities and could, if the authorities pressed the issue, be accused of breaking the rules. These “offenses” could certainly vary a great deal, from help and presents received from close relatives and family members, colleagues or friends who were in a position to have access to some-as such not very valuable and quite ordinary-goods and services, to small bribes and presents given to people who had the power to deliver valuable or scarce goods or services, such as apartments, cars, summer cottages, books, better cuts of beef, caviar or imported shoes and suits and to more serious and large scale bribing of one’s superiors and the representatives of the controlling organizations (“real,” large-scale economic criminality). As already mentioned these dealings could often go on for a long time and develop into permanent *blat* relations, of mutual giving and taking of “presents” and favors. In later Soviet times only some serious cases-or some warning examples-were publicly prosecuted. High-ranking Party members were often not put on trial. They were handled, if at all, by the responsible party organs which reprimanded them. Small offenses were often dealt only in a “heart to heart talk” between the offender and the representatives of his own Party organ. As Clark argued, the KGB collected evidence of such dealings that could incriminate party members, economic directors and civil servants but kept such evidence to itself. Thus it could, when needed, be used in internal power struggles among the nomenclature. (This was obviously the case when the Soviet leader Jury Andropov started the campaign against corruption in Moscow in 1983.¹⁵⁴)

At times private economic activities could assume large proportions. For instance, some entrepreneurial local directors could organize wide networks

between all kinds of industrial and trade enterprises which produced and sold, for instance, leather clothes and fur coats or shoes, privately alongside the official plans and budgets. The quite common practice of producing small series of fashionable clothes and selling them in the small boutiques adjoined to the fashion houses (*firmennye magaziny*) were a good example of Soviet entrepreneurship on the margins of the illegal and legal. It was at times tolerated but never authorized by the central authorities. The directors and leading designers of many fashion houses and ateliers were eager to start producing small series of their own designs, which gave much more freedom to their artistic creativity than the industrially mass produced clothes but was not as exclusive as the design of unique clothes for the ateliers. These experiments remained short-lived and were not allowed to grow remarkably. After all they did not really fit into the planned economy, which always favored highly standardized large scale production.

At the same time, “special access stores,” “closed” ateliers or medical clinics, as well as other special systems of distribution of goods and services prospered during Brezhnev’s later years.¹⁵⁵ Due to the widespread permanent shortages of consumer goods, practically all important state institutions, like the ministries, Academy of Sciences and party and trade union divisions had their own shops, ateliers, medical centers, children’s summer camps and summer resorts, housing establishments, etc. which provided their own employees with highly-valued goods. One of the functions of these privileges was to act as incentives to labor. The employees had access to these privileges according to their official rank. For instance an academician, a full member of the academy, had access to better and more varied services than an ordinary researcher or doctor of science. The same was true of the employees of the Communist Party. All enjoyed privileges but the members of the Central Committee had more privileges than others and the members of the Politburo even more. There is no available general data about the various units of “closed” service, open only to the employees of a specific organization.¹⁵⁶ Moscow had in the 1980s about 800 “closed” ateliers of individual sewing, open to a restricted clientele only, which was about as many as the number of all other, ordinary ateliers which were open to all customers without restrictions.

The main peculiarities of the Soviet consumer society

By the beginning of the 1960s the standard of living of most of the population, both urban and rural, had reached such levels that access to daily necessities, basic food items and clothing included, was more or less certain. The improvement was most rapid among the rural population since the starting conditions had been the lowest. The immigration of the rural population to the cities and the increasing monetary compensation of labor in the countryside (previously peasants were often paid in natural products and not in currency), the introduction of a general state pension system, and other similar measures led to the rapidly growing monetary demand for better food items and other consumer goods. An increasing share of such

transactions and acquisitions took place on the market (either in state shops or in the kolkhoz peasant's market). When, during Brezhnev's later years, the income differentials were allowed to increase and the shadow economy and the illegal income from it increased remarkably, many people came to have money at their disposal. In addition, some groups of the population had a lot of money, legally and illegally earned, at their disposal. The percentage of the urban and educated population increased rapidly too. One could therefore claim that sometime during the late 1960s and early 1970s the basic elements and preconditions of the Soviet consumer society were created. There were people around who had money at their disposal, who were eager to consume new, more varied and better consumer goods of all kinds ("commodity hunger") and whose level of aspiration was increasing and becoming more individualized.¹⁵⁷ This had an impact on the Soviet fashion industry above all.

The relationship of the Communist Party and the Soviet authorities to all kinds of expressions of consumerism, or individual acquisitiveness, was highly ambivalent in practice. They both condemned it as a harmful remnant of the petit bourgeois mentality¹⁵⁸ and at the same time expressed as their desired goal to reach or even overcome the material standard of living of Western Europe or the US – even if they did not unquestioningly buy into its whole "consumerist" lifestyle. The capitalist West was worth copying but only selectively. Even though Soviet society thus developed or copied with a short delay many features of the modern Western consumer society, it also radically differed from the latter in many important respects.

Due to the price policy which kept the prices of many ordinary consumer goods artificially low and stable as well as the hidden inflationary pressure caused by increasing wages, many goods, even the most ordinary ones, were in *defitsit*, in shortage. The demand for *defitsit* consumer goods exceeded their supply. While short-term shortages exist even in a market economy, under socialism many products could be in permanent short supply because their demand outgrew their supply more or less permanently due to their relatively low prices and limited volume of production. Private cars were among the best known examples of such *defitsits* but even many more mundane and less expensive consumer goods, like various garments and shoes, were often more or less in permanent short supply – or *defitsits*. Access to them demanded either long queuing, trips to the bigger cities, and a lot of effort, if they were at all available in ordinary shops. Despite rapid and even forceful increases in production, shortages and queues did not disappear. As the country became gradually richer, increasing amounts of the produced goods could not find buyers and languished on shop selves and in warehouses. They were either of bad quality, too expensive (compared to other, similar products) or simply not fashionable and stylish enough.

Since the import of foreign consumer goods was always quite limited, many foreign goods enjoyed a special aura of prestige and luxury. If available at all, there was a great shortage of them in the state shops and therefore they could be sold on the black market for exorbitant prices. This was particularly true of Western clothing and shoes, gramophone discs, cigarettes, cosmetics, and so on.¹⁵⁹

In addition to the state-owned channels of distribution, consumer goods could be acquired in legal and illegal private markets where the prices were usually much higher. The kolkhoz market probably came closest to the “real market” with market prices in the USSR even though its price structure also depended on the prices and availability of food items in the state shops. An official secondhand market existed too and, even more importantly, a large informal black market. It is difficult to name any other piece of clothing that enjoyed as important a symbolic position in the consumer goods market of the Soviet Union in the 1960s and 1970s as the “American” jeans. Real American jeans, like Levis or Wrangler, were highly cherished and difficult to acquire trousers which could be sold on the black market for huge amounts of money. They could be compared to nylon shirts and stockings, legally or illegally imported from the West, which had a similar position in the 1950s. The reasons for their high value among the more fashion conscious Soviet population are easy to explain. They symbolized the modern Western and American style of life and were hard to get. The Soviet Union did import many consumer goods from the West, like nylon shirts and men’s suits from Finland, but the amounts were always small compared to the total size of the market. Even if clothes imported from the West were more expensive than their domestic counterparts there was no lack of Soviet customers ready to pay these higher prices. Lee Cooper jeans were, for instance, imported to the Soviet Union from Finland but never in great numbers.¹⁶⁰ Instead, the Soviets produced their own jeans, a solution which was quite common in many other fields of light industry. Despite their obvious ideological connotations the Soviet textile industry made several efforts to start producing them in the 1970s. It faced serious technical problems in trying to produce good denim clothes made solely out of cotton. The first Soviet-made jeans saw day-light in 1973 and in 1975 Soviet industry produced 16.8 million jeans.¹⁶¹ In 1978 the denim fabric Orbita made wholly out of cotton went into production. According to Bartlett, this was the fifty-sixth attempt to produce real denim fabric in the Soviet Union.¹⁶² Earlier in the 1970s the Soviet industrialists had made efforts to buy denim fabric machines on license from the States but for some reason these attempts came to nothing.

By the end of the 1970s, Soviet-made jeans were, however, finally available to the Soviet youth in great quantities. They never succeeded in truly challenging the status of “real” American jeans which continued to be sold for high prices on the black market until the final opening of the Russian consumer goods market to import from the West in the 1990s.

Since the state gave some important goods and services, like housing, medical care, public transport and basic education, more or less free of charge to customers, they did not have to use their money for these purposes, which often formed the greatest part of the household budgets in the advanced capitalist countries of the West. Again, access and availability were the main problems, not the price (that is, access to better medical services, apartments, summer cottages, better schools, sidestepping long queues, etc.).

The infrastructure of trade and services was underdeveloped in the Soviet Union compared with the developed capitalist countries, Japan included. Many better quality and more specialized services and goods were available

only in a few big cities, Moscow in particular. This is certainly true in all countries to an extent – every village cannot have special shops and ateliers – but by all standards the Soviet system of distribution was much more centralized and concentrated in big cities and urban centers than was the case in the developed capitalist countries.

Regional differences in the provisioning of consumer goods and food items remained quite large all through Soviet times, both between big cities and smaller towns, between the town and countryside and between the Western Russian parts of the USSR and its more distant regions, like Central Asia. To take an example, in the 1980s and 1990s in Soviet Uzbekistan the share of clothing in the family budgets of workers and civil servants was only 17.4 percent, resp. 16.4 percent. Among the Uzbek kolkhoz peasants expenses for food were very high, over 40 percent.¹⁶³ Taken into account that in Uzbekistan families had more members than in the European parts of Russia, one can draw the conclusion that an Uzbek family had much less money to use on the clothing of individual members than a family in Moscow or some other Russian town had. Under the circumstances of the serious shortages of many consumer goods, the state chose to pay less attention to the provisioning of the periphery than the center. The difference in the quality of life, standards of consumption and cultural possibilities between the town and the countryside, between the center and the periphery did not narrow but tended to become wider – which caused much dissatisfaction among the population.

Even though advertising and other types of commercial promotion of brands and specific commodities and services (an important feature of the Western consumer society) was limited in the USSR, news about new goods and services reached the populace quite widely via other channels. News and information about novelties was regularly publicized in the Soviet press. Special trade journals like the fashion journals were printed and circulated in large editions. The monthly journal *Novye tovary* (New Commodities) started in the mid- 1950s. It was quite popular and wholly dedicated to the presentation of the novelties of the Soviet consumer goods industry and trade, shoes, clothes and all kinds of accessories included. Among the many efforts to improve the consumer goods situation and to overcome the economy of shortages, one solution was to emphasize and invest in certain particular luxurious items of consumption, as spearheads of the Soviet trade and consumer goods industry, which were then advertised widely as the great achievements of the Soviet economy. They did not necessarily contribute much to the general quality of life of ordinary Soviet citizens. The numerous fashion houses and institutions are a good example of this kind of policy. Even though they certainly, despite many problems and shortcomings, did make a big difference in the mass production of clothing in the USSR, they acted as much as propagandists and role models of a better life to come with their exquisite fashion shows, luxurious fashion journals and fashion ateliers, which despite their relatively great numbers could naturally service only a very limited part of the urban population. These flagships of Soviet trade existed alongside an ever more centralized and standardized mass



Fig. 3.4. A housewife participating in a popular evening class of cutting and sewing clothes inspects a prototype of a fashionable dress, Moscow 1954.

consumption. They gave inspiration and offered new designs to millions of Soviet women who sewed their own clothes at home or had them sewn in small ateliers. At the same time, they helped to preserve and even strengthen the role of traditional housework and female labor which officially should have been abolished from Soviet society, presumed to be living under the conditions of advanced, victorious socialism. For most women, the only way to dress themselves better and more fashionably was to sew their own clothes or to ask a colleague, neighbor or friend, well known for their sewing skills, to sew them following some new patterns published in a fashion journal or album. (Fig. 3.4.)

The discrepancy between what the fashion houses propagated and presented in their shows and fashion journals and what was in fact for sale in the ordinary clothing shops kept up the dissatisfaction of the consumers and encouraged them to complain about the shortages, bad quality and meager assortment of clothes and accessories. As Zygmunt Bauman argued¹⁶⁴, under socialism the State and the ruling Party promised to satisfy the needs of its citizens, a promise they could not possibly keep under the conditions of increasing diversification and individualization of consumers' demand.

4. The Early Years of the Moscow, All-Union Fashion House

The Moscow House of Fashion Design of Clothes was founded in the beginning of 1944 under the People's Commissariat of Light Industry—more than a year before the end of the war! Knowing that the final victory was approaching the Soviet Government gave an unusual present to its people, thus concretely showing that they took care of their own. What could be done to brighten the lives of people returning home after four hard war years? What could be more natural than to promote the production of decent civilian clothing? It was crucial for the citizens to be able to throw away their uniforms and quilted jackets and dress themselves beautifully and fashionably, to enjoy the fruits of victory. Fashion and beauty were excellent medicine for the wounds of war. This is what we can imagine the leaders of the country reasoned among themselves. They decided to forcefully promote the emergence of real professional fashion design in the country. It was decided that the best artists and designers should thenceforth have the main responsibility for designing new clothing. Furthermore, the garment factories were also expected to reorient their production following these better clothing patterns and not their own old pre-war ones. What was needed, above all, was to rapidly enlarge the clothing market, which had been very restricted during the war. In practice, the only options people had were to repair and remake their pre-war clothes or wear their old military uniforms and war loot that they brought back from the front.

According to the plans, all goods that were out of fashion and unattractive would disappear. Soon Soviet people would be able to find in any clothing shop only the most exclusive and fashionable clothes. The great advantages of the socialist, planned economy would become evident in the production of fashion too. The state planning and control of the garment factories would guarantee the provisioning of high quality textiles, highly qualified workers, modern machines and the latest technology, and exclusively fashionable sewing patterns. Consequently there would not be anything to prevent the population of the USSR from changing their outer appearance completely in the near future, dressing themselves in brand new clothes and feeling themselves real “aristocrats of fashion.” This is how it all looked in the plans, which unfortunately proved to be as far removed from reality as the whole coming Communist society.

The moment for this revolution of fashion was well selected. After the end of the war the garment factories already had to reorient their production for the needs of peaceful existence, which had been almost totally neglected during the four long years of war. It was only natural to take advantage of the situation and to start producing from the very beginning civilian clothes of only the best and most fashionable kind. The authorities thought this could best be achieved by the same methods of military directives and commands that had been effective during wartime. As soon became evident, however, fashion was not as easy to command as the army.

The textile and garment industry concentrated under the People's Commissariat (later Ministry) of Light Industry had the main responsibility for the rapid recovery and strengthening of the market for mass-produced consumer goods with the help of fashionable, high-quality clothing. These factories did not, however, have their own designers and pattern makers anymore since the research and development laboratories and workshops that had been established shortly before the war had all been closed down during the war. There was also another problem: in order to provide the factories with the new clothing patterns to be sewn on assembly lines it was not enough just to provide pleasing new designs. Also needed were total setups of technical documentation, including detailed industrial patterns and instructions. In order to solve the problem, a centralized system of professional design and pattern makers was created within the People's Commissariat of Light Industry with the explicit purpose of serving all the garment factories in the whole country.

Such a system was created over a few major stages and periods. In the first stage (1944–1948) only a few regional houses of fashion design existed in the major cities of the country, the Moscow House of Fashion Design (MDMO) from 1944 onwards as the leader among them. A decree of the Soviet of the People's Commissars of the RSFSR (the Government of the Russian Republic; April 23, 1944), with an almost simultaneous order from the Moscow City Administration of Light Industry, founded the MDMO in April 1944.¹⁶⁵ (Fig. 4.1.) The archival documents reveal that the original plans stem from January 1944, when the war was still being fought on all fronts and the siege of Leningrad had not yet been broken. The Leningrad House of Fashion Design appeared a bit later, in 1945.

By August 1948 such houses existed in Moscow, Leningrad, Kiev, Minsk and Riga. By the beginning of the next year their number had increased to 12.¹⁶⁶ They provided new clothing designs with the attached complete technical documentation to the garment factories mainly in their own Soviet Republic or region.

In 1949 the Moscow House of Fashion Design received the status of the All-Union House (ODMO) and the whole system of fashion design institutions became centrally organized. All the other houses of fashion design and other institutes in the field were subsumed under its leadership in questions of design methods, trend-setting, quality control and so on. During 1944–1948 designing was separated from pattern making and consequently MDMO and the other regional houses of fashion design under the Ministry of Light Industry concentrated their efforts on developing new designs. In



Fig. 4.1. Front page of the post-war issue of Zhurnal mod (*Journal of Fashion*) published by ODMO in 1945.

general, pattern making was the prerogative of the garment factories. In 1949, when ODMO was created and the whole system was reorganized, this division of labor was considered a mistake. Starting in 1948–1949 all the houses of fashion design designed prototypes of new clothes, made their patterns, and provided factories with the necessary technical documentation. In other words, they provided the clothing factories with everything they needed to start producing new designs at once. In a way this concluded the first stage of the construction of the system of fashion design in the Soviet Union.¹⁶⁷ In the 1970s, the number of the republican and regional houses of fashion design was almost 40 and their activities covered all the republics and regions belonging to the country.

Many of the main principles of Soviet fashion as well as the general Soviet approach to fashion design were set down as early as the second half of the 1940s and the beginning of the 1950s, mainly through the practice of the Moscow, later All-Union, House of Fashion Design. From its foundation in 1944 it was expected to be economically self-sustaining, covering its expenses mainly by selling its new designs to the garment factories in the Moscow region. These enterprises, often working on minimal budgets, preferred not to order anything at all, instead using their own pre-war designs. They could get away with this because under the post-war conditions the consumer demand of the population was very modest – not only fashionable but also almost any kind of cheap or practical clothing could find customers immediately. Therefore, the only alternative MDMO had was to create and propose new designs for the factories on its own initiative, often at great economic risk and often resulting in great losses. In addition to serving the factories in the capital area, in the second half of the 1940s the designers in Moscow started to cooperate with the enterprises in other areas of the country, including regions which had only recently suffered from German occupation and which were therefore entitled to special help without any extra financial compensation.¹⁶⁸

Since industrial design proved to be unprofitable under the prevailing conditions, MDMO's main source of income in 1944–1947 was in fact the orders from the *Glavosobtorg*, a department of the Ministry of Trade engaged in commercial trade, which was allowed in the country in those years. People were willing to pay high, commercial prices only for fashionable and good quality clothes. MDMO not only worked out new fashion designs on the orders of *Glavosobtorg* but even started to sew them in small series. For this purpose a pattern making department as well as a workshop for sewing light female clothing were both opened at Kuznetskii Most Street.¹⁶⁹

The establishment of such workshops or departments sewing clothes in smaller series could have become important alternatives to industrial mass production even if they could never seriously threaten its leading position. After the whole system of post-war commercial trade was shut down at the end of the 1940s¹⁷⁰ the production of small series did not immediately end at Kuznetskii Most street: the department of “multiple items” or small series of designer clothes was closed down only in 1962. It was said not to fit the profile of the House as an All-Union theoretical and experimental center of fashion.¹⁷¹ Even after that the House would produce some 50–150 experimental pieces of their own new designs, which were then sold in the Moscow clothing shops in order to get information about the demand for their designs. However, these minimal amounts of clothing could not have any real impact on the commercial markets since, as a rule, they hardly ever reached the normal shops and were mostly distributed privately by the various employees of the Ministry of Trade.

In the 1940s the specialists at Kuznetskii Most street designed not only for industry but also for the system of state ateliers and dressmakers. Therefore, the House of Fashion Design opened an artistic atelier of custom made clothes which took orders from the population for clothes sewn using MDMO's own designs. This practice was also understood to be a form of



Fig. 4.2. Designers consult visitors on questions of style at the atelier of ODMO, 1951.

market research. It enjoyed great popularity among the Muscovites and the visitors to the capital and was part of the structure of MDM/ODMO until the beginning of the 1960s when it was closed down as not fitting the profile of the House. This was claimed to be a consequence of the increasing burden caused by the more central tasks of ODMO.¹⁷² (Fig. 4.2.)

Similar ateliers existed in the post-war period at the other houses of fashion design at the Ministry of Light Industry. For instance, the Moscow (later All-Union) House of Fashion Design of Knitwear had one in its early days. In 1963 it already had two ateliers. One of the ateliers, in addition to fulfilling individual orders, sewed women's underwear, to be sold in small series. In addition to the ateliers, the House of Fashion Design of Knitwear had a small experimental factory under its administration. In 1962, for instance, it produced 82,000 items of underwear as well as 68,000 items of knitwear.¹⁷³ Thus, the Houses of Fashion Design under the Ministry of Light Industry, which were the most professional and largest organizations of fashion design in the postwar years, combined various functions in their activities, from the design of individual clothes to the production of small industrially produced series of clothes. In the long run, these organizations developed in the direction of greater specialization, cutting down other production functions which did not quite fit their core profile.

The basic principle that guided the Soviet industrial design of clothes was, just as in other countries, seasonality. Every year, all the institutes of fashion design prepared two main collections: spring-summer and autumn-winter. MDMO/ODMO, for instance, designed men's, women's, and children's wear, women's underwear, and head wear. Women's clothes dominated fashion design in the USSR just like in the rest of the world. As early as the fourth quarter of 1944 when the war was still going on but the victory of 1945 was already concretely in mind, the specialists of MDMO designed 137 items of women's clothing, 54 men's and women's suits, 108 items of children's wear, 11 pieces of women's underwear and 18 hats.¹⁷⁴

In 1945 – during its first whole year of existence – MDMO offered about one thousand clothing patterns to the garment industry.¹⁷⁵ In 1949 the designers worked out as many as 2591 new designs and 2844 in 1950.¹⁷⁶ The

staff of MDMO was rather small: on the first of January 1946 it employed 29 designers and 17 design engineers.¹⁷⁷ In the beginning of 1950 ODMO already had 617 employees, among them 32 fashion designers.¹⁷⁸

The design work took place under the conditions typical of the immediate post-war years. Practically everything was in great shortage and much had been destroyed in the war years: there were no electric light bulbs to light the design halls, no pins or pencils for the pattern makers. Often many basic raw materials were missing as well. The annual report of MDMO declared in 1945 that “the provisioning with basic textiles took place with breaks.”¹⁷⁹ To save the situation, the director gave orders to MDMO to organize their own production of fashion dolls, lasts, hangers and other similar production items, all necessary for the designers’ work.

As soon became evident, to create a design for a beautiful garment was only half the job. It was equally important to manage taking it into production in the original form. This proved to be a very labor intensive task in 1945, as well as later on. By referring to many objective difficulties, from old and worn out machinery and the lack of qualified workers and necessary textiles to the extra labor which the production of fashionable items necessarily demanded and which did not fit into the strict labor norms of the plans, the factories could refuse to take more developed designs into production. They either demanded the designs’ modification or greatly simplified them by their own efforts.

During the war the workers at these factories had experienced a remarkable transformation. They had become professionally unqualified. The workers had become used to sewing one and the same piece of cloth from one month to another and one and only grey greatcoat or military uniform. They did not have experience of sewing more complicated or demanding clothes, which were more varied in style and demanded the knowledge and skills of a larger number of difficult operations. The workers were also not used to the stress of continuously adapting to the demands of civilian apparel, which changed following the fashion cycles. The new post-war demands took them mostly by surprise.

Since the garment factories in the Soviet Union were not directly dependent on customer demand and oriented themselves mainly towards the fulfillment of their state quotas measured in total production quantities, their ideal was the production of technically simple clothes in great quantities and in minimal variety, which did not demand complicated or labor intensive operations. It was also important for them not to have to change their assortment too often. Such an approach to clothing production was the direct opposite of constantly changing fashion, the interests of the consumers, and also the wishes of the designers, who would have liked to see their original and unique designs in mass production. Gradually, due to their long-term experience of communication with the representatives of the garment factories the designers underwent a process of creative “self-censorship” by giving way to the practical demands of the dressmakers. The fact that the design organizations were punished with a loss of income in the form of bonuses due to the low percentage of designs taken into production also encouraged them to adjust to the harsh reality.

However, the appearance on the shop shelves of out-of-fashion, low quality and badly sewn garments incited the righteous anger of the population. The Minister of Light Industry – and the future Soviet Prime Minister – Kosygin lost his patience in 1947. In consequence, the leading designers of MDMO were partly liberated from their creative work and sent to the factories to closely follow what was concretely turned out on the production sites of the garment enterprises. The purpose of this measure was to control the quality of clothing designs in the factories. The degree to which they followed fashion, fulfilled the demands of the population and the aesthetic characteristics of their products were used as the main criteria of evaluation in the inspection. The comprehensive inspection work continued in 1947 and 1948 and its results proved to be quite devastating. Many products were taken completely out of production. For the first time both some factories and whole regions of the country were prohibited from designing and making the patterns for their own clothes. Under the circumstances the creation of a centralized All-Union system of fashion design, with ODMO at its head, was considered to be the best solution for light industry.

After these scandalous revelations the MDMO alone, or rather the new All-Union ODMO now under planning, was supposed to satisfy for the time being the need for all new designs even outside the capital region.¹⁸⁰ It was entrusted with inspecting and controlling the garment enterprises to ensure that their clothes were fashionable enough.¹⁸¹ As a consequence, the system of regular curators was established at the end of the 1940s at ODMO and in the other regional houses of fashion design at the Ministry of Light Industry: particular designers were henceforth connected to particular factories engaging in the – from the point of view of the factories – rather humiliating control over which new designs were taken into production and how. These control functions were in fact out of the range of the designers' professional expertise. Yet they were preserved intact in the Soviet houses of fashion design all through Soviet times. The houses of fashion design did not, however, enjoy any formal legally binding rights in their control functions. The curator could not, for instance, simply order simplified and distorted designs to be taken out of production.

After the establishment of the system of fashion design for industrial production the time had come to change the system for customized sewing of clothes at fashion ateliers. After the war no unified system existed in the Soviet Union. The fashion ateliers that functioned in the regions belonged to various ministries, cooperatives or units of local administration. The best ateliers in Moscow belonged, for instance, to the conglomerate *Mosindodezhda* under the Moscow City Administration, which created its own design organizations and in the 1950s opened its own house of fashion design with a staff of professional designers and pattern makers. As a consequence of the establishment of this parallel system, the houses of fashion design under the Ministry of Light Industry stopped designing clothes for the ateliers and concentrated on industrial designs only.

However, in the first post-war years new designs were understandably in great shortage, and the ateliers mainly used designs from foreign fashion journals and from patterns which they had acquired as war loot. In 1946

the MDMO was therefore expected to make sure that the ateliers used only “our own, Soviet designs.” When discussing and judging the new designs its artistic council decided which designs would be recommended to the factories and which to the ateliers. As a rule, designs which were thought to be too difficult and complicated for industrial production because of the great number of details or an increased demand for raw materials in comparison to the existing norms were directed to the ateliers. The employees of MDMO gave out special albums each quarter for the use of the ateliers, with detailed instructions and sewing patterns for the new designs worked out by their designers.¹⁸²

The artistic director of ODMO, Anna Fedorovna Blank, claimed in 1949, with good reason, that everything that took place in the ateliers of individual sewing, in particular in the provinces, “was covered in darkness.”¹⁸³ For years, no one had inspected or controlled their work from the point of view of fashion or taste. The first inspection tour by the Moscow designers, with the aim of inspecting the ateliers of customized sewing in the city of Ivanovo, revealed that the assortment offered to the citizens “did not at all correspond to the modern style.”¹⁸⁴ An order of the Ministry of the Light Industry in 1950 obliged ODMO to control and coordinate the collaboration with the garment factories as well as with the ateliers of individual sewing in their ongoing renewal of design according to fashion trends. Thus ODMO became, at least formally, a real dictator of Soviet fashion. In practice, however, it had very limited means and resources to force its will on the numerous Soviet garment factories and design organizations.

The archival data about MDMO for 1944–1947 reveal that, in many ways, it continued the tradition of the Moscow (later Central) House of Fashion Design that had come into being in 1934. At the same time its functions also differed quite drastically. The main difference was not only the amount of workers or the amount of accomplished work but above all larger variety and breadth of its functions and obligations. As early as the second part of the 1940s, MDMO and later ODMO had turned into a veritable “institute of fashion.” In addition to its main practical tasks, the servicing of the factories and ateliers with new fashion designs, it took care of the publishing and distribution of works on fashion, the propaganda of the culture of dress (with the help of lectures, fashion shows and exhibitions in its demonstration hall among other things), research in the theory and method of Soviet fashion, the analysis and prognosis of the trends of world fashion, and so on.¹⁸⁵ (Fig. 4.3.) The annual report of 1945 mentioned that MDMO was at that time already engaged in the “design of clothes with the future in perspective.”¹⁸⁶

The reorganization of MDMO into ODMO in 1948–1949 opened a new stage in Soviet fashion design. In 1949 ODMO started to organize annual All-Union meetings with the leading Soviet fashion specialists from the various regions with consultations and presentations of recent trends and perspectives in fashion. During these regular meetings the republican and regional houses of fashion design working under the Ministry of Light Industry demonstrated their new collections.¹⁸⁷ This was a concrete way of reporting their creative activities to the higher authorities. These meetings, which continued until the end of the Soviet Union, had an important



Fig. 4.3. Visitors at the Exhibition Hall of New Designs at ODMO, Moscow 1954.

function in unifying and centralizing the Soviet fashion system and in improving the qualification of its laborers.

One of the main tasks of MDMO/ODMO from the mid-1940s to the mid-1950s was the creation of common standards and the coordination of the creative activities of the Soviet houses of fashion design under the Ministry of Light Industry. In addition, it engaged in theoretical analysis and the practical realization of the concept of “Soviet fashion.” What were the real criteria of Soviet fashion and what was typical of it? The search for a specific “Soviet style” went on quite intensively during the post-war years. As far as the silhouette, textiles, colors, details, and so on of Soviet fashion were concerned, these questions were first raised concretely and comprehensively in the annual report of 1950.¹⁸⁸ The subject had, in fact, been first raised a year earlier in 1949. Naumova, the head of the artistic consultants of ODMO, discouraged the use of foreign fashion journals and copying their designs. At the first All-Union methodical meeting of the fashion designers in June 1949 she suggested the following universal formula of Soviet fashion: “One should combine the dream and the fantasy of the artist with the mastery of the pattern maker and the modern production technique.”¹⁸⁹ It was understandably quite difficult for anyone to argue against such a formula, but in its abstractness it gave only vague guidelines for the concrete design tasks at hand.

A couple of months before this first All-Union meeting, on the 18th of April 1949, the administration and the leading designers of ODMO had, together with the editorial board of the popular journal *Sovetskaya zhenshchina* (Soviet Woman) organized a meeting with the “representatives of Moscow women.” This meeting discussed the “open letter” which a group of women, all research workers by occupation, had addressed to the editors of the journal. In the name of “intellectual Soviet women” who all

appreciated fashion and took care of their style they expressed their desire not to “follow blindly” Western fashion anymore. In addition, they asked the Soviet women to launch a public campaign against any uncritical copying of Western fashion and actively promote the creation of “our own Soviet fashion.”

During the discussion started by the letter, Moscow women of various ages and occupations expressed their open dissatisfaction with the quality, assortment and color scale of the clothes for sale in Soviet shops. At the same time they were very interested in issues of fashion in general and strongly appealed to the authorities to take drastic measures to improve the situation. The participants made many practical proposals which were taken quite seriously and at least partly realized later on. The suggestion to start a new fashion journal, relatively cheap and available to everyone, was one of these. The Soviet women also demanded that Soviet designs should be actively propagated in the mass media in general, distributed in illustrated publications and in documentary films, and so on. They wanted to increase the number of fashion shows and exhibitions open to ordinary Soviet citizens.

These political campaigns of 1949 against the westernization of Soviet fashion were undoubtedly a part of the general campaign against “cosmopolitanism” ongoing in the Soviet Union. These campaigns had not only political but also very practical dimensions. Soviet fashion became, for the first time, the focus of public debates. Ordinary consumers used the opportunity to openly complain about shortcomings in the provision of clothes. More principally, the debates led to the promotion of folk and national motifs in Soviet clothing design. This was by no means a totally new idea since in the world of Soviet fashion: Lamanova had made it one of the leading principles in her aesthetics in the 1920s. These ethnic motifs were now expected to distinguish the creations of Soviet fashion favorably from the West, at the same time as emphasizing its popular image.

The remedies suggested included other elements too. In the first place, it was important to study the positive Soviet experience of the 1920s and 1930s. The main distinction of Soviet fashion was, however, claimed to be the wide use of folk motifs. “To follow the popular form of the achievements of our people, to renovate it and to make it the bearing point under the conditions of our life”¹⁹⁰ – this is how the task was presented to the designers at ODMO. Early on they recommended that one should not, however, just blindly follow any popular motifs but rather use them creatively in order to better adapt them to the purposes of modern fashion. The annual report of MDMO from 1945 expressed the issue as follows: “The artist should pay attention to such features in the creation of the ways of dress which combine original characteristics while generally following international fashion which correspond to the independent life-style of our Soviet women.” The work on the creative adaptation of the popular forms opened up the wide and demanding task of the creation of Soviet fashion.¹⁹¹

Soviet fashion was also supposed to distinguish itself with its democratic nature, “mass-character,” and general availability. It was not tied to any social estates. In distinction from the West where the best designers served only

the taste of the rich social elite, the Soviet designers oriented themselves to the needs of all the categories of citizens in equal measure.¹⁹² However, it was said that there was one privileged group of people in fashion, the children. It was decided to pay special attention to the design of children's clothes. Children should be dressed "cheaply, beautifully and elegantly, in a rich variety of clothes" using the same professional standards of design applied to grown-ups. For instance, in 1945 the designers at MDMO designed 115 new garments for boys and 340 for girls (the ratio of boys' to girls' designs was about the same as that of both sexes among adults).

The future Soviet fashion was supposed to make use of the best international experience of the most advanced developments in fashion design and pattern making. In order to do so, the Soviet fashion designers were expected to scientifically study the general laws of the growth of fashion, its history and the activities of the leading fashion houses abroad. The development of "prospective design" and the prognoses of fashion were understood to be particularly important in the Soviet planned economy. Together with the knowledge of the general laws of fashion it was supposed to make the system of fashion more predictable for the needs of long-term planning.

From the 1940s onwards the future perspectives of Soviet fashion concerned mainly the design of whole ensembles of clothes which, in the understanding of the fashion experts, consisted in the creation of a unified concept of dress based on the harmonious composition of all its parts (including the main garment, head wear, shoes, accessories, and socks as well as decorations and jewelry). The concept of the design of a whole set of clothes was also popular elsewhere. In the Soviet Union it was, however, difficult to realize because it demanded financial resources and the successful coordination and cooperation of the factories and specialists of various fields. The Soviet experts had great expectations that the planned economy would prove its superiority even in this respect and help to solve this problem. In the 1945 annual report of MDMO, the design of such whole sets of clothes was claimed to be the beginning of the creative search for the "expressive style and its individual realization."¹⁹³ At the same time, in order to concretely promote the principle of the design of clothing collections, MDMO organized special groups and departments for the design of the more important "complementary" items of clothing such as shoes and ladies' head wear.¹⁹⁴

Soviet designers' and art historians' efforts to create genuinely "Soviet fashion" were important for the propaganda and education of taste of the Soviet citizens. The annual report of 1945 mentioned that during the coming year MDMO faced the important task of "teaching the different groups of the population to dress with taste."¹⁹⁵ At one of its meetings in 1949, the representative of the Leningrad House of Fashion Design emphasized in particular the educational nature of the designers' work in an authoritarian tone: "We should dictate fashion to the population, we should educate and improve their taste."¹⁹⁶ Such statements implied that in the minds of the experts, Soviet men and women were not cultured enough, had no fine taste and did not know how to dress properly.

At the turn of the 1940s and 1950s the question of the importance of studying and controlling consumer preferences by educating them in the best possible taste became unexpectedly acute. Trade had strong motivation in this role since it had received in the end of the 1940s the right to study consumer demand and to use this knowledge to make orders to light industry to produce the items that were in fact needed. This irritated the dressmakers, who did not want to leave these questions to trade alone. In announcing in 1949 the decision to establish a chain of its own shops under the Ministry of Light Industry, the director F. D. Muraviev emphasized that the garment industry aimed at using shops to influence people's perceptions about fashion "in order not to end up being dependent on all kinds of fashions existing in the world."¹⁹⁷ The search for an effective means of exercising an impact on fashion trends in order to direct them never ended during the existence of the USSR.

MDMO/ODMO engaged actively in the propaganda for Soviet fashion both in the concrete form of its own designs and in other ways, many of which proved to be quite traditional. The numerous fashion shows organized regularly in the demonstration hall at Kuznetskii Most street with the participation of live models were among the most important such ways. In 1945 five such shows took place.¹⁹⁸ At this time, fashion exhibitions of new designs were common at MDMO. In 1949, 69,000 persons visited them. MDMO also studied the public opinion. Questionnaires were distributed to the visitors in order to collect information about their remarks and wishes concerning the exhibited items. This information was then analyzed, taking into account the visitors' social position, educational level and profession.¹⁹⁹ Thus, the workers at MDMO were engaged in market research of fashion as early as 1945.²⁰⁰ Moreover, from 1951 onwards the designer-consultants were always on call at the exhibitions. The visitors could ask them anything about the choice of fashionable clothes and their personal style free of charge. Such new forms of work helped to make the fashion designers' achievements very popular in the Soviet Union.²⁰¹

While the war was still going on, in October 1944, MDMO organized the first All-Russian competition in the best men's, women's, and children's wear. Altogether 228 designs took part in this creative competition, which garnered a lot of attention – and not only among professional designers. The specialists from MDMO, from the Moscow factories under the administration of light industry, and from the trust Mosindodezhda took part in it along with representatives of the garment factories from Leningrad, Sverdlovsk, Gorky, Saratov, Tula and several other towns. The designers at MDMO had created 20 of the 24 clothing designs which received a prize and were specially acknowledged during the competition.²⁰² On the eve of the final take-over of Berlin by the Soviet troops in March 1945, the All-Union exhibition of clothes took place in Moscow. MDMO took the self-evident first place among the competitors there as well.²⁰³

After the war, the publication of fashion journals got off to a new start. Two issues of the journal *Moda* (Fashion) came out in 1945 at the publishing house of the People's Commissariat of Light Industry. They presented altogether 123 designs made at MDMO.²⁰⁴ In the same year, MDMO started

its own publishing activities by printing four albums with its own designs. In 1948 the magazine *Zhurnal mod* (Journal of fashion) debuted with an edition of 50,000. It was produced mainly by the efforts of MDMO/ODMO and later by VIAlegprom. MDMO also published a fashion album with the title *Modeli odezhdy* (Clothing designs with 70,000 copies).²⁰⁵ *Zhurnal mod* became the main fashion journal in the USSR. Its editions as well as those of the other fashion publications grew regularly, reaching hundreds of thousands in the 1970s.

After the war, all the design organizations of the USSR (houses of fashion design, conglomerates of ateliers, experimental-technical institutes, etc.) established their own artistic councils which exercised aesthetic and ideological control over fashion design.²⁰⁶ Formally, these were independent social organizations – always authorized, however, by their respective ministries. For instance, their members were not paid for their work. Without their permission no new designs or trends could be approved or passed on to the production lines. After the authorization of the artistic council, the new designs received their technical instructions and other necessary documentation, their pattern drawings, prices, and so on.

The idea was that the artistic council should consist of authoritative experts who had good artistic taste, the necessary professional expertise, and were known to be respected citizens with a good public and professional reputation. They were in practice people from different professions – famous artists, sculptors, writers, art historians and other public figures, but first of all representatives of trade and industry, engineers and economists who, in one way or another, had a role in clothing production or in the production of the necessary machinery and instruments.

MDMO/ODMO had an artistic council established as early as 1945 and consisting of 23 members. Its task was to discuss the principles and standards of design work and the fashion of the season as well as to evaluate the main designs worked out by the MDMO specialists. In addition, the artistic council had a role as a consultant to the other houses of fashion design. Later on their other functions disappeared and the council was only engaged in inspecting and approving of the new designs. The council did not meet regularly but gathered together seasonally from a couple of times a year to every month and sometimes more often. For instance, in 1947 the artistic council of MDMO met 12 times. It judged 1269 so-called principal designs out of the well over 2100 created by the designers at the Moscow House of Design during that year. Of all inspected, 1103 were approved for further production – the rest were declined. Many famous people sat on the artistic council: the author and journalist Il'ya Grigoryevich Ehrenburg, Molotov's wife and Minister P. S. Zhemchuzhina, already referred to before, as well as Maxim Gorky's first wife, Ekaterina Pavlovna Peshkova.²⁰⁷

Just like their predecessors, the members of the recently organized artistic council of ODMO were in 1949 invited to monthly meetings to approve new fashion designs. Beginning in the same year, ODMO also demonstrated its new designs once every three months for the representatives of the trade organizations of the Moscow region. They were thought to be the mediators between the customers and the designers. The trade organizations were

encouraged to select new designs that they thought would enjoy a demand among their customers and place their orders accordingly for the next year. Ideally, the garment factories were expected to sew clothes following these orders, making sure that they satisfied a truly existing demand. In reality, however, things did not turn out quite like that.

It is possible to get an idea of what kinds of fears and hopes about the future of Soviet fashion were common among the members of the artistic council from the minutes and short typewritten notes preserved in the archives. These also give an impression of the aesthetic ideals and conceptions that guided the members in their choices. The orders concerning the houses of fashion design also give interesting insight into the practical organization of their work. Many of them are quite revealing. For instance, the order number 79 on ODMO, 12 April 1951, declared that “in order to improve the culture of exhibiting the designs” one should organize the demonstration of new designs exclusively as parts of a whole set of clothes: “The pattern makers should allow the models to perform only with all the specific accessories belonging to the designs, not let them appear in sports clothes with high heeled shoes, or children with short summer socks in winter coats, etc.”²⁰⁸

In evaluating new designs the artistic council was supposed to pay attention primarily to their aesthetic quality and fashionableness. In practice other and often more concrete questions played a more important role in its judgements. What was often most decisive was the real chance of taking the designs into production. In designing their new models the designers had to take into account the very strict norms concerning the use of materials, the limited assortment of fabrics and threads available, the elementary conditions of the technical equipment at the factories, and so on. As a result any “beautiful and fashionable” design could remain a prototype because the dressmakers simply could not sew it. For instance, at the All-Union demonstration of the new designs in August 1948 an original design of a female dress by the designer Matrosina was declined because the Deputy Minister of Light Industry S. G. Lukina, who was a member of the jury, argued, according to the minutes, that “I can see that its realization will be very labor intensive which cannot be defended by the beauty of the design.”²⁰⁹ The Deputy Minister used her right to veto by reminding everyone of the “realities” of the fashion industry. In this particular case, one can only guess what her real motives were since, in her opinion, the design was not only labor intensive but also too “daring and feminine.”

The founding of MDMO/ODMO in many ways started a new era in Soviet fashion design. In later years and decades a whole huge system – or rather several parallel systems – of fashion design institutions were added to it which covered the whole country and all the Soviet Republics. In the next chapter we shall describe in detail the development and functioning of this comprehensive Soviet system of fashion design. All through the post-war decades ODMO not only preserved its leading role in this system but in many ways set an example for all the other fashion organizations, which all, with some minor variations, followed the same patterns in their organization and functioning. They also shared also many of the same assets and problems familiar from the experience of ODMO quite early on.

5. The Institutionalization of Soviet Fashion: The System of Clothing Design and Fashion Organizations in the USSR (1960–1980)

Four Parallel Organizations

The first Soviet fashion organizations were created in the period just before and just after the Second World War but the decades from 1960 to 1980 could be called the period of the real institutionalization of Soviet fashion as this was when the system reached its full extent. Hundreds of large and small design organizations were established. Thousands of professional designers and pattern makers worked in these organizations and their numbers continued to increase in the thirty year period after the war. In the Soviet Union the state financed all the organizations engaged in fashion design although these organizations belonged to several different administrative departments or ministries, which all organized their own departments, networks, educational systems and parallel institutes of design.

In addition to such design institutes, the ministries also founded a number of scientific institutes and laboratories which all, in some way, engaged in creating the foundations for the design and manufacture of clothing. In the Soviet context, even fashion design had to have a solid scientific foundation. In this chapter we shall systematically explore the various scientific organizations researching and producing fashion as well as the various issues connected to the design and manufacture of fashion clothing.

At least four main administrative systems were engaged in fashion design which achieved their final structure in the late 1960s: the Ministry of Light Industry (fashion design for the purposes of industrial mass production), the Ministry of Everyday Services (designs for custom sewing in fashion ateliers), as well as the Ministries of both Trade and Local Industry. (Fig.5.1.) The first two ministries were economically the most important in the field of consumption and therefore we shall pay more attention to them in what follows. We shall analyze the specifics of fashion design in the trade organizations and will take the fashion department of GUM, the State Department Store in Moscow as a specific example in the next chapter.

Contrary to what one might expect considering the highly centralized and planned Soviet economic system, no single center of administration or unified centralized organization existed for fashion design. In fact, the

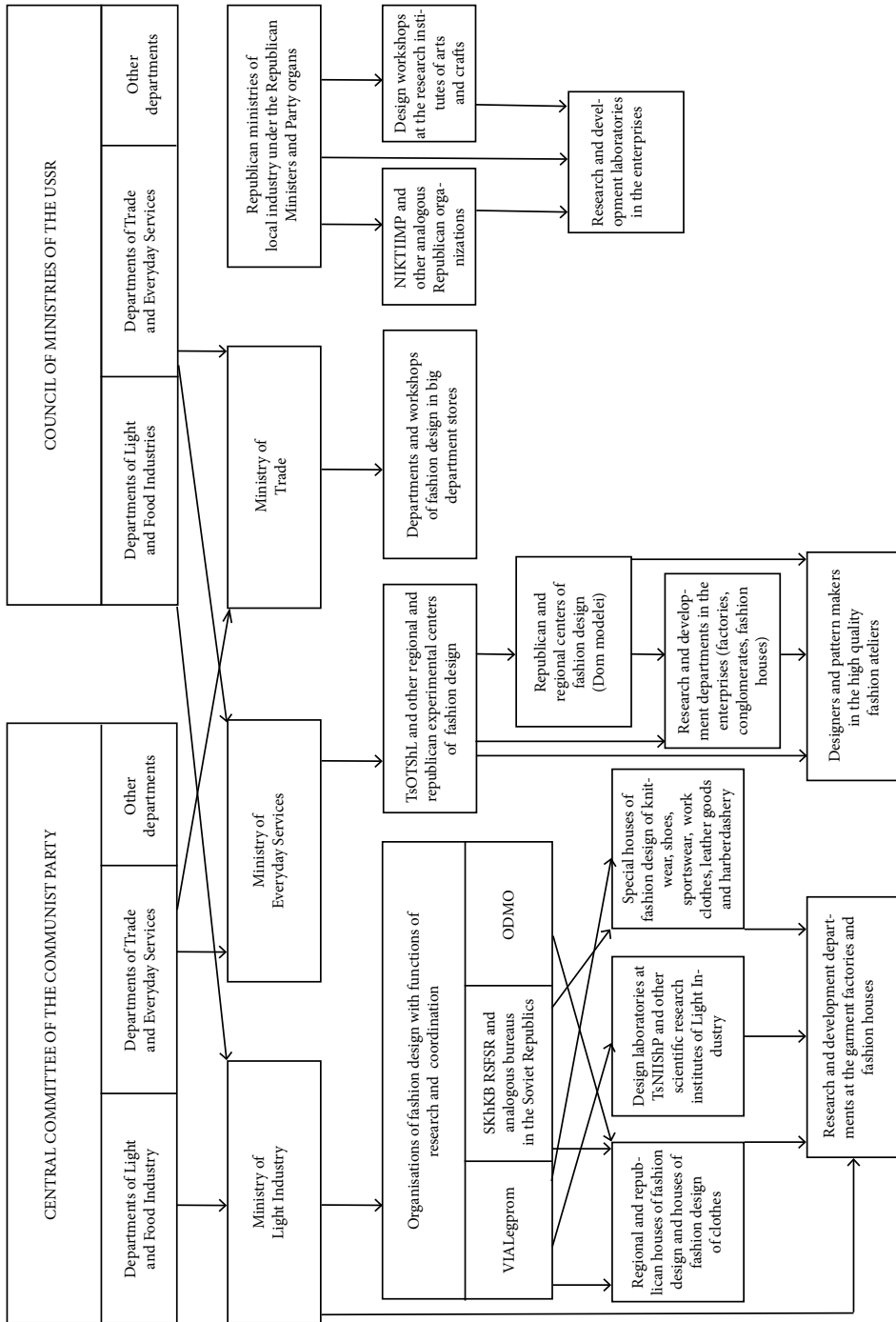


Fig. 5.1. The structure of the Soviet fashion organizations under different ministries.

idea of the necessity of increasing specialization as the best solution to the problems of fashion design and clothing production acted as the main antithesis to the principle of strict centralization of administration. Indeed, it motivated the foundation of the new fashion houses under the Ministry of the Light Industry as well as a whole system of separate organizations for custom made clothing within the republican Ministries of Everyday Service. The ministries that were responsible for providing the population with new and better clothes often referred to this principle in lobbying for their own administrative interests, in particular for the necessity of establishing their own new fashion organizations which, as a rule, also demanded additional financial resources from the state budget. Despite the fact that these parallel structures often existed in the same town and engaged in the same kind of activities, their work was not coordinated and they hardly cooperated with each other at all.

In practice the different administrative units acted independently and autonomously from each other, and in relation to some creative issues as well as in their appeals to consumers they often openly competed with each other. After the economic reforms of the 1960s the Soviet consumer goods enterprises had to earn money and become self-financing. They soon discovered that they were in fact competing with each other for the same markets. In addition, they had unofficial competitors: private tailors and seamstresses and even black market operations. Competition from the black market was even more significant in the enterprises under the Ministry of Everyday Services, which often felt the pressure in relation to both the prices and quality of the goods produced by unofficial competitors. In the context of the chronic shortage of fashionable clothes such competition had, however, a limited effect in practice. However, reports witnessing the existence of strong ambitions among the directors of the units as well as among the designers should not be ignored, nor should the role of the official socialist competition between the fashion organizations. On the other hand, it is equally evident that this tendency towards administrative specialization could be characterized in less positive terms, with the overlapping of their functions, parallelism and unnecessary waste of the financial resources of the state. This becomes evident in the light of the fact that despite the enormous quantity of new designs the Soviet consumers mostly could not buy the fashionable, higher quality clothes they desired. This raised the question of the extent to which these organizations were actually engaged in useful activities. This theme was openly discussed in the Soviet press and among experts throughout the 1960s and 1970s. Many reasonable measures were suggested in order to improve the situation, some of which were also realized in practice. Often the decisions taken on the governmental level did not have the expected effects because other conditions did not favor them. The Soviet economic system in fact often opposed them. Gradually, the leaders and the planning offices became aware that one could not really regulate such a delicate and rapidly changing sphere as fashion with the same administrative directives as were common in the other fields of the Soviet economy.

The search for more adequate forms of administration led to the emergence, in the 1960s and 1970s, of the so-called main organizations of design, which received additional authority and the status of inter-administrative units. This was true in particular of the four All-Union houses of fashion design under the Ministry of Light Industry: one designing clothes on the Kuznetskii Most street, and one each for knitwear, shoes, and other leather items. They had the responsibility for studying current fashions and future trends (each in its own particular field) and presenting their ideas to the special annual sessions of designers and pattern makers active in their own administrative system.

The directives of these main fashion organizations and the decisions made during the working meetings about the tendencies of fashion (shape, contour, style, colors, etc.) were officially only recommendations. They offered a kind of general orientation to the designers and pattern makers working all over the country. As was generally understood, it would have been impossible to predict the fashion trends with total certainty in advance. Later on these recommendations were reinforced by orders of the Ministry of Light Industry but this procedure was mainly a formality. In any case, neither the archives nor interviews with the former workers revealed any cases of someone being punished or reprimanded for not following these recommendations from the main institutions. Local and regional cultural or religious factors played an important role in Soviet fashion too. For example miniskirts or bikinis, popular in the European parts of the USSR in the 1970s, never made their appearance in the Asian Soviet Republics with predominantly Muslim populations.

At the end of the 1960s yet another main organization was created that came to have an enormous role in promoting the unity of the tendencies of fashion and approaches to design in the whole country. It had a typically long administrative name: the All-Union Institute of Product Assortment and the Culture of Dress under the Ministry of Light Industry. However, just like many other Soviet administrative organizations it was generally known by its acronym VIALegprom. While the All-Union houses of fashion design functioned practically autonomously in relation to each other, each one within their own field of specialization (the design of clothes, knitwear, shoes or leather items), VIALegprom was created to overcome the disadvantages of such specialization and to coordinate their activities by putting the principle of the design of complex collections of clothing into practice. At the same time, VIALegprom approached the concrete demands of the consumer. It was thought that a person wanted to be fashionable and beautiful in general and not just wear fashionable clothes and shoes. In order to achieve this result, one had to work scientifically, to study and to agree on the present and future perspectives of fashion in practically everything, including the colors and types of textiles and other materials (for instance, leather and fur), the style of dress as well as the shoes, hats, underwear, hairstyles and cosmetics. VIALegprom was engaged in this work, leaving ODMO behind in the 1970s in the hierarchy of fashion in the Soviet Union.

The General Structure of the Design Organizations at the Ministry of Light Industry

The Ministry of the Light Industry, with its big factories, was an All-Union Ministry and the main producer of consumer goods in the country. This included women's, men's and children's garments, shoes, hats and underwear, accessories, and so on. Its predecessor, the People's Commissariat of Light Industry was founded in 1932 and it became the Ministry of Light Industry in 1946. It was closed down in 1989, shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Historically, the majority of its enterprises were located in the Russian part of the country with a minority in Ukraine. It was therefore natural that the majority of the design organizations serving clothes factories were also located in these regions. In addition to the All-Union Ministry, each Soviet Republic, including Russia, had its own Ministry of Light Industry with its own Republican fashion institutes. They formed a strictly hierarchical network of administrative units. In the following we shall first present the main institutes of fashion design that worked under the Ministry of Light Industry, among which MDMO/ODMO and VIAlegprom were most prominent, before focusing on the fashion design that went on under other Soviet Ministries.

The 1960s were an important stage in the development of Soviet fashion design since the authorities acknowledged that the country had largely neglected to take care of the production of consumer goods. The consumer goods industry initiated many reforms to improve the situation by further specialization and concentration. It received remarkable additional finances and new production machinery. It was thought that as far as the enterprises had a duty to renew their assortment of clothing following the latest fashion trends and the orders from trade (presumably answering the customer's demand) the enterprises needed continuously new designs. Fashion would thus act as a major force of innovation and progress.

The profession of the designer became quite popular. Like mushrooms after a rain, new fashion design organizations "popped up" everywhere. According to the statistics published in the professional journal *Shveinaya promyshlennost'* (The Garment Industry), in the five year period between 1960 and 1965 about 40 new fashion organizations came into being in the consumer goods industry. Almost as many were opened in the area of shoe design.²¹⁰ Twenty years later, in 1984, 62 houses of fashion design worked under the Ministry of Light Industry, among them 38 in clothing design, 16 in shoe design, 5 houses in knitwear and 3 houses in work clothing design. They employed 2 802 designers and almost as many pattern makers.²¹¹ This "army of fashion" produced thousands of new designs for Soviet industry each year.

The system of fashion design under the Ministry of Light Industry consisted of several parts. The republican (in the capital cities of the Soviet republics) and regional (in other larger cities) houses of fashion design were headed by the All-Union House of Fashion Design, ODMO on the Kuznetskii Most street in Moscow, which coordinated their work and was responsible for advice and instructions. Some of them designed only clothes

but the majority had multiple functions and also designed shoes, hats and accessories.²¹² Their main task was to provide the factories in their own republics or regions with new designs. This was so that the clothes that were designed and sewn in a particular region would take local conditions and demand into account. Therefore they were also ideally supposed to be sold mainly in the same region.

The general political line from the 1960s to the 1980s was to strengthen the importance of these newly established regional fashion organizations. Following the example of ODMO they opened experimental departments which worked out their own “directional collections with a future perspective.” These were the Soviet collections of high fashion. They also started to participate in the creation of the prestigious, trend-setting All-Union collections. Before the 1970s the specialists of only a few houses – ODMO in Moscow plus the design houses in Leningrad, Kiev and Riga – were allowed to participate in this important work. Gradually, even smaller republican and regional houses started travelling abroad with “foreign” collections of their own.

Some houses of fashion design specialized in the design of all outer apparel besides clothing. The design of shoes, knitwear, leather wear, special or work clothes as well as sportswear all had their own houses. For example, some houses of fashion design specialized in socks and stockings as well as outerwear made of knit fabric. In the 1960s, they made about 2 500 designs every year.²¹³

In addition to the central houses in Moscow, all the major Soviet republics (Russia, Ukraine and Belarus among others) had their own specialized republican houses of design. (Fig. 5.2.) These worked for the needs of the specialized industrial conglomerates under the Ministry of Light Industry. Shoes, for instance, were designed both at ODMO in Moscow and at the Chelyabinsk House of Shoe Design.

The design of special and work clothes was entrusted to a separate organization in the middle of the 1960s. Before that the considerations of fashion had been deemed irrelevant to working clothes, which were supposed to be primarily functional and practical. However, by the decree of the Soviet of the Ministers of the USSR on the 23rd of July, 1962, the Ministry of Light Industry was given the task of founding the necessary design departments for working clothes.²¹⁴ On the 24th of November in 1964, the main Party newspaper *Pravda* reported that the Soviet government had discussed the question of the improvement of the quality and aesthetic character of such special clothes. As a result new state norms for working clothes were taken into use and special attention was paid to the design of all kinds of work clothes.²¹⁵ All-Union competitions, in which the best designers of the country took part, were organized regularly to reveal the best designs in work wear. In 1970 the Moscow Experimental Garment Factory was nominated as the main enterprise in the field of producing new clothing designs for the workers and employees in all the fields of the Soviet economy.²¹⁶ In the mid-1970s, it was transformed into the House of Design of Special and Working Clothes under the Russian Ministry of Light Industry. This was an important event which received a lot of publicity in



Fig. 5.2. Designs from the Kirghiz House of Fashion Design of Clothes, Ministry of Light Industry, 1967.

the Soviet press: the USSR was proudly declared to be the only country in the world where the best fashion designers designed the working clothes of ordinary people together with exclusive evening dresses. (Fig. 5.3.).

In addition to the territorial and specialized Houses of Design, the bigger enterprises of light industry founded their own departments of fashion design, research and development departments and laboratories. The plans of the enterprises obliged them to regularly renew the lists of their products. Bigger clothing factories employed dozens of professional designers and pattern makers. As a rule, the factories were supposed to order the majority of their new designs from the territorial or special houses of fashion design of clothes; they were officially assigned to produce only a small number of these designs themselves. The proportion of their own and external designs was not, however, strictly determined or stable from one year to the next. It also varied from one enterprise to another. In practice, the individual factories often tried to establish a maximal degree of autonomy and thus in fact competed with the houses of fashion design to which they were officially assigned.

The fact that the regional houses of design were supposed to service the local enterprises caused other problems too. For instance, the designer at the House of Fashion Design at Barnaul, Altai region, could be almost certain that



Fig. 5.3. A fashion show of new work clothes at the Youth Café Romantika, Moscow, 1964.

his or her designs would never be sewn with the much better machinery of the Moscow factory of the same Ministry. The Altai factories were expected to cooperate mainly with the local Altai House of Fashion Design to which they were officially attached. In principle, the local clothing factory was allowed to cooperate even with other houses of fashion design under the Ministry of Light Industry. In practice, this was however quite difficult since such an unorganized, free distribution of orders would, in authorities' opinion, lead to chaos and open competition between the various fashion institutions and was therefore not encouraged. As everyone knew, there were both professionally strong and highly experienced fashion organizations as well as weaker ones, like the new ones located in the smaller provincial cities. It was obvious to everyone that, if allowed, factories would order designs only from the best designers. In that case some houses would be inflated with orders at the cost of the others, which would not be able to fulfil their quotas since they could not compete with their prices. The Ministry tried to solve this problem and standardize the general level of designs by, for instance, giving extra support to the recently established weaker regional organizations.

There were certainly exceptions to the general rule. For instance, the Houses of Fashion Design at both Riga and Tallinn, not situated in the bigger Soviet centers, received a lot of orders from the factories in the territory of Russia because of their good reputation and Western image. But the main exception was the All-Union House of Fashion Design, ODMO at Moscow. The Ministry actively distributed its designs all over the country in order to improve the general quality of clothing production. To sum up, a garment factory at Sverdlovsk was supposed to mainly make use of the designs of the local Sverdlovsk House of Fashion Design as well as the designs worked out in its own research and development department. Only as an extra addition

did it have the right to buy a restricted number of designs from ODMO and even more rarely from the other leading Soviet houses.

In 1968 about 20 enterprises from the Moscow region were officially assigned to ODMO and ordered new designs from Kuznetkii Most street. In addition, 234 clothing factories from the “periphery” sewed clothes using ODMO’s designs. In 1969 as many as 297 factories from the different regions ordered ODMO’s designs.²¹⁷

The factories had the right and the obligation to order new designs from the houses of fashion design. They had to pay a price set by the state for these services. The factories were often interested, out of purely economic considerations, in designing their clothes themselves. The state did not approve of such a practice. The professional services of these houses of fashion design were not very expensive. For example, in the end of the 1970s the price a factory had to pay for one new design of male clothes (an overcoat, a dress suit, and a rain coat) including the template and the whole technical documentation and set of instructions was 546 rubles.²¹⁸ (At the same time the monthly salary of a university professor was 300–400 rubles.)

In the 1960s, the cultural, propagandistic functions of the houses of fashion design at the Ministry as well as at the other administrative units became more important. Their departments engaged in the propagation of fashion and the culture of dress as well as strengthening the education of good taste among the population. The directors of the houses as well as their designers, pattern makers and artistic consultants started to appear regularly in the central and local press, radio broadcasts and TV reports. As is evident from the newspaper clippings and journal articles preserved in ODMO’s library, hundreds of local newspapers had regular columns dedicated to fashion and the culture of dress. They were often written by the specialists working in the local fashion organizations. The local houses of fashion design gradually started to play an important role in the cultural life of the Soviet provinces. Judging from the local press, their leading designers became celebrities well known and respected in their own town and region. The local political and cultural elite used the services of these houses of fashion design too.

The Center point of Soviet fashion: The All-Union House of Fashion Design, ODMO

All through the post-war decades, the All-Union House of Fashion Design, ODMO was a leading institute of fashion design in the Soviet Union. It was a combination of a research institute, a design factory, and an exhibition center. From the second half of the 1960s until the collapse of the Soviet Union its structure remained more or less the same. It had several workshops, specialized departments and divisions: the design of men’s fashion, the design of women’s clothes and underwear, the design of children’s wear, as well as the design of fur clothes and head wear. In addition it had a department for the preparation of industrial templates, for the practical adaptation of designs for industrial production, for making instructional patterns for the general

population, for the propaganda of fashion and for running the exhibition hall. Finally it had an experimental department.

In the 1960s to the 1980s, the collective of ODMO counted 700–800 employees including 70 designers and about as many pattern makers. In those years ODMO worked out over four thousand new designs a year, though it should be noted that every design did not necessarily go through the whole process from first sketch to final production template. Hardly any other institute of fashion design could have competed with ODMO in terms of the amount of designers and designs. It was common knowledge that ODMO had the best fashion professionals in the Soviet Union. All new designs passed through the inspection of its artistic council, the head of which was the deputy minister of the consumer goods industry.

Two different seasonal collections (for both autumn-winter and spring-summer) were created every year from the new designs at ODMO and the other regional houses of fashion design: the first was the trend-setting collection of fashion (the Soviet analogue of haute couture), which gave “directions” to the other design organizations and the garment factories, helping them to orient themselves to the perspectives of fashion a couple of years ahead of time. The second kind were the so-called industrial collections, which had been worked out on the basis of the directive collections of the previous years.

The designs of the industrial collections were meant to be taken into production without any delay. Therefore, they not only followed present fashion but, distinctly from the designs of trend-setting fashion, they could easily be adapted to the various norms, standards and technical possibilities of mass production at Soviet factories. The seasonal collections had 120–150 items of clothing in various categories, from ordinary and work clothes to formal dress and wedding gowns. Periodically ODMO also received special orders, for example for school uniforms, uniforms for the pioneers’ summer camps, and fine clothing for delegations of sportsmen or other groups representing the country abroad. One of ODMO’s main tasks was to regularly supply the enterprises located in the capital area with new industrial designs. These factories were supposed to renew their production lists at regular intervals and therefore, following their economic contracts, they turned to ODMO in good time and ordered and paid for new designs of particular types of clothes. Alternatively, they could buy examples that had already been demonstrated at an exhibition.²¹⁹

After the second half of the 1960s, the role of ODMO grew remarkably stronger as the All-Union center of general coordination and instruction in relation to the other republican and regional organizations. An order of the Ministry of Light Industry on the 18th of September 1969 gave ODMO the leading role in questions of industrial and trend-setting design and in the preparation and distribution of the necessary methodical materials, and obliged it to give all kinds of practical help to all the republican and regional houses of fashion design.²²⁰ ODMO regularly organized working meetings, both All-Union and geographically more limited ones, for the co-workers of the various design institutions, the task of which was to inform the specialists coming from all over the country of the present trends in fashion as well

as to discuss emerging problems and to exchange experiences in fashion design and pattern making. These meetings contributed naturally to the development of a general policy and common style.

The leading French fashion houses were consistently the main reference point for the Soviet fashion experts and authorities. Among all the Parisian fashion houses Dior's played an exceptional role. Moscow's relation to the House of Dior was very close for most of the post-war era.²²¹ Christian Dior's Fashion House visited Moscow with a three day fashion exhibition as early as June 1959. This event could be compared to a great diplomatic accomplishment and it duly received a lot of attention both at home and abroad. A Soviet delegation visited Dior's fashion house in Paris in 1957, 1960 and 1965. This close collaboration even gave cause to a quite spectacular bit of news according to which certain Dior models would eventually be mass produced in the Soviet Union in the 1960s.²²² There were many reasons – partly accidental – why it was particularly Dior who came to play the role of an early godfather to Soviet fashion, but his rather classic and conservative style, exemplified in the famous New Look of the late 1940s, probably appealed aesthetically to the leaders of the Soviet consumer goods industry.

At the order of the Soviet government ODMO prepared one collection after another for foreign exhibitions, all expected to be on the level of world fashion both as far as their general design and more directly as far as the individual garments were concerned.²²³ The year 1953 was important in this respect since the USSR for the first time took part in the International Competition of Fashion at Prague. Later on these competitions among the designers of the socialist countries became regular, annual events. In 1957 Moscow organized the 6th International Youth Festival, which in many ways symbolized the new post-Stalinist opening of the country to the world. ODMO's artists designed special costumes for the Soviet delegation on this occasion. The year 1967 witnessed the International Fashion Festival at Moscow, an extremely important event in the Soviet history of fashion which definitively legitimized the role of fashion and fashion design in the Soviet Union in particular and under socialism in general. For this occasion ODMO naturally designed a special collection of its own. The Soviet exhibition at the International World Fair in Montreal, EXPO-67, in the same year, was almost as important for the future of Soviet fashion. Fashion exhibitions were an essential part of many Soviet trade exhibitions, like the ones held at Earl's Court in London.²²⁴ *The New York Times*, for instance, published a report of such a show in 1968 (7 August) with the title "The Russians Put on a Show – a Stylish One." (Fig. 5.4.)

Some Soviet designs and designers were well received early on and became well known abroad. For instance, at the International Competition of Fashion of the socialist countries in 1958 the designer Vera Ippolitovna Aralova from ODMO received two first prizes for her dresses with a straight silhouette of a Russian shirt, *Plakhta* and *Suzdal*, made out of artificial silk and designed following old Russian folk motifs.²²⁵ Ten years later, Tatiana Osmerkina's design *Rossiya* in carnation pink and stylized after an ancient Russian icon received an enthusiastic response. The model Liudmila



Fig. 5.4. A design from ODMO at the Soviet Exhibition of Trade and Industry in London, 1968.

Romanovskaya, a typical Russian beauty, demonstrated it.²²⁶ This dress, which many even now regard as the most successful achievement of Soviet fashion design, was well received first at the International Fashion Festival in Moscow in 1967 and at the international exhibition EXPO-67 in Montreal. Later on, it became a standard item in the collections of ODMO that were demonstrated in various countries around the world. This was a good example of how the Soviet experts treated their best creations like individual works of art that kept their aesthetic and functional value almost eternally, becoming classics.

Irina Krutikova's (also from ODMO, moved later to VIALegprom) collection of fur clothes, among them suede coats, caught the attention of many foreign visitors at the Moscow International Fashion Festival in 1967. This was the first time that a Soviet designer demonstrated a complete collection of her own and not just individual items as a part of a bigger Soviet or All-Union collection. It was common for the Soviet collections to be compilations of the designs of several designers who worked in the same fashion organization, like ODMO. In 1968 a delegation of the Ministry of Light Industry took one of Krutikova's creations to Paris where the Soviet model Tamara Vladimirtseva demonstrated it with great success as a part of Louis Ferró's autumn-winter collection of 1968–1969. During a few days of the fashion show the foreign specialists had a chance to see three Soviet designs, two in each individual show. Tamara Vladimirtseva was, according to Soviet standards, very thin.²²⁷ This was the first, in those times sensational, success of Soviet designers in the West.²²⁸

During this same time, 1967–1968, the talents of a young designer at ODMO, Vyacheslav Mikhailovich Zaitsev, were recognized abroad. He became the best known Soviet designer, called the “Red Dior” abroad. He designed for the two abovementioned exhibitions, at Moscow and Montreal, a small collection of his own called “The Ancient Russ” following the motifs of ancient Russian architecture. These were demonstrated as a part of the general collection of ODMO and received high grades from the international experts. As a consequence, in January 1968 the American firm Celanese Fibers Co made a deal with ODMO, having in mind the prospect of cooperating with Zaitsev, in particular, regarding the creation of a collection of women’s fashion with Russian motifs with synthetic fabrics of their own production. The purpose of the contract was to make the clothes of the American firm more competitive on the international markets. Three leading designers from ODMO, Irina Krutikova, Lina Telegina, and Zaitsev, made a collection of 30 items (according to some sources 45 items). Each of the three designers designed about ten items including both ordinary and formal clothes, like cocktail dresses. (Fig. 5.5.)

After a successful demonstration for the representatives of the firm Celanese in 1969 the collection was exhibited in the Museum of Contemporary Art in New York. *The New York Times* wrote that “although designed in the Government-controlled Moscow House of Fashion, most of the designs reflected the splendor of Tsarist Russia.”²²⁹ The May issue of the *Sovetskii export*, the official journal of the Ministry of Foreign Trade, appreciated this American contract highly, writing in the article “Clothes to America” that “the designs were sold for the prices common for the items of the best designers of Western Europe.” Pictures were also attached to the article of the models and designers demonstrating their clothes for Celanese. The picture of Zaitsev had the inscription: “V. Zaitsev, an artist of infallible taste, one of those who appreciates original and brave solutions. These designs enjoy a huge demand abroad.”²³⁰

At about the same time, from the end of 1966 to the end of 1968, ODMO played an important part in the efforts of Soviet economic expansion into the West. These efforts were initiated both by the Ministry of Light Industry and the Ministry of Foreign Trade and were actively supported by the whole Soviet government. Since the Soviet Union had a chronic lack of foreign currency and since Soviet fashion – Russian imperial style – seemed to be popular abroad, a decision was made to design, with the help of the best designers, collections which could be sold in the West.²³¹ The task was completed. In 1967–1968 such “commercial” collections were in fact demonstrated in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, West Germany, Great Britain and Japan. The foreign firms were, however, not overly enthusiastic and after the tragic events of 1968 in Czechoslovakia and the following worsening of relations with the West the initiative was given up.

The need to successfully demonstrate Soviet fashion abroad in international arenas opened up new and broader opportunities for the Soviet experts to study and learn from the international experience of fashion design and pattern construction, by, for instance, having better access to the Western literature, fashion journals and study trips abroad. The library of



Fig. 5.5. The Soviet top model Liudmila Romanovskaya demonstrates the dress Zolotoi kolos (Golden Ear) designed at ODMO at the order of the American firm Celanese Fiber, 1968.

ODMO regularly subscribed to the leading international fashion journals. ODMO's experts translated and studied them and, using them, compiled their own reports on the basic trends of international fashion, in general and in different subfields, like men's and women's fashion, sportswear, and so on.

In line with the growth in the importance of international contacts, a need arose to construct a Soviet analogy to haute couture on the basis of the trend-setting seasonal collections of fashion. (Fig. 5.6.) Thus the collections demonstrated on the podium became high priority at ODMO. The proportion of this kind of haute couture gradually increased too: according to the annual reports of ODMO in the second part of the 1960s its share was about one third of all the annual designs.²³² A new kind of a designer was demanded who could design clothes creatively for the colorful fashion shows. These designers were expected to be professionals with original ideas and creative dispositions. In the 1960s a generational change indeed took place at ODMO. Viacheslav Zaitzev, Tatiana Osmerkina, Lina Telegina, Yulia Denisova, Svetlana Kocharava, Tamara Mokeyeva (later to become Raisa Gorbachova's designer), Aleksandr Danilovich Igmand (Leonid Brezhnev's designer) and others gradually occupied the leading positions at the institute.



Fig. 5.6. Victoria Brezhneva and Patricia Nixon, the wives of the leaders of the world's two superpowers visit ODMO, 1972.

At the same time, the models changed too. New professional demands were directed at them: to better follow the international standards of appearance and to learn how to act more professionally on the podium. In 1962 alone, as many as 23 models had to leave their positions at ODMO.²³³ A special group of elite models soon appeared who demonstrated clothes mainly at the international exhibitions or in the demonstrations attached to the selection of the important directive collections. Since it was the special research and development department which dealt with the design of the Soviet haute couture and since each individual dress was sewn for an actual model these “elite” models at ODMO were mainly attached to this department. (Fig. 5.7.)

At the same time, ODMO was engaged in propagating fashion and the culture of dress among the Soviet population. The visitors to the Kuznetskii Most could take part in lectures, have a look at the permanent exhibitions and buy drawings or patterns and instructions for the best designs. Three two hour shows took place at the demonstration hall every day except Monday. They enjoyed great popularity among the Muscovites and the visitors to the capital, foreign diplomats and journalists. Those in power certainly monitored the workings of the main Soviet organization of fashion design closely, but this also meant that it enjoyed some privileges. The artistic council, headed by the deputy minister, approved of the seasonal collections as a rule.²³⁴ The council took just as seriously its task of checking and approving the collections aimed at international exhibitions. In addition, many other leading workers of the Party and the government who had some professional relation to the production of clothes, the culture and ideology of dress visited ODMO every now and then. In the 1960s and 1970s ODMO became a kind of cultural center in Moscow, attracting young people from



Fig. 5.7. Galina Milovskaya, a top model from VIALegprom, doing her make up in a Moskvich car before a photo session.

among the artistic and scientific circles. People came there hoping to get acquainted with modern fashion as well as the popular fashion designers, and possibly also in order to get one's clothes made by them (like the film director Andrey Tarkovsky). Some also certainly came there attracted by the possibility of meeting the beautiful models. Many actors and actresses well known from the Soviet film and theater world also became regular guests: Valentin Gaft whose first wife Elena Izergina was a model at ODMO, Andrei Mironov who had a romantic relationship with the model Romanovskaya, Nikita Mikhalkov, later to become a world famous film director and married to the ODMO model Tatiana Shigayeva, and others.

Even though officially ODMO did not engage in the sewing of custom made clothes to individual order, the best designers in the country did serve personally, as an exception, the cultural and political elite, at times even creating new designs for their important clients. According to the official accounts, every year ODMO filled over 100 such VIP orders sanctioned by its own Ministry. These clients included famous Soviet actresses and singers, for example, the prima ballerina of the Bolshoi Theater Maya Plisetskaya, Klavdia Shul'zhenko, Muslim Magomayev, Iosif Kobson, Edita P'ekha, Alla Pugacheva who represented the country abroad and at home and were therefore entitled to the highest standards of dress. But even other well-known public figures or their close relatives had their clothes made at ODMO, starting with the Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev, the wife of Mikhail Gorbachev Raisa Maksimovna, the Minister of Culture Ekaterina Furtseva, the daughter of the Soviet Prime Minister Aleksey Kosygin, Liudmila Gvishiani, and ending with the first female astronaut, Valentina Tereshkova. These close, often personal ties with the leaders of the country emphasized the exceptionally strong and central role of ODMO in the Soviet system of

fashion. However, from the end of the 1960s, the main institute of fashion research at the Ministry of Light Industry was no longer formally ODMO but the newly founded VIALegprom which now became the “crown on the head” of the extensive system of Soviet fashion. Nevertheless, due to its long and valuable experience in the work of fashion ODMO preserved its importance and became the right hand of VIALegprom until the collapse of the USSR.

Standardizing Soviet Clothing Sizes: TsNIIShP and Other Scientific Research and Construction Organizations at the Ministry of Light Industry

In addition to the houses of fashion design, the scientific research institutes and technical pattern construction bureaus at the Ministry of the Light Industry were important units in the Soviet system of fashion design. The task of such applied research was to provide the field of fashion with the most advanced scientific and technological advice and instructions. The state, which financed this extensive and expensive structure, naturally expected to get its money back in the form of new applications of science and technology for production.

The Central Scientific Research Institute of the Garment Industry (TsNIIShP) was the leading organization, the task of which was to develop the design and technology of clothing construction, to analyze the materials to be used in sewing and develop the practical qualities of the clothes in use. In the 1960s, TsNIIShP had several laboratories dedicated to, for example, the construction of practical clothing, the technology of the garment industry, the knowledge of materials, the clothing hygiene, and the design, construction and technology of industrial clothes. In 1965, the Institute employed five fashion designers and several dozen pattern makers and textile engineers.

It was founded as early as 1930 to provide the garment industry with scientific innovations. In the middle of the 1930s it worked out the first ever Soviet systematic and standardized method of industrially mass producing clothes.²³⁵ However, it never really succeeded in establishing itself before the war, which had devastating effects on the quality of mass-produced clothes up to the 1960s. For instance, for a very long time there were no anthropological data about the population of the Soviet Union which could be used to determine the different sizes and patterns when sewing clothes industrially. TsNIIShP, together with the department of anthropology at Moscow State University, conducted such systematic measurements for the first time in 1957–1965. Citizens of both sexes were measured in all the different regions and parts of the country, from the Far East to the Baltic Sea, from the Arctic regions to the Black Sea. After that the measures of the most commonly met figures were classified and codified.²³⁶ On their basis, about 100 standard measures were calculated for both women and men. In consequence, the garment industry, the fashion houses, and the clothing trade had a unified set of scientifically founded standard human figures at their disposal for the first time. All this allowed, from the 1960s onward, improvement of the quality of

mass-produced clothes, a better fit for different figures, as well as an increase in the variety of ready-made clothes for sale.

These new standard measures covered about 80 percent of all the various human figures, making it in principle possible for almost everyone to find readymade clothes in the shops that would fit without any need of additional adjustment. This was a great leap forward and followed the international example of those years. But what was to be done with the rest of the population, making up almost one fifth of all Soviets, who did not have these standard figures? Just like in other countries, they had the choice to buy readymade clothes and adjust them later, to sew clothes themselves, or to turn to one of the numerous Soviet ateliers of custom made clothes.

In 1966–1967, as a consequence of the standardization of the clothing industry within the COMECON, the Institute of Garment Industry conducted new anthropometric studies among the adult and adolescent population of the USSR. This resulted in the unified typology of the measures of the COMECON countries which led further, in 1974, to the development of the general standards for the clothing industry of the whole Eastern bloc. In the mid-1970s, 93 standard male figures and 105 female figures were determined which the clothing industry was to use in sewing garments.²³⁷ In the following decades, the TsNIIShP had various tasks. It had the responsibility of analyzing the new synthetic textiles which started to appear in clothing production in the USSR to make sure that they would not cause any harm to the health of the population. After 1970 the selection and buying of textiles from other countries followed the standards developed by the scientific laboratories. For instance, in evaluating the merits of jeans that could be imported to the USSR in the 1970s the same standards were used as far as their durability, resistance to folding and wrinkling and endurance of washing were concerned. Durability and long life were the main criteria of good quality. It did not occur to anyone that textiles that did not tolerate washing well and were soft and easily folding could be more fashionable and even more comfortable to wear. At the same time the secret laboratory number ten of the Institute conducted research, together with the Scientific Institute of Aviation and Cosmic Medicine of the Ministry of Defense, on suits for cosmonauts and pilots, from their underwear to their overalls.²³⁸ They all needed their own designers too. The laboratories at TsNIIShP also constructed special clothes for polar expeditions and for work in extremely warm conditions. The designers of the Institute had the important task of taking care that these special clothes were not only practical and comfortable but also beautiful and fashionable.

In the beginning of the 1970s the researchers at TsNIIShP were asked to prepare recommendations regarding the needed renewal of the clothing price approval system. No Soviet product could be sold before it had passed the rather complicated and bureaucratic procedure of price control. Until 1972, this was the duty of the State Committee for Prices of each Soviet republic. For instance, all the garment factories in the Russian Federation had to send their clothing designs and the attached technical documentation to the State Committee for Prices of the Russian Federation. Understandably, on many occasions the designs went out of fashion before their prices

had been properly approved. Fashion design would therefore have greatly benefitted from a more flexible and decentralized system of price setting.

In 1972 TsNIIShP did in fact take the initiative to change this system of price setting for men's and women's clothes. The old norms regulating the use of textiles, dating back to Stalin's times, were now abolished and at the same time the degree of difficulty in sewing the garment was taken into account in determining its price. These recommendations were approved and a new price list came into being in 1974. This reform gave a remarkable stimulus to the factories to take more fashionable clothes into production. At the same time, the garment industry was given the right to determine their prices without the interference of the State Committee for Prices, which saved a lot of time and greatly sped up the production of fashionable garments as well as their appearance in the shops. However, the reform at that point concerned only coats, trousers, suits and dresses. Other clothing items had to wait until 1979–1981 for the price control to become more flexible.

The Highest Authority of Soviet Fashion: All-Union Institute of Product Assortment and Culture of Dress under the Ministry of Light Industry, VIALegprom

VIALegprom was founded in 1958 to become the highest authority in the field of fashion design and the propaganda of fashion in the USSR. It again was an integral part of a bigger network of similar organizations in the other Eastern European socialist countries within the COMECON.

According to its founding statutes, VIALegprom had several important functions similar to ODMO's. It took in fact over the role of ODMO as the leading Soviet institute of fashion. Among its tasks were to study the assortment of items produced by Soviet industry, to choose and control the best textiles and clothes to be used, and to study and distribute the most advanced experiences of fashion design in the Soviet Union and abroad. VIALegprom's tasks also included the technical and aesthetic instruction of the activities of the houses of fashion design and the other organizations involved in fashion design within the Ministry, and to coordinate the work of its enterprises and organizations in order to create collections and whole sets of clothes, shoes, head wear, etc. It was also expected to actively propagate Soviet fashion.²³⁹ Until then no one had analyzed and coordinated in earnest the creation of harmonious totalities of dress, their color scales, silhouettes, stylistic themes, technological details, etc. in producing whole sets of clothes as well as whole collections.²⁴⁰ These innovative measures are still impressive even though their practical realization faced many problems.²⁴¹

Starting in the end of the 1960s, the institute received additional functions and authority in coordinating the work of the other organizations of fashion design, greatly increased its staff and moved to a brand new ten floor building in central Moscow specially constructed for it. Several new designers, Irina Krutikova among them, were employed in the research and development department. Departments analyzing consumer demand, the propaganda of

Soviet fashion and the culture of dress, and the advertising of fashionable clothes were all among its new additions.

Its publishing activities advanced too. VIALegprom started producing its own advertisement films. For instance, in the 1980s it prepared a movie for every meeting of its artistic council which was then distributed to all the main organizations of fashion design in the USSR. At the same time, the publication of its three major fashion journals continued: *Zhurnal mod* (The Fashion Journal), *Modeli sezona* (The Fashion of the Season; first issue in spring 1959), and *Mody stran sotsializma* (Fashion from the Socialist Countries).²⁴²

Organizations analogous to VIALegprom were established in the Soviet republics. The most important among them were the Special Artistic Bureau of Construction (SHKB) in the Russian Ministry of Light Industry and the Ukrainian Institute of Product Assortment and Culture of Dress. They both had their own experimental departments with their fashion designers and models.

The department of the theory of fashion was considered to be the leading part of VIALegprom. It made prognoses of the fashion trends, for the purpose of which it analyzed the development of international fashion. It also regularly summarized and compiled brochures on the tendencies of international fashion using international fashion journals and other available information sources. These were then distributed in a couple of hundred copies to all the republican and regional fashion institutions.

After its move to the new building it was the only organization in the Soviet Union that had a demonstration hall that was specially built for the purpose of fashion shows. The other demonstration halls in Moscow and other cities were situated in pre-revolutionary buildings that did not fulfil the modern demands of fashion demonstrations. In many Soviet cities and towns fashion shows were organized in sports and concert halls as well as bigger theaters. The hall at VIALegprom was certainly one of the biggest in the world. It hardly ever stayed empty: in addition to its internal use, twice every month a regional house of fashion design visited it to demonstrate its own fashion collection at the Soviet capital. These fashion shows were, as a rule, open to ordinary Soviet citizens and foreign visitors.

In its hall of product assortment, VIALegprom started to exhibit the best Soviet clothes, shoes, and textiles which its aesthetic committee had inspected and approved. It had a unique historical collection of the different kinds of textiles produced in Russia and the USSR since pre-revolutionary times. The building also housed a library which was, after ODMO's, the second fashion library in the Soviet Union with a rich collection of international and domestic fashion journals and other publications.²⁴³

It was above all VIALegprom which was responsible for the image of Soviet fashion abroad. The Institute created experimental designs of clothing aimed at international exhibitions and also collected and reproduced for the shows the best clothes created in the other houses of fashion design in the country. It organized delegations and compiled collections of Soviet fashion for the annual forums of fashion of the Socialist countries as well as for the more prestigious exhibitions in the West.

The only aesthetic council which had All-Union status and authority comprising the whole territory of the USSR on the questions of fashion and the culture of dress worked under the auspices of VIALegprom making it in practice the “lawgiver” of Soviet fashion. VIALegprom produced, and its aesthetic council gathered, inspected and approved of the trend-setting collection and worked out recommendations regarding the future perspectives of fashion.²⁴⁴ In the beginning this took place once a year, later on twice. As a result of its meetings and the work of the aesthetic council, VIALegprom regularly published a catalogue of fashion designs. Since fashion was planned at least a year ahead the fashion trends of 1970, for instance, were made in the summer of 1968 and were finally approved in the autumn of the same year.

The meetings of the aesthetic council were quite remarkable occasions, gathering together the leading fashion specialists of the country, including designers, pattern makers, art theorists, engineers, and the leaders of the various fashion organizations from all the republics and regions of the USSR. At best well over 500 participants could be present at the demonstration hall. The idea was that all fashion organizations would regularly send their best designs which included some innovative ideas to the aesthetic council to be seriously discussed and evaluated.

In practice, the aesthetic council went through and approved of four trend-setting collections every year: first, the prospective collection of textiles, clothes and other materials, second the knitwear items, then shoes and other leather items (bags, gloves, belts, etc.), and finally the collection of the complete sets of clothes. This order had a logic of its own since, quite naturally, each design needed its own raw materials. Interestingly, the idea of designing a complete set of clothes included hosiery, socks and accessories for both women and men.

All the houses of fashion design as well as, from the late 1970s onward, the main industrial enterprises made their own suggestions for the main collection.²⁴⁵ VIALegprom itself made only a few of the actual fashion designs; the other part came from the items designed by other houses and accepted into the special trend-setting collections. These included indoor and outdoor wear, knitwear as well as assorted leather and fur items.

Before each meeting of the big aesthetic council the members of its working group went through hundreds of designs submitted to them from the local organizations all over the country. A small number were turned down totally, the rest were divided into two groups to be included in either the industrial collection or the trend-setting collection. The final selection took place before the meeting of the whole aesthetic council.²⁴⁶ For instance, on the eve of the meeting of the aesthetic council on 22–23 November, 1968 its working section went through 403 new designs of male and female clothes, 50 knitwear items, 43 shoe designs, and 33 bags, suitcases and briefcases. Their designers came from the houses of fashion design all over the country. This particular meeting was quite typical and did not differ in any way from other meetings of these times.

The meetings of the council of VIALegprom differed from the meetings of the other fashion organizations since the collections were not the results of

the work of the designers of one organization alone but represented the best designers in the whole country. The clothes in the industrial collection were recommended for taking into industrial production immediately (in this case as early as the second half of the year 1969). The designs of the trend-setting collection were in their turn meant to be included in the following industrial collection of 1970. In principle every directive collection was meant to become an industrial collection the year after. The purpose was to promote orderliness and forecasting. The biggest part of the collection inspected and evaluated by the working section of the aesthetic council was included in the trend-setting collection: 151 designs of men's and women's clothes, 33 designs of shoes, and 22 designs of leather products.²⁴⁷ Accessories, which were usually regarded as secondary complements to the main design, were considered to be integral parts of the whole outfit in these collections. The results of VIALegprom's aesthetic council were published every year in special brochures, like "The directives of fashion of the complete set of clothes for the year ..." or "The directives of the fashion show for the year ..." They were then distributed all over the country.

The concluding part of the annual report on the collections of the aesthetic council was called the ensemble. In 1970 it gave the following characterization of future Soviet fashion: "The ensemble of female clothes distinguishes itself with its outstanding lines, harmonic portions, elegant forms ... The male ensemble distinguishes itself with the clear silhouette of its items with their carefully worked out details and additions."²⁴⁸

Together with the other socialist countries, the Soviet Union regularly demonstrated its new designs in the meetings of the Permanent Working Group on the Questions of the Culture of Dress of the COMECON. VIALegprom played an important role in this socialist competition too. Several dozen best female and male designs from the trend-setting collections of VIALegprom were selected for these demonstrations each year. They competed for the best designs with the fashion collections of the other European socialist countries

Fashion Design in the Garment Enterprises

In 1962, A. A. Krasovskaya, the director of the Leningrad garment factory *Bolshevichka*, which specialized in the production of high quality women's clothes published the book *Sovetskim zhenshchinam-krasivuyu, dobrotную odezhdu* (To the Soviet women-beautiful and good clothes). Krasovskaya complained that her advanced enterprise, which had had an experimental laboratory of fashion design of its own since the 1930s, had to rely on the products of the Leningrad House of Fashion Design. In her words, in 1961 out of all the 200 new designs, 165 were ordered from this House and the factory's own designers created only 35. In their own opinion, they could easily have done much more. She recommended that the proportion should be reversed and referred to the experiences of Hungary, which she had recently visited. The Hungarians created their new designs mostly in the industrial enterprises. The local houses of fashion design consulted the

firms on the more general directions of fashion. In Hungary, the houses functioned, in other words, exclusively as trend-setters resembling the role of VIA Legprom in the USSR.²⁴⁹ Krasovskaya was convinced that such a division of labor would be optimal for the garment industry in the Soviet Union too.²⁵⁰ Her opinion became popular among the factory directors, who were obviously dissatisfied with their dependence on the houses of fashion design and their curatorial role.

By 1960 at the latest all the major garment, shoe, knitwear, and leather factories had their own research and development departments or experimental laboratories and workshops. (Fig. 5.8.) They were directly engaged in both the design and styling and modeling of new patterns at the orders of the factory leadership as well as in the application—which often meant simplification—of the completed designs they received from the fashion houses, a procedure against which these houses constantly protested with hardly any results. The directors argued that many designs which came to them from the fashion houses, including ODMO, were good examples of Soviet haute couture in the sense that they were alien to “real life” and to the customers’ demands as well as to the technological possibilities and economic norms of the factories. Therefore it was necessary to modify them before taking them into production. To this claim the workers at the houses of the fashion design answered that, in fact, such changes often only led to the unnecessary simplification of the original design, mainly due to the professional incompetence of the garment factories.

The situation did not improve in the 1970s. The new economic politics demanded and actively promoted the formation of gigantic regional industrial consortiums by abolishing the central ministries and joining together several factories. As a consequence, their design organizations were joined together as well. As a result these organizations became stronger and could seriously compete with the real houses of fashion design. Some such conglomerates even established their own artistic councils which started to approve, on their own initiative, new designs worked out by the specialists of the factory. The very fact of the establishment of artistic councils was equal to a declaration of independence from the design houses in the questions of fashion. The design houses naturally protested against such tendencies.

Just like other big enterprises, the huge Moscow-based industrial garment conglomerate, with the characteristic name *Zenskaya moda* (Female Fashion) also had an experimental laboratory. It had come into being in the beginning of the 1970s as a result of the unification of three garment factories producing women’s fashion in the capital region, the profiles of which were quite close to each other: *Moksvichka*, *Chaika* and *Istrinskaya shveinaya fabrika*. *Zhenskaya moda* had its own artistic council. The following fact gives a good idea of the relatively high quality of its designs: four ended up at once in the trend-setting collection of the USSR for the years 1973–1974 and were demonstrated in the annual fashion competition of the socialist countries in Romania.

However, the new designs mainly came to the factory *Zhenskaya moda* from ODMO. Its own designers made only a relatively small percentage of them—as a rule only ten to fifteen percent. The situation in the whole country



Fig. 5.8. A meeting of the artistic council of the Bol'shevichka garment factory discussing a new men's suit, Moscow 1966.

was about the same from the 1960s to the 1980s. The designers working at the factories had the advantage of being more operational: in the fashion houses it could take a year to provide the new design with the complete technical documentation starting from its first sketch. The factories could complete the same task in just a couple of months. Sometimes, with an urgent order from the leadership, the designers at the factory could manage to do it in a couple of days. (For instance, when the trade organizations demanded an urgent modification of an already existing design.) The other side of the coin was the almost total dependence of the designers on the factory leadership, who often oriented themselves more according to the practical demands of the fulfillment of the quota than to higher aesthetic imperatives. In addition, the majority of these research and development laboratories were, after all, professionally weaker than the “real” houses of fashion design. Taking into consideration all these factors the leaders of the Ministry of Light Industry did not want to make any cardinal changes in the relations of the various design organizations: they relied mostly on the higher professional capacity of the fashion design houses and expected better results from their cooperation with the factories.

Fashion Design in the Houses of Everyday Services

In the 1960s a unique new sector of the economy came into being in the Soviet Union, even the name of which is almost impossible to translate into any other language. This was the comprehensive system of everyday services (*sluzhba byta*) for the population with a special ministry of its own. The Ministry of Everyday Services of the Population of the RSFSR (Minbyt RSFSR) was a Republican Ministry founded in 1965 to administer all enterprises relating to everyday services on the territory of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. It was shut down in 1991 following the collapse of the Soviet Union. In contrast to both light industry and trade, there was no All-Union Ministry in the field of Everyday Services. It was thought that the Republican level was more appropriate to administer numerous local and regional service enterprises.

Services were for a long time regarded to be the less developed part of the Soviet economy. Until the mid-1960s, many service enterprises and units (barber's and hair-dresser's, laundries, ateliers and workshops, watchmaker's, shoe and tool repair shops, etc.) worked under the local or municipal administration, others were cooperatives, whereas yet others were scattered under various other ministries and administrative units. In 1965, after the establishment of the new Ministry, they were all united into one central administrative system. In fact, a totally new field of the economy was thus born in the Soviet Union. The purpose of this reform was to enlarge the network of services, and provide them with modern tools and technique as well as more qualified labor force. The new Ministry introduced new quality standards to raise the level of its services. It also soon established its own institutes of fashion design to serve its ateliers of custom made clothes. In the following we shall present the most important among them.

Contrary to the capitalist West where local shopping centers often combined enterprises of trade with various service units under the same roof, in the USSR the state-owned trade and services had been, following the principle of specialization, strictly separated into separate ministries as well as buildings. The new Soviet service centers, *Doma byta*, on the other hand, covered everything that had to do with the services needed for the everyday life of a human being. They united all the existing ateliers of custom made clothes which had earlier belonged to different administrative departments, together with barber's shops and public bathing institutions, dry cleaners, renting points, as well as various service centers for the repair of watches, metal objects, electric tools, and so on.²⁵¹

The system of individual sewing or custom made clothes consisted of four divisions in the USSR: 1) clothes and suits, 2) knitwear, 3) head wear, and 4) shoes. Even though they all belonged to the same ministry they all also had their own ateliers, factories, and industrial conglomerates with their own designers. The individual sewing of hats and shoes in particular was popular in the Soviet Union. Special regional industrial conglomerates were established in hat production which had their own experimental shops with a staff of designers.²⁵²

The general idea was that the units of individual sewing and services could compensate for the shortcomings of the mass production of clothes, hats and shoes in the Soviet consumer goods industry. At the same time, in the economically advanced countries of the West such ateliers of individual orders and service had become rare and expensive luxuries. The opening of a nationwide chain of these service centers was concrete proof that highly centralized industrial mass production, officially favored by the Soviet government, was not a universally valid solution to all the problems of the satisfaction of the population's needs and material well-being. At the same time, the principle "big is beautiful" came from the very beginning to dominate this new service sector of the Soviet economy too. The new service centers were large and centralized all the various activities and units under the same roof and the same administrative planning system.

Since the individual nature of the customized production of clothes could not in general compete cost-effectively with mass production the government fixed its prices at an artificially low level. Therefore dressmakers' and tailors' ateliers sold their garments for relatively low prices, though they were still more expensive than ready-made clothes.²⁵³ Sometimes custom garments could, however, be even cheaper than ready made. The authorities therefore took to the old proven methods and tried to make the ateliers of individualized sewing more profitable by promoting their specialization, centralizing their production, and introducing more effective methods of mass production such as the conveyor belt with a strict division of labor. Thus the system of individual services gradually repeated the very same methods that had produced so many controversial results in Soviet light industry and had originally given rise to this new alternative organization. Its working methods often came to be closer to industrial production when compared to the traditional fashion ateliers and tailoring workshops. The industrialized production units of custom made clothes thus faced contradictory expectations from the very beginning, which were understandably not at all easy to satisfy. They were expected to have a highly individual approach to their clients at the same time as being economically highly effective by making use of all the methods of standardized industrial mass production.

The Soviet ateliers made practically any kind of clothing to order – for newborn babies and adolescents, for women and men, for civilians and officers. In principle one could easily order a tailcoat or a tuxedo even though their prices would admittedly be out of reach of most wage earners. Consequently, they were for sale only in the ateliers belonging to the highest luxury or first class, operating only in the bigger cities. People with normal figures mostly ordered clothes that they could wear for a longer time and not just one or two seasons from the ateliers, like overcoats, suits, dresses, more festive clothes or simply more fashionable clothes that they could not find in the shops. However, it was also quite possible to let an atelier sew new – or repair or remake old-underwear for oneself. Those who did not have time to queue for a good tailor or dressmaker could make use of the semi-industrial items that the ateliers recommended to their customers; these were produced in small series at the factories of the system of custom made

clothes. In such cases clothes could be fitted to the client almost at once and no particular fitting session was needed. The sale of semi-industrial clothes was much more profitable for the ateliers than only sewing to individual order. However, they also raised from time to time critical questions among the specialists. They did not, after all, quite correspond to the idea of a real atelier, with its individually custom-made clothing and skillful, experienced tailors or dressmakers.

A great part of the income of the ateliers in this new system of administration was expected to come from the unofficial market, dominated until then by private tailors and dressmakers who worked illegally and did not pay any taxes, thus depriving the state every year of remarkable sums of money. According to a financial inquiry from the year 1966, private persons had made 20 to 30 percent of all items of the outer appearance of the Soviet citizens.²⁵⁴ These private and illegal or semi-legal services continued, however, to compete quite successfully with the official state-owned new services until the very end of the Soviet Union, thus disappointing those who had put great hopes in the new centralized system.

In the mid-1960s, during the formative years of the state system of individual sewing, or custom made clothes, about 12,000 ateliers with about 35,000 pattern makers worked under the Ministry of Everyday Services of the Russian Federation alone.²⁵⁵ Since the qualifications of the workforce were rather poor only a few pattern makers mastered the skills necessary for successful and creative fashion design. The first inspections in their localities showed indeed that the pattern makers often could not follow fashion. Many sewed clothes for their customers using old patterns and silhouettes they had learned long ago. This gave rise to plans of organizing separate units of fashion design within the field of everyday services, of raising the qualifications and educating new cadres of designers and pattern makers, of publishing and distributing fashion journals and albums and of adding more precise drawings and instructions to designs.

The establishment of the network of educational, scientific and design institutions of the Ministry of Everyday Services started in the 1960s too. The Moscow Technological Institute became the main provider of its new cadres. It educated designers, pattern makers and engineers of clothing for this department in particular. In 1967 two more similar institutes of higher learning were opened, one in Ukraine (Khmel'nitskii) and the other in the Far East (Vladivostok) under the respective republican ministries of everyday services. A wide range of courses for the improvement of professional qualifications were also organized.²⁵⁶

Some exemplary enterprises existed in the Ministry of Everyday Services too. In Yaroslavl', the firm *Volga* came into being as a result of the unification of all the local enterprises of garment sewing in the autumn of 1964. In 1966 it was turned into a bigger industrial conglomerate with the same name. It united firms from both Yaroslavl' and Rybinsk and had a research and development bureau with its own fashion designers. The following year, 1967, the construction of a whole separate building for a fashion house under the Ministry of Everyday Services started in the city of Yaroslavl' in order to provide new designs to the local ateliers and enterprises.²⁵⁷

In the same way, four production units of everyday services were united in the city of Perm into the new Perm Garment Factory of Individual Sewing No. 1. It combined 33 ateliers in the different regions of the city with a total staff of 2,250 people.²⁵⁸ The factory had an experimental workshop with its own fashion designers and its own artistic council. In 1968 it had 13 members, all from the factory: designers, the head engineer, pattern designers and pattern makers, and others. The new designs that passed the judgement of its artistic council were sent to the experimental workshop to be properly worked out, after which they were offered to clients through the network of its own ateliers. During its first year of existence (1967) the Perm Factory No. 1 adopted over 100 new designs which it offered to the inhabitants of Perm.²⁵⁹ The factory actively advertised its products and services among the local population too. In the end of the 1960s, it organized fashion shows of its new designs twice a week in two places in the city: in the local Center of Everyday Services, *Almaz* and in the smaller demonstration hall of the biggest atelier in the city, *Elegant*. In 1968 the research and development workshop of the factory did not yet have any models in its staff. Therefore, the models from its local competitor, the Perm House of Fashion Design under the Ministry of Light Industry worked there on short term contracts.

The whole USSR was rumored to visit the Tallinn atelier of individual sewing, *Lembitu*, which actively engaged in fashion design and was one of the first ateliers to organize its own department of semi-manufactured products. These could be fitted and modified according to the needs of the client on the very day of taking the order, which was extremely rare in Soviet days.

The availability of the services of tailors and dressmakers of individual sewing differed greatly from one region of the Soviet Union to another. As a rule it was much better in the cities than in the countryside. The citizens of Moscow and Leningrad had by far the best services at their disposal. At the moment of the fall of the Soviet Union, Moscow had about 800 ateliers attached to the larger factories in the city districts as well as a dozen industrial units specialized in making clothes following the Muscovites' orders: fur clothes (*Zima*, 42 ateliers), women's underwear (*Gratsia*, 26 ateliers), plus-sized clothes (*Elegant*, 9 ateliers), children's and youth wear (*Yunost'*, 31 ateliers), head wear (21 ateliers) as well as knitwear (*Trikotazhnitsa*, 13 ateliers).²⁶⁰ All these conglomerates had their own designers. In addition, the capital city had almost as many ateliers belonging to different departmental units which serviced only their own, restricted clientele: the Communist Party apparatus, the KGB officers, the personnel of the Ministry of International Affairs and other ministries, the Academy of Sciences, and so on.

The early official statistics are quite impressive. In 1965 the clothing ateliers of the republican Ministries of Everyday Services (shoe makers' ateliers and head wear not included) filled 30 million sewing or repairing orders from the Soviet population.²⁶¹ This was the time when the system was first under construction. After another 15 years, in 1980, in the Russian Federation alone, the clothes, knitwear and shoe makers filled 113 million orders.²⁶² The figures for Moscow were particularly high. According to one of the leaders of the Moscow Administration of Individual Sewing, N. A.

Nesterova, the Moscow ateliers filled about 5 million orders a year in the 1980s.²⁶³ This added up to almost the total amount of the population in the capital city. The ateliers at Moscow were also as a rule of good quality and accordingly the quality of sewing was also better. The long queues at the ateliers in Moscow witnessed to the fact that they preserved their popularity among the Soviet population.

The Baltic Republics were also privileged in this respect. The Riga conglomerate *Rigas Modes* (3,500 workers) had four industrial units with ten departments (among them, as usual, clothes, knitwear, fur and head wear), 85 ateliers and work-shops. If we compare the amount of orders which this conglomerate, working exclusively in Riga, fulfilled with the amount of the population of the city, every third citizen on average ordered a garment annually from their ateliers and every sixth from the knitwear atelier. *Rigas Modes* had a big research and development department where the designers constructed hundreds of new designs of fashionable clothes for their clients every year.²⁶⁴ The same was true of the shoe conglomerate at Riga, *Rigas Apavi*, which was famous for its designers.²⁶⁵

The city of Kaunas in Lithuania also had quite impressive statistics to show. At the turn of the 1980s the local factory of individual sewing of clothes *Mada* (1,400 workers) had 30 workshops and ateliers as well as an experimental design workshop. Its designers constructed and recommended to their clients each season 25–30 new clothing designs. In 1979, *Mada* filled about 600,000 orders a year. Compared to the population of Kaunas this meant that on average every person in Kaunas visited the ateliers of individual sewing with a new order almost twice a year.²⁶⁶

The situation was totally different in the sparsely populated agrarian regions of the country, in Siberia, the Far East, and the European North where it was not profitable to construct big new buildings for the ateliers of individual sewing. One attempt to solve this problem was the introduction of mobile ateliers built in trucks, the production of which started in the middle of the 1960s in the factory at the city of Ordzhonikidze. When the car body was raised higher on both axels it became an all-terrain vehicle which could drive on tracks with no real roads. This pride of the spirit of Soviet engineering became one of the main attractions at the International Exhibition of Fashion in Moscow in 1967. It had both air conditioning and heating in the working cabin. Inside the cabin was a mini-atelier: a table and chair for sewing and a box for the clothes, clothing hangers with semi-manufactured clothes, a mirror, an armchair and a small table with fashion journals for the clients. Whenever the mobile atelier came to a village the loudspeakers announced to the inhabitants the following information, which had been recorded in advance: what was for sale, how long sewing would take, and the prices of the orders. The service of the clients, the consultation with the pattern maker, the reading of the fashion journals and taking of the measures went on with accompanying music.²⁶⁷ In some parts of the Soviet Union these trucks were known as the “atelier on wheels.”²⁶⁸

The Soviet authorities divided the ateliers into four quality classes: highest or luxury, first and second class and “ordinary” sewing workshops. Some ateliers of the highest and first class were officially called fashion ateliers.

They had their own designers who consulted the clients on the selection of raw materials, design and style of the clothes. If the client so wished the designer was expected to draw a sketch of the ordered design.

In 1966 special ateliers for girls and boys under the age of 18 were opened in the cities. Since the prices fixed by the state were much lower than in the ateliers for adults these children's ateliers became quite popular. By 1980, Moscow alone had 30 such children's ateliers belonging to the firm *Yunosť* which turned out 80 to 90 new children's designs each year.²⁶⁹ One of the tasks facing the workers in these ateliers was the propagation of fashion and good taste among the youth. "The children should be taught to dress themselves well just as they are taught other qualities of adequate behavior and good manners without which it is impossible to imagine any harmoniously grown up human being," the Journal of the Russian Ministry of Everyday Services, *Sluzhba byta* announced to its readers in 1967.²⁷⁰

This monthly professional journal started publishing in 1963. Its huge editions (for instance, 1.55 million in 1966), the popular character of its articles and the abundance of its entertaining material soon turned it into a popular journal which had a wide impact on the opinions of the population. This journal gave, up to the mid-1970s, a quite realistic picture of the situation in its own field, including both critique and discussion of its shortcomings. It devoted a lot of space to the questions of fashion and the culture of dress on its pages. As the editors wrote in 1967 "by publishing the designs of the clothes, shoes, hats and accessories we not only make our readers familiar with what is beautiful, practical and fashionable, but even give more concrete recommendations to the workers of the everyday services in the country."²⁷¹

The journal regularly published clients' complaints as well as critical views of the experts. These writings show clearly that the struggle to make the ateliers of custom made clothes economically more profitable was in fact almost lost. One article described how a person living in Irkutsk, Siberia had wanted to order a suit from the local atelier but his request was turned down without any explanation. The costume was made only after he had complained to higher authorities. In another case, the atelier took four years to sew a dress, totally destroying it in the process. The inspections of the ateliers revealed constant overstepping the deadlines of the orders, bureaucratic treatment of the customers, client complaints, etc. In some cases public attorneys had to take measures in order to make the ateliers comply with their rules and regulations.²⁷² It was no wonder that many clients, after such unhappy experiences with a state atelier, turned to the services of private tailors and dressmakers, which continued to operate in great numbers alongside the official state system of custom made clothes. E. Furman's column published in the journal *Sluzhba byta* in 1980 was characteristic. Furman recollected that in one case when a tailor had botched an order of trousers he-knowing that the client also worked in an atelier – recommended the client not to visit his state – owned atelier anymore but rather order his trousers from a good private tailor, even giving him the right address.²⁷³

Fashion Designers in the Factories of Everyday Services

The design of new clothes for the needs of the custom made system followed the general tendencies of Soviet fashion in all essentials. The demand of the consumers was proclaimed as one of the priorities. In order to adequately provision all the sewing and knitwear units, as well as the shoemakers and the hatters, thousands of new professionally designed items were needed each year. For instance, in 1965 450 tailors and seamstresses who had worked at the Leningrad Trust of Individual Sewing presented their own designs to the artistic council of the factory. In the lack of any specialized design organizations, by that time this activity had become more common and the best designs received prizes.²⁷⁴ Therefore, the Ministry of Everyday Services soon felt obliged to open its own institutes of fashion design and pattern making. In so doing it relied heavily on the previous experience of the Ministry of Light Industry. In practice, however, the task in this case proved to be even more complicated. It was not enough just to open specialized fashion design units; individual experienced designers and pattern makers also had to be recruited for these ateliers.

In the system of individual sewing in general, the design workshops and experimental departments of the factories and industrial conglomerates were mainly responsible for the design of clothes. They made their designs in response to the needs of the ateliers belonging to their own administrative organizations. As early as the mid-1970s all the bigger factories within the system of individual sewing in fact actively engaged in fashion design. The republican ministries of everyday services were naturally interested in propagating their own fashion, which was expected to compete successfully with the fashion of the consumer goods industry. Therefore they started publishing their patterns on a large scale. The album *Mody 1967* (Fashions 1967, with an edition of 75,000) is a good example. It presented the designs of the Kiev Factory No. 2. Alongside the name of each design its author was also mentioned.

In the 1970s, the ateliers in the agrarian regions opened experimental workshops with their own staffs of designers. For instance, the Kolomenskaya inter-regional factory of individual sewing in the Moscow region with 1,200 workers united 18 ateliers in the Kolomna, Lukhovitsy, Zaraisk and Ozersk districts of the south-eastern parts of Moscow region in the beginning of the 1980s. The needs of the peasant population, their main clients, dominated their designs. It is interesting that just like their colleagues in Light Industry, the designers for the system of individual sewing were, in addition to their main professional responsibilities, eager to act as messengers of good taste to the population. The experts at the Kolomenskaya factory traveled regularly in the villages answering questions concerning modern fashion. This was felt to be necessary since the peasants “do not have any possibilities to follow the fashion journals.”²⁷⁵

The next step in the system of individual sewing was establishing specialized fashion houses in the bigger cities – in the republican capitals and the industrial centers. The first fashion house of this kind in the USSR was opened in 1966 in Ordzhonikidze (North Ossetia). The name “fashion

house” sounded more serious, modern and attractive than an atelier of individual sewing or custom made clothes. It was thought that the services of a fashion house would be both multifaceted and better quality. These houses were regarded as centers of cultured leisure for the population, and the bigger cities generally had several such houses. Some of them were also attached directly to the bigger factories, such as the Moscow factories no. 15 and 19.

As a rule, these fashion houses grew out of the best local ateliers and they continued to work mostly on their old premises or, in the best cases, in new, specially constructed buildings. What a typical, exemplary fashion house looked like can be judged on the basis of the Fashion House of Leningrad. Its new building was finished at the end of the 1960s. It was located downtown on the Kirov Prospect. The service bureau, the information desk and the café were located on the ground floor of this building, which had six floors. The atelier itself was placed on the second through fourth floors. These floors also had room for the sales of ready-made and semi-fabricated clothes, exhibition halls, and the demonstration hall with 350 seats and a podium for the models. The fourth floor was dedicated to the production units engaged in individual sewing and the fitting of semi-manufactured clothes. The seamstresses, tailors, fitters and designers worked there. The administration occupied the fifth floor.²⁷⁶ The client could thus, in one place, get acquainted with the latest fashion, order a fashionable dress from the atelier or choose one from among the semi-fabricated clothes, and spend the rest of his or her time either in the café or watching the fashion show in the demonstration hall. Moscow had a few such fashion houses on Arbat Street and on the Prospekt Mira among others. The latter was opened in June 1982. The famous Soviet designer Vyacheslav Zaitsev became its first artistic director.²⁷⁷ He had long experience with ODMO but since 1978 he had worked at the fashion system of the Russian Ministry of Everyday Services.

The Moscow Fashion House (*Dom mody*) on the Prospekt Mira, housed in a building with 9 floors, was the biggest institution of its kind in the Soviet Union. It was a huge enterprise with 1,500 employees and united the functions of a design organization, an atelier of custom-made clothes, a garment factory and a boutique of its own on the ground floor. It was the first Soviet fashion organization officially allowed to sell its products in small series. This took place however first under Gorbachev’s perestroika in the second half of the 1980s. The demonstration hall occupied its first floor and had twice weekly theatrical shows lasting one and a half hours each. Its own artistic councils approved of all its new designs of men’s and women’s clothes.

Special Units of Fashion Design for Centers of Everyday Services

In addition to the fashion houses, the regional administrations of the Ministries of Everyday Services started to establish their own specialized centers of fashion design in all the republics and bigger cities of the USSR. These were not part of a factory or fashion atelier. After 1960 they became important institutes in their own field. Their functions were otherwise

quite similar to those of the houses of fashion design under the Ministry of Light Industry – like ODMO – copying their systems in many essentials. They designed all four kinds of clothes that could be ordered at the ateliers of individual sewing: sewn clothing, knitwear, shoes and head wear. Just like the other houses of fashion design in the consumer goods industry they mainly served the enterprises belonging to the same administrative structures in their own region: ateliers, factories, industrial conglomerates and fashion ateliers of the houses of everyday services. They worked out new designs with the whole package of technical documentation and patterns. Enterprises were expected to regularly order new designs from their own regional centers of fashion design. At the same time they tended increasingly to design and were eager to promote their own clothes in their experimental departments. These new clothing patterns were then recommended to clients through the comprehensive network of ateliers, fashion houses and other units of the Ministry. Following these designs, the factories of individual sewing also produced small series of apparel. They did not, however, have the right to sell their own products directly to their customers. Even in this sense their position followed the common rules in the system of the consumer goods industry.

The centers of fashion design soon established artistic councils. They also had a staff of their own models and a demonstration hall for their fashion shows. Each season they prepared both industrial and trend setting, haute couture collections. Following the example of the consumer goods industry they engaged in research: they distributed the most advanced foreign and domestic experience in the field of individual sewing, analyzed fashion trends, and engaged in methodical work with the designers of the fashion houses and the design shops at their affiliated factories. Gradually, the best houses of the Ministry of Everyday Services started demonstrating their collections abroad, predominantly in the socialist countries.

They had the same kind of responsibility as other fashion organizations to propagate fashion and the culture of dress among the population. Their workers regularly appeared in the mass media, organized exhibitions and fashion shows and published albums, booklets and drawings of designs, which were recommended to clients and distributed through the ateliers. The editions of the albums were mostly between 50,000 and 100,000 copies.

The Moscow Center of Fashion Design was one of the first within this structure. It was opened in the end of 1962. In the middle of the 1980s it had a staff of about 350, 20 designers and as many pattern makers among them. It employed 2–3 male models and about 15 female models of various ages and figures on a regular basis.²⁷⁸ (Fig. 5.9.)

A typical center of fashion design consisted of departments of both designers and pattern makers, one production department, and one technical department which engaged in the development and adaptation of technology for the purposes of individual sewing. It also had a publishing unit, including photograph services, the department of pattern drawing, and a workshop which produced prototypes of the clothes. In order not to lose its contacts with its previous customers, the Moscow Center of Fashion Design preserved its own experimental atelier.



Fig. 5.9. A dress designed for a heavy woman at the House of Fashion Design of the Ministry of Everyday Services, 1960s.

*The Law Giver of Fashion for the Service Centers:
The Experimental Center of Clothing Design, TsOTShL*

In addition to the regional centers of fashion design, from the 1960s onwards the system of the Russian Ministry of Everyday Services, alongside the other republics, established their own specialized experimental workshops. For instance, the laboratory of head wear and corsets in the city of Rostov-na-Donu was very important.²⁷⁹ It became the leading house of design for corsets in the Soviet Union. In addition to designing new models, the laboratory – in a way already familiar from other fashion design units – propagated its activities through mass media, educated professionals in its own field, organized seminars, and gave out illustrated albums and catalogues of its designs, which were then sent, together with the necessary technical instructions, to the enterprises of individual sewing.²⁸⁰

It is a well-known fact that any dress fits nicely with the underwear that has been sewn for the particular figure. Therefore even their form should follow the fashionable lines and silhouette of the dress. However, even if the dresses were, as a rule, quite fashionable every atelier had its own way of making their products of haberdashery. It must be admitted that the results are not always good. The reason for this is that little attention is paid in general to this important field of design.²⁸¹

This is how T. Pluzhnikova, the director of the Rostov laboratory, characterized the situation to the readers of the journal *Sluzhba byta* while presenting new designs of women's underwear. In 1980, the designers at Rostov created about 250 hat designs and as many designs of women's underwear every year (with the adjoining technical documentation), which were then distributed to the various organizations of individual sewing in all the regions in the Russian part of the country.²⁸² The Rostov experimental center published illustrated fashion albums with its own designs. For instance, in 1966 an album of the designs of women's underwear appeared.²⁸³

At the head of the whole Russian republican system of fashion design of individual sewing, amounting at the moment of its foundation in the 1960s to well over 70 design organizations,²⁸⁴ stood the Experimental Center (TsOtShL) in Moscow. Its predecessor was a laboratory under the Moscow city administration. It was founded at the end of the 1950s and it had rich practical experience in the design of various kinds of clothes for the ateliers of custom made clothes in the capital, from formal to everyday clothes, men's, women's and children's fashion. As early as 1957 it published its own design albums and booklets in large editions.

The new Experimental Center inherited all these activities together with new additional functions. Its tasks resembled those which VIALegprom and ODMO had in relation to industrial mass production of clothes. In other words, it was not only the main design and pattern making organization in its own administrative department but also the department's scientific-methodical center. The fact that the Experimental Center, just like VIALegprom, studied the fashion trends, consulted fashion ateliers, and created its own directive collection each season emphasized this close parallelism. The journal *Sluzhba byta* thus called it the "the law giver of fashion of its kind" with good reason in 1967. The title of the article, dedicated to its designs, proudly called the Center "the designer of the Republic."²⁸⁵

In the 1960s the specialists at the Experimental Center established contacts with VIALegprom and ODMO. The designs from the Experimental Center, together with the designs from the leading houses of fashion design under the Ministry of Light Industry, became part of the general trend-setting collection of the USSR. From the mid-1960s, its designs also appeared in the design catalogues that VIALegprom recommended to the garment factories in its annual consultations. For instance, the fashion catalogue *Modnaya odezhda*²⁸⁶ included 110 designs from the Center.

Beginning in 1967, the Experimental Center started to organize its own annual consultations among the specialists of the Ministry of Everyday Services of the Russian Federation. They analyzed the results and experiences



Fig. 5.10. Fashionable clothes from the Experimental Center of the Ministry of Everyday Services, TsOTShI designed in the Red Army style in 1967 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution.

of the previous year and discussed the special problems of clothing design for the organizations of individual sewing. In addition, the laboratory organized regional consultations, exhibitions and other events and started to publish fashion albums and illustrated brochures about fashion trends. (Fig. 5.10.)

Among its publications, the journal-catalogue *Modeli sezona* (Seasonal fashions, 3–4 issues a year) had a special position. It was distributed to all Soviet enterprises of individual sewing. In 1968 it published, alongside the designs of the Experimental Center, the best creations from the regional design organizations of everyday services. The employees of the Center – just like those of other fashion organizations – conducted a great deal of propagandistic work, writing articles about fashion and the culture of dress for the popular Soviet journals and newspapers. Their credo coincided on the whole with the point of view generally adopted among the Soviet fashion specialists: the main focuses in fashion were rationality, functionality and moderation.

The TsOTShL organized republican consultations on fashion twice a year. Besides the exchange of experiences they served the development of a unified “political line” in the tendencies of fashion as well as a unified approach towards the technical design of clothes. To take an example, the four-day meeting at Kalinin in 1970 had about two thousand participants. The journal

Sluzhba byta wrote a detailed report of it including pictures from the new directive collection of fashion for the year 1971.²⁸⁷

These consultations followed more or less the same scheme and program as the All-Union and All-Russian meetings organized both by VIA Legprom and ODMO for their designers in the consumer goods industry. In the beginning the directors of the Experimental Center delivered lectures on the tendencies of modern fashion, and on the present state and the most advanced methods of sewing. They also took up actual problems in the field. After that the representatives of the regional fashion units reported on their work by demonstrating their best designs and even whole collections with live models. These demonstrations had several purposes: they were a kind of annual report, an exchange of experiences as well as an introduction to the principal discussions. In the end, the best designs from the various collections were suggested for inclusion in the general All-Russian directive collection.

During the second and third days of the meeting its participants were divided into different sections according to their professional specialization. These sections discussed the questions of design, construction and the technology of the production of clothes. The last, fourth day was dedicated to the drawing of conclusions as well as the demonstration of designs—both from the trend-setting collections selected by the artistic council and other collections. For instance, the city of Kalinin (Tver') in 1970 had a demonstration of a special collection for full-figured women as well as a collection of the hundred best head wear and women's underwear designs that the above mentioned Rostov laboratory had created. They were included as an additional part of the annual trend-setting collection for the year 1971. This was the first time that a special collection of designs was created in the USSR for heavier women. Their sewing was considered to better suit the ateliers of individual sewing than industrial mass production, which oriented its designs to the average female figures.

The trend-setting collection, which included all kinds of clothes for all the seasons, was particularly important since the workers in the system of individual sewing were expected to mainly follow them, their style, length, color scale, etc., in their work. In the meeting on the last day the most advanced enterprises received their awards. The best designers, pattern makers and tailors were also rewarded for their outstanding performance.²⁸⁸

The trends of modern fashion were often discussed quite heatedly in these annual meetings. In particular, the meeting at Kalinin in 1970 raised the question of the adequacy and decency of female trousers—a question which had been hotly debated in the Soviet press around the same time (see Chapter 7). The directors of the Experimental Center strongly encouraged the design of female trousers and even fashionable combinations like female overcoats with fitting trousers.²⁸⁹

The main stages a design had to pass through on its way to the customer were the following: first, a prototype was sewn following a draft drawn by the designer. Then a model demonstrated it to the artistic council. After it had been approved of, a couple more months were needed to draw the final design pattern, print it, and send the catalogues and price lists to the local offices. Then the local administrations, industrial conglomerates and factories

of individual sewing inspected them and selected the designs they liked best, after which they ordered them from the Experimental Center. After that, it prepared the necessary technical documentation of the designs asked for and received the proper payment for them. After another half a year, the technical documents and patterns would be finished and were mailed from Moscow to the local administration which had ordered them. It could then multiply the documents and distribute these to its own ateliers.²⁹⁰ At best, the clients of the ateliers could order clothes using these new designs nine to ten months after their original creation. In this time, fashion could change. This long road was, however, much faster than it was in the system of light industry.

The analogous design organizations which operated under the Ministries of Everyday Services in the other Soviet republics worked basically in the same way as the Russian organization, which was, however, the largest of them all.

Closer to the Customer: Fashion Design in the Organizations of the Ministry of Local Industry

The Ministry of Local Industry of the RSFSR was founded after the WW2, in 1946. It took the place of the old People's Commissariat of Local Industry, established in 1934. It was reinvigorated in 1966 when the Soviet Government passed a new statute which stayed in place until the end of the Soviet Union. Its main purpose was to enlarge the assortment of ordinary consumer goods as well as to improve their quality. It also helped the enterprises of local industry to adapt the achievements of modern science and advanced technology. As a result, local industry started to modernize. Only small factories and workshops which made use of second-hand raw materials and left-overs from large scale industry, such as defects and cut-offs from textiles, or limited local resources fell under its administration. In addition, enterprises and workshops for arts and crafts, which relied on hand-made production and in which large scale production would have been practically impossible, belonged to local industry. They were mostly located in small towns or in the countryside. Local industry employed many disabled workers in special work-shops as well as people working at home. It had its own fashion houses and units of fashion design which had rather specific tasks and profiles.

In the Soviet economy local industry (*mestnaya promyshlennost'*) always had only a helper's role in relation to the consumer goods industry, which was mainly responsible for the production of the ready-made clothes in the country. As a rule, local industry traditionally engaged in the production of all kinds of souvenirs, toys, handmade goods, some types of knitwear and head wear, and ties, scarves, belts, buttons, pins, ribbons, as well as other such minor accessories of dress. The importance of all these accessories increased with the introduction of the principle of designing whole sets or ensembles of clothing in the 1960s. In the 1960s VIA Legprom, ODMO, and the other leading design institutes started to pay more attention to the question of the details of dress, which had earlier been regarded as only

of secondary importance. They increasingly recognized that fashion does not exist exclusively in the lines and colors of dress but also in the various details. Specialized designers of embroidery and textile printing were now employed in many general houses of fashion design. For instance, Viacheslav Zaitsev started his career at ODMO as a designer of “secondary features and accessories” for an ensemble of clothes. Accordingly, the success of the Soviet designer often depended on the achievements and shortcomings of the smaller enterprises and workshops of local industry, which did not officially enjoy a high status in the Soviet planned economy. In addition, the attempts to export Soviet consumer goods abroad opened the decision makers’ eyes to the fact that items with national or folk motifs were often the most successful ones in the West, particularly if they were hand made in limited numbers. For instance, the traditional decorations of the local manufacturers, like embroideries in gold or silver thread or collars with the well-known lacework from the Vologda region added another unique and exquisite flavor to the products of the garment industry.

In this respect it is understandable that the unique Scientific Research Institute of the Artistic Industry (*NII Khudozhestvennoi promyshlennosti*), or arts and crafts, which had been moved under the administration of the Russian Ministry of Local Industry, became much more active and important in the 1960s. One of its main tasks was the study and design of the traditional national or ethnic costumes. Starting in the 1950s it published the series *Khudozhestvennyye promysly RSFSR* (Arts and Crafts in the Russian Federation). It conducted research on the regional specificities of Russian embroidery and published illustrated booklets about it.

In 1969 the institute had 29 specialists including designers and pattern makers. The laboratory designed embroideries, developed their technology and cooperated in this field with about 60 industrial enterprises in the USSR. The laboratory also studied and developed the production of batik, the artistic printing of silk, which only small local manufacturers and workshops had mastered earlier. Batik also became more popular in women’s clothes partly due to the parallel international boom in folk themes in fashion.²⁹¹

Until the 1960s the Institute mainly designed items of dress produced as unique examples (for museums, folk culture collections, etc.) but in the beginning of the 1960s it faced the task of combining its narrow scientific occupation with the needs of mass production. An important stage in this process was the founding of the Laboratory of Artistic Clothing Design.²⁹² In 1969 this laboratory had 15 designers and pattern makers on its payroll—mostly talented young people, recent graduates from the artistic centers of higher learning in Moscow. The laboratory paid attention above all to “the creation of unique costumes in modern style,” that is, it not only collected and preserved but also systematically studied and analyzed the technical peculiarities of the sewing and patterns of the various kinds of national or ethnic clothes, including their color scale, their fabrics, trimmings and knitting. The end result was the creation of new designs based on national or ethnic motifs from Russia and the other Soviet republics. The experimental patterns thus created were then recommended to the houses of fashion design under the Ministry of Light Industry, to the ateliers of individual

sewing, and to the design shops of the various sewing enterprises. These ethnic clothes could inspire them to use ethnic motifs in their own designs which was officially encouraged by the Soviet authorities.

In the 1960s the Institute advanced from the design of individual items aimed mainly for exhibitions and museum collections to the sewing of whole ethnic collections of clothes following one or another general theme or idea. It organized its own design demonstrations too. It had its own artistic council, which consisted of representatives from the garment industry, art historians, and other specialists on the history of dress.²⁹³ In practice, their creations were produced and available to customers only in very limited numbers.

By the beginning of the 1970s all the republican ministries of local industry had their own research institutes. All these organizations had their own departments which engaged in the design of all kinds of consumer items, including clothing. In the 1980s, the Russian Ministry of Local Industry alone supervised 1380 industrial units and enterprises and 112 research workshops.²⁹⁴ In other words, local industry gradually created a huge system of fashion design and construction of its own. This was, in practice, the fourth extensive organization of fashion design in the Soviet Union.

The Differentiation of Soviet Economic Administration

The establishment of these four largely parallel Soviet fashion organizations, which took place in the three post-war decades, followed an interesting administrative logic. At the beginning only a few fashion design units were opened in Moscow and some other big urban centers. They rapidly spread their networks all over the country: their units increased in numbers and diversified their functions. Soon the planners detected that the development had led too long towards the decentralization and increasing autonomy of these numerous local enterprises. The next step was the strengthening of the planning and controlling mandate of the central administration either by founding a totally new central unit in Moscow or by giving more power to a previously existing one. These central units officially never planned or controlled the activities of their local fashion houses in detail. In practice their power was quite modest. It depended more on their recognized professional competence and better resources than on their position in the administrative hierarchy. Instead of dictating fashion to their underlings they acted more as positive examples and trend setters. Nevertheless, by regular training and sending their instructions to the thousands of designers and pattern makers working in their local units they had a firm grip on the formation of a Soviet style of fashion design. By publishing popular fashion journals and albums they also acted as the main propagators of Soviet fashion and the “educators of taste.” It was also generally acknowledged that they had the best experts on their payrolls.

Another interesting observation which has wider implications to the study of the development of the Soviet system of administration is the willingness or even eagerness with which the different Soviet ministries

created their own, extensive organizations of fashion design with to a great extent overlapping functions. Every ministry which was somehow involved in the clothing of the Soviet population lobbied, judging from the results often quite successfully, for the need of their own independent fashion design organizations. Taking into account the centralized nature of the Soviet planned economy one would have expected much more coordination and reserve in this respect. It looks like no one really had a general overview of or controlled the development of the whole field of fashion design in the Soviet Union. One possible explanation is that these separate, partly overlapping administrative units effectively used the shortcomings of their competitors to promote their own issues. This was perhaps most obvious in the relations between the Ministry of Light Industry and the Ministry of Everyday Services. The extensive chain of the ateliers of custom made clothes was created both to combat the illegal market and to compensate for the shortcomings caused by the inflexibility and monotony of the industrial mass production of clothes. At the same time it worked under the same pressure of economic effectiveness and tried to solve its problems with the very same methods applied in industrial mass production, by standardizing its products and increasing production targets. Both sides complained that they were not allowed to produce small series and open their own experimental clothing shops or boutiques. This was a concrete demand that – despite intensive lobbying by all these parallel organizations – the Soviet government and the Communist Party never really approved of. This is a good example of the power relations between the central governmental and party organizations and authorities, on the one hand, and the various fashion organizations, on the other hand. The Soviet fashion institutes worked constantly under some basic economic and administrative constraints and limitations which could occasionally be challenged, on purpose or by chance, but which all those concerned took mostly for granted. Within these limits the development and regulation of fashion was left to the numerous, increasingly well-educated fashion professionals. The Soviet administration could at times show amazing flexibility but it also had some firm limits which could not be overstepped without serious consequences.

6. Fashion at GUM, the State Department Store at Moscow

Fashion under the Ministry of Trade

The Ministry of Trade was an All-Union Ministry responsible for the administration of the retail and wholesale sales of all consumer goods in the USSR. Foreign trade was the responsibility of another Ministry. All state owned shops belonged to the Ministry of Trade, from major department stores to ordinary food stores. They employed hundreds of thousands of sales personnel. The Ministry was established in March 1946 on the basis of the People's Commissariat of Trade which had existed since the mid-1920s. It was closed down in 1991 following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Each Soviet Republic, including Russia, had its own Ministry working under the central, All-Union Ministry. In addition, regions and cities had their own administrative units of trade which formed a hierarchical administrative system.

Clothing design and construction in Soviet trade began in the 1930s and was related to the establishment of the big exemplary department stores. Not only did they receive the best consumer goods to sell and open their own ateliers of individual sewing to serve their clients; they also had the right to design and construct new garments. Accordingly, the new Soviet department stores established their own design departments. The idea was that they would work out new designs of clothes, hats and shoes closely following the demand of their customers and then either sew them in their own production units or order them through direct deals with the factories of local industry or cooperative workshops in the quantity dictated by their demand. In the end, these would be sold in the department stores' own trade network. They often claimed that since they were working in close contact with their customers they knew the real needs of the Soviet population better than the industry.

As such design organizations were opened in several department stores in the different cities of the country, the need emerged to coordinate their activities, to exchange experiences between them and to popularize their designs within trade. The administration of the model department stores established in the People's Commissariat of Trade started to publish a fashion journal of its own in the late 1930s, but the outbreak of war soon put an end to these plans.

The post-war rebirth of fashion design within Soviet trade in many ways coincided with the re-opening of the organizations of commercial trade and the re-establishment of ateliers and production units in the bigger department stores. In the ateliers as well as in the production units it was mostly the experienced pattern makers who designed the clothes. Their professional qualifications were generally not very high but in the immediate post-war years, for instance, the designers of hats in the Central Department Store (TsUM) at Moscow enjoyed a high reputation.

The People's Commissariat (later Ministry) of Trade put great hopes in the opening of the State Department Store (GUM) at Moscow in 1953. It had a fashionable atelier of custom-made clothes as well as a special department of fashion design with its own demonstration hall and a large staff of designers and models. The fashion department of GUM did not have any parallels and it remained the only one of its kind within the system of trade in the Soviet Union.

Nevertheless, in the 1950s to 1970s smaller design units operated in the bigger department stores and clothing shops in the cities. For instance, in Moscow alone, in addition to GUM and TsUM, the department stores *Moskva*, *Detskii mir* (the Children's World department store) and *Dom tkanei* (*House of textiles*) as well as the female clothing shop *Moskvichka* (Muscovite) on the Soviet Broadway, Prospekt Kalinina had design units. The well-known designer Vyaznikova worked, for instance, in *Moskvichka* shop.²⁹⁵ This was typical of all the shops that had a production unit, *promkombinat* of their own attached to them.

In the 1960–1980s, it became common practice to use the trade halls of the department stores, crowded with customers, to advertise new products and to propagate the novelties of Soviet fashion. In close proximity to the masses of customers on temporary podiums models started to demonstrate new designs. Demonstrations could take place at the initiative of the designers of the local houses of fashion design of the consumer goods industry but sometimes the shops organized them independently in order to advertise their own designs. In the last case, the models were usually selected from among the younger sales women. In some shops that had small demonstration halls of their own the meetings of the designers with their customers accompanied the demonstrations of the new designs, which took place quite regularly. In particular, this was the case in *Detskii mir*, which cooperated with the designers of ODMO, located on the neighboring street.

The opening of GUM

“Look at the jeans I got as a present,” Leonid Il’ich Brezhnev proudly declared with obvious pleasure, turning around on the spot in order to demonstrate the symbol of the “American way of life” that fitted his corpulent figure very well. This rare scene was witnessed at the beginning of the 1970s in the office of the main director of the Moscow State Department Store (GUM) by the artistic director of the department of fashion design, David

Borisovich Shimilis,²⁹⁶ when he happened to drop in there on some business: it was obvious that the jeans appealed to Brezhnev and also that he was also very conscious of the ideological connotations of his jeans. Shimilis was not surprised at the relationship of confidentiality which obviously reigned between Brezhnev and the director of this most famous Soviet department store on the Red Square. The Soviet political leadership at the Kremlin regularly visited its “closed” departments²⁹⁷ and, along with their family members, provided themselves with all necessary consumer goods. They also sprang to the services of the designers and other employees of its fashion atelier whenever needed. What caused Shimilis’ wonder, almost 40 years after the event, was more the fact that despite Brezhnev’s obviously positive reaction to this comfortable and practical piece of clothing, until the 1980s jeans suffered in the USSR from their ideological label as a symbol of American imperialism. The Department of Fashion Design at GUM, the purpose of which was to design beautiful and practical clothes for the Soviet citizens, was for a very long time prevented from designing jeans.

The GUM’s building was constructed at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries following the example of the best European department stores. Originally it was called “Upper trade rows or bazaars.” During the Revolution and the Civil War it was closed opening again during the NEP and continuing for a very short time in the 1920s when it received its name, State Department Store or GUM. In 1930 it was closed again²⁹⁸ re-opening after Stalin’s death in 1953 on the order of the government of the USSR. This “reawakening” of GUM was seen by contemporaries as a sign of the times. At the end of 1953 the new leaders of the country, who had declared that the problems of consumption would now be prioritized, decided to create a showcase department store in Moscow which would offer for sale the best possible goods and commodities with the most progressive forms of trade and service. It was opened at the Red Square. One should bear in mind that by this time, GUM had already lost its previous position as one of the centers of Moscow trade. During Soviet times Red Square had a pre-eminently political status, as the main symbol of Soviet power. It was a festive place, in fact, the ‘holy place’ of all the important Soviet state rituals. Just 50 meters from the show windows of GUM was the ‘holy of holies’, Lenin’s mausoleum, behind which many other famous revolutionaries and leaders of the Communist Party were buried in the Kremlin wall. Parades and official demonstrations were organized regularly at the Red Square with pioneers’ vows and student graduation ceremonies being carried out there. It is obvious, therefore, that the reanimation of retail trade at such a special place after Stalin’s death was a politically important event and by no means an accident. GUM was meant to become yet another major attraction in Red Square – the main proof of the achievements of Soviet power in the fields of trade and the service of the population.

GUM became not only exemplary but also the biggest store in the USSR, both on the basis of its turnover of products and the number of its employees. It was not called the “main store of the country” without reason. At the time of its opening in the end of 1953, it had 3,500 employees, and in 1973 its work collective consisted of 7,000 workers. According to the official statistics,



Fig. 6.1. Leonid Brezhnev dressed in a suit designed by Alexander Igmand from ODMO, late 1979s.

200,000–300,000 people visited it every day and bought 220,000–230,000 items.²⁹⁹ Muscovites and people living close to Moscow were understandably among its regular customers but many visitors from the other republics and regions of the USSR visited it too. Foreign tourists, for whom GUM became one of the main attractions in the capital, were mainly interested in its rich department of souvenirs. The department store had a special status which was kept up by the fact that all the consumer goods that were the most difficult to buy elsewhere in the USSR were on sale there: this made GUM particularly attractive to the customers. If you could not buy it at GUM it was probably not for sale in the Soviet Union. In 1950–1970 GUM sold 70–85 percent of all the so-called goods of higher demand sold in Moscow.³⁰⁰ For instance, as early as the end of the 1950s imported goods made up over 30 percent of all the textiles sold at GUM.³⁰¹ It was no wonder that the store became notorious among the Soviet population for its high number of customers and long queues that could stretch for several kilometers.

However, there was a special zone with no long queues at all within GUM where the customers experienced individual service. This was the “secret” department, number 200 unique among Soviet department stores, with its

own entrance, open only to “elite” customers of the Soviet leadership, Leonid Brezhnev among them. (Fig.6.1.) This special department sold, at very reasonable prices, both imported and high quality domestically produced clothes, among them the products of many famous foreign firms.

In addition to the various sale sections, GUM had a department for the study of supply and demand, the task of which was both to study consumer demand and to advertise goods, as well as a customer service department, which dealt with the packaging and home delivery of goods. Some items sold at GUM could be ordered by mail or telephone. The department store also organized its own medical service and had a special rest room for mothers with small children.

Two more special departments bore witness to the high quality of service at GUM: the Atelier of ‘Made to Measure’ clothes, shoes and head Gear, and the Department of Fashion Design with its own hall for fashion shows, the first of its kind in the Soviet system of trade. These departments are the main object of our study in this chapter, which is mainly based on the original minutes of the meetings of the Party organization of GUM, as well as documents from the personal archives and interviews that we conducted with several eminent former workers of the fashion department at GUM. This chapter, and the one which follows it and is dedicated to another famous Soviet house of fashion design in Tallinn, gives a detailed description of the daily activities, achievements and concerns of the most advanced and important fashion houses in the USSR.

The Fashion Atelier

Just like the rest of the department store, the fashion atelier – or the Atelier of the Individual Sewing of Clothes, as it was officially called, which opened its doors in the spring of 1954 – was thought from the very beginning to be a showcase department. It belonged to the official category of “lux” and could therefore charge seventy percent more for its services than the ateliers that belonged to the otherwise highest-first class. At this time Moscow had just a few other ateliers of the category “lux.”

It was presumed that the people who turned to the services of the atelier at GUM were those who either could not find any adequate clothes in the ordinary shops because of their unusual body shape, or who had exceptional taste and were striving for a more individual style. However, soon the store became so popular that, in addition to many ordinary citizens, many prominent members of the cultural and administrative elite of the country were also among its customers. Importantly, this atelier also became, in the end of the 1950s, the exemplary, leading center of the customized sewing of clothes within the Soviet system of trade. The specialists of trade and fashion came here from the different regions of the country to exchange experiences and to learn more about the most advanced methods of trade and fashion trends.³⁰²

In 1955–1960 the collective of the atelier consisted of approximately 500 people. In the beginning of the 1960s it filled up to 60,000 orders a year which, compared to the number of potential customers, was not much.

As everyone knew, those who wished to have their clothes sewn here far outnumbered the orders actually received. This created chronic shortages and, as was quite common in the Soviet Union, promoted a system of bribes and illegal deals of all kinds.

According to their rules, the men's and women's salons should have received a certain limited number of orders every day. However, the principle of having only one single queue giving the same opportunity to all customers was soon given up in practice. Not only was one's place in the queue soon turned into an object of financial speculation, but the employees of the atelier were also obliged to fill orders coming from outside the ordinary queue from "people who had special needs." This happened at the request of the administration of GUM, the Moscow city administration and even the Ministry of Trade. According to the directors of the atelier, in 1956–1957 it received up to 500 such orders for the sewing of men's clothes alongside the official queue each year.³⁰³ The amount of such special orders was presumably just as large in the department of women's clothing.

The salons where the customers' orders were received were supposed to become the real show windows of the atelier. The salons employed consulting pattern makers who gave advice to the customers about the fashionable designs that would fit them best. They also offered advice on the proper textiles to be used for these clothes. It was thought that these fashion consultants would, while consulting their customers, not only be occupied with the reception and consignment of their orders but also actively propagandize for Soviet fashion and educate them in matters of good taste. Special show windows with regularly changing designs concretely demonstrated the newest garments worked out by the pattern makers of the atelier. Several fashion journals and albums were at the disposal of the customers. From them they could select all the new designs that they liked. The book of complaints and suggestions (*kniga zhalob i predlozhenii*³⁰⁴) at the atelier included many positive comments but its customers also complained about the "formalism" of the service, as well as old fashioned journals with designs gone out of style long ago.

The order forms, which had been filled out in the salons with the necessary measures and descriptions of the design, were then sent on to the respective departments and workshops (the pattern makers and cutters, the women's and men's dress workshop, children's clothes, shoes or head gear). The fitting session followed next. The maximum time set for the filling of the order was one month but in the 1960s it was shortened to three weeks.

The main reason for the great popularity of the atelier at GUM was that in its early years the Ministry of Trade gave it the opportunity to select the best and most fashionable domestic and imported foreign textiles from its assortment of fabrics and other goods in the warehouses. Unlike all the other ateliers of individual sewing, in the beginning GUM did not make any clothes from the customers' own textiles. However, later on, it had to change this rule. As a result, as early as 1964, half of all the orders were sewn from the customers' own textiles. In the beginning of the 1960s the atelier lost its right to stock special provisions, textiles, tools and instruments directly from the central stores of the Ministry of Trade and had to provide itself with what

was available in the regular storerooms of GUM. These storerooms at GUM also provided all the other ordinary clothing departments with their textiles and other raw materials. These had an equally great interest in getting the best-selling textiles – those in *defitsit* or shortage – which naturally led to permanent conflicts of interest between them and the atelier. The directors of the atelier complained not only of the bad quality of the textiles available at GUM but also of their meager variety – monotonous colors, sometimes only silk was available, at other times wool, etc. In addition to tools and instruments, material for linings was often in great shortage too. The more ambitious employees of the atelier even had to dye their own thread in order to make it match the color scale of the clothes.³⁰⁵ However, in general the quality of the clothes sewn at the atelier was regarded to be better than the ready-made clothes sold in Soviet shops at the time.³⁰⁶

The “lux” status of the atelier at GUM gave it many valuable advantages in comparison to the first class ateliers. In these, the number of garments that the pattern makers were supposed to make every month was 60, at GUM only 32. In the ateliers of first class status the monthly salary was 900 rubles per month, at GUM 1400 (in April 1958).³⁰⁷ It was thought that under such beneficial conditions the pattern makers of the atelier at GUM would have more time to work individually with their clients and even to design clothes according to the wishes of the individual clients. Most importantly, they could sew more fashionable and modern garments of high quality. In practice, the design of clothes was only a side activity alongside the main task of the atelier, which was the fulfilment of the orders of its individual customers and the profits it made from this practice. The designing of new clothes was not very clearly connected to the other regular work norms and goals in the fulfilment of the annual quotas. It was not in general profitable for the pattern makers to experiment with new designs or make changes in the patterns often enough to be able to follow fashion. This was not only connected with the risk of failure but also with the use of extra time and other resources. If one became too creative one could easily forget the fulfilment of the quotas and miss one’s personal bonuses. As a result, instead of a really exclusive and individual service, the clients were offered a certain collection of more or less fashionable designs worked out by the pattern makers, which was renewed from time to time.

As the discussions from the meetings of the Party organization show, the employees of the GUM atelier were very familiar with the consequences of the above mentioned problems. For instance, in one of the regular Party meetings in 1955, the confectioner Smorodina said: “The pattern makers of the atelier are not at all interested in doing more difficult designs. Neither are they interested in offering their customers new designs from the Department of Fashion Design at GUM. They want to do something simpler.”³⁰⁸ The situation did not change in ten years: for instance, in 1964 the pattern makers were criticized again at the Party meeting for artificially making the designs and patterns simpler in order to more easily fulfil the quotas.³⁰⁹ “We live with old designs, and the new ones appear very seldom”³¹⁰ the same Smorodina repeated her accusation again in January 1964. At the end of 1963 the pattern makers started to complain that their work had become difficult since the

“customer sometimes demands the impossible. We should do simple, modest designs.” But the customers wanted exclusive models.³¹¹

The majority of the pattern makers at the Atelier did not have any real artistic education or previous professional experience, which would have been necessary for the creation of more original designs. Many of them did not even know how to draw a sketch of a new pattern. Consequently, only the most experienced pattern makers at GUM had the right to design new models. For instance, in 1964 out of the ten pattern makers who made women’s clothes only two were engaged in designing new models. In fact, the Atelier had a small research and development workshop which specialized in designing, working out new ideas and developing the sketches that they received from the other, ordinary pattern makers. Its major task was, however, the adaptation of the more promising and saleable designs that came from the other fashion institutes in the USSR to the concrete capacities of the atelier at GUM.³¹²

In a single year GUM worked out and recommended to its clients about 400–500 new designs. In 1962 out of 419 such designs, 215 consisted of clothes, 50 shoes and 154 head wear.³¹³ But in reality not all the designs were fashionable or original, or in any great demand among the customers. At the same time as the clients complained that the salons only offered them old-fashioned clothes, the leaders of the Atelier eagerly reported their remarkable achievements in the design business to GUM, obviously wanting to draw attention to the fact that the Atelier mainly used its own designs.³¹⁴ The ambitious leaders liked to bring up achievements in the design of fashion, thus consciously promoting the high image of this department among the Soviet fashion organizations.

The meetings of the Party organization had a more critical and open atmosphere. Here the workers in the salons, referring to the opinion of their customers, mostly complained about the low quality of design at the atelier. For instance, the director of the women’s salon, Antokolskaya, had made the following observations in 1957: new designs appear highly irregularly, “orders are received almost only for one pattern. The pattern makers do not at all think about the new designs.”³¹⁵ In the summer of 1958, while discussing the report of the Party organization, Comrade Voronina said that “the culture of service at the salons is not at the high level to be expected: no new fashion journals, many designs do not at all meet the demand.”³¹⁶

In September 1959, the general director of GUM, Kamenev, who had paid a special visit to the Party meeting of the atelier, was very critical of its work: “The designs we show lag behind in life.... The Atelier does not have a leading role in the design of the new clothes, hats”³¹⁷ Even after such harsh criticism, the leaders of the Atelier continued to follow their policy of promoting their own autonomy in the field of fashion design, also in relation to another department of GUM which had fashion design as its main task and which had come into being at the same time as the Atelier, namely the Department of Fashion Design. In fact, the Atelier’s relations to the fashion design department could be characterized more as one of competition than collaboration.

The Establishment of the Department of Fashion Design in GUM

The Department of Fashion Design was established at GUM, alongside its atelier, in 1954 at Anastas Mikoyan's personal initiative. As a long-time leader of Soviet trade he was well known not only as an experienced politician, diplomat and lobbyist for the interests of his Ministry but also as a defender of the transfer of the best international experience and perspective into the Soviet system of consumption.³¹⁸ Among the leadership of the Soviet Union he was also well known for being a person who liked to dress well and to make use of the services of the best tailors in Moscow. The founding of the fashion department at GUM was one of his experiments. Until then the big Soviet department stores did not have their own departments of fashion design. As Mikoyan hoped, the fashion department at GUM "should be the first one in the Union, and, who knows, with time even better than in the other countries."³¹⁹

The tasks that faced the Fashion Department were from the very beginning quite unusual for a trade organization and not directly related to the regular sale of commodities. These were, among others, the design of clothes, the propagation of fashion and good taste among the population (for instance, by publishing fashion albums and booklets as well as by regularly organizing fashion shows at the demonstration hall), and the establishment of trade relations with the textile factories in order to produce new clothes in small series following the designs of GUM. The designers at GUM were not only expected to design men's and women's clothes, shoes and hats. They also started to create complete seasonal collections consisting of a whole set of 100–150 designs primarily of women's clothes. All this resembled too much, however, the tasks of the main Soviet organization of fashion design, the All-Union House of Fashion Design of Clothes, ODMO, not to raise thoughts of the creation of a parallel organization.

In the second half of the 1950s and the 1960s Mikoyan continued to be personally interested in the workings of the GUM fashion department, arriving at the exhibitions of the clothing collections often not alone but in the company of other members of Soviet leadership like Aleksei Kosygin. One of Mikoyan's sons, Vano Mikoyan, who later became a famous Soviet constructor of war-craft and the director of the famous firm MIG, was also a regular guest at the fashion shows. Anastas Mikoyan was one of the Soviet leaders who understood that fashion, like culture in general, was an international phenomenon, and consequently acted purposefully to promote international cooperation in this area. As early as 1956 the designer Lidia Fedorovna Averyanova from GUM was included in a small delegation of the Ministry of Trade which for the first time headed to Paris in order to study the workings of its famous fashion houses.³²⁰ In Averyanova's own words these 20 days she spent in Paris changed her ideas not only about fashion and her own profession but also about life in general in many ways.³²¹ Mikoyan succeeded thus in getting ahead of his main competitor, the Ministry of Light Industry under which, as we know, ODMO worked. Its representatives visited Paris, the Mecca of international fashion, a whole year later, in the end of 1957.

During the second half of the 1950s, the Department of Fashion Design at GUM was regarded as one of the leaders of Soviet design. The following example is typical: when the Soviet delegation participated for the first time in the Leipzig trade exhibition in 1957, which included a competition of fashion design, the designs from only two Soviet design organizations were selected to represent Soviet fashion: ODMO and GUM.³²²

The fashion department was located in the main building of GUM, as a close neighbor to the vividly pulsating life of the sales departments. The “brains” of the department were located in two rooms, in which the designers and the pattern makers worked separately. A small sewing workshop was attached to the fashion department. Its task was to sew prototypes of the new clothes. The best designs were also prepared for publication by the publishing group of the department. The demonstration hall was the “window” of the department to the world outside: it started its demonstrations in September 1954. Models, musicians, speakers, an administrator, and an art historian all worked in the demonstration hall.

The total work force of the fashion department was not very big, about 70 persons in 1954–1955, among them 7 designers and 15 models, and 80 in summer 1958. In the 1960s and 1970s the number stabilized at about 90 workers.³²³ In 1972 out of the 90 (75 of them women) workers 50 were occupied in the sewing workshop (tailors, pattern makers, designers), 26 in the demonstration hall and 9 in the publishing department.

From the professional point of view the key positions were those of the designers, pattern makers and art instructors. However, in the 1950s specialists of these professions were very rare in the Soviet Union. Therefore the designers’ positions were mostly occupied by ordinary pattern makers who did not have the necessary professional qualifications. It was equally difficult to find experienced pattern designers. For instance, one of them, Mokshina, had only completed some basic courses of sewing and knitting whereas another one, Lapidus, had been educated as a constructor of airplanes. She had learned to sew and knit in some short courses.³²⁴

In 1955 only six specialists working at the fashion department at GUM had received a higher education. Almost all of them were in charge of administrative duties and did not directly take part in the design of clothes. Only in the second part of the 1960s did the professional level of the cadres improve remarkably due to the recruitment of new employees who had graduated from the Moscow Textile Institute, which became the main educational institute of fashion design in the Soviet Union. The number of designers at GUM increased too. Thus, in 1967 the Department had 12 and in 1973 15 designers: 3 in women’s outer wear, 8 in women’s dress, and only one each in men’s clothes, shoes, head wear and embroidery.³²⁵

One of the first designers at the department was Lidia Fedorovna Averyanova (born 1916) who moved to GUM in 1954 from the Shcherbakovskii Department Store – one of the biggest stores in post-war Moscow – in which she had successfully designed children’s wear during the first part of the 1950s. After her transfer to GUM Averyanova quickly became one of its leading designers of women’s clothes who up to her retirement in the 1980s had a decisive influence on the general style of GUM

as “modest elegance.” She did not have any special education as a designer. After returning home from the front she had taken part in some short courses. Because she was religious she refused to become a member of the Communist Party. Her “partyless” status did not prevent her from having a career and travelling with the models of GUM in many parts of the world.³²⁶

In the 1960s and 1970s Averyanova became a house consultant at the “closed” Department 200 of GUM. If a high status client could not make up her or his mind about a garment or otherwise wanted to consult a specialist before buying a dress or suit the leading expert from the fashion department was called to duty. Depending on the situation, it could be the artistic director of the fashion department (1960–1976 D. B. Shimilis) or one of the leading designers: for women’s dress Averyanova, for men’s dress Rubin Aaronovich Singer.

At the end of such consultations the client often decided to order an individually designed garment from the atelier of the fashion department instead of buying a ready-made garment. In that case the designer turned at once to a pattern maker and took the necessary measures of the client. In this way many garments designed by Averyanova ended up in the closets of the Minister of Culture, Ekaterina Fursteva as well as of the daughters of the Soviet leaders, the Prime Minister Alexey Kosygin and the Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSS Boris N. Ponomarev.³²⁷ Ekaterina Furtseva and Liudmila Gvishiani (Kosygina) also relied at the same time on the services of the designers of ODMO on the Kuznetskii Most.

In 1954 the recently opened fashion department at GUM employed Yevgeniya Nikolaevna Istomina as a designer. Elena Aleksandrova Tomashevich, whose specialty became extravagant women’s evening dresses, joined the collective at about the same time. Neither of them had any formal education in designing clothes but they had – in the terms of those days – solid experience in the customized sewing of clothes. They learned the art of design by doing it. Their colleagues called Averyanova, Tomashevich and Istomina humorously the “three whales” who supported the whole Department of Fashion Design at GUM on their backs. This was true in the sense that they had, in fact, designed the first basic seasonal collections at GUM, which had become a success abroad in the end of 1950s and which dictated the general style even later. (Fig. 6.2.)

Some former designers from the Central Department Store at Moscow, TsUM, were invited to continue their careers at the newly opened GUM. The atelier at TsUM had experience in fashion design from the 1930s onwards. Naum Yakovlevich Katz, who soon became the first director of the fashion department at GUM, was one of these experienced fashion designers. Katz was the only director of a department at GUM who was not a Party member. Katz remained in charge for 10 years. He did a lot to improve the reputation and status of his department, a goal that was not easy to achieve. In the beginning the relationship between the fashion department and the other sections of GUM was actually quite sensitive. Some of the salespersons could not understand why such a department was needed at all. They expressed their doubts about the seriousness and importance of the work of its designers and models which in the opinion of some was closer to frivolous



Fig. 6.2. Leading designers and employees of the GUM Department of Fashion Design in the 1950s (from the left Tomashevich, Istomina, Gurtavaya, unknown, Averyanova, Singer, unknown).

entertainment than serious work. The situation went so far that in summer 1955 the leaders of the fashion department asked the Party Committee to explain to the whole work collective of GUM that “what we in fact do in the demonstration hall is by no means easy and it is very serious work.”³²⁸

In 1964 Anna Georgievna Gorshkova was nominated to the post of director after Naum Yakovlevich Katz, who had become seriously ill and died soon after. In contrast to her predecessor, Gorshkova had no previous experience of fashion and clothing design. She had used to work in the staff office at GUM – a section which traditionally had strong ties with the KGB and therefore a lot of influence on the administration of the department store.³²⁹ The nomination of a reliable member of the Communist Party to the director’s post was to a great extent motivated by the fact that the leadership thought that the employees of the fashion department needed “special control” since they often met with foreigners and travelled regularly abroad. In the memories of her colleagues, Gorshkova had rather conservative views regarding proper dress. Nevertheless, she was clever enough not to interfere with questions of creativity and left them to the artistic leaders of her department, and instead mostly fulfilled administrative duties. The leading designer, Rubin Aaronovich Singer, was considered for the post of artistic director of the fashion department, but he did not have any formal

artistic education. Singer had emigrated from pre-war Poland. He was in great demand as a famous tailor in post-war Moscow. Being a virtuoso of a tailor he did not turn down profitable private orders during his time at GUM in the capacity of the leading designer of male dress. The direction of the department was fully aware of his unofficial activities and obviously tolerated them. This was a typical example of the close intertwining of the official and unofficial, or legal and illegal, economic relations within a Soviet organization. In the 1950s–1960s many Soviet leaders and famous artists were among Singer's clients.³³⁰ He worked in the fashion department at GUM until his dismissal due to his conflicts with the directors and emigrated to the West where he died tragically in a car accident in Italy.

During the first six years the fashion department at GUM was totally without any artistic leader because no suitable, qualified candidate could be found. The first to be nominated for the post was Shimilis. He was a graphic designer educated at the Moscow Textile Institute and worked at GUM from 1960 to 1976. He came to play an important role in its development.

A. Oganosov was the only designer of shoes at GUM. Mikoyan recruited him in the beginning of the 1950s from the experimental laboratory of the Leningrad Shoe Factory. He had a good reputation among the specialists as early as the second half of the 1940s. His shoe designs were often published in Soviet journals. He served at GUM for a long time. The models at GUM wore his shoes during fashion shows until the 1970s. They were recommended to be made to order for the clients of the atelier at GUM as well as to be mass produced in the leading shoe factories of the country. According to the interviews with former models his designs looked good and stylish but were not very comfortable to wear.

The first models at GUM (7–9 persons) were women of various sizes and shapes. Many of them did not have any experience of work in this, in those times, very exotic profession. Nina (Antonina) Vavilova was considered to be politically the most reliable model. She was about 30 years old when she started her professional career at GUM in the mid-1950s. Before entering the Department of Fashion Design at GUM she had finished the second term of the Institute of Literature and worked as a school teacher. (Fig. 6.3.) Tamara Mingashudinova (the name was also written as Mingashutdinova) was the prima donna of the Fashion Department who attracted a lot of attention from men. She was a Tatar by nationality, and had a tall and slender body which, with her natural talent and sensibility, made a strong impression on the podium. During the 1960s and 1970s the number of models at GUM increased to fifteen. The turnover rate was quite high among them as well. The profession was an easy one only in the minds of those who were not familiar with it. In contrast to ODMO, where the models could specialize themselves to a great degree, at GUM they were expected to engage in all kinds of work: to walk on the catwalk, to take part in photo sessions, and to patiently endure the long fitting sessions which “made one's legs to swell and your body ache, as if it had been pricked by small pins” for hours afterwards.



Fig. 6.3. GUM fashion with folk motifs, 1960s. (Models from the left: Kokareva and Vavilova).

GUM in Search of Its House Style

The Ministry of Trade, along with its head Anastas Mikoyan, had great ambitions and expectations of seeing the Department of Fashion Design at GUM as the lawmaker of Soviet fashion with its own “house style.” The director of the fashion department, Katz, explained that he expected to create “a new style of clothes, and consequently new designs and new kinds of clothes.”³³¹ In the middle of the 1950s a lively discussion went on about what kind of fashion should in fact be created at GUM. The secretary of the Party Committee of GUM calmed down the most eager spirits by recommending that the designers should “stay on earth” and not get carried away. Instead they should orient themselves according to the really very modest supply of raw materials as well as the real demands of the Soviet consumer. He

understood the style of GUM as a synthesis of four basic elements: simplicity of form, beauty of design, comfort of use and low prices.³³²

The Party Committee of GUM felt obliged to interfere actively in the discussion obviously because many workers of the fashion department turned up at the meetings arguing that their house style should not be mundane but rather something extraordinary, formal or even ultramodern. They claimed that such clothes were in great demand at the moment, in particular among the youth. In the mid-1950s such a position was common among the ordinary designers. According to the director Katz,

In the beginning we felt obliged to emphasize the design of the festive clothes which differed from the ordinary clothes but in the end we came to the conclusion that we should promote the creation of new things, new designs which are comfortable in structure, and above all, make use of domestic materials.³³³

The opponents of the predominance of mundane, everyday clothes in GUM's collections made an extra case of the use of the brilliant demonstration hall at GUM – at the time only ODMO at Kuznetskii Most Street could boast of anything similar: it should be clear to all that beautiful, bright designs looked much better on the catwalk than any everyday wardrobe. During the general euphoria of the first years of the fashion department, many anticipated future competition with ODMO and even Western fashion designs eagerly and triumphantly. “This caused many heavy disputes among us. Comrade Singer thought that our designs should compete with the Western things and should be ultramodern,” N. Y. Katz remarked in 1955.³³⁴

It is obvious that the prospect of GUM fashion soon reaching world standards greatly appealed to the leaders of the newly opened department store and corresponded on the whole to Mikoyan's own ambitions as well. On the other hand, the designers knew, better than anyone else, the real conditions of their work, the low level of the consumer goods markets and their own material base. In addition, in 1955 when the role of fashion in the Soviet Union was still quite ambivalent, the call made by some designers to “ultra-modernity” sounded too courageous if not totally frightening. Katz was careful and gravitated to the position that GUM's house style should consist of simplicity of structure, utility (functionality) and elegance of design.³³⁵

In practice, the designers of GUM worked out in the beginning both mundane and formal clothes, mostly for women. On the 19th of July 1955, the first annual report of the fashion department was discussed in the extended meeting of the Party Committee of GUM with the presence of all the heads of the other departments and sections of the department store. In addition to Katz's oral report the participants were invited to attend a real fashion show. The main question that was raised after the show was whether ordinary Soviet citizens could in reality wear all these clothes or if they had a purely artistic value. And if the second alternative was true, was it really worth the trouble to continue designing such impractical things? A lot of criticism was directed, for instance, at one of the designs, a festive dress with ribbons of rosettes which, in the opinion of those present, “hardly any Soviet woman would like to wear.”³³⁶

In the absence of an artistic council or an artistic director at the Department of Fashion Design the Party Committee itself took on the role of the “aesthetic arbitrator.” It soon proved that the taste of its members as well as of some of the heads of the other departments differed from the preferences of the fashion designers. The meeting of the Party Committee in 1955 was an important occasion in the establishment of the particular style of GUM as primarily utilitarian and functional.

During the meeting the general director of the whole GUM, V. Kamenev, urged everyone, including the designers, to be realistic and not to rely on international fashion. Neither was it possible to try to compete with the more specialized Soviet fashion houses working under the Ministry of Light Industry, compared to which GUM’s resources were after all rather modest. Kamenev explained that “we can dictate our designs only to the local industry and cooperative manufacturers, and even then only in the form of industrial production.”³³⁷ The director’s pessimism resulted from his knowledge that not a single organizational unit of the Ministry of Trade had, or would have in the near future, its own material base, which was necessary for the production and selling of clothes even in small series: sewing workshops, machines, and textiles were delivered from the general fund of textiles according to central plans. Great hopes had been put in the beginning on cooperation with the leading enterprises of the consumer goods industry, which, however, soon declined any offers to receive designs from an organization working under an alien administrative unit.³³⁸ The decisive issue was more one of principle than the quality of the designs: the consumer goods industry had its own design institutes headed by ODMO. To buy just a single successful design from GUM would have been interpreted to mean that they had lost their faith in their own designers and started using their budget to support another, alien organization instead.

Fabrics were, in the first place, centrally directed to the garment factories of the consumer goods industry. GUM received only remnants of clothes and textiles which had not been approved for sale. The designers at GUM were expected to recycle them for their own purposes as well they could. The department store also made a deal with the enterprises of local industry which were interested in cooperation. The enterprises received raw materials which came from clothes that had some defects and therefore could not be sold. They also received some bits and pieces of textiles from the resources of the atelier and fashion department at GUM to produce clothes which GUM had designed. With the introduction of the economic reforms in the 1960s the leadership of GUM hoped that material interests and the newly opened possibilities for contracting factories directly would overcome the previous administrative barriers. The fashion department at GUM even established a special technical unit, the task of which was to adapt their designs to the conditions of industrial production. On the whole, in 1967 the fashion department succeeded, with great effort, in making only 13 of its clothing designs and 11 shoe designs industrially producible.³³⁹ In 1968–1969 the Moskvichka factory produced altogether 10,000 women’s garments made with 15 of GUM’s designs.³⁴⁰ This was hardly enough to make it possible for



Fig. 6.4. An evening dress from the Department of Fashion Design at GUM, 1964.

customers to judge whether GUM really had a style of its own as its direction expected. The situation did not change notably in the 1970s.

During all the post-war years even the best designs of GUM thus, with some rare exclusions, remained largely out of direct reach of Soviet consumers since they were not profitable for the Soviet garment industry to produce in big series. Most of the designs remained at the stage of sketches and pictures on paper or, if they were approved for the seasonal collection, they were sewn in a unique copy to fit the model demonstrating them. In this respect the activities at GUM did not differ much from its internationally more famous Parisian or other Western counterparts, whose creations mostly remained on the catwalks of fashion shows.³⁴¹ (Fig. 6.4.)

Under these conditions, the whole discussion regarding the house style of GUM might have seemed to become irrelevant. In fact, this was not the case. The leadership of GUM continued to emphasize that the adaptation of the designs of GUM into industrial production was a political question because sooner or later the citizens would be able to recognize in the streets the superior designs from GUM and become aware of its house style. In this respect the actual numbers produced were thought to be of only secondary importance:

Let them take into production just five designs in a year, but such ones which they cannot make with the designs of other fashion houses. We need a firm of our own to take into production such designs which cannot be found anywhere else.³⁴²

In these words the artistic director of the fashion department of GUM, Shimilis, declared his own position to the working collective at the end of 1967. But if the issue was not the number of products but their quality another question could be raised: could clothes designed in the utilitarian style of GUM really distinguish themselves from the mass of objects and touch the consumer?

This theme was raised from time to time at the meetings of the Party Committee and the work collective of the fashion department. At this time, the voice of the utilitarians could be heard more and more often. It is interesting to note that this coincided with the general technocratic orientation and atmosphere in the country in the 1950s and 1960s, which found its expression in, for instance, Soviet architecture. Instead of Stalin's style of excessive decorativeness the new building plans of the cities introduced after Khrushchev's coming into power embodied rationalism and frugality.³⁴³ The artistic consultant of the Department of Fashion Design, E. A. Semenova, urged her colleagues to look around with care and to draw the necessary conclusions: "Art for art's sake is on the retreat. So is science for science's sake. This means that we do not have to build things without which we can do as well."³⁴⁴ And in her opinion we could very well do without the frivolity of fashion and the whole idea of haute couture. In another party meeting she developed her thoughts further: "Today we wage a struggle against all that is malicious, artificial and expensive. A garment which cannot be worn at all under our conditions can be called abstract."³⁴⁵ In 1962 the designer Tomashevich opposed her ideas by arguing that the fashion department should also engage in designing various, even extra-modern clothes. "Where could an actress go otherwise to look for her clothes?"³⁴⁶

In 1960–1970 the main question that occupied the workers of the fashion department at GUM was the right proportion in designing, on the one hand, more festive dress for the seasonal collection and shows and, on the other hand, everyday clothes.³⁴⁷ It seemed that the designers themselves were more eager to design festive collections than clothes for more mundane use. In 1974 for instance, the director of the fashion department, Anna Georgievna Gorshkova, criticized her own designers because they "did not pay enough attention to the designing of practical clothes, designs that are near to life and available to the great majority of our people."³⁴⁸ During the 1960s, the house style of GUM was, however, more or less finally fixed. It was based on the idea of utilitarian fashion, which, more concretely, included the following principles: to study modern fashion with great care but with strong reservation concerning the use of the "ultra-modern" tendencies and to create comfortable, simple, and moderately priced clothes which should preferably be fashionable and beautiful too. The main idea was to orient oneself not according to international fashion leaders but to the needs of the ordinary Soviet consumer. A collection was ideally supposed to include all kinds of clothes with a special emphasis on the design of practical things

which could be used every day at home and at work, at the theater and cinema, in leisure time or for sport.³⁴⁹

If we compare these principles with the rules that were in general use in Soviet fashion during this period, there was nothing unique or specific about GUM's style of fashion. It loyally followed the general trends of Soviet fashion.³⁵⁰

In reality the designers at GUM, for very good reasons, had a strong tendency to deviate from the principle of utilitarian fashion. Several contradictory expectations were namely directed towards them at the same time. First, when designing clothes for international demonstrations, ultra-fashionable designs in bright tones and often with expensive pieces of fur were highly appreciated. Second, in 1960–1970 GUM's direction demanded that the fashion department design clothes from textiles which were difficult to sell in stores or could not be sold at all in order to convince their customers of the high quality of such textiles and to stimulate their demand in this way. There was only one method to achieve this goal in practice: to compensate for deficiencies in the raw materials by the excessive styling of their design or by adding original and bright attractive details to them. These factors worked against the principle of functional dress. In addition, the utilitarian principle had to be revised from time to time due to the general tendencies of consumption in the USSR in the 1960s and 1970s. Living conditions improved rapidly in those days. People had both a wish and a real possibility to dress better, more variedly and more festively. The very idea of everyday fashion necessarily changed too and became in itself more festive and varied. With the gradual disappearance of real poverty and the rapid urbanization of the country, the strict distinction between the festive – or Sunday – and the mundane – or weekday – dress became blurred. (Fig. 6.5.)

With the increasing differentiation of taste it became more difficult to determine the “needs of the Soviet mass consumer.” In the 1960s, the designers of GUM saw how the actual manner of clothing as well as the demand for fashion among the inhabitants of Moscow differed more and more from the population living in the countryside. If GUM mainly oriented its fashion towards the demands of Muscovites it had to raise its standards constantly. This was made particularly clear in the 1960s when the amount of visitors to the demonstration hall decreased drastically. Many saw the reasons for this not only in the fact that GUM had by then lost its monopoly on “exoticism” in demonstrating fashion in the Soviet capital but also in the fact that the Soviet citizens had turned into more fashion conscious customers who could compare the designs at GUM with the achievements of international fashion.

In order to attract more customers the directors of GUM tried to make fashion shows more interesting by including more original and ultra-fashionable designs, such as women's trouser suits (the next big thing of the time) in the collections. But as soon as such measures were taken the other side raised its critical voice. The April issue of the popular Soviet women's journal *Rabotnitsa* published an article in 1969 with the telling title “The Splashes of Fantasy or 45 Opinions about Fashion.” After visiting the demonstration of the spring-summer collection at GUM the author had



Fig. 6.5. Two new designs of everyday clothes from GUM at the Red Square, Moscow, 1960s.

come to the conclusion that the majority of the designs were impractical and blindly copied the modern tendencies of international high fashion. The critique was above all directed towards the evening dresses, which had been sewn from fashionable, expensive and, even more worrying, immodestly shining *lurex* cloth.

The article was discussed animatedly at the meeting of the party activists of the Department of Fashion Design at GUM on the 23rd of March 1969. The majority of the designers did not agree with the author's views. "In Moscow many women wear fashionable dress... People are now well dressed,

and we try to create flashy designs with a unified style.... There is no more need to demonstrate expensive furs since everyone wears them already now”³⁵¹ as the designer and party activist Klara Pobedinskaya explained. Other participants argued that in the streets of Moscow people dressed themselves better and better every year and paid more attention to fashion. This had reached such measures that, compared to the clothes of some young Muscovites walking in the city center, the new designs from GUM simply looked old fashioned. The art consultant Bessmertnaya expressed her worries that if the advice of the defenders of utilitarian fashion was followed the “designs of GUM will turn out to be of a lower standard than those worn by the population of Moscow.”³⁵² In her opinion, the task of the designer should not be to descend to the level of the “average” buyer at GUM but to consistently raise the aesthetic level and thus also the standards of taste of the citizens.

At the same meeting, the designer Istomina by no means tried to hide the fact that the fashion department engaged in the “creative” adaptation of the tendencies of Western fashion: “We basically take the journals of the capitalist countries which in some way becomes apparent in the designs we create.”³⁵³ The former artistic director of the department of fashion at GUM, Shimilis, told the authors of this book that the designers of GUM, did in fact orient their work according to the fashionable tendencies of the West in many ways. The Department regularly received new fashion journals from the socialist countries but also from France, Great Britain, Italy and the USA. Even though neither he nor the majority of the designers knew any foreign languages it was in his opinion “quite enough for a specialist to see the pictures in a fashion journal in order to understand what the leading tendencies of the world of fashion were like.”³⁵⁴

Working Days at the Department of Fashion Design at GUM

The main indicator of the activity of the labor collective of the Fashion Department was the number and the quality of its new designs. In 1950–1970 the department created 800–1300 new approved images every year (see table 6.1.). This amount included both totally new designs and, to a certain extent, reprises (designs that had been created earlier but were still in fashion possibly after some modifications). With the exclusion of the shoes and hats, regarded as secondary in the collections, the amount was 500–700 new garments. These included as a rule two seasonal collections (spring-summer and autumn-winter), each of them with 120–150 designs which were shown to the public every day in the demonstration hall at GUM. In addition to these seasonal collections, at the order of the direction of GUM, the fashion department also compiled special collections, some of which were shown in international exhibitions abroad. In contrast to ODMO, GUM did not make any exemplary or trend setting collections whose purpose would be to act as a guideline for the whole country.

Table 6.1. The Number of Designs at the Department of Fashion Design at GUM 1956–1974.

	1956	1957	1959	1963	1965	1966	1969	1970	1971	1972	1974
	over										
All	800	823	1372	1000	1205	1295	1019	1001	962	908	924
Clothes	–	586	1068	–	821	892	–	–	803	764	783
Shoes	–	242	304	–	87	78	–	–	86	78	73
Hats	–	–	–	–	–	106	–	–	73	66	59
Repeats	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	96	90	157

Source: D.23.L.37; D.39.L.183; D.41.L.219; D.56.L.87; D.63.L.128; D.105.L.159 and others.

In 1964, according to the annual plan, each designer at the department was supposed to create eight designs a month. In 1966 the average quota was cut down to seven.³⁵⁵ However, these rather tight quotas together with the norms regulating the expenditure on textiles and accessories needed for work were often experienced as constraining the creative character of the work.

The procedure for the approval of new designs merits a separate discussion. Despite many appeals to the higher state offices, the artistic council of GUM was created first in 1967 but only started its work as late as 1969. Before that, during 1954–1968, most of the women’s designs were taken into use during the so-called working inspections of the special committee, which consisted of the leading designers and artistic counselors of the department together with the representatives of the direction of the store and its sales departments. The members of this committee formed the first artistic council. However, not all the new designs passed through the periodical “working inspections” or the meetings of the council. For a long time all the men’s clothes as well as head wear were sewn without any critical discussion. Because no special men’s collections were ever made for the purposes of the demonstration hall or exhibitions abroad, the individual men’s designs were regarded as just additional parts in the regular women’s collections. Ruben Singer was for a very long time the only designer of men’s clothes at GUM with personal authority. In the beginning of the 1960s many new items never reached the public and instead found their way straight to the storerooms of the department.

The need to increase the quality of design at GUM was very acute. For the half year from November 1962 to April 1963, 30 percent of all the designs never passed inspection.³⁵⁶ In 1964–1966 the situation was even worse: half of all the designs either did not pass at all or were sent back to be remade.³⁵⁷ The work of the “real” artistic council also started with scandal: in 1969 it declined 15 percent of the inspected designs, and another 26 percent received bad marks and were sent to be remade. Thus, in all, over 40 percent of all designs were turned down at the first inspection of the council.³⁵⁸

In 1973 it was suggested that the designers who produced a lot of rejects should lose their right to a “creative” day. During such days, common in the Soviet research institutes, which had been introduced as early as 1956

in ODMO, the workers did not have to show up at the workplace. In general, a designer had 50 creative days a year. These days were to be devoted to the improvement of professional qualifications, to studying the international or domestic experience of design, and to searching for new ideas in libraries, museums, exhibitions, and so on.

Many concrete factors influenced everyday life at the fashion department at GUM, not the least among them the personal relations between the members of the working collective. Ideological issues did not play a large part on the “shop floor” level. Ideology functioned mainly as the general, mostly taken for granted “background” of activities.³⁵⁹ It reached the ordinary designers and other workers in the form of periodically repeated political campaigns initiated from above. Whereas the ideological dogmas were understood with time more and more as a kind of a ritual, the economic-administrative system of the USSR had a more concrete and practical impact on the work of the department. The low standards of the material-technical provisions of the department were its weak point: good textiles and new machines were in great shortage.

Since the main purpose of the fashion department was to design clothes for the ordinary Soviet citizens it could officially only make use of such textiles and clothes of domestic industrial make as were for sale to the ordinary customer and more or less regularly available in the shops. As the director of the department Katz declared in April 1958 “we cannot show designs made out of non-existent textiles” which were not for sale anywhere.³⁶⁰ The designers at GUM felt these restrictions to be harsher than, for instance, those at ODMO. Consequently, in the usual manner, they invented several ways of overcoming these restrictions as early as the end of the 1950s. Unofficially, the direction of GUM allowed its designers to buy textiles and accessories as private customers in the Moscow shops, to be used in their professional work. They could be reimbursed from GUM’s accounting office. In addition, the department started, even though only exceptionally, to use the cloth from imported clothes for sale in the sales departments of GUM. In the 1960s orders were given to some Moscow factories to produce small quantities of textiles with specific colors and designs.³⁶¹ These exceptions were quite common for collections that were to be shown abroad. On the pretext of a “foreign” collection one could overcome almost any kind of shortage and engage any external specialist in the specific work task. For instance, the department sometimes received luxurious furs, like karakul and others. No one at GUM could, however, dye furs and therefore a deal was made with masters employed at the Soviet circus.³⁶²

In addition to such foreign collections, under special circumstances GUM was even asked to design some particularly demanding domestic ones. Such was the case with, for instance, the collection of about 150 items designed in 1967 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution of 1917. In that case neither the use of raw materials nor the creativity of the artists faced any limits. The main challenge that the designers faced was to combine modern fashion with revolutionary traditions, with the addition of some folklore motifs.³⁶³ With the help of these collections, GUM participated with success in the International Festival of Fashion in 1967 in Moscow.³⁶⁴

In anticipation of the important foreign collections the direction of the Department of Fashion Design at GUM would, in the beginning of the year, start hoarding the best textiles. At the same time, for work with the “ordinary” seasonal collections that were shown in the exhibition hall to the general public, the designers had to beg for the “last pieces” of high quality cloth. As a consequence, intentionally or not, domestic collections gradually came to be of only secondary importance.

From the point of view of the creativity of the designers, the main contradiction was between new ideas and the many restrictions to their realization. As one of the documents formulated it “the designer was not expected to create the design she had thought of but instead to make something out of the textile that she was supposed to use.”³⁶⁵ The situation did not change drastically over the years and understandably had quite a destructive impact on creativity. According to the designer Klara Pobedinskaya, as late as the mid-1970s the problems with provisions were so big that a designer was best off orienting herself from the beginning to what happened to be available at the moment in the storerooms of the department store.³⁶⁶

Under the conditions, a lot depended on the personality of the designer. Designers could justifiably follow the formal path and be satisfied with the meager materials in fact available. Or, if they could not find the necessary materials in the storerooms of GUM, they could go the informal way and buy them in any shop as a private person.³⁶⁷ In addition, when faced with the task of designing with the relatively limited variety of textiles, they could compensate for this disadvantage with some particularly fashionable silhouettes or creative details that would attract a spectator’s attention. As the designer E. A. Tomashevich formulated it, under the conditions the best way out was to “take refuge in all kinds of ultra-fashionable patterns.”³⁶⁸

The price of the creativity of the designers at GUM was quite low for the state. The price of the raw materials, and not the designers’ salaries, made up the overwhelmingly greater part of the prices of exclusive items of clothing. In 1968 the Department of Fashion Design at GUM made special economic calculations in order to determine what would be a profitable price at which to sell the unique clothes that had been designed for the fashion shows. It proved that the average expense for sewing a light female dress at the department was not more than 54.4 rubles and that of a women’s overcoat 108.5 rubles, including the price of the raw materials. If a customer had compared these prices with the prices of the corresponding industrially produced clothes sold at GUM she would have found that their “state” prices were almost the same. For instance, the price of an ordinary women’s overcoat was 112 rubles, only slightly more expensive than the unique designs of the fashion department.³⁶⁹

In the beginning, the designers’ trips abroad along with the demonstration of their designs gave rise to additional interest in the novelties of international fashion. The designers at GUM also visited the first demonstrations of foreign fashion which took place at the international exhibitions in Moscow in the end of the 1950s and the beginning of the 1960s. Trying to follow their times, the direction of the fashion department also subscribed to

foreign fashion journals. In one of the party meetings in April 1958, the shoe designer A. Ogenesov noted the fact that the majority of his colleagues did not know any foreign languages and therefore asked the direction to organize their translation. As the minutes of the meeting show, E. V. Semenova, who was reputed to know languages well, was given the task of systematically translating articles from the foreign fashion journals as well as compiling reports on the future perspectives of tendencies in international fashion.³⁷⁰ When she, referring to her otherwise heavy work burden, stopped the translations for a time at the end of 1960, the matter was given high priority and raised again in the party meetings. The designers declared that they could not work anymore because they “did not know what was new in the West in construction and design.”³⁷¹

The question of making active use of the progressive experience of the other fashion design organizations in the Soviet Union and, above all, of All-Union House of Fashion Design (ODMO) was also relevant to the time. The designers at GUM complained that they felt themselves isolated in the lack of complete information about what was going on elsewhere in the country. This had a negative impact on the results of their work. They regularly asked their directors to establish regular contacts with ODMO. As the worker at the Department at Fashion Design Shipova argued in 1960:

The (All-Union – J. G. and S. Z.) ODMO organizes methodical consultations but we will not take part in them. The same House takes part in the competitions and conferences of fashion – it gives direction to their design work but we lack all this. This is a very serious and big question....³⁷²

In 1962, the designer Kolegaeva raised the same question again in the party meeting: “We do not have any ties to the (All-Union) House of Fashion Design. We do not take part in anything at all, we simply see nothing and work blindly.”³⁷³ This critique was obviously taken into account.

There is no doubt that many designers and models at GUM had unofficial contacts with their colleagues at ODMO. The workers at GUM took part as private persons in the exhibitions of the new collections at ODMO even though they were not invited there on official business. In 1963, the direction of the fashion department for the first time made a deal that three of their specialists could practice at ODMO in order to learn new methods of clothing construction. From the mid-1960s, the workers at GUM were officially invited to the All-Union consultations organized regularly by ODMO and VIALegprom which discussed the future perspectives of Soviet fashion.³⁷⁴

Publishing Activities at GUM

GUM had permanent problems establishing cooperation with the clothing factories to start producing their designs industrially in greater quantities. Therefore, it had to take refuge in other ways of making its designs well known. Publishing activities were in this respect among the most important.

They both brought significant profits to GUM and made their designs popular among the citizens.

In the beginning, some single designs were published in women's magazines, among them *Sovetskaya zhenshchina* ("Soviet Woman," which appeared in 7 languages and was actively distributed abroad). The Department of Fashion Design also soon started to publish its own patterns for sewing by ordinary women. In 1954 a series of these patterns was published as an attachment to the popular journal *Rabotnitsa* (The Working Woman).

In 1955 the Department of Fashion Design started publishing its own fashion albums – *Novinki GUMa* (Novelties at GUM) and *Mody GUMa* (Fashions at GUM). Later it increased its publications purposefully and offered its customers four to six fashion albums each year. In addition to individual booklets, the patterns were also published under the title *Modeli s chertezhami kroya* (Designs with sewing instructions) with a typical edition of 50,000 to 75,000. From the beginning of the 1960s such albums with instructions were published for both adults' and children's wear.³⁷⁵ Since sewing one's own clothes was common in the Soviet Union, the total copies of the edition doubled in 1963 compared to 1962 (from 150,000 to 381,000). The number of printed pictures in color sold to the visitors at the demonstration hall also doubled in 1963.³⁷⁶

The fashionable publications from the fashion department were sold in practically all the regions of the USSR as well as at GUM and in Moscow. One could subscribe to them in advance or buy them in the local shops. This system of distributing printed fashion patterns and illustrations with practical instructions for sewing proved to be very effective. From the middle of the 1950s to the middle of the 1970s GUM published tens of thousands of new designs for women's and children's wear. It did not publish any men's patterns.

Some of the albums were "universal," dedicated to the oncoming season (*Modeli GUMa*, *50 Modelei GUMa*, *Modeli 1967 goda*, *Na kazhdyi den'* [For Every Day]). Others were directed to a particular readership according to their age or constitution like *Detskoe platye dlya shkol'nikov* (Clothes for the Schoolchildren), *Dlya molodykh* (For the Young Ones), and *Dlya polnykh zhenshchin* (For Big Women). The albums with designs for big women ran many copies and were particularly popular. For instance, in 1974 one such album had an edition of 100,000. Special albums propagated sport wear (*Sportivnaya odezhda*), the knitwear designed at GUM (*Spitsami i kriuchkom* [With Knitting Needles and Crochet Hooks]), or presented GUM's designs from the special exhibitions. For instance, in 1961 the album *Modeli GUMa*, with an edition of 20,000, presented the collection which GUM's models had demonstrated in the All-Union exhibition of textile products.³⁷⁷ Some albums were dedicated to special festive collections, like *Yubileinyi* (The Festive) in 1967, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution of 1917. The total amount of the printed albums varied greatly from one year to the next. The size of the editions always depended on the availability of printing paper due to the limited paper quotas which the planning organs had given to GUM. (See table 6.2.)

Table 6.2. *The annual number of fashion albums and the total amount of copies in their editions at GUM in the 1950s–1970s.*

1956	1966	1967	1968	1969	1970	1971	1974
5	–	5	4	–	4	6	4
230.000	171.000	254.000	328.000	335.000	330.000	650.000	375.000

Source: Compiled using the annual reports of the direction of the Department of Fashion Design at GUM. (Dela 23, 39, 41, 56, 63, 105.)

Table 6.3. *The total amount of copies in the editions of the GUM pattern and design booklets published and distributed in 1956–1970.*

1956	1958	1959	1966	1970
1,148 thousand pattern booklets	1,200 thousand pattern booklets	708 thousand pattern booklets with 169 designs	1,960 thousand pattern booklets + 120 thousand collections of drawings	453 thousand collections of drawings

Source: the table is compiled from the annual reports of the direction of the Department of Fashion Design at GUM. (Dela 23, 39,41,56,63,105).

The fashion department was, however, very keen on making its designs available to the population at large. Its directors knew

that there are millions of sewing machines in the country. This means that every woman who knows how to sew can with the help of our patterns sew herself a beautiful and fashionable dress. This will promote the good taste of the population and they will dress themselves attractively.³⁷⁸

The Ministry of Trade actively supported the publishing initiatives. It assumed that the fashion department at GUM would distribute one million printed copies of the patterns of the best designs from GUM every year. GUM could in fact easily fulfill this quota, even to excess. But as the directors well knew not even a million patterns could satisfy the demand.³⁷⁹

Due to this publishing activity, the designs of GUM, as a rule not exciting interest within the garment industry and consequently not sold at clothing shops, did not disappear without trace (see table 6.3.). Individual sewing was an effective alternative to the mass production of clothes in the Soviet Union all through these decades. Thanks to these publications, the designs from GUM were turned into real concrete clothes after all, through the method of sew-it-yourself, with the help of private tailors and the state ateliers of individual sewing.

In the 1960s and 1970s the fashion department received remarkably many letters of gratitude from the most remote corners of the country. The authors usually wrote that they lived far from Moscow but still wanted to dress themselves “not worse than the Muscovites.” The distributed printed patterns gave them such a possibility. As the writers explained, with the help of the designs from GUM they could cloth their whole family too.³⁸⁰



Fig. 6.6. Fashion show at the demonstration hall of GUM, late 1950s.

In the Demonstration Hall at GUM

The main forum where the designers met their customers was without a doubt the demonstration hall at GUM. There was no lack of visitors to the fashion shows in the beginning. Long queues formed on the stairs in front of the hall before the shows started. Among them were many regular guests who visited all the seasonal exhibitions. The demonstration hall had 350 seats and it was famous for its exclusive architecture and rich interior. (Fig. 6.6.)

At times the hall was closed to the general public. In addition to the fitting of new designs all kinds of consultations and meetings of the artistic council (after its founding at the end of the 1960s) as well as all kinds of exclusive demonstrations took place here. The hall became busier when the open demonstrations started. In the beginning the seasonal collections were demonstrated once a day. Soon, in the end of the 1950s, the number of demonstrations was increased to two or three depending on the day of the week, including Sundays. This made it possible for about one thousand visitors to see the shows every day and acquaint themselves with the tendencies of present fashion. Internal radio broadcasts informed the customers of GUM,

who filled the sales departments in great numbers, about the upcoming shows. The tickets were sold at the entrance for quite a reasonable price of 50 kopeks. With this sum the visitor received several unique pleasures at once. First, in the 1950s and 1960s the demonstration hall was the only one in Russia where one could follow an exotic, well arranged show with live models and the accompaniment of a real orchestra and the commentaries of experts. Not even at ODMO, the main “cathedral of Soviet fashion,” did a live orchestra accompany the shows with music. (In Tallinn, Estonia, this was the case quite early on.)

When a new design was demonstrated the speaker always announced the name of its designer and gave some short comments about its construction, style and purpose, the cloth used to sew it, and so on. The idea was that during these shows the visitor would increase his or her knowledge about the culture of dress and fashion trends as well as learn to follow the standards of good taste. It was no accident that only professional art consultants or historians were allowed to introduce the shows as well as to comment in more detail on the individual designs.

The visitors who often came to Moscow on short trips from other regions of the country could also buy the albums with the patterns and drawings of the designs shown in the demonstrations – as well as other albums published by GUM – at the same place, either in the kiosk at the entrance to the demonstration hall or in the department of “goods of culture” (writing and drawing utensils, paint, brushes, etc.) at GUM. From 1963 brochures about each new seasonal collection were published and sold to visitors. In addition, visitors could buy drawings of the designs sold either in single copies or in collections.

At the turn of the years 1969–1970, a crisis hit the fashion demonstrations at GUM, which at this time organized about 620 open shows every year. Its working collective had for a long time lived on the success of its first years, when the number of visitors had increased like an avalanche each year: in 1957 it was two times more than in 1956, in 1958 40 percent more than the year before, and in 1959 44 percent more.³⁸¹ In 1959 and 1960 the fashion department reported that 500,000 to 600,000 thousand people had seen seasonal fashion collections either at the internal demonstrations at GUM, during the visiting exhibitions in other places in the USSR, or abroad. In 1960, the fashion show at the demonstration hall was filmed for the first time and broadcasted on the All-Union television station.³⁸²

Since everyone at GUM had gotten used to the long queues and streams of visitors it was inconceivable that this huge popularity could come to an end so soon. No one had paid sufficient attention to the quality of the shows or taken into account the growing demands of the customers. The visitors’ critical remarks, which started to appear in the beginning of the 1960s, had been taken more than anything as proof of the visitors’ deficient understanding of fashion and low cultural standards.

To the employees of the fashion department these problems did not, however, come as a big surprise. Many remembered the sharp-tempered presentation of the designer Singer at the meeting of the Party activists of the department on the 15th of April, 1963. In his opinion “in the beginning we

were all deeply involved in demonstrating our designs but now no one cares about it.”³⁸³ As a matter of fact, during the first years the general enthusiasm and emotional involvement of the designers was great. In the beginning of the 1960s, this enthusiasm started to fade and a certain degree of boredom or nonchalance took its place. Routines and the strict fulfilment of the quotas became more important to many than a genuinely creative relationship to fashion design. Many designers lost all interest in following the future destinies of their own creations. In the end, the direction had to order the designers to be present at the demonstrations of their own clothes in order to get firsthand reactions to their designs.³⁸⁴

At the departmental meetings the workers also expressed their worries about the need to renovate the demonstration hall and called attention to the overall decline in the level of the demonstrations. There were many objective reasons that had led to this situation. The foreign visits of the collective as well as the increasing popularity of the fashion shows organized in other big cities in the USSR by other fashion institutes, including those established on the local and regional level, had led to a diminishing interest in the shows of the GUM demonstration hall. The fashion shows at GUM simply lost their unique character. The best designs were not shown there anymore. They were more often included in the collections touring abroad. The best professional forces – and the best textiles – at GUM were now mostly mobilized to maintain the prestige of the country. The first whole collection to be shown abroad was created at the end of 1958, but as early as 1966 the designers created three such full “foreign” collections a year.³⁸⁵ This was mostly done alongside and at the expense of the regular planned work.

The relatively long-term absence of part of the labor collective from Moscow also had a destabilizing effect on the work of the Department. The designers had to cancel their fitting sessions because the models were abroad. The regular shows suffered from the fact that the models were not available in Moscow. The models left behind had to work twice as much, being so busy with the fitting sessions that they hardly had enough time to do their make-up for the shows.³⁸⁶ In addition, the direction gave the Department new design tasks that were not in its original plans. The art director of the department, Shimilis, complained in one of the Party meetings that

a regular collection for the demonstration hall, other collections for the tours, for the congress, for the celebratory collections. Such a heavy burden does not pass without consequences. The models have it very badly. This makes them nervous and disturbs the rhythm of work. All this hurry has a negative effect on the creativity of the work.³⁸⁷

The head of the demonstration hall, V. I. Gurtovaya, gave the following negative picture of the working of her unit in one of the Party meetings in 1972:

The demonstration hall has not been renovated for a long time and it has an unpleasant and dirty view. A lot of dust, the catwalk is shaky. The narrow path (covered with carpet) does not cover the whole catwalk ... After the call when the

visitors have already entered the hall the lights are not turned on [in order to spare energy-authors] and the visitors have to sit almost in the dark ... people come late and enter the hall almost during the whole first part. ... During the demonstration the musicians come to the hall noisily and start tuning their instruments speaking together while the speaker is already making her introductory comments. The models walk the catwalk without always coordinating their actions with the speaker's comments.³⁸⁸

All this caused the prestige of fashion at GUM to start to fall in the eyes of the Soviet consumers. When people felt that their presence was not taken seriously they stopped attending the shows. During the second half of the 1960s often only half of the seats in the hall were occupied. Scandals took place when the visitors who were angry with the low standards of the shows simply left their seats in the middle of the show and demanded their money back.³⁸⁹ According to the annual reports, in 1967 a total of 250,000 visitors saw the 789 demonstrations either in the demonstration hall or in the other places which GUM visited. The next year the amount of visitors declined to 203,500.³⁹⁰ With daily shows, the demonstration hall at GUM could take a total of 217,000 visitors a year.³⁹¹ In 1972 only half the seats were occupied, with 100,500 visitors, and in 1973 the amount decreased to 83,100 people.³⁹² Therefore, whenever designers and export firms from the other socialist countries came to show their collections they had no problems renting the demonstration hall at GUM. In 1971 the annual income from all the regular shows of GUM's own collections was 55,600 rubles, whereas just a couple of dozen visiting fashion shows from the GDR and Czechoslovakia produced a profit of 10,700 rubles.³⁹³

In the middle of the 1960s the direction of the Department of Fashion Design took some measures to improve the situation at the demonstration hall. In order to attract more visitors it was decided that the demonstrations should be made more varied and modern and more theatrical. Instead of the tradition of the two seasonal collections, four and later six different programs were introduced. Starting in 1968, a whole collection of women's dress was designed each season consisting of all the different categories of clothes: for domestic use, for work, sport as well as leisure, for visits to the theater and other cultural events, etc., all of these taking into special account women of different ages and various bodily constitutions.³⁹⁴

In practice it was not possible to satisfy all these demands on a regular basis. Sportswear was more or less absent from one collection and in another some other kinds of dresses were missing. A worker at the fashion department, L. N. Sazanskaya, admitted in 1974: "The summer is hot and the beach attracts many but in the demonstration hall they only show two things that suit the season."³⁹⁵ Nevertheless, in 1974 the fashion department delighted its visitors by demonstrating seven thematic programs with 540 new designs in all.³⁹⁶

It was also decided to pay more attention to public opinion. In the 1960s the visitors to the demonstration hall received twice yearly questionnaires with the purpose of finding out what they really thought about the designs on display. The questions included, for instance, the following: Which designs and

which models did you like best as well as what kind of music accompanying the demonstrations is best suited to emphasize the style, contents and pattern of the designs?³⁹⁷ In 1971 to 1973, 300 questionnaires a year were distributed (100 each in three different shows) which hardly qualifies the sample of the study as representative. In addition, the visitors' reactions could mostly be anticipated and observed even without questionnaires based solely on their emotional reactions during the shows.

The aesthetic preferences did not always coincide with those of practicality. The visitors obviously liked to look at festive dresses worn by young, thin models on the catwalk. On the other hand, judging from the answers to the questionnaires, the most desirable designs were mundane, practical designs for women of mature age. The visitors also expressed a wish for the models to be not only young girls but also, just as in real life, women of different ages and sizes. When presenting the results to the direction of the Department of Fashion Design the workers of the demonstration hall drew from them the conclusion that "our models do not have to keep up their form, to lose weight, as is common with us." It would be fully possible to "extend the size of the models up to the number 56."³⁹⁸ As a conclusion, the direction expressed their willingness to employ "a very robust model (up to size 58)."³⁹⁹ This followed the general concern for the needs of heavier women. In the late 1960s, the designers at GUM were given the task of creating designs "which can dress women of all ages and all figures."⁴⁰⁰ Every expert knew without doubt that there were no such universal designs. Those that fit thin women differed from those that fit heavy women as far as their different styles, proportions, and colors were concerned.⁴⁰¹ In practice, however, GUM designed clothes taking into account the sizes of their own models, who were mostly young women of the sizes 44 to 48. In the second half of the 1960s the situation changed and a new line appeared in the plans of the department: "the design for heavy women." In 1968 23 percent of all the designs at GUM were designed for women counted as plus-sized (sizes 50–54).⁴⁰² At the same time the publishing unit of the fashion department produced special fashion albums with sewing instructions called "For the Large Woman" (in 75,000 copies).

The Models: "The Most Difficult Part of the Work"

The propaganda for the culture of dress and good taste among the Soviet citizens was one of the main tasks of the Department of Fashion Design at GUM just as of all the other Soviet fashion institutes. This cultural mission was taken quite seriously at GUM, which was filled every day with buyers coming from all over the country who demonstrated concretely in their own appearance, dress and behavior the difficulties and contradictions of the social and cultural processes taking place in the Soviet Union.

The creators and distributors of socialist culture had a special responsibility. They were supposed to personally follow and represent the good lifestyle that they propagated in their work. An interesting contradiction was therefore inherent in the activities of the fashion department which proved

to be difficult to solve. The results of the work of the whole collective were namely not presented to the public by an educated art consultant but by an ordinary girl employed as a model, or as they were called then, a demonstrator of clothes. She did not say anything during the demonstration but the public could very well understand and interpret the message sent by her style of walking, gestures and facial expressions as well as the bodily poses she took on the podium. Even more: she was more expressive and colorful than the language of even the best propaganda ever could be and, above all, she was very difficult to control. The model could easily, if she only wanted to, either “destroy” any design or to lift it up to the skies. With her own behavior, manners and looks she “educated” the public by offering a concrete example, often more directly than the very designs that she demonstrated.

The models at GUM soon became generally known and even famous. They were invited to work at ODMO too; their pictures together with the images of the best models from Kuznetskii Most were published in the popular Soviet journals and in the fashion albums from GUM, often in huge editions. Soon flowers, presents and admirers appeared.

The profession of a model was highly novel in the still rather traditional Soviet society at the turn of the 1950s and 1960s when the outer appearance of a human being was considered to be of only secondary importance compared to her inner characteristics and work performance. All extensive attention that was paid to one’s outer appearance was therefore regarded with suspicion. It proved to be particularly difficult to hire models from among local people in the Soviet republics with predominantly Muslim cultural traditions. Under these conditions the main moral qualification of a woman was not her beauty but her modesty. The only people who had the right to a good reputation and high social status were those who had earned it with their socially useful work, like actresses, scholars, sportsmen or the shock workers in production. The models of GUM, as well as all the models in the Soviet Union, became the symbols of a fame that they had not really earned. Their profession was not really decent, at least in the eyes of some of their contemporaries. Towards the end of the 1960s this attitude gradually started to change and the profession of a fashion model became, just like in the West, less controversial and stigmatized.

From 1958–1959 onwards their regular travels abroad with the fashion shows as well as the reception of foreign fashion delegations nourished additional suspicions concerning the moral worth of their profession. For obvious reasons, the models formed at least half of all the delegations. Travel abroad and all kinds of contact with foreigners were regarded as particularly demanding in those days. Therefore, it was no wonder that the Party organization of the GUM considered the question of the ethical and aesthetic education of the work collective, as well as the general strengthening of discipline, to be of the utmost importance.

The presence of international tourists at the fashion demonstrations, attracted by the rich cultural history of the city center, did not make the situation easier. The possibility of seeing a modern Soviet fashion show intrigued many tourists, journalists and businessmen. In 1958, the Party Committee of GUM took up the state of political education at the Department

of Fashion for special discussion.⁴⁰³ The work with the models was said to constitute its most sensitive issue. There were some good reasons for this conclusion. It was common practice that in order to receive travel documents the Party Committee at GUM interviewed people who were sent abroad on working commissions and posed them some simple questions on domestic and international policy. The situation understandably made people nervous and the answers given by the interviewed models caused the direction a lot of headaches, even circulating as common jokes among the workers of the Department.

There were no members of the Communist Party among the models at GUM, and only a few were members of the Komsomol Youth League. A model travelling abroad was expected not only to show clothing on the catwalk but also to take part in receptions and to socialize with their foreign hosts in unofficial situations. This demanded not only a pleasant outer appearance but also “ideological firmness,” a level of culture, and knowledge of basic manners and good behavior. The behavior of Soviet citizens abroad was thought to have a direct impact on the general image of the whole country.⁴⁰⁴

The Secretary of the Party Committee at GUM, Belyakov, formulated the important task as follows on the 30th of July, 1958:

Unless we work with our models they can cause damage to our reputation. We have to conduct discussions with them, also on the individual level, depending on their level and readiness so that our Soviet models will be able to answer all the questions, which some of them are not at all ready to do now. We have to nominate the politically more mature Party members as their tutors to conduct discussions with them.⁴⁰⁵

The head of the demonstration hall, the Communist V. I. Gurtovaya, was given the task of tutoring the models and following their behavior and morals. In her role of an “agitator” she raised, on Mondays and Fridays all through the late 1950s and 1960s, the models’ cultural-political level of consciousness in collective reading sessions during which the latest newspapers were discussed. She conducted other political discussions with them too.⁴⁰⁶

There is no doubt that the visits abroad made a very strong impression on the models as well as designers at the fashion department. This was not only true of the observations made of the higher living standards and shops without queues and full of goods. The travelers were even more amazed and impressed by the fact that abroad, including the other socialist countries of Europe, the status of their own profession, as well as that of female beauty and appeal, was quite different from what it was in the USSR. While abroad, the Soviet models felt themselves to be almost queens. They were always at the center of attention during the receptions, which were often held in old aristocratic apartments or in luxurious hotels. In most of the informal pictures taken during these visits abroad the models have very happy smiles on their faces. It was not easy to return home to normal life after such celebrations. Psychologically it therefore makes sense that the models were often accused of being arrogant and capricious after such travels abroad. (Fig.6.7.)



Fig. 6.7. Models from GUM having fun after a fashion show in East Germany, 1965 (from the left: Mingashudinova, Vavilova, Mironova, Kokoreva, Korshunov and Osetsimskaya).

On the first of July, 1960, the Communists of the Department of Fashion Design met to discuss the confidential letter of the Central Committee of the Party about “raising political alertness” which was distributed to all the Party organizations in the country. The letter mainly targeted those colleagues, in particular the models, who travelled abroad a lot. As the secretary of the Party Committee at the Department N. A. Lifshits said, “it is necessary to educate the models both politically and morally.”⁴⁰⁷ The critique was directed towards their outer appearance and, in the eyes of some Communists, excessively loose manners. What worried them most was that the models used to go around half-naked during the fitting sessions. “It has come time to create order, to forbid them ... during the work time on the podium to appear not properly dressed,” demanded V. Kartashova, not paying any attention to the specificity of their work.⁴⁰⁸

The Party members, in particular the elderly women among them, demanded also that the models should behave more modestly even outside of work in order not to “distinguish themselves.” As the Party member Petrosyan remarked, “the models should not use so much make-up during their free time,” adding that their appearance reminded one of circus performers who only wanted to draw the attention of others. “Any foreigner can freely use

them for his own purposes,” she continued. “Our models have a cheap finesse and even their appearance gives a very frivolous impression.”⁴⁰⁹ The head of the sewing workshop, G. V. Shvets, was of the same opinion: “Our models cannot really behave themselves well. All the European delegations who have visited us have behaved themselves very modestly.”⁴¹⁰ In her opinion, their tendency to “cheap finesse” was proof of their low cultural level and the shortcomings in their aesthetic education as models.

In the beginning of 1962, the question of the models’ unsuitable outer appearance was raised in a critical article again on the pages of the internal newspaper of GUM, *Za obraztsovuyu trgovliu* (Towards Exemplary Trade). The theme was also discussed in the meeting of the trade union of GUM and, on the 24th of May 1962, it was taken up again in the Party meeting.⁴¹¹ The complaints about the models were the same as before: their vulgar outer appearance both during the working sessions (too much make-up) and after work. Petrosyan declared with pathos: “In our times in our country one should not be allowed to present fashion in such a manner. Not even our actresses use make-up like that.”⁴¹²

According to G. D. Shvets “the cultural exchange with the foreign countries has both its good and bad sides.”⁴¹³ What he had in mind was that the opening of the iron curtain opened the USSR to the import of Western values too. As further proof of their arguments the Communists claimed that during their foreign travels the models were only interested in clothes and in having access to the all the imported “junk.”⁴¹⁴

On the 15th of January, 1963, two leading designers, Averyanova and Singer, who were not Party members, presented heavy criticism towards the work at the demonstration hall. According to Averyanova, it was totally unacceptable that the models were allowed to go to the demonstrations not respecting the principles of the ensemble – “overcoat without a hat, a dress without an umbrella, gloves and shoes – all are worn down and dirty. Any kind of a design will suffer from this.” In her words,

the models go to the demonstrations not properly dressed, in some kind of a hair do, in dirty stockings and worn out shoes. They remain standing in front of the podium and continue talking with each other. They keep to themselves – and the public is left without attention.⁴¹⁵

Singer joined the complaints by describing the following scene:

If you enter the demonstration hall you see the models walking the catwalk looking bored, with such an unconcerned and icy look on their faces that one cannot speak of any style at all. The music plays for itself in one boring tune. Vavilova is the only bright spot.⁴¹⁶

When one of the authors of this book presented such utterances, found in the archives, to the former workers of the fashion department their reaction was mostly one of surprise. The prima donna of those years, Tamara Mingashudinova, mostly did not use any make-up at all on the scene, though certainly one or another liked to use lipstick and emphasized the

expressiveness of the eyes with eyeliner. Looking at the past from today's perspective, the interviewee could not, however, remember one single model at the end of the 1950s and in the 1960s who could be characterized as "vulgar" or excessive in any respect. On the contrary, they all recalled very well how difficult it had been to find any good cosmetics in Moscow and how they had all had to make their own "laboratory experiments" before the shows to "cook" eyeliner and lipstick themselves.⁴¹⁷

The expenses of cosmetics had not been taken into account in the budgets of the fashion department. Consequently, the models did their own make-up and hairstyling, helping each other. Some succeeded better than others. As the designer Tomashevich complained in one of the Party meetings in 1962, "they [the models-authors] do not know how to make a face mask and no one teaches them to do so."⁴¹⁸ For a long time no one taught the models at GUM how to walk on the catwalk either. Finally in 1967 the fashion department started organizing special courses for the newly employed models on "choreography and rhythm, and the creation of style during shows."⁴¹⁹ A regular demand made of the fashion department was for each model to wear during the shows the shoes that were made for her personally, but the leaders regularly answered that it would be too expensive to buy such shoes for everyone. Therefore, some of the models preferred to use their own shoes in the demonstrations, but it was not always easy to make them fit the style and color of the dress to be demonstrated. Often the models, to promote their work, brought along their own accessories that were high quality and fashionable (belt, gloves, handbags, etc.) in order to better fit the designs that they demonstrated.⁴²⁰

Quite naturally, the models also made use of their trips abroad to acquire high quality things that were beneficial to their work, and in particular things that were in great shortage in the USSR, like good underwear, perfumes and cosmetics. This was not a secret from anyone. The models were, for instance, supposed to bring their own underwear to the shows. GUM did not provide it. Since the designs did not look good without the proper kind of underwear the models complained regularly that they did not receive any bras or underpants that would fit the style and other characteristics of the demonstrated designs.⁴²¹

After the second half of the 1960s the general tone of the Party meetings changed. They became less political and more down to earth. It was, for instance, said that the work of a model was very demanding and it was therefore necessary to create good conditions for their work and to guarantee them their fully deserved rest. The artistic director D. B. Shimilis remarked that "the models should have more time to take care of their outer appearance." To be able to do so they received a weekly day off, Thursday, during which they were supposed to visit the hairdresser, rest, engage in sports, and so on. Often they were, however, invited to work even during their days off.⁴²²

The criticism of the models' behavior did not stop, but now they were criticized mostly for coming late to work, for their "never ending gabbles on various themes, smoking and laughing" and for not always appearing in the regular shows. However, as one of the Party meetings could confirm, during the important shows or demonstrations abroad they always made an

extra effort and worked with distinction.⁴²³ In the middle of the 1960s a new generation of models entered GUM. Many young girls came to work there but at the same time the turnover rate of the labor force increased too. Many girls moved to other fashion institutions, which could offer them both better conditions of work and a higher salary. Unfortunately, GUM could not stand up to this challenge. Quite the contrary, during this same time the amount and, consequently, the burden of work increased remarkably. The fashion department traveled abroad regularly and organized demonstrations of its collections outside Moscow. But since the work in its own demonstration hall did not diminish either the question was raised of recruiting another crew of models.⁴²⁴ It was not easy to recruit and school new models in such a short time.

Finally in 1968 the fashion department succeeded in recruiting a second crew of models, and after that the burden of work and the situation at the demonstration hall became normal again.

The Call from Abroad

The workers of the fashion department were sent abroad quite early, in the end of the 1950s. International cooperation within the field of fashion served both practical and propagandistic purposes. Included in the former category were the exchange of experiences with foreign specialists and the study of modern trends of fashion in the West and the other socialist countries. The propaganda of Soviet fashion aimed at creating a positive image of the USSR among foreigners, who should become convinced not only that fashion existed under socialism but also that ordinary Soviet citizens were dressed no worse – and would soon be dressed even better – than those in the West.

The best designs from GUM were included regularly in the “campaigning” collections of clothes and shoes which the USSR exhibited in various trade exhibitions and fairs abroad. For instance, 48 pairs of shoes designed at GUM were selected to represent the Soviet Union in the World Fair at Brussels in 1958.⁴²⁵ In addition, from the end of the 1950s the designers at GUM were encouraged to create their own “international” collections. These demonstrations often took place at Soviet trade exhibitions and fairs as well as during the days of Soviet culture which were organized within the program of strengthening the friendship, cooperation and cultural relations between the USSR and foreign countries. In 1957–1959, GUM’s designs were demonstrated for the first time in the USA, Finland, Yugoslavia, the United Arab Emirates, the GDR, Poland, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia. In the 1960s and 1970s they were shown predominantly in the socialist countries and in some developing as well as some friendly capitalist countries like Finland.

The model Liudmila Andreeva remembered in particular the first ever visit of the GUM fashion show to Prague in 1958 and the great success of their designs there. This was a “return” visit: their colleagues from Czechoslovakia had visited Moscow for the first time the year before and demonstrated their designs in a couple of shows at GUM. According to Andreeva, the Czech audience received the festive evening dresses included in the Soviet



Fig. 6.8. The fashion model Vavilova demonstrates a new design from GUM at the Soviet Exhibition of Trade and Industry in Helsinki, Finland in 1959 next to the model of the nuclear ice breaker, Lenin.

collection with great enthusiasm. 50 years later Andreeva still associated this, one of GUM's very first foreign visits, with an exclusive celebration: a beautiful hotel in downtown Prague, luxurious service, official receptions, picnics in nature, the beautiful views of the old city, trips to the mountains and much more.⁴²⁶

In 1959 the delegation of the fashion department toured with a show for almost 30 days in Finland. (Fig. 6.8.) The fashion shows, in which even ODMO and some other Soviet design organizations took part, were organized within the Soviet industrial and trade exhibition in the main exhibition hall in the heart of the Finnish capital, Helsinki. The Finnish newspapers wrote about the exhibition and some, like *Salon Seudun Sanomat*, had on its front page pictures of the Soviet models dressed in the festive evening dresses designed at GUM.⁴²⁷ The close contact of the designers of GUM with Finland continued even later. For instance, in 1966 a Finnish TV crew made a documentary about a fashion show organized especially for them in the demonstration hall at GUM.⁴²⁸

In 1963 the designs of GUM toured the cities of Poland and in the end of 1965 a successful visit to the GDR took place including shows in Leipzig, Erfurt, Karl-Marx-Stadt and some other towns. After the show at Leipzig the local newspaper *Thüringische Landeszeitung*, enchanted by the Russian furs, wrote: "the female overcoat and the other fur items were greatly admired

– these valuables from the forest of the dark brown fox, nutria, all the way to the ermine and sable hats.” The evening outfits from GUM were admired as “examples of classical beauty.” The long evening dress called Leningrad’s white nights which the model Anatonina (Nina) Vavilova demonstrated impressed the audience with its originality: “airy, covered with shining pearls and with a long scarf falling down to the floor.” Nominating the models “heroes of the day,” the newspaper printed a long interview with Vavilova. The article had the title “Nina and the White Nights.” The model in question, who retired long ago, preserves this paper clipping from the newspaper to this day in her family archive as a deeply cherished memory.⁴²⁹

The GUM collection appealed greatly to the East German specialists. They made a proposal to the leader of the delegation, the general director of GUM Kochurov, to use the collection to start producing its designs in small series in the GDR. It was also hinted that this would only be the first step. According to the artistic director of the fashion department, D. B. Shimilis, during the talks the Germans raised the question of starting a systematic collaboration, distributing the best designs of GUM and opening GUM’s own boutiques in the GDR.⁴³⁰ The suggestion of exporting fashion from GUM was certainly very flattering to the direction of the department store, who had long dreamed of their own “brand” of fashion. The realization of the plan was not, however, within their power. After their return to Moscow Kochurov discussed the matter with the officials of the Ministry of Trade but as far as we know no further concrete measures were ever taken. For some reason the Soviet Government was not seriously interested in selling Soviet designs abroad. These later offers from potential buyers that we are aware of as well as Soviet experts’ own rather modest efforts shared a similar destiny.

In addition to the visits to the European socialist countries (GDR, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Bulgaria) in the middle of the 1960s GUM also established relations with Cuba.

As a rule the export collections had 100–150 designs of various items, from sportswear to luxurious evening dresses. The Soviet designers quickly learned that the festive evening dresses and clothes got the most attention. This was particularly the case if they had some Russian folk motifs or if the clothes or some of their details were made out of fur or had decorative images made in the “Russian style,” with traditionally handmade embroidery, etc. One of these collections from the late 1960s/beginning of the 1970s with clothes made out of karakul caused a real sensation touring in the COMECON countries.

A delegation consisting of 10–15 members, among them 5–8 models, some designers and representatives from the administration of the department store and its fashion department, usually followed the collection abroad. To have one’s name included on the list of the members of such a delegation was understandably extremely highly valued and envied among the workers. The trip abroad was regarded not only as working assignment but also as a kind of extra reward. The interviewed former workers of the department remembered their trips abroad both with great pleasure and as important occasions to learn more about their profession and trade.

7. The Tallinn House of Fashion Design: A Gateway to the West

The Founding of the Tallinn House

In many ways the Tallinn House was a typical middle-sized republican fashion institute that served mainly the local garment industry and the population of Estonia. However, because of its popular fashion journal it was better known than most others and its designs were well received among both the Soviet fashion specialists and the general public with an interest in fashion. The reputation that Estonia enjoyed, along with the two other Baltic States, for being an “internal Soviet West” certainly helped to promote the fame of both the Fashion House and its “house journal.”⁴³¹ (Fig. 7.1.)

Estonia along with the other two Baltic Soviet states of Lithuania and Latvia, had formally become part of the Soviet Union in 1940 after a short period of “bourgeois” independence between the two world wars. It was fully integrated into the Soviet administration first after the Second World War. Its reputation for being “Western,” however, dates far back to the times when it was first annexed from the Swedish Baltic Empire at the beginning of the 18th century, and became a province of the Russian Empire. Tallinn was famous for, among other things, its “European” coffee houses which were not found in the Russian regions of the Soviet Union.

The Tallinn House of Fashion Design, Tallinna Moemaja, was formally founded on the 15th of May, 1957 on the order of the Soviet of Ministers (Government) of the Estonian Socialist Soviet Republic. It was a direct effect of the Khrushchev’s “liberal” reforms which granting more authority to and involved the national republics of Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan and others in mutual cultural and economic cooperation on the USSR level. By the 1970s the republican houses of fashion had been opened in the capitals of almost all the Soviet Republics. The Tallinn House was thus from the very beginning an integral part of the All-Union network of the Soviet fashion design institutes (republican and regional), which formed a unified system. It worked under the Ministry of Light Industry of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic, which also financed it and approved its plans and its annual reports. The central fashion institutes in Moscow coordinated its activities in relation to “creative” matters, including fashion and other trends and technological developments by sending information and instructions



Fig. 7.1. A youthful dress from a fashion show organized by the Tallinn House of Fashion Design in the dance hall at Pirita, Tallinn, 1960s.

as well as by organizing meetings and conferences to share professional experiences. On all the above-mentioned subjects the specialists of ODMO and VIALegprom in Moscow supervised the Tallinn House just as they did all the other local republican fashion institutes. However, Moscow could not simply dictate its instructions and norms to them. In practice, each local house had a lot of independence in deciding and planning its future work. In fact, they were regularly encouraged to develop their own creative style and profile.

According to its founding document, the main tasks of the Tallinn House was to design, construct and demonstrate new clothing models, to promote the mass production of new models, and to participate in the activities of the design shops of the garment factories. At the beginning of 1958, it started publishing its own fashion journal, *Silueti*, in parallel Russian and Estonian editions. Its Russian edition was much larger and soon became well known all over the Soviet Union and in the Eastern European socialist countries.⁴³²

According to its long-time employees, the Tallinn House was the only one in the USSR which used the local language (Estonian) rather than Russian as its official working language. The annual reports and plans of The House preserved in the archives are also written in Estonian with the exception of

the economic book-keeping documents and letters to the other Soviet fashion institutes. Almost all its designers and workers were Estonian by birth and even the few Russians who worked there spoke fluent Estonian. Its first and long-time director, Anita Burlaka, was an Estonian too – her definitely non-Estonian sounding surname came from her Ukrainian husband. She used to joke that her non-Estonian surname acted as a protective shield and saved the House from any campaigns of “Russification.”

How did the Tallinn House work in practice? At the very start, the number of workers at Moemaja was relatively small. In 1958, the first year of its existence it employed a total of 52 workers, 26 of whom had a secondary educational degree, mostly from the Tallinn Technological Institute of Textile Industry.⁴³³ During early years they designed some hundreds of models annually, most of them work clothes and uniforms of various kinds.⁴³⁴ It reached its final size – which remained more or less the same until the end of the Soviet Union – by the mid-1960s and its main organizational structure and features were also established by then.

In addition to several administrative units, such as the economic department and the staff office, it consisted of five departments which dealt directly with fashion design: the department of “light clothes,” that is, indoor clothing, the department of outdoor clothing, the head wear department, the department of fashion exhibitions and the department responsible for the editing of the journal *Silueti*. The sixth department produced other printed publications such as fashion albums and technical drawings of the individual clothes sold to the public, often in big editions. All these departments were relatively small, the biggest ones with some 20–25 employees. The structure of the Tallinn House was typical of all the republican houses of fashion design in the USSR.

In the beginning the individual designers were attached to the different departments according to their specialization but later they formed a design department of their own servicing all the other departments. Designers thus did not have a narrow specialty of their own but took part in the design of all kinds of clothing. Only the shoe and leather design department had its own designers.⁴³⁵

The situation was the same at ODMO in the 1960s, where Zaitsev was, for example, assigned to design men’s and women’s clothing but also shoes. Only those ODMO designers who dealt with fur, millinery and underwear were strictly specialized from the very beginning. There is some evidence that the tendency towards specialization increased in ODMO, following world-wide tendencies, from the more “flexible” 1960s to the 1980s. This did not seem to be the case at the Tallinn House, where majority of the designers were expected to be ready to design all kinds of clothes every year or even on a monthly basis.

In 1967, when the House celebrated its 10th anniversary, it had 221 employees. As for professional education, 21 had a diploma from the Estonian State Academy of Art. They worked quite efficiently. About 1,600 models were designed during 1967, of which 1,100 were approved for industrial manufacture. In addition, the House produced 2,700 women’s dresses or other clothes as well as 400 wool overcoats and 46,500 hats, mostly wool

head wear.⁴³⁶ In addition to the Estonian factories, garment manufacturers from all over the Soviet Union in, for example, Alma-Ata, Dnepropetrovsk, Tashkent, Moscow, Chelyabinsk, Archangel, Kuzbas, Yerevan, Lugansk and Smolensk, ordered samples from the Tallinn House. The most significant and permanent customers came, however, from Estonia. According to the former head economist of the Tallinn house about 60 percent of the industrial designs were sold to Estonian factories in the 1960s and 1970s.⁴³⁷ Designs approved for mass production usually reached the customers in no less than two years. Such a situation was typical not only in Estonia but in the USSR as a whole, reflecting the shortcomings of the Soviet bureaucratic system.

Just like all the other Soviet fashion designing bodies, clothes factories and bigger ateliers, the Tallinn fashion house had an artistic council of its own which approved or disapproved of all the new designs. As a matter of fact, several such councils existed side by side. The first one was purely internal, consisting of the House's own director, its designers and pattern makers. It inspected all the designs first and approved of their further use either in the fashion shows and exhibitions or for industrial production. Three other bigger councils, one for clothes, one for shoes and one for head wear design each existed in addition to the one consisting of the House's own designers and directors. These bigger councils all had important representatives from the Estonian textile and garment industry, the trade organizations, ministries and so on. The first bigger artistic council dedicated to clothing design was founded in the beginning of 1958, at the very start of the House. In the beginning, it had 14 members but these soon increased to 24.⁴³⁸ The following year it was accompanied by another council with 13 members, specializing in leather and shoe designs.⁴³⁹

The protocol of the first meeting of the artistic council took up several important issues.⁴⁴⁰ The propagation of fashion was naturally one of the main tasks of the House. This took place in Tallinn but also in the other big towns of Estonia like Tartu, Narva and Pärnu. More importantly, the House was expected to produce similar designs to those that were now imported – mostly illegally – from abroad, thus diminishing the demand for the Western, capitalist clothes. By showing that Soviet designs could successfully compete with Western designs the authorities also hoped to reduce the general appeal of the Western consumer culture among the population. In addition, the importance of also designing men's fashion and working clothes was emphasized.

The special interest that these councils took, at least ideologically, in the fashion of men's and work clothing was also typical of ODMO and all the other Soviet fashion institutions in the 1960–1970s. It was not a peculiarity of Tallinn, but a result of general state policy. The members of the council, understandably, also emphasized the special importance of creating good relations between the Tallinn house and the central administrations of trade and industry in Estonia for the success of its future work. Great expectations were also put on the Tallinn House to analyze and assist in planning the general perspectives and trends of the garment industry in Estonia, just as in the case of the central All-Union House of Fashion Design (ODMO) in Moscow.

Just like any Soviet state institution or organization, the Tallinna Moemaja had its own Communist Party organization. It was formally established in 1961 on the initiative of the three Communist Party members then employed at the House, its first director Burlaka among them. Only one of these founding members – she became a long-time Party organizer – had been a Party member since the 1930s, before Estonia became a Soviet republic. Following the ordinary procedure, these three members asked, on the 22nd of September, 1961, the Estonian Communist Party for permission to organize a Party cell at their own workplace.⁴⁴¹ During the first years of its existence the Party organization was very small, with just of a couple of members. According to the preserved minutes of the Party cell meetings at the beginning of the 1960s, it had quite a limited impact on the activities of the House. This might be at least partly due to the fact that the director of the House was not only a founding member of the rather small Party organization but was also regularly the one who presented new issues and problems at the Party meetings. Anita Burlaka, together with the Party organizer, undersigned the minutes. Thus its activities did not differ much in practice from the formal administration of the House.

In a typical manner, the meetings took up some minor disciplinary matters among the workers (for instance, sewing clothes privately for customers) as well as complaints and problems concerning the relations between the House and the clothing factories. According to the minutes the House had problems in particular with the *Baltika* factory, which accused it of producing incorrect patterns and instructions. The House in turn claimed that the *Baltika* did not and obviously could not follow their patterns at all.⁴⁴² The Party organization actively recruited new members from among the workers of the House and by the end of the 1960s the number of its members, and consequently the number of the Communists working at the institution, increased to almost twenty.⁴⁴³ Despite obvious increase in the “weight” of the Party, it seems that its role was not very important at Tallinn compared to, for instance, the Party organization at GUM.

New Designs and the Artistic Council

The artistic councils inspected all new designs. They were always shown on live models. It could approve of these designs, disapprove of them or send them back to the designers to be reworked and improved. If the members of the council did not agree, a vote was taken and the majority decided the fate of the design with the chairman’s vote deciding in case of a stalemate. In Tallinn however, the council seemed to approve almost everything that was presented to it in its meetings, and it also regularly sent the majority of the designs presented on to industrial mass production.

In one of the first meetings of the general artistic council it inspected 61 designs and as many as 59 were approved.⁴⁴⁴ The lists of the new designs became longer at each regular meeting of the council. For instance, at the meeting on the 20th of January 1960, it inspected altogether 115 new designs and all except one were approved. In addition, one out of four designs received

the highest quality classification.⁴⁴⁵ Judging from the documents of these meetings, in the eyes of the members of the artistic council the general level of design was obviously quite satisfactory. The work load stabilized on about this level during the later years. In the mid-1970s, the Tallinna Moamaja produced 1,500 new clothing designs each year.⁴⁴⁶ One should, however, keep in mind that, in addition to totally new models, the council also inspected something called renovated designs as well as duplicates of old designs obviously still in fashion. The 15–20 designers employed at the House each had a quota of about 12–13 new fashion designs to fill each month, which was more than the production norms demanded at, for instance, ODMO.

The head designer distributed the themes each month to each designer. Some designs were made for the fashion shows, some were destined for small series production, and some for industrial production in the big factories. As a rule tasks circulated every half year from one designer to another. This was an organization of labor that the employees obviously welcomed.

The Tallinn House of Fashion Design had one particular way of organizing its work which, at least according to the long-time head pattern maker, was not common among the Soviet fashion houses.⁴⁴⁷ The pattern makers took part in the design and construction of the new designs very early on, right after the designer had presented her or his first drawings and sketches of the dress to the director or the internal artistic council. After that the designer and the pattern maker worked in close collaboration until the final patterns with their detailed technical instructions and calculations were finished. When the garment was meant for industrial production, the representatives of the factory could also take part in the planning process from quite early on, thus making it from the beginning more suitable for industrial production. Whether these features, partly explained by the close and long-time collaboration of all those involved, were really unique to the Tallinn House is difficult to judge. In any event, they were an understandable, practical measure to try to bridge the gap between the new fashionable designs created at the houses and the practical and economic restrictions of the consumer goods industry.

Reading the lists of the new designs presented regularly to the artistic council, one can see some interesting changes with time, with new items appearing on the production list of the House. While women's fashion, dresses, shirts and overcoats, dominated the lists almost totally, with a smaller amount of children's wear, during the first years of its activity, starting in the mid-1960s, even men's wear appeared more regularly in the lists. Just like everywhere else in the world of fashion, men's fashion design could never overtake the great original lead of women's fashion. In 1960, men's shirts appeared for the first time for presentation to the artistic council. In 1961, for instance, the novelties included a wedding dress, men's trousers of cotton as well as a women's beach outfit. Skiing outfits also appeared regularly in the seasonal collection after this year. More spectacular was probably the appearance of the first design of women's trousers to be worn in public – and not as part of a work outfit – in the presentation to the artistic council in the same year.⁴⁴⁸ The first trouser suit for women, however, was designed in 1968⁴⁴⁹, the end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s can



Fig. 7.2. The model Karmen Talisoo demonstrates broad-legged trousers with a top from the summer collection of the Tallinn House of Fashion Design in the Kalevi Sports Hall, Tallinn, 1971.

in many ways be regarded as a turning point in the liberalization of the norms of everyday dress culture in the USSR. (Fig. 7.2.)

The general style of the Tallinn House was, as in the case of the Soviet Union in general, oriented towards functional and practical design. This was dictated both by the general ideological concerns as well as by the many practical constraints limiting the availability of textiles, other raw materials and modern machinery to an equally great degree. The designers and the pattern makers were, due to their long lasting collaboration, quite well aware of the limited technical and economic resources of the clothing factories they mainly cooperated with. The House designed mostly casual wear and a lot of working clothes and other uniforms, for example school uniforms for the population of the Republic. One of their main achievements was designing the uniforms of the whole service personnel for the new flagship of the Soviet Estonian tourism industry, the hotel *Viru*, built by the Finns and opened in 1972 in the heart of Tallinn. A regular theme that the director took up at the meetings of the Party organization, following the general recommendations of the Soviet Ministry of Light Industry, was the important task of designing clothes for “big” women.⁴⁵⁰ Gradually, more festive designs like women’s evening dresses and coats made their appearance in the fashion shows and

even in the product lists of the factories. Judging from the lists of garments approved for production at the meetings of the artistic council, some clothes, like overcoats, with their calculated production costs, could sometimes be very expensive, with prices of well over 1,000 rubles, equal to half a year's wages for a worker in the textile industry. Such expensive coats and other clothes were, however, usually not for sale in ordinary Soviet clothing shops and were never produced in any great numbers.

The Design Practice of the Tallinn House

The size and structure of the Tallinn House remained more or less the same from the late 1960s through the 1980s.⁴⁵¹ All through its existence it was situated in the same building in the medieval Old Town of Tallinn. The building had three floors but was very small and narrow. All the designers, for instance, had to share one common room.⁴⁵² To make the situation bearable, the fashion house rented extra room in other parts of town from the biggest Estonian fashion atelier of custom made clothes, Lembitu, where it also had its first show rooms. Lembitu belonged to the Ministry of Everyday Services and was the best fashion atelier in the system of individual sewing, belonging to the class "lux," in Tallinn and in the whole of Estonia. In the 1960s the Ministry promised the Tallinn House of Fashion a new, larger building with 14 floors and a lot of office and working space. (This coincided with the construction of the brand new building for VIALEgrpom in downtown Moscow.) The new house was built accordingly in the center of the city but was in the end given to another state office. Obviously, despite the relatively high status enjoyed by fashion in the Soviet Union, there were other important organizations that could lobby more effectively for their interests among the local governmental and Party administration.

Even though the House worked under relatively poor conditions it did not seem to be difficult to employ new designers and other workers and to keep the old ones on its payroll. The salaries were not very good, close to the average in many female lower white collar professions. The director, the head designer and the heads of the other departments as well as some more qualified workers enjoyed, however, remarkably higher salaries. The pattern makers had usually graduated from the Tallinn Technological Institute of the Textile Industry. The chief economist, for instance, came from the same place of higher learning. Altogether, the workers were recruited locally from among the Estonian specialists. There seems to have been very little circulation of designers and pattern makers among the various republican and regional fashion houses in the Soviet Union. This was at least the case in Tallinn. Three members of the staff in higher positions had received a diploma of higher education from the most prestigious institutes of professional higher education in the All-Union Ministry of Light Industry, two in Leningrad and one in Moscow. Among these were the main pattern maker, who graduated from the evening classes of the Moscow Textile Institute in 1976, and the head designer. They had all by that point served the House for several years and were sent to Moscow and Leningrad to increase their professional

qualifications and status, obviously associated with their leading positions at the organization. All the other designers and pattern makers were educated in Tallinn or, to some degree, in Kaunas, in close – by Lithuania. As a rule, the designers had spent some time, many of them much time, at ODMO on Kuznetskii Most Street in Moscow on short term working assignments (usually one month at a time).

A typical feature was the total lack of underwear design at the ordinary Soviet fashion institutes and houses. Tallinn was no exception in this respect. Somewhat amazingly, taking into account the generally heavy emphasis usually put on the centralized nature of Soviet planning, there was no specialization and no overall plan for the division of labor among the different fashion institutions in the Soviet Union, not even, say, between the Baltic Republics and the nearby Leningrad or Minsk houses, to which the Tallinn designers had otherwise close relations.⁴⁵³ The local fashion design administrative units, working under the republican ministries of the consumer goods industry, could thus remain relatively free from central interference and organize their own work. The central, All-Union institutes in Moscow were keener to set the general stylistic trends for Soviet fashion than to interfere in the annual production plans of their local counterparts. This can be explained at least partly by the fact that the main function of all these Houses, Tallinn included, was to serve their own republican clothing industries. Estonia had several big clothing manufacturers which dated from the pre-war period, the women's clothing factory *Klementi* being the biggest and best known among them. But men's wear, children's clothes, and knitwear were also produced in Estonia. These factories sold their products partly outside of Estonia too. Likewise, Estonia had its own relatively good textile factories which produced raw materials for these and other Soviet garment factories.⁴⁵⁴

As the old workers of the Tallinn House still remember, getting access to good textiles and other materials was often a very difficult task which demanded great personal effort from the designer. Even though the House had one specially employed worker (*tolkach*) whose main task was to buy and get supplies of attractive textiles and other necessary raw materials, all the designers engaged in these activities themselves too. While visiting their customers at the factories, fashion conferences or meetings and consultations in the other cities and republics, they used the opportunity to provide themselves with new, more fashionable textiles and other raw materials. If they could not find what they wanted, which was often the case, they would even make some things themselves, for example dyeing clothes to get more fashionable colors.

The Tallinn House designed almost all the new models for all the Estonian clothing factories. *Klementi*, the biggest women's clothing factory in Estonia, had, however, fashion designers of its own. *Klementi*'s own designers, working in its experimental laboratory, were responsible for approximately half of all the new designs taken into production in this factory. The other half came from the Tallinn House; in all the other Estonian clothing factories practically all came from Moemaja's designers. *Baltika* produced men's costumes, *Virulane* women's overcoats, *Marat* knitwear, and so on. As the

representatives of the Tallinn House proudly reported, even though the Estonian garment factories were its main customers, its designs were popular and sought after by other Soviet producers too, in Leningrad and Moscow as well as in many far away locations. Kaliningrad, on the Baltic coast near-by, had a big clothing factory which was an important customer and to which new collections were regularly taken and shown. An interesting example of the Soviet division of labor in the field of fashion was that Moemaja designed new school uniforms, twice during its lifetime, for all Estonian-speaking schoolchildren. The Russian-speaking schools in Estonia used the standard All-Union uniforms designed in Moscow instead.

The Economy and Basic Tasks of the House

According to the long-time head economist of Moemaja, the main income of the fashion house came from its own fashion journal, *Siluet*, founded as early as 1958.⁴⁵⁵ In addition to its general issues which for the most part consisted, following the example of the famous international fashion journals, of women's fashion, *Siluet* also regularly published special issues on children's fashion and, more rarely, on work clothes. This journal had a huge Russian edition at its best in the 1970s, and a much smaller edition in Estonian. Its Russian edition grew from about one hundred to three hundred thousand (the peak was reached in 1972 after which its edition somewhat diminished). The Estonian language edition was about 50,000. A few thousands, in Russian, were even sold abroad, in Czechoslovakia and the GDR.⁴⁵⁶ The editorial board of the journal was, not correspondingly, quite small: it had one regular editor, one assistant editor, a secretary and a typist on its staff.⁴⁵⁷ The photographer, just like most of the models, was not employed permanently at the House but free-lanced for the journal.

The income from the popular fashion journal made up at best about 60 percent of the total annual budget of the Tallinn House of Fashion. The House did not, however, receive all the net income from the sales of this journal since the Ministry took care of its distribution and gave only a certain sum to the House. As everyone was eager to claim, they could easily have sold many more copies of the journal and made an even better profit from it. The main restriction was the availability of paper. The journal was printed first in Riga, Latvia, but later on in a printing house in Tallinn. As a rule, "our men" traveled personally to the paper factory up North in the White Sea region, with bottles of the famous *Vana Tallinn* (Old Tallinn liqueur) and other similar delicacies from Estonia, not for sale elsewhere, and brought a train load full of paper back with them.⁴⁵⁸ The concrete reason for the final and very abrupt collapse of the whole economy of the Tallinn House was that after the new independence of Estonia in 1991 it could not collect the income from the sales of the last issue of *Siluet*, which had already been delivered to the subscribers and press agencies in Russia and the other parts of the Soviet Union. Therefore, the House lost its main source of income quite abruptly and unexpectedly and was forced to close down.

The other notable sources of income were royalties from the factories that ordered the designs and the income from the tickets sold for the regularly organized big fashion shows. Despite the fact that serving the clothing factories and helping them to produce better and more fashionable clothing was the main purpose of the whole design enterprise in Tallinn as elsewhere, according to the long-time head economist of *Moemaja* this was not particularly profitable because the pricing was unfavorable to the House.⁴⁵⁹ This was a common complaint among the Soviet design professionals. It is difficult to say whether the terms of trade were more favorable in the bigger central Houses, but the Moscow designers complained too that their main activity was not profitable either. Another complaint that the representatives of Soviet fashion voiced constantly was that the centralized pricing system made the introduction and rapid change of new, fashionable clothing economically almost impossible. As we have seen elsewhere too, the local actors tried to solve this problem in many creative ways, both official and non-official or half-legal. In 1967 the inspectors from the Estonian Ministry of Light Industry, for instance, suddenly discovered that the Estonian clothing factories, trade organizations and the Tallinn House of Fashion Design had established among themselves a price council which was totally informal and as such illegal. Instead of sending their applications for new prices to the Ministry, as they should have done according to the rules, they decided the prices in practice among themselves. This informal council was consequently abolished on the 27th of November, 1967.⁴⁶⁰ Only during the last years of the Soviet Union, in the beginning of the 1980s, when the factories were allowed to pay an extra premium of 25 percent for any design which was taken into production as a novelty, did the industrial design of clothes for mass production become economically more profitable to the Tallinn House of Fashion as well as to the other Soviet fashion design organizations. Under the centralized planned economy, the *Moemaja* had, however, to turn out a certain amount of new designs for industry every year whether this was profitable or not. Economic profitability was also only part of the deal: it was very important for the professional reputation and status of a house of fashion in the USSR – as well as for its designers and pattern makers – that the garment factories, even outside the borders of its own republic, were willing to take the house's designs into production.

As the previous designers and pattern makers of the Tallinn House told, the representatives of the factories often came to the House to inspect new designs. These were also shown in fashion exhibitions in different parts of the Soviet Union in which such representatives also took part. In addition, the House took its own collections to show to the factories – or at least this was done with its more regular and sizable customers. From these reports one gets the impression that the selling and ordering of new designs mainly took place on such occasions. The inclusion of designs in All-Union collections and catalogues or lists of new fashionable clothes was thus of less practical importance to those included but was certainly very prestigious for the designer and the house she or he represented.⁴⁶¹

In addition to these three basic forms of activities – designs for mass production, drawings and patterns for the fashion journal and designs for



Fig. 7.3. Milliners at the hat workshop of Lembitu, the fashion center of the Estonian Ministry of Everyday Services, Tallinn 1963.

both the more regular and exceptional fashion shows and exhibitions – the House produced small series of clothes. These series could consist of a few hundred (200–600) examples of different kinds of clothes. These were sold in several Estonian clothing shops, not only in Tallinn but in Tartu and Pärnu, too. The Tallinn clothing store *Mood* (Fashion) opened up in the late 1960s. It sold fashionable clothes of higher quality, among others clothes produced in small series at the Tallinn House. It was, however, not Moemaja’s own “boutique” since it sold clothes from other manufacturers too. The Tallinn fashion house sold its own production through other regular clothing shops too. What the economic result of this activity was is not clear, but due to the relatively small series of clothes sewn it could not be that important in the whole annual budget. On the other hand, the Tallinn House had a big atelier of woolen head wear with its own – very few – fashion designers, which produced tens of thousands of hats a year and which turned out to be quite profitable. (Fig. 7.3.)

The Tallinn House of Fashion Design did not have an atelier serving individual customers. However, as most similar Soviet fashion houses, Moemaja sewed customized clothes for the local political and cultural elite as well as for the wives of prominent citizens, like those of the Ministers or

the members of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party despite the fact that it did not have a regular clothing atelier of its own. Just as the other parts of the Soviet Union, Tallinn and other towns in Estonia had their own ateliers of individual sewing or custom made clothes which were organized into three different quality classes. As a rule, they and not the fashion houses were supposed to take care of all the individual orders of the population, its political elite included. But the fashion houses serviced some special individual clients personally too. The same dressmakers who sewed other clothes for the exhibitions and fashion shows took care of these individual orders on the side. How general this practice was and to what extent it varied from one year or decade to another is not known. As an example, the former workers told a story about the wife of the Minister of Estonian Agriculture, who claimed that she had the right to order an evening dress from the Fashion House since her husband was in charge of providing the fertilizers so essential to Estonian agriculture.⁴⁶²

The Siluett Fashion Journal

The *Siluett* fashion journal was well known and highly appreciated among its readers all over the Soviet Union – according to the former editor they often received readers' letters from distant places in the Soviet Union, like the shores of the Pacific Ocean.⁴⁶³ In his history of Russian fashion, Aleksander Vasil'ev, for instance, mentioned the two Baltic journals of fashion, the Latvian *Rigas modes* and even more the Estonian *Siluett* on several occasions as the most popular and artistically advanced fashion periodicals in the USSR.⁴⁶⁴ Other republican fashion houses distributed their own fashion journals too, like the Ukrainian *Krasota i moda*, *Banga* in Lithuania or the Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan based *Modalar*, but either they did not have as wide of an All-Union circulation or their printing was of an inferior quality. Under the chronic conditions of paper limitations only those Houses that had the best reputation and could be expected to regularly provide high quality fashion designs and examples had the privilege of publishing fashion journals of their own. In some cases the reasons might have been more directly political too: the journals were published, for example, to prove the existence of the high standards of Soviet Central Asian fashion and the achievements of that culture in general.

The editor of the journal explained that there were two main reasons for the success of *Siluett*, the first of which was the relatively high quality of its illustrations and published patterns. The fame of Tallinn among the Soviet citizens as an almost Western city probably helped too. But its best sales asset was the detailed drawings of the patterns of the new clothes attached to each issue of the journal. If we are to believe its editors, *Siluett* was the only Soviet fashion journal that regularly provided to its subscribers such drawings and detailed technical instructions in its special attachments. Therefore it was extremely useful to its female subscribers and readers. The quality of the printing depended on the quality of the printing paper and the press and varied from one year to the next. The journal was always published in good

printing houses, first in Latvia, later in Tallinn. The editors made the whole layout of each issue – drawing, cutting and gluing by hand – in their office. However, after the layout and the proof copy had been finished, it could take as long as one and a half years before it was printed and distributed to its readers – another good example of the relative slowness of the Soviet fashion system.

Each issue of the journal had several standard parts, mostly dedicated to new clothing designs – women's and men's garments, overcoats, children's wear and festive evening dresses – but it also regularly gave space to the issues of hairdressing, cosmetics, the education of taste and the history of fashion. The Tallinn House of Fashion Design employed, like all the other Soviet houses, a “fashion propagandist,” or an art historian. Instructions on how to keep one's body fit were also a legitimate and popular subject in the journal. Just as in other Soviet fashion journals, the demands which different body figures set for the choice of dress were also a regularly repeated topic in *Siluett*.

Before being sent to print, each issue was inspected by a special committee of external censors who came to the office of the journal where the layout of the next issue was waiting for them. Among them were high-ranking members of the Communist Party and representatives of the Ministry.⁴⁶⁵ The main representative of the Estonian Communist Party in this Committee was a woman who had a reputation for being particularly keen on controlling the sexual decency of the illustrations. Too much bare flesh, like low-cut dresses, should not be revealed in the pictures! Since the editors knew these restrictions concerning, for instance, the poses of the models, problems did not usually occur. Obviously the members of the control committee, just like almost everyone else involved with the House, served a long time in their respective positions. Since Soviet fashion was for many a life-long occupation everyone knew what to expect from each other.

One of the former editors of the journal recalled only one breach of rules leading to serious reprimands in the history of the journal.⁴⁶⁶ In 1970, an illustrator had drawn for purely decorative purposes a cross – like those on the shields of the Knights Templar – on the corner of the drawing of a new fashionable design. The inspecting censors had not paid any attention at all to this “religious symbol” but when the journal had already been printed and distributed someone alarmed the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party. As a consequence, the director of the House was called to the Central Committee and seriously reprimanded. The illustrator and the editor were moved to other, less prestigious tasks in the House. In addition to such “religious symbols” the color combination of black, blue and white – symbols of pre-war independent Estonia – was strictly forbidden in the illustrations. The editors of *Siluett* knew this quite well since a bulletin of the local fashion design students had once been confiscated for this reason. *Siluett*, like many other Soviet fashion journals, regularly published – usually on their last pages – pictures of the new foreign and Western fashion designs. These came mostly from Paris, but could also come from Italy, England, or at times even from countries less known for their fashion industry like Sweden. These pictures were copied directly from the Western fashion journals and

publications without any extra information or explanations. This practice, however, came to an end in the 1980s when it was officially forbidden.

The editors could be quite innovative in planning the settings of their photo shoots. Often newly built and still empty buildings, like the brand new *Viru* hotel were used as shooting locations, but the views and surroundings of the medieval old town often served as an interesting background location too. Even the new “luxurious” lavatory in the hotel could be used as an interesting, photographic set-up. The editors and illustrators of *Siluet* even did some commissioned work for the journal published by the Leningrad House of Fashion Design. As a sign of the new times and as an attempt to adapt to the new commercial market, *Siluet* employed a Finnish fashion photographer to take the pictures for the issue that then proved to be its last ever.

Contacts with the Other Soviet Fashion Houses

The workers at the Tallinn House kept up regular contacts with other Soviet fashion institutions and their colleagues working there. The first representatives of the Tallinn House visited ODMO in Moscow as early as February 1958, at the very time of the opening of the House in Tallinn.⁴⁶⁷ They regularly visited annual and seasonal All-Union or regional meetings and consultations organized by ODMO or VIALegprom, which usually met once or twice a year and were arranged according to the special line of work (like overcoats, women’s dress, children’s wear, etc.) or by professional specialization (designers, pattern makers, economists, etc.). The pattern makers and the designers met regularly among themselves at what could be called courses or meetings for further training in order to keep up their professional qualifications. These meetings were highly appreciated and the work organization of the participants took care of all the travel expenses. They could take place almost anywhere in the Soviet Union, at Tashkent just as well as at Moscow, and understandably such work trips gave the participants a welcome opportunity to visit interesting places and sights as well as socialize with colleagues. As mentioned earlier, many designers and pattern makers spent a month at ODMO in Moscow in order to get acquainted with the workings, the new technical and stylistic inventions, of the best Soviet fashion institutions.⁴⁶⁸ The representatives of the Tallinn House naturally took part in the annual or seasonal fashion exhibitions in Moscow during which the All-Union collections were selected.⁴⁶⁹

In addition to their colleagues from Moscow (ODMO) Tallinn designers also had regular contacts with the other fashion houses in the North-West part of the USSR: Riga, Vilnius and Minsk.⁴⁷⁰ As a matter of fact ODMO regularly organized not only All-Union meetings, but also (taking into account the size of the country) regional meetings of fashion designers and other specialists in the field, aiming to establish closer cooperation between “neighbors.” In addition to Minsk, Riga and Vilnius, Tallinn also had many contacts with the Leningrad House of Fashion Design. Usually leading specialists from Moscow also came to the regional meetings in

order to discuss mutual problems and to present papers on recent and prospective fashion trends. One after another these Houses of Fashion Design hosted such regional events. After formal meetings, informal parties took place.

A typical All-Union meeting lasted several days. All the participants took some new designs of their own with them which they presented to the other participants and discussed collectively. Sometimes the critique could be rather hard. An artistic council consisting of, among others, the representatives of the Moscow central fashion institute VIALegprom and the Ministry of Light Industry took part in these meetings too. Often their verdict on the new designs was both feared and appreciated. In this way, all the Soviet head pattern makers or head designers, at least from the same part of the country, got to know each other quite well. And since they almost without exception stayed at the same fashion house for the biggest part of their professional lives these contacts could develop into close friendships too. These contacts were thus sincerely missed after they were radically broken off at the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In the early 1970s, Tallinn hosted a nationwide seminar on designing and pattern making for the first time. Obviously Tallinn did not have the honor of organizing such meetings often. Only during perestroika in the late 1980s did the Tallinn House start to regularly organize its own Estonian fashion weeks, inviting guests from all over the Soviet Union. These fashion weeks came to an end when Estonia declared its independence from the Soviet Union.

Fashion Shows and Exhibitions

In the popular imagination, Tallinn was a gate to the West. It was therefore no wonder that the leading designers from all over the Soviet Union, for example Leningrad, Moscow, and Sverdlovsk, visited it regularly in order to get inspiration and new ideas about fashion trends. A good proof of the relatively high esteem of fashion both in the Estonian Ministry of Light Industry and in the Soviet Union was that its director, Anita Burlaka, was soon after the founding of her House, sent on a long work mission to Budapest, Hungary to get acquainted with the Hungarian institutes of fashion design. The trip, which typically went via Moscow, lasted almost a month.⁴⁷¹ Only the director and the head designer of the Tallinn House, followed by the best fashion models, ever traveled abroad with its fashion collections.⁴⁷² In Tallinn the designers did not follow their own collections abroad, not even to the other socialist countries.

The collections of the House did not take part in many international fashion exhibitions. When they traveled abroad they were usually part of the general Soviet Trade Exhibitions.⁴⁷³ The first exhibition in which the Tallinn House took part, the World Fair in Brussels, was typical in this respect. The role of the Estonian fashion designers in the EXPO-67 at Canada was slightly different. ODMO designed a whole fashion collection with national motifs from the Estonian, Turkmen, Tadjik and Kirghiz

Soviet Republics in collaboration with the designers from these republics. The Estonian designers consequently took part in designing the Estonian collection.⁴⁷⁴ Compared to the big houses of fashion design in Moscow, Tallinn's international participation and performance was after all rather modest. But it was understandably extremely important and prestigious to all those involved.

The task of designing a collection for the World Fair in Brussels in 1958 faced the House at its very founding. Other exhibitions followed in Zagreb, Yugoslavia and Capri, Italy (in the 1972 "Sea and Fashion" organized by the Italian-Soviet friendship society). The visit to Capri was understandably a deeply cherished memory for those involved and everyone remembered it with great pride. Again, new possibilities opened up with the new political winds in the 1980s: a fashion exhibition at Izmir in Turkey followed by Basel, Switzerland.

From the very beginning, the Tallinn House organized big public fashion shows twice a year in Tallinn for which tickets were sold to the spectators. They quickly became very popular. After a modest beginning they were eventually organized at the big Estonia concert hall or the *Kalev* sports hall. 15,000 spectators at a time saw these shows in the 1970s and 1980s. They were obviously quite entertaining, with highly ambitious programs. As a rule, they lasted two hours and were organized twice during three days. A big orchestra of seven well-known Estonian musicians accompanied them.⁴⁷⁵ As early as 1958, the House organized a special course for all its regular models. A famous Estonian ballerina, Inge Poeder, taught them how to walk and move their bodies more gracefully on the catwalk when presenting new clothes.⁴⁷⁶ These courses became a regular part of the schooling of new models even during the later years.

Just like other Soviet fashion designing units, the Tallinn House toured the country and took its popular fashion shows and exhibitions to other towns, factories or *kolkhozes*.⁴⁷⁷ As the main male model of the 1970s, Jüri Siim, remembered, he had visited almost every corner of Estonia and the Soviet Union touring with shows and exhibitions. Other Soviet fashion organizations hired his services too. He cherished the memory of these times and told that he and his colleagues were treated extremely well all over the Soviet Union. Being Estonian, tall and blond, and exceptionally fashionably dressed they were taken to be almost foreigners.⁴⁷⁸

The new designs presented in these shows were designed just for the shows. Only exceptionally were any of them taken into industrial production. Each show had 12 to 13 themes decided by the head designer and each of these was the responsibility of one designer. Children's wear as well as costumes following the national ethnic motifs belonged to the obligatory repertoire of all these shows. (The designers' own or their colleagues' children often acted as models for the children's wear.)

The great popularity of these fashion shows can be partly explained by the fact that they served a very practical purpose for their fashion conscious spectators, who often directly copied new designs by making their own drawings of the most interesting ones. It seems obvious that the fashion shows faced the same dilemma – in miniature – as the whole Soviet fashion

industry: if the designs were too practically oriented they soon lost their value as good entertainment and the interest of the consumers. If, on the other hand, they became too spectacular and extravagant, the customers did not have any other use for them other than just admiring them like any work of art. Consequently, when these shows became more extravagant and artistic in the 1980s during *perestroika*, and ever more distanced from industrial production, they lost a great deal of their popularity and audience.

An Almost European House of Fashion

The Tallinn House was famous for its “European” style within the USSR. Tallinn, like Riga, Vilnius, or Kaunas had, in fact, had a lot of fashion ateliers and tailors’ shops during its independence before 1940, with close contacts to the great European centers of fashion in Paris, Berlin and London. More concretely this reputation was, however, due to the fact that the new fashion designs from the West often reached the Tallinn House even earlier than Moscow. The Tallinn Fashion House could not subscribe to any Western fashion journals. Instead, the central Moscow fashion units, ODMO and VIALegprom, subscribed to them. One of their main tasks was to circulate selected examples of useful new Western designs to the republican and other local fashion houses. It could therefore take a long time before they ever reached Tallinn or the other “provinces.” The fashion designers in Tallinn had, however, a more direct and unofficial channel to the new creations and world-wide trends of Western fashion. Many old Estonians and inhabitants of Tallinn had close relatives who had emigrated abroad, to Sweden, Canada, and the USA, and who often sent parcels home, many of them including such popular fashion journals as *Vogue* or *Burda*. They, for their part, often sold these valuable and rare items to a particular second hand book store in Tallinn. A particular employee of the Fashion House, in her turn, had the responsibility of visiting this book store every week and buying all its new fashion journals for the Fashion House. In this way the designers had direct and immediate access to the latest news from the Western fashion world. This practice was, of course, totally unofficial and bordering on illegal. It was, however, common knowledge to all those included, and also announced without any further comments in the Party meeting at the House.⁴⁷⁹ Another important channel of importing new fashion to Tallinn was the storeroom of the customs office, with which the House had a similar unofficial deal. As soon as new clothes or garments were confiscated at the border from tourists or smugglers, a representative of the House was informed and had the right to collect these items. This way they could get their hands not only on pictures of new designs but even on concrete examples of new fashionable clothes and textiles. Thus there were some very concrete and simple reasons why the Tallinn designers really were better informed and more up to date about the latest developments of the world’s great fashion centers than even the head designers at the central Soviet fashion institutes in Moscow.

The Soviet fashion institutes were in general interested in receiving not only fashion journals and other information about tendencies in the

fashion world but also concrete examples of fashionable clothing. Therefore the Soviet foreign trade organizations in Paris, London, Rome, Berlin, and New York were ordered by the government to help Soviet designers and pattern makers in the field by collecting samples of fashionable clothing. The All-Union Chamber of Commerce in Moscow was another important source or channel of such concrete information. When foreign firms, interested in establishing cooperation with the USSR and in selling clothes on the Soviet market, presented examples of the fashionable clothing they aimed at producing in the near future, the representatives from the Soviet fashion institutes used them non-officially as a free source of information about the latest fashion trends.⁴⁸⁰ In some cases the items were sent from Moscow to the various regional fashion organizations. Sometimes the items were ripped up into small pieces in order to better learn their pattern and sewing technology. From this point of view the Tallinn designers were in a privileged position as they had almost unlimited access not only to such information (through the journals and relatives abroad) but also to the fashionable Western items in the local second hand shops. Fashion designers from ODMO visited Tallinn regularly, probably in order to enjoy the same “privileges” as their Estonian colleagues as well as to breathe Tallinn’s European air.⁴⁸¹ Moreover, contrary to, for example, the house of fashion design in the city of Barnaul in the Altai region, Tallinn was a well-known tourist target with thousands of visitors who came mainly from near-by Finland across the Gulf of Finland, and it was enough to see how foreigners were dressed to obtain knowledge of the novelties in the field of fashion trends. In addition, the habitants of Tallinn could follow the programs of the Finnish TV.⁴⁸²

Whether it depended on these close and direct contacts to the West, on its historical heritage or on the particular creativity of its fashion designers, the Tallinn Fashion House belonged, together with the other Baltic houses, to the leading fashion institutes in the USSR. When the 23rd Congress of the Communist Party opened in Moscow in March 1966, Tallinn was, together with the Moscow ODMO, Leningrad and the other two Baltic fashion houses, invited to demonstrate its collection – with live models – to the Party delegates and the official foreign guests in Moscow. It was a special honor to be selected from among all the Soviet Houses of Fashion design and invited to participate in this “closed” fashion exhibition.⁴⁸³ This congress was namely expected to take important economic and political measures in order to stimulate the growth of the consumer goods industry and fashion in the USSR. The Tallinn designers, together with their colleagues from the other five participating houses, had the honor of acting, in this way, as practical examples of how the rest of the Soviet fashion industry could and should work in order to fulfill the high expectations invested in it by the Soviet people and their political leaders.

8. Fashion in People's Minds: The Public Discussion of the Culture of Dress in the Soviet Press

Fashion in the Press

There never actually was any cohesive or unified ideology of fashion in the Soviet Union. To the best of our knowledge, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union never approved of general rules or guidelines concerning the design and production of fashion, or for the proper relationship to fashion and fashionable clothing expected from Soviet citizens. The role and importance of fashion was nevertheless discussed spiritedly at times, both by specialists and the general public throughout the Soviet period. The general ideological doctrines on the regulation of the production, distribution and consumption of material wealth certainly had implications for Soviet fashion and fashion design institutes too. The coming Communist society promised general abundance and the fulfillment of all the basic human needs of its members. One of the main and most theoretically challenging problems facing Soviet ideologists and theoreticians of fashion was to decide whether fashion was something that was really needed. Similarly, the moral code of the builders of the future Communism included several ethical rules regarding the decent and proper behavior expected from Communists, which had more or less direct implications for the proper dress code and the individual's relationship to his or her outer appearance, as well as for the world of material goods and pleasures in general. These rules did not remain the same throughout Soviet history but changed with the times. More importantly, they left a lot of room for creative interpretation in the more concrete matters of fashion and fashion design. The hegemonic position prevailing among the Soviet experts changed, more or less, from a radical anti-fashion in the late 1920s to the practical acceptance of fashion as an essential feature of the socialist society. The authorities were consequently supposed to try both to regulate fashion for the common good and to adapt themselves to the fashion mechanism as best they could.

As with many other similar everyday institutions, fashion was a multifaceted phenomenon. Furthermore, the public response to it changed over time. In the Soviet Union as elsewhere in the modern world of fashion was in fact largely regulated by informal social relations, ethical norms of everyday behavior and ordinary standards of taste. A multitude of factors influenced

these changes: the traditions and habits within the different groups of the Soviet population, generational differences, conflicts in cultural attitudes and practices and, the urbanization and modernization of society, not to mention the influence of worldwide tendencies in fashion and consumption in general. The Soviet authorities and the Communist Party ideologists believed firmly in social and economic progress. The Soviet citizen was supposed to take part in this progress by cultivating his or her character and personality so as to be more civilized and sophisticated. At the same time, there was a permanent conflict between the ideal goals dictated by the ideological doctrines and the numerous modifications demanded by the practical everyday conditions of the society and economy.

By the 1960s, at the latest, the social phenomenon of fashion had definitely been legitimized in the USSR. This meant that every Soviet citizen had an acknowledged right to dress himself or herself fashionably and with freedom of variation in order to cultivate his or her individuality in taste and style. After this time we hardly ever meet serious arguments suggesting that socialism could or should do totally without fashion. Nor was there any further serious suggestion that Soviet fashion designs should be something totally and radically different from their Western counterparts although few economists continued to point out that fashion did not really fit in the planned economy. Nevertheless, we can also follow the gradual formation of the idea of Soviet or socialist fashion as different from the Western, bourgeois one. This was, however, more a question of the difference of degree rather than a radical rupture. In brief, Soviet fashion design was said to follow three fundamental principles, all of which, at least in the minds of the Soviet ideologists and theoreticians of fashion, were alien to bourgeois fashion: First, it followed worldwide trends and tendencies but always adopted them selectively and moderately, without extremes and exaggerations. Secondly, it was expected to use national and folk motifs, and thirdly, it was functional and practical, including in the sense of designing medically approved “healthy” clothes.⁴⁸⁴

In the Soviet period, the mass media was considered to be the “mirror of life” since it was said and expected to reflect the problems that arose in society and in particular in the everyday life of ordinary citizens. Therefore, it gave quite a lot of space to the problems of consumption, often in the form of citizens’ complaints and worries. This chapter is based mainly on the analysis of the articles on fashion and the culture of dress published in the Soviet press over a span of almost 30 years – from the end of the 1950s through the 1970s, that is, during the time of the establishment of the Soviet system of fashion and the maturation of the idea of a genuinely Soviet fashion.

Our sources are quite unique since we can use a wide range of media covering almost everything published on the issues of fashion and clothing. These include journals and newspapers of all kinds, central, local and professional or departmental press published all over the Soviet Union, in practically all its regions and national republics, from Kaliningrad and the Baltic republics in the West to Vladivostok and Khabarovsk in the Far East, from Archangel in the North to the Central Asian republics. To give



Fig. 8.1.
A collage
of fashion
albums and
brochures
published
by various
Soviet
fashion
houses.

a thorough and reliable impression of the concrete issues and the ways of discussing them as well as of the different arguments and standpoints put forward by the various agents and discussants, we cite extensively from our sources, all the different kinds of Soviet printed media involved in the issues of propagation of fashion design.⁴⁸⁵

Fashion was keenly discussed in the Soviet press in the post-war decades. Both All-Union and local newspapers published regularly news as well as more in-depth articles on the questions of fashion and attractive dressing. Similarly, many popular journals and women's magazines in particular reported regularly on fashion. In addition, fashion was often discussed quite actively in the periodicals published by the Soviet organizations active in the textile and garment industry and trade as well as in the applied arts. Finally, many periodicals specialized in fashion. Several big fashion houses published a fashion journal of their own. Among them the *Zhurnal mod* published by the All-Union Fashion House, ODMO and later by VIALegrpom in Moscow was the leader. Even smaller republican fashion houses could publish their fashion journals in large numbers with a circulation covering the whole of the Soviet Union. Many fashion houses were allowed not only to publish their regular fashion journals but also separate fashion albums and special issues. (Fig. 8.1.)

These fashion journals were often published in two languages: the local language like Estonian, Latvian or Kazakh as well as in Russian. At least in the case of the small Baltic fashion houses the Russian language edition was as a rule the bigger one, allowing for the journal to be sold and read all over the Soviet Union and even abroad, which certainly promoted its status and reputation. These special fashion journals mainly published pictures and practical instructions about the new seasonal fashion trends and designs but they also included more general articles on fashion and the proper Soviet dress code and etiquette of behavior. What made them very popular was that they often included practical instructions and patterns for some of the new seasonal models, with the help of which readers could sew their own clothes at home.

The fashion journalism published in the general newspapers and journals can be divided basically into five major topics and types of articles and news: 1) changes of season in fashion, 2) fashion events (shows, exhibitions, and competitions), 3) economic problems of fashion industry, 4) the proper Soviet dress code, and 5) the role of fashion under socialism.⁴⁸⁶

First, the Soviet press, just like the periodicals in the West, published short articles and instructions about the annual and seasonal changes in fashion. In the local newspapers these short articles often appeared once or twice each season. The approaching day of school graduation at the end of May was always, for instance, preceded by both practical comments on the proper dress code for high school graduates as well as concrete advice on the newest trends: "how to dress fashionably." Such practical instructions could be followed by comments on the proper dress code and reminders of the common rules of decency as well as on the role of fashion in socialist society. But more often than not the articles were totally informational and practical in their advice. When general moral or ideological questions emerged they were normally treated in quite a standardized manner.

The specialized fashion journals were naturally dedicated almost totally to the propagation of the latest fashion, but even they could include more general reflections on the nature of fashion in general and Soviet – or socialist – fashion in particular. The art historians and aestheticians regularly employed as the propagandists of fashion at the fashion institutions often wrote these more principal articles on the aesthetics of dress, as well as the short overviews of the history of fashion that also belonged to the usual repertoire of these journals.⁴⁸⁷ Each body of fashion design had in the 1970s and 1980s a special department of propagation of fashion responsible for contacts with the mass media as well as for other fashion education like public lectures and exhibitions.

The leading Soviet fashion journal *Zhurnal mod* had as a rule a special attachment which could include lengthy theoretical treatises on fashion and good taste written by the main specialists in the field. The periodicals could also interview the fashion designers or other experts working in the organizations of fashion, asking their expert advice on questions of the latest fashion. A few fashion designers became well known Soviet celebrities who could receive a lot of publicity. The best known among them was Vyacheslav Zaitsev from ODMO, who became a real Soviet "superstar" in the world of

fashion in the early 1960s. His name and work were well known to all Soviet citizens interested in fashion.

The second, larger group of equally regularly published articles had news about all kinds of fashion events, from fashion shows and exhibitions at home and abroad to Soviet and international fashion conferences, meetings and competitions. Naturally, these writings often took up the role and success of the Soviet fashion units and designers. Similarly, the local press mostly paid attention to the achievements at their local level, in their own city or region. Such news could equally well advertise the opening of a new fashion house or atelier or a new fashionable clothing shop in the local center. Such news abounded in the Soviet press, fitting well into the general tendency of Soviet journalism to report the new achievements and successes of the economy and culture, which were claimed to become bigger and better with each year that passed under the victorious Soviet planning. In contrast to news about the annual production targets and their fulfillment on time or even before – typical of industrial production including the textile and clothing industries – the news on fashion often reported single unique events which were impressive due to their high quality and excellent standards. In the best cases Soviet fashion was reported to have reached the highest international standards and was claimed to be successfully competing with Parisian fashion, which set the self-evident bar of excellence even in the minds of the Soviet fashion propagators and ideologists. In promoting fashion, the Soviet press hardly ever referred to the Five Year or annual quotas or boasted about their fulfillment in advance, which was typical in other reports on the achievements of the Soviet socialist economy. The fashion houses and other institutes of clothing design certainly had their annual quotas to be fulfilled, but in their case it was not primarily the production numbers that mattered but rather the quality of their performance and its practical consequences for the provisioning of better and more varied clothes. Success in international and national competitions and exhibitions was the best proof of the high standards of Soviet fashion design.

The third group of articles, the contents of which often partly overlapped with the second one, consisted of reports on the economic problems that the creation and production of new fashionable clothing regularly encountered. The press often got their inspiration from concrete experienced shortcomings in production and distribution and the consequent consumer complaints. These articles could be general ones discussing the relation of changing fashion to the principles of the socialist planned economy overall as well as reports on very concrete failures and the mismanagement of the economic organizations. It was also typical of such articles that they identified both problems and their presumed causes, often blaming one economic organization or ministry or another for its inefficiency and negligence. The retail trade blamed industry or wholesale trade, industry blamed another sector of industry lower down in the production chain (typically, garment factories would blame the textile industry or even the manufacturers of buttons for not delivering the raw materials needed for more fashionable and beautiful clothes, the textile industry would in its turn blame, for instance, chemical factories for not producing the chemicals for the right colors, etc.).

But at times the critical journalism even touched principal features of the Soviet planned economy. Such critique and regularly published complaints of the various shortcomings were part of the firmly institutionalized culture of the Soviet public sphere from the 1960s to the 1980s, just the flip side of the almost eternally repeated reports of economic successes and more than fulfilling of the planned targets of production. Such consumers' complaints were legitimate and inbuilt into the political system of socialism. They were an important part of the Soviet bureaucracy's system of public control. They often, without doubt, pointed out real problems and even identified their real causes, but similarly they often made a very schematic impression, repeating the same diagnosis of the disease and even its remedy almost word for word one year after another.

The question of proper dress code and common decency in dress was the fourth repeatedly appearing theme in the Soviet press. All seemed to be of the same opinion that the general advancement of a decent and attractive dress code as well as the introduction of the proper Soviet dress code had two main enemies: the bad quality of the mass produced clothes and the *stiliagis*, young people who overdressed themselves, exaggerating fashion. Both tended to spoil good taste, the one by not offering enough beautiful examples or individual freedom of choice, the other by exercising too much of the same. People who totally ignored fashion or were openly critical of it, whom one could meet in the public press after the war and in the 1950s, gradually disappeared from publicity in the 1960s. In this way, the fashion propagators did not have to worry anymore about people who by totally denying or neglecting fashion would have exaggerated their relation to the other extreme, anti-fashion. Otherwise, it did not seem to be very clear what specific demands of proper or decent dress followed from the fact that people were now living under socialism, in a higher form of society, and would soon be ready to enter Communism.

Stiliagis came to stand in the Soviet press for almost anything that was regarded to be an exaggeration and an expression of bad taste.⁴⁸⁸ Many articles about the *stiliagis* or women wearing trousers were written in the typical style of Soviet investigative journalism. They either commented on local shocking events or were inspired by the letters of ordinary people. These articles often propagated the middle of the road approach to style and fashion by condemning the "extravagant" style of the *stiliagi*. More remarkably they, at the same time, mostly distanced themselves from the cruder demands for intervention in personal dress style. For instance, the editors of the articles might criticize the local police for arresting or fining people who in their opinion were not properly dressed. These rather extreme cases were presented in the press as examples of overreacting. The press in fact defended young people's right to a fashionable and more individual style of dressing. They taught their readers that it was wrong to condemn the overall moral worth of a youngster simply because his trousers were too narrow or his colorful shirts hung over his trousers. They agreed among themselves that such extravagantly stylish dressing was definitely a sign of bad taste and only an expression of an unhealthy need to show off but that it was not automatically a sign of a bad, morally depraved character.

Women wearing trousers were traditionally not an unknown sight in the Soviet Union, where many women worked in the steel and machine factories and on big construction sites or even in the armed forces alongside the men. But as late as the 1960s the fashion experts and journalists strictly condemned women wearing trousers in public in the city. It was an even cruder breach of the rules of decency to wear trousers in the evening at a cultural club, visiting a cinema, a theater or a concert. Women's trousers belonged only to some specific work milieus. They could also be allowed for women exercising or doing sports, like skiing, but definitely not for official or festive occasions.

The Komsomol newspapers in particular, directed to the younger Soviet readers, waged almost eternal campaigns against all kinds of expressions of "stiliagism" and labeled all young people who dressed in a deviant way or extravagantly as *stiliagis*. For instance, in one of the first post-war books on etiquette and proper dress, A. G. Golybina⁴⁸⁹ presented the *stiliagi* in a typical way as a warning example in discussing the ethics of dress, opposing them to all the genuinely spiritually rich people who had higher cultural standards:

Not by chance are the overwhelming majority of the *stiliagis* rude people who ignore the habits and taste of the surrounding society, setting themselves against the collective, higher above the 'masses.' The attempt to dress oneself 'stylishly' is not a proof of any higher cultural standards. On the contrary it is an indication of the lack of culture, of the poverty of one's spiritual world, and of the narrowness of one's interests.

According to Golybina, real beauty emerges only when external appearance coincided with a rich inner spiritual world. The appearance becomes genuinely noble only when supported by inner spiritual beauty.

The fifth group of articles that we shall scrutinize further partly overlapped with the two previous ones but, at the same time, introduced a theme of their own. These were questions concerning the nature of fashion in general and the role of fashion under socialism in particular: was fashion really needed at all under socialism, and if it was needed, how much and what kind of fashion was needed? What was the place of fashion, if any, in the centrally planned economy? How did socialist fashion differ from bourgeois fashion? Such general questions about the character of fashion and its place in socialism were eagerly discussed among experts of various kinds in the professional journals like the *Dekorativnoie iskusstvo SSSR* (Applied Art in the USSR), *Sovetskaya torgovlia* (The Soviet Trade) or *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta* (The Economic Newspaper) as well as in the major fashion journals. Soviet economists, sociologists, art historians, fashion designers, and other professionals of fashion took part in this discussion, which was waged particularly actively in the 1960s. Judging from these theoretical discussions it appears that by the beginning of the 1970s serious attempts were made to reach some kind of a consensus about the nature of socialist fashion.⁴⁹⁰ After this time these questions were no longer raised as regularly or with such emphasis in the press.

News and Reports on Seasonal Fashion

News and reports about the new trends in dressing were regularly published in all the local as well as central newspapers and in the evening and youth (Komsomol) press in particular. The big Soviet women's journals, like *Sovetskaya zhenshchina* (*The Soviet Woman*) published reports on fashion in Russian and several foreign languages. *Rabotnitsa* (*The Working Woman*) published similar reports regularly. Such news and reports naturally followed the seasonal pattern of fashion change. The approaching spring, for instance, gave cause for comments on the fashion of the upcoming spring and summer, and the fashion of the autumn and the winter deserved their own comments and reports later on in the year. Sometimes these reports could take up more specific topics like children's fashion or youth wear. Like everywhere else in the world, women's fashion dominated the news, but often a few lines were also dedicated to men's wear. The fashion journals paid attention to the children's collections too but in the local press such news appeared rather seldom. These news generally discussed rather technically and in detail the length of the hem, the breadth of the legs of the trousers, the general line of the cut of the dress, the fashionable colors of the season, etc. but they at times also included some standardized, general ideological comments on proper dress code and the role of fashion in the Soviet dress culture.

Let us take some examples of such news from the Soviet local press:

In their article "Taste and Fashion"⁴⁹¹ S. Kopelman and M. Arpa, both ordinary pattern makers from the fashion atelier in the city of Uzhgorod (Ukraine), took up the classic and eternally relevant question of the breadth of trouser legs. They informed their readers that according to the present fashion, the width of trouser legs was 24–25 centimeters. They hasten to give their readers some general advice on proper dress in general too:

This is normal [the breadth-authors]. But while some people rather wear trousers with the breadth of 24–25 centimeters, others, again, exaggerate in the other direction and insist on wearing trousers with a width of 45 centimeters. This is a style of its kind too. But one should not try to cheat the new fashion.

This article is a good example of what was meant by normalcy in the Soviet aesthetics in applied arts. It was always to be found in the middle, opposed to the two possible extremes: in the case of the trouser legs, too broad or too narrow. The proper measure was harmonious and it avoided extremes. According to this principle some clothes are "always" fashionable, like the classic "English" suit just because they are harmonious and proportionate. Therefore they fit almost everyone and are always beautiful and comfortable. On the other hand, a "sportive" or "free" cut of a costume could be fashionable too and fit both men and women.

In 1963, E. G. Solov'yeva wrote about what the girls should know.⁴⁹² The advice given was typical. It emphasized that, after all, fashion in socialism was something quite different from fashion in the West. What differed was, above all, its modesty and lack of extravagance:

The very word fashion is used among us with another meaning than in the West. If one dresses fashionably in the West that means that one attempts to draw the attention of those surrounding one, but with us fashion means above all the culture of dress, the high standard of aesthetic taste.

At the same time, the article does not leave the reader in any doubt about the general importance of fashion. It permeates all the details of our dress. Thus, fashion is quite normal in socialism. As a matter of fact, the article adds up to a real glorification of fashion:

Fashion exists in order to beautify, to increase the variety in our life. Fashion renews itself all the time. However beautiful they ever were, the models of five years ago already outlived themselves, passed by, and therefore cannot any more satisfy our demands of today. In order to dress oneself fashionably one does not by any means wear expensive, luxurious things. The main thing is that the design of the costume is thought through and kept in the modern style. The Soviet designer works in order to create whole collections of clothing. One should not forget that in fashion there are no trivialities. Fashion spreads out into every part of our attire. It is by no means a secret that badly fitting gloves or the wrong kind of bag can destroy the appearance of any beautifully sewn costume.⁴⁹³

The report from the artist J. Zavishene, published in the evening paper from Vilnius, Lithuania⁴⁹⁴ is in many ways typical too but it was more detailed in its instructions about the present trends, which were quite multifaceted:

The most popular style of dress recommended for all age groups is sportive. However, already for some time there has existed an elegant style for thirty year old women which suits the great majority and which is very popular. But we also recommend the classical style of dress with all its advantages. Tight forms with deeply cut collars and bodice are also popular. Pockets are bigger, with different configurations and decorated with buttons. Hooks are fashionable both as single-breasted and double-breasted. This spring's color tones are peaceful. Brown, as well as the colors of violet and tan are recommended as is the classic combination of black with white. Textiles are most varied in their color and texture As always, from all the available silhouettes, colors and patterns one should choose the one that suits one best. Which length to prefer: midi, mini or maxi? Does a more extravagant dress suit you well? If you are artistically inclined it is perhaps worth taking the risk. The present character of fashion gives the opportunity to use your female fancy: an overcoat, a dress, a skirt with a blouse and a vest, a knit dress (either hand-made or machine made). ... Different textiles can be combined too: wool with leather or chamois, knitwear with cotton or wool.

By the time of the publication of this article in 1971 trousers had become an accepted item of women's dress in the Soviet Union:

Various combinations of clothes have become typical recently: trousers with a dress coat, trousers with a blouse and a vest, trousers with a knit jumper and a coat, trousers with a lengthy suit coat, trousers with an overcoat of various length (also maxi). Anyway, as always, follow the rules of tact and taste. Shoes are typically massive and decorative.⁴⁹⁵

In the article “Learn How to Dress Beautifully” R. Murasova,⁴⁹⁶ the chief engineer of the Stalinabad garment factory No. 1, taught her readers in Tadzhikistan that

for our energetic youth there is an adequate, new style of dress. It has basically a sportive character. Therefore it is perplexing when a young girl at the age of 18–20 dresses in a double breasted suit coat with wide curves and clamps with 2–3 buttons. Such a dress coat makes the figure of the girl sturdy and fat.

In a typical way, Murasova ended her treatise on beautiful dress with some general reflections about fashion and bad taste. In her opinion, fashion always introduces something new, interesting and light to our dress, but at the same time demands of us a rational and thoughtful approach: “We met youngsters who wear trousers with heavily narrowed endings of the legs. This is a very irrational fashion! And we have to declare a war against such distortion, conspicuousness and formalism.” On the other hand, Murasova admitted that it is difficult to demand that a young man or woman at the age of 16–18 should know all the necessary rules of how to dress beautifully. Her own maxim of beautiful dressing was, after all, quite abstract and not much help in making everyday fashion choices: “A dress the material and the model of which corresponds to our habits and ways of life is always the best one.”⁴⁹⁷

Later in the 1960s, J. Zavishene reported in *The Evening News (Vechernie novosti)* of the capital of Soviet Lithuania that Russian motifs, like the long women's overcoat with fox fur linings and a hat resembling a hussar's cap, were now fashionable. As always, the classic style was also “in.”⁴⁹⁸

A couple of years later, in 1971, the fashion propagandist of the city of Ufa in Soviet Bashkiria, V. Plenkina, could reassure her readers in her comment on the eternally relevant theme “the first ball” that now we did not have any strict limitations on the design of more festive dress.⁴⁹⁹ This advice was part of the useful instructions for all mothers and their daughters on how to dress for the school graduation ball. The report *Vesna i moda*⁵⁰⁰ published a few years later went even further in declaring that now fashion had become democratic. The main thing was to emphasize one's individuality.

Despite such reassurances, the proper length of skirts still seemed to worry Soviet readers in 1973. G. Videnskaya, the artistic consultant of the fashion house at the city of Gorky, could, however, write in *Gor'kovskaya Pravda*⁵⁰¹ that this question had been solved once and for all a long time ago. The length had namely now stabilized within some limits: “above, at the height of the knees or lower, depending on the age and the figure of the person as well as the function of the dress.” The same adviser had referred to the same question a few years earlier in another local newspaper.⁵⁰² Videnskaya paid close attention to the general instructions of the Soviet trendsetters who closely followed the changes in international fashion. The leading Soviet fashion journal published, for instance, in 1971 L. Yefremova's report on Paris fashion with the title “No more disputes about the length.”⁵⁰³

In the article, “Fashion – what will it look like”⁵⁰⁴ the chairman of the artistic council of the local administration of everyday services, Z. Fomina,

declared that the style often called the “new classicism” would determine the fashion of the next year. She explained that “the main thing is that the woman should take seriously the task of choosing her dress according to her age and individual peculiarities.” Even according to Fomina, the recent heated disputes about the length of the skirt had now cooled down. A long skirt remained fashionable for particularly formal occasions and also for domestic leisure.

In its turn the author of *Fashionable Silhouettes* from the town of Khimki (Moscow region)⁵⁰⁵ did not feel obliged to take sides in the equally classic dispute regarding the supremacy of single-breasted or double-breasted suits since she simply announced that, according to the fashion designers, both were equally fashionable now.

These and hundreds of similar reports and news on the fashion of the upcoming season were regularly published in the Soviet press, just like in the rest of the world. They were often written either by journalists or the local experts working in the fashion industry and trade. Journalists could also interview such specialists. Often the writings were accompanied by an illustration or two – or alternatively a drawing – taken from a fashion show or exhibition displaying modern clothing. Just like elsewhere, the photos and drawings of fashionable clothing patterns dominated the contents of many Soviet fashion journals, but as a rule they gave detailed instructions about the tendencies of modern fashion too. The “real” fashion journals were often more self-conscious in their declarations about fashion and the present fashion in particular. For instance, *Zhurnal mod* set the example for all the other republican and local fashion houses. In winter 1966–1967 it presented the general guidelines and principles of the fashion of 1967 fully aware of the seriousness of the future challenges awaiting the modern fashion designer:

The designers (of the Eastern European socialist countries – the authors) have to think about all the sides of the life of all the three hundred million people living in the socialist states in Europe. The change of fashion is not as simple as the change of the sewing and the form of the dress. It is above all a reflection of our reality – of the laconism of the modern architecture, the rhythm of life, the growing industry, of the sport and of the conquer of space. All this makes our dress more businesslike, smaller in size, easier in the composition of the textiles and light in their silhouette. The basics of the modern fashion are to be found in its simplicity and laconism. But they hide behind themselves a long range of creative quests of research in the new and modern materials as well as constructive decisions.⁵⁰⁶

Vyacheslav Zaitsev – A Celebrity among the Soviet Fashion Designers

Many Soviet designers, in Moscow and in the Soviet republics as well as in the provincial centers, were well known to the Soviet citizens interested in fashion. The professional and popular press publicized their designs regularly, often conscientiously naming the author of the design as well as their professional affiliation. It is apparent that at least a dozen top designers

became real Soviet celebrities, comparable to movie stars or popular singers in their fame and popularity. We have earlier mentioned some of them and referred to their well-known creations.

There is, however, one particular fashion designer who was known all over the Soviet Union and whose reputation reached even people who ordinarily were not interested in modern fashion design. This person was Vyacheslav (Slava) Zaitsev. In addition to his own creations becoming well known to the public through the wide publicity they received, he was also interviewed regularly in the Soviet press about the latest trends, developments and sometimes even the problems of fashion design.

Zaitsev was born in 1938 in the city of Ivanovo, well known for its textile industry. He studied at the Faculty of Applied Arts at the Ivanovo Polytechnical Institute, from which he graduated in 1956. In the same year, he moved to Moscow and started his studies as a fashion designer at the Moscow Textile Institute. He graduated in 1962 after which he began to work at the design workshop of the factory *Babushkino* in a suburb of Moscow. Here he designed a collection with the typical Russian quilted jacket, felt boots and other work clothes which was presented at the All-Union methodical meeting in the beginning of 1963. These were meant to be ordinary peasant women's work clothes for the collective farmers. Zaitsev designed them in bright colors and not in the grey and brown tones typical of ordinary Soviet work clothes. This created a scandal and the collection was not approved for mass production. However, his collection became famous because a group of reporters from the Soviet News Publishing House (APN) visited the exhibition together with a correspondent for the French journal *Paris Match*, which presented Zaitsev and his creations to its French and international readers in February 1963. The article, "He dictates the fashion in Moscow" declared that Zaitsev had created real novelties in Soviet fashion which otherwise only imitated Paris and London.⁵⁰⁷ In 1965, the famous Paris haute couturiers Pierre Cardin, Mac Bohan (from Dior) and Guy Laroche visited Moscow and became familiar with Zaitsev and his work. At this time he was probably even better known among Western fashion designers and journalists than to the broader public at home.⁵⁰⁸

Starting in 1965 Zaitsev worked as a designer at ODMO and, by the end of the decade, he was nominated for a leading post in the system of Soviet fashion design when he became the deputy artistic director of this fashion house. He remained in this position, central to the Soviet system of fashion, until 1978. (Fig. 8.2.) After 1978 he worked in the fashion institutes under the Russian Ministry of Everyday Services and, in 1983, became the artistic director and head designer at the one of their leading houses of fashion design at Prospekt Mira Avenue in Moscow. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Zaitsev privatized "his" house, which continues its activities even today under the formal direction of his son.

Zaitsev's career is, without a doubt, an almost ideal Soviet success story.⁵⁰⁹ He came from a working class family in very poor conditions, with a single mother. Born in a provincial town, with his own talents and efforts, and obviously with some luck and help from the right people too, he became the leading professional in his own field. He was a member of the Communist



Fig. 8.2. Viacheslav “Slava” Zaitsev gives his opinion about new designs from ODMO before the members of its artistic council, 1974.

Party and a true Communist who believed in the bright future of his socialist fatherland. Despite their officially declared aims of successfully competing with Paris and other centers of world fashion, the Soviet authorities for some reason did not use Zaitsev’s international reputation in the Soviet propaganda for fashion, for instance by trying to sell his designs abroad, but rather downplayed it in later Soviet times. He was not allowed to travel to the West with his designs, which were exhibited abroad together with those of his colleagues as part of various Soviet fashion exhibitions in the 1960s and 1970s.

Inside the Soviet Union Slava Zaitsev became, however, the front figure of Soviet fashion. From early on in his career at ODMO, Zaitsev appeared regularly in the Soviet press propagating fashion, giving his personal opinions and advice on the fashion of the season, and commenting on the proper dress and good taste in general. Soviet readers became familiar with his person and his biography as well as his opinions and his achievements in the world of fashion early on in his career. One of the early examples is the article published in 1964 in the popular youth journal *Smena*, “Let’s give the word to fashion,” which presented Zaitsev – along with some of his typical fashion designs – as a talented, young designer. The article praised, without any critical reservations, Zaitsev’s first collection of women’s working clothes, which had not been taken into production because his superiors had turned it down. The article left no doubts about the importance of Soviet fashion and its creators:

The whole factory is youthful and young. It is about three years old. Here is a friendly collective of enthusiasts, and the possibilities of the creative search do not meet any limits. Working at the factory helped Slava to find his own style

– the ‘Zaitsev style’ (which has already become a concept). Sometimes he made a remark that fashion is something that is ‘well forgotten.’ This is quite true.⁵¹⁰

On the 16th of June, 1967, the newspaper *Komsomol'skaya pravda*⁵¹¹ published a long interview with Zaitsev's comments on the readers' letters about fashion. The Moscow youth newspaper *Moskovskij komsomolets* followed suit only a couple of weeks later, on the 30th of June.⁵¹² The questions occupying the readers' minds were many and they varied from the possibility of the prognostication of fashion and the impact of fashion on the identity of the person (“How can one retain one's identity in the face of fashion?”), to examples of bad fashion which at times could overtake the population of a whole city, to the relationship of Soviet fashion and Western fashion.

Zaitsev's answers were interesting, multifaceted and well-reasoned. In his opinion it was, for instance, much more difficult to see how modern fashion reflected the specific spirit of the times. This could be done only from the perspective of the historical changes of style. Similarly, he readily admitted that there is no way to know why some designs, including “bad” fashion, can suddenly become very popular. Zaitsev took up two concrete examples of such changes which had both taken place totally without the contribution of the fashion designers, and the first one even against their active interference and advice. His example of the sudden spontaneous popularity of “bad” fashion was bell-shaped trousers with bright wedges and buttons which were a total surprise to the designers, and, in his opinion, a real nightmare. The other, in his opinion positive, surprise was the great and unexpected popularity enjoyed both at home and abroad by the merino wool caps that the Soviet sportsmen wore at the winter Olympic Games at Innsbruck. In Zaitsev's words, these Soviet sportsmen became real lawgivers of fashion. Any professional fashion designer could only dream of similar success with his own individual creations.

Similar interviews with Zaitsev came out often in the following years.⁵¹³ Thus not only his opinions about fashion but also his face became familiar to Soviet readers. He even appeared in some provincial newspapers and informed his readers about, for example, the lively international contacts and co-operation in which ODMO was engaged, boasting that the French firm Christian Dior shared their latest constructive instructions “with us.”⁵¹⁴ He even claimed that ODMO sometimes worked on orders from abroad after its collections had been very well received there. By this time Zaitsev had become one of the leading designers at ODMO. In these interviews Zaitsev answered questions about his own role as a fashion designer, about the nature of fashion in general and current or upcoming fashion in particular. Often these interviews had a personal flavor and Zaitsev's ideas were often quite original. He denied for instance that the designer could dictate the changes of fashion. All he could do was to support them and help them find their right directions. Therefore, he invited all people to become his co-authors in fashion, to start imagining with the designers. But Zaitsev also accepted the designer's role as an educator of fashion. In his opinion, such an education should start in the children's day care centers. Zaitsev also demanded that the authority of the designer should be increased in the process of creating



Fig. 8.3. Viacheslav "Slava" Zaitsev among his own designs, 1976.

fashion. He complained that under the present circumstances, the artistic councils consisted of people who as a rule did not have any special artistic education but who nevertheless thought themselves great experts in the matters of taste and fashion.⁵¹⁵

The titles of the articles and interviews often emphasized both the importance of the issue and the expertise of Zaitsev. The biggest Soviet women's magazine, *Rabotnitsa*, published an interview with him under the title "Fashion is a serious issue."⁵¹⁶ These articles propagated fashion, and particularly Soviet fashion without reservations. But Zaitsev also warned his readers against typical extravagances and presented warning examples of bad taste. As Zaitsev argued,⁵¹⁷ fashion exists because it answers the natural striving of man towards regeneration, towards change. And whatever we might think about fashion, a human being cannot live without it. In the same article, Zaitsev declared his own ideals of fashion design which he had learned during his long years of professional experience and which had guided him in designing clothes: a harmonic composition of the principles of comfort, practicality, and beauty. (Fig. 8.3.)

Slava Zaitsev's public role did not restrict itself to interviews with the press. He had, for instance, his own TV program, "How to dress beautifully", (*Krasivo odevatsia*) which started in 1977.⁵¹⁸ He was often portrayed in the press photographs together with important international guests in the

fashion world visiting Moscow.⁵¹⁹ Equally important was the fact that his collections were regularly published and received a lot of space in *Zhurnal mod*⁵²⁰ which presented for instance his famous collection of clothing designs inspired by the motifs of Russian folklore. Perhaps more than anyone else, Slava Zaitsev gave a “face” to Soviet fashion both at home and abroad.

News about the Fashion Events: From the Domestic Exhibitions and Shows to the Great Achievements of Soviet Fashion in the International Arena

In the world of Soviet fashion there were many events to report on since the fashion bodies organized and took part regularly in all kinds of shows, exhibitions and professional conferences and meetings both at home and abroad. The relations between the fashion houses and designers of the Eastern European socialist countries were close and they met regularly at the fashion exhibitions and competitions. In 1963 *Molodezh Moldavii* published news about the fashion exhibition and congress of the COMECON countries. Similar news was common and published in many papers in the USSR:

In spring 1964 in Moscow an international forum of designers and artists will be held which will determine the development of fashion during the following two years. In a few months, the inhabitants of Moscow will become acquainted with the work of artists from Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and the DDR. And we shall tell you about the new collection of the Soviet artists today. What will fashion look like in the years 1964–1965?⁵²¹

The Soviet newspapers also reported on the regularly held annual meetings and consultations of the Soviet fashion designers and pattern makers during which both the general guidelines of fashion and the new technical innovations in industry were discussed. These could often consist of a short news story simply notifying of the event.⁵²² But the very fact that such events were worth reporting to the public in the press certainly increased their status – and the status of fashion – in the eyes of the Soviet public.

On the 5th of September, 1965 the Lithuanian newspaper *Sovetskaya Litva*⁵²³ reported that the Lithuanian fashion designers had participated in a COMECON fashion congress in Romania.⁵²⁴ The central newspaper of the Communist Party of the USSR, *Pravda*, in turn reported to its readers in 1969 that a Baltic exhibition of fashion took place in Vilnius with guests from neighboring Estonia and Latvia (16 January 1969). The Vilnius evening newspaper *Vechernie novosti* reported that the representatives of the fashion atelier from the city of Karaganda, Kazakhstan had visited the Vilnius fashion house in order to learn from their experience in sewing clothes.⁵²⁵

News about all kinds of fashion shows and exhibitions that propagated fashion to the people were considered worth reporting. These shows usually took place either in the clubs at the factories or kolkhozes or in the local shops, fashion ateliers and department stores. (Fig. 8.4.)



Fig. 8.4. "Trade knows best what the customers want." A fashion show on an ad hoc podium in the culture club of a collective farm near Moscow, 1960.

For instance, *Tikhookeanskaya Pravda* newspaper, published in the Far East at Khabarovsk, reported on 6 September 1962 that

last Saturday the workers of the Khabarovsk fashion house took their designs to one of the most popular places in the city, the Park of Culture and Leisure. The main artist, Comrade Dreshina, delivered a lecture. On the 30th of June in 1962, at the same fashion house at Khabarovsk, 400 workers from the local enterprises listened to a lecture on the culture of dress of the Soviet man and woman. The lecture was followed by a fashion show.⁵²⁶

In Chelyabinsk (the Urals) the fashion propagators proudly called these lectures and shows "Universities of the Culture of Dress." The students of the University gathered at the local shop *Druzhba*.⁵²⁷ In Volgograd similar fashion shows were organized in a café where the visitors could also enjoy a family lunch while watching the show.⁵²⁸ In Ul'yanovsk, like in many other places in the Soviet Union, the technologists and pattern makers from the local clothing factory came to the department store "to consult its customers

both about the designs of the individual items for sale and about the details of the clothes, the forms of the products and all the other details of dress.”⁵²⁹

The regional fashion houses of the Ministry of Light Industry were not alone actively propagating fashion. Many other organizations were eagerly offering their services to their customers. The local newspaper of the city Cheboksary in Chuvashia⁵³⁰ reported that in the big hall of the Palace of Culture with a thousand seats the local clothing factory and repair shop demonstrated its own new custom made clothing designs. In the club of the village Churachiki in the Tsvil'skiy region in Chuvashia the clothing factory of artistic embroidery demonstrated its women's dresses and men's shirts to dozens of eager women who all sat, judging from the published photo, watching the show wearing their traditional peasant head scarves and long black dresses.⁵³¹

The opening of new special clothing shops or ateliers also made typical news items in the local press. In Vilnius a new special clothing shop opened next to the republican house of fashion design. As the reporter added, the designers from the house would regularly work at the shop too giving advice on how to dress oneself attractively.⁵³² *Molodoi dal'nevostochnik* told its readers of the grandiose plans to build a fashion house in Khabarovsk “with a straight lined façade, with glass and cement and a fashionable modernistic canopy above the entrance.”⁵³³ The house did not exist in 1966 but, according to the newspaper, all the necessary preparations for its building had been made. “This is the future” the reporter finished his report. In the very same year the *Severnyi rabochii* published a report of the opening of a new first class fashion atelier at Yaroslavl.⁵³⁴ In Moscow, a special shop for larger people, called *Bogatyr*, opened in 1965. This was important enough news to be published in the biggest Soviet women's magazine, *Rabotnitsa*.⁵³⁵

Finally, the regular tidings of the achievements of Soviet fashion and fashion designers, internationally and domestically, were eagerly reported in the press. In 1967, the Soviet monthly journal *Ogoniok* proudly claimed that Russian fashion had now conquered Europe. According to the journalist, this conquest started in 1961 when Russian fur boots arrived at Paris during the Soviet Industrial and Trade Exhibition. These achievements could also be more modest but still worth paying special public attention to.⁵³⁶ The newspaper *Chelyabinskii rabochii* wrote proudly that as many as four local designs had been approved for the annual All-Soviet fashion design collection.⁵³⁷ Of these four two were women's skiing outfits, one a work outfit and one a cloak. On the other hand, in 1964 it had taken the artistic council five days to go through all the new designs suggested by all the clothing firms in the Chelyabinsk, Orenburg and Kuzbass regions. As many as 1800 new designs were approved for industrial production.⁵³⁸

The International Fashion Festival in Moscow in 1967 with participants from well over 20 countries, France, the USA, Australia and Sweden among them, was one of the highlights of Soviet fashion history. It consisted of two big events: a fashion exhibition at the Sokol'niki Park and fashion shows at the huge Luzhniki sports arena. They were naturally widely reported and commented on in the Soviet press and TV and gave ample opportunity for Soviet fashion experts to reflect on the real achievements of Soviet fashion.

The Soviet journal of applied arts, *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR*, published a whole series of articles with many illustrations to commemorate the event. Not all the commentators were as enthusiastic about the real achievements of Soviet fashion as they were in the reports in the popular press. T. Strizhenova wrote the first report published in the eighth number of *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* in 1967 shortly after the exhibition was over. Her evaluation of Soviet achievements was predominantly positive. The exhibition proved conclusively that the Soviet designers had become creative artists:

Now we can speak not only of the (Soviet-authors) designer who is working along the lines of the generally accepted direction of fashion but also of an artist who creates such patterns of dress that in a bright way reveal the tendencies of tomorrow.⁵³⁹

Among the positive examples of these new achievements she mentioned the hats that resembled the legendary Red army headwear or *budennovki*, the winter sports dress inspired by the highly relevant theme of conquering space, and finally, Viacheslav Zaitsev's designs inspired by the ancient Russian folk motifs, "while being at the same time clearly modern and original."⁵⁴⁰ In pointing out these three positive examples, with quite different motifs, Strizhenova followed the well-known maxim according to which the fashion designer can get inspiration from basically three different sources: from historical dress, from folklore, or finally from the expressions of modern culture in all the fields of life, like science, technology, art, film, etc.

Even though generally positive, Strizhenova made the same reservation that was often heard in the critical discussions about the achievements of the Soviet fashion industry, according to which there was a big discrepancy between the achievements and the talents of the designers employed at the fashion houses and the products that the garment industry could in fact mass produce.⁵⁴¹

The two other comments published shortly after the exhibition in *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR*, by V. Kriuchkova⁵⁴² and I. Golikova,⁵⁴³ were much more critical and in fact openly revealed the shallowness of the great promises of Soviet fashion. After describing in great detail the collections of several of the participating countries, Kriuchkova turned her attention to the Soviet collection. Her verdict was quite devastating:

Some countries, among them the Soviet Union, showed unique collections in which the designs served the purpose of artistic expression and were not meant to be released as mass produced dresses. They do not have a consumer, only a spectator, and this explains the peculiarity of these designs: their daringly keen realization, the lavish expressiveness of their basic lines, their almost theatrical, exaggerated conspicuousness.⁵⁴⁴

Kriuchkova also had a much more critical attitude to the examples of Soviet achievements that had been proudly pointed out by Strizhenova and many other commentators. In Kriuchkova's opinion, almost all the Soviet fashion

designers and institutions presented designs that got their inspiration from the local folklore. Both the folklore inspirations and Red army headgear were examples of the tendency of overt stylizing which was typical in Soviet fashion. She suggested that the Soviet designers would do better to study the Chanel collection instead, also demonstrated at the Exhibition which, in Kriuchkova's opinion, was a good example of the successful use of classic lines and traditional forms. Instead, they tried in vain to cut a dash with their exotic motifs.⁵⁴⁵

Golikova was the author of the second review. Her verdict was in general similar to and as critical as Kriuchkova's. She complained that the Soviet collections totally lacked their own style, design or line.

If we empty our collections of those things that had a clear national motif, they do not differ at all from the mediocre collections of several other participating countries. With one important difference: this is not a mass produced collection but single items on exhibition. It is high time to tell everyone that the emperor is naked, and to start as fast and conscientiously as possible to dress him.⁵⁴⁶

The solution Golikova offered to the problems of Soviet fashion, which had now sharply and almost tragically been revealed in front of an international audience, was not very original or surprising. It was often heard among the Soviet specialists of fashion. She suggested namely that the Soviet authorities responsible for the fashion industry should open boutiques belonging to particular producers and selling small experimental series of clothing.⁵⁴⁷

Fashion and Customers' Complaints

The reports of customer complaints concerning the bad quality and availability of consumer goods were a regular and deeply institutionalized genre of Soviet journalism. Sometimes these complaints were published in the form of readers' letters to the editors, sometimes they were presented as the starting point of the reports written by investigative journalists revealing the shortages and corruption to be met in the Soviet trade and consumer goods industry. On the more concrete local level many articles in newspapers and journals complained about specific shortcomings and shortages in clothing shops. These could be about the bad quality and small variety of designs available at the shops or even about more concrete and alarming shortcomings (only one size of shoes on sale, all the coats only available in one color, etc.).

The article published in the Smolensk based newspaper *Rabochii put'* in 1959⁵⁴⁸ was typical of such revelations in its almost extreme concreteness: "Whichever shop you visit you'll always find exactly the same overcoat, the same costume, because the garment factory of the Smolensk economic administration which is the main producer of the ready-made clothes in this region does not produce anything else at all." And further: "You cannot buy trousers without the coat – the factory sews only whole suits." The journalist interviewed local representatives of trade and industry: in a typical manner

they all blamed each other for these shortcomings. Industry claimed that trade did not order more fashionable clothes, arguing that they did not meet any demand; trade for its part argued that industry was neither willing nor able to produce them.

The interviewed representative of industry in his turn blamed the representatives of the wholesale organization: “the main principle guiding the workings of the wholesale station is to make things simpler and therefore this principle even guides the directors of the factories.”

The article ends in a slightly ironic tone typical of such Soviet critical journalism: “We are not against simplicity. But one should not advance it to that degree. Why should the inhabitants of Smolensk all wear just one particular model of clothes just because it happens to be convenient to the Smolensk wholesale organization of industrial products? Why does the dress have to be a uniform?”

Finally, the author paid attention to one more typical shortcoming of the clothing industry: no one paid attention to children's wear in Smolensk and therefore it was almost impossible to find a good and relatively cheap children's winter coat in any of the shops. The article also makes some positive suggestions on how to improve the supply of goods and more varied clothing in Smolensk. Referring to the opinion of the interviewed factory workers, it suggested increasing specialization as the best solution: one factory should specialize only in overcoats and suits, men's, women's and children's. Obviously they could then turn out more varied models of each particular item of dress they produced.⁵⁴⁹

In the central newspaper of the Soviet trade ministry, *Sovetskaya trgovlia*, Z. Pariskaya,⁵⁵⁰ a doctor of economics, revealed in 1962 rather crude examples of the negligence in the clothing industry: “Some garments are made only in size 50, others only in 46. At some times an overcoat or a men's suit is sewn only in black cloth, others in only brown.” In the opinion of the author, the main problem was that no one knew and followed the real demand for various kinds of clothes. This was a typical claim often heard from the representatives of Soviet trade who at the same time let the other involved parties understand explicitly that the trade organizations should be given a greater role in economic planning since they, if anyone, knew what the population really needed and wanted to buy. The shortcomings that the main Lithuanian newspaper *Sovetskaya Litva* revealed were even more serious. According to one author, the designs that the Vilnius House of Fashion Design had suggested for the year were totally out of proportion. The size 42–44 overcoat fitted grown women who usually wore sizes 46–48 but at the same time the sleeves were too short for a child.⁵⁵¹

Another common type of newspaper report discussed and revealed serious shortcomings in the planning of the production of essential raw materials, like buttons or colors, which the garment industry and clothing production absolutely needed. In the leading Soviet newspaper of economic matters, *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta*, Georgii Mariagin took up the burning problem of the colors of textiles and clothes. The colors were namely very monotonic. To find out what caused the problem he interviewed prominent representatives of the chemical and textile industries. Not surprisingly, he

found out that the supply of the coloring chemicals was not adequate. Many factories only fulfilled one third of their quotas. The promise of the soon arriving abundance of coloring chemicals – due to the expected progress in technology and science – had not been fulfilled. In the whole of Leningrad there was not a single factory that could produce them as there were not enough raw materials available. But this was not enough: at any one time the customer only found clothes for sale in a single color, because different colors were always produced periodically. During one quarter of the year all clothes were brown, in the next another color.⁵⁵²

The evening newspaper at the city of Perm (in the Urals) concisely formulated this basic problem of the Soviet fashion industry in March 1972. The author was inspired by the Estonian designs published in the Tallinn fashion journal *Siluett*:

How we all would like to dress like they do on the pages of *Siluett* but, unfortunately, at the time the local house of fashion design is mainly occupied with its own perspectives and the factory with its own plan. ... And therefore, who knows, we'll probably have to meet even this spring dressed in old coats.⁵⁵³

The role of fashion in socialism was keenly discussed in the 1960s in *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR*. The distinguished Soviet economist A. Braverman's article of 1963,⁵⁵⁴ "Fashion with the Economist's Eyes," is a systematic and sober attempt to analyze the phenomenon of fashion and its place in a planned economy.⁵⁵⁵ Braverman realistically identified the basic limitations facing the social mechanism of fashion under socialism. But what others could have interpreted to be a serious shortcoming in the production of fashionable clothing Braverman turned into a legitimate achievement. As Braverman categorically stated in the beginning of his article, it would be wrong to expect that socialist industry should clothe the population according to the latest fashion. It was true that in Communism the needs of the man would be satisfied, but this promise could not possibly be true of all the possible needs of man. Only the rational needs of man were worthy of satisfaction. Obviously, the need for a new fashion which changed itself over and over again was not a rational need, or at least it shared serious irrational features. The logical consequence was that the existing system of fashion had to be adopted to better correspond to the economic conditions of socialism. One could not simply expect that everything would be solved automatically with the gradual growth of the socialist economy and industry. Fashion, as Braverman correctly noted, leads to the artificial and premature ageing of clothes. In consequence, a coat, for instance, will go out of fashion and become obsolete sooner than it otherwise would with normal wear and tear. From this fact Braverman did not, however, draw the logical conclusion that fashion was an anomaly under socialism and therefore should preferably be abolished totally. On the contrary, even he seemed to take its existence for granted and therefore he only suggested that the mechanism of fashion should be somewhat modified to better fit the conditions of the socialist economy. It was important to remember that Soviet fashion differed, after all, from bourgeois fashion in its principles. It was less extravagant and did not

change as rapidly and as often as its bourgeois counterpart. In Braverman's opinion, the logical solution demanded by the Soviet economic system was therefore to build up a system of periodically and regularly changing fashions in such a way that a garment, even if it stopped pretending to be at the top of the fashion cycle anymore, would still guarantee the aesthetic satisfaction of the man.⁵⁵⁶

As Braverman reasoned, there is nothing mystical about the workings of fashion. Since fashion is after all created by living, concrete people it can be changed by their wills too: consequently, much depends on how the fashion designers and other specialists understand their own function in fashion. What is fashionable depends, in Braverman's opinion, to a great extent on the decisions of the organizations creating fashion.⁵⁵⁷ What was mostly needed was to organize the effective propagation of fashion (on TV, fashion shows, fashion press, etc.), which would take care to keep the old designs fashionable longer and to make the shift from one fashion to another more gradual. The fashion designers were supposed to take care of this task. In the last instance, Braverman thus implicitly accused the fashion designers and the organizations responsible for the creation of fashion of acting politically irresponsibly by too eagerly propagating their own novelties, thus promoting their own case at the cost of the whole national economy. Therefore, Braverman demanded a total and quick reorientation and the consequent establishment of a genuinely Soviet system of fashion which would mainly take care of preserving the aesthetic value and worth of clothing longer than was the case at present. Braverman supported the active promotion of a kind of anti-fashion propaganda. In his opinion, the necessary decisions needed to be made immediately before it was too late.⁵⁵⁸

What Braverman suggested, in other words, was that the state should more effectively and powerfully interfere with the creation of fashion in order to control and restrain it. This was in line with the aesthetic ideals and principles of good taste which above all emphasized moderation and avoidance of all kinds of extravagance. As we have seen, these ideals were also eagerly propagated by the Soviet fashion consultants and artistic experts, who often had an academic education in art history and aesthetics.

The other, not necessarily opposite but rather complementary view put great hopes in the scientific prognoses of fashion changes – or what would nowadays be called trendsetting. If only the trends of fashion could be predicted several years in advance, they could naturally also be better taken into account in the general economic plans. The very founding of VIA Legprom in the late 1960s, for instance, was heavily motivated by such arguments and followed by great expectations. In his article "On the Concept of Fashion" A. Zinoviev⁵⁵⁹ went so far in his belief in the power of science that he called for a general theory of fashion with the help of which its changes could be understood and predicted better. Such a general theory would, out of necessity, be based on a mathematical model. What is interesting in Zinoviev's article of 1971 is that he believed that the development of a proper theory of fashion was all the more important because the phenomenon of fashion did not restrict its influence to the culture of dress alone. Quite the contrary, "it cannot be doubted that people act under the influence of fashion

to a great extent.”⁵⁶⁰ But while waiting for such a general science of fashion to materialize itself it was logical to follow Braverman's advice and just try to slow down the rhythm of fashion.

The year 1971 saw the publication of two influential experts, A. Levashova's and I. Gordon's article “Fashion and Economics,” which admitted that the wish to dress fashionably was totally legitimate in the Soviet Union and in socialism in general. The publication of this principal statement in *Pravda*, the official organ of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR, gave its arguments special weight and authority in the public debate. They were not just private scholarly opinions but approved of by the high party leadership. In writing that “the renewal of dress has become an aesthetic need to the human being” they raised fashion to the level of a need, the satisfaction of which, together with the other human needs, the individual had every right to expect in the socialist society.⁵⁶¹

When it came to the bottom line it is easy to agree with V. Dukor's opinion, based on the results of the All-Union conference of the workers and employees of the linen industry. He formulated the basic dilemma of the Soviet fashion industry very compactly: “In order that all the factories should be able to turn out such products [as fashionable and as high quality clothes as the designs of ODMO-authors] two things are necessary: raw materials and machines.”⁵⁶²

The Question of the Small Series and firmennye magaziny

Throughout the existence of the Soviet fashion houses and other fashion institutes the representatives of these organizations had one solution to offer to the problem of how to cope with changing fashions and the demand for more individual and varied clothes in the system of the planned economy: this solution, repeated from time to time, was the production of small experimental series and, even better, small series that would be sold in the shops of the fashion houses themselves, *firmennye magaziny*. Such a system of regularly produced small series could, in the minds of the Soviet fashion experts, successfully bridge the huge gap that now existed between the individual designs of garments and the mass production of clothes. As a matter of fact, these small series and *firmennye magaziny* can be seen as a close parallel to the semi-mass fashion which had emerged in the West shortly before in the form of boutiques selling the designs of a fashion couturier under its own trademark or brand, common in the Western fashion market since the 1960s.⁵⁶³

As the Soviet protagonists of such small series argued, under socialism they would serve at least three main purposes. For the first, fashion designers could more easily experiment with new designs and make more rapid changes in their designs when this did not lead to the economically expensive change of the whole production line in the clothing factory. For the second, such small series would also introduce more varied designs into the fashion market. And finally, by “marketing” such small series, the fashion houses could study the market and the actual demand in practice to

find out which designs in fact found their interested customers and which did not. This could, of course, be more easily done in a shop of one's own where one could follow the changes in demand from one day to the next. Obviously, the fashion houses had also calculated that these small series would be economically profitable to them. Customers could easily identify with their branded clothing and could better vote with their money for the more fashionable products. This would lead to increasing competition, which eventually led to the economic success of some producers at the cost of others. Since bankruptcy was not possible and unemployment not tolerated real economic competition could not be encouraged or tolerated either. As a consequence only a few big, important and more prestigious factories situated near the city centers, like *Bolshevichka* or *Zhenskaya moda* at Moscow, were allowed to open their own boutiques, usually attached to their premises.

It is obvious that many Soviet fashion institutes and their designers had aspirations of producing such small series and they were repeatedly discussed in the trade press. Even though we do not have reliable overall statistics about the prevalence of such practices we can safely say that many fashion houses did engage in the production and selling of their own designs. To what extent this took place within the limits of the official regulations and plans, to what extent it depended more or less on the local initiative and more on the informal entrepreneurship of the heads of the fashion houses and institutes, is difficult to say. It is, however, obvious that it was almost impossible to produce such relatively small and rapidly changing series of fashionable clothes and at the same time not violate or overstep the official rules and regulations of the planned economy. For instance, the very fact that all the prices of all new products had to be approved of centrally either in Moscow or at the republican level – a process which could take well over half a year – made it almost impossible to experiment with fashion.

The sizes of these suggested – and at times realized – small series also varied widely, from a couple of dozen to several hundred or even a couple of thousand items. They could either be produced totally within a fashion house or in a bigger atelier, or they were ordered using the original designs from the local clothing industry and workshops.

For instance, in a report on the Tallinn House of Fashion Design, the *Zhurnal mod* reported in 1971 that 15–20 items were produced in the House and sold directly in the shops. As a representative of the House proudly declared:

Here we shall know if the customers like our designs, what they expect from us and what they do not want at all. As a matter of fact, the destiny of the future designs will be totally decided here: will they be taken into production or turned down.⁵⁶⁴

According to the author, such experimental parties had become more important now that economic units had, with the adoption of the new system of economic planning, to take into account their own profitability more seriously. The artistic director of the Riga House of Fashion Design,

A. Gramolina, reported in the journal *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* in 1971 that the Latvian house of fashion design in Riga was “one among the many which had its own production unit to produce small series.”⁵⁶⁵ The author made the quite radical suggestion of widely increasing the role of the special fashion shops which, if realized, would have opened the Soviet clothing market to an extensive segmentation according to the different assortment, quality and price classes of the clothes on sale: some shops would sell only cheap, mass produced clothes, others more fashionable ones with the accompanying higher prices.

The same journal discussed problems of socialist design and fashion eagerly all through the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1973 it published an interview with two important persons in Soviet fashion, Alla Levashova and Vera Chertovskaya.⁵⁶⁶ In the beginning of the 1970s Levashova was the director and Chertovskaya the head engineer of the recently founded Special Designing Bureau (SKhKB) under the Ministry of Light Industry of the Russian Federation. Levashova's opinion was valued in particular since she had extensive previous experience of working at ODMO. This special bureau was founded, like many other design organizations before and after it, in order to bridge the gap between the individual, unique fashion designs and the mass production of clothes. As the article claimed, the artists working in the fashion houses usually had fashion shows and exhibitions on their mind. Therefore the demands of the “broad masses” which should be the natural goal in designing clothes were often forgotten. According to Levashova, what was needed in order to remedy this problem was a totally new structure of fashion design consisting of three different levels of designs: individual or unique designs, small series, and designs for mass production. By that time in the Soviet Union only the two extremes, the unique and the mass production levels existed. In consequence, the necessary link between them was lacking. According to Levashova, it was not difficult to design beautiful clothes as such. It was on the other hand very difficult to get them adopted in the streets. The Soviet designers made a mistake in imagining that in Paris any design was good enough for industrial production. As Levashova claimed to know, this was not the case at all.⁵⁶⁷

The editions of the small series propagated by Levashova were to be 200, maximally 500 items of any single design. As Levashova explained, it was quite natural and was to be acknowledged by all involved that not every item of all the 200 new designs which her institute turned over to the firms of the Russian Federation would be equally well received by the customers. It was not that easy to change the appearance of the modern man or woman. Levashova took up, as a good example of the real successes of Soviet design, a popular youth design, the suit of the “harvester” which she together with her colleagues had designed on the order of the Komsomol Youth League some ten years before. According to her, it was still at the time of the interview gladly and proudly worn by all the student battalions working on the big construction projects or in the fields during their summer vacation: “We hit a need, found a practical garment that was convenient to the industry, and the rest was done by the students themselves.”⁵⁶⁸ What made these suits so remarkable was that the students took an active part in designing them

by decorating their own work uniforms with all kinds of cooperative signs identifying their own work unit and place of work.⁵⁶⁹ These suits were all identical uniforms of the work battalions but this creative and spontaneous praxis gave each of them an interesting individual flavor. To Levashova, this was living proof that these suits had really become a cherished part of the Soviet popular youth dress culture.

Levashova's colleague, the main engineer of the Bureau Chertovskaya, reminded the readers that one of the main problems on the way to transforming individual fashion designs into industrial mass products was the extremely complicated process of the price determination of novelties, which did not at all promote the development of the new rapidly changing fashions. Any change of design demanded by fashion also presumed as a rule a different amount of work time and raw materials than the previous fashionable design even in the case of otherwise almost identical products. This fact threatened to ruin the whole economy of the fashion organization. Therefore it was easier not to try to find how the new design would really appeal to the taste of the masses but rather just to find out how it fit into the economic plan. Such an approach would naturally not lead to a satisfactory result from the point of view of the consumer.⁵⁷⁰

Despite the fact that a clear consensus seems to have reigned regarding the need for such small, experimental series and special clothing shops among the Soviet specialists, and despite the fact that hardly anyone openly seemed to object to the idea, and despite the further fact that many fashion houses and institutes obviously experimented in practice with them, they were never, judging from the repeatedly arising suggestions and complaints, made an integral part of the Soviet fashion system. There was an obvious reason for the ambivalent attitude towards this issue: the suggested *firmennye magasin*y did not really fit into the system of the centrally directed and controlled planned economy with its centrally controlled prices and production goals. In addition there was always the danger that the "factory outlets" that had come into being through the initiative of the local economic actors would get out of the controlling hands of the central planning organizations and develop into bigger economic units working beyond the guidelines or at the margins of the plan and, even more problematically, beyond the direct control of the central planning and decision making organizations, in the last instance the Communist Party. The authorities were often suspicious of such, in themselves quite reasonable and limited, economic experiments because they obviously feared that they could easily get out of hand and sow dangerous seeds of private entrepreneurship and profit making, always lurking at the margins of the socialist, planned economy.

The Rules of Decency and the Proper Soviet Dress Code

Most of the Soviet experts and instructors took it for granted that one should follow fashion in one's dress. The article "Do you want the dress beautifully?" from Kazakhstan explained in 1963 in a typical manner to its young readers why one should not ignore fashion: "Sooner or later the surrounding

people will think that you look funny. As a matter of fact, don't you also think that such women are funny who cannot live without an overcoat with cotton shoulder pads or leather flowers? Nothing is worse in fashion than standardization. If you all wore similar costumes, what a dull picture that would be."⁵⁷¹

According to the usual advice one should by no means follow every whim of fashion. This warning was regularly heard in the press, for instance in the Party newspaper of the city of Zaporozhye (Ukraine). In "How to Dress with Taste" the author explained that

we call caprices of fashion all kinds of strange exaggerations and deviances from the generally accepted norms. These should be avoided by all means in the dress. This is relevant in relation to the length or width of the dress or skirt as well as the size of the collar and the form of the arms. Such designs, patterns or details which do not have any practical function only draw, because of their inutility, attention to themselves. Such caprices of fashion will rapidly pass away, as unnecessary and contingent, not resulting from the demands of beauty and practicality, and, instead, the basic and generally accepted lines will stay.⁵⁷²

To many Soviet fashion advisers, functionality and practicality, and the adjoining rule of modesty, were the ultimate principles of Soviet fashion which they thought separated it from fashion in the West. In a similar way, A. Tikhonov, a design engineer of the fashion house of the Ministry of Everyday Services at Cherkessk in the Caucasus, wrote in *Leninskoe znamia* that in opposition to the typical extravagances of Western fashion, modern Soviet fashion relied on pleasant, functional and beautiful forms: "One should follow fashion, but one should remember also that beautiful is above all something which is modest, and does not demand too much attention."⁵⁷³

Warnings against "too much or too trivial fashion" were very common in these reports. An artistic consultant from Moscow, E. Semenova, wrote in the Belorussian youth newspaper that one should "remember that something that is in fashion a short time is not necessarily beautiful as such." The author took up some concrete warning examples of such short lived fads. "Fashionable" huge English pins once appeared suddenly for sale. They were supposed to be used as hooks. In the opinion of the author, such pins of ordinary size are very useful but when enlarged to the measures of caricature they are not beautiful anymore. Similarly, huge sparkling spiders are not beautiful either: "They hardly make a dress more beautiful at all."⁵⁷⁴ Typically, while raising a warning finger the article at the same time encouraged people to follow fashion in general in order to dress more beautifully. The "warnings" were directed not against fashion as such but only against particular examples of too excessive or extraordinary taste.

In answering in 1960 the oft-posed question "Is it worthwhile to follow fashion?" *Kustanaiskii komsomolets*, a youth newspaper from Kazakhstan, felt it necessary to point out that the solution to beauty is not fashion alone. Instead of blindly following fashion, one has to know what best suits one and how to wear it:

Yes, but not simply blindly to follow it but to follow it with reason, not to give way to the occasional deviances, not to try to grasp every novelty but to evaluate with dignity every novelty designed by designers. This is important, in particular, because not every novelty makes every individual beautiful. Of two people, both dressed equally fashionably, one can be tastelessly and unattractively dressed, the other beautifully and with good taste.⁵⁷⁵

Such rather general and admittedly abstract advice was common enough in the Soviet press in those days: they all ended up recommending great moderation and personal reflection, that is, not to follow fashion blindly but to adapt every single fashion to one's personal style. Similar recommendations were quite common in many Western ladies' journals and fashion columns in newspapers at the same time.

Ural'skii rabochii, from the city of Sverdlovsk, explained in 1960 to its readers that any new fashion can in the beginning feel strange and repugnant simply because it is new and therefore people are not used to it. In consequence, disputes about fashion are quite natural:

A new fashion is introduced into life in steps at the same time that the old one has already achieved the power of a habit. This explains the vehement disputes about the beauty of 'wide shoulders' or 'narrowed trousers.' Often such disputes do not concern so much the new lines or silhouettes of the dress but the violations of proportion.⁵⁷⁶

The same popular theme of the right proportions, harmony and moderation was continued in L. Tikhovskaya's article "To have a beautiful look everywhere and everyplace." Tikhovskaya was a well-known art director. She presented a long list of extravagances which some people took to be fashionable but which in fact were only proof of the bad taste of their wearer:

Once I happened to meet on the street a young person. All passersby involuntarily stared in his direction disapprovingly. Narrow, short trousers with huge cuffs. The shirt which was hanging over the trousers had an unbelievable scale of colors. On the tie some apes or perhaps crocodiles. Boots completed the whole picture with their almost one quarter of a meter long points, and a tiny moustache on a very young face looked as if it had been glued on it. This young man was, obviously, quite convinced that he was dressed according to the latest fashion.⁵⁷⁷

In the author's opinion, these were all examples of dress which unnecessarily exaggerated all kinds of fashionable details, thus in fact producing an impression of bad taste. This, as well as many similar outbursts of worry concerning such extreme forms of youth fashion, often had a strong moralizing tone too. The way people dressed was not only a question of beauty but also an expression of their inner moral worth and decency. On the other hand, almost all the authors hurried to deny that they would have advocated a style of clothing without any change or variation. As they reminded, those who thought that grey, boring clothes and old fashions were adequate for the youth should know better that "our industry makes for our youth in particular light, bright and joyous clothes." The Soviet man and

woman who also possessed inner spiritual beauty had both a right and an obligation to strive after beauty even in their clothing and outer appearance. Quite rightly, “now everything possible is done in our country that she could dress herself according to her increasing demands and in accordance with her physical and age peculiarities.”⁵⁷⁸

The Soviet disputes about fashion and good taste often fluently blended the issues of beauty with issues of moral decency. Thus, a beautiful dress should not violate the rules of common decency. Otherwise it could not be regarded as genuinely beautiful. Women wearing trousers, breaking the ancient rule regulating difference between women's and men's dress, was the hot topic in the Soviet press in the 1960s.⁵⁷⁹ Women's trousers and pant suits were extremely important and, in the beginning, quite controversial cultural innovations in the 1960s in the capitalist West too.⁵⁸⁰

In 1960 the newspaper *Sotsialisticheskaya Karaganda* (Kazakhstan) took a clear stance against women wearing trousers in public places, at the same time admitting that trousers did not spoil a woman if the situation demanded wearing them (work, tourism, sports and exercise) “but to go to an institute, cinema or a canteen in trousers is not appropriate at all.” The article gives detailed advice about the proper women's dress in other aspects too: “To visit a club of culture one should select a dark toned dress proper to the style. If the dress is slightly low-necked then one should cover one's shoulders with a scarf.”⁵⁸¹

In 1959 the artistic director of the Rostov house of fashion design, T. I. Ostrovskii, took up the same question of women's trousers in the youth paper *Komsomolets*, published in Rostov-na-Donu. This was obviously one of the hot topics of the years 1959–1960. He corrected some general misconceptions concerning proper women's dress:

For some reason some girls think that one can wear trousers in the evening at the club, or in the dances. This is not true. As a costume for going out trousers are not suitable at all. In dressing, like in everything else, one should follow the right sense of proportion.⁵⁸²

In addition to the questions of decency associated with sexual morality another burning question was whether the fact that people were living under socialism set any particular or new demands on the proper dress code. In the evening paper *Vechniaya gazeta* M. Gaimanova, the artistic director of the Kirghiz House of Fashion Design, admitted in her turn in 1959 that

a new fashion can, at first glance, look very extravagant, and many think that it does not at all fit everyone. Such an impression is typical only in the beginning, when one sees totally new lines and one does not know them in detail. Almost every new fashion looks strange and even ugly in the beginning.⁵⁸³

The article in general presented a cautious defense of fashion in socialist society. It ended with a rather interesting comparison and an attempt to distinguish between bourgeois and socialist fashion:

A part of our population thinks that the dress of a Soviet man or woman should be totally different from the dress of other countries. However we know that in the bourgeois society two cultures exist side by side – a bourgeois culture and a people's culture. The one is aimed at the peak of the bourgeois society, and it advertises extravagant, often exaggerated forms which can develop into absurdity. The other – the dress of the working population connects utility, comfort and simplicity with the artistic taste. And these same demands we promote as the basic principles of the Soviet design. Our designers make use of the new trends suggested by foreign designers only when they conform to our perceptions about the dress suitable to our working way of life.

“Fashion – a year ahead” was similarly convinced that the Soviet designers worked only for the people – in contrast to the designers of the capitalist countries who usually did not care about the demands of the wider circles of society and only catered to the rich:

And even if our designers do not so far have enough experience in order to determine the main direction of fashion in adapting fashion practically to the demands of everyday life, in creating practical, necessary and various clothes for everyone's demand they, without doubt, can and should win the golden palm leaf.⁵⁸⁴

Once again, the main features which distinguished the socialist dress from the capitalist were practicality, functionality and modesty which all, in practice, amounted to the avoidance of extravagance.

At first glance it might seem strange that the public discussions and debates about fashion in the Soviet press did not often refer to the norms of sexual morality. It seems that these questions were taken more or less for granted. They were hardly ever challenged publicly. Fashion and sexuality were without a doubt closely related in the Soviet Union just like everywhere else.

The Everlasting Campaign against Bad Taste

One of the most peculiar reports in the campaign against the *stiliagis* was published in the Party newspaper *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda* on 31 March 1959.⁵⁸⁵ Its title alone was provocative: “One should dispute about the matters of taste!” The article characteristically took up a concrete case which had raised moral concerns among the citizens of Leninogorsk, a mining town in Kazakhstan. A young worker and Komsomol activist from a village in the Leninogorsk district, Gennadii Sidorov, got the questionable honor of personalizing a serious moral dilemma. Sidorov's portrait had namely appeared in a caricature in the local satirical wall paper heavily criticizing the *stiliagi*. In addition to being shown with the typical characteristics of *stiliagi* he had been portrayed as a drunkard and a hooligan, and the caricature had been displayed in the shop window on the main street of the district center. (Fig. 8.5.)

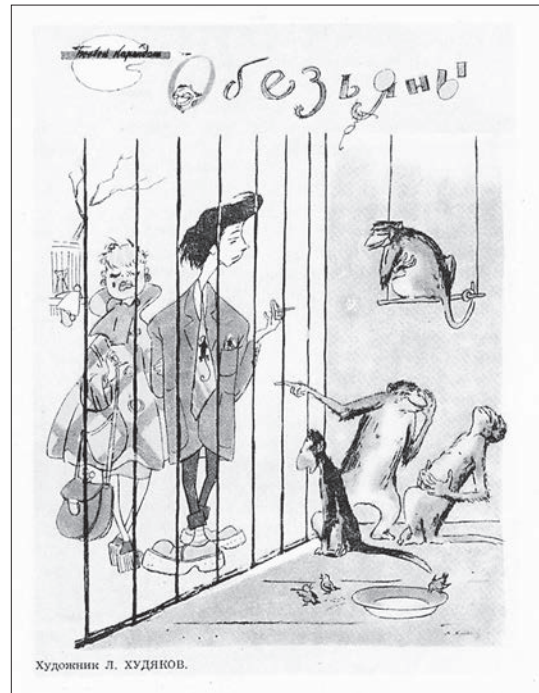


Fig. 8.5. “Even apes laugh at *stiliagi*!” A typical caricature published in the Soviet press.

When the journalist of the Party paper who had been sent to the village with the mission to investigate the case asked the editor of the wall paper he admitted that he had never seen Sidorov drunk or engaged in any other kind of anti-Soviet, punishable behavior. The only reason why he was presented in this manner seemed therefore to be the way he dressed himself, and in particular the width of his trousers, the usual sign and sin of a *stiliagi*. As the journalist continued his investigations it turned out that the head of the local militia, who had also been active in publicly condemning Sidorov, had in fact a very peculiar idea of what it meant to dress oneself properly. He did not, for instance, approve of a young worker wearing a tie. Neither did he think that a Mackintosh rain coat could ever be an appropriate garment. And if he met any youngster wearing trousers narrower than 30 centimeters at the local cinema he automatically expelled them from the hall and kicked them out on the street.

As the investigation continued the reader also learned that Sidorov had become good friends with Igor Skachkov, who had graduated from the House Construction Institute in the Kazakhstan capital city Alma-Ata. Skachkov had decided to change his profession and had come to work in the same mineshaft as Sidorov. According to the local witnesses, at the beginning of their friendship everything was just as before but gradually Sidorov's character started to change. He did not want to live at the dormitory anymore, since there was too much noise. Most notably, he did not like the rule that visitors were not allowed in the evenings. Sidorov and Skachkov therefore moved into the hotel actually reserved only for “educated specialists.” The

room was expensive but it allowed them to go out at night because the keeper of the hotel did not interfere in their comings and goings. What was even more serious, they did not care about their previous friends and work mates anymore and passed them in the street in their stylish clothes and specially done hair, totally refusing to recognize them. Because of all these strange changes in their behavior the townspeople started to call them *stiliagis*.

So far the story was quite typical and could be told about many youngsters in the various corners of the Soviet Union who in one way or another rebelled against the social norms which they experienced to be too restrictive. What made this particular case especially interesting was that the two young men had not been willing to adopt the label of *stiliagi* that the local guardians of proper behavior wanted to paste on them. During a hearing arranged by the local Komsomol organization, Sidorov defended himself steadfastly and convincingly against the accusations of being a *stiliagi*. "What kind of *stiliagi* are we just because we want to dress ourselves fashionably?" he asked. "We do not drink, we do not harass girls, but work diligently at our mine shaft. And if we dress according to the fashion, what's wrong with that after all?" he continued.

After hearing Sidorov's defense the local Komsomol Committee had to admit that it was not wrong for a young person to dress fashionably. But why did he have to break up with his previous friends? In this respect Sidorov admitted his mistake and to make up for it he kindly invited his whole work brigade to the factory canteen to celebrate his birthday under very pleasant conditions. In consequence, he became almost a local hero among his work mates. The question remained whether the head of the local militia had been wrong in this case in too eagerly condemning these youngsters simply because of their extravagantly fashionable dress.

In order to be sure that his judgement would be as well-founded and impartial as possible the "investigative" reporter of the Party newspaper paid a visit to Sidorov and his comrade Skachkov in their hotel room. Sidorov was well prepared and did not have anything to hide: "Please, take a look, said Sidorov opening the clothes closet. As you can see everything here is sewn according to the patterns of the Moscow fashion journal. We subscribe to it."⁵⁸⁶ Since their clothes were thus authorized by the central fashion experts of Moscow there could hardly be anything wrong with them.

But the case could not yet be judged conclusively in favor of Sidorov and his friend. The clothes closet was namely not the only thing that the reporter observed in their room that raised his curiosity. He saw kinds of other interesting things, too, speaking both in favor of and against the good character of the boys. For instance, their skis proved that the boys were active sportsmen – another proof of the good character expected from a proper Komsomol youth. But something else, more suspect turned up: above the bed hung a rather crude oil painting with an openly obscene subject. According to Sidorov, it was a present from a friend. As if this were not enough to question the moral character of the boys, a couple of the works of the Western abstractionists lay among the fashion journals on the table. When asked whether they really liked the pictures, Skachkov, obviously the "expert on art" among the two, answered affirmatively that the works were

very interesting. As he argued, the unexpected combination of the colors raised various associations. Next the journalist's attention was directed to the window sill on which he recognized a record player and a tape recorder together with some gramophone discs with foreign labels. "We like jazz music," Skachkov hurried to explain.⁵⁸⁷

With the accumulation of the "evidence" for and against the boys it gradually became evident to the journalist why the local authorities did not approve of Sidorov's and Skachkov's taste and why they thought it was harmful enough to be worth a serious public reprimand. As the article advances, the boys are connected to almost all the possible – and in the Soviet minds, standard – dangerous signs of a character spoiled by bourgeois taste in almost all fields of culture, from clothes to art and music. The investigative journalist could now finally summarize his report and read his final verdict:

Now it becomes quite clear why the two good working kids, the two Komsomol boys started to favor the taste that is alien to the Soviet youth. No, the question is not about the line of the suit coat nor of the width of the trousers! In Leninogorsk many youngsters dress up according to fashion and take care of their appearance. But only Sidorov and Skachkov, only these two, paid all their attention and thoughts to a "chic" tie, to the new foreign gramophone discs of boogie-boogie and the hair cut like an overgrown cocoon. Their false thoughts about originality led Sidorov and Skachkov to the point when they started to avoid their work comrades. How come! Only they two get lost in the novelties of the abstractionists, only they can tell how to dance the hula-hula.⁵⁸⁸

If their only "crime" had been their fashionable dress, looking like a *stiliagi*, this would not have been a real problem. But at the same time they had developed a "strange" or foreign taste which was apparent in their preference for abstract art and American jazz music. The only thing that strongly spoke in their favor was that they were good workmen who did not get drunk, did not harass girls or end up in any fights in the streets. In many ways Sidorov and Skachkov were thus decent, ordinary guys after all. No one was claiming that they would have committed any crimes. The case investigated here was made complicated by the fact that the characters of the two suspects were not painted only in black or white but were obviously more complex and, above all, quite ambivalent. Therefore the journalist was faced with a serious dilemma: how could one explain that the boys were good, work-loving citizens of the Soviet Union and at the same time had a highly suspicious, corrupted bourgeois taste? And what should one do about it?

The most interesting thing about this article published in 1959 in this central party newspaper of the Republic is that the reporter does not propose any straightforward solution to the problem. He admits that Sidorov's and Skachkov's taste is a problem. It is alien to the Soviet youth. Furthermore it is "dangerous too because it looks like they are not alone but have 'followers' among the local youth: A group of young men gather around Sidorov and Skachkov who think that rock'n roll and cocktail drinks are the highest achievements of culture."⁵⁸⁹

The article does not suggest direct reprimands towards the boys but neither does it propose that the local Komsomol organisation should leave the boys to their own “private hobbies.” As a matter of fact, the reporter supported a proposal made earlier by Skachkov himself. He had offered to engage in a public debate about the kind of music the young people really liked, the kind broadcasted by the All-Union radio station or the kind recorded on the tapes by Skachkov. The reporter actively supported the idea that the local Komsomol organization should engage more often in such open disputes in order to finally make Sidorov and Skachkov – and all their ilk – understand their mistakes and regain the respect of their working collective.

There are at least three lessons to be learned from this multifaceted history recorded in great detail in the Kazakhstan Communist Party newspaper. The first point is that it was not a crime in itself to dress fashionably anymore. The second point is that one was not supposed to judge a person's character on the basis of his or her outer appearance alone even though in this respect the message of the paper is somewhat ambivalent: taste in dress was not dangerous as such but it could obviously develop into a problem when spreading to other areas like music or art. Then it would obviously indicate some serious problems in the character of the young man. The third point is that the best way to cope with such problems of deviant behavior was not public humiliation and punishment but education of taste and propagation of fashion in a public dialogue with the persons concerned and the Soviet youth in particular.

A similar stance on this important question of the politics of taste was expressed in 1960 in the Moscow-based newspaper *Komsomol'skaya Pravda*,⁵⁹⁰ the main organ of the Soviet Communist Youth League, which commented on the recent activities of the overzealous Komsomol activists at the famous Soviet summer resort Sochi on the Black Sea coast. The article was based on readers' letters reporting their own experiences, another common method of dealing with difficult moral issues in the Soviet press. A highly respected citizen and laureate of the Stalin prize, Docent Leviatin from Leningrad, had witnessed how the local *druzhinniki* (voluntary street militia) of the Komsomol activists had not only forbidden men to wear brightly colored shirts and women to wear trousers but even tore them to pieces when met in the streets of Sochi. The writer of the letter admits that he, in his advanced age, is personally not a great friend of such youth fashion but wonders if the reactions of the local Komsomol activists were really the right way to tackle the problem. A lawyer from Lithuania, D. Freishmanene, wonders on her part why girls were not allowed to wear trousers in Sochi. This was strange, in particular since such a habit was in her opinion quite common in the Baltic Soviet Republics. She had, however, learned that the prohibition on women's trousers in public places, like streets, was part of the official regulations of the local authorities of the city of Sochi. The author of the article in *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* regarded such reactions and measures as signs of intolerance. In her opinion they were, unfortunately, not only typical of Sochi. In the same article, two girls from the Amur region in the

Far East reported, for instance, that in their village anyone who differed from the common mass was treated as a *stiliagi*. Their regional Komsomol Committee even told them in an authoritarian manner to dress so that they would not differ from the rest, not to show off.

The journalist Koleshnikova who compiled and commented on these readers' letters did not propose any clear cut measures, neither did she engage in the dispute over what really is good taste and what is really decent and proper. It was, however, obvious that her sympathies were on the side of young people who wanted to wear trousers or bright colors and dress up more fashionably. Above all, the article published in this main Komsomol newspaper of the USSR clearly condemns the aggressive manner in which the local Komsomol militia at the popular holiday resort of Sochi, which every year gathered millions of visitors from all over the Soviet Union, reacted to the visitors who dressed themselves in a new and slightly more daring manner. At the same time she, in a typically balanced way, also admits that the youth can and – often do – outdo themselves by taking to all kinds of extravagance thus breaking the norms of good taste. In these matters the article puts its hope in the Soviet propaganda for good taste and, even more than that, in the power of the good example:

Right now in the center of Sochi, on the *Kurort Porspekt*, they finish the building of the new fashion house [of the Ministry of Everyday Services – the authors]. We'd like to believe that this building in the modern light and plain style will become a real propagator machine of the best ways of dressing. How useful it would be to organize regularly in the atelier exhibitions about the new models of the season with the title 'This is fashionable with us.' It would also be a good idea to hang alongside it examples of the opposite, silly style.

As she concluded, what makes these questions important is that they do not touch upon the issues of fashion alone: "We talk too little about the questions of culture, ethics and aesthetics with our youth, with our Komsomol. The time has come to start to seriously think about this!"²⁷⁵⁹¹

These two articles show in a clear way the dilemmas facing the Soviet political, aesthetic and ethical educators and the guardians of popular morals in reacting to the cautious signs of the emergence of an unofficial youth culture, with its more spontaneous and individualistic style of dress. They were certainly not the only ones published in the Soviet press at about the same time.

By the beginning of the 1960s the Soviet commentators on fashion seemed to agree on the right answer to the general question of whether fashion and the style of dress, even such extravagances as those typical of the *stiliagi*, could be regarded as reliable signs of one's moral character. According to this consensus, one should not pay undue attention to details of the dress or draw far-reaching conclusions about them but, at the same time, general questions of good taste did matter. This position was formulated clearly and in an exemplary manner in 1961 in "Some remarks on the beautiful dress" in the Voronezh based youth newspaper *Kommuna*:

In the vehemence of the struggle against the stiliagi one often pays attention to such things as the width of the trousers, the length of the garment, etc. As matter of fact, there is nothing wrong as such with such modern lines, or fashionable details. The real danger lies in the lack of proper measure and in the silly manner of wearing a costume.... We can and must educate people in good taste.⁵⁹²

In another youth newspaper, *Komsomolets Turkmenistana*, E. Palienko, a geomorphologist from the Central Complex Expedition came to the same conclusion even more convincingly.⁵⁹³ The author reminded his readers in 1959 that men are more inclined to lag behind in fashion. One reason obviously was that prejudices prevailed about the moral character of “too fashionable” men. In his opinion one should be careful not to blend fashionable dressing with bad character, or in general to draw any direct conclusions about the moral character of the man from his outer appearance. He used, unsurprisingly, the example of *stiliagis*, well known to his readers, in order to illustrate the point:

One does not become a ‘stiliag’ simply by dressing fashionably. Stiliagi are people who have the narrow mentality of the petite-bourgeoisie, who are without any proper occupation, in particular, good-for-nothings, drunkards, lewd or base people. Should one therefore count a working young man in the same group as a lazy lecher, just because their appearance happens to resemble each other to an extent?⁵⁹⁴

Palienko openly welcomes the new men's fashion even in its more extravagant expressions:

One has to admit that it is a pleasure to look at a young man in blue trousers with narrowing down legs and with a shirt of the same tone hanging outside the trousers. Now many young people wear such trouser shirts. But just a year ago they were openly laughed at.

Finally, he reminds his readers that it is only natural that they should become more open to the novelties of fashion as a natural companion of the advancing abundance of the socialist society: “Many might not agree with me, defending the old. But does not our life get richer, fuller of contents, and at the same time do not our views about beauty grow and change?”⁵⁹⁵

Published a couple of years later in the central Soviet newspaper *Izvestiya*, “The case of the *sarafan*, the light, sleeveless women's summer dress”⁵⁹⁶ was openly directed against all overly eager protectors of public order and the decency of the dress code. It told the story of a woman who on her way to a concert in Odessa was stopped and fined by a militiaman simply because she was not – in the eyes of the militiaman – properly dressed. According to the official city regulations of public order one could get a 10 ruble fine for wearing a sleeveless summer dress, or *sarafan*, in any public place because it was too revealing. The woman's crime was that she wore just such a *sarafan*. The article shows clearly that such crude events of official interferences into the dress code and proper behavior of ordinary people were not, in the early 1960s, restricted only to remote or provincial towns or villages. The article

adopts, in a typical way, a double strategy in solving such dilemmas: it condemns these crude measures of disciplining the taste of the citizens and at the same time asks for the public education of taste instead so that Soviet citizens – and the youth in particular – might learn how to dress both fashionably and with style. To wear a *sarafan* should be no crime and the reaction of the militiaman was wrong. On the other hand, as the article let us understand, we should all be on the alert against the cruder violations of good taste and common decency which are not at all that rare either. As the author concluded, these are, in the end, matters of public opinion and not of the penal code, and we should find the best ways to influence it with means other than fines and other punishments. Strict prohibitions and disciplinary measures will in such delicate matters only lead to disaster and strengthen opposing reactions. Such administrative measures would only give cause to further carelessness and “primitivism” by encouraging people to recognize each other by their dress. They would start to think that a *sarafan*, narrow trousers or a fashionable beard and hair-do were signs of a good-for-nothing. This was not true at all, as the author concluded his reflections.⁵⁹⁷

The *stiliagis* were in the 1940s and 1950s associated with a very specific detail of dress, the extremely narrow legs of men's trousers. This question of the proper breadth of the trousers worried many Soviet citizens for a long time, and they therefore asked the press for advice. The Soviet fashion created by the state fashion institutions and their designers generally followed international trends. Consequently, men's trousers did get narrower and broader cyclically – this seemed to cause a lot of uncertainty and it worried many ordinary citizens who had traditionally gotten used to one or the other in the breadth of their trousers. The “official” answer to this question was the same as always: best to stay in the middle.

V. Solomatina from the city of Khabarovsk in the Far East suggested in 1960 in his letter to the *Sovetskaya torgovlia* newspaper a practical solution to the problem of the proper breadth of the legs of trousers. In his opinion the width of the trousers should correlate with the size of the shoes. The bigger one's shoe number the wider one's trouser legs should be. This, as a reasonable rule which could have solved the problem once and for all, was, however, not approved of by the newspaper's editors: “It is naturally not at all necessary that the breadth of the trousers should follow the size of the shoe!”⁵⁹⁸

Whereas the questions of women's trousers and the breadth of trouser legs were “evergreens” in the Soviet public discourse from the 1950s to 1970s, sometimes the experts' advice on the proper dress code could be quite esoteric too. Young people walking outside without a hat in the winter cold was, in the memory of one of the authors of this book, one of the big issues in the education of proper manners in Finland in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

The same “fashion” had obviously spread to the northern parts of the Soviet Union too, judging from a reader's letter published in 1961 in the youth newspaper *Smena*. A retired man, A. Ivanov, wondered whether the strange habit among “our” youth of going without any hat in the cold outdoors had come from the West and were “our” youngsters thus simply

trying to imitate a harmful Western fashion not suitable to the northern Russian climate.⁵⁹⁹

The answer to this as such reasonable inquiry was rather amazing. It was not written by a fashion expert as usual but by a certain K. Smirnov, who was a professor of medicine and, as a matter of fact, the head of the department of physical culture at the State Institute of the Education of Physicians in Leningrad. He explained that to go bareheaded outdoors is actually one of the best ways to harden one's body. The habit was, therefore, quite reasonable and could be recommended to all. But the professor was clever enough to remind his readers that even in this issue one should exercise moderation and avoid going to extremes. In his medical expert's opinion, when the temperature was below zero to five degrees Celsius it was definitely not to be recommended anymore.

The Soviet Ideology of Fashion

N. Versakov, a technologist from Zlatoust in the Urals, explicitly posed the question in the newspaper *Zlatoustovskii rabochii* in 1962 of what fashion is, after all, really about. Could one speak of the progress of fashion in the same way as in science and technology?

Some comrades connect fashion with the progress of science and technology ... But why would just something like narrow trousers and one button on the jacket more than anything else, in their opinion, correspond to scientific and technological progress? In my mind this is absurd. Fashion must be rational, corresponding to our culture and ethics.⁶⁰⁰

In Versakov's opinion it was natural that every man and woman wanted to dress beautifully. This was typical of all normal people. But it was bad if this turned into an effort to dress fashionably at any cost and became the main purpose of the life of a young man or woman. Then he or she would turn into a slave of his or her own entertainment because everything else would become subordinate to the wish not to lag behind in fashion. Fortunately such people were not numerous. As Versakov concluded, "after all, even they will have to enter with us into Communism!"⁶⁰¹

If anything, the Soviet ideologists and theorists of fashion were unified in their conception that neither the Soviet fashion designers nor ordinary consumers should blindly follow just any fashion, but rather should show moderation in their relation to fashion and, above all, avoid all kinds of extravagance and caprice in their dress. In the Soviet Union as well as in socialism in general fashion changes should be gradual rather than sudden. This stance was repeated again and again, in slightly different formulations and with slightly different emphasis, in almost all the popular writings and lectures on fashion. It was presented as the practical rule guiding universal good taste, for instance, when discussing how to relate to the *stiliagi*. As we have seen, the mistake of the *stiliagi* was not in trying to be fashionable as such but their preferences for extravagance and unnecessary "showing off"

in an attempt to get the attention of others. This also meant that the fashion designers should avoid all extravagance and useless details which did not serve any practical purpose but only served as eye catchers. Even more importantly, Soviet fashion developed and changed slowly.

N. Zheleznova, a fashion specialist from Moscow, argued in 1963 in her article "When everyone is young"⁶⁰² that one should not expect any sudden disruptions in the future Soviet fashion. Its development was balanced and consequential. The journal *Krest'yanka* claimed quite categorically a couple of years earlier that "in our country, fashion changes without any disruptions."⁶⁰³ According to T. Larina's practical instructions in the evening newspaper in the city of Perm,⁶⁰⁴ an abundance of clothing as well as overwhelmingly abundant decorations were a sign of bad taste and not of very high cultural standards as sometimes believed. Her advice on how to relate to fashion was classical, following the best traditions of European humanistic culture or *Bildung*: one should not try to achieve what is in fashion at all costs but rather try to have a style of one's own, at the same time as not deviating from the general trends. If you choose your style taking into account your profession and your figure then you would, in Larina's opinion, always be regarded as a fashionable woman. E. Rozenfel'd argued in 1959 in the *Altaiskaya Pravda* that some people still thought that the beauty of a costume could be measured by its price, that everything that was expensive and luxurious was also beautiful. This was, in his opinion, deeply wrong.⁶⁰⁵ K. Smolentseva, the chief engineer of the local sewing factory in Yalta, argued, following the general line, in the *Kurortnaya Gazeta* that it was not the unnecessary luxury and excessive decorations of a garment that made it beautiful but, on the contrary, its modesty, functionality and the rational following of fashion.⁶⁰⁶

It would, of course, be tempting to interpret these and hundreds of similar statements expressed in the Soviet press emphasizing the modesty and functionality of dress as opposed to extravagance and luxury as simply legitimating the shortcomings of the Soviet garment industry and its chronic incapacity to produce more varied and fashionable clothes for the great majority of its population. On the other hand, similar and often quite categorical statements about the standards of good taste could equally well be read in the Western European books of etiquette of proper, cultured behavior, which always recommended to their readers to above all not become slaves to fashion, its frivolousness and fancy, but, instead, to preserve their own style and thus make rational use of each fashionable style to their own personal purposes. This was the classical stance of a civilized European person, the cultural heroes of whom were Goethe, Kant or Schiller – or in Russia Pushkin – and who was educated in the spirit of the classical humanist tradition.

Whereas all the previous instructions referred to universal standards of good taste, some Soviet experts on fashion pointed, in their similarly oriented recommendations about the simplicity and functionality of dress, more directly to the demands that modern times posed to the modern person. They claimed or demanded that the principles of Soviet fashion should follow from the particular demands of modern times. Soviet fashion

should distinguish itself by its functionality and simplicity, since this was the adequate expression of such a phenomenon of modernity. The modesty – or simplicity, if you like – of Soviet fashion thus became not a drawback but, on the contrary, its greatest asset.⁶⁰⁷ Similarly, in the opinion of many Soviet fashion experts it was reasonable to demand that Soviet fashion should follow the example of international or Western designers, but this was advisable only insofar as their patterns corresponded with Soviet views of dressing and with the demands of their “industrious way of life.”⁶⁰⁸

In the same spirit, the Soviet Karelian youth newspaper *Komsomolets* from Petrozavodsk defended changes of fashion by arguing that the Soviet designers were deeply convinced that one could not dress beautifully without being fashionable since each time has its own demands and conceptions of beauty. Somewhat surprisingly, these same suggestions of adapting fashion to the spirit of modernity could end up recommending the classical style or the “English style” which the Soviet experts on fashion thought to be elegant and eternally beautiful while best corresponding to their ideals of modesty, simplicity and harmony.⁶⁰⁹

The more theoretical articles published regularly, for instance in the *Zhurnal Mod*, often argued even more convincingly and categorically for the principal modernity of Soviet fashion. The editorial of the *Zhurnal Mod* referred to earlier⁶¹⁰ propagated, for instance, the fashion of the year 1966–1967 by claiming that the modern tempo of the present life made dress more businesslike, smaller and lighter in its silhouette. The editorial of the previous issue of the same journal stated that one could hear the voice of the times passing, the past and future, in every costume.⁶¹¹ The new demands of life presumed changing fashion and turned down all outdated forms, old-fashioned views, and yesterday's demands. What this voice of the present in fact dictated to the fashion designers became somewhat clearer in an editorial published a few years later:

Such a [modern-the authors] person is very busy and has little time. He is seldom alone. He prefers freedom of movement and needs attire that is both light and dynamic, expressing the characteristics of the twentieth century, expressing the unexpected discoveries of the artistic search and the simplicity of its realization.⁶¹²

A recurring theme in the writings about fashion was the individuality of dress and fashion, or rather the question of what the Soviet fashion designers and her customers should think about the question of individuality. There was no doubt among the Soviet theoreticians of fashion that even under socialism fashion was somehow important for the expressions and development of the individuality of the person. In 1969 A. Kamenskiy argued in *Zhurnal mod* that in looking for the social meaning of fashion we should, above all, pay attention to two factors: first, to its aspiration to naturalness and artfulness, and second, to the freedom to express one's own individuality of taste. Individuality of taste was also understood to be an essential part of modern society. On the other hand, as we have also seen, too daring expressions of individuality, deviating from the social mean or the normal, were usually regarded with suspicion.⁶¹³

What this really meant and what the role of the need or demand for individuality meant in the Soviet world of fashion more concretely was a question to which no simple or self-evident answers were to be found. It is interesting that, at the time, the new and fashionable science of sociology offered its advice to the Soviet fashion designers too. Y. Davydov (1939–2007), one of the leading Soviet sociologists and an expert on social theory, presented some general ideas of the sociology of aesthetics and art in the journal.⁶¹⁴ The article was quite abstract and it is not easy to see what it contributed to the understanding of fashion. According to another theorist, the philosopher and author A. Zinoviev, a theory of fashion was definitely needed but he did not have any concrete suggestions for what such a theory would look like.⁶¹⁵ One of the most interesting contributions published in the *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* in those times was V. Terin's "Fashion and Sociology"⁶¹⁶ which presented to the Soviet readers in a very learned manner two basic sociological texts on fashion, Georg Simmel's and Herbert Blumer's articles. Simmel is one of the few recognized classics of sociology who wrote about fashion at the turn of the 20th century. The article by Herbert Blumer, one of the founding fathers of symbolic interactionism, has become a standard reference in any sociological study of fashion since its publication. In 1970 it had just come out in the *Sociological Quarterly* in the USA (1969). The question of the relation between the collective and individual taste, between social imitation and cultural distinctions were the basic questions of interest to both Simmel and Blumer. To both of them fashion is an extremely interesting and important social phenomenon which helps to bridge the gap between the individual and the social, or between the individual taste and the collective taste. Terin presented only the basic ideas of these two fashion theorists and does not in his article draw any explicit conclusions about the role of fashion or about the more general questions regarding the relations between the individual and collective in the socialist society. He leaves it totally up to his readers to do so.

There are two more articles that deserve special attention because of their theoretical originality and the seriousness of their effort in openly posing and trying to solve the problem of the role of fashion and the individuality of taste in society at large and in socialist society in particular. The first one, written by the philosopher V. Tolstykh, was published in *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* in 1970.⁶¹⁷ The second article was published in the same year in the special "theoretical" supplement that was regularly attached to *Zhurnal mod.* The author of this article, published in the same year, was the art historian V. Kriuchkova. It was called "Fashion as a Form of Consumption."⁶¹⁸ Even though the general solutions offered by these two authors did not differ that much from each other they did, however, differ to an important extent in their evaluations of the social role and cultural meaning of fashion under socialism. The particular need to analyze the nature of fashion under socialism and the coming Communism was presumably a late reflection of the general public discussion which the adoption of the Third Program of the Communist Party of the USSR inspired. This program promised in 1961 that the Soviet Union would enter the last and highest stage of social development, Communism, no later than 1980. The public

discussion of what Communism was really like and what it demanded from the development of the Soviet society and Soviet people continued all through the 1960s. Tolstykh understood fashion as not just an aesthetic phenomenon and therefore it is of great importance to discuss and analyze the scientific grounds on which the Soviet politics of fashion was in fact based.⁶¹⁹ Tolstykh does not expect fashion to carry any extraordinary social ballast with it. What was needed was therefore to openly pose the question of whether fashion is, in fact, able to satisfy the “simple demands” of an individual in harmony with the higher human needs of life. This should be the crucial question both to those who make fashion as well as to those who consume it. In this way, the question of fashion should be answered from the point of view of the nature of the future Communist society. As Tolstykh argued, in the Communist society the individual human person is at the same time at one with his own human nature which can thus “fill” his particular individuality with real human contents.⁶²⁰

Tolstykh's main point is that in contrast to the artificial nature of individuality in a bourgeois society which bourgeois fashion supports – fashion is after all shallow and does not really touch the inner self of the person – in socialism the relation of one's individuality to clothing is more profound. Tolstykh basically argued for the estranged nature of human beings under capitalism. In fact, his whole critical analysis of fashion rests on this claim. In his opinion, bourgeois fashion is created for the purpose of keeping up the sense of one's social uniqueness with the help of the rapid changes of as such rather unimportant external matters of appearance, like dress, etc. This politics of capitalist fashion is indeed effective in its own right. It works very effectively with people who have a born tendency to fall under the spell of the illusory hope that by changing the label of their dress they can change themselves too.⁶²¹ In the socialist society, fashion has a totally different function because, in Tolstykh's opinion, under socialism the interests of the society and those of the individual are the same and the individuality of the person is formed on the basis of the real human culture, the appropriation of which creates a genuine rather than an ugly and artificial individuality like under capitalism. Tolstykh refers to the authority of Immanuel Kant, according to whom the very sociality of men has the “effect of respect” as its goal. Obviously, Tolstykh argued, this kind of Kantian mutual respect for the unique personality of each man can only be reached under socialism. Fashion can only give the false promise of such mutual recognition.

The criteria which Tolstykh referred to in distinguishing the good-socialist-fashion from the bad-bourgeois-fashion, or a proper relation to fashion from a bad relation to fashion, in fact had to do with the preservation and strengthening of individual freedom in the face of the natural force of fashion which threatened to subvert genuine individual freedom and substitute a kind of a pseudo-freedom of choice for it. As Tolstykh admits, fashion always, even under socialism, has an element of outer constraint, but it can preserve its “humanity” if it fulfils some conditions such as not to “speculate” on or manipulate the natural, lower animal instincts and traits of man. Most importantly, fashion should not turn the various kinds of

external, social conditions under which we live into the criteria of the real worth of a person's personality and individuality. Fashion will be successful in the aesthetic sense too only if it does not give any false promises of being the "most beautiful" but rather guarantees everyone their "uniqueness among their equals."

Read closely, Tolstykh did not have all that much to say about socialist fashion as such. His critical analysis of the estranged nature of fashion under capitalism does not give any specific means in analyzing the social role of fashion under socialism, that is, in addition to being a remnant of the bourgeois society. As was common in everyday parlance, Tolstykh does not explicitly distinguish between the meaning of fashion as the way people dress themselves at any one point in time and the social mechanism of the eternally changing fashion. It seems that to him fashion in the second meaning was not an essential part of socialism but rather something external to it. For some reason, socialism simply had to take into account and try to cope with the phenomenon of fashion. As far as the first meaning of fashion is concerned, it is obvious that just as in any social formation even in socialism people have some relation to their outer appearance and have to be clothed. Once again the propagation and education of fashion is offered as the practical solution to the questions of good taste and fashion. Socialist fashion should educate men in the right relation to their outer appearance and their dress. By cultivating one's taste, fashion could be made to serve the development of human spiritual growth. In Tolstykh's optimistic words, a time will come when dress will lose all the connotations of social prestige and all its other symbolic functions. Then, he claimed, artists will realize that it is much more difficult to dress the man than to decorate him, which they did under capitalism.⁶²²

V. Kriuchkova took up the same basic questions in her thorough article in *Zhurnal mod.*⁶²³ Not surprisingly, she shared with Tolstykh the idea of the nature of a genuine socialist individuality, as opposed to an artificial individuality in capitalism. Her general conclusions and recommendations hardly differed from those of Tolstykh. According to Kriuchkova, the main difference between the new socialist and the old capitalist societies is that in the new society the value of each human being is not determined by his or her personal utility but the value becomes rather his or her social attribute. Under socialism, the human being is not the "owner" of the features that are typical of him but only their "carrier." Therefore, other people can and are obliged to turn them into their own personal properties too. This idea, which is not easy to understand, somehow explains to Kriuchkova why the social mechanism of fashion would more or less disappear in the future in socialism. The relative weakness of fashion in the present socialist society was therefore a sign of its progressive development even if it did not yet quite conclusively prove that the world view typical of bourgeois fashion was dying out with the increasing dominance of the socialist social relations. What is more important from the practical point of view, Kriuchkova admitted that in the foreseeable future fashion would continue to operate in the Soviet Union and had to be taken fully into account by aesthetic educators and economic planners alike.⁶²⁴

Despite her postulation about the different nature of human individuality in capitalism and socialism respectively and despite her rather predictable and among the Soviet experts rather standard conclusions about the future of fashion under Communism, Kriuchkova's more concrete analysis and discussion about the social character of fashion are quite interesting and multifaceted. She understood fashion to be a really central social phenomenon.

Kriuchkova namely goes through a long list of the possible interpretations of the social phenomenon of fashion familiar from classical sociology and the philosophical literature on fashion.⁶²⁵ She presents them without, unfortunately, explicitly drawing any conclusions about them in order to answer the question of the role of fashion under socialism. The first interpretation takes fashion to be basically a phenomenon of modernity. As such it is a kind of last resort or some kind of weak common social standard of taste in the lack of any stronger, traditional moral or social rules in a world characterized by a great degree of individual freedom in morals, the state and the society. In this sense the community of fashion becomes a kind of a substitute for the community based on strong social norms or the last symbol of social cohesion, even if only a weak form of cohesion.⁶²⁶

Kriuchkova's first interpretation was strongly reminiscent of Georg Simmel's classical position.⁶²⁷ She argued that it looks as if human beings are not quite ready to take full responsibility for their freedom. They try to find at least some support for their choices in the social world surrounding them. This is, according to her, understandable because just during the lifetime of a single generation a society changes so much, its culture, the amount and the quality of scientific knowledge, as well as the material world have all changed drastically. It is understandable that under such circumstances a man or a woman cannot find any support in old social traditions. All stable tastes and habits become obsolete. Only the rapidly changing and highly contingent standard of fashion remains to guide him or her in choices of style.

According to the second interpretation which Kriuchkova took up, this can also be seen as a sign of a weak development of individuality, or, as a matter of fact, a total lack of individuality. One could also interpret it as a sign of mass society where all the individuals do is look for guidance in each other by simply passively imitating each other's external behavior.⁶²⁸ But it is also possible to think along the lines of the third interpretation discussed by Kriuchkova, according to which the modern man needs fashion mainly in order to combat the monotony of his daily life.

Unfortunately, Kriuchkova does not draw any conclusions about socialist fashion from these three interesting, possible theoretical interpretations of the social function of fashion under modernity. Interestingly Kriuchkova understood that fashion has penetrated our society in a much broader sense than is usually thought of. As she argued we can identify fashions – obviously in the Soviet Union too –

in the antiques, in the art market, in tourism towards the Northern provinces, in the reading of philosophical or science fiction literature, in the popular expressions like 'the flow of information,' in table manners, etc. To wear a beard,

to attend a church service, to cook exotic food, to sing to the accompaniment of a guitar, to dance a certain way, to visit or not to visit a café, to drink or not to drink vodka, to be interested in Antonioni or in ice hockey, etc., are all equally questions of fashion.⁶²⁹

In the end, even to Kriuchkova, fashion seemed to be only a substitute for the real freedom that was essentially missing in bourgeois society. According to her, fashion becomes accentuated in bourgeois society because it offers a strong impetus to reach the same kind of independence as the realization of oneself in any socially useful activity, an alternative which is usually not open to an ordinary man under capitalism. Therefore he tries to realize his own individuality in the only and narrow sphere that is under his own control: in his private life, in his dress, manners, entertainment, or dance. Under these conditions fashion can also at times become a form of social protest.⁶³⁰

Kriuchkova argued along the same lines as Tolstykh in claiming that the effects of fashion are restricted to man's outer appearance and behavior. Fashion touches only the very surface of man and, unlike true spiritual culture, leaves the "real" human being unchanged. One changes one's fashion just as one throws away an old coat and starts to wear a new one. According to this view, the appropriation of a deeper, spiritual culture necessarily leads to the transformation of one's personality. Since fashion is appropriated only imitatively it does not have strong impact on the human inner life.⁶³¹ Kriuchkova, in all essentials, thus made a dual claim about fashion: it is only a trivial and shallow social and cultural phenomenon but at the same time obviously typical of and even inevitable to the modern world, stretching its effects over almost all spheres of culture.

If fashion is a phenomenon of modernity, appearing in times of rapid change and in the absence of solid norms and standards of behavior, what happens to it in socialist society? Kriuchkova's answer is already familiar to us: in her opinion, fashion is not such a big problem. Since the man can better express his own individuality in other, more serious fields of social life, he is not faced with the necessity to compete for external symbols of distinction in order to prove his right to his autonomy. This was according to Kriuchkova the real explanation why fashion was less extravagant and exaggerated under socialism than under capitalism. It did not appeal to extravagant tastes as was typical of bourgeois fashion. Neither was there any need for the abrupt and rapid changes of fashion in socialism.⁶³² Somewhat surprisingly, neither Tolstykh nor Kriuchkova referred to the presumably greater degree of equality under socialism which could, in Simmel's reasoning, restrict the need to distinguish oneself through fashion from others. For Simmel, women are more attracted to and dependent on fashion than men because they have fewer possibilities open to them to distinguish themselves by other means in other more serious fields of life. Therefore they tend to express their individuality in fashion instead.⁶³³

In the end, both Kriuchkova and Tolstykh are more loyal to the classical European tradition of *Bildung* than Simmel in their critique of the spiritual shallowness of fashion. Simmel did welcome fashion as the necessary

condition and companion of modernity with its lighter and rapidly changing forms of “sociation” – or “solidarity” – which helped to create social order and cohesion and from which there was no return to the strong and stable social ties of the more traditional society. Neither Tolstykh nor Kriuchkova give any serious social function to fashion because they believed that in the genuine socialist or Communist society the relation between the individual and his or her social whole would somehow be solved once and for all, thus abolishing all the tensions between the individual and society. In Simmel’s opinion the tensions could, however, only ever be solved provisionally in modern society, with the help of the social mechanism of fashion among others. There was no permanent solution in sight and therefore the modern individual had to learn to live with the ambivalence of modernity. The Soviet fashion theorists’ claim about the future society, which could be seen in its infancy in the socialism of their times, presumed that each and every individual both represents an equal share of the collective culture of mankind and can at the same time freely make use of any of its parts which he or she has already made his or her own. This does not take place at the cost of others but recognizing the equal social worth and right of everyone to do the same. As the Soviet fashion theoreticians thought, this final consolidation would be possible under Communism when each individual finally lived in harmony with both his and her social surroundings and human nature.

Kriuchkova’s and Tolstykh’s theoretical reflections on fashion and taste are probably the most developed to be found in the professional press in the USSR. On the other hand, as we have seen, the practical advice which they gave concerning fashion in socialism was repeated in numerous instructions published in the Soviet press in these times: one should not follow all the whims of fashion but turn fashion into one’s own personal style by selectively adopting it according to one’s own individual taste. To make this possible, fashion should not change too often or too drastically.

Street Fashion and Youth Fashion

In the beginning of the 1970s, the *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* published two extensive treatises on fashion which both in their own way proved that the Soviet fashion theorists were well informed of the developments and discussions in the West, where the youth revolution of the 1960s had revolutionized the fashion system by elevating spontaneous street fashion and its various unique styles to the status of fashion leaders, thus seriously undermining the authority of the big European fashion houses.⁶³⁴

In 1971, Alla Levashova, the influential head of the Special Designing Bureau under the Russian Ministry of Light Industry published an interesting article on the dressing style of the ordinary Moscovites walking the streets of the Soviet capital.⁶³⁵ Unlike the many typical fashion pictures taken in the studios or in the fashion exhibitions idealizing their objects, the photos published in this article were the closest one came in the Soviet press to concrete and realistic reporting on how ordinary people dressed themselves in public. To our knowledge this is the only article of its kind

which systematically tried to analyze and describe the style of everyday clothes, or street fashion, in Moscow or, for that matter, in the USSR.

As a result of her keen observations, Levashova could report that younger Muscovites were generally much better dressed than older ones. The generation who spent their youth in the war or grew up in the immediate post-war years under the conditions of the heavy shortages of almost all kinds of clothing had simply not had enough concrete possibilities to develop their own style of dressing and therefore they related to fashion with great pleasure but without being able to make any proper distinctions. The more general problem was, however, that the Soviet garment industry and trade had not really learned how to cope with the complex emotional disposition of the human being. Therefore, they produced mainly fashion of mediocre quality which could not seriously compete with the spontaneous creativity of the youth, who preferred to design their own self-made clothes.⁶³⁶ According to the author's observations, Soviet street fashion had one particular feature without correspondence abroad: the real specialty of Soviet street fashion in 1971 was the popularity of knitwear of all kinds. Levashova interpreted this as an expression of genuinely Russian taste which did not have a direct counterpart in Western fashion. As a matter of fact, this was not really true, since knitwear enjoyed popularity among Western women as well. In addition, the author did not explicitly refer to another possible reason for the popularity of knitwear among Soviet women: any woman could easily knit her own jumpers, scarves or hats. When the fashion changed, the yarn from the knit garment could be used anew to knit another more fashionable piece of clothing according to the patterns published, for instance, in the latest issue of *Zhurnal mod*.

Another interesting article about the more spontaneous developments of fashion also came out in *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* at about the same time in 1969. M. Kalling from Tallinn, Estonia wrote a very informative report about the latest tendencies in the youth and street fashion of the West.⁶³⁷ The report is totally free of ideological or moralizing overtones and it paints a very interesting and well-informed picture of the newest tendencies and trends of youth fashion. The new youthful fashion, which had come into being in the 1960s in the West, was, according to the author, a totally new kind of phenomenon. Kalling gives a very enthusiastic picture of the new developments. What was new was particularly the fact that clothing did not express one's social status anymore. Now in the 1960s, for instance, a student was often dressed in exactly the same way as any unskilled worker. One's dress became all the more an object of creativity and a confirmation of one's individuality.⁶³⁸

Further, the new relationship that the youth had to fashion was a strong weapon against old-fashioned traditions. It was democratic by its nature and had a tendency to gradually overcome all age barriers. Older women were ready to follow the example of the young girls but men had not yet quite decided how to relate to these new phenomena of fashion and were thus lagging behind. In Kalling's opinion, fashion had long ago stopped being an object of hypocrisy and ambition, of discipline and punishment. Now we were just waiting for the art of dress to finally become the object of the

genuine creativity of the masses. According to the author, “we” were now firmly on our way in that new direction.⁶³⁹

Interestingly, although the article mainly dealt with developments in the West, the author’s optimistic predictions about the future of the more democratic and spontaneous fashion are quite universal, not making any distinctions between the bourgeois and socialist countries and fashion in this respect. On the contrary, the new developments of the youth fashion of the West were presented with hardly any critical comments or doubts as “our” own too. In other words, at least implicitly supported by the conclusions presented in Levashova’s contribution on street fashion in Moscow, Kalling welcomed the new democratic, unpretentious and spontaneous fashion of the Western youth as the bright future of fashion in general and Soviet fashion in particular.

Fashion: For or Against

From the 1960s onwards, one could summarize the main maxim of the Soviet ideology and politics of fashion with the slogan “to dress, beautifully, fashionably and with modesty.” Despite the fact that the Soviet ideologists and propagators of fashion had, by the 1970s at the latest, developed and adopted a more or less unified aesthetic stance towards fashion and the external decoration of man, in practice acknowledging fashion, it theoretically remained an anomaly in the socialist, planned economy. While practicing fashion designers and the artistic consultants employed in the fashion houses and other institutes were understandably in general positively inclined to the phenomenon of fashion, its novelties and its change, even they often felt uncertain about the future destiny of fashion in a highly developed socialist society, not to speak of Communism: was it needed after all in fully-fledged socialism? The more theoretically oriented commentators were obviously even more at a loss in judging the role of fashion in the construction of socialism.

As we have seen, in the late 1960s and in the beginning of the 1970s the main women’s journals as well as journals of applied art and fashion gave a lot of space to serious theoretical considerations about the nature of fashion. A remarkable achievement in this respect was the publication of a collection of controversial essays on fashion in 1973: *Fashion: For or Against*.⁶⁴⁰ Its editor was Valentin Tolstykh, one of the Soviet theoreticians on fashion to whom we have referred earlier. As Tolstykh argued in his introduction it was important to take a stance on the basic principles of socialist fashion: should it clothe the man or make him attractive, make him beautiful or help him to stand out among his “likes?”⁶⁴¹ It is possible that this compilation of essays on fashion, written by a great number of specialists representing different fields of science, was meant to be a kind of theoretical groundwork towards the development of an official political program or statement on fashion which, however, never came into being. If anything, this work proved that no unified position reigned among the scientific experts and, most likely, this was true of the leading ideologists of the Communist Party too. Instead of

strictly regulating this undoubtedly important ideological issue with official Party declarations or statements, a relatively loose consensus or compromise reigned among the experts in the field. It left, however, a lot of room for different individual interpretations and changes of emphasis.

The different positions of the essays published in *Fashion: For and Against* were typical in the plurality of their standpoints. The arguments “for” fashion were, however, clearly in the majority. Whereas the majority took fashion seriously and acknowledged the need to develop an adequate understanding of its role both in general and in the socialist society in particular, one can also find reminders of an ideological position that was more common in the early Stalin era. For instance, the distinguished philosopher and art historian K. M. Kantor wondered whether anyone had any time to deal with fashion and take it seriously in general. As he added, “we have enough important work and worries even without it.”⁶⁴² The editor Tolstykh wrote in his own introduction that fashion is on the contrary a very simple phenomenon, though it does not come into being because of any simple causes. It rests on sociological and socio-psychological principles which are worth serious scientific analysis.⁶⁴³ He even put great hopes in the new, fashionable science, systems theory or cybernetics, as the adequate solution to a really comprehensive analysis of fashion.

As was often the case, the authors of the essays more easily agreed on what the “real” Soviet fashion was not or what it should not be than on their understanding of its actual nature. As usual they demarcated it from its bourgeois counterpart – or at least contrasted it to the idea of bourgeois fashion which they had in mind. Their conceptions about the nature of bourgeois fashion did not necessarily coincide either. For instance, while it was common to blame bourgeois fashion for its extravagance and elitism – it served only the ruling classes – Raisa V. Zakharzhevskaya, a well-known art historian, saw its problem mainly in its mass character.⁶⁴⁴ Since it was in her opinion mainly oriented towards the “middle” and only satisfied the standard medium taste, Western fashion could never reach the spiritual peaks of mankind’s aesthetic achievements. With all the means of advertising and marketing at its disposal Western fashion aimed at establishing these mediocre aesthetic values of the masses as the general social standards. Zakharzhevskaya accused bourgeois fashion of being anti-human: “The fashion industry, with the help of the latest methods of advertising and propaganda, inspired by competition and the laws of profits, drains them of their human nature every year, every month, every hour, and every minute.”⁶⁴⁵ It would be much better to use these extra resources spent on fashion for the real benefit of the society and its members. The socialist fashion was to be, contrastingly, deeply humanistic. It was directed by the state and its cultural institutes; it oriented itself according to the higher ideals of beauty and taste. The state should take care of fashion in order to elevate the citizens to the higher achievements of human cultural progress. Therefore, the task that remained for the socialist state to take care of was how to better regulate fashion and its changes. In the same spirit, E. Y. Basin, professor of philosophy, and a psychologist, V. M. Krasin, emphasized in their own contribution that “the decisive thing is to make use of the symbolic means of the genuine cultural values.”⁶⁴⁶

What the Soviet ideologists of fashion basically seemed to agree upon among themselves, despite the differences in their evaluations of the social and cultural role of fashion, was that whereas bourgeois fashion served the principle of profit and was characterized by its extravagance and elitism – or alternatively by its mediocrity – Soviet fashion was democratic and served the genuine principles of beauty. The art of clothing design, just like any form of art, was in the Soviet Union regarded as contributing to the general cultural growth and progress of mankind, and as such it was an important aspect of the art of governing and planning social development. The idea of progress was thus transformed from basically technical and economic progress to the field of aesthetic achievements. In consequence, fashion was considered totally legitimate if it contributed to the general beautification of society and promoted its gradual approach to the ideal of beauty. What this meant more concretely was naturally far from clear. Understandably, it was much easier to understand what technical progress meant than what was real progress in beauty.

The Unanimity and the Diversity of the Public Discussion on Soviet Fashion

The close reading and analysis of the public writings about fashion in the Soviet Union in the decades after Stalin's death proves that it was characterized by many viewpoints and even disagreements and, at the same time, it took place in a certain general, broader framework which was more or less taken for granted and not questioned openly. An interesting question remains of to what extent this discussion and the resulting Soviet discourse on fashion was in fact centrally regulated and the main positions effectively imposed on the authors by the ideological authorities, and to what extent the viewpoints genuinely expressed the private opinions of their authors and the eventual consensus resulting from the public dialogue. Without claiming to be able to give a final answer to this question we would venture to claim that the right answer is to be found somewhere in the middle of these two extremes. On the one hand, there were obvious limits to the freedom of opinion even in the questions of fashion. For instance, no one ever suggested publicly that the centrally planned economy should be abolished, the Soviet fashion institutes privatized and fashion left to the care of the private market. This would have been totally out of the question in the Soviet Union. Neither did almost anyone, from the late 1950s onward, maintain that there was absolutely no place for fashion and the fashion institutes in the USSR even though many still regarded fashion as a rather trivial or even harmful social phenomenon with very limited importance. Official censorship existed in the Soviet Union too but it mostly regulated the public expression of politically more sensitive issues. As far as fashion was concerned, the censors mostly tried to identify and control the use of politically sensitive nationalistic or religious symbols and understandably had little to say about aesthetic issues as such. They also made sure that the norms of sexual decency were not exceeded. On the other hand, such general restrictions undoubtedly left a lot of room

for various interpretations and alternative standpoints, and the more so the closer to the concrete aesthetic and economic problems of fashion design one came. More than any official ideological principles of Communism expressed in the Party Programs, the principles and standards that were supposed to guide both the Soviet fashion designers and their customers followed from the general and mostly informal and rather traditional ethical and aesthetic ideas that were common in Soviet society – particularly among its better educated members – and regulated the proper behavior and decency of the outer appearance of its members. It was no wonder that these rules and standards were problematized and did not stay the same in a society like the Soviet Union, which was undergoing exceptionally rapid social, economic and cultural change, and which transformed from a society of peasants into a modern urban and industrial society within one generation. This transformation and its consequences were by all means felt with different force and timing in the different geographical regions and areas of the big country as well as in the different social groups of society.

Another natural question is whether we could in our press data identify any systematic differences in the arguments and standpoints published in the local and regional press compared to the central press. Did the provinces, for instance, “lag behind” in the changing aesthetic and ethical rules of beauty and decency? Using the data at our disposal, the answer is negative. As we know, at least officially and in principle the propaganda of fashion was led from the central Moscow institutes of fashion – ODMO and VIALegprom – which regularly sent their instructions and trend prognoses to the regional and local fashion houses. On the other hand, we also know that these only had the character of recommendations. The local fashion designers and propagandists did not have strict obligation to follow them. Similarly, many fashion reports and news stories originally written and published in the central press circulated and were published anew in the local press. But the articles published in the local press could equally well, and more often, originate from the pen of or from interviews with the artistic leaders and designers of the local fashion houses and garment factories. A bigger and clearer difference than between the local and the central press existed between the professional journals – or Soviet “trade press” – and the popular press, for instance, to take two extremes, between local evening papers like *Vecherniaya Perm'* or the Lithuanian *Vechernie novosti*, on the one side, and *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* or *Sovetskaya torgovlia* on the other. In addition to being more compressed and “light” the reports published in the local, popular press were rather standardized or almost stereotypical in their formulations, their titles included, whereas the professional press followed mainly by the experts was much more critical and open to discussion and the expression of various conflicting views. The articles published in the bigger central (All-Union) popular journals, like *Ogoniok* and *Smena*, as well as such newspapers as *Izvestiya* and *Komsomol'skaya Pravda* were mostly in between these two extremes.

9. Conclusion

The Soviet system of administration had an innate tendency towards establishing increasingly differentiated but parallel organizations. The case of Soviet fashion is a good example of this development. By the end of the 1960s, there were four, largely overlapping organizations of fashion design in the Soviet Union, each under a different ministry. The first and most extensive system of the houses of fashion design worked under the Ministry of Light Industry. The Ministry of Trade supervised the numerous institutes of fashion design at the Soviet department stores. The real Soviet specialty, with no equivalent in Western countries, was the Ministry of Everyday Services which had its own, extensive network of fashion ateliers, often placed in the bigger service units in cities or rural centers, which had their own institutes of fashion design which designed clothes for them. Finally, the Ministry of Local Industry was responsible for fashion design in the numerous and mostly smaller economic enterprises at the local level. All these parallel structures had the hierarchical organization typical of all respective administrative units on the All-Union, republican and local, regional level.

In principle, the four organizations should have dedicated themselves to different functions, in accordance with their specialty. The main purpose of the institutes of fashion design at the Ministry of Light Industry was to service the big garment manufacturers with new designs for industrial mass production. The fashion institutes attached to the system of the department stores were meant to service their own fashion ateliers and smaller production units with new designs. Similarly, the system at the Ministry of Everyday Services had its specific goal of designing clothes for their own fashion ateliers engaged in sewing custom made clothes following individual patterns or using a semi-fabricated product. Finally, the fashion institutes under the Ministry of Local Industry designed clothes for relatively small local enterprises. The same tendencies of centralization and further specialization made themselves felt in all these branches. Big was beautiful throughout the Soviet economy.

These organizations were created sequentially with the fashion houses of light industry appearing first. One cannot avoid the impression that by establishing a new system the authorities were trying to compensate for

the shortcomings of the previous systems – only to realize quickly that the same problems repeated themselves in the new organization. Their division of labor worked only partially however and soon became evident that these parallel organizations had great ambitions to design their own industrially manufactured clothes both in large, mass produced quantities and in smaller series to be sold in their own or local clothing shops. They all also sewed small quantities of clothing unofficially in their own ateliers for a set of privileged clients – select members of the political and cultural elite of the locality. These organizations all engaged actively in the propagation of fashion and the proper dress codes from the beginning by publishing their own fashion journals and catalogues, organizing their own fashion shows and exhibitions, presenting their own patterns and views on fashion in the All-Union and local press, on the radio and later, increasingly, on TV. Many Soviet fashion designers, models and fashion consultants thus became local and even national celebrities.

The importance of the existence of these parallel, and to some extent competing organizations was soon acknowledged officially: their best designs tended to be integrated into the seasonal collections which were meant to be the trendsetters of Soviet fashion, thus setting the new trends for the whole of the Soviet fashion industry. Their designs were also approved for the collections representing Soviet fashion abroad, both in the other socialist countries of Europe and in the capitalist West.

Despite their many parallel, overlapping functions and the increasing competition between them, both the All-Union House of Fashion Design and later the VIALegprom, both under the Ministry of the Light (or Consumer Goods) Industry, preserved their role as the leading Soviet institutes of fashion design over the years. Even though these organizations had no legitimate means of imposing their directives on any of the other institutes, they were supposed to set the general trends of Soviet fashion which both the local organizations and fashion houses in turn, under their own and the other administrative units, were expected to follow. This was accomplished by organizing meetings and seminars, by offering further training to the designers visiting from the other fashion organizations, and by spreading information about international and Soviet fashion trends. These central organizations had, at least in principle, a monopoly on information about the new international fashion trends, which they acquired by subscribing to fashion journals as well as by touring regularly to show their own collections at international exhibitions. They were then supposed to deliver this information selectively to the other, less central, less important organizations. More importantly, the representatives of these organizations had the right to act as final judges in selecting the designs approved for the annual and seasonal All-Union collections, thus rewarding the designers and organizations whose work they considered to be the best. As the example of the Tallinn House of Fashion Design shows, even relatively small regional houses could become recognized fashion leaders under particularly favorable and, in this case, rather exceptional conditions relating to their direct access to Western fashion and the publication of their own high quality journal.

The question of how Soviet, socialist fashion was distinct and particular as opposed to the examples of Western, capitalist fashion occupied the minds of Soviet fashion experts and specialists throughout the Soviet period. After the radical stance that did not recognize any place at all for fashion under socialism shifted in the 1930s the question became relevant but proved to be quite hard to answer in any systematic or convincing way. Despite the fact that some Soviet economists declared even as late as the 1970s that the fashion cycles were only disrupting economic planning and growth, other authorities and experts took them more or less for granted. The Soviet economic system simply had to learn to live with fashion and, within reasonable limits, to promote it. It is difficult to give any definite answer as to why fashion was taken for granted as far as the self-understanding of the Soviet authorities and ideologists was concerned. The explicit reasons given were not very enlightening and mostly almost tautological. Fashion was either claimed to be something without which Soviet people, and particularly women, simply could not live. Or it was “brought” from the, admittedly, more developed economy of the West as part of the modern culture of consumption which was seen as worth copying selectively, just as was the case with many other examples of technical progress that the Soviet Government imported from the USA and Western Europe. The increasing pressure to compete with the West caused by the gradual opening of the borders from the 1960s onwards was felt also in the field of popular culture and consumption. This could certainly escalate the process of imitation and have a quite decisive impact on the adoption of some concrete forms of fashion, like, for example, the decision to start mass producing Soviet jeans in the 1970s. But to a great extent, Soviet fashion, both in its official and even illegal versions, was copied from the West. The difference between official and unofficial fashion was related to who made the decisions and exercised their judgment about what was to be copied. Was it the fashion experts and designers or some spontaneous “fashion leaders” among the Soviet population – perhaps its youth, or a combination of both?

The Soviet designers relied on the same sources of inspiration in their search for new creative solutions as their Western counterparts: they followed and copied international trends and studied historical costumes as well as the folk dress preserved in ethnographic collections in museums representing the different nationalities of the Soviet Union. The adaptation of folk designs of various kinds, as well as the use of handmade details like embroideries, soon became an essential part of any Soviet collection of fashion. The latter fitted particularly well into the populist image that Soviet fashion wanted to deliver to its admirers. (Fig 9.1.)

In practice the advice given to the fashion designers and other creators of fashion as well as to ordinary consumers was the same: try to avoid extremes and abrupt changes. The highest principle which, in the minds of many experts and propagandists, should guide both Soviet fashion design and the consumer in selecting fitting attire was that of harmony. The post-war Soviet ideology of fashion was thus basically inspired by the European classic humanistic tradition of *Bildung*, personified by such European cultural heroes as Kant and Schiller. Reference could, however, be made to the

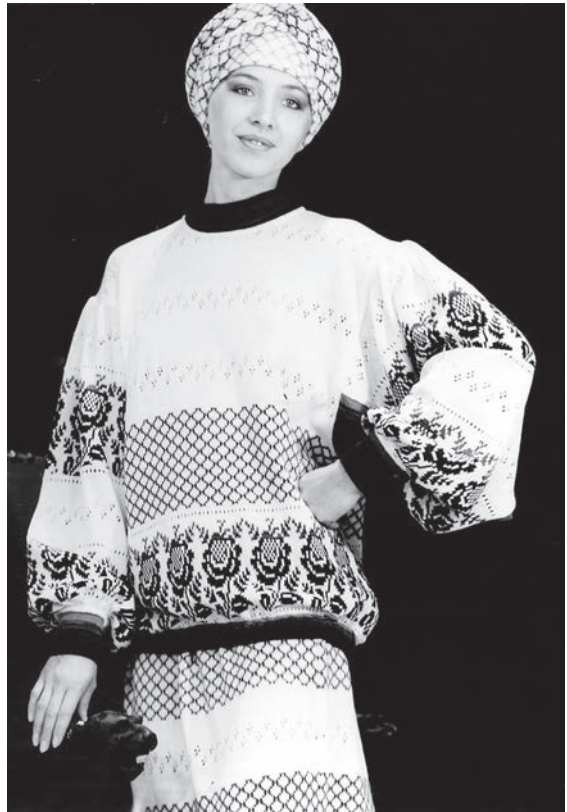


Fig. 9.1. A knitwear dress designed by the Moscow House of Design under the Ministry of Everyday Services.

Russian cultural tradition and its idols such as Pushkin or Chekhov. Had not Pushkin contrasted Jevgeniy Onegin's London dandyism with Tatiana's natural beauty and modesty? And had not Chekhov let one of his main characters, the doctor Astrov, formulate the maxim, which then became the leading principle of the Soviet cultural policy – fashion included? “In a human being everything should be beautiful: his face, and dress, and the spirit, and the thoughts.”

However, if one, had to name one classical source that acted more than any other as an ideal for Soviet aesthetics and the etiquette of fashion, it would without a doubt be Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who expressed, in the words of one of his characters in *La Nouvelle Heloise*, the basic contradiction, between fashion, extravagance and luxury, on the one hand, and good taste, simplicity and modesty, on the other hand. These words came to characterize the Soviet ideology of fashion:

As the laws of fashion are inconstant and destructive, hers (Julie's-authors) is economical and lasting. What true taste once approves must always be good, and though it is seldom in the mode, it is, on the other hand, never improper. Thus in her modest simplicity, she deduces, from the use and fitness of things, such sure and unalterable rules as will stand their ground when the vanity of fashion is no more.⁶⁴⁷

Soviet fashion was moderate and modest in another respect too: it was never sexually provocative, emphasizing the rules of common decency. Warnings against wearing low-necked dresses or daring, sleeveless summer *sarafans* in public were commonly heard both in the fashion columns of the popular Soviet press and in the more professional fashion journals. The wearing of trousers by women, widely experienced as threatening common decency by blurring the clear, traditional borders between male and female, was one of the big issues in the 1960s. In many ways, similar moral and aesthetic worries and questions were raised in the popular press and women's magazines in the West at the same time. The miniskirt of the 1960s, which entered the Soviet world of fashion with a couple of years delay, caused something of a moral panic in Western societies too. Alongside the slow pace of change in Soviet fashion, the biggest differences between these two worlds of fashion were first, that the relationship between sexuality and fashion was not openly discussed in the Soviet Union.⁶⁴⁸ Everyone seemed or pretended to know what was proper and what was not, what was presentable and what was not. Soviet models, for instance, learned never to strike sexually provocative poses in their photo sessions. Lingerie, underwear and the more-daring beach fashion, such as bikinis, were ordinarily not shown on the pages of journals or in fashion shows. Secondly, commercial advertisements and promotions on the pages of journals and magazines were relatively rare in the Soviet context. The socialist advertisements that existed were less persuasive and less aggressively competitive than Western, capitalist advertisements. Soviet fashion journals did, for instance, openly promote and propagate the designs of particular fashion houses and even particular fashion designers by presenting their clothes to readers as examples of good taste and thus worth wearing. Most of the designs presented on the pages of fashion journals and in fashion shows were however totally out of the reach of ordinary readers. They could only dream of sewing a simpler copy of the designs by following the published instructions as best they could with the resources they had at their disposal. There was, therefore, certainly some truth in the claims of the Soviet fashion theoreticians that Soviet fashion, in contrast to its Western counterpart, did not have to try to appeal to the "base and lower instincts of the man" with the sole purpose of seducing him or her to buy the garment advertised.

The Soviet fashion designers and their customers more often faced another kind of a dilemma: what was the purpose or use of designing and propagating new, beautiful and fashionable clothes if they were nowhere for sale? The other side of the coin was the question of what should be done with all the millions of those industrially mass produced clothes and dresses which were a far cry from the creations of fashion shown on the journals' pages and which people only bought if absolutely nothing else was available to them. As we have seen, this dilemma was discussed almost eternally and various solutions were offered for it in the Soviet press, without much result.

The great Parisian fashion houses, the House of Dior in particular, had been the main models inspiring many generations of Soviet fashion designers. Almost paradoxically, the big Soviet houses soon faced the same dilemma as their Parisian and other Western role models: they produced Soviet haute couture and thus, instead of effectively improving the designs

of mass produced clothes, they increasingly created individual examples of beautiful new designs that hardly anyone could buy or wear. Increasingly, they did so in order to compete with the West but they would never succeed in conquering the rival or even seriously challenging it. Whereas the Western fashion houses could realize these aesthetic achievements by selling their name as a brand for various mass produced items of luxury consumption like perfumes and other cosmetics, this option was not open to the Soviet houses. Their favorite solution was to demand the right to produce small series of clothes using their own designs, which would be sold in something roughly translated as Soviet clothing boutiques (*firmennye magaziny*). Even though many fashion institutes in the consumer goods industry, trade and everyday services experimented with such series, the central Soviet economic agencies and decision-makers at best only tolerated, and would never wholeheartedly support them. They remained to a great extent a part of the unofficial economy of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union had, by the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s, built up a huge organization of fashion design, which remained largely intact up to the fall of the Soviet Union, only to collapse totally with it. Soviet fashion designers, throughout this period, faced the almost impossible task of satisfying the increasingly multifaceted and individualized demand for new, attractive, and fashionable clothes. The complaints of the consumers did not by any means disappear with economic growth and the increasing material well-being of Soviet citizens but, on the contrary, tended to increase. The unsatisfied consumer was a legitimate figure in socialist politics whose complaints were regularly voiced in the Soviet public sphere. The authorities answered these complaints and the subsequent expressions of distrust with repeated efforts to strengthen the organizational basis of Soviet fashion design.

An important change or at least reorientation took place in Soviet discourse on fashion sometime during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Instead of moralizing about spontaneous fashion designs which supposedly corrupted Soviet youth in the shape of the *stiliagis* – by misleading them with Western ideals and idols – the Soviet gatekeepers of morality and common decency increasingly started to warn their readers against drawing hasty and simplistic conclusions about the moral character of a person based only on his or her dress or outer appearance. A young man looking like the notorious *stiliagis* in his individualistic and exaggerated style of dress could be found to be following the latest “official Soviet” fashion which he or she had simply copied from the pages of the *Zhurnal mod* or some other popular fashion journal. Despite the fact that he or she was dressed in a highly exaggerated manner, thus breaking the rules of good taste, this did not necessarily mean that he or she would be a total good-for-nothing or a lazy drunkard. Quite the contrary, he could just as well turn out to be an excellent workman and a completely honest and decent member of the *Communist Youth League*.

The warning examples of *stiliagis* heatedly and repeatedly discussed in the Soviet press had their female counterparts with the same purpose of acting as instructive cases in drawing the moral boundaries of common decency. In the case of women, these rules were more openly sexual, concerning issues

relating to revealing dresses or overstepping the traditional borders between male and female dress as in the wearing of trousers. In both respects, Soviet rules of decency and the proper dress code gradually became more liberal during the 1960s. The strict prohibitions, which had even been controlled with the help of voluntary citizen patrols, gave way to more flexible instructions both allowing and expecting more independent decision making from the individual with regard to what was appropriate under the circumstances and in the company in question.

The cultivation of more individual style of dress, together with higher cultural standards among the population, was considered to be an effective means of protecting Soviet consumers from the seductiveness of Western mass culture which, in the opinion of the Soviet ideologists, only captured the lower instincts of man. However, such individualization was a double edged-sword since it could threaten the spirit of collectivism and equality that was supposed to reign in the Soviet Union. One could, however, with some reservations, speak of processes of informalization and individualization even in the Soviet Union resembling the developments in the Western European and North American cultures where they were mostly associated with the youth and consumer revolutions of the 1960s.⁶⁴⁹ The Soviet process was less directly associated with the cultural differentiation of society in the form of the different sub (youth) cultures and remained more restricted and clandestine. The simplistic label of the *stiliagi* followed the members of youth cultures until the end of the Soviet Union. Thus, as with Soviet fashion overall, this process of informalization was in many ways comparable to the same process in the West but slower, somewhat moderated.

The Soviet ideologists of fashion continuously warned their audience of the danger of getting carried away by the caprices of fashion which would lead to unnecessary extravagance with the sole purpose of showing off, by distinguishing oneself from one's peers. To let oneself be seduced in this way by the commodities of material culture was, in the opinion of these experts, a typical sign and harmful remnant of the petit bourgeois mentality (*meshchanstvo*) which was supposed to have been rooted out from socialist society and culture, where higher goals and values were expected to reign sovereign. Paradoxically, if we are to believe the historical and empirical studies about the taste of different social classes and groups in the bourgeois society in Europe, the advice and attitude recommended by these experts to their Soviet audience did follow the most typical petit bourgeois attitude towards consumer culture.⁶⁵⁰ In reality, the petite bourgeoisie or the middle classes of the bourgeois societies were historically not disposed towards general extravagance, nor were they inclined to freely experiment with novelties. These extravagant attitudes, if held by anyone, were typical of the new economic elites, whereas the second position, which the Soviet propaganda associated with the petite bourgeoisie, was typical of the new cultural and economic elites of the bourgeois society. The petite bourgeoisie and particularly its socially declining part appreciated precisely the values propagated by the Soviet experts on taste and fashion: in work it valued order, rigor and care, in its aesthetics austere and traditional values. The new "executant" petit bourgeois – the lower civil servants – preferred in

their turn, according to Pierre Bourdieu, most of all “sober and correct” clothes.⁶⁵¹ In other words, the official Soviet, socialist aesthetics of dress – and consumption in general – and its maxims of good taste with their emphasis on moderation and harmony were, if anything, *petit bourgeois*!

The best proof that Soviet consumers were increasingly dissatisfied with the modest role ascribed to them by the authorities and propagators of fashion, and the relatively limited supply of fashionable clothes offered to them in the Soviet department stores and ateliers was their great interest in and demand for all imported consumer goods, clothes and shoes included, particularly from the West. The prices paid on the official and unofficial – or black-markets for these foreign goods were proof of the lack of any real alternatives. Soviet fashion designers and organizations were certainly both able and willing to meet this increasing demand for the range of expressions of individual taste. However, the institutional limitations inherent in the Soviet planned economy often effectively restricted the realization of many well-meant attempts at improvement.

Fashion design was also harnessed to serve the Soviet efforts to compete peacefully with the West, but this competition remained mainly ideological and not really economic at all. No serious attempts were made to export Soviet fashion to the West and importation from the West was always heavily restricted, making up just a very small part of the whole clothing market in the country. With the notable exception of the wide scale collaboration with the other socialist countries in Europe within the organization of COMECON, Soviet fashion remained largely an internal affair.

This honorable attempt to become largely self-sufficient, and at the same time world leading in the field of fashion design, as well as in many other fields of economic activity – partly – explained the great efforts and remarkable investments made in fashion during the post-war decades in the Soviet Union. Soviet fashion designers and their organizations played an important role in this ideological competition – in legitimating the superiority of the socialist system to the inhabitants of the first socialist country in the world. At the same time, the challenge – of being the best in the world of fashion – proved to be just too much.

Soviet experts and authorities were aware of the basic problems and limitations inherent in their system of fashion design quite early, but repeatedly offered the same solutions. Even at their best, however, these remained half measures, soon to be forgotten and only to be taken up again later as ‘new’ remedies to the same old problems. Soviet fashion designers and other experts were continuously confronted with the basic principles of the centrally planned economy which could effectively concentrate its resources to solve its problems. They never really challenged the final right of the central planning organs of the Soviet Government and the leadership of the Communist Party to regulate the input and the output of its production down to the smallest details, leaving only limited room for creativity. Under these circumstances fashion designers could either adapt themselves to the limitations and filled their quotas, or they could give free rein to their imaginations by creating unique works of art which had very little impact on the general culture of dress.

The system of fashion under socialism was imbedded in a wider moral discourse about the rational needs of a human being and the ideal type of Soviet personality which in many ways moderated the social and cultural impact of fashion. The incompatibility of fashion with the principles of planned economy challenged the moral order of the socialist society. In this respect fashion resembled monetary relations which, at least in the minds of the authorities, constantly threatened to get out of hand and take on a life of their own, changing the priorities of the socialist order. This appeared concretely in the character of the speculator or black market dealer putting private economic interests before the common good. Just as with monetary relations, the authorities tolerated, and at times encouraged, the operations of the fashion system. By developing their own huge system of fashion design and industry they both acknowledged the social power of fashion and tried to control and restrict it. They adapted the moral standards of the old European *Bildungsbürger* who fought with the whole integrity of his own good taste against the corrupting influence of money and all the new temptations offered on the rapidly growing consumer goods market. As we know now, the Soviets lost their fight both on the aesthetic and the ethical fronts just like the old *Bildungsbürger* before them. However, for some time the outcome of this “moral battle” was uncertain. During the Soviet Union’s 70 years of existence, numerous protagonists of socialist fashion suggested ideas and promoted methods for how to reach a truce or at least a working compromise between the increasing individual aspirations of the modern man and woman and the spirit of collectivism integral to the principles of the centrally planned economy. The suggested solutions kept repeating themselves but the problems did not disappear.

If the experience of ambivalence is a sign of modernity, the Soviet Union was a modern society, albeit not quite the same kind as those under capitalism. Instead of choosing between frivolous fashion and centralized economic planning the Soviets had to learn to live with both. Of the two sides of modernity, the Soviet ideology emphasized the ideals of rationality and scientific control of the world, the social world included. The Soviet citizen was expected to develop her individual, material and spiritual needs as well as to recognize and control them rationally. This was perfectly in line with the ideals of the first modernity. The other side of modernity, typical of its second stage and expressed in the Romantic tradition of thought following the Enlightenment, added to these ideals the right of each person to their self-realization and self-expression. This Romantic spirit was very much alive in the Soviet Union in, for example, the cult of genius, expressed via the numerous official awards and honorific titles glorifying the ‘exceptional talents and achievements’ of some great personalities in the world of art, science and politics. For the ordinary man and woman the bureaucratic administration of large economic and political organizations as well as the rather dull world of mass consumption offered much less space for individual self-expression. The contrast between the two forms of modernity was perhaps nowhere as keenly felt as in the Soviet world of fashion which tried to balance between the – ‘rational’ – demands of planned economy and the growing – ‘irrational’ – individual aspirations, only more diversified as time went by.

Notes

Chapter 1

- 1 See e.g. Osokina, E., *Our Daily Bread. The System of Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin's Russia 1927–1941*. Armonk, N.Y.:M.E.Sharpe, 2001; Gronow, J., *Caviar with Champagne. The Common Luxury and the Ideals of Good Life in Stalin's Russia*. London and New York: Berg, 2003 and Siegelbaum, L., *Cars for Comrades. The Life of the Soviet Automobile*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008.
- 2 Kotkin, S., *Modern Times: The Soviet Union and the Interwar Conjecture*. In: *kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 2 (2001): 1, pp. 111–164; Kotkin, S., *The Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as Civilization*. Berkeley 1995. For a recent bibliography and debates on the nature of Soviet modernity see Hoffman, David L. *Stalinist Values: the Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- 3 Fitzpatrick, S., Introduction, in: *Stalinism: New Directions*. Ed. by Sheila Fitzpatrick. London and New York, 2000.
- 4 David-Fox, M., *Multiple modernities vs. Neo-traditionalism. On recent debates in Russian and Soviet History*. In: *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 54 (2006), pp. 535–555.
- 5 Simmel, G., *Philosophie der Mode*. Berlin: Pan 1905.
- 6 Bourdieu, P., *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge, 1984.
- 7 We have not found any programmatic statements of the Communist Party or the Soviet Government about fashion. However, in 1961 the Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, who had a background in the Soviet textile industry, declared at a session of the Soviet Supreme Council: “The retail network must always have a variety of contemporary fashionable goods and cuts.” (cited in Natalie Chernyshova’s *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era*. London: Routledge 2014, 146.) By contemporary fashionable Kosygin presumably referred to stylish and beautiful as well as to new and modern.
- 8 Gronow, J., *Sociology of Taste*. London and New York: Routledge, 1997.
- 9 Hoffmann, David L. *Peasant Metropolis. Social identities in Moscow, 1929–1941*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994 and Hoffmann, David L., *Stalinist Values: The Cultural Norms of Soviet Modernity, 1917–1941*. Ithaca: Cornell University press, 2003.
- 10 Zakharova, L., *Kazhdoi sovetskoi zhenshchine–platie ot Diora!*. *Frantsuskoie vliyanie v sovetskoi mode 1950–1960–kh gg*. In: *Sotsial’naia istoria. Yezhegodnik*, 2004, pp. 347–353; Zakharova, L., *Dior in Moscow: A taste for luxury in Soviet*

- fashion under Khrushchev. In Read, S. and Crowley, D. (eds.), *Pleasures in Socialism, Leisure and Luxury in the Bloc*. Evenston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2010, pp. 95–120; Zakharova, L., Soviet fashion in the 1950s–1960s. Regimentation, Western influences, and consumption strategies. In Kozlov, D., and Gilburn, E. (eds.), *The Thaw. Soviet Society and Culture during the 1950s and 1960s*. Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 2013.
- 11 Gronow, J. and Zhuravlev, S., Soviet luxuries from champagne to private cars. In Crowley, D. and S.E.Reid (eds.): *Pleasures in Socialism*. 2010, pp. 121–146.
 - 12 Gronow, J. and Zhuravlev, S., The book of tasty and healthy food: The establishment of Soviet haute cuisine. In Strong, Jeremy (ed.): *Educating tastes*. Lincoln, NE.: University of Nebraska Press, 2011.
 - 13 The literal translation of Dom modelei is a house of prototypes (or patterns). In the following we use consequently the expression “a house of fashion design” which in our opinion characterizes far better the nature of the wide range of their activities.
 - 14 Crane, D. *Fashion and its Social Agendas. Class, Gender, and Identity in Clothing*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2000, p. 135.
 - 15 In fact, even the bigger Parisian fashion houses increasingly since the 1970s design clothes not for sale but for the purpose of promoting their brands which mostly sell other consumer goods, like perfumes and jewelry. The number of customers of their elite fashion is, after all, extremely small. The main purpose of their spectacular fashion shows is to advertise and promote their trademark, which is used to market all kinds of products apart from fashionable clothing, such as perfumes, jewels, various other kinds of accessories to clothing, etc. (Crane, *Fashion and its Social Agendas*, p. 144–147). In the Soviet Union, the fashion houses understandably did not primarily promote their own trademarks – it is questionable if one can speak of them at all in this context – but mainly propagated Soviet fashion and clothing culture in general.
 - 16 See Gronow, J. and Zhuravlev, S. *Soviet Luxuries from Champagne to Private Cars*, in: *Pleasures in Socialism*, 2010, pp.121–146; Siegelbaum, L. *Cars for Comrades: the life of the Soviet automobile*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2008; and Zhuravlev, S.V., Zezina, M.R., Pikhoia, R.G. and Sokolov A.K.: *AvtoVAZ mezhdru proshlym i budushchim, Istoriya Volzhskogo avtozavoda, 1967–2006* Moskva: RAGS 2006.
 - 17 In 1935, Chanel had 4000 employees (Crane, D., *Fashion and its Social Agendas*. p. 141).
 - 18 For first-hand evidence of the leading Soviet designers see: Andreeva, Iren. *Chastnaya zhizn' pri sotsializme: otchet sovetskogo obyvatelia*. Moskva: NLO, 2009; Jushkova Anastasia. Alexander Igmand: “Ya odeval Brezhneva...”. Moskva: NLO, 2008; Shchipakina, Alla. *Moda v SSSR. Sovetskii Kuznetskii*,14. Moskva: Slovo, 2009; Zaitsev, Slava. *Tainy obmana*. Moskva: Iskusstvo–XX vek, 2006.
 - 19 Komarov, V.E. and Cherniavskii, U.G.: *Dokhody i potreblenie naselenia SSR*. Moskva: Nauka, 1973.
 - 20 Kiaer, C.: *Imagine no Possessions. The Socialist Objects of Russian Constructivism*. Cambridge, Ma. and London: MIT Press 2005, pp. 89–142.
 - 21 Zhuravlev, S.V. and Gronow, J., *Krasota pod kontrolem gosudarstva: osobennosti i etapy stanovlenia sovetskoi mody*. In: *The Soviet and Post-Soviet Review* 32 (2005), 1, pp. 1–92.
 - 22 For the best examples of recent studies on everyday life and public attitudes in the Soviet Union during Khrushchev's times see: Aksiutin, Jury. *Khrushchevsakaya “ottepel” i obshchestvennye nastroeniya v SSSR v 1953–1964 gg*. Moskva: ROSSPEN 2004; Lebina, N.B., Chistikov A.N. *Obyvatel' i reformy. Kartiny povsednevnoi zhizni gorozhan v gody nepa i khrushchevskogo desiatiletiya*. SPb: Dmitry Bulanin, 2003.

- 23 Bestuzhev–Lada, I.V., *Moda i promyshlennoe modelirovanie odezhdy. Teksty i tezisy dokladov na Vsesoyuznoi nauchnoi konferentsii 16–18 yanvarya 1979 g.* Moskva: Moskovskii tekstil'nyi institut, 1979, p. 4.
- 24 “Stiliagis” had several meanings in Soviet public and official discourses. One referred to stiliagis as “stylish people”. Another came from jazzmen’s slang, in which “stiliat” (from English verb *to steal*) meant to подражать – to follow or copy somebody’s style. The term became widespread in the Soviet society as a symbol to the Western values after publication D.G. Beliaev’s feuilleton “Stiliagi” in the popular Soviet satirical journal “Krokodil” (1949, 7, March). See also: Kristin Rot–Ai: Kto na Piedestale, a kto v tolpe? Stiliagi i ideya sovetskoi “molodezhnoi kul'tury” v epokhy “ottopeli”. *Magazines.russ.ru* and Vainshtein, O., Dendi. *Moda, literatura, stil' zhizni.* Moskva: NLO 2005.
- 25 The latest stage in the myth building process which started with the early caricatures in the comical journal *Krokodil* in the late 1940s was the release of the new musical movie *Stiliagi* in 2008.
- 26 See for example Kozlov, A., *Kozel na sakes–I tak vsiu zhizn' (jazz–jazz.* [ru/?category=interesting&altname...kozlov...na_sakse](http://www.schukra.ru/bio.php?show&id=4); Saul'ski, Yu., *Kokteil–holl i Shestigrannik* (<http://www.schukra.ru/bio.php?show&id=4>).
- 27 Edele, M., *Strange young men in Stalin’s Moscow: the birth and life of a stiliagi, 1945–1953.* *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, 50 (2002), 1, pp. 37–61. See also Vainshtain, O., Dendi. *Moda, literatura, stil' zhizni* 2005, pp. 527–539.
- 28 Kimerling, A., *Platforma protiv kalosh, ili stiliagi na ulitsakh sovetskogo goroda.* *Teoriya modi* 2007, 3, pp. 81–99. See also Fürst, J., *The arrival of spring? Changes and continuities in Soviet culture and policy between Stalin and Khrushchev.* In Jones, P.(ed.), *The Dilemma of De–Stalinization. Negotiating Cultural and Social Change in the Khrushchev Era.* London and New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 135–153.
- 29 For a standard Soviet commentary on stiliagis in the late 1950s, see Golybina, A.G., *Iskusstvo odevat'sia.* Leningrad: Lenizdat 1959, p. 243. See also useful sources in the internet, documentaries and an agitation movie from the late 1950s, as well as recent comments on stiliagis: www.proza.ru/2009/10/27/732; www.bujhm.livejournal.com/383320.htm
- 30 Soviet women who engaged in manual work, tourism and sports – which they were encouraged to do in great numbers – naturally wore trousers even earlier.
- 31 Dan Healey’s *Homosexual Desire in Revolutionary Russia. The Regulation of Gender and Sexual Dissent* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2001) is the only systematic study of homosexuality in the USSR. It has a comprehensive bibliography on Soviet sexuality and homosexuality. Healey destroys quite effectively the prevailing myth of the USSR as a country of heterosexuals and puritan morality. The questions about the number of people with “non–traditional” sexual orientations and how typical the cases he describes in fact were remain, however, largely open.
- 32 See however Zdravomyslova, Yelena and Temkina, Anna, *Rossiskaya transformatsiya i seksual'naya zhizn'.* In Zdravomyslova, Ye., and Temkina, A. (eds.), *V poiskakh seksual'nosti.* St.Peterburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2002, p. 11.
- 33 S.I.Golod, one of the few specialists in this area, points out the fragmented nature of many research results as well as their constructivist approach and the use of predominantly qualitative methods. (See Golod, S.I., *Shto bylo porokami, stalo nravami. Lektsii po sotsiologii seksual'nosti.* Moskva: Lodomir. 2005, p. 5–6.) In I.S. Kon’s opinion contemporary surveys conducted among elderly people about their sexual behavior in their youth in the USSR suffer from serious methodological problems. They can reasonably be used to pose further questions and as illustrations of general tendencies but not to get scientifically reliable

- results. (Kon, I.S., Rol' i mesto seksual'noi kultury i stanovlenii tsivilizovannogo gosudarstva. St.Peterburg: Sbp GUP, 1999, p. 72.)
- 34 Laura Engelstein, *The Keys to Happiness: Sex and the Search for Modernity in Fin-de-Siecle Russia*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993.
 - 35 Golod, S.I., *Shto bylo porokami, stalo nravami*. 2005, p. 77.
 - 36 I.S.Kon has paid attention to the fact that these negative connotations of sex and sexuality have long roots in Russian culture: The Orthodox Church as well as such influential Russian authors as Lev Tolstoy together with many revolutionary democrats all agreed that sexuality was something bad as such. (Kon, I.S., Rol' i mesto seksual'noi kul'tury v stanovlenii tsivilizirovannogo gosudarstvo. 1999, p. 61.)
 - 37 Rotkirch, Anna, *The Man Question. Love and Lives in Late 20th Century Russia*. University of Helsinki, Department of Social Policy. Research Reports 2000:1.
 - 38 Kon, I.S., *Seksual'nost i kul'tura*, 2004, p. 49 and Rotkich, A., *The Man Question*, 2000.
 - 39 For scholarly debates on the future of Soviet fashion see: *Moda i promyshlennoe modelirovanie odezhdy. Tezisy dokladov Vsesojuznoi nauchnoi konferentsii*, 16–18 of January, 1979. Moskva: Moskovskii tekstil'nyi institut 1979.
 - 40 Cf. Blumer, H., *Fashion: From Class Differentiation to Collective Selection*. In: *The Sociological Quarterly* 10 (1969), 1, pp. 275–91.
 - 41 Yasinskaya, I., *Soviet Textile Design of the Revolutionary Period*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1983.
 - 42 Strizhenova, T., and Bowlt, J.E., *Costume Revolution. Textiles, Clothing and Costume of the Soviet Union in the 1920s*. 1989.
 - 43 Strizhenova, T., *Soviet Costume and Textiles. 1917–1945*. Paris: Flammarion, 1991. See also Huber, E., *Mode in der Sowjetunion 1917–1953*. Wien: Praesens Verlag, 2011.
 - 44 Vasiliev, A., *Beauty in Exile.: The Artists, Models, and Nobility Who Fled the Russian Revolution and Influenced the World of Fashion*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 2000 and Vasiliev, A., *Russkaia moda. 150 let v fotografiyakh*. Moskva: Slovo 2004.
 - 45 Ruane, C., *The Empire's New Clothes. A History of Russian Fashion Industry, 1700–1917*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.
 - 46 Zakharova, L.V., *S'Habiller à la Soviétique. La Moda et le Dégelen URSS*. Paris: CNRS Edition, 2011. See also Zakharova, L.V., "Naibolee rasprostrananoi yavliaetsia forma priamogo pal'to s odnobortnoi zastezhkoï", 2006; Zakharova, L.V., *Dior in Moscow*, 2010, pp. 95–120. and Zakharov, L.V., *Defilirovat' po-sovetski. Teoriya mody 2006–2007*, 1, pp. 59–74; Zakharova, L.V., *Soviet fashion in the 1950s–1960s: regimentation*, 2013, pp. 402–435.
 - 47 Vainshtain, O., "Moye liubimoe plat'ye": portnikha kak kul'turnyi geroi v Sovetskoi Rossii. *Teoriya mody. Odezhda, telo, kul'tura*, 3 (2007), pp. 101–127, Vains'tain, O., *Female fashion, Soviet Style: Bodies of Ideology*. In Goscilo, H., and Holmgren, B. (eds.), *Russia. Women. Culture*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996, pp. 64–94. and Vainshtain, O., *Fashioning women: the dressmaker as cultural producer in Soviet Russia*. In Marcus. G.E., (ed.), *Parasites. A Casebook Against Cynical Reason*. University of Chicago Press: Chicago and London, 2000.
 - 48 Vainshtain, O., *Dendi. Moda, literature, stil' zhizni* 2005.
 - 49 Chernyshova, Natalya, *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era*, 2014.
 - 50 Gurova, Olga, *Fashion and Consumer Revolution in Contemporary Russia*. London: Rotledge, 2014. p. 45.
 - 51 Bartlett, D., *FashionEast. The Spectre that Haunted Socialism*. Cambridge, MA. & London: MIT Press, 2010.
 - 52 Stitzel, J., *Fashioning Socialism. Clothing, Politics, and Consumer Culture in East Germany*. London & New York: Berg, 2005.

- 53 See for instance, Finnare, A., *Changing Clothes in China. Fashion, History, Nation*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2008 and Wu J., *Chinese Fashion. From Mao to Now*. Oxford & New York: Berg, 2009.
- 54 See for instance Steele, V., *Paris Fashion: a Cultural History*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988; Steele, V., *Women of Fashion: Twentieth-century Designers*. New York: Rizzoli, 1991; Steele, V., *Fifty Years of Fashion: New Look to Now*. New haven: Yale University Press, 1997; Mendes, V., and Haye, A. de la, *20th Century Fashion*. London: Thames & Hudson, 2005.
- 55 Wilson, E., *Adorned in Dreams*. London: Virago, 1985.
- 56 Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000; see also Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.
- 57 Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1990.
- 58 For an interesting discussion based on the memories of ordinary Russian women, see Gurova, Olga, *Fashion and Consumer Revolution in Contemporary Russia*, 2014.
- 59 Osokina, E., *Our Daily Bread. The System of Distribution and the Art of Survival in Stalin's Russia 1927–1941*. Armonk, N.Y.: M.E.Sharpe, 2001. Hessler, J., *A Social History of Soviet Trade. Trade Policy, Retail Practices and Consumption, 1917–1953*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004; Randall. A., *The Soviet Dream World of Retail Trade and Consumption in the 1930s*. 2008; Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan; Gronow, J., *Caviar with Champagne. Common Luxury and the Ideals of Good Life in Stalin's Russia*. Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003.
- 60 The historical development of East German consumer goods and consumer culture in the post-war years has been explored more systematically and extensively than any other country of the East European socialist bloc. See *Wunderwirtschaft. DDR-konsumkultur in den 60er Jahren*. Herausgegeben von Neue Gesellschaft für Bildende Kunst. Köln, Weimer and Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 1996; Merkel, I., *Utopie und Bedürfnis. Die Geschichte der Konsumkultur in der DDR*. Köln, Weimar and Wien: Böhlau Verlag; Pence, Katherine and Betts, Paul (eds.), *Socialist Modern. East German Everyday Culture and Politics*. Ann Arbor, MI.: The University of Michigan Press, 2008 and Rubin, Eli, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic*. Chapel Hill, NC.: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009.
- 61 Chernyshova, N., *Soviet Consumer Culture in the Brezhnev Era*, 2014; Siegelbaum, L., *Cars for Comrades*, 2008.

Chapter 2.

- 62 For a detailed account of the different aspects of the establishment of the fashion industry in pre-revolutionary Russia, see Ruane, Christine, *The Empire's New Clothes. A History of the Russian Fashion Industry, 1700–1917*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009.
- 63 Larin, Yu., *Intelligentsiia i soveti. Khoziaistvo, burzhuziia, revoliutsiia, gosapparat*. Moskva: Gosizdat, 1924, p. 4.
- 64 Maier, N., *Sluzhba v Komissariate yustitsii i narodnom sude*, In *Arkhiv russkoi revoliutsii*. T. VIII. Berlin 1923, pp. 56, 98.
- 65 Budennyi, S.M., *Proidennyi put'. V 2-kh kn. Kn.1*. Moskva: Voenizdat, 1958, pp. 294–295. For a detailed account of public attitudes during the Russian Revolution and the Civil War, see Buldakov, V.P. *Krasnaya smuta: Priroda i posledstviia revoliutsionnogo nasiliia*. Moskva: ROSSPEN, 2010.
- 66 *Petrogradskaya Pravda*. 27.9. 1919. p. 1.

- 67 See for instance, GARF. F.R.–393, Op.13,D.219,LL.131.300.305.352; Ibid. F.R.–1240, Op.1.D–99–L.40–41.
- 68 For the typical expressions of such an approach to culture, see the issues of the journals *Gryadushcheyo* and *Iskusstvo kommuny* published in 1918–1919.
- 69 In later times, the concept of anti–fashion is often associated with the post–war tendencies in the West when self–made street fashion and various social protest movements challenged the creations of the professional designers and their “haute couture.” It united tendencies which did not fit into the official fashion or existed side–by–side with it. The hippie movement offered a characteristic example of anti–fashion with its decorative clothes and hairstyles inspired by folk art. Anti–fashion had its pre–revolutionary ancestors in the radical political movements, in particular among the radical movements of women’s liberation which claimed that fashion was just one more means of oppressing women.
- 70 The world famous sculptor, V. I. Mukhina, as well as the designers N. P. Lamanova, A. A. Ekster and E. I. Pribyl’skaya among others, all cherished such progressive ideals. See Strizhenova, T. K., *Iz istorii sovetskogo kostiuma*. Moskva. Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1972; Mertsalova, M.N. *Istoriya kostiuma*. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1972; Kirsanova, R., *Vtoroi Shlyapin ve svoem dele*. Rodina nr. 4, 2004.
- 71 For early feminist and other radical critique of fashion in Russia, see Ruane, Christine, *The Empire’s New Clothes. A History of the Russian Fashion Industry, 1700–1917*. 2009, pp. 209–14.
- 72 Ruane, C., *The Empire’s New Clothes. A History of Russian Fashion Industry, 1700–1917*. New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009, p. 241.
- 73 Ibid. p. 209.
- 74 *Izvestiya VTsIK*, March 11, 1923, p. 4.
- 75 *Komsomol’skaya pravda*, 10.10.1926, p. 4.
- 76 Zaitsev, V.M., ‘*Etot mnogolikii mir mody*.’ *Sovetskaya Rossiya* (Moskva), 1982, p. 58.
- 77 Zaitsev, V.M., *ibid.* p. 58. About Soviet fashion in the 1920s see also Vasilyev, Alexander, ‘*Art–Deco v sovetskoi mode!*’ www.moda.ru/content/id/7363/20290/
- 78 Bartlett, Djurdja, *FashionEast. The Spectre that Haunted Socialism*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010, p. 15.
- 79 *Ibid.* p. 18.
- 80 Strizhenova, T., ‘*Sud’ba Nadezhdy Lamanovoi*.’ *Zhurnal mod* 1989, nr. 4; See also Strizhenova, T., ‘*Iz istorii sovetskogo kostyuma*.’ Moskva 1972.
- 81 Lamanova, N., ‘*Russkaya moda*.’ *Krasnaya niva*, 1923, nr. 30. See also Lamanova, N., ‘*O sovremennom kostyume*.’ *Krasnaya niva* 1924, nr. 27.
- 82 Bartlett, *FashionEast*, 2010, p. 42.
- 83 Vasilieva, L.N, *Kremlevskia zheny*. Moskva:Vagrius. 1994, p. 123.
- 84 *Ibid.* p. 262.
- 85 *Ibid.* pp. 102–103.
- 86 Zhuravlev, S.V. *NKVD naprasno ne sazhaet...., Sotsial’naja istorija, Yezhegodnik* 2004. Moskva: Rosspen, pp. 371–400.
- 87 Moskva–Washington: politika i diplomatiya Kremliya, 1921–1941. *Sbornik dokumentov v 3-kh tomakh pod redaktsiei G. Sevost’yanova*. Vol. 2. Moskva: Nauka, 2009, pp. 11–17.
- 88 Vasilieva, L.N, *Kremlevskia zheny*. Moskva: Vagrius, 1994, p. 145.
- 89 Osokina, E., *Za fasadom ‘stalinskogo izobiliya*.’ *Raspredelenie i rynek v snabzhenii naseleniya v gody indutrializatsii, 1927–1941*. Moskva: ROSSPEN, 1998.
- 90 See Gronow, J., *Caviar with Champagne: Common Luxury and the Ideals of the Good Life in Stalin’s Russia*, 2003, pp. 87–97.
- 91 The minutes of the meeting of the Narkomat Vnutrennei torgovli on the work of the exemplary department stores, 23.2.1935– RGAE. F. 7971. Op.1.D.80.L.32.
- 92 TsMAM. F.1953.Op.1.D.9.L.3.

- 93 Commercial trade was common in the first half of the 1920s. It was officially allowed again in the cities for a short period between April 1944 and December 1947. The prices in commercial trade were not market prices but set by the State planning offices. They were however much higher than the prices of goods distributed through rationing and in many cases reflected their costs of production. The share of commercial trade in the distribution of consumer goods remained quite modest: by the end of 1945 only 10 percent of all the state-produced goods were sold through it and the remaining 90 percent distributed through the system of rationing for remarkably lower prices. In December 1947 both rationing and commercial trade were shut down and equal state prices were introduced for all consumer goods. After that the prices of foodstuffs and drinks remained almost as low as in the previous war-time rationing system, whereas the prices of clothes, shoes and textiles were much higher but still about three times lower than in the short lived commercial shops. (See Hessler, J., *A Social History of Soviet Trade. Trade Policy, Retail Practices and Consumption, 1917–1953*. Princeton, NJ. and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2004.)
- 94 The letter of the director of the factory *Magnezit* of the Trust *Ogneupor* NKTP SSSR Tabakov to V.M. Molotov, 1.11.1934 (RGAE.F7971.Op.1.D.16.L.54–54 ob.)
- 95 Widdis, Emma, *Sew yourself Soviet: The pleasures of textile in the machine age*. In Balina, M. And Dobrenko, E.(eds.), *Petrified Utopia. Happiness Soviet Style*. London: Athen Press, 2009, pp. 115–132.
- 96 The new governments tried in many ways to regulate and influence politically and ideologically the fashion designers and enterprises both in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany in the 1930s (see Guenther, I., *Nazi Chic? Fashioning Women in the Third Reich*. Oxford: Berg, 2004 and Paulicelli, E., *Fashion under Fascism: Beyond the Black Shirt*. Oxford: Berg, 2004). These measures were, however, more restricted than in the Socialist countries which created from their own needs – in a centrally planned way – a totally new, huge state owned system of fashion design from the very beginning. Both in Nazi Germany and Mussolini's Italy the fashion industry remained largely in private hands.
- 97 The figures are from Roger Markwick: 'Women, War and "Totalitarianism": Soviet and Nazi Experiences compared.' *The 20th Congress of Historical Sciences*, 3–9–July. Programme, Sydney 2005, p. 104.
- 98 Kantor, K.M., *Moda kak stil' zhizni*. In Toslytkh, V. (red.), *Moda: za i protiv*. Moskva: Iskusstvo, 1971, p. 141. See also Kantor, K.M., *Krasota i pol'za. Sotsiologitseyskie problemy material'no–khudozhestvennoi kultury*. Moskva: Iskusstvo 1967.

Chapter 3.

- 99 Davies, R.W., *Soviet Economic Development from Lenin to Khrushchev*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, pp. 59–61.
- 100 *Ibid.* p. 65.
- 101 *Ibid.* p. 59.
- 102 These commercial shops were in the Soviet Union state owned or cooperatives. They sold their goods for prices fixed by the state. They were commercial in the sense that any customer who had money at his or her disposal could enter them and buy any goods on sale within the limits of his or her wallet. A large and varying share of the major consumer goods, food and clothes included, were always distributed to the Soviet citizens through other channels, so called closed shops were attached to various economic or state organizations and open only to

- a restricted clientele. Gronow, J., *Caviar with champagne*, 2003 and Julie Hessler, *A Social History of Soviet Trade*, 2004.
- 103 Osokina, E., *Za fasadom 'stalinskogo izobiliya*. 1998.
- 104 See Matthews, Mervyn, *Privilege in the Soviet Union. A Study of Elite Life–Styles under Communism*. London: Georg Allen & Unwin, 1978.
- 105 Taubman, W., *Khrushchev. The Man – his Era*. London: Free Press, 2005, pp. 305–06.
- 106 Gronow, J., *Complaining in the USSR: Consumer dissatisfaction and the legitimacy of the Soviet rule*. In Kahla, E., (ed.), *Between Utopia and Apocalypse, Essays on Social Theory and Russia*. Aleksanteri series 1, 2011, pp. 305–315.
- 107 Inkeles, A. and Geiger, K., *Critical letters to the editors of the Soviet Press. Areas and modes of complaints*. *American Sociological Review* 17 (1952), 6, pp. 694–703.
- 108 Bogdanova, E., *Obrashsheniia grazhdan v organy vlasti kak opyt otstaivania svoikh interesov v usloviyakh pozdnesovetskogo perioda (1960–1970–e gg.)*. Avtoreferat na soiskanie nauchnoi stepeni kandidata sotsiologicheskikh nauk po spetsial'nosti 22.00.04– sotsial'naya struktura, sotsial'nye instituty i sotsial'nye protsessy. St:Petersburh, Norma, 2008.
- 109 Soviet organizations of trade engaged in real market research quite early on, beginning in the late 1940s. After the founding of a separate All–Union market research institute under the Ministry of Trade (VVNIIKS) in 1965 this activity gained well–organized, regular forms. It had branches in all bigger Soviet cities and regional centers. (See the order of the SM SSSR nr. 157, 13.3.1965. In *Postanovlenie SM SSSR I VSNKh SSSR. Sbornik dokumentov*. March 1965, p.64.)
- 110 See for instance Arzamastev, A.M., *Shto ponimaetsia pod razumnimi potrebnostami*. *Nautsniy kommunizm*, 1980, 1. pp.
- 111 *Ekonomicheskaya gazeta*. 1969, nr. 41, p. 3.
- 112 *Moda i promyshlennoe modelirovanie odezhdy. Tezisi dokladov na vsesojuznoi nauchnoi konferentsii 16–18 janvaria 1979 goda*. Moskva: Moskovskii tekstyl'nyi institut, 1979.
- 113 In his article about the standards of private consumption in the USSR published in 1962 M.E.Rubin concluded that in 1958 the per capita consumption of textiles, clothes and footwear was well below the rational standards and even in 1965 would be attained for only some of them. (*Private Consumption in the USSR: Changes in the assortment of goods 1940–1959*. *Soviet Studies* 3 (1962): 13, pp. 237–253.)
- 114 *Samoregulyatsiya i prognozirovanie sotsial'noi povedeniya yunosti*. Leningrad: Nauka, 1979.
- 115 Davies, R.W., *Soviet Economic Development*, p. 69.
- 116 *Ibid*.
- 117 As compared to the capitalist states, the income statistics in the USSR did not include any income from property. Neither do the statistics include income from the informal economy which in the Soviet Union was quite high. Nevertheless, one can draw the general conclusion that the share of the highest income groups compared to the lowest was much higher in the Soviet Union than in the capitalist countries in the middle of the 1950s.
- 118 Davies, R.W. *Soviet Economic Development*, p. 68.
- 119 *Narodnoye khozaistvo SSSR za 70 let*. Moskva 1987, p. 8.
- 120 Cf. Elena Zubkova's analysis of the great hopes and disappointments of the post-war expectations in the late 1940s (Zubkova, E.Ju, *Russia after the War. Hopes, Illusions and Disappointments, 1945–1957*. N.Y.: Armonk, 1998.)
- 121 Davies, R.W., *Soviet Economic Development*, p. 70.
- 122 Harrison, M., *Economic growth and slowdown*. In Bacon, E. and M.Sandle (eds.), *Brezhnev Reconsidered*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan 2002, pp. 203–277.
- 123 Zhuravlev, S.V., Zezina, M.R., Pikhoya R.G. and Sokolov, A.K., *Avtovaz mezhdru proshlym i budushchim*. Moskva: RAGS, 2006.

- 124 Hanson, Philip, *The Rise and Fall of Soviet Economy: an Economic History of the USSR from 1945*. Harlow: Longman, 2003, pp. 84–5. See also Nove, A., *Soviet agriculture under Brezhnev*. *Slavic Review*, 29:3. pp. 379–410.
- 125 Hanson, P., *The Rise and Fall of Soviet Economy*, p. 50.
- 126 *Ibid.* p.65.
- 127 *Ibid.* p. 115.
- 128 Joint Economic Committee. Congress of the United States. *USSR: Measures of Economic Growth and Development, 1950–1980*. Washington, Government Printing Office, 1980.
- 129 *Narodnoe khozaistvo SSSR v 1990*. Moskva: Statistika, 1991, p.135.
- 130 Joint Economic Committee. Congress of the United States. *Annual Economic Indicators of the U.S.S.R.* Washington, Government Printing Office, 1964.
- 131 Small amounts of shoes were imported from capitalist countries, such as Finland and Italy, but most imports came from other socialist countries, such as Poland. For the small share of some other imported clothes items, see *Narodnoe khozaistvo SSSR v 1990*. Moskva 1990, pp. 654 and 657.
- 132 *Narodnoe khozaistvo SSSR v 1980*. Moskva: Statistika 1981, p. 540.
- 133 Hanson, Philip, *The Rise and Fall of Soviet Economy*, p. 115. See also Roth–Eye, Kristen, *Finding a home for television in the USSR. 1950–1970*. *Slavic Review* 6 (2007): 2, pp. 278–306.
- 134 *Narodnoye khozaistvo SSSR za 70 let*. Moskva: Statistika, 1987, p. 472.
- 135 *Narodnoye khozaistvo SSSR v 1980*. Moskva: Statistika, 1981, pp. 441–443.
- 136 Bokarev, Yu.P., *SSSR i stanovlenie postindustrial'nogo obshchestva na Zapade. 1970–1980–e gody*. Moskva: Nauka, 2007, p. 207.
- 137 *Ibid.*
- 138 *Ibid.* p. 209.
- 139 *Narodnoe khozaistvo SSSR v 1960 g*. Moskva 1961, p. 341; *Narodnoe khozaistvo SSSR v 1970 g*. Moskva. Statistika, 1971, p.1971 and *Narodnoe khozaistvo SSSR v 1980*. Moskva: Statistika, 1981, p. 449.
- 140 *Narodnoe khozaistvo SSR v 1990*. Moskva: Statistika, 1991, p. 680–681.
- 141 See for instance, *Promyshlennost' SSSR. Statisticheskii sbornik*. Statistika: Moskva, 1964, pp. 84–85.
- 142 Bokarev, Yu.P., *SSSR i stanovlenie postindustrial'nogo obshchestva na Zapade. 1970–1980–e gody*, 2007, pp. 40–41.
- 143 Kravtsov, N. and Kuznetsov, I., *Firmy–khorosho!* Moskva 1962, pp.10 and 70.
- 144 Aleksei Kosygin (1904–1980) was an important politician in the USSR who started his career in the Soviet Government as the Minister of Light Industry during Stalin's regime. He was a long time minister in the USSR and its prime minister in 1964–1980. An engineer by education, he had earlier experience in the administration of textile industry and was therefore regarded as an expert on the consumer goods industry, among others.
- 145 Hanson, P., *The Rise and Fall of Soviet Economy*, p 104.
- 146 *Ibid.* p. 106.
- 147 *Ibid.* p. 107. This was, in fact, accomplished in Hungary in 1968, but even there, since enterprises could not be allowed to fail (that is, go bankrupt) and they were always “bailed out” by the state, this did not lead to the increase in more effective allocation of resources and increasing productivity, as wished.
- 148 Hanson, P., *The Rise and Fall of Soviet Economy*, p. 108.
- 149 Dunham, V., *In Stalin's Time: Middle Class values in Soviet Literature*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976.
- 150 Millar, J.R., 'The Little Deal': Brezhnev's contribution to acquisitive socialism. *Slavic Review* 1985,40:4, p. 697.
- 151 Schwartz, C.A., *Economic crime in the U.S.S.R.: A comparison of the Khrushchev and Brezhnev eras*. *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly* 1981, 30:2,

- pp. 281–96; Clark, W.A., Crime and punishment in Soviet officialdom, 1965–1990. *Europe–Asia Studies* 1993, 45:2, pp. 239–257.
- 152 Bokarev, Yu.P., SSSR i stanovleniya postindustrial'nogo obshestva na zapade. 1970–1980–e gody, p. 212.
- 153 O'Hearn, Dennis, The Consumer second economy. Size and effect. *Soviet Studies* 32 (1980), 2, pp. 218–234.
- 154 Duhamel, L., The last campaign against corruption in Soviet Moscow. *Europe–Asia Studies*, 2004, 56:2, p. 188.
- 155 Millar, J.R., 'The Little Deal' 1985, p. 704.
- 156 See however Doklad upravdelami TsK KPSS N.Ye.Kruchiny i otvety na voprosy delegatov. In *Materialy XXVIII s'ezda KPSS. Stenograficeskii otchet*. Moskva: Partizdat, 1991. For earlier times, see also Matthews, M., Privileges in the Soviet Union, p. 38–43.
- 157 As the correspondent for *The New York Times* put it in 1966 (May 22): "The problem of high prices and low quality have now taken the place of the former major problem of acute shortages of practically everything."
- 158 Vihavainen, T., *Vnutrennii vrag. Bor'ba s meshchastvom kak moral'naya missiya russkoi intelligentsia*. Sankt–Peterburg: Kolo, 2004.
- 159 One of the authors remembers that the standard black market price of American jeans was 100 roubles in Kiev in the early 1970s – more than half the average monthly wages of a worker.
- 160 Miss' on farkku Suomi? (Where is jeans Finland?). Image 5.11.2014.
- 161 Kostin, L., *Proizvodstvo tovarov narodnogo potrebleniya (Sotsial'no–ekonomicheskiy aspekt)*. Moskva: Ekonomika, 1980 and Lebina, N., *Entsiklopediya banal'nosti. Sovetskaya povsednevnost': kontury, simvoly, znaki*. St.Peterburg, 2006, p. 125.
- 162 Bartlett, D., *FashionEast*, 2010, p. 269–270. See also Chernishova, N., *Soviet Consumer Culture*, 2014, p. 154–155.
- 163 [hht://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st](http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st)
- 164 Bauman, Z. 'Communism: a post mortem.' *Praxis International* 1990–1991, 10:3–4, pp.185–92.

Chapter 4.

- 165 RGAE. F.523.Op.1.D.3.L.7. See also the directives of the Collegium of the People's Commissariat of Light Industry RSFSR, 18.4.1945.
- 166 RGAE. F.523.Op.1.D.23.
- 167 The Minister of Light Industry, A.N.Kosygin confirmed the directive of ODMO by undersigning the order nr. 338 on the 24th of May, 1948 (RGAE.F.523. Op.1.D.19.L.2–2ob.)
- 168 As early as 1944, the enterprises of the Novosibirsk region had taken into production 15, the Chelyabinsk region 16 and L'vov 11 new designs from MDMO (RGAE.F.523.Op.1.D.7.L.11).
- 169 RGAE.F.523.Op.1.D.3.L.7. MDMO sewed for sale in 1945 3100 male and 1100 female overcoats and suits, 20 600 pieces of various kinds of female clothes, 2600 clothes for young girls, 400 children's outerwear as well as 200 sets of underwear and head wear and 4700 military shirts. (Ibid. D.7.L.6.)
- 170 Hessler, J., *A Social History of Soviet Trade*, 2004, 279–290.
- 171 RGAE.F.198.Op.1.D.222.L.86.
- 172 RGAE.F.198.Op.1.D.222.L.13.
- 173 RGAE.F.198.Op.1.D.223.
- 174 RGAE.F.523.Op.1.D.3.L.9.
- 175 Ibid. D.7.L.9. As a matter of fact many of the designs in 1945 were not highly

- original at all but resembled in many ways pre-war designs in their silhouettes and construction. They had only been slightly renewed and styled in order to better follow the fashion trends. Of all the 963 new items of design which the designers at MDMO offered to the industry, the factories in the capital region took into production 225, more peripheral garment factories another 408. MDM's own production units produced 81 on the orders of the *Glavsobtorg*, and the atelier of individual sewing at the trust *Mosindodezhda* received 209. The cinema company *Mosfilm* ordered an additional 40. (RGAE. F. 523.Op.1.D.7.L.9).
- 176 See the annual report of ODMO for 1950 (RGAE. F.523.Op.1.D.47.L.7.)
- 177 RGAE.F.523.Op.1.D.7.L.14–14 ob.
- 178 Ibid. D.47.L.27.
- 179 Ibid. L.10.
- 180 RGAE. F.523.Op.1.D.13. L.8–11.15.
- 181 Ibid. D.13.L.7.
- 182 Ibid. D.7.L.11 ob.
- 183 Ibid..D.37.L.19.
- 184 Ibid.
- 185 In particular, in 1945 the workers at MDMO were engaged in compiling collections of publications from the foreign journals of fashion which they received in their library. They followed with special interest the appearance of Russian motifs and other folk traditions in international fashion.
- 186 RGAE.F.523.Op.1.D.7.L.6 ob.
- 187 The first All-Union methodical meeting or consultation which ODMO organized with leading fashion designers, pattern makers and other representatives of the local houses of fashion design and the garment shops, etc. took place in Moscow in June, 1949.
- 188 RGAE.F.523.Op.1.D.47.L.8.
- 189 Ibid..D.37.L.69.
- 190 Ibid. D.7.L.7 ob.
- 191 Ibid.
- 192 Ibid. D.13.L.6.
- 193 Ibid. D.7.L.10.
- 194 Ibid. D.13.L.5.
- 195 Ibid. D.13.L.5.
- 196 Ibid. D. 37.L.23. The explanatory text attached to the annual report of 1947 also took up the importance of the role of the Soviet designer in forming the taste of the population and extending their qualified help to them in the questions of the choice of clothing style. (Ibid.D.13.L.1,9.)
- 197 Ibid. D.37.L.71–73.
- 198 Ibid. D.7.L.11 ob. In 1947 over 12 thousand people visited such shows. (RGAE.F.523. Op.1.D.13.L.19.)
- 199 Ibid. D.7.L.10 ob.
- 200 Ibid. D.37.L.10.
- 201 The order on ODMO nr. 84, 18.4.1951. (Ibid. D.61.L.108.)
- 202 Ibid. D.3.L.9.
- 203 Ibid. D.7.L.9.
- 204 Ibid. D.7.L.11 ob.
- 205 Ibid. D.32.
- 206 Similar artistic councils were established in other kinds of creative organizations and institutes of culture. For instance, the responsible artistic councils went through all Soviet theater plays and artistic films. Only after such an inspection were they allowed to be publicly shown.
- 207 RGAE.F.523.Op.1.D.13.L.12–13.
- 208 Ibid. D.13.L.12–13.
- 209 Ibid. D.24.L.65.

Chapter 5.

- 210 Shveinaya promyshlennost' 1965, 2, p. 2.
- 211 These official figures come from the former employee of VIAlegprom N. M. Agarevskaya, who kindly made them available to the authors.
- 212 With the exception of the Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian Republics, the other Soviet republics had only a single house of fashion design with multiple functions under their own Ministries of Light Industry.
- 213 RGAE F.198.Op.1.D.223.
- 214 For the realization of this decree at VIALegrpom in 1962 see, for instance, RGAE.F.198.Op.1.D.147.L.39.
- 215 Pravda 27.11.1964.
- 216 Pravda 14.2.1970.
- 217 RGAE F.198.Op.1.D.815. L.89; D.467.L.33.
- 218 <http://www.cniishp.ru/index.php?pp=stat/Babadjanov>
- 219 The applications for the new designs came from the factories to ODMO over a year in advance: for instance, the order for the spring–summer season 1966 came in on the 15th of January 1965.
- 220 RGAE F.198.Op.1.D.1638.L.14.
- 221 Zakharova, Larisa, “Naibol'eye rasprostranenoii yavliaetsia forma priamogo pal'to s odnobortnoi zastezhkoi. O sovetskoi mode epokhi 'otpepli'”. *Nepriskosnovennyi zapas*, 45, 2006:1 (15.2.2006) and Zakharova, Larisa, *Dior in Moscow. A taste for luxury in Soviet fashion under N. S. Khrushchev*. 2010, pp. 95–119.
- 222 “Dior Clothes May be Made in the Soviet,” *The New York Times* 11 December, 1963.
- 223 In the documents of ODMO, the obligation to follow the international level in the new designs and patterns of clothes can be read repeatedly, like a refrain. It was thus no accident that in 1966 the labor collective of ODMO faced the task of “advancing to the application of the designs which are designed on the highest technical level of the best domestic and international standards” (RGAE.F.198. Op.1.D.200.L. 32.)
- 224 See for instance the advertisement in *The Times*, 6th of July, 1961. One of the earliest Soviet fashion shows outside the European Soviet bloc was held in 1958 in Cairo, Egypt as part of the trade exhibition of the cotton industry (see *The New York Times*, 29 April, 1958.)
- 225 www.afield.org.ua/mod3/mod83_1.html
- 226 The career of Lyudmila Romanovskaya (later Romanovskaya–Edwards) started at the Leningrad House of Fashion Design of Clothes but she moved to Moscow after getting married and started to work at ODMO. She emigrated later with her second husband, the artist Yurii Kuper (Kuperman) with a Jewish visa.
- 227 The model T. Vladimirtseva was selected to demonstrate Soviet fashion from among many candidates. Two factors worked in her favor: her previous education as a movie actress and her slender figure which was thought to appeal to the Western audience. Vladimirtseva's standard measure was 44 and in the middle of the 1960s she normally worked as a model in the children's department at ODMO, for which her figure was thought to be ideal in the Soviet Union.
- 228 In addition to Krutikova's suede coats, a dress in Russian national style under the title “Russian tea” as well as sports clothes with Moldavian folk motifs were demonstrated in Paris. For a report of the trip of the Soviet delegation to Paris, see RGAE F.467.Op.1.D.765.L.26, 29–30.
- 229 Soviet Styles—And a U.S. Audience. 34 styles designed by three leading Soviet designers—American fabrics made from Celanese fibers. *The New York Times*, April 25, 1968.
- 230 *Odezhda dlia Ameriki. Sovetskii eksport* 1968, 5 (56).

- 231 One of the reasons for the popularity of the Russian style was the American popular movie released in 1965 based on Boris Pasternak's Nobel prize-winning novel *Doctor Zhivago*, which remained highly contested in the Soviet Union.
- 232 From 1962 to 1969 the amount of designs at ODMO that went to exhibitions and shows grew remarkably, whereas the amount of industrial design declined somewhat. For instance, in 1969 the artistic council approved of 2730 "industrial" designs and 1354 designs for shows and exhibitions (RGAE F.467.Op.1.D.1638).
- 233 RGAE F.198.Op.1.D.222.L.11–13, 40–41, 64.
- 234 Aleksandr Igmand's memories, written down by A. Yushkova, give a detailed picture of the everyday life at ODMO. (See Yushkova, A., Aleksandr Igmand: "Ja odeval Brezhneva....". M.: NLO, 2008.)
- 235 See Spravochnik shveinika. T.1. Moskva: Legpromizdat., 1960. www.cniishp.ru/index.php?pp=stat/Lyapidus
- 236 This groundbreaking study was noted in The New York Times too under the title "Soviet fashion seeks 'Data.'" (September 23, 1956.)
- 237 <http://www.cniishp.ru/index.php?pp=stat/Lopandina>
- 238 RGAE F.198.Op.1.D.159.L.14.
- 239 RGAE F.198.Op.1.D.147.L.17–19.
- 240 An interview with D. F. Dominova, June 15, 2008.
- 241 The fashion industry was not the only area of industrial design with great hopes put in a comprehensive system of design. Similar impressive efforts were made in the electric industry. See Tillberg, Margareta, The electric industry in Soviet Russia, 1973–1979. Focused – Current Research Projects and Methods. Swiss Design Network Symposium 2008, pp. 2003–2053.
- 242 For a more detailed description of the Soviet fashion journals, see Vasil'ev, Aleksandr. *Russkaya moda. 150 let v fotografyakh*. Moskva: Slovo, 2004, p. 293 and others.
- 243 An interview with N. A. Nesterova, 20.9.2007.
- 244 An interview with N. M. Agarevskaya, 30.5.2007.
- 245 These main enterprises were the biggest specialized industrial units of light industry and had their own special structures of fashion design, research and development departments.
- 246 See for instance, the decision of the meeting of the Aesthetic Committee under the VIA Legprom Minlegproma SSSR on the question of the directions of fashion in the ensemble of the year 1970. Moskva 1968, pp. 26–31.
- 247 Ibid.
- 248 Ibid. p. 11.
- 249 Cf. Bartlett, D., *Fashion East*, 2010.
- 250 Krasovskaya, A. A. *Sovetskim zhenshinam–krasivuyu, dobrotnyuyu odezhdu*. Leningrad 1962, pp. 77–78.
- 251 For a presentation of an exemplary House of Domestic Services in Leningrad, see V. Nikitin, *Novyi dom Byta*. DI SSSR 1971:4(161) DI SSSR.
- 252 *Sluzhba byta* 1980 nr. 7, p. 41.
- 253 Vainshtein, Olga, *Fashioning women: The dressmaker as cultural producer in Soviet Russia*. In Marcus, George F. (ed.), *Para-sites. A Casebook of Cynical Reason*. Chicago: Chicago University Press 2000, pp. 195–223.
- 254 Kosyachenko, S. *Otstupi, "massovka"*. *Sluzhba byta* 1967 nr. 5, p. 6.
- 255 *Sluzhba byta*. 1966, nr. 1, p. 4. The general number of all the Soviet enterprises of everyday services grew from 135.2 thousand in 1960 to 239.4 thousand in 1970 and further to 267.9 in 1979. In the Russian part of the USSR, the respective figures were 66.2 thousand in 1960, 113.0 in 1970 and 119.1 in 1979. (*Istoriya sotsialisticheskoi ekonomiki SSSR*. T.7. Moskva:Nauka, 1980, p. 559.)
- 256 *Sluzhba byta* 1967, nr. 12, p. 5.
- 257 *Sluzhba byta* 1967, nr. 7, p. 19.

- 258 Mikhailov, Al. Ochen napryazhennyi god. Sluzhba byta 1968, nr. 4, p. 13.
- 259 Ibid.
- 260 The data come from the guidebook of the institutes and organizations of the Administration of Sewing and Repair of Clothes on Individual Orders from the population of the Moscow city administration (Mosgorispolkom).
- 261 Sluzhba byta 1966, nr. 9, p. 2.
- 262 Sluzhba byta 1980, nr. 1, p. 2.; nr. 11, p. 18.
- 263 An interview with N. A. Nesterova, 26.10.2006.
- 264 Sluzhba byta 1980, nr. 2, p. 9.
- 265 Ibid. p. 15.
- 266 Sluzhba byta 1980, nr. 9, p. 20.
- 267 Vladimirov, I. Uchastvuem na pervoi mezhdunarodnoi vystavke "Odezhda". Sluzhba byta. 1967, nr. 11, pp. 18–22.
- 268 Pravda 9.10.1971.
- 269 Sluzhba byta 1980, nr. 11, p. 38.
- 270 Sluzhba byta 1967, nr. 7, p. 12.
- 271 Sluzhba byta 1967, nr. 7, p. 32.
- 272 Nikonov, V. Pochemu rodilas' zhaloba? Sluzhba byta 1980, nr. 7, p. 35.
- 273 Sluzhba byta 1980, nr. 7, p. 47.
- 274 Eitingin, Ye. Stimul i rezultaty. Sluzhba byta 1966, nr. 8, p. 8.
- 275 Sluzhba byta 1980, nr. 4, p. 22.
- 276 Sluzhba byta 1966, nr.10, p. 7.
- 277 From the 18th of January, 1983, at the decision of the Executive Committee of the city of Moscow the administration of the House was separated from Factory No. 19 under the name Experimental–Exemplary Enterprise "Fashion House." On the 18th of January 1989 by the decision of the same committee (order no. 134 19.1.1989) it was renamed as Moscow Fashion House. Starting from February 1993 its official name is OAO "Moskovskii Dom Mody Viacheslava Zaitseva" (The Moscow Fashion House of Vyacheslav Zaitsev).
- 278 An interview with the director of the staff office of the Moscow Center of Fashion Design, G.V., 25.5.2007.
- 279 For a cultural history of Soviet underwear, see Gurova, Olga, *Sovetskoe nizhnee bel'e. Mezhdru ideologii i povsednevnost'u*. Moskva: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie, 2008.
- 280 See for instance, "Gratsia. Al'bum modelei Rostovskoi opytno–tekhneskoi laboratorii golovnykh uborov i shveinoi galanterei Minbyta RSFSR". Rostov/Don: Minbyt RSFSR, 1966.
- 281 Sluzhba byta, 1966. nr.9, p. 29.
- 282 Sluzhba byta 1980. nr. 2, p. 40.
- 283 Gratsia. Al'bom modelei Rostovskoi opytno–tekhneskoi laboratorii golovnykh uborov i shveinoi galanterei Minbyta RSFSR. Rostiov/Don:Minbyt RSFSR, 1966.
- 284 This figure included the fashion houses, the houses of fashion design, sewing laboratories, and research and development departments at the enterprises of everyday services. See Matusova, E., 'Model'ier respubliki.' Sluzhba byta 1967, nr. 10.
- 285 Sluzhba byta 1967, nr. 10.
- 286 Modnaya odezhda. Katalog. Moskva, VIAlegrpom, 1965.
- 287 Sluzhba byta 1970, nr. 12, pp. 20–25.
- 288 Sluzhba byta 1970, nr. 12, p. 25.
- 289 Sluzhba byta 1970, nr. 12, p. 23.
- 290 Arkad'ev, A., Ternist put' mody. Sluzba byta 1966, nr. 4, p. 36.
- 291 www.art-mozaika.ru/batik.php?page=3. See also the work of Temerin, S., *Russkoe prikladnoe iskusstvo. Sovetskie gody*. Moskva: Sovetskii khudozhnik, 1960.

- 292 Kiknadze, N. Takoe dalekoe i takoe blizkoe. Sluzhba byta 1969, nr. 9, p. 19.
293 Ibid. p. 19.
294 See in more detail, <http://www.niimestprom.ru>

Chapter 6.

- 295 An Interview with D. F. Dominov, 15.9.2007.
296 Interview with D. B. Shimilis 6.5.2008.
297 The department number 200 was closed to ordinary customers. It was opened in the middle of the 1950s to provide the leaders of the country as well as the members of their families with the best consumer goods, mostly of foreign origin.
298 Hilton, M.L., Retailing the revolution: The state department store (GUM) and Soviet society in the 1920's. *Journal of Social History* 37 (2004): 4, pp. 439–464.
299 3. TsAOPIM F.947 (The party organization of GUM). Op 1. D.1.L.1; D.165.L.49. (All the references to the archival documents in this chapter refer to this collection.)
300 Ibid. D.12.P.228. The minutes of the 15th meeting of the party committee at GUM, 27.4.1955.
301 Ibid. D.51.L.46.
302 Ibid. D.44.L.40. The minutes of the Party organization of the atelier, 14.9.1959.
303 Ibid. D.30.L.99–101.
304 In the Soviet Union, every shop, restaurant and other organization of public service was obliged to have a book of complaints and suggestions available to its customers in which they could freely write their – positive as well as negative – comments.
305 Ibid. D.41.L.179.
306 The mother of one of the authors still preserves as a kind of family relic her winter overcoat which was sewn at the atelier of GUM in the middle of the 1970s. She was very pleased with the designs and materials available as well as with the quality of the service and sewing.
307 Ibid. D.40.L.70.
308 Ibid. D.16.L.153. The minutes of the Party meeting of the Atelier and Department of Fashion Design 19.6.1955.
309 Ibid. D.96.L.79.
310 Ibid.L.78. The minutes of the Party meeting of the Atelier 13.1.1964.
311 Ibid. D.81.L.101.
312 D.1.L.14; D.44.L.40. The minutes of the Party organization of the atelier 14.9.1959.
313 D.96.L.80.
314 D.12.L.142. The presentation of the director of the atelier, Kozlova, at the meeting of the Party Committee GUM 19.7.1955.
315 D.30.L.19.
316 D.40.L.88.
317 D.44.L.42.
318 A. I. Mikoayn was the most important leader of trade all through the history of the Soviet Union. After the war he occupied at the same time some of the most important positions in the Party and the government. He was the Minister of Trade (from 1953) and the first Deputy Prime Minister (from 1949) as well as a member of the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR (from 1952).
319 Ibid. D.12.L.141. The minutes of the meeting of the Party Committee of GUM, 19.7.1955.
320 In addition to Averyanova (GUM), one member of the All-Union Chamber of Commerce (Torgovaya palata), one from TsUM (Central Department Store,

which had a well-known atelier in Moscow too), as well as a representative of the organization Lenodezhda which was engaged in customized sewing in the city of Leningrad (An interview with L. F. Averyanova 30.4.2008).

- 321 An interview with L. F. Averyanova, 30.4.2008.
- 322 A.Vavilova, GUM's own model, demonstrated the designs created at its fashion department. (Interview with A.Vavilova 30.4.2008).
- 323 D.34.L.137.
- 324 D.12.L.143.
- 325 D.165.L.72; D.110.L.125.
- 326 An interview with L. F. Averyanova 30.4.2008.
- 327 An interview with L. F. Averyanova 30.4.2008.
- 328 D.12.L.138, 140. The minutes of the meeting of the party committee of GUM, June 1955.
- 329 Interview with A. Vavilova and D. B. Shimilis, 27 April, 2008.
- 330 In 1950–1970 many designers of GUM worked extra in their leisure time by taking private orders. The income from these deals was often higher than their official salary at GUM. Naturally, no taxes were paid for this extra income. The transfer from the system of individual sewing to GUM was in many cases economically not profitable. For instance, Singer had received 3 000 roubles per month in his previous work place at an atelier of custom made clothes whereas at GUM he was paid only 1400 roubles. His prestigious occupation at GUM allowed him to find quite profitable private customers. An interview with L. M. Lobacheva (Andreeva), 30.4.2008. See also Alik Singer's internet publication about his father: www.bdm.ru/arhiv/2006/09/84.htm and www.teatr.newizv.ru/news/?IDNews=1251&date
- 331 D.12.L.137. The minutes of the meeting of the Party Committee of GUM, 19.7.1955.
- 332 D.12.L.151–152.
- 333 D.12.L.137.
- 334 Ibid.L.137.
- 335 D.12.L.138.
- 336 D.12.L.141.
- 337 D.12.L.138, 148–9.
- 338 There were, however, some exclusions: In 1962, some designs worked out by the designers at GUM were taken into production by the Moscow factories Bolshevichka and Number 9 as well as the Sewing Factory Number 1, Tula. The shoe factories were more interested in taking into production the shoes designed by A. Oganessov at GUM.
- 339 D.119.L.16.
- 340 D.129.L13.
- 341 According to Diane Crane, there is a huge gap between the artistic creations of haute couture and their practical applications: "The role of luxury fashion designers is not to set trends but to produce ideas for trends. From these collections, fashion editors and fashion forecasters select items that will be promoted as trends." (Fashion and its Social Agendas, 2000, p. 165.)
- 342 D.110.L.170.
- 343 Reid, Susan E., Destalinization and taste, 1953–1963. *Journal of Design History* 10 (1997), 2, pp. 177–201 and Buchli, Viktor, Krushchev, Modernism, and the fight against petit-bourgeois consciousness in the Soviet home. *Journal of Design History* 10 (1997), 2, pp. 161–176.
- 344 D.63.L.54.
- 345 D.75.L.166. One should remember that "abstract" was a term with highly negative connotations in the official Soviet art criticism.
- 346 D.75.L.169.
- 347 D.110.L.102. This particular citation is from 1967.

- 348 D.175.L.31.
- 349 See the minutes of the meetings of the Party organization in 1966, protocols 68 and 73. Ibid. D.105.L.160; D.126.L.15; D.165,L.62.
- 350 See the presentation of the public discussion of Soviet fashion in Chapter 8. See also Lebina, N. B. and A. N. Chistikov: *Obyvatel' i reformy*, 2003, 212 and Zakharova, Larisa, *Moda, ili rezhim sotsial'nogo nivelirovaniya*, 2009, 243–256.
- 351 D.126.L.11.
- 352 Ibid.L.12.
- 353 Ibid.L.14.
- 354 An interview with D. B. Shimilis, 30.4.2008.
- 355 D.105.L.79.
- 356 D.75.L.155.
- 357 D.94.L.112; D.105.L.111.
- 358 D.135,L.5.
- 359 As Mari Kanasaar, a long time fashion illustrator at *Siluett*, the fashion journal of the Tallinn fashion house stated when interviewed in 2013: “I don’t remember any special ideological pressure from Moscow; or it was just background noise that no one paid any attention to.” (Komissarov, E., Interview conducted with Mari Kanasaar, a long– time fashion illustrator at *Siluett*, in Komissarov, E. & Teeäär, B. (eds.), *Fashion and Cold War*, p. 144. At the same time, the editors of the journal experienced more concrete pressure from their own control committee which had representatives from, among others, the local Ministry of Light Industry and the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia (ibid.p.148).
- 360 D.39.L.182.
- 361 D.84.L.184; D.94.L.105; The interviews with D.B.Shimilis, 28.4.1008 and with L.F.Averyanova, 29.4.2008.
- 362 An interview with A.Vavilova, 30.4.2008.
- 363 The most succesful designs were I. V. Glukhova’s folklore dress, Voloshinova’s with the theme Cashmir (made out of Pavlovo–posadskie textiles) and K. I. Pobedinskaya’s collection of sport clothes following the themes of the ethnic costumes of the Russian North.
- 364 D.110.L.155.
- 365 D.63.L.125.
- 366 D.185.L.2.
- 367 D.146.L.132.
- 368 D.75.L.169 (1962).
- 369 D.126.L.15.
- 370 D.39.L.180.
- 371 The minutes no. 6 of the party organization, 29.12.1960. D.63.L.119.
- 372 Ibid.
- 373 D.75.L.170.
- 374 D.165.L.45.
- 375 For instance, in 1961 their editions were 60 resp. 25 thousands. (See D.63.L.34.)
- 376 D.94.L.124.
- 377 D.63.L.34.
- 378 D.32.L.17.
- 379 Anna Tikhomirova, who interviewed women living in Soviet times in the city of Yaroslavl, found out that according to her respondents the practical patterns with sewing instructions were in most demand in the 1960s and 1970s. It did not matter much if they were printed on cheap, poor paper as long as they could be used in practice to sew fashionable clothes, see Tikhomirova, Anna, V 280 kilometrakh ot Moskvyy: osobennosti mody i praktika povsednevnoi odezhdy sovetsjkoi provintsii (Yaroslavl, 1960–1980 gg.). *Neprikosnovennyi zapas*, nr. 37, 2004, p. 5 (<http://www.nz-online.ru/index.phtml?aid=25011179>).

- 380 D.119.L.1.
381 D.23.L.37; D.39.L.183;D41.L.219.
382 D.63.L.33,128.
383 D.84.L.180.
384 D.126.L.26.
385 D.63.L.128; D.110.L.167.
386 D.155.L.90.
387 D.110.L.132. In addition to the collections mentioned by Shimilis, the Department regularly received orders to design special work clothes or uniforms too: for the saleswomen at GUM and at the hard currency shops (*Berezka*), the waitresses at the Soviet airports, for the Moscow International Students' Sports Competition (in 1973),etc.
388 D.155.L.88–89.
389 See, for instance, the minutes no. 15 of the Party meeting of the fashion department, 18.9.1968. (D.219.L.117.)
390 D.119.L.16; D.126.L.15.
391 This number is calculated by multiplying the number of seats with the amount of annual shows.
392 D.175.L.6.; D.185.L.8.
393 D.155.L.23.
394 D.126.L.15.
395 D.175.L.23.
396 D.185.L.1–2,4.
397 D.145.L.7.
398 D.165.L.10.
399 Ibid.
400 Ibid.
401 D.145.L.10.
402 D.126.L.15.
403 D.34.L.140.
404 See Gorsuch, A.E. All this is Your World. Soviet Tourism at Home and Abroad after Stalin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp.106–125.
405 D.34.L.43.
406 D.63.L.6.
407 The Minutes of the Party meeting of the Fashion department no.10, 26.5.1961. (D.63.L.23.)
408 D.56.L.104.
409 Ibid.L.103.
410 Ibid.
411 D.75.L.138.
412 Ibid.L.140.
413 Ibid.L.163.
414 Ibid.L.164.
415 D.84.L.180.
416 Ibid.
417 An interview with D. Shimilis and A. Vavilova, 30.4.2008.
418 D.75.L.169.
419 D.110.L.194.
420 An interview with L.M.Lobacheva (Andreeva), 30.4.2008.
421 D.84.L.179.
422 D.110.L.102.
423 *ibid.*L.110.
424 D.105.L.89.
425 D.39.L.179.

- 426 An interview with L.M.Lobacheva (Andreeva), 28.4.2008.
 427 Salon seudun sanomat, 24.11.1959.
 428 D.105.L.111.
 429 Nina und die "weisse Nächte". "Erfurter Debut ein Triumph für uns." Gespräch mit Nina Wawilowa vom GUM. Thüringische Landeszeitung, 14.11.1965.p.1.
 430 An interview with D.B.Shimilis and A.Vavilova, 30.4.2008.

Chapter 7.

- 431 For an interesting discussion of Estonia as the Soviet abroad, see Gorsuch, All this is Your World, pp. 49–78.
 432 Ajalooline öiend ("a historical report") attached to the archival sources of Tallinn Moamaja preserved at the Estonian State Archive (Eesti Riigiarhiiv), ERA.R.9.6.
 433 ERA.R.1886.1.455, p. 18.
 434 ERA.R.1886.1.349, pp. 4–5.
 435 ERA.R.9.6.33, pp. 1–5.
 436 ERA.R.9.6.844, p. 9. and 9.6.739, p. 5.
 437 Interview with Evi Pääbo 12.3.2008.
 438 ERA.R.316.1.12, p. 10.
 439 ERA.R.316.1.22, pp. 1–3.
 440 ERA.R.316.1.12, pp. 11–12.
 441 ERA.F.117.1.24.
 442 See for instance, ERA.F. 117.1.28 and 29.
 443 ERA.F 117.1.29, pp.33 and 63.
 444 Ibid. p.73.
 445 ERA.R.316.1.31, p. 25.
 446 ERA.R.316.1.234, p. 7.
 447 Interview with Evi Pääbo 12.3.2008.
 448 ERA.R.316.1.42, pp. 10, 42, 101, 107 and 110. From other sources we know it was acceptable for the women in the Baltic states to wear trousers while going out to the city in the evening at least a couple of years before the European parts of Russia not to speak of the non-European parts of the Soviet Union.
 449 Interview with Krista Kajandu 12.3.2008.
 450 See for instance ERA.F.117.1.24, p. 5.
 451 In the middle of the 1960s, ODMO at Moscow had about 700 employees, who designed about four thousand new designs each year, see RGAE.F.523, Op.1, D.217, L.267.
 452 ERA.R.1992.2.248.
 453 In the correspondence of the Tallinn House of Fashion Design a deal from the year 1973 has been preserved, according to which the fashion houses of Tallinn, Leningrad, Gorkyi and Kiev agreed to design one fashion design for each other (see ERA.R.316.1.204, p. 9.) Whether this really was only a one time phenomenon of such cooperation between such bigger Soviet houses of fashion design is not known but in any case such closer forms of cooperation seem to have been more of an exception than the rule.
 454 Interviews with Krista Kajandu and Katrin Kasesalu, 12.3.2008.
 455 Interview with Lende Švarts, 12.3.2008. For the year 1965, see also ERA.F.117.1.23.
 456 The journal *Siluet* was a very prominent journal in the whole printing and media business in Soviet Estonia. In 1962, its share was one eighth of the annual paper deficit of the whole republic (See ERA.F. 117.1.26, p. 57. "Deficit" means in this case the difference between the planned and the actually received deliveries of printing paper. Because of the relatively low prices of books, journals and

newspapers, printing paper was one of the permanent deficits in the USSR's economy).

- 457 See for instance, for the year 1965: ERA.R. 9.6.33, pp.1–5.
- 458 Like many such legendary stories, it is difficult to verify whether this had taken place just once or twice or whether it really was a common practice all through the existence of the Fashion House.
- 459 Interview with Lende Švarts, 12.3.2008.
- 460 ERA.R. 1992.2.248, pp. 32–5.
- 461 Interview with Krista Kajandu, 12.3.2008.
- 462 Interviews with Mari Kanasaar and Lende Švarts, 12.3.2008.
- 463 Interview with Mari Kanasaar, 12.3.2008.
- 464 Valsil'ev, Alexander: *Russkaia moda: 150 let v fotografiakh*. Moskva: Slovo 2006, p. 352.
- 465 See Komissarov, E., Interview conducted with Mari Kanasaar, a long-time fashion illustrator at Siluett, in Komissarov, E. & Teeäär, B. (eds.), *Fashion and Cold War*, 2013 p. 144. A
- 466 Interview with Mari Kanasaar, 12.3.2008.
- 467 ERA.R.316.1.11, p. 20.
- 468 In 1962, altogether 31 workers of the Tallinn House had been ordered on a work trip to somewhere in the Soviet Union (Moscow, Riga, Vilnius, Minsk, Leningrad, etc.; see ERA.F. 117.1.26, p. 9).
- 469 In 1964, 48 designs from Tallinn were, for instance, included in the central collection (see ERA.F.117.1.27, p. 36).
- 470 See for instance, RGAE.F.523.Op.1, D.203, L.101.
- 471 ERA.R.316.1.11, pp.129–130.
- 472 This also meant that their political correctness and loyalty were important issues discussed at the Party meetings. Some even thought that it would therefore be best if the head models were members of the Party; see ERA.F.117.1.26, p. 2.
- 473 In 1968, for instance, the designs of the Tallinn fashion house, together with ODMO's from Moscow and the houses from Riga and Vilnius, demonstrated in the trade exhibition in London. Anita Burlaka, the director of the Tallinn house, commented in an interview with *The New York Times* ("Russians Put On a Show—a Stylish One," August 7, 1968.) that "minis are going out of style now. Young people still wear them, but an elegant lady, paying attention to her looks, finds the line and length of her dress herself and this adds to her looks"
- 474 See RGAE F.523. Op.1, D. 208, L.217 in December 1966, ODMO sent Viadzeshlav Zaitsev to visit the Riga, Vilnius, Tallinn and Leningrad fashion houses in order to finish his collection of fashion designs for the World Fair at Montreal.
- 475 ERA.R.316.1.11, p. 39.
- 476 *Ibid.* p. 18
- 477 In 1962 the fashion house organized 82 exhibitions and fashion shows and 11 lectures of which 8 were on the radio or TV (ERA.F.117.1.25, p.23). In 1966, 82 fashion shows, 11 lectures with demonstrations of fashion and 40 ordinary lectures including radio and TV presentations (ERA.F.117.1.29, p. 78).
- 478 Interview with Jüri Siim, 18.6.2008 Tallinn.
- 479 ERA.F.117.1.27.
- 480 See for instance, the order given on 26.4.1965, RGAE.F.523.Op.1, D.203, L.405.
- 481 See for instance RGAE.F.523.Op.1, D.200, L.253, 281 and 330 and D.203.L.17, 60.
- 482 The inhabitants of Tallinn and the other parts of the northern coast of Estonia had, since the 1960s, as the only region in the Soviet Union, direct access to TV programs from the capitalist West. They could namely follow the programs of the Finnish TV across the Finnish Bay. Even though Finland definitely was not a leading nation of fashion design this opportunity to follow the style of dress and fashions, for instance, in the regularly broadcasted American and European

- movies and TV-series, must have had an impact of its own on the fashion consciousness of both the ordinary Estonians and the fashion designers.
- 483 RGAE F.523.Op.1, D.207, L.184–186.

Chapter 8.

- 484 Zhuravlev, S. and Gronow, Soviet people with ‘big bodies.’ In Rysst, Mari (ed.), *Aesthetic Ideals and Big Bodies: A comparative Study of Russia and Norway*. Collection of papers presented at Moscow 17–18. September 2009. Statens institute for forbruksforskning, Oslo. www.sifo.no/page/Nyheter/Nyheter_internet_arkiv/110178/77044.html
- 485 See also Chernova, E.A., *Formy kul'tury povsednevnosti po materialam sovetskikh zhenskikh molodezhnykh zhurnalov 1960–1970gg*. Diplomnaya rabota Universiteta istorii kul'tur, pp.43–54. <http://www.doc.ru/users/unic/diplom.html>
- 486 The library of the All-Union Fashion House, ODMO, collected and preserved clips of all the articles on fashion published in the Soviet press. It offered a unique data source to researchers interested in analyzing the Soviet discourse on fashion.
- 487 The distribution of these instructions were highly centralized in the Soviet system of fashion. Aleksandr Vasil'ev recalled in his popular history of Russian fashion (*Russkaia Moda. 150 let v fotografjakh*, Moskva: Slovo 2006, p. 359), that in order to help the Soviet clothes factories and ateliers, one single Moscow fashion expert, Irina Sumina, regularly wrote “methodical instructions” which included precise instructions for the fashion designs authorized by the artistic council for the next two years. These stencilled instructions were distributed in 500 copies all over the Soviet Union. These methodical instructions sent from Moscow were annually adopted on the official order of the Ministry of the Consumer Goods Industry and had therefore a highly official character. On the other hand, the local fashion houses were under no real obligation to follow them. Consequently, it depended on the local directors and artistic directors to what extent they were in fact followed. Some followed them closely, others took them just as useful examples to be followed quite flexibly and freely. Thus in fact they had the character of common recommendations only.
- 488 The first caricature of a ‘stiliagi’ appeared as early as 1949 (Beliayev, D.: *Stiliagi*, March 7, 1949, p. 10) in the popular Soviet comic journal *Krokodil* (see Zakharova, Larisa, *Moda, ili rezhim sotsial'nogo niverlirovaniya*. In Kondratieva, T.S. and A.K.Sokolov (red.): *Rezhimnye liudi v SSSR*, 2009, pp. 243–256.) The image of a stiliagi, ‘eternalised’ in this picture, became the stereotypical image repeated in the Soviet press ever after. See also <http://bujhm.livejournal.com/383320.html>.
- 489 *Iskusstvo odevat'sia*. Leningrad: Leninizdat 1959, p. 243.
- 490 Tolstykh, V.I. (ed.), *Moda–za i protiv*. Moskva: Iskusstvo1973.
- 491 Kopelman, S. and Arpa, M., ‘Vkus i moda.’ *Sovetskoie zakarpat'ye* (Uzgorod), 26.10.1958.
- 492 Solovjeva, E.G., ‘Devushkam polezno znat.’ *Komsomolets* (Cheliabinsk), 10.3.1963. The same article was published in other local newspapers too. See for instance, *Komsomol'skoie plemia* (Orenburg), 20.3.1963.
- 493 *Ibid.*
- 494 *Vechernie novosti* (Vilnius), 17.4.1971.
- 495 *Ibid.*
- 496 Murasova, R., ‘Umei krasivo odevat'sia.’ *Komsomolets Tadzshikistana* (Stalinabad), 17.2.1960.
- 497 *Ibid.*
- 498 Zavishane, J., ‘Prishla ocen.’ *Vechernie novosti* (Vilnius), 11.11.1969.

- 499 Plenkina, V., 'Pervyj bal.' Vechernaya (Ufa), 21.5.1971.
- 500 'Vesna i moda.' Komsomoletz Kubani (Krasnodar), 25.5.1974.
- 501 Videnskaya, G., 'Vesna i moda.' Gorkovskaya Pravda (Gorki), 22.4.1973.
- 502 Videnskaya, G., Leninskaya smena (Gorki), 27.3.1971.
- 503 Yefremova, L., 'O dline uzhe ne sporyat.' Zhurnal mod, 1971, nr.3 (104).
- 504 Fomina, Z., 'Moda-kakoi on budet-.' Zabaikalskii rabochii (Chita), 12.11.1972.
- 505 'Modnye silhuety.' Vperiod (Khimki), 6.3.1971.
- 506 Zhurnal mod, 1966-67:4, pp. 3 and 4.
- 507 Lapiere, D. and Lefévre, A., 'Il dicte la mode á Moscou.' Paris Match, nr. 724, February 23, 1969.
- 508 "Only a few of Mr. Zaitsev's sketches are ever made" The New York Times reported in 1967 (July 14) in an early interview with Zaitsev "If I had My Way." A couple of years later, on January 13, 1969, the same newspaper quoted Zaitsev's comments on the new trends of Soviet fashion in an article with the title "Style Less Avant in Moscow": "We cherish our women as women and our men as men"
- 509 During recent times, Zaitsev has "stylized" his biography into a public figure and consequently the selective highlights of his biography and career have become quite well known to all Russians interested in fashion and popular culture. (See for instance Zaitsev, Slava, Tainy obmana. Moskva: Iskusstvo XX veka, 2006.)
- 510 Smena nr. 5, 1964 8 (May), p. 36.
- 511 'Zachem nuzhna moda.' Komsomolskaya Pravda (Moscow), 16.6.1967.
- 512 V.Kirsanova, 'Chelovek i moda.' Moskovskii komsomolets (Moscow), 30.6.1967.
- 513 See for instance, Dneva, I., 'Moda-chto eto takoe?' Rabochaya Gazeta, 9.2.1972, Leikin, A., 'Moda eto iskusstvo' Sotsialisticheskaya Karaganda, 13.1.1973, Verstova, V., 'Vkus ne molchit.' Sovetskaya Rossiya (Moskva), 31.12.1973, and Batayev, N., 'Poslednii shtrikh.' Moskovskiy Komsomolets (Moskva), 16.2.1974.
- 514 Dneva's Moda-shto eto takoe? was distributed by TASS and was published, for instance, also in Ukraine in Voroshilovgradskaya Pravda (Voroshilovgrad), 5.3.1972.
- 515 'Sovetskij zakonodatel' mod - Zaitsev.' Ogoniok 1966:1, p 29.
- 516 Orlova, L., 'Moda - eto seriozno.' Rabotnitsa 1977:10.
- 517 Kuziaev, A., 'Model'er V. Zaitsev.' Sovetskaya torgovlia (Moskva), 3.2.1976.
- 518 See, for instance, Televidenie-radioveshchanie 6.6.1977.
- 519 See for instance Ogoniok 1966, nr.1. and Izvestiya (Moskva) 13.9.1966.
- 520 See for instance Zhurnal Mod 1977 nr.4.
- 521 Zheleznova, N., 'Kogda vse molodye.' Molodezh Moldavii (Kishinev), 5.10.1963.
- 522 See for instance, Saulis, V., 'Sozdateli mod.' Komsomol'skaya Pravda (Vilnius), 11.3.1961.
- 523 Magazin "Moda." Sovetskaya Litva (Vilnius), 5.9.1965.
- 524 Ibid.
- 525 'Nauchilish' u vilniustsev.' Vechernie novosti (Vilnius), 9.2.1961.
- 526 'Novye khabarovskie modeli.' Tikhoookeanskaja Pravda (Khabarovsk), 6.9.1962.
- 527 Petrin, A., "Uchites" krasivo odevat'sia.' Chelyabinskii rabochii (Chelyabinsk), 17.8.1966.
- 528 'V kafe pokaz mody.' Volgogradskaya Pravda (Volgograd), 18.4.1969.
- 529 Biliaeva, N., 'Pervaya model' mesiatsa.' Ulyanovskaja Pravda (Volkograd), 18.4.1969.
- 530 'Eto modno.' Sovetskaya Chuvasiya (Cheboksary), 6.10.1964.
- 531 V. Igorov, 'Mody v sel'skom klube.' Sovetskaya Chuvasia (Cheboksary), 5.5.1968.
- 532 'Magazin pri eksperimental'nom tsekhe.' Vechernyje novosti (Vilnius), 4.3.1960.
- 533 'Industriya mody'. Molodoi dal'nevostochnik (Khabarovsk), 19.7.1966.
- 534 L. Bondareva, 'Mody predlagaet "Volga" Severnyi rabochi (Yaroslavl)', 26.10.1966.
- 535 Kostygova, T. and Levina, A., 'Taina bol'shogo razmera.' Rabotnitsa, 1965: 9.
- 536 'Teatr, eskizy kazhdij den.' Ogonniok 1967: 10.

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Chapter 9.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

A List of Original Names of the Soviet Institutions and Their Abbreviations

- Aesthetic Council – Esteticheskii sovet VIALegproma
- Artistic Council – Khudozhestvennyi sovet
- Atelier – atelier of the custom made clothes
- Central Scientific Research Institute of the Garment Industry- Tsentral’nyi nauchno-issledovatel’skii institut shveinoi promyshlennosti, TsNIIShP
- Central Experimental-Technical Laboratory of Garment designs, at the Russian Republican Ministry of Everyday Services – Tsentral’naya opytno-technicheskaya shveinaya laboratoriya Ministerstva bytovogo obsluzhivaniya naseleniya RSFSR, TsOTShL
- Department of Fashion at GUM – Otdel mod GUMa
- Center of Everyday Services – Dom byta
- House of Fashion Design of Clothes, DM or DMO – Dom modelei or Dom modelei odezhdy
- Exhibition Hall – Demonstratsionnyi zal
- State Planning Committee – Gosplan
- State Department Store in Moscow – Gosudarstvennyi universal’nyi magazin, GUM
- House of Fashion Design of Leather Goods and Haberdashery – Dom modelei kozhgalantereinykh izdelii Ministerstva legkoi promyshlennosti (Minlegprom) RSFSR
- House of Fashion Design of Work Clothes – Dom modelei spetsial’noi i rabochei odezhdy Minlegproma RSFSR
- House of Fashion Design of Sportswear – Dom modelei sportivnoi odezhdy Minlegproma RSFSR
- Ministry of Light (or Consumer Goods) Industry – Ministerstvo legkoi promyshlennosti, Minlegprom
- Ministry of Everyday Services (republican) – Ministerstvo bytovogo obsluzhivaniya naseleniya, Minbyt
- Ministry of Local Industry – Ministerstvo mestnoi promyshlennosti
- MDMO –Moskovskii dom modelei odezhdy, Moscow House of Fashion Design of Clothes.
- ODMO – Obshchесоjuznyi Dom modelei odezhdy, All-Union House of Fashion Design of Clothes at the Ministry of the Consumer Goods Industry.
- Rostov Experimental-Technical Laboratory of Head Wear and Corsets – Rostovskaya eksperimental’no-tekhnicheskaya laboratoriya golovnykh uborov i korsetnykh izdeliy Ministerstva bytovogo obsluzhivaniya naseleniya RSFSR

- Councils of the People's Economy –Sovnarkhozy, Sovety narodnogo khoziaistva
- Special Bureau of Artistic Design of the Ministry of Light Industry of the RSFSR –Spetsial'noe khudozhestvennoe konstruktorskoe buro Minlegproma RSFSR
- Scientific Research Institute of Arts and Crafts – Nauchno-issledovatel'skii institut khudozhestvennoi promyshlennosti Ministerstva mestnoi promyshlennosti RSFSR
- Scientific Research Institute of Technology and Design for the Local Industry –Nauchno-issledovatel'skii konstruktorsko-tehnologicheskii institut mestnoi promyshlennosti RSFSR, NIKTIMP
- Ukrainian IALegprom – Institute of Product Assortment and Culture of Dress of the Ministry of the Consumer Goods Industry of the Ukrainian SSR - Institut assortimenta izdelii legkoi promyshlennosti i kul'tury odezhdy Minlegproma Ukrainiskoi SSR
- Uzbek Central Bureau of Technical Design at the Ministry of the Light Industry of the Uzbek SSR –Tsentral'noe tekhniko-konstruktorskoye buro Minlegproma Uzbekskoi SSR
- All-Union Institute of Product Assortment and Culture of Dress, under the Ministry of Light Industry of the USSR – VIALegprom, Vsesoyuznyi institut assortimenta izdelii legkoi promyshlennosti i kul'tury odezhdy

Appendix 2

A List of Major Fashion Design Institutions Under the Ministry of Light Industry of the USSR

- A) All-Union and republican fashion design institutions with special status and functions of coordination, research, and methodical work:
- VIALegprom (Moscow)
 - ODMO (Moscow)
 - Special Bureau of Artistic Design of Clothes at the Ministry of Light Industry of the RSFSR (Moscow)
 - IALegprom at the Ministry of the Consumer Goods Industry of the Ukrainian SSR (Kiev)
 - Uzbek Central Bureau of Technical Design at the Ministry of the Consumer Goods Industry of the Uzbek SSR (Tashkent)
- B) Republican and regional houses of fashion design of clothes
- In the Russian Federation:
- Altai DMO (Barnaul)
 - Chelyabinsk DMO
 - Gorky DMO
 - Ivanovo DM
 - Irkutsk DM
 - Kalinin DM
 - Kemerovo DM
 - Khabarovsk DMO
 - Kuibyshev DM
 - Leningrad DMO
 - Novosibirsk DMO
 - Perm' DM
 - Rostov-on-Don DM
 - Sverdlovsk DMO
 - Ufa DM

- Voronezh DMO
- Volgograd DMO
- Yaroslavl'

In the Soviet Republic of Ukraine:

- Dnepropetrovsk DM
- Donetsk DM
- Kiev DMO
- Khar'kov DM
- Lvov DMO
- Odessa DM

In other republics of the USSR:

- Armenian republican DMO (Yerevan)
- Azerbaijani DMO (Baku)
- Belorussian republican DM (Minsk)
- Estonian republican DM (Tallinn)
- Georgian republican DM (Tbilisi)
- Kazakh republican DM (Alma-Ata)
- Kirghiz republican DM (Frunze)
- Latvian republican DMO (Riga)
- Lithuanian republican DM (Vilnius)
- Moldavian republican DMO (Kishinev)
- Turkmen republican DM (Ashkhabad)
- Uzbek republican DM (Tashkent)

C) Specialized houses of fashion design of tricot clothes:

- All-Union House of Fashion Design of Tricot Clothes (Moscow);
- Leningrad House of Fashion Design of Tricot Clothes;
- Armenian Republican House of Fashion Design of Tricot Clothes «Erebuni» (Yerevan);
- Georgian Republican House of Fashion Design of Tricot Clothes (Tbilisi)
- Kazakh Republican House of Fashion Design of Tricot Clothes (Alma-Ata)
- Ukrainian Republican House of Fashion Design of Tricot Clothes (Kiev)
- Uzbek Republican House of Fashion Design of Tricot Clothes (Tashkent)

D) Specialized houses of fashion design of shoes:

- All-Union House of fashion design of shoes (Moscow)
- Leningrad House of fashion design of shoes
- Novosibirsk House of fashion design of shoes
- Chelyabinsk House of fashion design of shoes
- Armenian House of fashion design of shoes (Yerevan)
- Belorussian House of fashion design of shoes (Minsk)

E) Other specialized houses of fashion design:

- Russian Republican House of Fashion Design of Leather Goods and Haberdashery (Moscow)
- Russian Republican House of Fashion Design of Sports Wear (Moscow)
- Russian Republican House of Fashion Design of Work Clothes and Overalls (Moscow)
- Ukrainian Specialized House of Fashion Design of Work Clothes (Kiev)

Appendix 3

Houses of Fashion Design of Clothes – Major Providers of New Fashionable Clothing for Soviet Mass Production Under the Russian Ministry of Light Industry (Particular Houses Attached to Particular Garment Factories):

- 1) The houses of fashion design of clothes in Gorky, Yaroslavl', Ivanovo, Kuibyshev, Perm and Ufa were obliged to provide new designs for the garment factories located in the Volga region and in the Russian North-East.
- 2) The Voronezh, Volgograd and Rostov-na-Donu Houses were obliged to provide new fashions for the garment factories situated in the Southern part of Russia and the North Caucasus.
- 3) The All-Union House of Fashion Design (ODMO), Kalinin House, and Special Bureau of the Artistic Design of Clothes of the RSFSR (SKhKB) were obliged to provide new fashions for the garment factories situated in the Moscow region (city of Moscow, Moscow region and neighboring regions).
- 4) The Leningrad House was obliged to provide new fashions for the garment factories situated in the Leningrad region (city of Leningrad, Leningrad region and neighboring regions).
- 5) The Sverdlovsk and Chelyabinsk Houses worked for the garment factories in the Urals.
- 6) The Houses in Barnaul, Kemerovo and Novosibirsk were obliged to provide new designs for the garment factories in the Western Siberia.
- 7) The Irkutsk House was tied to the factories in Eastern Siberia.
- 8) The Khabarovsk House designed new clothes for the garment factories of the Russian Far East region.

Appendix 4

A List of Major Research Institutes Subordinated to the Ministry of the Light Goods Industry of the USSR Involved in Fashion Design Activities on an Experimental Basis

- Altai Scientific Research Institute of the Textile Industry, Barnaul (Altaiskii NII tekstil'noi promyshlennosti)
- Central Scientific Research Institute of the Garment Industry, Moscow (TsNII shveinoi promyshlennosti)
- Central Scientific Research Institute of the Cotton Industry, Moscow (TsNII Khlopchato-bumazhnykh izdeliy)
- Central Scientific Research Institute of Wool, Moscow (TsNII shersti)
- Central Scientific Research Institute of the Linen Industry, Moscow (TsNII l'novolokna)
- Central Scientific Research Institute of the Leather Industry, Moscow (TsNII kozhanoi promyshlennosti)
- Georgian Scientific Research Institute of the Textile Industry, Tbilisi (Gruzinskii NII tekstil'noi promyshlennosti)
- Leningrad Scientific Research Institute of the Textile Industry (Leningradskii NII tekstil'noi promyshlennosti)
- Lithuanian Scientific Research Institute of the Textile Industry, Kaunas (Litovskii NII tekstil'noi promyshlennosti)
- Scientific Research Institute of the Russian Consumer Goods Industry, Kostroma (NII Legproma RSFSR)
- Scientific Research Institute of the Latvian Consumer Goods Industry, Riga (NII Legproma Latviyskoi SSR)

- Scientific Research Institute of the Textile Industry, Moscow (NII tekstil'noi promyshlennosti)
- Scientific Research Institute of Polymeric and Chemical Fibers, Moscow (NII polimerno-khimicheskikh volokon)
- Scientific Research Institute of the Textile and Haberdashery Industry, Moscow (NII tekstil'no-galantereinoi promyshlennosti)
- Scientific Research Institute of the Leather and Haberdashery Industry, Moscow (NII kozhgalantereinoi promyshlennosti)
- Technological Institute of the Kazakh Consumer Goods Industry, Alma-Ata (Giprotekhnolegprom Kazakhskoi SSR)

Appendix 5

A List of Major Soviet Organizations of Fashion Design of Clothes that Regularly Published Their Own Fashion Journals or Albums:

- VIALegprom, Moscow ("Zhurnal mod" – Fashion journal, "Modeli sezona" – Designs for the Season);
- Belorussian DM, Minsk ("Katalog mod" – Fashion Catalogue)
- Estonian DM, Tallinn ("Siluett")
- Georgian DM, Tbilisi
- Kazakh DM, Alma-Ata ("Modalar" – Journal of fashions)
- Latvian DM, Riga ("Rigas modes" – Riga fashions)
- Leningrad DM
- Lithuanian DM, Vilnius
- ODMO, Moscow ("Zhurnal mod" – later published by VIAlegprom);
- Perm DM ("Zhurnal mod" – Fashion journal)
- Uzbek DM, Tashkent ("Katalog mod" – Fashion Catalogue)

Abstract

Jukka Gronow & Sergey Zhuravlev

Fashion Meets Socialism

Fashion industry in the Soviet Union after the Second World War

This book is the story of the emergence and establishment of the post-war Soviet culture of dress, the great expectations attached to it, its great achievements and the limitations that prevented it from revolutionizing the Soviet style of dress and culture of consumption in general. The reasons for the discrepancy between the 'input' and 'output' in the Soviet system of fashion provide an intriguing question to which we devote much attention. The serious shortages, issues of quality and limited variety of items regularly on sale in the Soviet shops were problems that plagued not only the fashion industry in the USSR but the production of consumer goods in general. However, these problems probably beleaguered the clothes industry to a greater extent than other fields of consumption. The rapid, seasonal changes of fashion just did not fit into the planned economy.

The Soviet Union has certainly never enjoyed a high reputation in the world of fashion. The standardized, industrially mass-produced clothes were held in low esteem by both Soviet consumers and foreign visitors. If anything, Soviet citizens were generally dissatisfied with the domestic supply of clothing. Interestingly at this time, the Soviet Union had one of the world's largest organizations of fashion design, all planned, financed and supported by the state. Thousands of professional, well-educated designers worked in the various Soviet institutions of fashion in four parallel organizations. They designed according to the annual plan thousands of new fashionable garments and accessories both for industrial mass production and for smaller fashion ateliers that sewed custom made clothes for their customers.

By the early 1960s, these institutions of fashion design had many accomplishments to be proud of. They promoted Soviet fashion by increasing the variety of industrially produced clothing as well as with their spectacular fashion shows, which were well received both at home and abroad. Thus, Soviet fashion contributed to the Soviet effort to nurture peaceful competition

between the two world systems, socialism and capitalism. It became obvious during the 1970s that, in the end not even fashion and fashion design, could overcome the economic and bureaucratic limitations and inherent rigidity of the planned economy.

This book presents, above all, a study of the establishment and development of the Soviet organization and system of fashion industry and design as it gradually evolved in the years after the Second World War in the Soviet Union, which was, in the understanding of its leaders, reaching the mature or last stage of socialism when the country was firmly set on the straight trajectory to its final goal, Communism. What was typical of this complex and extensive system of fashion was that it was always loyally subservient to the principles of the planned socialist economy. This did not by any means indicate that everything the designers and other fashion professionals did was dictated entirely from above by the central planning agencies. Neither did it mean that their professional judgment would have been only secondary to ideological and political standards set by the Communist Party and the government of the Soviet Union. On the contrary, as our study shows, the Soviet fashion professionals had a lot of autonomy. They were eager and willing to exercise their own judgment in matters of taste and to set the agenda of beauty and style for Soviet citizens.

The present book is the first comprehensive and systematic history of the development of fashion and fashion institutions in the Soviet Union after the Second World War. Our study makes use of rich empirical and historical material that has been made available for the first time for scientific analysis and discussion. The main sources for our study came from the state, party and departmental archives of the former Soviet Union. We also make extensive use of oral history and the writings published in Soviet popular and professional press.

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Fond 4670 – Ministerstvo legkoi promyshlennosti SSSR (1965–1989)

Fond 7604 – Narkomlegprom i Minlegprom SSSR (before 1957)

Fond 7971 – Ministerstvo torgovli SSSR

Fond 8591 – Glavnoe upravlenie tekstil'noi promyshlennosti Minlegproma SSSR

Fond 8610 – Glavnoe upravlenie shveinoi promyshlennosti Minlegproma SSSR

Fond 8815 – Glavnoe upravlenie shveinoi, trikotazhnoi i tekstil'no-galantereinoi promyshlennosti Minlegproma SSSR

Fond 9480 – Gosudarstvennyi komitet po nauke i tekhnike pri Sovete Ministrov SSSR, GKNT

Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii, GARF

FOND P-393 – Narodnyi Komissariat vnutrennikh del RSFSR

FOND P – Upolnomochennyye VTsIK i otvetsvennye predstaviteli TsK RKP(b) po vsestoronnemu kontroliu i revizii gubernskikh, uezdnykh i volostnykh sovestkikh uzhrezhdenii i partorganisationsii

Tsentrал'nyi Arkhiv Obshchestvenno-politicheskoi Istorii goroda Moskvy, TsAOPIM

Fond 947 – GUM Party Organization

Tserntal'nyi Arkhiv goroda Moskvy, TsAGM

Fond 474 – Gosudarstvennyi universal'nyi magazin, GUM

Fond 1953 – Tsentrал'nyi universal'nyi magazin, TsUM

Eesti Riigiarhiiv (Estonian State Archive)

ERA.R.9.6. Tallinna Moemaja

ERA.F.117 Tallinna Moemaja parteiorganisatsioonid

ERA.R.316 Tallinna Moemaja kunstinõukogu protokollid

ERA.R.1886 Tallinna Moemaja aastearunne, tehnilis-tootsimis finantsplan

ERA.R.1992 Tallinna Moemaja konstruktsoonisplan
ERA.R.2285 ENSV Kergetööstuse ministeeriumi

Eesti filmiarhiiv (Estonian Film Archive)
Tallinna moemaja collection
Lembitu collection

II. PRIVATE COLLECTIONS OF DOCUMENTS AND PHOTOS

Nauchno-tehnicheskaya Biblioteka Obshchesojuznogo Doma modelei odezhdy, NTB
ODMO
Collection of Russian/Soviet and international fashion journals
Collection of photos and albums
Collection of reports on internal and international fashion events
Collection of clippings from the Soviet press on fashion and culture of dress

Personal Collection of Vyacheslav Zaitsev, Biblioteka Doma mody Vyacheslava Zaitseva
Collection of photos
Collection of clippings from the Soviet and international press

Family Collection of David Borisovich Shimilis and Antonina Vavilova

Personal Collection of Natella Markovna Agarevskaya

Personal Collection of Lidiya Fedorovna Aver'yanov

Personal Collection of Svetlana Konstantinovna Samsonova

Personal Collection of Galina Ivanovna Titkova

III. ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED IN 2007–2009 WITH FORMER EMPLOYEES OF THE SOVIET FASHION DESIGN INSTITUTIONS AND GARMENT FACTORIES

In Moscow

Svetlana Konstantinovna Samsonova
Natella Markovna Agarevskaya
Lidiya Fedorovna Averyanova
Tatiana Ivanovna Balandina
Tatiana Nikolaevna Barkanova
Dmitry Fedorovich Dominov
Liudmila Lobacheva (Andreeva)
Irina Vasil'evna Nartikova
Natalia Aleksandrovna Nesterova
Valentina Ivanovna Rumiantseva
Galina Ivanovna Titkova
Valentin Ivanovich Tolstykh
Dmitry Borisovich Shimilis
Antonina.Vavilova

In Tallinn

Kajandu Krista
Kanasaar Mari
Kasesalu Katrin
Pääbo Evi
Siim Jüri
Svartz Lende

IV. SOVIET PERIODICALS AND FASHION ALBUMS OF 1940–1980S

Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR
Dlya molodykh
Dlya polnykh zenshchin
Moda
Modeli sezona
Mody GUMa
Modeli s chertezhami kroya
Na kazhdy den'
Novinki GUMa
Novye tovary
Ogoniok
Rabotnitsa
Siluett
Sluzhba byta
Sovetskaya zhenshchina
Spitsami i kriuchkom
Sportivnaya odezhda
Zhurnal Mod

V. VOLUMES OF STATISTICS

Narodnoye khozaistvo SSSR v 1960. Moskva: Statistika 1961
Narodnoye khozaistvo SSSR v 1970. Moskva: Statistika 1971
Narodnoye khozaistvo SSSR v 1980. Moskva: Statistika 1981
Narodnoye khozaistvo SSSR v 1990. Moskva: Statistika 1991.
Narodnoye khozaistvo SSSR za 70 let. Moskva: Statistika 1987
Promyshlennost' SSSR. Statisticheskii sbornik. Moskva: Statistika 1964

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