



THE SPECTRE THAT HAUNTED SOCIALISM

DJURDJA BARTLETT

FASHION EAST



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EAST

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WEST

DJURDJA BARTLETT

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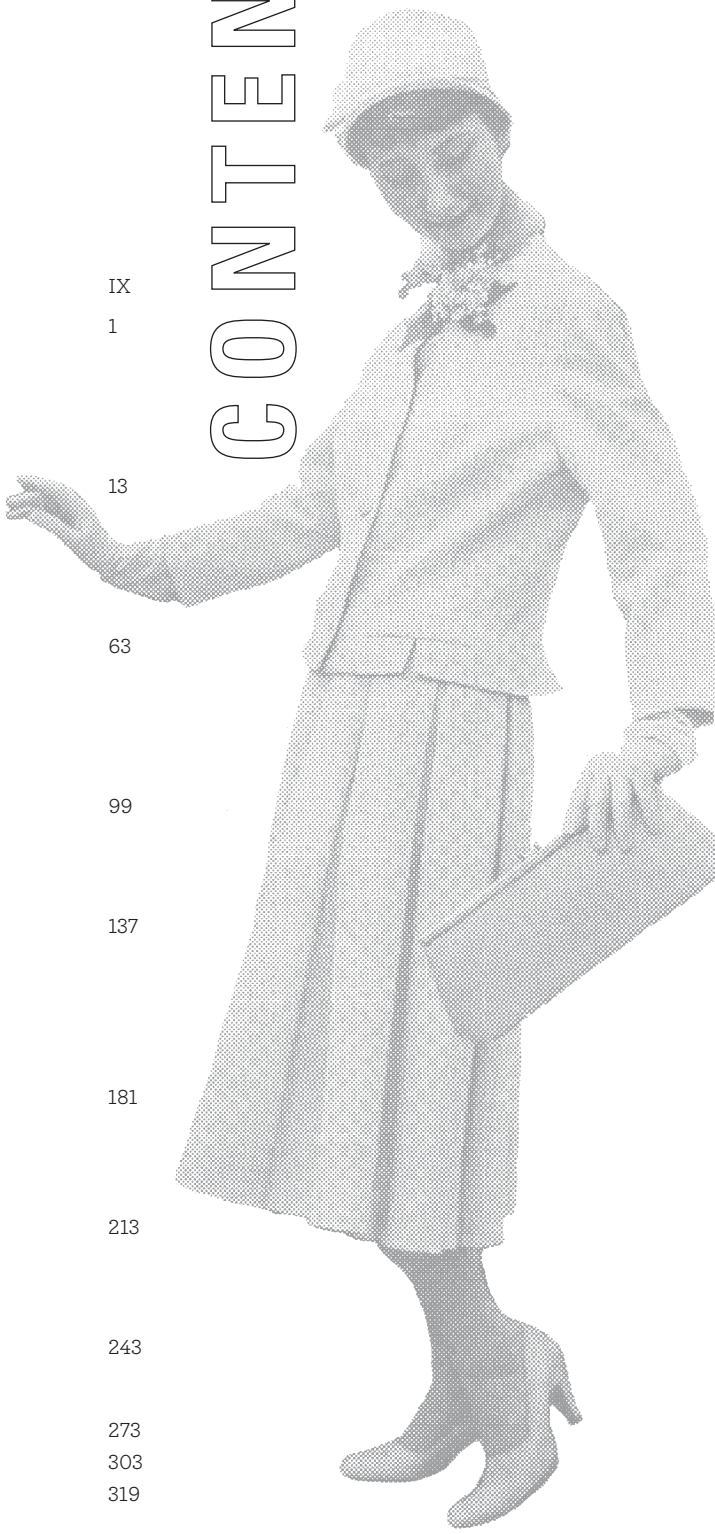
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FOR ANA AND DANKO

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PREFACE

In 2004, while researching socialist fashion in Moscow, I met Lydia Orlova, a fashion journalist, author, and former editor of several Soviet fashion magazines. Orlova had been a dedicated Communist party member under socialism and was still a beautiful woman genuinely interested in fashion. During the later phases of socialism she had been a powerful promoter of fashion. In the late 1970s, as fashion editor of the most popular mass women's weekly, *Rabotnitsa* (Working woman), she had consistently presented information about Western fashion and introduced paper patterns from the German women's magazine *Burda*. However, during the Perestroika years in the late 1980s, Orlova argued in the mighty Communist party daily *Pravda* that socialism deserved its own proper fashion. Through her high-level political connections, she managed to revive three Soviet fashion magazines to compete with the arrival of *Burda* on the Soviet market. Far removed from the reality of the poor-quality clothing provided in the shops, and presenting exclusive prototypes of dresses designed within the central fashion institution, the Dom modelei in Moscow, these Soviet magazines looked even more luxurious and elitist than *Burda*. During our interview, Orlova told me: "Believe me, Dior had many more fans in the USSR than in France."

Indeed, in 1959 the Soviets had invited the fashion house Christian Dior to present its latest collection in Moscow's sports hall, called The Soviet Wings Club. Street posters helped to widely publicize Dior's fashion show. The mass weekly *Ogonek* excitedly stated that "Soviet women would finally have the chance to see Paris fashion that, for centuries, has dictated new trends to half of the world's population."¹ Dior's highest representatives and twelve fashion models stayed on in Moscow for a week, presenting two to three shows a day with 120 outfits. Heavily scented with Dior's perfumes, the hall's eight hundred seats could not accommodate all the women who wanted to see the fashion house's summer dresses, which were modeled with background music from the latest Paris and New York soundtracks. The audience consisted of women designers and employees from the textile industry, young actresses, and nomenklatura wives and daughters.

This total fascination with the most famous representative of Western fashion, combined with support for a genuine socialist fashion that would be able to compete sartorially with the West and eventually overtake it, while simultaneously neglecting the reality that the average woman could find only poor-quality clothing in the stores, encapsulated all the contradictions of fashion under socialism. While preaching modesty in personal appearance, the socialist regimes were fascinated by an elitist, haute couture type of dress. The elitism and exclusivity that lies at the core of high fashion suited the high-minded aspirations of totalitarian ideology, and led to the invention of the phenomenon that I call "socialist fashion."

While this book also covers two other sartorial practices under socialism—utopian dress and everyday fashion—socialist fashion was its unique and most durable sartorial product. It was born in the mid-1930s in the Stalinist Soviet Union and survived until the end of the 1980s, both in the Soviet Union and in the East European socialist countries covered by my research—Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia. Although socialism eventually invented its own fashion, it was not the genuinely new socialist dress style that the constructivists had dreamt of in the early 1920s. On the contrary, socialist fashion officially preferred the most conventional aesthetic and promoted the most conventional concept of gender. This book presents its story, following its rise from the crushed utopian dream of the early Bolsheviks in the 1920s Soviet Union through its enforcement in the East European countries following the Communists' coups in 1948, and its gradual demise in the later decades of socialism. Embedded in socialism's slow-moving master narrative and sharing its fear of change and discontinuity, socialist fashion lost its struggle against its dynamic and ever-changing Western counterpart. But its very existence—manifested in the regimes' large-scale efforts to maintain it through their central fashion institutions, and to promote it through their women's magazines—showed the socialist system's deep anxieties about the phenomenon of fashion.

By paraphrasing the first sentence of the *Communist Manifesto*, the title of this book suggests that fashion was a spectre that haunted socialism. As an ephemeral, incomplete, and ever-changing phenomenon, fashion contradicted and seriously challenged socialist values, which were organized around stability, fear of change, predictability, and eternity. Although central planning, shortages, a controlled and undeveloped market, and political turbulence are not the main focus of this book, they are the background against which we can explore the conceptual and practical aspects of the phenomenon of fashion—surroundings that differed significantly from its conventional setting. Thus, this book covers the hitherto unknown part of fashion history that took place on the other side of the divide, designated both geographically and politically as “East Europe.”

The official and unofficial spaces which accommodated socialist fashion showed that it was an elitist phenomenon, as its practices required time, money, and connections. In that context, my interviewees were privileged, as they had mainly been practitioners within the official fashion institutions and the official media. But most of them, such as Lydia Orlova, Dorothea Melis, Eva Mészáros, and Margit Szilvitzky, to name just a few, were also capable and well-educated professionals who would probably have succeeded in any fashion system. I am very grateful to them, as to all my other interviewees, for their time and their willingness to talk to me. It was my privilege to hear their thoughts and their memories. My empirical research included various written and visual sources, from women's magazines, picture weeklies, political dailies, state archives, printed materials from museum collections, and posters and films, but spoken sources added a special and lively experience to it.

In that sense, the twenty-four interviews I held with participants in various fields of fashion production, including fashion designers, managers of central fashion institutions, models, organizers of official fashion shows and fairs, journalists, and authors, enriched my

insights on the topic of fashion under socialism. Nevertheless, my main research source on socialist fashion was women's magazines, which were informed by the conventions of both fashion journals and political bulletins. As the magazines were state-owned, the regimes channeled all official policies on dress and gender through them. Although highly controlled and carefully composed, these magazines nevertheless revealed the contradictions within the system and its confrontations with the everyday.

During my research for this book, conducted over more than ten years, I have received the support and help of many individuals and institutions. I am especially indebted to Elizabeth Wilson and Amy De la Haye for their patient support and intellectual encouragement, as well as to Lou Taylor and Caroline Evans for their helpful comments and suggestions. I also appreciate very much the kind support of Chris Breward. I am grateful to Olga Vainshtein and Oksana Gavrishina, who invited me to present my work in Moscow at the State University for the Humanities and for their valuable assistance in my field research in Russia; to Raisa Kirsanova for her constructive discussion with me on Soviet fashion; and to Liuda Alia-bieva and Natal'ia Shustikova for helping me with fieldwork in Moscow. Irina Prokhorova's invitation to give a talk at the conference "Socialist Fashion: A New Look," organized by the journal *New Literary Observer* in Moscow in 2007, gave me another opportunity to engage with my Russian colleagues and accomplish additional fieldwork there. I appreciate very much my discussion of Aleksandr Rodchenko and Varvara Stepanova with Alexander Lavrentiev in Moscow. In London, I had an opportunity to discuss Soviet fashion with Oksana Sekatcheva, which I found very useful.

My initial research in Hungary was made possible by a grant from the Gender Department at the Central European University in Budapest. I am grateful to Anna Wessely from ELTE (Budapest) and Marton Oblath for their assistance during my work in Budapest. During my subsequent research trips to Budapest, I was greatly helped by the Hungarian dress historian Katalin Dózsa, and had a valuable opportunity to discuss Hungarian socialist fashion with one of its leading experts, Tibor Valuch. I am also grateful to Ildikó Simonovics, who invited me to talk at her conference on socialist fashion in Budapest in 2007, which provided an excellent opportunity to meet other researchers, including Katalin Medvedev, who kindly assisted me during my interview with Margit Szilvitzky. I am also grateful to the Soros Open Society Foundation (Zagreb) for a travel grant that enabled me to carry out my fieldwork in the Czech Republic, where Konstantina Hlaváčková, curator of the Museum for Applied Arts in Prague, was extremely helpful in my research. Katja Remus offered kind and efficient aid during my research trips to Berlin. I am also indebted to Ariela Grundy from the London School for Slavonic and East European Studies, who patiently checked my Polish translations. Gar Powell-Evans was always prepared to help me while I worked on this book.

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I have spent many days and months in libraries during my work on this book. I enjoyed that time, especially as I was usually helped by extremely well-informed and kind staff. I am very grateful to the librarians at the British Library, the library of the School for Slavonic and East European Studies, London, the National Arts Library at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, and the National Library in Zagreb, as well as the archive at the Croatian publishing house Vjesnik, the library of the Museum of Applied Arts in Budapest, the Hungarian National Library, the Moscow Arts Library, the Historical Library in Moscow, and the Modearchiv in Berlin.

INTRODUCTION

This book focuses on three main socialist sartorial narratives—utopian dress, socialist fashion, and everyday fashion—that unfolded over the course of seventy-two years in the Soviet Union, and forty-two years in Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Yugoslavia. The symbolic production of the first of these sartorial narratives, that of utopian dress, was informed by the initial Bolshevik rejection of the past and the search for a totally new type of clothing in the 1920s. Later, the dream of creating a utopia in East European countries following the Communist takeover also led to an insistence on an austere and simple style of dress. The second fashion narrative, socialist fashion, which predominated in the Soviet Union from the 1930s, and in East Central Europe from the mid-1950s, showed that the socialist regimes had failed in their efforts to create an egalitarian and utilitarian sartorial style. Instead, socialist fashion relied on presenting unique prototypes at domestic and international fairs and at socialist fashion congresses. Expressed through traditional aesthetics and conventional notions of gender, socialist fashion reflected the regimes' ontological fear of change and discontinuity within a slow-moving socialist master narrative. Both utopian dress and socialist fashion were ideological constructs expressed through highly orchestrated representational narratives. In contrast, everyday fashion increasingly prospered beginning in the late 1960s. It found its place within everyday life and its rituals, and was embedded in an unofficial, faster-moving modernity. Everyday fashion involved numerous individual acts of appropriation through which socialist women indigenized and adjusted Western fashion trends to their needs.

Utopian Dress

Can fashion—a phenomenon deeply rooted in its own past and the past of Western civilization—start from zero? Following the 1917 October Revolution, the Bolsheviks tested that hypothesis to its limits through ideological programs, artistic practices, and everyday life. An urgent need for a new style of dress was just one element in the clean break with the past that the revolutionary originators of the socialist system envisioned in every field. No other revolution rejected tradition more strongly or attempted so vigorously to provoke an absolute break in continuity between the past and the present. Embedded as it is in both the present and the past, fashion could not escape the radical nature of the political and social changes that were taking place, and which were completely transforming the Russian state and society. In the constructivist world, there was no space for frivolous or unpredictable changes brought about by fashion trends, nor any place for a fashionable woman. She was overdecorated for their functional taste, oversexualized for their puritanical values, and alienated in an ontological sense because she belonged to a past that they

did not recognize. Wanting to discard preexisting fashion, the arts, and applied arts, the constructivists embraced geometric abstraction as their visual language.

The Russia of the 1920s was modernist in many ways. The archmodernist Le Corbusier saw Lenin as not only a political iconoclast but also a visual one. Detecting a new geometrical order in the clean lines of Lenin's bowler hat, his smooth white collar, his white porcelain coffee cup, his simple glass inkpot, and the sheets of typing paper on which he wrote for hours in the café Rotonda in Paris, Le Corbusier declared: "He is teaching himself to govern one hundred million people" (Le Corbusier 1987, 7–8). As it turned out, Lenin did indeed conduct his revolution in a Western suit. The new socialist country that he created initially preserved its artistic and sartorial connections to the West. Fashion briefly returned during the commercially favorable early 1920s, when the New Economic Policy (NEP) introduced a semicapitalist system in Russia. The confrontation between Bolshevik political power, which opposed fashion, and the economic power of the NEP, which promoted it, gave rise to an ideological and conceptual split that ran through the Soviet social body throughout the 1920s (fig. 0.1).

Challenged by the seductive NEP culture, even the Bolsheviks did not dare to officially ban decoration altogether. Even though industrially mass-produced dress was the official aspiration, individually made artistic dress still had its supporters at the highest level of Bolshevik power. The fashion designer Nadezhda Lamanova enjoyed official support from the Commissariat of Enlightenment in her use of traditional crafts as a basis for a genuinely new socialist style in dress throughout the 1920s. These debates on handicrafts and industry were embedded within a broader European discourse taking place at the time on the relationship between the crafts and industrial production. However, the development that was needed to transform such artisanal pieces into sophisticated but industrially manufactured goods never occurred in Russia. A permanent confusion between craft and industrial modes of production was perpetuated by official announcements claiming that exquisite handmade artifacts could successfully be turned into mass-manufactured products without losing any of their quality.

When Stalin came to power at the end of the 1920s, the utopian dream ended in the Soviet Union. However, the early Bolshevik utopia became a model for the later attempts to build utopias in East Europe after World War II. As in Russia, these utopias had a precise starting point. Chronologically, they started in 1948, after the Communists came to power in the East European countries. Ideologically, the start of the East European utopias announced the breakdown of capitalist culture. This sudden rejection of all previous culture and the ways of producing it was even more shocking in East Europe than it had been in Russia in 1917, as those countries had had a capitalist system before the war. In Russia, poverty and industrial backwardness had confined the constructivist ideas on functional, clean-lined style of dress to a limbo of esoteric artistic practice. In contrast, the textile and clothing industries were far more developed in prewar East Europe. But these traditions, both symbolic and economic, of prewar fashion production had to be urgently repositioned so that new roles for the textile and clothing industries could be established (fig. 0.2).



FIGURE 0.1

Fashion drawing, *Iskusstvo odevat'sia*,
Leningrad (1928, no. 7).



FIGURE 0.2

Nők lapja, Budapest

(August 1952), back cover.

In parallel, a new functional aesthetics was hastily introduced, as well as a new concept of woman. She was officially perceived as a worker dressed in a practical work uniform, as the new states privileged class over gender. Just as in Russia in the 1920s, this view demonstrated a serious political effort to deconstruct the previous gender order. The utopian element was strongest immediately following World War II, when the East European regimes were establishing a new political and social order. As in the 1920s dress proposals of the Soviet constructivists, there was no place for fashion because the new Communist regimes wanted to abolish all previous traditions. Under Soviet political control, the new regimes' search for a new style of dress and a new woman became merely a ritualistic repetition of the early Bolshevik efforts at creating utopia. The East European regimes used the ideology of utopia to free space for the advancing Stalinist culture and its concept of socialist fashion.

Socialist Fashion

While Bolshevik and East European attempts at utopia had rejected fashion, it received official approval in the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s. Developing within a system that was highly centralized, socialist fashion gradually evolved into a unique phenomenon of its own. That system was introduced as part of the Stalinist industrialization drive designed to raise the technical and organizational levels of the backward Russian textile and clothing industries. In the end it arrested the development of fashion under socialism, not only in the Soviet Union but also in East Europe following the end of World War II. Whereas the Bolshevik utopia had advocated a total change in dress, change became an ontological obstacle for a system organized around five-year plans and hierarchical levels of decision making because, in contrast to Western fluidity and rapid change, the epic socialist master narrative expressed itself through a slow flow of time.

While real change in styles of dress was highly suspect, Stalinism created a space for socialist fashion with the opening of the Dom modelei (House of Prototypes) in Moscow in 1935. That institution was supposed to organize and coordinate the textile and clothing industries and design prototypes for mass production in the whole country. Following the end of World War II, the establishment of a chain of regional Dom modelei under the umbrella of the central institution completed the Soviet hierarchical model. Although these institutions physically existed, socialist fashion did not exist in the real world; it inhabited the limitless space of Stalinist mythical culture. That culture incorporated different elements, from Russian medieval history to Hollywood glamour, gluing these disparate historical phenomena together in an amalgam that would suit the political needs of the Stalinist system (fig. 0.3).

Situated within the Stalinist myth, socialist fashion conformed to its ontological status and its aesthetics of socialist realism. Generally speaking, myth and fashion share very few characteristics. Fashion is a modernist, fast-changing phenomenon immersed in everyday reality, while myth is conservative and traditional, preserving the status quo. Their relationship to the past is also different. Fashion grabs its quotations from the past erratically and unpredictably, while myth is loyal to specific historical moments. Unlike Bolshevism, which



FIGURE 0.3

Fashion drawing, *Modeli sezona*,
Moscow (1939–1940, no. 4).

attempted to expel history from its new world and impose immediate change, Stalinism imposed an aesthetics that was greatly indebted to premodernist times. Photographs and artistic images of the two leaders, Lenin and Stalin, demonstrate the shift from a modernist visual culture into conservative and traditional iconographic forms. The well-established iconography of Lenin in paintings, which depict him in a suit and tie even on the revolutionary barricades, suggests a dynamic and still open relationship with the West, while Stalin's attire—a uniform resembling a traditional Russian peasant tunic, or *tolstovka*—was an iconographic symbol of his society's return to conservative and immutable forms.¹ Prototypes of elegant dresses decorated with ethnic motifs played an important role in the promotion of Stalinist culture in magazines, advertisements, political posters, the fine arts, films, and theater. Yet, as historical accounts of the period demonstrate, the Stalinist concept of luxury, presented through idealistic media images, contradicted the everyday reality.

The East European states were forced to adopt the same centralized model of dress production following the Communist takeovers in 1948. The first task of their new central dress institutions was to destroy the prewar symbolic and material sartorial traditions in order to implement a new utopian dress. However, by institutionalizing utopia, the regimes toned it down, both conceptually and aesthetically. The East European utopias stood little chance in front of the advancing Soviet socialist fashion. Dependent both politically and ideologically on their Soviet masters, the new regimes could neither stop nor slow down the course of industrialization which, following postwar deprivations, further impoverished their citizens and extended the rationing of everyday goods well into the 1950s. From the mid-1950s, the East European regimes adopted the Soviet model of the grandiose sartorial prototype to suit the mythical reality in which they found shelter from the irresolvable problems which their planned economies faced in everyday life. Escape into myth prevented the development of any space for new socialist style of dress.

From the late 1950s, with the growing representational role of socialist fashion, the central dress institutions incorporated the word “fashion” into their names, even though they maintained their ideological role of controlling unpredictable change. In this context, the position of fashion designers in the central fashion institutions was identical to the position of the socialist realist artists. As Joseph Bakshtein observes: “The main task of the artist was to use a representation as an index of some ‘other,’ non-artistic circumstances, whether social, political, economic, or ideological” (Bakshtein 1993, 57). Similarly, in the field of socialist fashion, dress was not about fashion as an everyday object. Instead, images of smart and luxurious dresses were an ideal medium to visualize the progress that the socialist regimes dreamed of. To paraphrase Guy Debord, they showed that power had accumulated to such a degree that it became an image (fig. 0.4).²

In the late 1950s, Khrushchev struggled to impose a new modesty and clean modernist lines that resembled constructivist purism and restraint. He launched a new aesthetics, that of socialist good taste, which embellished the original proletarian austerity with new categories of modest prettiness and conventional elegance. Unlike the constructivists who had envisioned the new society and its objects against a background of technological

backwardness, Khrushchev attempted to channel some of the latest technological developments into the design and production of everyday clothes that fulfilled the new criteria of functionality and simple, untroubled prettiness. But he did not succeed. Simplicity was officially promoted, but socialist fashion stayed indebted to Stalinist grandiose aesthetics. The socialist regimes continued to rely on the concept of representational dress. Such dress could not be bought in the shop. It was exclusively produced as a unique prototype, presented at domestic and international fairs and socialist fashion congresses, and published in the magazines. This representational prototype, introduced through the Bolshevik artistic dress of the 1920s and perfected by Stalinism within its mythical culture, continued to exist until the end of the socialist system. At the same time, socialist good taste was the official aesthetics in the everyday. It was granted political approval because it was ordinary, anonymous, moderate, and banal.

Introduced under Stalinism, the traditional concept of womanhood fitted well into the smart and conventional aesthetics of socialist fashion. The women's organizations, institutionally and ideologically close to the Communist parties, disseminated the official gender politics through practices ranging from educational courses on hygiene and healthy cooking to grooming and fashion shows. They promoted the official shifts in the conceptualization of gender, and instructed women on correct dress and manners through the mass magazines that they controlled. Beginning in the 1950s, socialist regimes recognized the growing demand for fashion and grooming by the female members of their newly installed middle classes. Consequently, the notion of gender softened, and women's magazines encouraged moderate expressions of femininity. Modest fashion, conforming to socialist good taste, became one element of the cultural capital of the socialist middle classes. In order to compete with the West in everyday lifestyles, the socialist regimes wanted to dress up their middle classes, but, at the same time, they also wanted to control their sartorial choices. In the end, both versions of socialist taste—grandiose and modest—served the official politics of style from the 1960s. In aesthetics these two styles differed widely, but they shared the same fear of unpredictable change (fig. 0.5).

Socialist fashion was always simply a discourse, with little concern about reality. Even the shifts toward fashionability inside the central fashion institutions in the 1970s and 1980s were ideologically imposed. Fashion-conscious outfits designed within the field of socialist fashion showed that the regimes had been aware of the need for change, but they continued their attempts to control it both through the state-owned women's magazines and through the inefficient and centrally organized design, production, and distribution of clothes. All the distortions that characterized socialist fashion were embodied in its conservative aesthetics: an ontological anxiety about the fluidity of time, a pathological fear of change, the hierarchical levels of decision making in planned economies, the neglect of the market, the confused relationship with Western fashion, cultural autarky, and a lack of experience informed by an earlier ideological rejection of fashion's history.



FIGURE 0.4

A Russian model at the fifth annual Contest in the Culture of Dress, held in Budapest, *Ez a divat*, Budapest (1954, nos. 5–6).

Fehér műselyemből készült estélyi ruha, áttört kézimunka díszítéssel. Szovjet modell — a szovjet kollekciót kitüntető serleggel



FIGURE 0.5

Fashion drawing, *Modeli sezona*, Moscow

(Autumn-Winter 1956–1957), cover.

Everyday Fashion

In contrast to the socialist fashion that was paraded at socialist fashion congresses, exhibited at domestic and international fairs, and presented in glossy magazines, everyday fashion existed in an alternative, unofficial modernity and conformed to a different, faster and fragmented concept of time. To a limited degree, the socialist countries had experienced a Western type of modernity for almost thirty years, which ran parallel with the official socialist modernity. During the late 1950s, the regimes abandoned harsh repression in favor of more subtle ways of controlling their citizens, and elements of Western modernity were gradually allowed to penetrate everyday life. From then on, fashion was an important intermediary between the inadequate official modernity, which took place within officialdom, and the limited Western-type modernity, which took place on an everyday level. However, fashionable clothing still could not be purchased in the shops. It was impossible to produce within the highly controlled and hierarchical socialist economic system and was also a dangerous artifact, with its variety and penchant for change, whose mere presence in the stores challenged the very essence of socialism.

Socialist consumption consisted of a set of illogical and disparate practices due to the irrationality of five-year plans and the general preference for heavy industry over consumer goods. The inefficient official markets were complemented by the activities of the black market and by networks of connections. Everyday fashion was embedded in such alternative places. People produced it themselves or acquired it through a combination of illegal and semiclandestine channels within the second societies and second economies that grew in importance in the later phases of socialism. Yet, although everyday fashion required a different concept of time and was provided through different channels, it actually existed with the regimes' discreet approval. The socialist regimes recognized new desires arising, of which fashion and dress were among the most important. In order to secure their political legitimacy, the leaderships made a series of deals with the middle classes, promising to deliver more consumer goods in exchange for political loyalty.

The promoters of everyday fashion were members of the socialist middle classes who gradually turned into a new bourgeoisie. In the later phases of socialism, when the acquisitive ambitions of the new middle classes came into play, consumption was politically legitimated in the form of a controlled and rational practice, and entered the body of approved cultural capital. From the 1960s, the socialist escalation of middle-class distinctions was established through "appropriate" consumption practices, expressed aesthetically as socialist good taste. But the middle classes wanted more. Due to improved connections with the West and easier access to information on Western fashion trends, they started to acquire another, unofficial cultural capital. While the middle classes still depended on the approved cultural capital in order to function within the official socialist modernity, unofficial cultural capital included skills for different, Western-style consumption practices, information on the latest fashions, and new lifestyles.

Moreover, these new consumerist practices, including fashionable dress as one of their most coveted items, presupposed a new concept of time that was faster and more fragmented

than the official concept. As Henri Lefebvre comments in another context, “a bitter and dark struggle around time and the use of time” went on between the regimes and their citizens (Lefebvre 2004, 74). Everyday fashion took place through a range of minor practices such as home dressmaking, services from a dressmaker, or purchases made on the black market. Ephemeral, temporal, dispersed, and rooted in the everyday, the practice of fashionable dress under socialism matches Michel de Certeau’s definition of tactics (Certeau 1988). Fashion tactics introduced the political into socialist everyday life, but in a new, dispersed way.

Everyday fashion was expressed in a range of styles. However, for women who lived under socialism, expressing their femininity was much more alluring than the latest fashion trends. While interiorizing the official concepts of conventional elegance and femininity, women rebelled against the modest levels of each that were officially endorsed. Fashionability in dress was also present, especially among the young. Paper patterns, which were regular supplements to socialist fashion magazines, demonstrated how the relationship between the desire for modern clothes and the conceptual order had its own dynamics. Through the medium of paper patterns, the regimes favored the traditional aesthetics that conformed to the rules of socialist good taste. Yet magazines occasionally ventured into a self-provided Western sartorial modernity by publishing paper patterns of the latest fashions. Promoting a faster concept of time through seasonal changes in dress, such paper patterns threatened the system, and appeared only when the regimes wanted to present themselves visually as modernist projects.

The regimes, however, were not prepared for the system of radical change in which fashion is embedded. Even when it tried to change, as shown through the practices of everyday fashion, socialism remained a closely guarded system. Organized around its ideology, socialism, just like any other hegemony, functioned to its end by defending its values and resisting its spectres. As it happened, one of these spectres was the ephemeral, eternally changing, and permanently incomplete phenomenon of fashion.



CHAPTER 1

ART VERSUS TECHNOLOGY

Early Soviet Dilemmas on Dress

Throughout the 1920s, the Soviet urban population was surrounded by cubism, futurism, Bauhaus, jazz, commerce, films, and advertising. These radical expressions of Western modernity took place against the background of sweeping change brought about by the Bolshevik revolution. The modernist issues that engaged the West, from a crisis in the representation of woman to a crisis in the relationship between subject and object, were even more radicalized in the highly ideological, yet in many ways modernist, environment of the Soviet 1920s. The Soviet relationship with fashion embodied all the contradictions of the postrevolutionary utopian fervor. While it opposed fashion as a commercialized and gendered practice, the new regime frenetically supported avant-garde artistic dress projects and invested its hopes in highly impractical projects that brought together traditional crafts and high technologies. In everyday life, the commercialized environment of the New Economic Policy (NEP) enabled fashion to return briefly to the Soviet Union. While the NEP woman adopted luxurious Western dress practices, and thus was an alien in a new Bolshevik country, the socialist urban woman worker adjusted Western fashion trends to the new reality and her own position within it. Her dress attempted to reconcile Bolshevik utopia with its counterpart, Western modernity.

Clothed in a Russian Peasant Skirt

On a poster entitled “Under the Red Star, Together with Men, Let’s Frighten the Bourgeoisie,” a squadron of women workers and peasants in wide black skirts and long red aprons threateningly march toward a single bourgeois man. Dressed in formal evening wear and sporting a huge, well-fed belly, the bourgeois is already on the ground, trying unsuccessfully to escape the proletarian women’s wrath. Their broad shoulders, broad hips, and prominent breasts owe their shape equally to the strength of the Nietzschean superman and to the softness of the countryside woman. With muscles adding strong and robust armor, that large female body was large enough to embody a traditional peasant woman and a new Bolshevik woman simultaneously. One iconographic detail—the way they tied their scarves on their heads—differentiates the women workers from peasant women. A scarf tied below the chin continued to represent a traditional peasant woman, while the dynamic working woman tied her scarf at the back of her neck. Otherwise, in that poster, the women workers and the peasant women have the same large body, clothed in long, wide, peasant-style skirts. Symbolically, the women’s large, muscular bodies and their unadorned faces were required both for the physically demanding role of building up the new world and for the destruction of the previous bourgeois culture (fig. 1.1).

The Bolsheviks’ condemnation of the past presupposed that the present reality would soon be replaced by a new world, inhabited by New Men and New Women modeled on the Nietzschean superman.¹ The iconography of a strong and harmonious body complemented the broader Bolshevik goal of mastering nature. In the mid-nineteenth century, Charles Baudelaire and Karl Marx had developed ideas which later informed the opposing conceptualizations of modernity in the capitalist West and the socialist East.² Baudelaire argued that nature was vulgar and that human beings should rise above it through the aesthetic artificiality of dressing up. He praised cosmetics because it transformed a crude natural woman into a beautiful creature superior to nature. For him, fashion was a permanent and repeated attempt to reform nature (Baudelaire 1964, 32–33). In contrast, the robust and unadorned Bolshevik superwoman drew on Marx’s theory of revolutionary practice, which would abolish all dualities and alienations between man and nature, and between man and woman. These ideas were ontologically rooted in the eighteenth-century idea of a lost paradise (fig. 1.2).

Made-up women dressed in fashionable clothes had no place in the new socialist world, and so the fashion magazines that had been published before the revolution were all abolished. The first Bolshevik women’s magazine *Rabotnitsa* (Working woman), published by the official women’s organization Zhenotdel from 1923,³ displayed the same cover throughout its first year of publication: a woman worker in a red headscarf holding a banner emblazoned with the name of the magazine so that it unfurls over the chimneys of a large industrial city. Throughout the 1920s, covers showed female exemplary workers or depicted revolutionary topics. The magazine dealt with a set of broad themes of interest to the new socialist woman: politics, science, workplace, history, and literature. Fashion and grooming

were excluded from *Rabotnitsa*, as they were identified with the overthrown bourgeois cultural and commercial heritage. On propaganda posters, large women in long, wide skirts displaced the earlier prerevolutionary images of art nouveau-style women. While they were ideologically loyal, however, the antimodernist appearance of these women was an inappropriate visual statement for the new, forward-looking state and the new women who would embody it.

Opposing Fashion in Modernist Clothes

In contrast to the images of large women wrapped in peasant-style clothes which appeared in *Rabotnitsa* and on the early Soviet posters, the constructivists' visual language bore striking similarities to the body shapes and dress proposals typical of the capitalist West in the 1920s. The leading constructivists, Liubov' Popova and Varvara Stepanova, were well versed in cubist artistic practices and relied on genuinely cubist devices—geometry and flatness—to develop their visions of the New Woman and her dress.⁴ Popova's theater costume for Actor N 5 in the 1922 play *The Magnanimous Cuckold* mirrored the dress of the proletarian woman worker in the poster "Under the Red Star, Together with Men, Let's Frighten the Bourgeoisie." Popova, however, deconstructed the traditional image of a curvaceous peasant body dressed in wide skirts, replacing it with geometricized and flattened versions of both dress and body. Stepanova designed geometric overalls for the play *The Death of Tarelkin* in the same year. Both Popova and Stepanova called their theater costumes *prozodezhda* (production clothing),⁵ and were guided by functional constructivist aesthetics and by biomechanics—Meyerhold's system of actor training. Popova intended her geometrically cut and unadorned *prozodezhda* not only to sartorially correspond to a Taylorized, mechanized theatrical gesture, but also to be worn by actors during rehearsals and even in their daily life. Both set designs and costumes in the plays *The Magnanimous Cuckold* and *The Death of Tarelkin* received enthusiastic critical and public acclaim when the plays premiered in 1922. In his constructivist cry against decorativeness in theater, Vladimir Mass claimed that the public wanted *prozodezhda* instead of ornamental costumes on the stage: "They have fallen out of love with [Lev] Bakst and have fallen in love with *prozodezhda*; they have left [Aleksandra] Ekster and are increasingly courting the Constructor Popova" (Mass 1922, 8) (figs. 1.3, 1.4).

But Stepanova went further. Staying true to the constructivist ideals, she decided to take *prozodezhda* out of the experimental environment of the theater and into everyday life. In her programmatic article "Today's Dress: *Prozodezhda*," published in the constructivist journal *Lef* (*Zhurnal levogo fronta iskusstv*, Journal of the left front of the arts) in 1923, she envisioned the modernist future of dress and its liberatory potential, and advocated mass-produced and simplified clothes: "Clothing must cease to be craft-produced in favour of mass industrial production" (Stepanova 1923, 65). For Stepanova, the new industrial production would bring transparency to the relationship between the finished product and its manufacture, by revealing all the secrets behind a dress: "The stitching of a garment,



FIGURE 1.1

N. Valerianov, poster, "Under the Red Star, Together with Men, Let's Frighten the Bourgeoisie," 1925.

FIGURE 1.2

Rabotnitsa, Moscow (1923, no. 1), cover.

ПРОЛЕТАРИИ ВСЕХ СТРАН, СОЕДИНЯЙТЕСЬ!

РАБОТНИЦА



№ 1.

1923 ГОД ЯНВАРЬ

ИЗДАНИЕ ОТДЕЛА ПО РАБОТЕ СРЕДИ ЖЕНЩИН
ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОГО КОМИТЕТА РОССИЙСКОЙ КОММУНИСТИЧЕСКОЙ ПАРТИИ

its buttoning, etc., need to be exposed ... the stitching of a sewing machine industrializes the production of a dress and deprives it of its secrets" (ibid.). Stepanova's *Lef* article was accompanied by a modernist drawing of sports clothing that geometricized both the body and the garment (fig. 1.5).⁶

By revealing the mechanics of dress, Stepanova's 1924 drawing of a woman's *prozodezhda* was consistent with the simple and functional aesthetics promoted in her *Lef* article. The outfit's monochrome appearance was interrupted by visible stitching that accentuated its large pockets, waistline, and seams. In its flatness and overall economy of style, this *prozodezhda* was similar to the *tuta*, one-piece overalls that the Italian futurist Thayaht had launched in 1919, as well as to fashionable cubist-style Western dresses (fig. 1.6).

The constructivists shared with their Western contemporaries an urge for change, a drive toward novelty, and an appreciation of innovation. However, while sophisticated haute couture belonged to the field of fashion production, and Thayaht flirted with fashionability by smartly accessorizing his *tuta*, the constructivists opposed bourgeois styles. In the first issue of *Lef*, the fiercest constructivist theoretician Sergei Tret'iakov emphasized that "the question of a rational dress could not be left to a fashion magazine which dictates to the masses the will of the capitalist manufacturers" (Tret'iakov 1923b, 202). Promoting *prozodezhda* in her *Lef* article, Stepanova stressed: "Fashion that psychologically reflects a way of life, customs and aesthetic taste gives way to programmed clothing ... which is tested only through the process of working in it ... The clothing of today must be seen in action; outside of this it is unimaginable" (Stepanova 1923, 65). Embedded in modernist aesthetics, Stepanova's radicalism was not visual but lay in her ideological claim that the previous field of fashion—including production, retail, and dress practices—should be completely abolished. Arguing that "shop windows containing wax mannequins wearing various designs ... are only an antiquated aesthetic phenomenon," she dismissed the role of fashionable dress as commodity. By insisting that *prozodezhda* should renounce decoration in favor of comfort, Stepanova negated the previous history of fashion: "Any decorative detail is abolished with the following slogan: the comfort and functionality of clothing must be linked to a specific productive function" (ibid.).

The seductive objects of capitalism lacked the transparency that the constructivists advocated. For Aleksandr Rodchenko, Western commodities were "decorated on the outside, and they coldly decorated Paris, but on the inside, like black slaves, they concealed catastrophe" (Rodchenko 1982, 96).⁷ Indeed, as he observed during his visit to Paris in 1925, although modernist Parisian dresses offered outfits that were easy to copy and mass-produce, luxury and privilege were sewn into their seams, well hidden behind the simplicity and functionality of their cuts and behind the "poverty" of their new fabrics, such as jersey. In contrast, Rodchenko wanted to establish a radically new relationship between the socialist subject and the world of objects, in which an object would never again be a commodity, a result of an alienated and exploitative labor, but would be "a friend" and "a comrade." He dreamed of a new interactive relationship in which "man and object would talk to each other" (ibid., 95–96)—a result he believed possible only in the "simple and healthy" East (ibid., 89). Drawing on

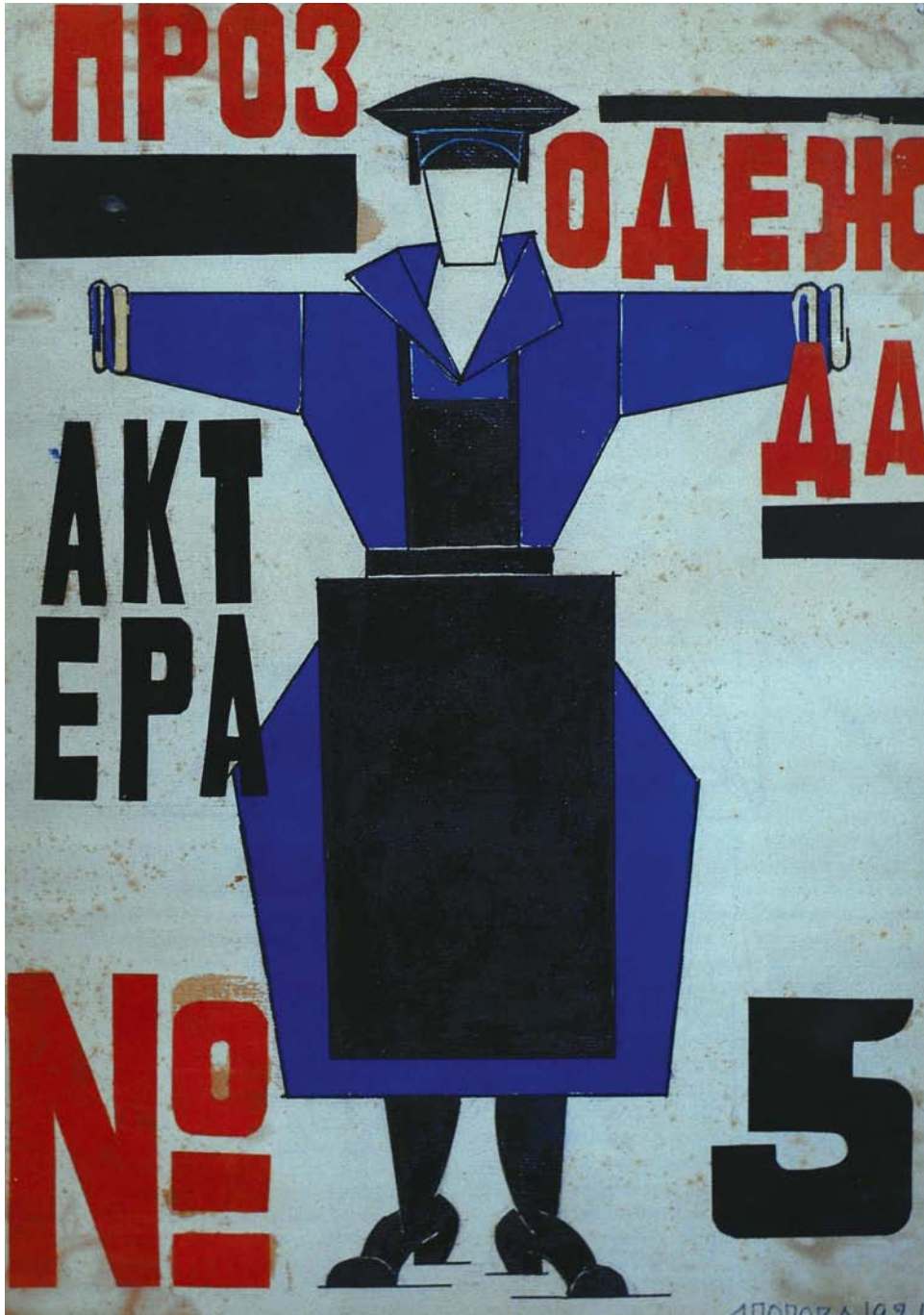


FIGURE 1.3
Liubov' Popova, costume design
for the play *The Magnanimous*
Cuckold, 1922.

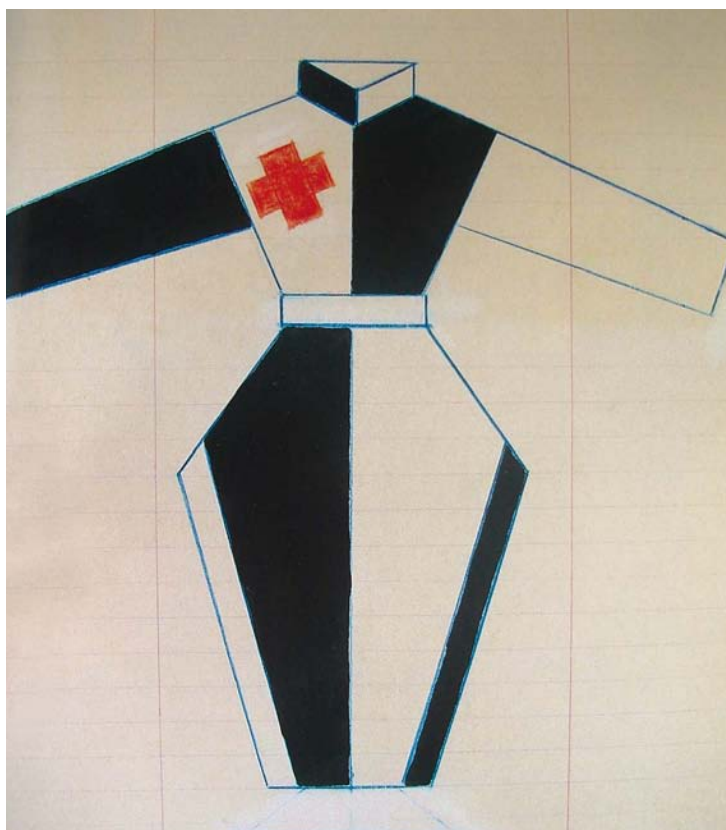


FIGURE 1.4

Varvara Stepanova,
costume design for the play
The Death of Tarelkin, 1922.



FIGURE 1.5

Varvara Stepanova, drawings
accompanying her article on
prozodezhda, *Lef* (1923, no. 2).

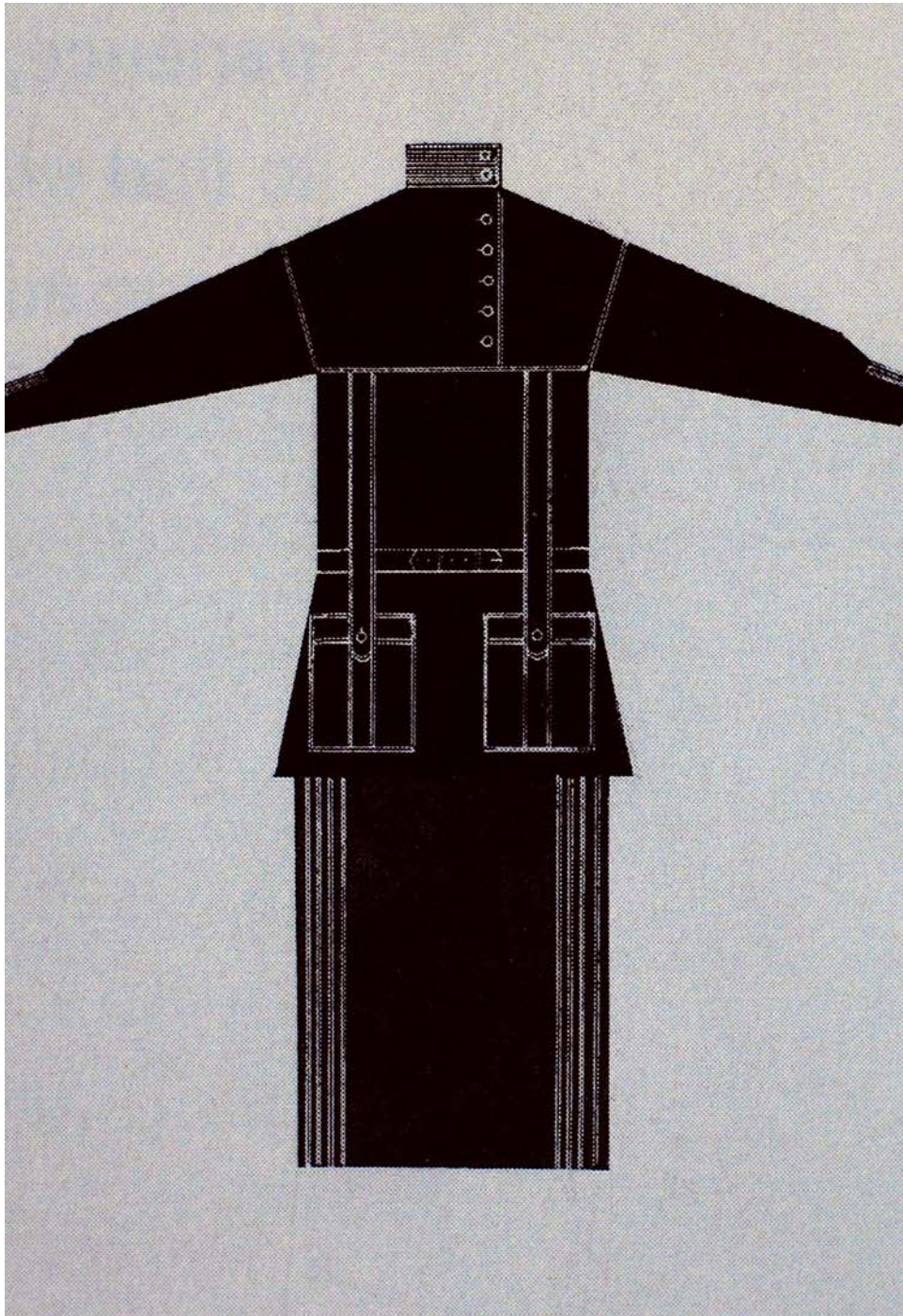


FIGURE 1.6

Varvara Stepanova, design
for a *prozodezhda* suit, 1924.

modernist impulses, the constructivists addressed the crisis of the object, which initially demonstrated itself in cubist deconstruction and continued with surrealist displacement, but they tried to resolve that crisis in their own way. They envisioned the merger of art and industry and a radically new, interactive relationship between the new socialist person and the new socialist everyday objects.

Thus, Stepanova and Popova's engagement as textile designers in the First State Textile Print Factory⁸ in Moscow in 1923 was strongly supported by their constructivist colleagues as a pure example of production art. In his article "From Painting to the Textile Print," Osip Brik claimed that the applied arts survived only because of the fatal rupture between the artist and industry. He stated that "the artist, not receiving economic directives, slips, consciously or unconsciously, into aesthetic templates," and hoped that Popova and Stepanova would overcome the situation in which "the artist is still an alien in the factory" (Brik 1924, 34). However, Popova and Stepanova were prevented from becoming directly involved in the technology of fabric production on the factory floor.⁹ The radical novelty of their geometric patterns caused another set of problems within the conservative factory environment. Their reliance on a compass and ruler to produce industrial designs that would abolish all traces of handicraft was misunderstood by the factory management as an inability to draw. As their minimalist triangles, circles, and rectangles were an abrupt break with traditional flower motifs, the management asked them to make their avant-garde designs more acceptable for the public. Furthermore, their productivist dreams were shattered by out-of-date machinery, shortages of raw materials, and lack of dyes.¹⁰

Although some of Popova and Stepanova's fabric designs were actually produced and did arrive in the shops,¹¹ they did not interact significantly with their ideal consumer—the socialist masses. In contrast, the Western modernist designers had their ideal customers right in front of them—the sophisticated café society. Its members patronized Parisian fashion designers, and were the cognoscenti and consumers of avant-garde arts. By dressing them in active and functional clothes, the fashion world made the leisure class look busy and casual.¹² Informed by the pleasure principle of the new times, these clothes were relaxed and eroticized. In contrast, Stepanova pushed erotic drive, femininity, pleasure, and individual desire away from the dresses that she designed in 1923–1924. Insisting exclusively on the comfort, functionality, and purposefulness of dress, she revealed the constructivist unwillingness to accept desire and to offer new ways of organizing it. Her modernist body with its squared-off shoulders, clad in geometrically cut clothes, was puritanical.

The constructivist proletarian asceticism drew on prerevolutionary Russian utopian ideas. In his 1909 novel *Red Star*, Alexander Bogdanov, one of Lenin's closest collaborators and the founder of the cultural movement Proletkul't, describes socialist anxieties concerning dress as a carrier of status, gender, and change.¹³ On Bogdanov's red planet Mars, whose culture is three hundred years ahead of that on Earth, clothes are designed according to the most progressive scientific knowledge, and their production is centrally organized, without any waste of fabric or production time. Clothes are manufactured using a huge variety of simple patterns, without any special embellishments. To avoid emphasizing sexual differences, the



FIGURE 1.7

Liubov' Popova, design
for a shop window, 1924.

Martians' clothing is loosely cut (Bogdanov 1984). The progressive Martians are thus actually manufacturing and wearing a unisex uniform.

This vision of an ascetic and asexual woman informed Rodchenko's negative impressions on woman and fashion. As a puritanical Bolshevik observer, Rodchenko argued that fashionable women were too thin, had no breasts, and wore skimpy dresses. He believed that fashion was imposing these looks on women. In fact, following contemporary fashion, the woman on the street looked as if she had stepped out of the pages of a glossy fashion magazine (Rodchenko 1982, 95).¹⁴ Rodchenko mocked such looks in a series of modernist photomontages for Maiakovskii's poem "Pro eto" (About this) in 1923. He illustrated the poet's lamentations on everyday life, typified by comfortable commodities and conventional relationships, with a series of surreal collages of cutouts from Western magazines. Various "decadent" objects and "decadent" women fight for attention in these photomontages. Maiakovskii's lover, Lili Brik, stares out from one collage, her gaze intensified by the dark makeup around her eyes. Fashionable women are shown dining and tangoing with their partners in long evening gowns and exotic hats. Embedded in their proletarian asceticism, Stepanova and Rodchenko thus remained prisoners of the traditional concept of femininity as incarnated in an overly dressed-up and made-up femme fatale, the embodiment of all the evils of capitalist system. As Hal Foster has observed: "innocent of psychoanalysis, Constructivism conceived subject-object relations in terms that privileged political will over sexual desire, means of production over processes of signification" (Foster 1999, 251).

Liubov' Popova, a jazz enthusiast and ballroom dancer who was renowned for her polished looks in her private life, developed a more complex relationship toward femininity; she established her own type of fashionability in a series of "flapper" dresses and in designs of some other fashionable clothes.¹⁵ Popova recoded the line and shape of the flapper dress¹⁶ into a more robust form to cover a body that was neither the large and muscular proletarian body nor the slender boyish figure of the fashionable 1920s *garçonne*. Popova no longer intended to change the world with her version of a flapper dress, but rather sought to reconcile previously irreconcilable items: the sartorial translation of a Western fashion trend, feminine makeup and hairstyle, a coquettish bonnet with a pom-pom, proletarian arms, a strong body, delicate hands, and feet in pointed high-heeled shoes (fig. 1.7).

In another drawing, she acknowledged fashion and its seasonal changes by accompanying her ensemble, consisting of a long, geometrically cut jacket and a narrow skirt, with a hand-written note, "Spring Summer 1924." Since Popova also understood the constraints imposed by the destitute Soviet industry, she wrote that the ensemble was to be made from modest flannelette, trimmed with suede (fig. 1.8).

While Popova acknowledged the changes in gender formation taking place in both the West and the Soviet Union in the 1920s, Stepanova and Rodchenko wanted to abolish fashion as a phenomenon driven by the market and the inequalities it imposed. They used the same visual vocabulary as their Western counterparts in their construction of an angular and flat-chested New Woman, and envisioned her as equal to a man and capable of embarking on any job or adventure. However, in the West such redefinitions and reconceptualizations



FIGURE 1.8
 Liubov' Popova, design
 for an ensemble, 1924.



FIGURE 1.9
 Fashion drawing,
Novosti mod,
 Moscow (1924, no. 3).

of female identity were mediated through fashion and consumerism.¹⁷ Western fashions were charged with sexuality in new, transgressive ways, and this modernist, boyish-looking woman was both highly maintained and sexy. Her hectic, athletic looks were achieved through leisure activities such as visits to beauty parlors and hair salons, through dieting, playing tennis, the wearing of fashionable flapper dresses, and a knowledgeable use of makeup. In contrast, Stepanova's ideal woman was supposed to lead a rational existence wearing simple and functional clothes. Nevertheless, her ideological opposite, the fashionable and eroticized woman, threatened the purity of the constructivist project not only from the West, but from within the Soviet public sphere itself. For Stepanova's fierce rejection of fashion was informed by the emerging culture of the New Economic Policy, which did not share proletarian values or revolutionary ideals (fig. 1.9).

The Return of Western Fashion

Fashion returned to Bolshevik Russia when the New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1921 reintroduced private ownership and retail practices, which were more efficient than state-run businesses.¹⁸ For the constructivists, the changes brought about by the NEP were politically and culturally unacceptable. Their offensive against the NEP included Tret'iakov's fierce ideological attack entitled "The LEF and the NEP," published in the same issue of the journal *Lef* as Stepanova's *prozodezhda* proposal. After heatedly enumerating all the luxuries, from delicatessens to the shining jewelry, furs, silk, and porcelain figurines that had sneaked back into the shop windows due to the NEP initiative, Tret'iakov (1923a, 70–71) combatively announced that the *Lef* revolution would continue. As embodied in the overly decorative luxurious goods available to the new rich, the NEP stood for everything that the constructivists had fought against, including fashion. And in 1923, *Atel'e* (Atelier), the first ambitious fashion magazine to be published since the revolution, was launched. It was a programmatic journal that aimed to bring fashion back to the Soviet Union, justifying its rituals and adjusting them to the new socialist reality.¹⁹ Fashionable and artistic dresses were presented in articles about the tango or the latest theater plays, in images of theater costumes and actresses in luxurious evening wear, and in animated polemics on contemporary dress and the success of the domestic textile industry. Its drawings, photographs, and articles on fashion demonstrated that its authors were well informed about Western fashion and lifestyles (fig. 1.10).

Notwithstanding its modest circulation of two thousand copies, *Atel'e* was symbolically very important. Its contributors, who had been active in the Russian arts and applied arts in prerevolutionary times, criticized the ahistorical Bolshevik and constructivist attitude toward dress. Some of *Atel'e*'s articles addressed the issues of appropriate dress for the new socialist masses, but the radical concept of *prozodezhda* was strongly opposed by Vladimir von Meck in his article "Dress and Revolution." As a financier of prerevolutionary artistic events and a connoisseur of the history of dress, von Meck understood *prozodezhda* as an adventurous theoretical proposal that could not possibly be relevant for everyday clothing practices. The real revolution in dress, observed von Meck, had taken place after the new

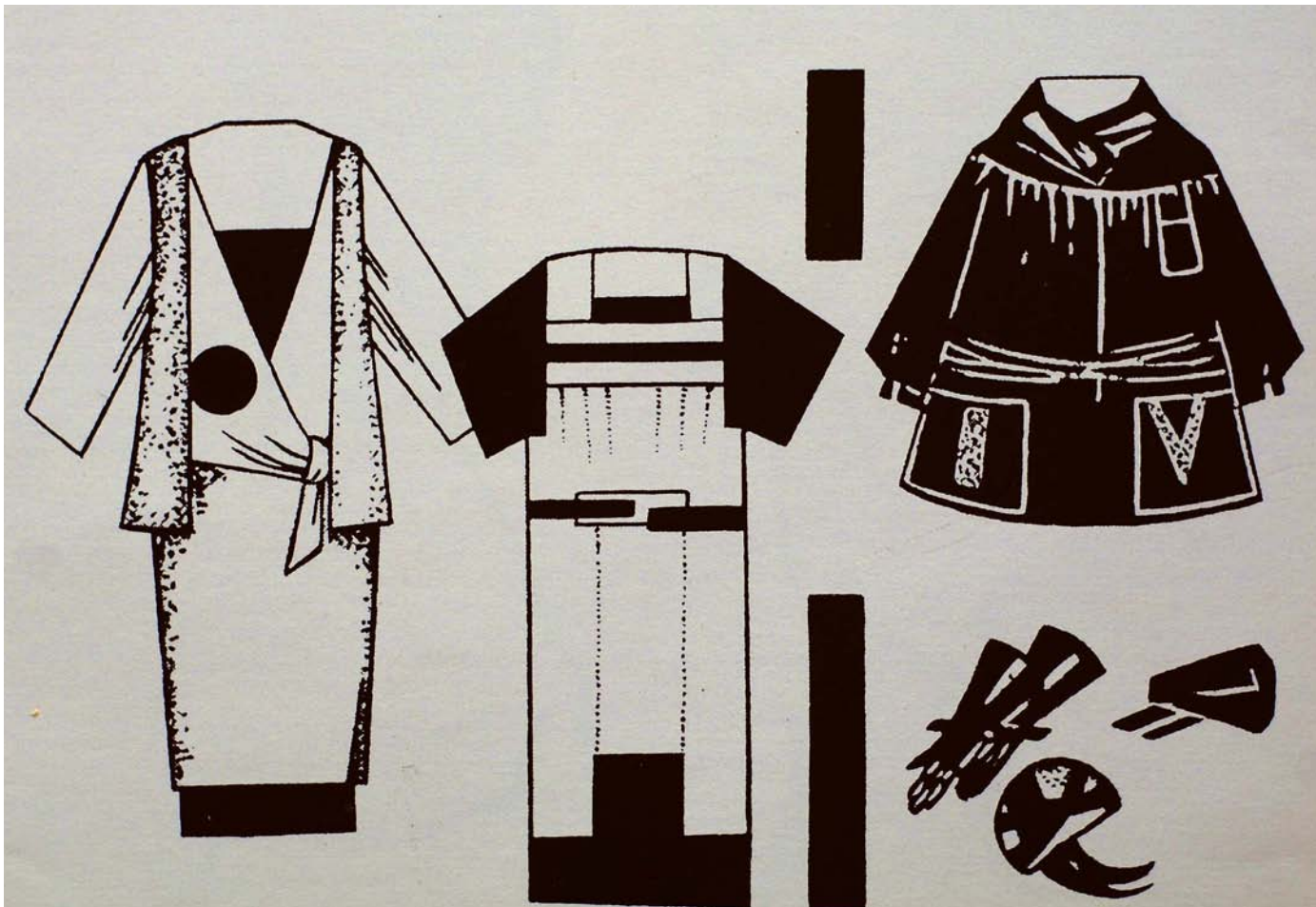


FIGURE 1.10

Aleksandra Ekster, drawing
for the cover of the journal
Atel'e, Moscow (1923).

FIGURE 1.11

Aleksandra Ekster, dress
design, *Krasnaia niva*,
Moscow (1923, no. 21).



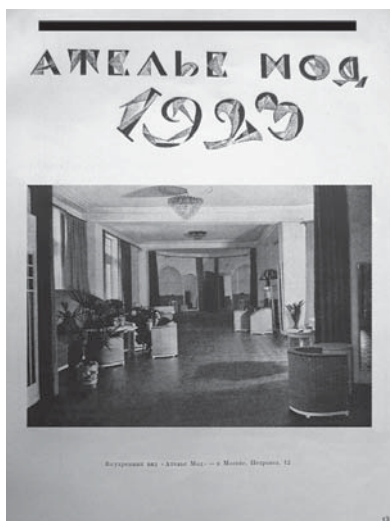


FIGURE 1.12
Interior, Atelier of Fashion, *Atel'e*,
Moscow (1923, no. 1).

FIGURE 1.13
Aleksandra Ekster, dress design,
Atel'e, Moscow (1923, no. 1).



FIGURE 1.14
Aleksandra Ekster, dress design,
Atel'e, Moscow (1923, no. 1).

urban proletariat left their traditional peasant dress and started to follow Western fashion trends in 1917–1918 (von Mekk 1923, 32).

Atel'e also published the ideas of artist and theater designer Aleksandra Ekster on functional work clothing meant for mass production. Like the constructivists, Ekster recognized that “the question of a new style of dress is the urgent issue. Since the working class constitutes the majority of the population, the dress should be adapted to suit workers and the particular job they perform” (Ekster 1923a, 4). Ekster’s concept of work clothing differed considerably from Stepanova’s rigorous views on *prozodezhda*. Ekster advocated that “a style of dress grows out of the conditions of life: work and leisure. The change of dress should be economic and appropriate, but also hygienic and psychological” (ibid.). Ekster’s drawings published in the journal *Krasnaia niva* (Red field) in 1923 showed that her ideas on rational mass clothing did not exclude diversity and elements of ornamentation. In her functional designs, the same outfit could be used as a day dress, evening wear, and work clothing, simply by adding or taking off different layers (Ekster 1923b). As an experienced artist in theater design, Ekster opposed the dominance of the ideological contents of *prozodezhda* over its functionality even in contemporary theater costumes, observing that a perfectly purposeful *prozodezhda*, the classical ballet *tutu*, had already been in use on the stage for a over a century (Ekster 1923c) (fig. 1.11).

Atel'e acknowledged contemporary Western fashion trends in numerous articles. The playwright Nikolai Evreinov, the erstwhile supporter of the tango and nudity on stage in the 1910s, praised Parisian chic, claiming that it made a Parisian woman appear better dressed than a woman from Berlin or Petrograd. A Parisian woman did not care much about the latest fashions, argued Evreinov; instead, she mastered the art of wearing her clothes (Evreinov 1923, 9). The fantastically precise details in *Atel'e*’s articles on fashion not only provided information about new trends but also painstakingly tried to restore the field of fashion and its rituals. Original contributions on fashion design in the magazine—by Aleksandra Ekster, Evgeniia Pribyl’skaia, and Vera Mukhina—presented artistic-style dresses and luxurious evening wear. Only one issue of *Atel'e* was ever published, which in itself demonstrated its utopian position. Yet, in the pluralistic 1920s, *Atel'e* was a counterattack on the Bolshevik political ideas represented by the rationalized constructivist aesthetics. Highly experienced in prerevolutionary avant-garde artistic practices, the initiators of *Atel'e* challenged the constructivists’ insistence on the modes of production at the expense of all other aspects of dress.

Because *Atel'e* was born into the flourishing NEP culture, its artistic pretensions had to match its commercialized surroundings. The journal was in fact the mouthpiece of the fashion salon Atelier of Fashion, which was affiliated with the Moskvoshvei (Moscow Sewing Trust). Atelier of Fashion executed prototypes of dresses for mass production by the Moscow Sewing Trust, as well as individual, custom-made outfits. An advertisement published in *Atel'e* announced that the salon provided elegant off-the-peg and custom-made evening wear, as well as film and theater costumes. The journal proudly advertised the salon’s luxuriously furnished and spacious premises in the center of Moscow with its art deco furniture,

palms, and chandeliers. The extravagant interior of the Atelier of Fashion provided a more realistic idea of its customers, the rich NEP circle (fig. 1.12).

While Ekster was keen to design functional, simple, aesthetic, and harmonious clothing that could be mass-produced, she also advocated the custom-made dress, claiming that different human characters should be matched by the type, shape, and color of individual outfits (Ekster 1923a, 5). In her *Atel'e* dress proposals, Ekster drew visually on two art deco trends. Westernized due to her peripatetic artistic life and her intense participation in the Western art world prior to the revolution—including friendships with its leading protagonists, from Guillaume Apollinaire to Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, and Sonia Delaunay—Ekster was already adopting the emerging aesthetics, which was about to move from the rigorously geometricized shapes and muted tones of cubism toward the more colorful and more ornamental shapes of art deco. Her biographer, Iakov Tugendkhol'd, stated that “her internal eyes are ever turned toward the West” (Tugendkhol'd 1922, 6). For the nouveau riche customers of the Atelier of Fashion, Ekster developed multilayered outfits, designing them in brocade, satin, and silk, and adorning them with fur and leather trimmings. Such highly decorated and custom-made outfits were an extreme departure from the constructivist concept of industrial mass-produced and unadorned clothing, which was far too utopian for the new NEP clients (figs. 1.13, 1.14).

Ekster's other dress proposals in *Atel'e* resembled modernist geometrical costumes for both theater and film. They were connected to her cubist artistic practices, applying the same avant-garde technique that Tugendkhol'd had already observed in her work for the theater: “Ekster's costumes are neither ‘designed’ nor ‘sewn’ but constructed: built up from different surfaces just like her stage decorations” (ibid., 13). While these artistic drawings of dresses borrow their rich colors and dramatic shapes from Ekster's costumes for a 1921 performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, they shared their extravagance and futuristic boldness with her costumes for the 1924 film *Aelita*. The difference was that Ekster had used aluminum, metal foil, glass, and Perspex for her costumes in *Aelita*, while her dresses in *Atel'e* made use of luxurious fabrics and exuded an impression of fashionable luxury. Corresponding to contemporary Western art deco fashion illustrations, Ekster's dress drawings were an art form in themselves. Her bold geometrical drawing labeled “N 1” in *Atel'e* differs from the real dress that was based on it. Although the real dress looks modernist, its image does not match the daring futurist allure radiating from the audaciously colorful drawing (fig. 1.15).

Atel'e's relationship to ethnic motif in dress was embedded in both contemporary and pre-1917 modernist sensibilities and artistic practices.²⁰ Though she came from that background, Evgeniia Pribyl'skaia gradually developed into an ethnic art expert and became instrumental in applying aestheticized ethnic motifs on Western-style dresses. Her ideas, elaborated in her article “Embroidery in Contemporary Production,” reveal the limitations of *Atel'e*'s elitist avant-garde approach to dress. Pribyl'skaia admitted that embroidery could have only a very limited applicability: “Its limitations are determined by a historical moment ... which does not permit the production of frivolous and precious objects, which are deprived of an immediate utility” (Pribyl'skaia 1923, 7). However, because the Bolsheviks



FIGURE 1.15
Aleksandra Ekster, dress design,
Atel'e, Moscow (1923, no. 1).



FIGURE 1.16
Evgeniia Pribyl'skaia, fabric design,
Atel'e, Moscow (1923, no. 1).



FIGURE 1.17
Evgeniia Pribyl'skaia, dress design,
Atel'e, Moscow (1923, no. 1).



FIGURE 1.18
Poslednie mody: Zhurnal dlia zhenshchin, Moscow (1928, no. 7), cover.

FIGURE 1.19
 Underwear design, *Poslednie mody: Zhurnal dlia zhenshchin*, Moscow (1928, no. 5).



FIGURE 1.20
 Poster against prostitution, "Stop!," 1920s.

frowned on Western fashion and its opulence, the ethnic was the least confrontational type of decoration. Pribyl'skaia tried to justify the use of embroidery in order to secure authorization for the use of ornament in the new socialist style of dress: "If we are aware of the scarcity of new fabrics and the limited range of variations in them, embroidery could partially modify the fabric. In that case, embroidery could perform a utilitarian function, contributing to the value of fabric, and adding to its esteem. Thus, embroidery could offer new ideas in textile production" (ibid.). It was unrealistic to expect that huge quantities of fabric could be improved by handmade embroidery and make an impact on Soviet mass production. The fashion plates that accompany Pribyl'skaia's article were, in the end, examples of her talent for purifying traditional ethnic motifs to the point that they aesthetically matched modernist Western dresses of the mid-1920s (figs. 1.16, 1.17).

The capitalistic NEP was a brief period in which Western-style dress was accepted. The fact that political power stayed firmly in the hands of the Bolsheviks while the NEP was modifying the economic system contributed to the confusing status of fashion during the 1920s. *Atel'e* tried to reconcile fashion, socialism, the applied arts, and domestic industry, but it competed with a number of conventional fashion magazines which reappeared on the market after having been closed down following the revolution. Fashion magazines such as *Novosti mod* (Fashion news), *Poslednie mody: Zhurnal dlia zhenshchin* (The latest fashions: The women's magazine), and *Zhurnal dlia khoziaek* (The housewives' magazine) were eagerly accepted by the nouveau riche Russian capitalists and their wives and girlfriends. They published numerous drawings of flapper dresses, which were literal copies of the latest Western fashion trends (fig. 1.18). Paper patterns were enclosed so that a seamstress or home dressmaker could make a copy of a flapper-style dress herself. In these drawings, fashionable dresses were accompanied by equally fashionable cloche hats and pointed shoes. Images of the NEP women's expensive dresses, silk underwear, painted nails, and eyelids smudged with black were published in these fashion magazines. Traditional symbols of bourgeois impurity—makeup, nail polish, feminine dress, and jewelry—threatened to pollute the pure proletarian body (fig. 1.19).

Commercial advertising in these magazines also emphasized the presence of the NEP woman as an avid consumer of all sorts of luxuries: fur, cosmetics, perfumes, fashion accessories, and clothes. The Bolsheviks' class enemy, the bourgeoisie and its ways of living, had been feminized and embodied as a woman interested in fashion, cosmetics, and the former way of life. Fashion was immersed in the old, traditional world that the Bolsheviks wanted to annihilate. In the framework of the ideologically imposed concept of the pure new socialist world there was no place for fashion, not only because it was considered to belong to the past, but also because it was perceived as artificial. Feminized bodies, and femininity itself, were considered to be not only bourgeois, but alienated in the ontological sense because they were artificial in the first place. In socialism, fashion and femininity became political issues because they opposed the essence of the system. On a poster from the 1920s fighting prostitution, a young, simply dressed proletarian woman with a red handkerchief on her head, with her left arm raised, and holding a red signal light in her right hand, stops an overdressed and overly made-up woman in a clingy evening dress, with a large trimmed hat

covered in feathers, red painted cheeks, and a cigarette hanging from her crimson lips, who symbolizes prostitution itself. In the background of skyscrapers and the lights of a big city, other fashionably dressed women are engaged with men in indecent erotic activities. In the poster, fashionable dress and makeup are identified as a serious threat to the social body. In consequence, the feminine woman was forced into the position of a permanent Other (fig. 1.20).

Such a portrayal of a prostitute explains why Sergei Tret'iakov was horrified in 1927 to see on cinema screens "old-style beauties ... with satin skin, elegant feet, the aristocratic hands, fine bones, noble profiles, and perfect mouths" (Tret'iakov 1927, 29). Such a notion of femininity turned a woman into a bed accessory, Tret'iakov observed. Her small feet, delicate bones, and soft hands not only denied her any chance to be a worker and friend, but identified her as an enemy "for whom men abandon their coarse, exhausted wives, with their short noses, small eyes, and heavy bones" (ibid.). This description emphasizes how the technology of gender was formulated by connecting various cultural symbols to sex. Only a woman of monumental shape could be a good worker and a loyal friend; a delicate female body belonged to the class enemy and the old world, and was suspected of eroticism and decadence.

Aleksandra Kollontai published her novel *Vasilisa Malygina* in 1923, just as the NEP was signaling a return to capitalist economic practices and the NEP men were starting to behave like a new bourgeoisie.²¹ In the novel, the proletarian heroine Vasilisa loses her Communist husband to the frivolous and fashionably dressed Nina Konstantinovna, whom Vasilisa's friend Lisa describes as incredibly beautiful, incredibly well dressed, always wearing silk, and always surrounded by admirers (Kollontai 1999, 131).²² The modest Vasilisa secretly goes to a park in which Nina Konstantinovna usually strolled with her admirers, to see for herself:

So here she was at last. She wore a thin white dress which enveloped her body in soft folds and clearly exposed her breasts, and long sand-coloured gloves. A matching hat tilted over her eyes so Vasya couldn't see her face properly. All she could see were her lips, bright crimson as though smeared with blood. "Why, look at her lips! They're like blood!" she exclaimed. "That's lipstick," Maria Semenovna explained sagely. "You should see her eyes too, all smudged with soot! I'd like to get a cloth and scrub all that mess off her face, then we'd see what she really looked like. Hah!" (ibid., 165-166)

Vasilisa, in contrast, is uneasy about cosmetics and the latest fashions. She despises the NEP wife of one of her husband's colleagues: "His wife was tarted up like a streetwalker in a diaphanous dress, with furs draped over her shoulder and rings sparkling on her fingers" (ibid., 86). In fact, Vasilisa's husband betrays her not only sexually but also ideologically. While Vasilisa is still loyal to the ideals of revolution, Vladimir changes into an unscrupulous NEP man to such an extent that friends nickname him "American." Vasilisa's rival, the frivolous and feminine Nina Konstantinovna, is thus a metaphor for the reactionary forces



FIGURE 1.21

A. Zelenskii, advertisement,
the Donbas State Tobacco
Factory, 1927.

that threatened both the New Woman and the ideals of revolution. The modernist sensibility of the NEP woman nevertheless found its way even into official propaganda. The new androgyny was no longer based on the masculinity of the Nietzschean superman: Kollontai accentuates throughout her novel that Vasilisa is thin, pale, and flat-chested. Reflecting 1920s urbanity, Kollontai's heroine shares a boyish frame with her ideological opposite, the NEP woman. The difference is that the NEP woman decorates her groomed, skinny body, while Vasilisa's equally urban, boyish figure is unadorned and restrained. Although Vasilisa despises the expensive embellishment of her ideological rival, visually they both conform to the 1920s modernist travesty of transforming women's bodies into those of young boys.

The NEP woman reminded loyal Bolsheviks of the worst practices of capitalism, and symbolically suggested the notion of the female body as the site of consumption and pleasure. There were two different visual representations of the fashionable NEP woman. In the cartoons published in the Bolshevik media, she was an overdecorated, nouveau riche woman lacking personal style, while in the pages of the NEP fashion magazines, as well as in advertising, she was presented as sleek and slim. Thus, dress visually expressed a huge schism within Soviet social body in the second half of the 1920s. That schism also ran along the gender divide, as popular economic anxieties were transferred into antagonisms toward the NEP man, while sexual anxieties were embodied in his fashionable wife or girlfriend.²³

In a 1927 advertisement, the Donbas State Tobacco Factory identified its customers through their attire: a Red Army soldier, a worker, an intellectual, a middle-class lady, a peasant, and a man in an evening frock and top hat, accompanying an extravagant NEP woman in a long dress and a huge overcoat trimmed with white fur (fig. 1.21). Everybody, including the NEP woman, represented a specific, easily identifiable social type, but only her dress was in the latest style. While the NEP woman's extravagant luxury was an ideological issue, the contemporariness of her dress was an ontological problem: for, in promoting the most current styles, NEP clothing was actually returning to the past, a past in which fashion was important and always in flux. As the Bolsheviks tried to expel both previous sartorial history and future fashions from their utopia, the return of fashion during the NEP period seriously disturbed the new emerging values.

The Artistic Prototype

By the mid-1920s, the constructivists had lost their political influence. Their dress project slowly faded, never materializing into the utilitarian garments its creators had dreamed of. Other Bolshevik initiatives, which lasted until the end of the 1920s and were supported by Anatolii Lunacharskii, the People's Commissar for Enlightenment, attempted to create a new socialist dress as a utopian merger between the backward clothing industry and a style that was close to haute couture. In those Bolshevik initiatives, dress was perceived as an artistic artifact. Unique prototypes, whose production required demanding handmade techniques, emerged from that unlikely union. In his 1928 article on "Cultural Revolution and Art," Lunacharskii recognized three sartorial categories: *prozodezhda*,

sportodezhda, and *spetsial'naia prazdnichnaia odezhda* (special festive dress). The first two categories are Stepanova's terms for working clothes and sports clothes, and Lunacharskii stressed the importance of the engineer-artist's technical knowledge in their production. However, in the design of the third, handmade category, he emphasized the artist's creative input. He envisioned a hand-crafted, festive socialist dress of excellent quality, and advised the designer to collaborate closely with the dressmaker and the milliner in order to realize it. According to Lunacharskii, socialist festive dress should be bright and full of colors, qualities that should not be available only in the bourgeois world (Lunacharskii 1928a, 5–12). Although this third category—festive dress—was opposed to constructivist functionalism, its artistic pretensions singled it out as just another utopian construct.

By 1928 Stepanova had transferred all her Bolshevik anxieties about fashionable dress to the role of the designer. She opposed the trend “in European women's dress . . . towards making an individual model of a dress unrepeatable, available only to a very restricted circle of customers, or even the outfit for a single evening, to be worn once only, not stitched but only pinned—such ventures are seen from time to time in European fashion houses” (Stepanova 1998, 191). Stepanova complained that the problem with “the dress of the European woman of fashion” was that it was not made by a “production worker” but by an “easel artist” (ibid.). She still opposed “the hideous experiments in printing flowers or stripes on beautifully worked knitwear,” a practice that, she asserted, was common in the West (ibid., 192). But the bold decorativeness and exclusivity that Stepanova loathed in the West could also be found in the Soviet Union, promoted by the Commissariat of Enlightenment.

Although Lunacharskii, from his powerful position, supported the constructivists' avant-garde ideas about the merger of art and industry, he never renounced decorative aesthetics. In the search for a new socialist style of dress, the Subsection of Art and Production within the Fine Art Department (IZO) of his ministry promoted an aesthetics of dress which involved the use of decorative ethnic motifs and which would not abandon adornment and attractiveness.²⁴ The aesthetic differences between modernist austerity and art deco-style embellishments underlined the main ontological differences between the constructivists and the practitioners of Bolshevik artistic dress. While the former rejected fashion because they rejected history, the latter attempted to invent and promote a new socialist style of dress that would not completely deny the previous history of fashion, while avoiding its exploitative and commercial practices.

The State Couturière: Nadezhda Lamanova

The esteemed prerevolutionary fashion designer Nadezhda Lamanova was central to the state-sponsored promotion of socialist dress as an artistic outfit. Unlike the constructivists such as Stepanova, who made a lot of noise with her programmatic texts, and Popova, whose artistic excellence was never transferred to real dresses, Lamanova produced high-quality outfits from sumptuous embroidered fabrics and hopsack. This talent was precious to the state. From the mid-1920s, when it became clear that socialist industry was incapable

of producing any decent clothes, such artistic custom-made outfits were appropriated as prototypes and promoted by the Bolshevik regime.

Lamanova had opened her fashion salon in Moscow in 1885. By the 1910s, she employed two hundred seamstresses and supplied haute couture dresses for her rich and sophisticated clientele, which comprised gentry and famous actresses. Her premises at Tverskoi Boulevard included a sumptuously decorated amphitheater for her fashion shows, which also hosted a Paul Poiret catwalk presentation during his visit to Moscow in 1911. In the immediate postrevolutionary period, Lamanova spent some time in prison as an enemy of the people, and was eventually released following an intervention by the writer Maksim Gor'kii.²⁵ Although she had lost her fashion house in the aftermath of the revolution, Lamanova continued to discreetly provide custom-made dresses for private clients from artistic circles and for some members of the new Kremlin elite. While in the 1890s and 1910s she had lavishly used the best chiffon, tulle, silk, satin, sequins, and highly ornamental beaded decorations, she still managed, through the NEP's commercial channels, to procure machine lace and some silk even in the poverty-stricken 1920s, and to embellish her dresses with beadwork and silk ribbon tassels.

While she was reduced to making dresses for private clients in shadowy deals, Lamanova was simultaneously building a new, respectable career in socialist dress design by progressing through the newly established educational and artistic institutions. In her discussion at the First All-Russian Conference on Art and Production in August 1919, Lamanova negotiated for a new meaning of dress within the conference's main ideological theme of the merger between art and industry. She claimed that *odezhda* (dress) was one of the most suitable mediums for the dissemination of art into all the manifestations of the everyday, and called upon artists to design beautiful dresses using plain fabrics, corresponding to the new mode of working life.²⁶ In the same year, Lamanova became head of the Workshop of Contemporary Dress (*Masterskaia sovremenogo kostiuma*), which, embedded in the IZO's Subsection of Art and Production, was in charge of inventing and promoting the new socialist dress. As a professional dressmaker, Lamanova was more pragmatic than the constructivists. She inherently knew how to please her customers, including both the members of the state apparatus and eccentric theater actresses. In the spirit of the times, her vision of a new socialist dress abandoned fashion practice and the word "fashion" itself, but preserved the concept of a handsome dress. Unlike the representatives of leftist discourse, from the constructivists to Lunacharskii and Ekster, Lamanova never referred to *prozodezhda*, but used the words *odezhda* and *kostium* (costume) interchangeably. In referring to the material elements of clothing and their relationship to the body, these words avoided the ideological connotations of "fashion" and *prozodezhda*. Lamanova's technical knowledge of fabrics and cuts, combined with her readiness to discard fashion and its seasonal changes in order to save the concept of "beautiful dress," enabled her to operate successfully within the state-sponsored initiatives.

Lamanova perfected her approach to beautiful dress by reducing its shape to a simple rectangle, and insisting on the appropriate relationship between the modest fabric and the



FIGURE 1.22

"New Approaches in the Field of Dress," *Soviet Culture: Results and Perspectives*, 1924. First row: Nadezhda Lamanova's dresses; second row: Lamanova's dress on the left, Aleksandra Ekster and Vera Mukhina's dresses in the middle, Lamanova's dresses on the right; third row: Liubov' Popova's costumes for *The Magnanimous Cuckold*.

cut of a dress. While Stepanova and Popova had discovered the flatness of dress through their cubist practice, Lamanova's flat, uncomplicated dress was mediated through early 1920s Western fashion and its adoption of cubist aesthetics. Staying true to her profession and its innate understanding of change, Lamanova deflated her earlier Belle Époque bustier gowns into the elongated lines of 1920s dresses (fig. 1.22).

While ideologically biased against the West, the early Bolsheviks shared its modernist urge for change, and Lamanova's fashionable proposals conveniently connected their cravings for simplicity and functionality in dress with their dreams of its industrial production. Developing her dress proposals within the official discourse, she regularly conformed to the ideological dictates of the time. Lamanova's simple and sparingly adorned dresses designed within the Workshop of Contemporary Dress in 1922 mirrored the constructivist aesthetics. At that time, Emiliï Mindlin had elevated a traditional peasant-style collarless shirt, the *tolstovka*, to an ideal socialist vestimentary code by stripping down its shape to a network of vertical and horizontal straight lines which matched the Parthenon's geometrical structure (Mindlin 1922, 10–11). Lamanova's dresses successfully translated such constructivist ideas into stylish, wearable clothes, corresponding in their geometrical shapes with both constructivist dress proposals and Western fashion.

Through a strange twist of fate, Lamanova again became an haute couture designer, this time, however, engaged by the Commissariat of Enlightenment. As the struggle against the overdecorated and Westernized NEP aesthetics gained strength in the mid-1920s, the regime needed a more representative dress, and Lamanova obliged. Actively supported by Lunacharskii, this new dress was supposed to be both beautiful and decorated. In practice, it was also a unique piece. Lamanova used her position wisely, proposing a type of Soviet reform dress. Her proposals—simple, elongated shapes, delicately decorated with domestic ethnic embroidery—were clever and perfectly crafted Soviet versions of contemporary Western fashionable dresses. In contrast to Stepanova who tried to abandon fashion, Lamanova skillfully attempted to reform it, adjusting it to the new political and social situation. When worn with modestly embroidered tunics, her effortless straight dresses communicated a message of restrained elegance. Lamanova's reliance on Russian ethnic motifs for decoration was not an ideological problem. Her simple and functional dresses justified the very idea of a socialist dress, and the ethnic motifs that adorned them served the representational purposes of the new state. These beautiful, hand-crafted dresses were displayed in exhibitions both at home and abroad.

The presentations of unique, hand-crafted outfits in the midst of the prevailing poverty and in the context of ubiquitous ideological proclamations on equality were justified by the unrealistic claim that these dresses would soon be mass-produced and available to everyone. In the West, similar precious and elitist art deco dresses had a different fate. In contrast to the Soviet approach, in which overambitious artistic dresses could not be mass-produced, the leading Western fashion designers diluted the artistic aura of their creations in order to successfully enable their mass production. Studying the connection between modern art and fashion, Nancy J. Troy singles out Paul Poiret and his contradictory efforts to maintain an identity as an artist while gradually establishing his identity as a businessman. Known



Мастерская костюмов
Н. П. Ламановой

Atelier de costumes de
N. Lamanova

Модели костюмов
А. Экстер и В. Мухиной

Modèles de robes, peintres
A. Extère et V. Mouchina

Художественно-Промышленная Выставка в Москве
Exposition Artistique de l'Industrie à Moscou

FIGURE 1.23

Display of dresses by Nadezhda Lamanova (left)
and Aleksandra Ekster and Vera Mukhina (right)
at the First All-Russian Exhibition of Art in Industry,
Russkoe iskusstvo, Moscow (1923, nos. 2–3).

for his designs of extravagant couture dresses and theater costumes, he sold simplified versions of the same creations to middle-class American customers (Troy 2003).

With only ideological support from the Commissariat of Enlightenment, Lamanova was in a completely different position. She and her colleagues found their creative refuge in the production of prototypes in the experimental workshops of the state artistic institutions, or through vague attachments to the new industrial establishments. The group of collaborators was small in number, and more or less the same artists took part in all the projects. Lamanova, Ekster, Mukhina, and Pribyl'skaia were active in both the dress and textile laboratories of the State Academy of Artistic Sciences as well as in the fashion salon Atelier of Fashion of the Moscow Sewing Trust. The same group represented the Atelier of Fashion at the First All-Russian Exhibition of Art in Industry, which was organized in Moscow in 1923 by the Subsection of Art and Production within the Commissariat of Enlightenment and by the State Academy of Artistic Sciences. The Atelier of Fashion's collection of dresses won the highest recognition: "The Committee of the exhibition, presiding at the Academy of Artistic Sciences, awarded the certificate of the first order to the Atelier of Fashion: (a) for the successful results in the colors and lines of dresses, and for the sophisticated interpretation of the mutual relationships between the person, fabric and the artistic shape in the outfits on display; (b) for engaging the highly experienced artists in the design of the new contemporary dress."²⁷

Reviewing the exhibition, the art critic Iakov Tugendkhol'd emphasized that the proletariat deserved beautiful and functional clothes, and criticized the constructivists' identification of the proletariat's aesthetic needs with the aestheticization of the machine, a position that had been promoted in *Lef* (Tugendkhol'd 1923, 105–106). He echoed contemporary opinions about the constructivists, whose rejection of traditional fine arts and applied arts was considered to be too fierce. The designers from Atelier of Fashion showed different aesthetic approaches at the exhibition. Ekster and Mukhina presented functional ensembles adorned with geometrical stripes in contrasting colors, while Lamanova and Pribyl'skaia displayed outfits with simple, elongated lines which consisted of either a jacket with a dress or a tunic accompanied by a pleated skirt embellished with hand-stitched embroidery. Tugendkhol'd praised the vivid colors of Ekster's and Mukhina's geometrical ensembles designed for the Moscow Sewing Trust (*ibid.*, 104), but he preferred Lamanova's outfits on the grounds that that her successful application of embroidered ethnic motifs onto dresses met the demand for a more modern, democratic fashion (*ibid.*, 107) (fig. 1.23).

The aesthetics of the new artistic Bolshevik dress involved a compromising symbiosis of fashionable modernist dresses and traditional ethnic decorations that were ideologically unthreatening. Contemplating the new relationship between the artist and industry, the influential art critic David Arkin, of the State Academy for Artistic Sciences, emphasized that the contemporary Russian artist did not experience industry as strange or hostile, but understood its technical formulas. Arkin emphasized that the new art schools educated their students in both scientific and artistic matters. The new Soviet artist would never become just an applied artist, a *décorateur* (Arkin 1925, 43–47). Arkin's article, published in the



FIGURE 1.24

Nadezhda Lamanova, dress design,
exposition catalog *L'art décoratif et
industriel de l'U.R.S.S.*, 1925.

official Soviet catalog for the International Exhibition of Decorative Arts in Paris in 1925, was accompanied by photographs of Lamanova's dresses embellished with ethnic motifs. The ethnic-influenced abstract pattern covered a large part of the surface of the outfits. Lamanova's outfits revealed the Bolsheviks' confused relationship with fashion. Due to the ideological obstacles and the desperate state of the Soviet clothing industry, the everyday reality of fashion was replaced by the highly representational dresses shown at the official exhibitions. The claim that those beautiful, individually executed dresses would soon be mass-produced was unrealistic, as was the idea that those exclusive outfits would be available to everyone.

Artistic Dress at the Paris 1925 Decorative Exhibition

Lamanova's outfits were displayed in the Russian ethnic section at the Paris International Decorative Exhibition in 1925. Her dresses occupied stand N 59, squeezed between wooden carved toys, embroidered cushions, ethnic dresses, naive art paintings, decorated balalaikas, wooden painted boxes, pioneer dolls, lacquered wooden objects, and painted pottery.²⁸ P. Kogan, in charge of the Soviet display on behalf of the prestigious State Academy of Artistic Sciences, announced in the preface of the exhibition catalog: "There are neither luxurious items of furniture nor precious fabrics in our display. Our visitors will find neither fur nor diamonds in the Grand Palais" (Kogan 1925, 7). Rather, stressed Kogan, they would encounter genuine examples of Russian ethnic art, enlivened with new revolutionary topics (ibid., 6).

Officially, Lamanova's dresses, designed with the help of her colleagues Pribyl'skaia, Mukhina, Ekster, and Nadezhda Makarova, represented the work of the Moscow branch of the craftsmen's association, Moskunst. Her Western-style dresses with their applications of skillfully reinterpreted ethnic motifs differed from traditional ethnic dresses and subverted the meaning of the other objects in the Soviet ethnic display. While those other ethnic objects had remained within the field of conventional ethnic art, merely changing their iconographic elements, Lamanova's sophisticated outfits challenged the context of both ethnic art and fashion in an effort to establish a new socialist dress. Prior to the exhibition, Lamanova and her colleagues had agreed on the concept of applying Russian ethnic motifs to Western-shaped dresses. The ethnic motifs, specially designed by Mukhina and Makarova to match the dresses, were purified and perfectly suited the clean lines of the outfits. The clothes were accompanied by specially designed hats, handbags, and jewelry made from unusual materials, like cord, straw, rope, beads of wood, pebbles, and even breadcrumbs. These stylish, handmade accessories, just like the dresses, corresponded to contemporary fashion trends but subverted the traditional idea of luxury which encompassed only precious stones, fur, feathers, and expensive types of leather (fig. 1.24).

The lavish outfits presented by seventy-five French fashion businesses became a metaphor of how Paris wanted to be seen in 1925: sleek, elegant, luxurious, sensual, and feminine. This French emphasis on luxury was not welcomed by everyone; in fact, serious debates on the nature of the Paris International Decorative Exhibition had begun even before its

preparations, but the Soviet Union was the only country to oppose the concept of bourgeois luxury and to promote industrially produced art for the masses. Still, the Soviet display was confusing and radiated contradictory messages. While the Soviets proclaimed the advent of industrial art, they actually presented traditional ethnic art, with the only innovation being the revolutionary themes in its decoration. The Soviets also exhibited artistic velvet prints by Liudmila Maiakovskaia and some avant-garde examples of constructivist textiles by Popova, Stepanova, and Sergei Burylin, all of which were eventually produced in small quantities at home, in addition to Lamanova's innovative dresses, which could not be mass-produced. Although opposing luxury from an ideological standpoint, the Soviet Union nevertheless exhibited rich furs and other luxurious items in order to boost its exports.²⁹ Because the Soviet Union was ideologically opposed to fashion, Lamanova's dresses were shown not in the fashion section, but in the ethnic art section.

However, Lamanova's outfits were also alien to the opulent world of French fashion. Their pared-down modernist style was far less attractive than the luxurious and exotic looks that the West expected from Russia. Moreover, they were genuine, while Paris was used to experiencing the Russian national heritage in translation. Ultimately, Lev Bakst's and Natalia Goncharova's theater costumes in Diaghilev's Ballets Russes succeeded mainly because they provided what the West craved to see. Russia was the Other: exotic, wild, and oriental. There was no mention of Lamanova's approach to dress in the French magazines that covered fashion at the exhibition. They praised only their main advertisers, the French haute couture houses. Reviewing costume and fashion design at the exhibition, even the official *Encyclopédie des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes au XXème siècle* offered just a few words on the Soviet display in its volume on costume and fashion design: "In the field of fashion, the Soviet Union relied on its national production and had no doubts about showing us a retrospective exhibition of picturesque dresses worn in different parts of its immense territory, from Ukraine to central Asia, from Siberia to the Caucasus."³⁰ Another volume of the *Encyclopédie des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes au XXème siècle*, dedicated to textiles, reviewed the Soviet display negatively: "Apart from some futurist exaggerations, it could be stated that fabrics from the Soviet Union generally lacked originality and *richesse*. While the reservoir of Russian embroidery possesses an immense charm, all the trusts that economically run the country today have not yet reached the level of artistic production that could compete with other European countries."³¹

Despite such critiques, Nadezhda Lamanova won the Grand Prix at the exhibition for contemporary dresses based on ethnic art, which provided the recognition that the Soviets were looking for.³² The French arts journal *L'amour de l'art* published an approving review on the new Soviet dress written by the Soviet critic Iakov Tugendkhol'd. He praised Ekster, Stepanova, and Mukhina, claiming that they were producing dresses from the simplest fabrics, while still managing to reveal their beauty and aesthetics (Tugendkhol'd 1925a, 396). Concerning Lamanova, Tugendkhol'd wrote: "In the field of dress, the activity of the famous *modéliste* Lamanova is exceptionally remarkable. This artist has put a lot of effort into designing dresses which are simultaneously perfectly simple and highly artistic, and that

could serve as prototypes for mass production, and could be offered at a relatively low price, so that all working women could afford them” (ibid.).

As we have seen, the Bolsheviks opposed fashion as an elitist phenomenon in practice, but supported the exclusive prototypes at the representational level with claims that these wonderful clothes would eventually be mass-produced. Yet the essential infrastructure was insufficiently developed. Observing the birth of mass fashion in the West, Gilles Lipovetsky states: “haute couture, on the one hand, industrial clothing manufacture (confection) on the other: these were the two keystones of the century of fashion” (Lipovetsky 1994, 55). The Soviet Union missed both branches of that bipolar system, and opposed the market and its diversified consumption patterns as well. Even Lamanova’s reform dress, which could have served the socialist requirements concerning fashion, stayed in a limbo of cultural production. On the other hand, the weakness of Soviet industry only encouraged utopian dreams about the wonders of mechanization which would enable artistic dresses to become an everyday reality and realize the Bolshevik ideal of a merger between art and production. Although the constructivist concept of the total submission of the arts and applied arts to industry was eventually rejected as too extreme, Lunacharskii continued to support a more moderate version of their fusion.

Utopian Uses of Ethnic Motifs

The ethnic motifs that had been introduced in the first half of the 1920s by Lamanova and were advocated by the ethnic expert Pribyl’skaia were gradually established as the approved type of embellishment in the new dress. The constructivists avoided ethnic motifs because they were marked by the past and by tradition, whereas they planned to reconstruct everyday life from zero in a new geometrical and cosmopolitan order. In contrast, Lamanova, who used Bakst’s and Goncharova’s embroideries in her pre-1917 elitist dresses, relied on the past. Elitist dress as such was excluded from the new order, but its strategic positioning in the field of applied arts and crafts was useful to both the designers and the regime. Embedded in this context, ethnic motifs not only embellished dresses, but also gave them an artistic existence as opposed to a fashionable one. Lamanova and Pribyl’skaia approached the ethnic motif in a similar way to the prerevolutionary artists, who also experimented with the relationship between avant-garde arts and Russian traditional crafts. Both designers purified traditional ethnic motifs before incorporating them in the modernist shapes of their dresses. Although fashionable, these simple dresses were unthreatening, as the local provenance and relative immutability of their ethnic decorations helped to isolate them from fashion changes.

While for professional fashion designers such as Lamanova and Pribyl’skaia the ethnic motif was valuable as an ideologically neutral type of decoration, P. R. Trifonov, a member of the Moscow Sewing Trust Board, saw it as a visual intermediary between fashion and socialism. In an article in *Atel’e*, he suggested that the new socialist dress should develop by synthesizing actual Western fashion trends and characteristics of Russian national arts

(Trifonov 1923, 45). In Bolshevik circles, there were hopes that the ethnic motif could lead toward a legitimate socialist fashion. In 1923, the illustrated Bolshevik journal *Krasnaia niva* compared Russian fashion with Western fashion. Borrowing its shape and decoration from ancient Egypt, China, and imperial times, Western fashion looked exaggerated and out of place. In contrast, sparingly used ethnic decoration on the new socialist dresses accentuated their clean lines and made them look modern in a new way (fig. 1.25).³³

Moreover, ethnic motif became an important visual statement within the Bolshevik aesthetics in its opposition to the Westernized decorativeness of the NEP dress. In an attempt to compete with the NEP fashion magazines, *Krasnaia niva* published a supplement entitled *Iskusstvo v bytu* (Art in everyday life) in 1925. Drawings for coats, dresses, jackets, ensembles, sports outfits, and a pioneer's uniform were accompanied by paper patterns and precise instructions meant for amateur seamstresses. Produced by Lamanova and Mukhina, this proposal, like their other creative sartorial interventions in the 1920s, was supported by Lunacharskii, who was the coeditor of *Krasnaia niva*. Well informed about current Western fashion trends, Lamanova and Mukhina preferred clean, elongated lines of clothes, either decorated with ethnic applications or accentuated with stripes in contrasting colors. Officially, Lamanova had to abandon her pre-1917 extravagant and luxuriously embroidered fabrics, but her linen dresses were now embroidered with Russian ethnic motifs or simply sewn from a couple of towels patched together (fig. 1.26).

Regardless of all her efforts in her official initiatives on the new socialist dress, Lamanova carried the stigma of being the former owner of an elitist prerevolutionary fashion house. In contrast to Ekster, an avant-garde artist who was ideologically close to the Bolshevik project and could design a dress as if it were one of her artistic commissions, Lamanova continually relied on ethnic motifs due to the permanent vulnerability of her social position.³⁴ In fact, Lamanova and Pribyl'skaia even embellished a sports dress with ethnic decoration.³⁵ Lamanova, however, still applied lavish art deco decorations to her private commissions, which differed in style from her Bolshevik artistic dress proposals.³⁶

The promotion of art deco aesthetics as expressed through Russian ethnic motifs continued with the publication in 1928 of a new journal, *Iskusstvo odevat'sia* (Art of dressing), which appeared as the NEP was approaching its end. In political struggles within the Central Committee, the NEP's supporters, Nikolai Bukharin and Lunacharskii, were losing out to Stalin and his plans for the political and economic centralization of the country, but *Iskusstvo odevat'sia* appeared with Lunacharskii's political blessing. In the editorial of the first issue, he stressed: "Some fear that clothing will become elegant or coquettish, and they consider it a great offense. For them, it is a philistine, or even worse, a bourgeois act. . . . However, a certain amount of elegance and coquetry is by no means unsuited to the proletariat. It is pleasant to see youth and beauty" (Lunacharskii 1928b, 3). While it disappeared in 1929 together with the NEP, *Iskusstvo odevat'sia* did not resemble the other NEP fashion magazines, which mainly copied the latest Western fashions. Instead, it revived *Atel'e's* earlier concept of uniting industry, art, fashion, and traditional ethnic motifs. Similar to *Atel'e*, *Iskusstvo odevat'sia* was an elitist fashion magazine, only vaguely

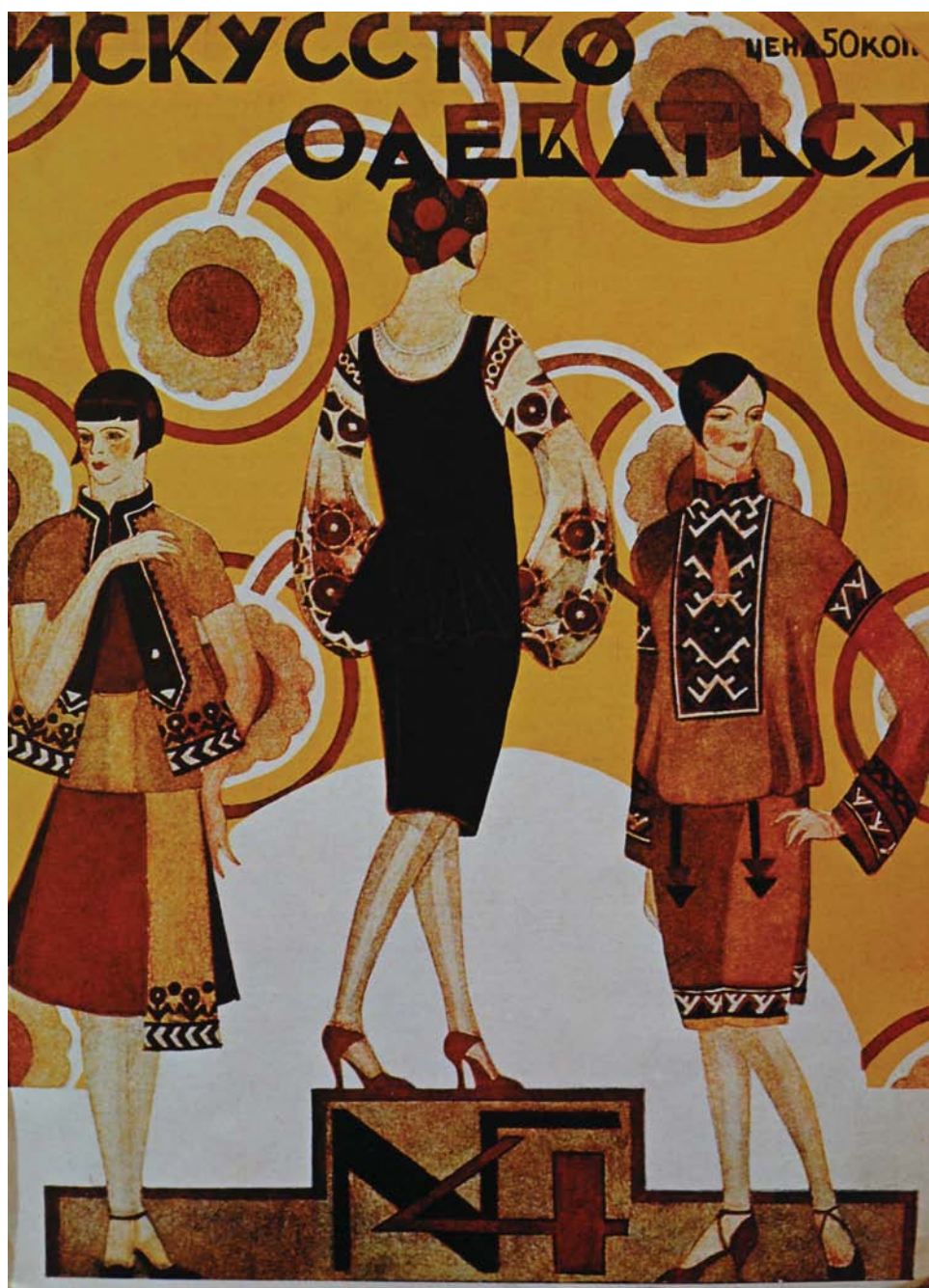


FIGURE 1.27

Iskusstvo odevat'sia, Leningrad
(1928, no. 4), cover.



FIGURE 1.28

Iskusstvo odevat'sia, Leningrad
(1928, no. 5), cover.

connected to Bolshevik values. Relying on strong geometrical art deco patterns, its bold Russian ethnic motifs adorned Western-style dresses, while fashion accessories, from hats to shoes, resembled contemporary Western fashion. Although the prevailing aesthetics, as presented in the journal's drawings, favored a visual merger between Western fashionable dress and Russian ethnic decorations, proposals for working clothes were also published, as well as examples of genuine French fashion and its Russian copies. However, *Iskusstvo odevat'sia* did not approach fashion only through the visually attractive spreads of fashionable dresses that dominated its pages. Its articles covered the history of dress and fabrics, social aspects of fashion, the theory of functional and practical clothes, and advice on hygiene (figs. 1.27, 1.28).

Lunacharskii had optimistically envisioned the democratic participation of the masses in fashion, but the aesthetics of *Iskusstvo odevat'sia* showed that the hand-stitched ethnic motif remained an appropriate Bolshevik decorative element. Moreover, it became more ornamental, corresponding to both its mature NEP surroundings and the dominant art deco aesthetics in Western fashion. The three most prominent fashion designers promoting ethnic decoration in *Iskusstvo odevat'sia* were M. Orlova, N. Orshanskaia, and O. Anisimova. Orlova's style was closest to Lamanova's rationalized use of embroidery. Orshanskaia decorated her outfits with traditional ethnic motifs, while Anisimova's ethnic applications were the most fashionable, relying on Delaunay's visual vocabulary, and her simultaneous fabrics and dresses from the mid-1920s. Delaunay was herself an occasional contributor to *Iskusstvo odevat'sia*. In 1928, she published an article on "Standardization of Clothes" in which she emphasized that two contradictory dress codes informed contemporary fashion. The first called for everyday dress of functional cut made out of fabric suitable for everyday life and work, which in Russia, Delaunay specified, was called *prozodezhda*. The second trend encompassed an extremely imaginative evening dress, blooming with fantasy, decorativeness, and charm, all of which were rejected in functional daywear. Contemporary fashion needed both functionality and beauty, and the aim should be to unite them. She praised the standardized patterns of the Anglo-French fashion house Redfern, whose vividly colored patterned strips alternating with wide blank bands were an appropriate fabric for everyday dress, keeping it standardized yet beautiful (Delaunay 1928, 2).³⁷ Popova had already envisioned such technological progress in 1924 in the ways in which she organized the relationship between the cuts and the rhythm of patterns in her drawings of "flapper" dresses, but the Soviet industry was not ready for such sophisticated techniques in dress and textile production.

Lamanova and Pribyl'skaia continued their experimental work related to ethnic applications on dress, but remained isolated in the laboratory. At the 1928 exhibition "Handmade Textiles and Embroidery in Woman's Contemporary Dress," they presented a joint artistic project, with Lamanova designing dresses and Pribyl'skaia contributing appropriate embroidery. Though this exhibition was held five years after the First All-Russian Exhibition of Art in Industry, the two shows shared many common features. Both were organized by the State Academy for Artistic Sciences, and both promoted the same aesthetics of



FIGURE 1.29
Zhenskii zhurnal, Moscow
 (1929, no. 7), cover.



FIGURE 1.30
Zhenskii zhurnal, Moscow
 (1926, no. 8), cover.

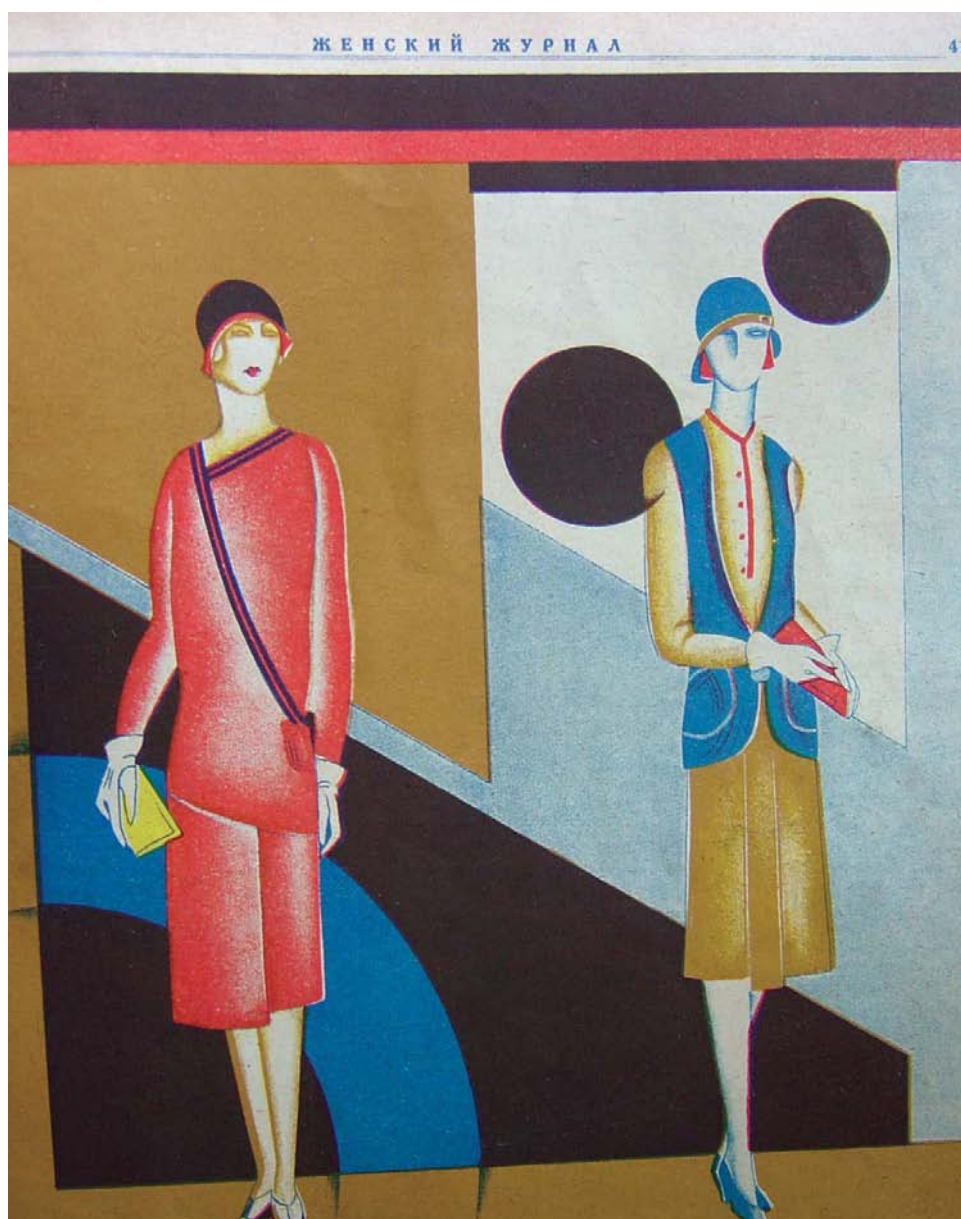


FIGURE 1.31
"Our Proposals," column, *Zhenskii zhurnal*, Moscow (1929, no. 3).



FIGURE 1.32

"Our Proposals," column, *Zhenskii zhurnal*, Moscow (1929, no. 1).



FIGURE 1.33

Dress design, *Zhenskii zhurnal*,
Moscow (1926, no. 7).

simple outfits decorated with handmade ethnic-style embroidery as an appropriate socialist dress. As the need to organize and supply the clothing and textile industries grew ever more urgent, David Arkin started to doubt the logic of the handicraft ornament in industrial production. In 1925 he had enthusiastically presented Lamanova's dresses embellished with ethnic decorations in the context of the merger of art and industry (Arkin 1925), but in a later article Arkin challenged the utopian vision of a union of handicrafts and industry: "The technique of ornament, as presented at the 1925 Paris International Decorative Exhibition, revealed high achievements but it was mainly embodied in unique, hand-made pieces. The mass market was left with a surrogate of an artistic object, with imitation, with waste" (Arkin 1929a, 22).

Socialist and Fashionable?

A new women's magazine, *Zhenskii zhurnal* (Women's journal), was launched in 1926 with the idea of promoting dress that would be fashionable enough to be interesting for urban working-class women, but that would avoid the extravagant and luxurious sartorial statements that the NEP aesthetics preferred. Ideologically close to Bolshevik values, the aesthetics of *Zhenskii zhurnal* included images in the style of avant-garde cubism and suprematism, Western-style dresses decorated with ethnic motifs, and visual borrowings from contemporary Western fashion magazines. The highly urbanized covers of *Zhenskii zhurnal*, produced by leading graphic designers such as the Stenberg brothers, presented groomed women in refined minimalist dresses and sporty modernist outfits, engaged in respectable leisure activities such as reading, strolling, sunbathing, or swimming in the surroundings of cozy modern-day homes, urban parks, beaches, and swimming pools, occasionally accompanied by fashionably clad children (figs. 1.29, 1.30). Within the smart yet ideologically appropriate covers of *Zhenskii zhurnal*, fashionable Western-style dresses were presented in appropriate Bolshevik settings. Numerous fashion spreads, articles on the latest Paris fashions, and regular columns such as "Our Dress Proposals" and "Fashion Chronicle" were balanced by articles on women scientists, on mother and child, and on women's health issues (figs. 1.31, 1.32).

The editorial of the first issue of *Zhenskii zhurnal* stressed that the journal wanted to fill the gap between perfect laws on women's equality and women's problems in everyday life.³⁸ In dealing with the everyday, *Zhenskii zhurnal* presented a merger between the NEP and Bolshevik values, for its recognition of fashionability acknowledged a different type of modernity. While industrialization had brought modernizing Western practices to the factory floor, fashionable dress began to convey modernity to the streets of the big city.

In the first issue of *Zhenskii zhurnal*, Lamanova published two articles accompanied by images of feminine dresses aimed at the wider public that the journal wanted to reach. In the photographs, her proposals ranged from delicate lace dresses to a translation of constructivist style into softer shapes. In her article "On Dress," Lamanova emphasized that the creation of an artistic dress should take into account the woman's specific body shape,

the fabric, and the purpose of the outfit itself. Only the combination of those elements would result in a successful form, while simultaneously corresponding to the spirit of the times (Lamanova 1926, 16). Her programmatic article corresponded to the journal's ideological platform. By introducing a nationwide competition for the best contemporary woman's dress, *Zhenskii zhurnal* went further in its attempt to institute socialist fashion. The entries in the contest presented a whole range of dresses, from a modernized version of the traditional Russian female sarafan to a dress for a modern housewife, and from elaborate evening wear to a uniform for a woman worker. The variety of proposals not only reflected everyday reality and the different dresses that suited it, at least in its idealized version, but also introduced a space in which fashion could emerge and take place in the new society (fig. 1.33).

To help make fashion an everyday reality, the drawings of dresses published in *Zhenskii zhurnal*, whether of domestic or foreign origin, were regularly accompanied by paper patterns for home dressmakers. Women made their own clothes or used the services of a seamstress not only because of poverty or insufficient shop inventory, but also because they wanted their own distinctive version of the flapper dress. Vera Inber, the Soviet revolutionary poetess, looked almost as chic pictured in her obviously home-produced flapper dress that accompanied the editorial of the first issue of *Zhenskii zhurnal* as Lelong's model in one of his dresses, published in the same journal.³⁹

The postrevolutionary attempts to deconstruct the previous gender order were constantly challenged in everyday life by Western fashion and by the popularity of dances such as the tango and the fox-trot. Though the Bolshevik press perceived all these Westernized rituals as serious social maladies, various elements of Western modernity, from wearing flapper dresses to indulging in American movies or dancing, spread from the NEP bourgeoisie to urban working-class women.⁴⁰ Although the puritanical members of the Communist youth organization Komsomol complained about revolutionary youth indulging in the fox-trot and waltz, many Komsomol clubs organized dances and dancing classes. At a conference of female Komsomol activists held in Moscow in 1927, Comrade Smirnova from the Nogin factory emphasized: "We know that streets exert great influence on our factory girls. The evenings we organise do not satisfy them and they come, if at all, only when the second part of the evening begins—dancing. They come in silk dresses, powdered and made up, despite the fact that wages at our factory are not very high (2 roubles and 96 kopecks a day) they manage to carve out for cosmetics and silk dresses. Our agenda is of no interest to them and we are powerless to draw them away from dancing parties."⁴¹

Reflecting on the shifts in 1920s society, the revolutionary poet Vladimir Maiakovskii published a poem about a factory girl who died because she could not afford a pair of fashionable patent shoes. Printed in the journal of the Communist Youth Association *Komsomol'skaia pravda* in 1927, Maiakovskii's poem was based on a true story from the same newspaper:

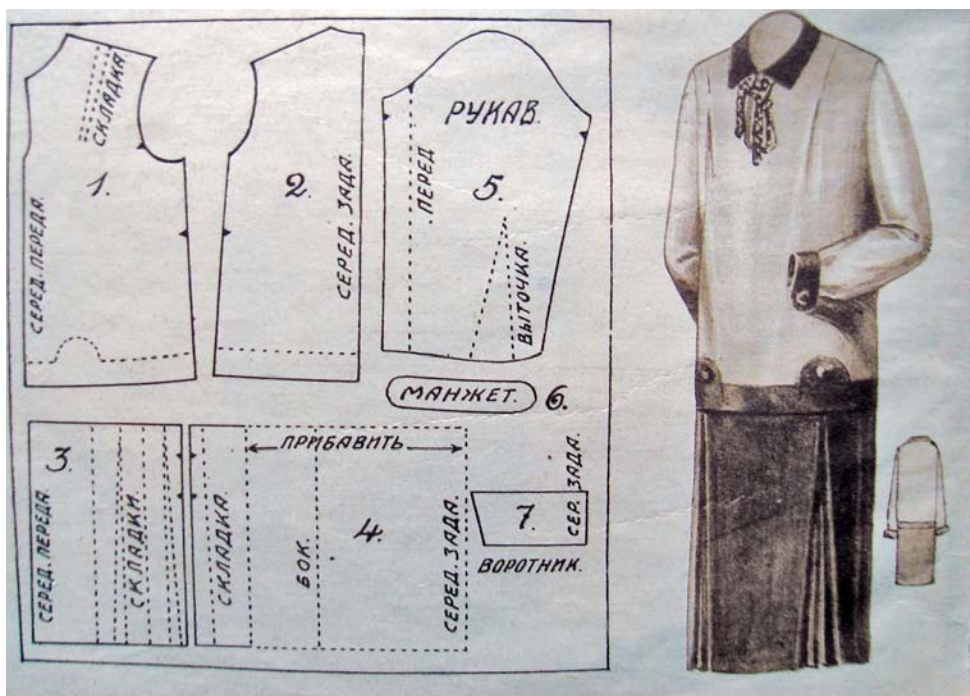


FIGURE 1.34

"Do It Yourself," column, *Rabotnitsa*,
Moscow (1929, no. 2).

Money was needed to buy shoes
and money was in short supply
Marusia bought a bottle of poison for five kopecks
the end of a short life.⁴²

The importance of fashion among the female population at that time is revealed by the fact that the woman's tragically unnecessary death was not ideologically condemned or trivialized, even though she did not die for a revolutionary cause. In 1927, even the leftist art critic Sergei Tret'iakov recognized that young Soviet women, at the end of a dull working day, in a mood "to escape their own lives through the familiar images of empresses, duchesses, heroines, mermaids, temptresses," would rush to the cinema. He flatly admitted that "the desire for elegance is very strong" (Tret'iakov 1927, 29).

Toward the end of the 1920s, urban working women preferred the Westernized style of clothes and appearance to the ideological austerity of their own everyday dress. Many had their hair cropped short, and their favored outfit was a white soft, loose tunic, discreetly embellished with white embroidery in geometric patterns, combined with a straight skirt in a dark shade. In 1927, the heroine of an odd love triangle in the Soviet film *Bed and Sofa* was dressed in that easy urban style.⁴³ Obviously competing for attention with the numerous American movies, the poster of this Soviet film, designed by the Stenberg brothers, depicted a young, good-looking and made-up woman wearing a fashionable beret in place of the scarf tied at the back of the neck, as commonly worn by urban women workers at that time. That small iconographic detail was enough to mark the heroine on the poster as a member of the urban working class, because the NEP woman would have worn a cloche hat.⁴⁴ By publishing the basic instructions for both a cloche hat and a beret in a do-it-yourself column in its second issue in 1926, *Zhenskii zhurnal* announced that it had entered the public space in order to broker an ideological truce between fashionability and urban female workers.

At that time, even previously rigid Bolshevik strongholds such as the journal *Rabotnitsa* introduced paper patterns, advice on fashion, and fashion spreads. They featured simple yet pretty dresses with elongated lines that corresponded with contemporary Western fashion trends (fig. 1.34). In her factory sketches entitled "Womenfolk," Ekaterina Strogova vividly describes the fashion-conscious women workers: "You'll see our girls wearing stylish checked caps, and coquettish yellow shoes, and beige stockings. . . . At parties you wouldn't recognize the factory girls decked out in all their finery: silk jersey blouses (our factory's own manufacture), in all possible colours with stylish trimmings, fancy shoes, and extravagant hair-dos" (Strogova 1994, 282). Many working women tried to renegotiate the early Bolsheviks' preference for class over gender, which had marked the initial restructuring of power. By declaring women to be politically equal to men, the Bolsheviks wanted to abolish, or at least minimize, gender differences. In everyday life, especially encouraged by NEP values and aesthetics, urban working women attempted to redress the balance between class and gender. Yet modernity mediated through Western dress and cosmetics opposed not only revolutionary values but also traditional ones. The position of women who plucked



FIGURE 1.35

"Life and 'Art,'" the workers' club (left) and the NEP nightclub (right), cartoon, *Krokodil*, Moscow (1927, no. 16).

their eyebrows, fox-trotted, used cosmetics, and dyed their hair was still vulnerable, both in the street and on the shop floor. Twenty-nine-year-old Marusia Vorobeva, who greatly enjoyed the fox-trot and started to dye her hair, consequently quit Komsomol. Reporting on her inappropriate behavior in the trade newspaper, her male colleague asked: "Will the five-year plan be better fulfilled if she is a redhead?"⁴⁵ Perceived as an individual aesthetic statement, the flapper dress was still suspect. The Bolshevik women's magazines were, however, forced to respond to their readers' interest in Western-style dress.

Under the circumstances, the image of the political activist was bound to change. The austere Bolshevik dress worn by female political activists was never meant to be a fashion statement and gradually became an anachronism in the new culture gripped by the importance of Westernized and feminine looks. By the late 1920s, Strogova could allow herself to be amused by the sloppy appearance of the stern female members of Komsomol in her sketches on factory life (Strogova 1994, 282). In contrast to the artists and urban working women who, encouraged by the commercialized NEP climate, were interested in fashionable and handsome clothes, the political activists faced a bigger problem. Belonging professionally to a system that preferred class over gender, and loyalty to the party over any expression of femininity, their space for maneuver was limited. Moreover, even Communist men perceived female political activists and female members of the Communist Party not as women but as comrades—comrades in a skirt, as some of them expressed it.⁴⁶

Artists also depicted the ongoing negotiations between the meanings of "feminine" and "politically conscious" that took place in everyday life. In the 1927 painting *The Party Delegate* by Georgii Riazhskii, a female Bolshevik political activist is still presented with no makeup and a serious face, framed by a red scarf on her head. However, she wears a simple skirt and a white blouse with a dark blue silk scarf tied in a bow below her collar, in the manner of a little boy's sailor suit. That sartorial quotation, belonging to the prerevolutionary dress codes of boys from the upper classes, was recoded in the 1920s into a representative dress of politically conscious female urban workers. Like the leather jacket worn before the revolution by professional chauffeurs and adopted after 1917 by male political activists, a boy's sailor suit was part of the sporty urban dress code that made both items natural choices for the dynamic lifestyle of political activists. The sailor suit also appears in a 1927 cartoon in the satirical journal *Krokodil* (Crocodile) showing two scenes with contrasting settings and clothing. In the sober atmosphere of a workers' club, workers play chess or talk to each other. Responsible working-class women are shown wearing red headscarves tied back at the neck and dressed in the sailor-suit outfit, confirming that such a dress code enjoyed ideological approval. The other scene of the cartoon presents a nightclub full of sexually liberated NEP men and their girlfriends. Wearing luxurious Western-style flapper dresses, crazed NEP women are shown dancing on tables, drinking, or dancing carelessly with men (fig. 1.35).

The boy's sailor suit was also an interpretation of the male work uniform, which granted it additional ideological reliability. The recoding of the sailor suit from a boy's wardrobe softened its masculine edge. It was a much softer vestimentary substitute for gender difference,

but it still retained the restrained elements of male dress. Worn by an urban political activist, a boy's sailor suit became a sartorial expression of proletarian smartness because it was functional, simple, and gender-ambiguous. Its everyday mass popularity was recorded in numerous drawings in the Bolshevik women's journals, such as *Rabotnitsa* and *Zhenskii zhurnal*. While by the end of the 1920s the female superman was too austere and simple to be a role model any longer, an androgynous attitude corresponded to the modernist insecurities about the concept of gender. Both the journals and their readers reacted to and promoted a new visual construction of femininity. A little boy's sailor suit was also a fashionable female style in the West in the 1920s, demonstrating the sartorial and existential correspondence between the experiences of the urbanized Soviet Union and the West. Stalinism soon brought an end to the dress-mediated merger between Western and socialist modernity that had slowly begun to develop on the streets of the big cities and in the new socially conscious women's magazines. In the late 1920s the avant-garde lost its artistic struggles for the new modernist woman, while at the same time the commercially oriented NEP was brought to an end. Stalinism soon found novel ways to discipline and control the social body. It established a new relationship toward fashion, and eventually imposed an overdecorated aesthetics on its ideal dress.



CHAPTER 2

BETWEEN SCIENCE AND MYTH

The Birth of Socialist Fashion

Before introducing the First Five-Year Plan in 1929, the Stalinist regime abolished the NEP and its aesthetics as well as all the various avant-garde proposals and artistic experiments in dress. Although Stalinism rejected the concepts of gender that had developed during the 1920s, it used some aspects of them, including the glamour and femininity of the NEP, as raw materials for constructing its ideal of the female and imposing it on women. It rejected the angular constructivist body and reclaimed the curved female body, bringing about a return to conventional femininity. In a massive media campaign, the Bolshevik superwoman was recast as a glamorous and feminine role model. Such radical shifts in the official concept of gender called for a new conventional and lavish socialist fashion to replace the modernist constructivist experiments as well as Lamanova's artistic dresses with their elongated lines and spare ethnic decorations. Though Stalinism was not interested in constructivist modernist aesthetics, it inherited and further developed the constructivists' insistence on functionality and efficiency.

The Bolshevik artistic dress of the 1920s was translated into a luxurious representative outfit, and the newly established fashion magazines began to promote the concept of the unique prototype. Stalinism established socialist fashion in the newly opened *Dom modelei* in Moscow. Situated within the Stalinist myth, socialist fashion was expressed through dresses of eternal, timeless style. Its conservative aesthetics was established by blending disparate elements, from an ideological use of ethnic motifs to selective borrowing from Western sartorial traditions, to create a new, unique style. Its aesthetics and its method of homogenization of ideologically and stylistically different styles into a new artistic form positioned socialist fashion within the realm of socialist realism.

Following the rapid industrialization of the 1930s, Stalinism translated the difficult Soviet reality into an ideal mythical image which was disconnected from the hardships of everyday life. Stalinism not only imposed a new style of smart socialist dress, but also engineered a new middle class and new elites by introducing large differences in wages and rewarding some social groups at the expense of the others. Whereas Lunacharskii had earlier suggested that smart clothes were suitable for the proletarian masses, Stalinism permitted only a minority of privileged citizens to enjoy them.

The Demise of Constructivist and Artistic Bolshevik Dress

Until his resignation from the post of People's Commissar for Enlightenment in 1929, Lunacharskii had allowed and even encouraged a variety of approaches, both in arts and applied arts, including Lamanova's decorated and elegant outfits, Stepanova's *prozodezhda*, Pribyl'skaia's dresses embroidered with ethnic motifs, Ekster's extravagant, luxurious gowns, and Popova's flapper-influenced constructivist dresses with their vivid patterns. As the power of the avant-garde declined,¹ its critics became more vocal. The constructivists had already been challenged by vociferous opponents during the heated artistic debates of the 1920s. Just a few years later, in the context of a return to traditional artistic patterns within Stalinist culture, critics had dismissed them entirely. The prestigious art critic Frida Roginskaia questioned the aesthetics of Popova's and Stepanova's textile patterns, claiming that their bold graphics were not suitable to the flimsy fabrics they were printed on (Roginskaia 1930, 26). In an article on Soviet textile artists published in 1935, Elena Eikhengol'ts stressed that the constructivist abstract patterns did not respect the cut of the outfit and that the artists did not take into account the specific characteristics and textures of different fabrics, but applied the same ubiquitous geometrical decorations indiscriminately on satin, flannel, and rough-surfaced cloth. She viewed the constructivists as a mere episode in the history of Soviet textiles, and praised the new generation of textile designers such as Skliarova and Shukhaeva, who had revived flowery patterns (Eikhengol'ts 1935, 142–143). In 1931, the textile expert T. Armand confirmed the official return to traditional ornament in his study *Ornament in Textile* by reintroducing patterns from different historical and geographical backgrounds. Yet all the ornaments that Armand presented, from traditional Persian patterns to rich baroque samples and grandiose evening wear in patterned silk

from *Vogue*, complied with the highly decorative Stalinist aesthetics that was taking shape at the time, as well as with its new iconography which recoded quotations from diversified sources. Among all the dresses from the earlier Soviet period, Armand praised only Lamanova's ethnic decorations (Armand 1931, 102–103).

But the legacy of the constructivists continued to influence the new political and economic conditions. Although the Stalinist drive toward industrialization made the utopian element of their work appear superficial, it also made their insistence on functionality and efficiency more relevant. In 1928, the exhibition “Soviet Textile for Everyday Life” presented textile design by prominent artists, such as Maiakovskaia, Pribyl'skaia, and Stepanova, as well as conventional samples from contemporary mass production and radical agit-textiles adorned with propagandistic motifs by the graduates of the Higher Artistic Technical Institute (VKhUTEIN).² In her article dedicated to that exhibition,³ Stepanova revised her earlier radical position, recognizing fashion as an important element of rationalized modernity and emphasizing the authority of the scientific approach for its future expressions. Corresponding to the drive to industrialize, she argued that a change in the style of dress should be neither frivolous nor capricious, but should be related to the development of new technologies. As the start of the First Five-Year Plan was approaching, Stepanova announced the fate of socialist fashion:

Under a socialist planned economy, fashion will assume a completely different form and will depend not on market competition but on improvements and rationalization in the textile and garment industry. . . . If the task of fashion in the capitalist economy is basically to reflect the cultural state of society, then in the socialist society fashion will be the progression to ever more perfect forms of clothing. Every discovery in whatever branch of technology will invariably lead to a change in the form of clothing. (Stepanova 1998, 192)

Stepanova's functionalist approach to dress matched the industrialist rhetoric that accompanied the start of Stalinist reconstruction of everyday life. In 1931, according to the critic Aleksei Fedorov-Davydov, “*Prozodezhda* will unquestionably develop hand in hand with collectivization, with the elimination of individualism in everyday life and individual forms of labor” (Fedorov-Davydov 1975, 138). However, the pragmatic Stalinist concept of industrial progress contradicted the earlier all-encompassing utopian vision. While Stalinism was about to transform the backward country into a developed one regardless of cost, the Bolsheviks had hoped to change the relationship between the new socialist person, arts, and industry in an ontological sense. By the end of the 1920s, Stalinism started to tame avant-garde utopianism and its diversified artistic practices into a homogenized industrial routine, subordinating the design, production, and distribution of clothing to the total authority of socialist science. In place of the artistically inclined fashion magazines *Atel'e* (1923), *Zhenskii zhurnal* (1926), and *Iskusstvo odevat'sia* (1928), a new professional magazine, *Shveinaia promyshlennost'* (Clothing industry), appeared in 1929. Throughout the

1930s this magazine followed the industrialization of the clothing industry closely, favoring the scientific approach to the problems of industrial dress production, while ignoring fashionable and artistic dress. In 1932, *Shveinaia promyshlennost'* published an article on color in clothing. Written by perceptual psychologist Sof'ia Beliaeva-Ekzempliarskaia, the article dealt with the rational application of colors in clothing, based on extensive research into the theory of color, including psychological theories of chromotherapy.⁴ Beliaeva-Ekzempliarskaia had acquired her theoretical knowledge on psychology, the arts, and visual perception while working in the psycho-physiological section of the State Academy for Artistic Sciences in the mid-1920s. She was a scientist, and her manual *Dress Design According to the Laws of Visual Perception*, published in 1934, analyzed various theories of form and their application to dress in a serious scientific manner. While Beliaeva-Ekzempliarskaia drew on the constructivist legacy by linking dress with science, she abandoned the utopian expectation that art should permeate technology (fig. 2.1).

Indeed, in contrast to the constructivists' utopian attempts to blend the arts into industry, Stalinism strictly divided these fields. The Stalinist relationship toward dress followed this division and moved in two separate directions. At the practical level, the centralized industry produced basic, badly executed clothing from low-quality fabric. At the symbolical level, Stalinism produced an ideal dress and positioned it in its newly emerging mass culture, which was actively inventing a mythical version of Stalinist society. The leftist ideology would no longer disturb the representation of this ideal dress and its attractive fabric patterns. In textile design, agit-textiles that featured industrial and agricultural themes, designed by the leftist VKhUTEIN graduates, were abandoned in favor of the previously despised floral patterns. In 1933, an article in *Pravda* ironically announced the demise of agit-textiles, claiming that political propaganda should not be literally applied to textiles. *Pravda* suggested that pictures should hang in picture galleries, while a dress should remain a dress; otherwise, Soviet citizens might have been turned into traveling picture galleries.⁵ The harsh reality of rapid industrialization required tractors in the fields, and chimneys, machines, and cogs in the factories, rather than being depicted on printed textiles. Fabric patterns again began to feature stylized flowers in bright, optimistic colors.

Leaving behind the utopian dreams of synergy between the producer, product, and consumer, Stalinism introduced a division between production and consumption at the representational level. Production belonged to the heroic and rapidly progressing, yet difficult everyday reality. On the other hand, consumption, which in practice was highly constrained, was symbolically moved into the quickly emerging mythical world promoted through magazines, films, and theater. Loaded with consumerist value, dress acquired an important place within the Stalinist culture of invented consumption. In a bizarre turn, the smart dress mediated between the worlds of production and consumption. The first consumers of this ideal Stalinist dress were the shock workers, or Stakhanovites.⁶ In order to boost the industrialization process, Stalin introduced rewards for individuals who worked hardest to build the new society, and an exceptional attire was one of the most valued prizes that these workers could receive for their extraordinary efforts.

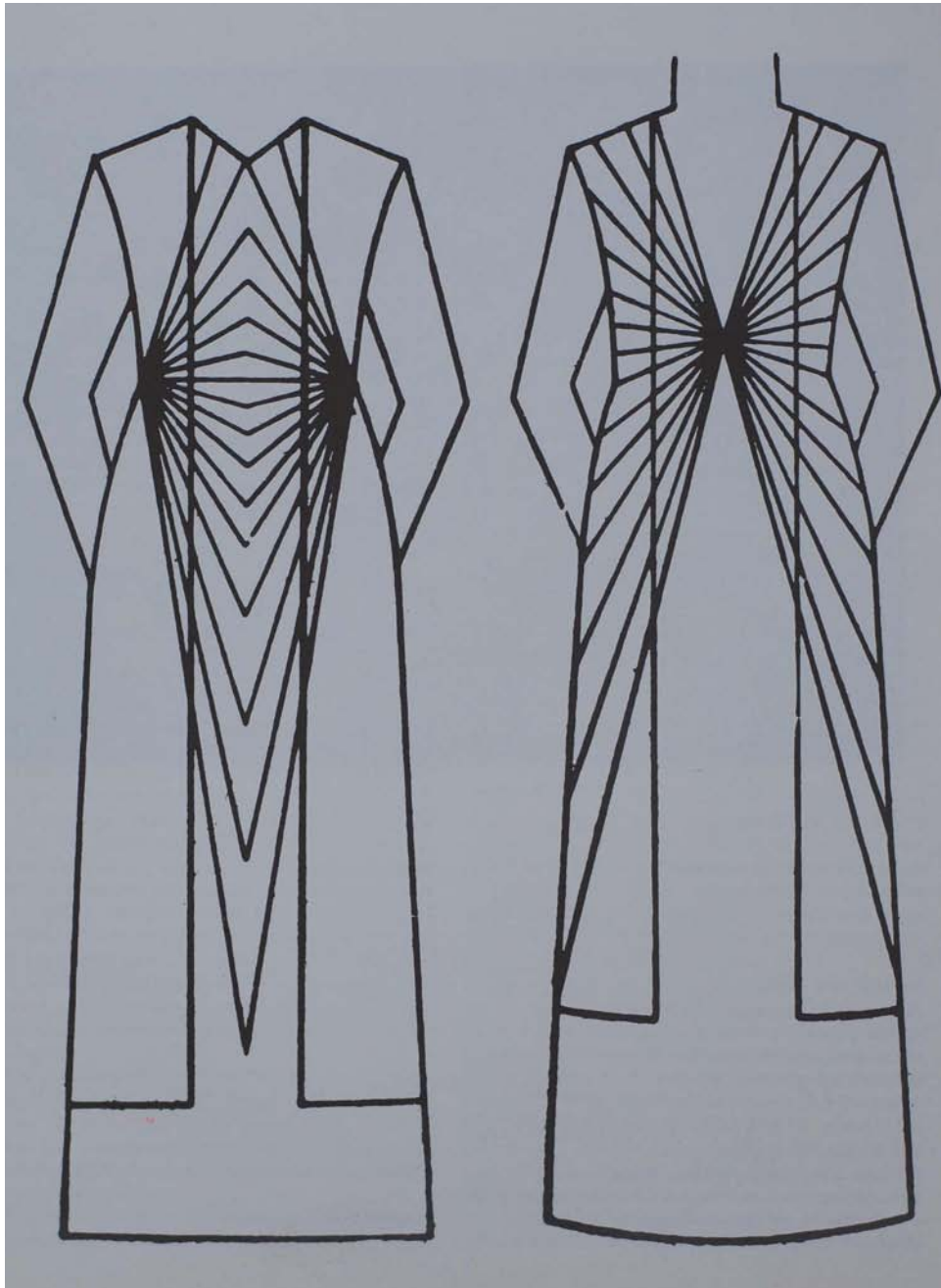


FIGURE 2.1

Sof'ia Beliaeva-Ekzempliarskaia,
*Dress Design According to the Laws
of Visual Perception*, 1934.

Stalinist Extraordinary Mannequins

At the end of 1935 and the beginning of 1936, the attention focused on the Stakhanovites—the star shock workers. The daily newspaper *Izvestiia* regularly reported on congresses of Stakhanovites from different industrial branches in Moscow and their meetings with Stalin, while the more populist daily *Vechernaia Moskva* (Evening Moscow) covered their social life, including visits to the Bolshoi theater, dancing in clubs, or buying clothes in special shops with the best goods on offer. The Stakhanovites were awarded prestigious clothes as bonuses, and were often given clothes at the shock workers' congresses. On those occasions, their childlike public confessions of their dreams and fantasies in front of the audience and the presidium, in the symbolical role of a benevolent parent, were mainly about clothes and shoes. The Stakhanovite Marusia Makarova acquired special fame, which even reached the Western mass media, not only because she was earning nine times more after she became a shock worker, but also because she was determined to buy nothing but clothes with her extra income: "Makarova, 'a labour heroine' of the Stalingrad tractor factory, ... does want money. It does not disturb Soviet leaders, as long as Makarova stays 'Stakhanovite.' Indeed, at the Stakhanovite conference of 3,000 delegates to Moscow the other day, Orzohonidzhe, commissar of heavy industry, led her on to the platform himself. Terrific cheers greeted the commissar, proudly introducing her: 'This, comrades, is THE Makarova who used to earn 150 roubles a month and now earns 1,350 because she wants to buy fawn kid shoes.'" ⁷ Makarova's craving for clothes was also justified in the shock workers' publication *Geroini sotsialisticheskogo truda* (Heroes of socialist labor) in 1936, where her friend and coworker Slavnikova explained to the Politburo member Mikoyan: "I asked my friend: 'Marusia, what are you going to do with the money?' She said: 'I'm buying myself ivory-coloured shoes for 180 roubles, a crêpe-de-chine dress for 200 roubles, and a coat for 700 roubles.'" ⁸

When official receptions were held, so-called "simple people," whose huge professional achievements did not match their social skills, were advised to dress up. The Stakhanovites were entitled to order custom-made clothes in the best fabrics from special ateliers. The situation was portrayed in the recollections of the Komsomol member Petrova, who was invited to a ball at the Column Hall of the House of Unions dedicated to model workers in 1935: "I was wearing a black crepe de chine dress. When I was buying it, at the atelier at Taganka Square, I thought that my look would match the ancient Greek style. Not exactly like Danae, of course, but a loose tunic dress with a gathered cape around my neck—that was something!" (quoted in Lebina 1999, 224). During the 1930s, state celebrations in the Kremlin took place in grand settings. Women paraded in long evening gowns through salons lit with chandeliers, while the regime emphasized its successes and celebrated its heroes. The media reported that the Stakhanovites who were invited to those celebrations often met Stalin himself. Magazines paid special attention to the attractively dressed young female shock workers, who became an integral part of these carefully choreographed state events. Their work was no longer their only duty; they were also expected to be extraordinary mannequins, as Stalinist culture delegated them to dress up for the rest of the population (fig. 2.2). At the



FIGURE 2.2

Stakhanovites at a spa,
Moscow, USSR under
Construction, June 1939.

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В магазинах продаются фотоснимки
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Специализированные магазины
Союзтекстильшвейторга имеются во
всех крупных городах СССР.

FIGURE 2.3

Advertisement for hats,
Stakhanovets, Moscow
(1938, no. 1).

beginning of 1938, even the Russian journal *Stakhanovite*, dedicated to the world of machines and the supermen who mastered them, published advertisements for cosmetics and fashionable feminine hats. A mythological approach toward the world ritualized every action. Once everyday work had become a ritual, dress could also be transformed into a desirable ritual, abandoning a quotidian reality burdened with shortages and scarcities (fig. 2.3).

Within Stalinist mass culture, luxury, elegance, and femininity became desirable categories that were already possessed by those who “deserved” them, and it was promised would soon be within the reach of every woman worker in the country. Reminiscing on his visit to the Soviet Union in the mid-1930s, André Gide cited his Russian friend Koltsov’s remark that Stalin “has had the brilliant notion of reinstating female coquetry, dress and beauty culture in a place of honour” (Gide 1937, 89–90). Gide stated that he was still very surprised to see many made-up and manicured women with red nails everywhere, and especially on the Crimean peninsula (ibid., 90). The regime wanted both the domestic public and the West to see the Stakhanovites buying clothes and perfumes and holidaying on the Crimea, which was nicknamed the Red Riviera by Western reporters and writers who were taken there during their visits in the 1930s. The foreign correspondent of the *New York Evening Post*, H. R. Knickerbocker, was amazed by the number of dressed-up and made-up women on holiday on the Crimean peninsula. They seemed very relaxed in their silk dresses, and happy to leave behind the hardship of the First Five-Year Plan (Knickerbocker 1931, 150–157). In 1935, the *New York Times* described a Stakhanovite shopping spree in Moscow during which they bought perfumes, kid gloves, silk lingerie, and fur cloaks before returning to the coalmines, textile mills, and beet fields, emphasizing that such stories were reported in the Soviet dailies as well. Visiting Moscow shops during the Stakhanovite congress, hard-working shock workers led by Aleksei Stakhanov himself were hard to please:

Stakhanoff bought a suit, hat and gloves for himself, a silk dress, coat sweater, perfume and silk lingerie for his wife. Alexsander Buaygin, an expert smith from Gorki, bought two dresses, shoes and gloves for his wife. Women Stakhanoffites Marusia and Dusia Vinogradova from the textile mills at Ivanovo Voznesensk were “tough customers.” “We showed them crepe de chine dresses and they said ‘We’ve already bought that kind,’” a clerk in Moscow’s biggest department store said. “We showed them other kinds of silk dresses with no better luck. ‘We’ve that kind too,’ they declared.” The Vinogradova sisters wanted wool dresses but could not find their sizes.⁹

However, these shifts in social stratification for certain categories of citizens, marked by beautiful clothes, did not take place in the real world of ordinary people. Sheila Fitzpatrick (1993, 219–227) recognized two Stalinist realities as “life as it is” and “life as it is becoming.” The luxurious goods granted to the Stakhanovites in the 1930s were not available to their coworkers, who could neither afford nor find even the simplest items of clothing in the shops. In 1934, the First of May factory produced 75,000 dresses, 85,000 skirts, 65,000

trousers, and 39,000 blouses from plain white cotton that it had at its disposal. This strange choice of an easily soiled color, especially at a time when soap was scarce, was explained in the daily *Leningradskaia pravda* (Leningrad truth) as due to the lack of dyes for the cotton.¹⁰ Although the dailies occasionally pointed to everyday problems, films and magazines usually preferred an extraordinary representation to an ordinary one. The aim of constructing a radically new and utopian society was replaced by the rapid industrialization of the country, and the equally rapid production of its mythical images.

Dom Modelei in Moscow

The symbolic importance of smart dress grew within Stalinist mythical culture. In 1935, its physical existence was officially confirmed with the opening of the Dom modelei (House of Prototypes) in Moscow.¹¹ Its opening, along with other fashion events that took place at that time, was reported in the newspapers. In November 1935, *Vechernaia Moskva* published two pictures: one of them documented a fashion show at the Dom modelei and the artists and political dignitaries who attended it, while the other portrayed the director of the Dom modelei, comrade Makarova.¹² A month later, the same daily reported on the presentation of new fashion trends by the Univermag N1 (General Department Store).¹³ Only a couple of days later, *Vechernaia Moskva* informed its readers that the fashion atelier attached to the Moskvoshvei (Moscow Sewing Trust) would provide ready-made dresses, offer custom-made clothes, and produce dress prototypes.¹⁴ The publication of this news, scattered between advertising for American movies and elegant clothes, reflected the political shifts inside the Stalinist master narrative.

In 1936, in the editorial of its first issue, the in-house journal *Dom modelei* envisioned two complementary ways for the new institution to accomplish a Soviet style of dress. The first was an independent, creative path inspired by the traditional dress of different Soviet nationalities, while the second was a critical reworking of the technical elements of Western fashion in order to organize domestic production professionally. In its first issue the journal claimed that the Dom modelei had already designed 4,297 original outfits from October 1935 till July 1936, and that these prototypes were being mass-produced in textile factories from Moscow to Ukraine, Byelorussia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan.¹⁵ Both the creative and technical tasks of the Dom modelei were to be achieved by a group of artists who specialized in designing dresses and a group of highly qualified cutters and prototype-makers, presided over by the artistic board, which had a very active role and included the most prominent state artists and high-ranking politicians.¹⁶ The established fashion designer Nadezhda Makarova, who started her career under Lamanova's guidance in the Workshop of Contemporary Dress, was the first director of the Dom modelei, and Lamanova was appointed as its artistic consultant. The head of the design studio within the Dom modelei was another of Lamanova's collaborators, F. Gorelenkova, and the prominent theater costume designers A. Sudakevich and S. Topleninov were also drawn into the design studio. To demonstrate the importance of the new institution and the new role of fashion, the names of the

members of the artistic board as well as the names of the designers, cutters, and sample makers were listed in the editorial of the first issue.

The outfits designed for busy women on the streets of a big city, presented in photographs and drawings in the first issue of *Dom modelei*, were highly urbanized and polished. The style of clothes was neither modest nor minimalist, although Lamanova's restrained aesthetics was a visible influence. Makarova, the fashion house's director, stayed loyal to her mentor's ideas on dress; her designs corresponded to 1930s Western fashion, but were not overtly fashionable. Makarova insisted on simple day dresses intended for mass production (fig. 2.4). The images in the first issue of *Dom modelei* marked the first time that prototypes, supposedly meant for mass production, were photographed. Previous fashion magazines had contained mainly drawings, with the NEP magazines copying their drawings from the Western press, while avant-garde artists had provided artistic drawings for the Bolshevik-influenced magazines.¹⁷ The journal *Dom modelei* emphasized its use of photography as an advantage over all the previous Russian fashion magazines: "So-called fashion magazines, published in our country previously, shared the same failure: they blindly depended on Western examples and merely copied illustrations from foreign magazines. In the journal *Dom modelei*, the designer and the photographer face a new and decisive task: to bring out the most expressive presentation of the dress in combination with a live person."¹⁸ Documentary and modern media such as photography were better suited to industrialization (fig. 2.5). Photographs presenting "real" dresses gave the impression that they could soon be mass-produced and arrive in the nearest shop. But the journal also featured some refined drawings of clothes by leading state artists who also happened to be members of the *Dom modelei*'s artistic board, such as the painter M. Rodionov (fig. 2.6).

But smart dress never entered the everyday life of citizens. In 1935, the *Dom modelei* was far too ambitious a project for a country in which food rations had only recently been abolished, and everyday goods, clothes included, remained scarce. In fact, the attempt of the first issue of the journal *Dom modelei* to present new dresses through the medium of photography very soon proved to be unsustainable. Drawings became the prevailing medium in the luxurious magazine *Modeli sezona* (Prototypes of the seasons), which followed the journal *Dom modelei* as an official biannual fashion publication. The medium of artistic drawings served a different symbolic role from the documentary immediacy of photography. Those sophisticated drawings took an ordinary object such as a dress away from the competition of the market, and even away from the busy noise of the machines in the clothing factory. And in fact, the beautiful dresses presented in the drawings did not face an industrial destiny (fig. 2.7).

In her autobiography, Elsa Schiaparelli describes how she was asked to open the Moscow *Dom modelei* during a visit to Russia at the end of 1935. She was sent by the French government as its official representative to an exhibition of French light industry.¹⁹ As Schiaparelli described it, "Electric mannequins under glass were turning slowly as they displayed rather bewildering clothes. Or at least these clothes bewildered me, for I was of the opinion that



FIGURE 2.4

Dresses designed by
E. Raizman (left)
and N. Makarova (right),
Dom modelei, Moscow
(1936, no. 1).



FIGURE 2.5

Outfits by F. Gorelenkova (left)
and S. Topleninov (right),
Dom modelei, Moscow
(1936, no. 1).



FIGURE 2.6

Dress designed by Nadezhda Makarova;
drawing by M. Rodionov, *Dom modelei*,
Moscow (1936, no. 1).



FIGURE 2.7

Evening dresses, *Modeli sezona*,
Moscow (1938, no. 2).

the clothes of working people should be simple and practical; but far from this I witnessed an orgy of chiffon, pleats, and furbelows" (Schiaparelli 1954, 92).

The ceiling of the Dom modelei on Sretenka Street was decorated with a mural by Vladimir Favorskii depicting, in Stalinist monumental style, the mythological world of the new socialist fashion. The mural included two muscular men on horses, another man marching while playing an accordion, and three women dressed in willowy dresses which vaguely resembled neoclassical robes.²⁰ Visually feeding on the mythological and the exotic, the horsemen were symbolically leading fashion to the music of the accordion into a mythical wilderness in which ancient Greece and Rome happily coexisted with Russian traditional culture. Ada Chesterton observed the Dom modelei's Paris-style luxury in her travel memoir *Salute the Soviet*, which documented her return to Moscow in 1939 after having lived there previously as the wife of the British ambassador: "The house is most attractive; a huge studio with windows running its whole length was painted a soft green which toned perfectly with pile carpets and velvet curtains of grey. The whole place reeked of Paris, and remembering Moscow's longish skirts and dull tones, I was not prepared for the exotic creations shown off by extremely attractive work girls" (Chesterton 1942, 17). In contrast to the constructivists such as Varvara Stepanova, who had encouraged change but did not allow space for fashion, Stalinism created a vast mythological space for fashion by physically establishing the Dom modelei, special fashion ateliers, and glossy fashion magazines, but stopped short of change by insisting on the concept of timelessness in dress.

Modest, practical clothes could not match the grandiose pretensions required by the Stalinist interest in dressing up its heroes, the shock workers of the huge industrialization campaign. During her visit in 1936, the English Labour MP Jennie Lee also reported on the grand fashion show held in the newly established Dom modelei, and attended by young women from the neighboring factories: "It was a very grand affair. The room might have belonged to a fashionable London or New York dress designer. The mannequins were of the same order. The first to appear was a tall, slender blonde who might have stepped straight out of a Cochran revue. Every detail was perfect. The flawless coiffure, pencilled eyebrows and expert make-up could not have been improved upon in any capital in Europe."²¹ Among thirty outfits presented on the catwalk was a black evening dress with a long train. Jennie Lee observed that the working women in the audience were dressed very modestly, but in conversation with them she understood that they expected to wear pretty dresses from the catwalk soon enough. In order to persuade the English visitor of the fantastic Soviet progress, one of the women asked her: "Have you seen our Metro?"²² Built in a record-breaking time and embellished with fine marble, decorated colonnades, and crystal chandeliers, the Moscow underground railway, like luxurious dress, was supposed to recreate the opulence of the old regime for the working class. Reporting on Soviet fashion shortly after Schiaparelli's visit, the French journal *Regards* quoted her advice to the Soviets: "Do not waste the best of your energies on evening dresses but on daywear."²³

Amazed Westerners such as Elsa Schiaparelli, Jennie Lee, and Ada Chesterton, as well as impressionable Soviet working women, thus witnessed the birth of socialist fashion in the Moscow Dom modelei in the mid-1930s. Neither real-life changes, fashion trends, nor the

laws of the market disturbed its birth. Although sympathetic toward the Soviets and their efforts to industrialize their country and develop a new type of society, Ada Chesterton asked the obvious question after seeing luxurious dresses on the catwalk in the Dom modelei on Sretenka Street:

“But,” I enquired, “what happens to all these lovely things. I haven’t seen anybody wearing garments like this. Don’t you repeat your models?” It was the old story. Labour could not be spared to manufacture the stuffs or copy the models. Standardisation of the simplest garments was essential and the output of the concern was earmarked for stage and film use. In the theatres or on the screen performers are usually very well dressed. But—here again we have the plan—when the hour strikes all will be in readiness for a spate of charming clothes and full accessories. (Chesterton 1942, 18)

Standardized *prozodezhda* was hastily mass-produced. It was, however, turned into a bare necessity, “the simplest essential garment,” without any ideological correspondence to its previous utopian content. Meanwhile, Stalinist mythical reality—within which socialist fashion developed into a timeless, luxurious, and unique phenomenon of its own—was being produced through theater, film, and mass magazines. Lavish dress from the highly choreographed fashion show for working women was a purely ideological product, designed by the costume artist and realized as a unique copy by the sample maker. Clothing at the fashion shows was just an element of fashion as myth rather than fashion as an everyday commodity. The regime did not want fashion but a representational dress, produced not to be worn but only to represent an ideological concept.

The Sartorial Prototype

The newly mechanized industry, still struggling with weak organization, a meager supply of raw materials, and the low quality of fabrics, could not live up to the ideals imposed by the Stalinist myth. Rationing came to an end in 1935, but many goods were still either too expensive or unattainable.²⁴ In spite of the glorification of smart dresses, the Stalinist economy was unable to deliver them to the public. In 1937, the popular *Rabotnitsa*, which occasionally voiced everyday concerns, published reporter Mariia Iurina’s story of her attempts to buy a ready-to-wear dress in the Moscow shops. She could not find anything attractive, she wrote, as the dresses were all strangely cut, badly executed, or made from fabrics with old-fashioned patterns. When she finally saw some beautiful dresses in the windows of Dom modelei on Sretenka Street, she learned that those were only prototypes intended for mass production in the garment factories. As Iurina’s unsuccessful shopping trip showed, such mass production was not occurring. Iurina emphasized that the factories were not producing the new styles, and that, even worse, mass dress production was resulting in standardized and tasteless outfits.²⁵



FIGURE 2.8

Catalog, the Leningrad Rot Front
fur company, 1936–1937.



FIGURE 2.9

Catalog, the Leningrad Red Front
fur company, 1936–1937.



FIGURE 2.10

Drawing, *Zhurnal mod*,
Moscow (1945, no. 1).



FIGURE 2.11

Iurii Pimenov, cover for
Zhurnal mod, Moscow
(1945, nos. 3–4).



FIGURE 2.12

"Fur Coats," *Zhurnal mod*,
Moscow (1945, no. 1).

Images of impeccably groomed women in *Modeli sezona* and in the luxurious catalogs that began to appear in the late 1930s were meant for members of the elite, who were discreetly given the chance to enjoy the most traditional forms of luxury. In the Leningrad Rot Front fur company's catalog, published by the Ministry of Internal Trade for the 1936–1937 season, only the most luxurious fur coats, fur stoles, and fur hats could be found. Printed in color on the best-quality paper with a circulation of a few thousand, this catalog informed only the most privileged about the new collection by Leningrad's specialized fur company. Incredibly composed women were depicted in luxurious fur coats in the same way that Paris haute couture would present its most exclusive products to its richest and most sophisticated clientele. The women had slim bodies, were impeccably made up, and wore fur coats, flirty hats, black high-heeled shoes, and white gloves. Nonetheless, the line of coats still resembled the shapes that had been stylish in the 1920s, while similarly luxurious Western fur coats already had much wider, flared lines by the mid-1930s. This difference not only revealed the cultural autarchy in which high Stalinism enclosed itself, but also showed that the display of sheer luxury was much more important than fashion trends within the Stalinist set of values (figs. 2.8, 2.9).

World War II introduced a hiatus in the production and design of socialist fashion. However, immediately after the end of the war, socialist fashion was revived. Both *Modeli sezona* and the new fashion magazine *Zhurnal mod* (Fashion journal), which was published by the Ministry of Light Industry from 1945, maintained the sartorial reproduction of the Stalinist myth (fig. 2.10). The covers of *Zhurnal mod*, often created by the prestigious state painter Iurii Pimenov, suited the official emphasis on traditional elegance that prevailed in the magazine. Staying loyal to his pretty, impressionistic style, Pimenov depicted a charming young woman against a background of the Moscow winter. Her blue coat resembled the Western postwar fashion of the late 1940s. Embellished with an astrakhan fur collar, a blue hat, a black handbag, and a pair of leather gloves, she looked like a proper lady. Her youthful elegance was matched by the magnificent black limousines on the road, making 1945 Moscow look both romantic and opulent under the snowflakes (fig. 2.11). Drawings of elegant dresses and advertising for sophisticated products indicated that the monthly *Zhurnal mod* was, like the seasonal publication *Modeli sezona*, meant for the Soviet elite. It was the appropriate place to advertise the luxurious products of the Moscow Fur Company N 2, with two ladies posing wrapped in expensive fur coats (fig. 2.12).

While the populist *Rabotnitsa* had a circulation running into several million, the small print run of *Zhurnal mod* was insufficient to meet the requirements of the elite at national and regional levels. Even so, by the late 1940s, *Zhurnal mod*'s drawings and photographs of highly representational dresses were validated by the Obshchесоiuznyi dom modelei (All-Union House of Prototypes, ODMO) and its regional branches, which centralized all aspects of design, production, and distribution of clothes.²⁶ All clothes, whether in *Modeli sezona* or *Zhurnal mod*, were presented as the work of ODMO or one of its regional branches. The names of the designers were always quoted and attributed to the particular Dom modelei which employed them, contributing to a certain credibility for the outfits.



FIGURE 2.13

Dress design, *Zhurnal mod*,
Moscow (1950, no. 2).

However, this could also have been a hint to the readership about who to approach if they wanted such dress, since the clothes depicted were not available in the shops. The editorial of the first issue of *Zhurnal mod* acknowledged that the magazine had a duty to educate its readers about the culture of commodities and to cultivate in them a taste for beautiful dresses.²⁷ Staying within the Stalinist myth, its editorial policy was to present only prototypes from the various Dom modelei. Apart from the title and technical description of each outfit, no other texts accompanied page after page of fashion spreads. The drawings in *Zhurnal mod* thus resembled a luxurious picture album, which invited a leisurely flipping from the first to the last page (fig. 2.13).

The textile and clothing practices introduced in the mid-1930s continued after World War II. Though promising fabulous dresses, the regime still could not provide even average clothes in the shops. In fact, the Stalinist myth could not recognize the category “average” in the first place. Mass-produced clothes were supposed to look like the luxurious prototypes in *Zhurnal mod* or *Modeli sezona*, or like the ambitious outfits presented at the official fashion shows that started immediately after the war. British *Vogue* reported in 1945 on a five-day-long fashion show in Moscow with 1,100 outfits at the All-Union House of Prototypes, from which it was claimed 325 were chosen for mass production on the basis of “attractiveness, usefulness, and their possibilities for mass manufacture” (Aldridge 1945, 49). The deputy commissar of light industry, Ribakov, stated that each outfit was to be made in five sizes and five different colors. Nonetheless, the English reporter could not understand the criteria of the professional jury: “A lot of trimming was hand embroidery, excellently worked and perfectly finished. I was surprised to see this embroidery accepted for mass production” (ibid.). Even the centralized industry under state control could not fulfill the unrealistic expectations imposed by the Stalinist myth. As Roland Barthes observes: “it [is] necessary to distinguish in clothes between the synchronic or systematic level and the diachronic or processive level. Once again, as with language, the major problem here is that of putting together, in a truly dialectical snapshot, the link between the system and process” (Barthes 2006, 10–11). The immobilization of Bolshevik change in the Stalinist myth disabled the link between system and process in socialist fashion. From the mid-1930s on, socialist fashion preferred the “synchronic or systematic” over the “diachronic or processive.” Bureaucratic overcentralization contributed to the failure of the Soviet clothing industry. In addition to ODMO, the establishment of regional Dom modelei completed the centralization of the fashion system. The Leningrad Dom modelei, founded in 1945, delivered five hundred prototypes to Leningrad factories in its first year, and delivered fifteen hundred prototypes in 1954.²⁸ The Dom modelei in the city of Gor’kii founded in 1949, provided prototypes for fifty factories in three neighboring republics.²⁹

The powerful bureaucracy established under Stalinism that governed the industry through a rigid, hierarchically structured and overcentralized system determined the functioning of the field of fashion up to the end of socialism. With their activities informed by the hierarchical principle, socialist state textile factories did not respond to the desires of their

customers but to the desires of their superiors, from whom they received both supplies and orders to fulfill their plan. If an enterprise could not obtain the required quantity or quality of raw material, or if some essential component was unavailable, production would not stop, because the plan had to be fulfilled. The production process would continue through “substitutions,” which affected the quality of the products.³⁰ After a series of substitutions, whether in fabric or detail, the look and quality of the dress that reached the shop floor in order to be reproduced in a hundred thousand copies had little in common with the fashion drawing or with the prototype that had arrived at the textile company from the central Dom modelei.

As real change became impossible, the mythical space that accommodated representational images widened. In 1951, Anatolii Surov’s play *Dawn over Moscow*, while apparently praising the positive changes in a textile factory, exposed the overcentralization of the Soviet textile industry.³¹ The plot revolves around three generations of women engaged in the same textile plant. While the young designer, Sania Solntseva, wants to introduce changes and offer customers cheerful new ethnic-inspired patterned textiles, the factory director, Kapitolina Andreevna, cares only about fulfilling the demanding plan. When Andreevna cannot understand that huge quantities of ugly fabric would not make their customers happy, Solntseva turns for help to a Bolshevik grandmother. The action follows their visits to the offices of important Communist party officials in an effort to obtain political support for a change in the factory’s production policy. While Andreevna does not understand that the times have changed, Solntseva nevertheless succeeds in introducing colorful fabrics into the production line due to intervention from the top. In the Stalinist myth, the new role of the factory was not only to fulfill its plan but also to fulfill its customers’ desires. By claiming that customers deserved a better choice, the first layer of Surov’s play served the representational purposes of mature Stalinism. Yet another layer showed that the activities of Soviet factories depended on protection from a political mentor, whose support was needed to provide a chance for change. This practice had started in Bolshevik times, represented in the play by the grandmother, and never ceased to be a functioning method in the textile industry. The fact that this appeal to a political mentor was openly shown in Surov’s play, and that the young heroine was even encouraged to practice it, demonstrates that it was acknowledged and widely applied.

Right up to its end, Stalinism existed in the clashes between a deprived reality and the optimistic myth that was promoted through mass culture. The richness of that all-encompassing myth revealed that Stalinism had left its earlier revolutionary ideals and its aesthetics far behind.

The Grandiose Aesthetics of Socialist Fashion

The aesthetics of socialist fashion, both in its imagery and in its concept of a unique dress, contradicted the idea of mass-produced clothes. Evening gowns and cocktail dresses presented on superbly polished women were favorites in *Modeli sezona* in the late 1930s. The

illustrations of slender and curvy bodies clothed in glamorous dresses with emphasized shoulders were never more than mere representations of the concepts of grandeur and luxury.³² In 1935, Schiaparelli produced a capsule collection for the Soviet working woman. As she recalled:

The rumour went around that I had designed a dress for Soviet women. Stalin had decided that army officers should wear gold stars, smartly cut jackets and trousers with broad stripes. They must learn to fox-trot. Commissars must learn golf. The Red Army soldiers must teach the women how to look their best. Newspapers carried the sensational news that I had made a dress forty million women would wear. This news reached Russia. It was said that the wife of Stakhanov, the miner who had invented Stakhanovism, had been given a motor-car, a banking account, and the latest Schiaparelli dress. (Schiaparelli 1954, 91)

She described her dress for Soviet working women as a simple little black “Schiap” number accompanied by a red coat lined in black, with large pockets, and a beret-style hat. In her autobiography, Schiaparelli claimed that, contrary to all expectations, she had surprised the Soviets by designing something so simple (Schiaparelli 1954, 91) (fig. 2.14).

In March 1936 Jennie Lee, on a journalistic assignment for the *Daily Express*, could not trace any of the Schiaparelli clothes that had been designed only three months earlier: “I wondered what had become of the famous Schiaparelli model specially designed for Russian women. No one seemed to know anything about it. Ultimately, I unearthed it. The unfortunate Schiaparelli has been stuck in an obscure corner of an exhibition of French imports, which is being held in the Chamber of Commerce, formerly the Stock Exchange. The Soviet fashion experts have rejected it as unsuitable for mass production.”³³ The Soviet officials claimed that the design was too “ordinary” and that the large pockets on the coat would attract pickpockets on public transport.³⁴ A Schiaparelli capsule collection was both fashionable and could have been easily mass-produced in an appropriate technological and market-oriented environment, but it was abandoned in the Soviet Union because it was considered too ordinary.

However, the Stalinist search for a new socialist fashion did not reject the historical and contemporary aesthetics of Western clothes altogether. When a genuine new dress had not emerged by the mid-1930s, Stalinism was compelled to borrow selectively from the West. The Dom modelei and the fashion ateliers that opened within the large textile companies and at model department stores, called “palaces of consumption,” were encouraged to subscribe to Western fashion magazines. Nevertheless, fashionability was not allowed to disturb the composed perfection of socialist fashion and its emerging grandiose style. Western fashions were copied and carefully recoded to suit the new conservative ideals of beauty and femininity. An examination of the dresses that were chosen from luxurious foreign fashion magazines³⁵ reveals that the budding socialist fashion was expected to comply with the main characteristics of the aesthetics of socialist realism: grandness, classicism,

FIGURE 2.14

Elsa Schiaparelli, dress design
for a Soviet working woman,
Daily Express, London
(26 March 1936).



FIGURE 2.15

Dress design, *Modeli sezona*,
Moscow (1938, no. 2).



uniqueness, and preciousness. Joseph Bakshtein has observed that socialist realism homogenized ideologically different forms at the plastic and stylistic level, adding an archaic quality to modernist form, and charging it with mythological content (Bakshtein 1993, 49). Although it copied technically superior cuts and a traditional concept of luxury from the West, socialist fashion rooted itself in the Russian national heritage. It was increasingly adorned with ethnic motifs from an imaginary past in order to invent a new tradition. Earlier ethnic applications, pioneered by Nadezhda Lamanova, had been mediated through prerevolutionary artistic practices that cherished difference. In contrast, the 1930s uses of ethnic heritage were informed by the all-encompassing Stalinist myth. Appropriated ethnic images blended the enormous ethnic variations that existed throughout the Soviet Union, and domesticated the otherness that had been recognized in the 1920s (fig. 2.15).

In the first issue of the journal *Dom modelei* (1936), the modernist aesthetic still informed Makarova's day dresses and Topleininov's city suit, which consisted of a sports jacket and a pair of culottes. However, the grandiose evening wear and the insistence on technical perfection in the same issue of the journal announced a new direction for socialist fashion. The regime was eager to master the techniques of impeccable cut and perfect manufacture of dress in order to produce its own timeless classics. Ideally, copied from the West and flawlessly mastering all their complex technical details, these classics were supposed to protect socialist fashion from future changes. Existing within a highly controlled mythical narrative, socialist fashion was condemned to an eternal synchronic status that did not allow for sudden change. Opposing an ideology that pretended to be eternal, Walter Benjamin had observed: "The eternal is in any case far more the ruffle on a dress than some idea" (Benjamin 1999, 69). In a paradoxical turn, the socialist idea in its most ideological form actually did turn into an eternal ruffle in Stalin's *Dom modelei*.

In the search for its own classical style, socialist fashion appeared in a variety of aesthetic expressions, from the imposingly glamorous to the conventionally pretty, which presented a glorified reality far removed from the deprivations of everyday life that had begun with the introduction of the five-year plans. Socialist realism, observes the Russian art critic Gleb Prokhorov, "prognosticated not only a form of art, but also a new reality," and its artists "were given the directive to work with the *a priori* idea of reality already articulated in official ideology" (Prokhorov 1995, 28). Socialist fashion from the Moscow *Dom modelei* shared both its aesthetics and its ontological status with socialist realism: its perfect beauty in magazine drawings conjured up a life that did not exist. In his article on Stalinist aesthetics, Leonid Heller comments on its equation between beauty and life: "Formulating the beauty/reality relation in these terms was not at all absurd; on the contrary, it made perfect sense given the fact that Zhdanovite realism presupposed the objective existence of everything it depicted. It thus created reality, much in the way the avant-garde had hoped to create it (and, for that matter, not unlike medieval literature, with its refusal to question the different ontological status of the 'seen' and the 'written')" (Heller 1997, 68).

The Stalinist strategists abandoned both the avant-garde Bolshevik aesthetics and the NEP's literal copying of the West, while envisioning a new socialist fashion as one of the

most important symbols of their new world. Stalinism abandoned both the aesthetics of its predecessors and their exclusive attitudes, and instead mobilized the masses through its new mass culture that promoted a whole new world populated with new objects, from the newest model of cars to gramophones, pianos, decorative lampshades, opulent curtains, perfumes, cosmetics, furs, ladies' hats, and elegant dresses.³⁶ Since such traditional, luxurious, and prestigious goods had previously been condemned, the regime now had to borrow them from the West. The earlier dynamic relationship with the West—rejection, comparison, collaboration, exchange—which had existed within both Bolshevik and NEP cultures ended during Stalinism. Various elements of Western culture and aesthetics now became a raw material in the production of Stalinist mass culture and its imagery. That process was both discriminating and creative, as luxurious Western objects were subjected to processes of signification that changed their meaning. Traditional luxuries were uprooted from their natural commercial habitat and given a new, merely representational role within Stalinist mythical culture. Although Western luxuries continued to be presented as decadent, extravagant, and exclusive, once transferred into the Stalinist context they were perceived as democratic and progressive goods, an appropriate part of the new cultured lifestyle.³⁷ In contrast to the previously appreciated *kul'tura* (culture), this new set of values, which emphasized familiarity with the new etiquette rather than a deep understanding of high arts, was called *kul'turnost* (culturedness).³⁸

Fashion became one of the new Stalinist rituals that were carefully recoded from traditional Western patterns. The cultured person was supposed to be well behaved and take special care of his or her appearance. The luxurious advertising campaigns for new perfumes and cosmetics produced by the Ministry of the Food Industry promoted state policies toward grooming more than the products themselves. New rituals, from dressing up and grooming to visits to the theater and cultured shopping, were introduced and explained in the mass media. Embellished with ethnic motifs, socialist fashion reintroduced opulence, decoration, and femininity, which held a wide appeal for the masses. Within their new urbanized rituals, this fashion was both aspirational and a medium for civilizing the public. Moreover, it was supposed to emanate a home-grown Soviet glamour rather than being of Western or avant-garde origin.

In contrast to the previous utopian idea that a functionalist, modernist aesthetics would best suit an egalitarian society, Stalinist grandiose aesthetics abandoned modesty and simplicity. Significant gradations were established in the representations of luxury, corresponding to the social stratification of mature Stalinism. Observing the shifts in the formation of Stalin's middle classes in the 1940s, Vera Dunham argues that the managerial and technical intelligentsia, together with members of the former bourgeoisie and the surviving petite bourgeoisie, emerged as the most important social strata, replacing Stakhanovites. The members of the new middle classes were apolitical, uncritical, upwardly mobile, and acquisitive (Dunham 1990, 13–17).³⁹ Following these developments, the frozen glamour of the elegant ladies in the elitist *Modeli sezona* was diluted by the prettiness and conventional femininity of the images which began to appear in mass magazines, posters, and paintings.



FIGURE 2.16
Rabotnitsa, Moscow
(1937, no. 3), cover.

By 1937, even the popular *Rabotnitsa* began to publish pretty feminine dresses in pastel shades on its back cover. Accompanied by a paper pattern, they were modeled by stylish women, encompassing the regime's reconceptualization of the female as a superwoman.

Dressing Superwoman

While centralizing industry through its five-year plans, Stalinism also centralized the production of its mythical images, through which it had resolved the crisis of gender that had tormented the modernist 1920s. The various Stalinist ideal-type women did not compete among themselves, and were not ideologically opposed, in the way that the constructivist woman had opposed the NEP woman. All Stalinist ideal-type women were imposed by the official ideology, and by the mid-1930s dissemination of their images was firmly controlled by the state-owned mass media and arts, from film to theater, and from literature to magazines and posters. Stalinist culture tirelessly celebrated the remarkable achievements and smart looks of its superwomen, whether they were shock workers, party delegates, young professionals, politically engaged housewives, or mothers. Stalinist myth tried to apprehend a reality in its totality, to merge with everyday life, and to translate the latter into a series of highly desirable pictures. A teacher in a school, a dedicated worker by a machine, and a Stakhanovite in a coal mine were all supposed to be groomed and dressed up. Stalinist women looked elegant in shiny leather jackets when engaging in sports such as flying and parachuting, and looked feminine in smart long dresses when attending theater premieres (fig. 2.16).

Beginning in the mid-1930s, when Stalin took total control, the official discourse reclaimed the female body with its curvaceous lines. Stalinism returned to the initial socialist embodiment of woman as a large powerful body, whose strength and health were needed in building a new society. That body was in demand even more once the process of industrialization had begun. Ideologically, women were not excused from difficult physical jobs that required strength, and they were encouraged to perform even the most demanding physical tasks. However, Stalinism recoded the previous incarnation of the Bolshevik woman, which had been modeled on the Nietzschean superman. She had been shy, and although her large bosom and hips had resembled the traditional female form, her female attributes had been hidden, covered by layers of long wide skirts, workers' aprons, or peasant clothes. In contrast, Stalinism accentuated the female form and revealed flesh, whether depicting a female shock worker in all her muscular beauty or a young, scantily dressed woman playing sports.

As the Stalinist myth was meant to be comprehensive, a new image of the party delegate was also launched. Her hairstyle was elaborate, her face was made up, and she wore a smart suit. The 1920s party delegate had worn an outfit resembling a little boy's sailor suit, and had cared more about fulfilling her political tasks than about looking pretty. In the 1930s, the sailor suit, a sartorial expression of gender ambiguity, was no longer appropriate. The official aesthetics of socialist fashion was promoted not only in the pages of the elitist

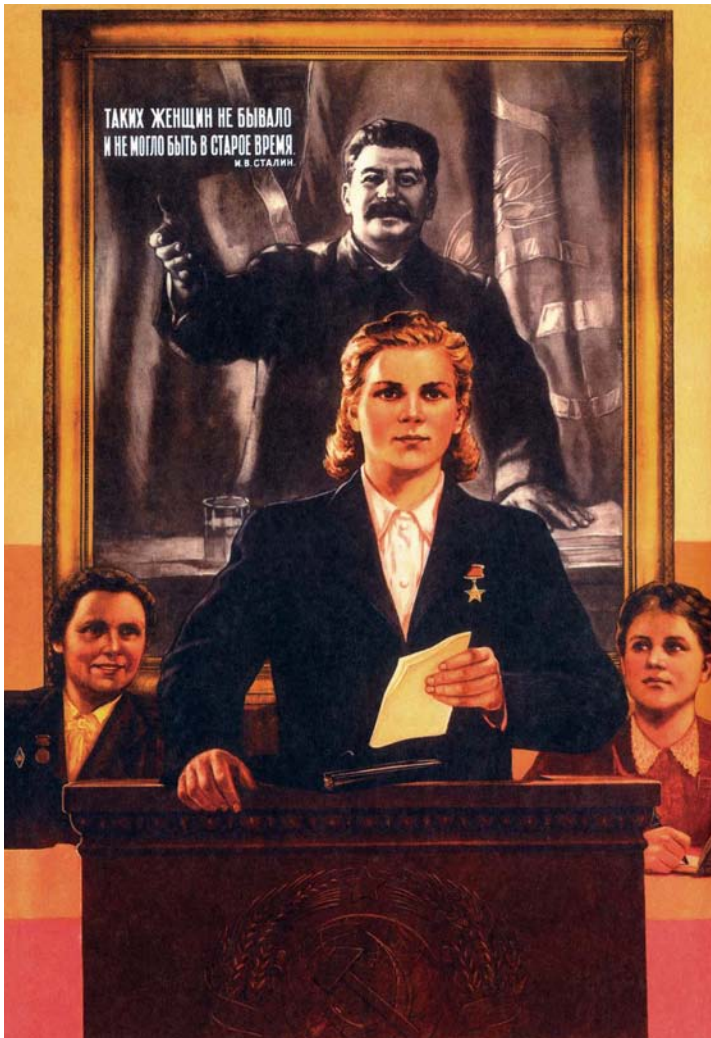


FIGURE 2.17
Mihail Solov'ev, poster,
"Such Women Did Not
Exist and Could Not Exist
in the Old Days," 1950.

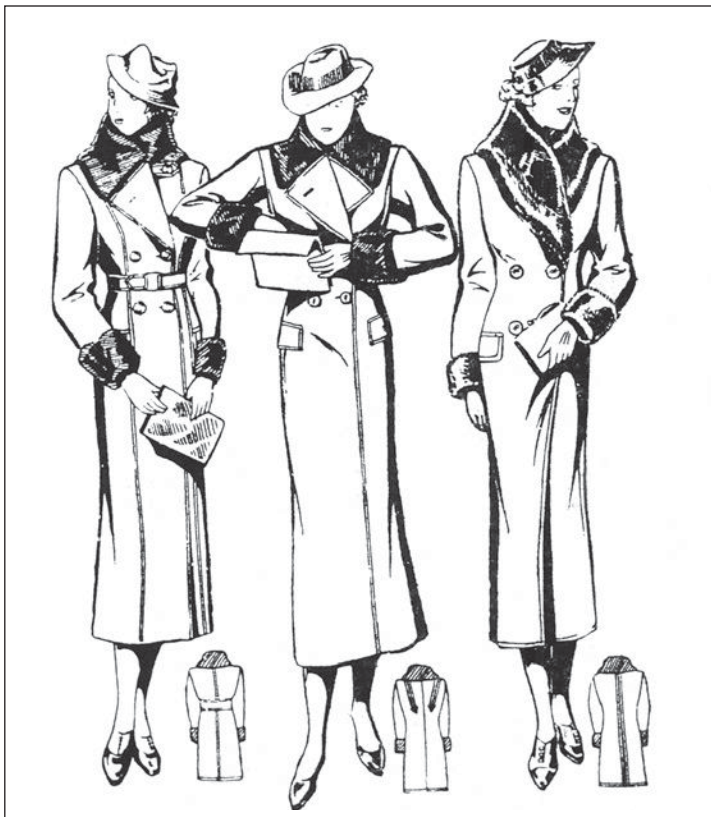


FIGURE 2.18
Dress design, *Udarnitsa Urala*,
Sverdlovsk (1937, no. 1).



FIGURE 2.19

Rabotnitsa, Moscow

(1937, no. 12).

Modeli sezona and the popular mass women's magazines such as *Rabotnitsa*, but also in the numerous highly representational paintings that marked significant political events. On those occasions, women who met Stalin wore beige belted suits, feminine flowery dresses, and silk scarves. Within the Stalinist mythical reality, smart clothes easily merged with political meetings as a background for a new type of socialist woman, who smoothly combined political activism with her sophisticated dress (fig. 2.17).

The politically imposed shift in gender representation resulted in a dramatic change in the preferred look of the female Stakhanovite. The imposing Stalinist style, enriched by elements of Western-style luxury, reached even the farthest regions of the Soviet Union. In 1937 the regional journal of the female Stakhanovites from the Urals suddenly started to publish fashion spreads with very smart clothes. Elaborate makeup and hairstyles, big hats, and high heels accompanied long, body-clinging gowns meant for women with wasplike waists (fig. 2.18). The covers of the *Udarnitsa Urala* (Female shock worker of the Urals) also changed. Instead of hard-working women in work uniforms laboring by their machines, pretty young women, engaged in leisurely sports activities like swimming or just sunbathing in their swimming wear, appeared on the journal's covers, reflecting the way in which a new cultural order was being inscribed on women's bodies. While Stalinism went back to the most traditional versions of feminine looks, the regime made sure that they were practiced in closely controlled social situations. In 1937, for example, *Rabotnitsa* described how women workers from the subway-building organization Metrostroï rushed to put on makeup and change into evening clothes the moment they took off their overalls at the end of the working day. One of them told the magazine: "If you were to meet one of our female metro-builders at the theatre or a party, you would not be able to guess that she works underground."⁴⁰

This space for smart dress opened up further when the regime reinstalled the conventions of the traditional gender division. The new official recognition of femininity, promoted through a conservative and attractive style of dress, confirmed that representation and gender identity were intrinsically intertwined. Prettiness was not an option, but just another duty. After initial postrevolutionary experiments with a unisex vision of gender based on the Nietzschean superman, and further moves toward androgyny in the fluid and unstable 1920s, the firm gender boundaries of the 1930s confirmed that society had stabilized by returning to the most traditional patterns of womanhood (fig. 2.19).

Traditional Femininity Lives On

Throughout the Stalinist era, grandiose formal dresses and ensembles prevailed in the fashion magazines that promoted socialist fashion designed by the various *Dom modelei*. Long evening dresses presented on polished women, ethnic-motif details embroidered on silk fabric, and showy jewelry—each contributed to a traditional concept of luxury. At the start of the 1950s, the young textile designer Solntseva in Surov's play *Dawn over Moscow* declares: "Comrade Stalin told us textile workers: 'Dress Soviet women as princesses, so that the whole world will admire them'" (Surov 1951, 121) (fig. 2.20).

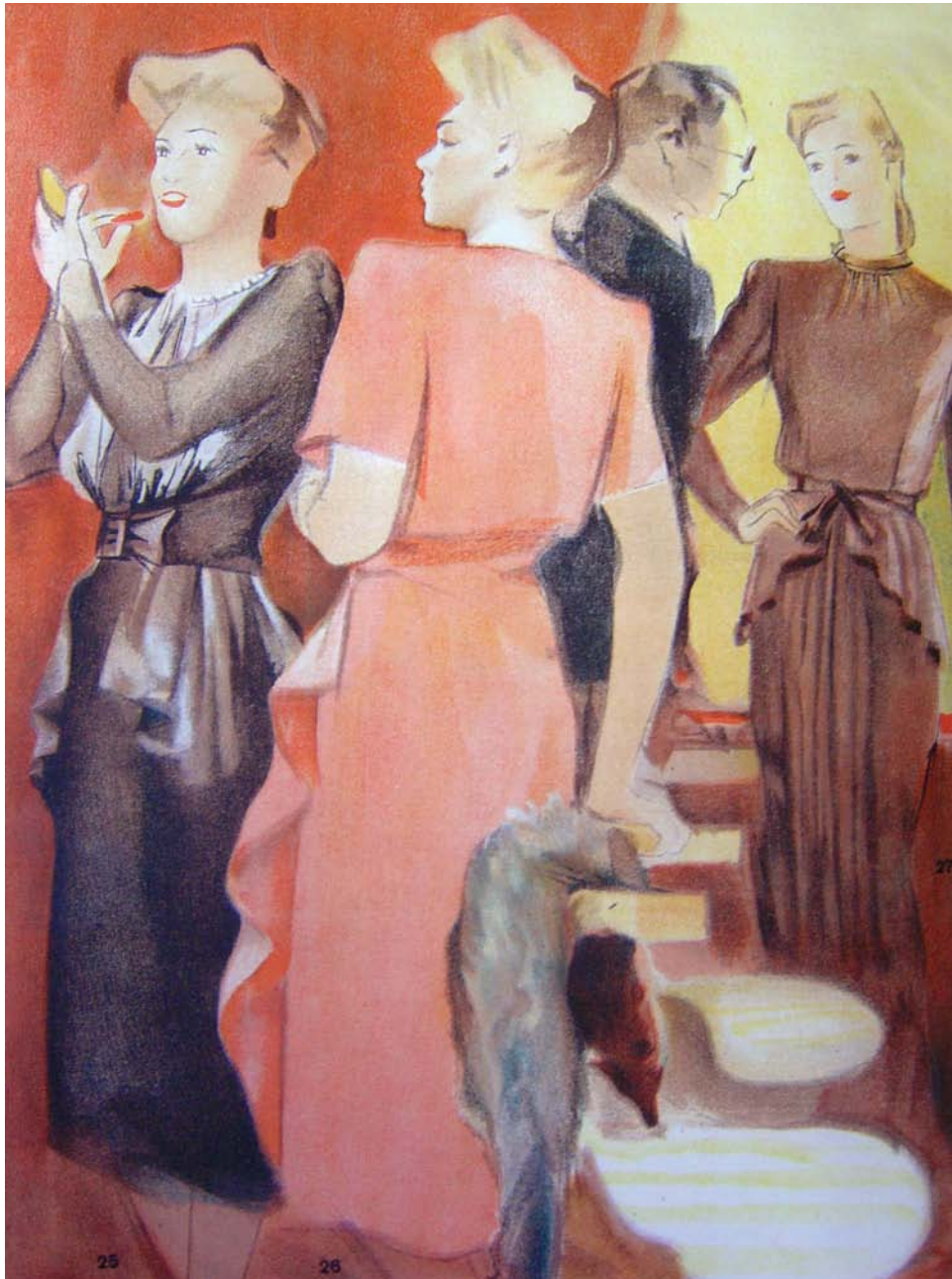


FIGURE 2.20

Dress design (detail), *Zhurnal mod*,
Moscow (1945, nos. 3–4).



1. Нарядное зимнее пальто из шелкового шёлка, отделанное мехом норки. Спереди пальто слегка стяннуто мехом. Мех украшает воротник, манжеты и наружные стороны стачных карманов. Внутренняя сторона этого воротника подшита тёмно-синим мехом.

Автор Д. Коленкина

2. Зимнее пальто, отделанное мехом норки. Воротник отделан мехом норки. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы.

Автор В. Горюхи

3. Зимнее пальто из шёлка. Воротник отделан мехом норки. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы.

Автор Г. Смирнов

4. Спортивное пальто из тёмного бархата. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы.

Автор В. Горюхи

5. Зимнее пальто с норковым воротником (шёлк шёлк) из меха норки. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы.

Автор Д. Коленкина

6. Пальто, отделанное мехом норки. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы.

Автор А. Черныш

7. Зимнее пальто из шёлка. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы.

Автор Д. Коленкина

8. Зимнее пальто, отделанное мехом норки. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы.

Автор А. Черныш

9. Зимнее пальто, отделанное мехом норки. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы. Пальто имеет стачные карманы.

Автор А. Черныш

(Модель Общественного Дома моды)

Рисунки О. Гросс



FIGURE 2.21

All-Union House of Prototypes
(ODMO), dress design, *Zhurnal mod*,
Moscow (1954, no. 4).



FIGURE 2.22

Riga Dom modelei and All-Union House of Prototypes (ODMO), dress design, *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1954, no. 4)

After Stalin's death in 1953, Khrushchev established his own rule by simultaneously denouncing Stalin's politics and declaring war on excessive Stalinist aesthetics. Soon, a new Soviet aesthetics was promoted. In applied arts and dress, the new look translated modernist Western simplicity into socialist modesty. It was hoped that simple and functional lines would finally help industry to offer decent goods on a mass scale. The brief period between Stalin's death in 1953 and the promotion of the new Soviet aesthetics that followed after 1956 was characterized by a new classicism in dress presentation in *Zhurnal mod* and *Modeli sezona*. Women still had curves and wore beautiful, ladylike dresses, but many elements of the Stalinist monumental style started to disappear in this transitional period. Images of Stalinist frozen perfection in dress faded away, while images of conventional prettiness survived. Even the settings in fashion illustrations became more realistic. Within the Stalinist myth, the natural habitat of incredibly polished and luxuriously dressed women was a huge room furnished with antiques or a city boulevard full of elegant cars and lined with beautiful classical buildings. By 1954, new clothing styles were presented in pictures of smartly dressed women entering the Moscow metro. Embellished with fur details, their coats were designed by ODMO in Moscow (fig. 2.21). Engaged in an everyday activity, and wearing conventionally elegant but simple coats, the women in these images were distanced from Stalinist myth. However, since the Moscow metro was the ultimate monument to Stalin's excessive decorative style, the fashion illustration did not deviate too far from the Stalinist representation. Another fashion plate in *Zhurnal mod* depicted women at a tea party and showed a similar movement toward more mundane settings that were nevertheless more elegant than the ordinary woman's lifestyle. The image hardly presented a typical Soviet home at that time, and such feminine afternoon dresses were not available to the average hostess and her guests (fig. 2.22).

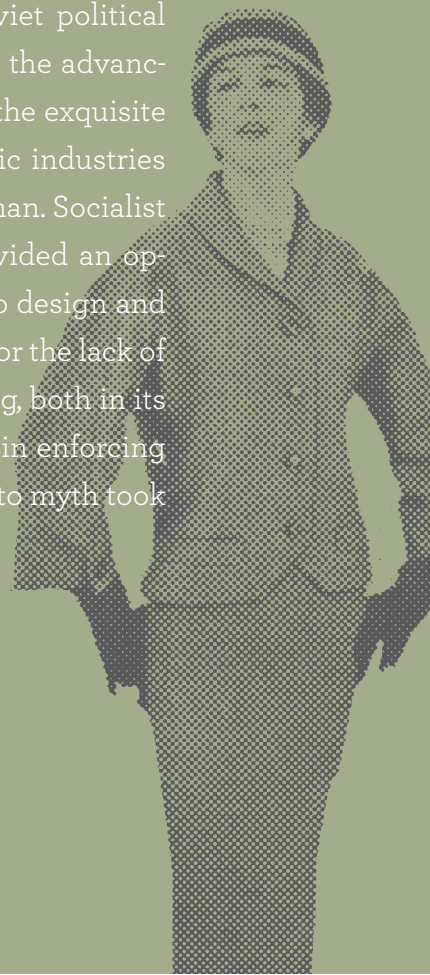
These images of restrained luxury announced new times, politically and aesthetically. But Stalinist-style luxury did not disappear altogether. While Khrushchev's aesthetics of functional modesty was officially promoted in mass magazines, traditional images of luxury still continued to be presented in the elitist publications *Modeli sezona* and *Zhurnal mod*. Luxurious dress continued to discreetly serve the nomenklatura, and was officially used for highly representational purposes both at home and abroad.

CHAPTER 3

EAST EUROPE

From Utopia to Myth

In the late 1940s, the new East European Communist regimes repeated the Bolshevik utopian experiment of deconstructing established dress codes and imposing a new style of dress on the socialist woman. In comparison with their 1920s Bolshevik predecessor, the East European utopias were antimodernist projects. Emerging under Soviet political influence, their main role was to create an empty space for the advancing Stalinist mythical culture. Following the Soviet model, the exquisite sartorial prototype was introduced at a time when domestic industries were struggling to provide new clothes for the ordinary woman. Socialist dress contests and participation in international fairs provided an opportunity for the East European central dress institutions to design and display representational dresses which would compensate for the lack of fashion available in shops. The pace of change was shocking, both in its destruction of prewar dress and lifestyles, and in its speed in enforcing a new official style. The East European journey from utopia to myth took only a few years.



The Return of Utopia

The radicalism of the East European utopian approach to dress was a reaction to the fact that the region had been an integral part of the prewar Western cultural and economic system. Thus, as part of its self-purification, the new regimes sought to rapidly introduce socialist utopian ideals of dress. Their utopian fervor emphasized the ontological difference between fashion and socialism: fashion draws on the past in order to invent its present, while socialism denied the past in order to establish its future. Utopian novelty would have been a modernist endeavor had it not been linked to the regimes' fervent rejection of prewar cultures. Fashion was regarded as dangerous for the new regimes as they set about creating a New Man and a New Woman.

The Critique of Western Fashion

All previous sartorial references were supposed to disappear when these countries officially adopted the early Bolshevik ideology. Critiques of Western fashion were set out in new women's magazines, such as the Hungarian *Asszonyok* (Ladies), the German *Frau von heute* (Woman of today), and the Czechoslovak *Žena a móda* (Woman and fashion). *Asszonyok* declared that the Dior-style "New Look" dresses were tasteless and anachronistic, describing them as "class struggle dresses," outfits that served only rich, idle women.¹ As critiques of Western fashion continued, the designers of the prestigious Budapest fashion salons, which had restarted their activities after the war, were asked to comment on "the persistence of fashion despite the fact that it did not adjust to the spirit of the times."² The designers replied that their customers preferred diversified fashion trends. However, *Asszonyok*, claiming to protect women workers from the pressure to wear such anachronistic and unhealthy clothes, declared: "We are protesting against the waste fashion!"³ *Frau von heute* stated that the fashion goddess would be dethroned in the new Germany, sharing its destiny with other false gods.⁴ The Czechoslovak *Žena a móda* authoritatively declared that Western fashion imposed uniformity because it dictated fashion changes and the rules of dressing up: "It is necessary to understand that the obsession for changes in fashion and clothes that is rooted in wolflike capitalist competition is simply not the true reflection of woman's fashion, but that in fact it prevents fashion's true development. Changes are not necessary for fashion. The concept of too much choice comes from bourgeois times. It forced women to wear different clothes for different occasions. . . . It was uniformity."⁵ The author of this article, Jiřina Spalová, became a fierce critic of Western fashion. In another article, entitled "Elegant Will Not Be Nice?," she even rejected the very word "elegance" because of its bourgeois connotations, since for the bourgeoisie only the most expensive and the most decorative clothes were elegant. She argued that "socialist clothing—the clothing of the future—is supposed to substitute the word 'elegant' with the words 'pleasant, good, smart, tasteful,' as the style of socialist clothing will be suitable and worthy."⁶

Driven by ideological pressure, the new dress was to be established in opposition to bourgeois dress. Though a fierce critique of Western fashion took up most of the space in the media, contemporary Western fashion images still inhabited smaller spaces in the same women's magazines. The utopian aim to establish a new attire proved to be too radical an initiative at the everyday level. Ambivalence about the new sartorial order was often expressed through contradictions between the written and visual contributions to the socialist women's magazines. The written language was typically ideologically harsher than the image of the clothing to which it referred. While Gertrud Berger claimed in *Frau von heute* that Frau Mode's dictatorship was at an end, her article was nevertheless accompanied by drawings of coquettish utility suits and dresses.⁷ In her article about new styles, the Czechoslovak Communist ideologue Jiřina Spalová also visually promoted the latest Western fashions, while verbally preaching total utopian newness in dress. Her own drawings diluted the excesses of the Parisian New Look, with its narrow waists and wide, gathered skirts, into wearable clothes. Visually, they matched the translations of the New Look in popular Western fashions of the time,⁸ while in the text itself Spalová insisted: "Clothing must be free from ornamentation originating from a different historical period, i.e. lace, ribbons, gathers, unpractical placing of buttons, senseless variations of the basic shape of the collar, pockets, yoke, cuffs and the like" (figs. 3.1, 3.2).⁹

The denunciation of fashion also gave rise to a crisis in the representation of woman. Two distinctive choices emerged within the new visual economy of a woman's body: she could enter the new world by physically resembling a man, or be excluded from it as a creature of the past, clinging to a redundant display of femininity and fashionability. In order to be accepted into the body politic, women were expected to change both their dress and their looks.

The New Woman and Her Dress

As in the earlier Bolshevik utopian narrative, the New Woman was modeled on the Nietzschean superman, in the belief that only a strong, robust body could encompass both corporeal and moral perfection. Fashionable women, bearers of slender frames and pre-war sartorial memories, stood in the way of the regimes' efforts to create a new socialist woman. Those memories had to be eliminated so that new subjectivities could be created. In 1947, *Asszonyok* called Western dresses "weapons in the war for the class of 'her ladyships' . . . that make us as thin, weak, and sweet as our grandmothers were."¹⁰ Besides the importance of robustness and strength in the shaping of the ideal female socialist body, modesty and asexuality played significant roles in its final look. In 1950, *Žena a móda* proposed that a fabric should not hug the body too tightly, as this was unpleasant and disturbed the wearer during her work. Instead, tops should be wider, as should sleeves and skirts, especially at the hips. Evening clothes were given less prominence and were generally considered suspect: "A woman should make sure not to catch a cold in some inadequate little dress."¹¹ As in Bolshevik Russia in the 1920s, a delicate female body belonged to the class enemy and the decadent bourgeois world.

The German *Frau von heute* tried to reassure its readers that even the renowned Parisian woman, the ultimate symbol of chic and elegance, was not crazy about fashion anymore. Who is the real Parisian woman? asked the journal, and offered a new vision of a Parisienne as a woman worker.¹² In contrast, the Zagreb-based fashion magazine *Naša moda* (Our fashion) did not deny fashion's appeal, but emphasized its class-based inequality. In an article "An Encounter with Paris Fashion," *Naša moda* presented the latest Paris trends, but observed that they were worn "only by a limited number of rich people," while "sales-girls from the large department stores, thousands of typists, working women, dancers and singers in bars ... try to match colors in cheap fabrics according to their circumstances ... and wear fake-gold jewelry and apply makeup on their pale cheeks and lips."¹³

In 1948, Karel Langer, who would later become a distinguished theoretician of Communist ideas on fashion, dismissed Berlin fashion as frivolous, Viennese fashion as too sweet, and French fashion as presenting a woman as a fragile, erotic toy. Although Langer considered English fashion to be respectable, he denounced what he considered its dry, unfeminine sturdiness. He concluded that Western fashions were unsuitable for the Czech socialist woman, who was supposed to be graceful in an earthy, healthy, simple, and natural way (Langer 1948, 84). The images of the new dress and the New Woman eventually left urban fashions behind, and replaced them with images of women performing physically demanding jobs, in clothes that matched the grim reality of their industrial surroundings and harsh rural settings. Although Stalinist culture had been mass-producing imaginary versions of the rural idyll through ethnic-inspired outfits for many years, as well as images of groomed women who strolled in pretty dresses on city streets, the East European utopias were not yet allowed to enter that mythical world. They had first to relinquish their modernist past, which was populated with real women wearing fashionable dresses. Peasant-style headscarves, such as those designed by the Warsaw Institute of Industrial Design and printed with the Żalipie region's ethnic motif, distanced Polish postwar utopian dress from both contemporary Western fashion and modernist novelty (fig. 3.3).

The symbolic battle between fashionable Western-style hats and traditional peasant-style headscarves also raged in the Czech magazine *Žena a móda*, which put forward the image of a robust woman in overalls conquering the countryside on her tractor (figs. 3.4, 3.5). As recently as 1949, *Žena a móda* had presented idealized images of summer dresses for the city and the countryside (fig. 3.6), but in 1951 statuesque models carrying bunches of hay wore functional aprons and practical cotton dresses. Traces of their previous glamour lingered on only in their carefully applied makeup and neat hairstyles. In 1952, the models represented middle-aged women feeding pigs or cleaning a pigsty, wearing workers' overalls and standing beside a tractor (fig. 3.7).¹⁴ These women were too serious and too asexual to promote a new modernist androgyny, as the latter gender-ambiguous type was nevertheless a highly sexualized image. Although the overalls did not hide the curvaceous female shape, they minimized the erotic potentials of the female body. Baggy overalls mocked both sexuality as a natural force and femininity as a bourgeois cultural practice. A woman wearing overalls while driving a tractor was an icon with a well-defined symbolic meaning in the visual propaganda of all the East European countries.



FIGURE 3.3
 Scarf design printed with the Zalpie
 region's folk motif, *Polska Sztuka*
ludowa, Warsaw (1952, no. 1).

FIGURE 3.4
 "New Patterns for Headscarves,"
Žena a móda, Prague (1952, no. 6).



FIGURE 3.5
 "Hats for This Winter,"
Žena a móda, Prague
 (1952, no. 10).



FIGURE 3.6

"Linen in the Countryside,"
Žena a móda, Prague
(1949, no. 5).



FIGURE 3.7

Design for working clothes,
Žena a móda, Prague
(1952, no. 6).



FIGURE 3.8

A woman salutes the upcoming
Third Congress of the Communist
Democratic Alliance of Hungarian
Women (MNDSZ), *Nők lapja*,
Budapest (1952, no. 21), cover.



FIGURE 3.9
 "The Man Makes the Clothes,"
Žena a móda, Prague
 (1950, no. 10).



FIGURE 3.10
 "The Man Makes the Clothes,"
Žena a móda, Prague
 (1950, no. 10).

With their official preference for a dignified public role for women, the regimes downplayed traditional female attributes such as femininity and dressing up, and even gender difference itself. In propaganda posters, women often wore male-style clothes. A cover of the Hungarian women's weekly *Nők lapja* (Women's journal) depicted a woman in a dark masculine jacket and a simple white shirt. Raising her arms in the air, she saluted the forthcoming Third Congress of the Communist Democratic Alliance of Hungarian Women (MNDSZ).¹⁵ This was an appropriate dress code for a political activist, as it emphasized her distance from the frivolity of fashionable dress while also demonstrating her political consciousness (fig. 3.8).

In Czechoslovakia, *Žena a móda* challenged the role of fashion in women's lives by placing the latest outfits by French and American designers alongside pictures of socialist women dressed in work uniforms. The accompanying article argued that Western fashions "root their credibility in dressing up a woman-doll in a capitalist society, who stimulates the jaded nerves of financial and industrial magnates. These clothes precisely point to the class degeneration of the capitalist system."¹⁶ According to *Žena a móda*, although dressed in well-cut clothes, those women were without personality. In contrast, the socialist woman had a clearly defined character: "The women in the people's democracies, dressed in the uniforms and working clothes of the new professions, are representative of a new type of socialist woman. They joined the labor force; they raised themselves to work side by side with all progressive-thinking people who every day willingly, enthusiastically and diligently fight for world peace and the happiness of all mankind" (figs. 3.9, 3.10).¹⁷

In their fashion sections, socialist magazines published hundreds of examples of work uniforms for female nurses, teachers, tram conductors, factory workers, office employees, laboratory scientists, doctors, traffic wardens, political activists, librarians, and police officers. The depiction of a woman in a working uniform confirmed that the concept of a sartorial seasonal change was irrelevant once the new dress became connected with desirable moral values. At that time, women's magazines published numerous articles on female shock workers, especially praising extraordinary women textile workers. Working hard at their weaving machines in their simple workers' overalls, they visually demonstrated the new role of women in socialist society.

The Formalization of Utopia

As Stalin tightened his grip, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and Poland nationalized their textile and clothing industries and their prewar fashion salons. Subsequently, central dress institutions, based on the Moscow Dom modelei, were set up to coordinate the activities of those industries and to design new dresses. The establishment of the Moscow Dom modelei at the beginning of the 1930s had been justified by the complete disarray of the Soviet textile and clothing industries, but such a rationale was not valid in the East European countries two decades later. Although their textile and clothing industries had been destroyed during the war, these countries had well-established prewar sartorial

traditions. The adoption of the Soviet model negated the preexisting domestic structure of fashion production as well as the previous history of fashion. Once central planning was imposed, radical changes in dress fuelled by utopian ideals became impossible. As instruments of planned economies, the new central dress institutions ultimately suffocated the very utopian dreams that they were supposed to put into practice.

The first of these central dress institutions, *Tekstilní Tvorba* (Textile Production), was established in Czechoslovakia in 1949 by a decree of the minister of light industry.¹⁸ By designing work uniforms, *Tekstilní Tvorba* assisted the state-owned textile and clothing companies in defining their new social role now that seasonal fashion cycles had been officially abandoned. In *Žena a móda*, Jiřina Spalová argued passionately that work uniforms were “clothing for the nicest and most significant part of our day. In that way, work clothes turn into the focus of attention among all clothes, that is, so-called fashion. . . . Work clothes will become the foremost point of interest for designers from which other forms of clothes will be derived.”¹⁹ In her view the new working uniforms, which combined functionality and aesthetics, would put overdecorated evening dresses to shame and render them redundant.²⁰

But who was supposed to design and produce these miraculous outfits whose timeless perfection would abolish fashion cycles? Since industry was nationalized and most of the factory owners had fled, new, inexperienced but loyal managers took their places in the factories. However, in choosing collaborators to design new dresses, the regimes had little choice but to employ prewar designers in the newly founded central dress institutions. As a result, the style of new clothes was not as radical as the utopian ideas on which they were based. These designers were not revolutionaries who aspired to radically change the world and its objects, but merely professional designers who struggled to negotiate their new role within the boundaries of the new political systems. One of these was Zdeňka Fuchsová who, working for the *Tekstilní Tvorba*, designed work uniforms with a precise cut and execution. As a prewar fashion designer from the leading Prague fashion salon Rosenbaum, she had made regular visits to Paris in the interwar years, and her technical expertise was a valuable asset for the new regime (fig. 3.11).

Another prewar designer, Hedviga Vlková, was appointed as head of the dress department at the Prague Academy of Applied Arts in 1949, after being forced to close down her own exclusive fashion salon. In the interwar period, Vlková had been chief designer at the Prague high-fashion salon Podolská, but in her new role as an educator of socialist designers she gave precedence to working uniforms. In her 1952 article “Uniform for a Woman,” she presented and explained her students’ design for a uniform for women tram conductors.²¹ Vlková used all the technical knowledge she had acquired from her earlier experience of designing and cutting haute couture clothes in discussing every detail of the uniform: the beret, the cut of the trousers, the way the differences between summer and winter seasons are reflected in the fabrics and colors, the choice of colors—dark red jacket and dark gray trousers—and the most suitable types of fabric (fig. 3.12).



FIGURE 3.11

Zdeňka Fuchsová, design for
working clothes, *Žena a móda*,
Prague (1951, no. 5).

Despite the emphasis on work clothes, Western dress designs continued to be published in the East European women's magazines (fig. 3.13). The photographs accompanying the review of the first Tekstilní Tvorba fashion show in *Žena a móda* in 1949 showed that the system that had destroyed the historical field of fashion production could not yet design new socialist clothes.²² Dresses with an accentuated waistline, accompanied with long gloves, pearls, and hats with feathers, reflected the grown-up elegance of contemporary Western fashion (fig. 3.14).²³ The initial critique of Western fashion and the obedient presentation of work uniforms in *Žena a móda* had been intended to support the launch of Tekstilní Tvorba. However, since it was a fashion magazine, *Žena a móda* also dedicated many pages to rather different designs from Tekstilní Tvorba, such as cocktail dresses, evening wear, day dresses, and tailored suits. Although the regimes needed the prewar designers in the central dress institutions, the designers were often attacked for relying on Western fashionability in their dress designs. Jan Danielis, a leading official from the Ministry of Light Industry, complained that the designers employed by Tekstilní Tvorba were still inspired by Western fashion, and that the advisory Artistic Board supported such aesthetics.²⁴ The presence of Western fashion images revealed a serious weakness of those utopias. Antimodernist concepts of dress had little appeal compared to the seductiveness of modernist Western culture.

In Poland, the regime employed Jadwiga Grabowska, who in the prewar period had worn outfits by Schiaparelli, Chanel, and Fath. At the end of the war, she had opened her own private salon, Feniks, in the center of Warsaw. Forced to close it, Grabowska was co-opted into the Bureau for Fashion Presentation at the Leipzig Fair and became involved in designing collections for the international Leipzig fair. The development of new dress in Hungary also relied on a peculiar alliance between the principle of high fashion and the utopian ideal that promoted work uniforms. The Hungarian central dress institution, Ruhaipari Tervező Vállalat (Central Design Company for the Clothing Industry, RTV), was established in 1951 through a merger of the Laboratory for Workers' Uniforms and the Divat Központ (Center for Fashion), which had gathered prewar fashion designers following the nationalization of the private fashion salons. Informed by two opposing practices of dress—industrial production and made-to-measure—RTV was unable to provide adequate logistics to the textile and clothing industries. Its designers' expertise, based on their prewar couture techniques and expressed through professionally executed prototypes, was not applicable to industrial production. The neutral professionalism of prewar designers could not, either conceptually or aesthetically, envisage new sartorial shapes that would match the utopian dream. Even though these designers succumbed to the ideological pressure applied by the regimes, they nevertheless hoped that Western fashion could still find a place in the new socialist societies.

In such a context, utility design seemed a particularly appropriate sartorial quotation. Even its basic shape, consisting of a perfectly cut suit with a square-shouldered jacket and a straight skirt, conformed to the style of a uniform, but a pretty one. In 1951, the Polish *Świat* promoted the activities of the new Institute of Industrial Design with an article entitled "Dress Must Be Attractive," in which the photograph of a young designer drawing



FIGURE 3.12
 "Uniform for a Woman,"
Žena a móda, Prague
 (1952, no. 11).

FIGURE 3.13
 "Practical Dresses,"
Žena a móda, Prague
 (1949, no. 2).



FIGURE 3.14
 Model at the first Tekstilní
 Tvorba fashion show,
Žena a móda, Prague
 (1949, no. 4).

a utility suit with a square-shouldered jacket and slim skirt showed in graphic detail the effort to strike a truce between socialism and fashion (fig. 3.15).²⁵

Although the centralized dress institutions were supposed to resolve conceptual dilemmas about the appropriate sartorial codes by designing new dresses and organizing their mass production, they perpetuated the contradictory visual constructions of femininity and dresses that suited them. Reflecting that diversity, annual dress contests between the socialist countries were held, starting in 1950, that were meant to establish a socialist style that would be functional, yet modestly feminine and fashionable. The initial idea of holding dress contests was born in Czechoslovakia, the natural leader in the field of clothing due to its highly developed prewar traditions. The regime wanted to use its prewar fashion experts to implement the new centrally organized textile and clothes production, but these fashion designers also believed that there might be an opportunity to preserve the legacy of craftsmanship and to advance Czechoslovak expertise and leadership both domestically and abroad, even within the new organization. Only Czechoslovakia and East Germany took part in the first two annual dress contests, and Czechoslovakia won on both occasions, with presentations organized by *Tekstilní Tvorba*. In 1951, at the second contest held in Leipzig, each country presented a collection of fifty outfits. Not only did the Czechs win the dress contest due to their superior catwalk show, but the East Germans were so impressed by the centralized organization of the Czech textile industry that they planned to create a similar central dress institution.²⁶

In order to join the events, in 1952 the Hungarian Ministry of Light Industry established a permanent working group within its central dress institution RTV to organize its presentations at the dress contests. Czechoslovakia again won the third Contest in the Culture of Dress, while newcomer Hungary came second, and East Germany was placed third.²⁷ In *Žena a móda*, the Czech outfits were praised for their “balance between elegance and purposefulness,” and their style of “practical elegance” was declared the most suitable for a working woman.²⁸ Even so, the images that accompanied the article presented dresses whose style varied between discreet fashionability and traditional gracefulness. Politically informed discussions between textile experts and representatives from the ministries of light industry of the respective countries provided an opportunity for the exchange of technical knowledge and experience in the “culture of dress,” as the word “fashion” itself had not yet been officially mentioned. However, the professional aspirations of the designers to adjust Western fashionability to the new reality would soon be crushed by the advancing Stalinist myth.



FIGURE 3.15

"Dress Must Be Attractive,"
Świat, Warsaw (1951, no. 9).

Socialist Fashion

Emerging in East Europe immediately after World War II, the mythical approach to dress initially competed with the utopian approach, but it became dominant only after the centralized system of design and production of clothing was firmly established. Within the advancing Stalinist mythical culture, negotiations between socialist functionality and Western fashionability could not continue because they were both, in their different ways, modernist and cosmopolitan. Moreover, as the Stalinist myth was associated with grandeur and eternity, socialist functionality was too austere and Western fashion was too prone to seasonal change, to survive as relevant visual statements in dress representation. Such representations would in the future be expressed in East Europe through a style that recoded all the previously diversified visual and sartorial materials, from traditional Western opulence to genuine ethnic motifs, into a grandiose and timeless aesthetics of socialist fashion. This development changed the nature and aesthetics of dress contests, as well as the ontological status of dress. Complementing the Soviet model, the culture of the sartorial prototype—a unique, perfectly executed garment—was officially confirmed and promoted through the new dress departments at the universities. Although their physical presence on the catwalks of socialist contests and international fairs suggested that such prototypes would soon enter into mass production, it never happened.

Socialist Fashion on the Catwalk

The Soviet Union joined the fourth dress contest, held in Prague in 1953, competing with Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and East Germany, while Poland and Romania were invited as observers.²⁹ The event, organized by the Ministry of Light Industry, was opened by the Czechoslovak president, Antonín Zápotocký, and attended by the prime minister, Viliam Široký; the minister of light industry, Alois Malek; the mayor of Prague, Dr. Václav Vacek, and other dignitaries. The images published in domestic journals showed the highly representational nature of the event, in a setting that looked like an odd combination of fashion catwalk and Communist party congress (fig. 3.16).

Models on the catwalk wore silk summer dresses bearing flowery patterns, accompanied by large hats and gloves. But the catwalk occupied only a small part of the huge hall, for the space was dominated by an enormous podium, which accommodated the political elite. Other iconographical details included a red draped curtain spreading along the back wall, and a slogan praising the Contest in the Culture of Dress, which graphically resembled political slogans at party gatherings. The countries competed in four categories: the most appropriate use of fabric, the least amount of waste, the technical quality, and the aesthetic achievement of the collection. Although the overall winner was the Soviet Union, the Czechs won the aesthetic category with their signature style of smart functionality.

However, the Soviet victory at the Prague dress contest presaged the future of those events. Gradually, the Soviet Union took an active and often controlling role in the annual

FIGURE 3.16

The fourth annual Contest
in the Culture of Dress,
held in Prague, *Žena a móda*,
Prague (1953, no. 11).



socialist dress gatherings, imposing its grandiose aesthetics and its practice of centrally controlled fashion trends. The Soviet Union also won the first prize cup at the fifth dress contest in Budapest. A Russian model who paraded along the catwalk carrying a large cup announced the Soviet success, but her long white organdie dress also demonstrated the victory of Soviet grandiose aesthetics. During the early years of the dress contests, the Czechs had planned to reorganize and improve the socialist textile and clothing industries, proposing restrained and elegant dresses. Soon afterward, the Soviets imposed aesthetics that favored opulent evening wear and sophisticated day ensembles that complied with their official aesthetics, which itself continued to draw on the Stalinist idea of luxury.

After the initial utopian attempt to invent new dresses had failed, the central dress institutions began to focus exclusively on the production of socialist fashion, just as the Moscow Dom modelei had done two decades earlier. Ignoring the everyday reality of mass-produced clothes, socialist fashion acquired a strictly representational function. Having failed to either deliver a new dress or engineer a New Woman, the socialist regimes returned to traditional sartorial codes and conventional expressions of femininity. Even so, in 1954, the Budapest dress contest still paid lip service to functional and modest proletarian dress. Each of the participating countries—East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union—competed with fifty outfits, in several categories: work uniforms for heavy and light industries, peasant clothes, sports uniforms, housewives' dresses, evening wear, men's suits and coats, children's wear, and knitted clothes.³⁰ On the catwalk, a made-up woman in a worker's overall cheerfully carried a rake, but she was not the favorite role model in fashion magazines, which preferred to show ladies in smart dresses, with hats, gloves, and elegant handbags as fashion accessories (fig. 3.17).

Founded in December 1952, the last in the group of East European central dress institutions, the East German Institut für Bekleidungskultur (Institute for the Culture of Dress, IBK) promoted highly representational dresses from its very beginning. Its director, Elli Schmidt, announced in the fashion magazine *Die Bekleidung* (Clothing) that the IBK had the same role as its counterparts: to design and transfer new dress proposals to industry and to coordinate the mass production of clothing and fashion accessories.³¹ However, the regime was satisfied that the IBK produced haute-couture-style prototypes and paraded them at socialist dress contests and other prominent events without mass-producing them. This suited East Germany, which sought an alternative, representational reality with which to oppose the increasing West German advantage in everyday lifestyles. Elli Schmidt's political biography mirrored the system's transition from utopia to myth. In February 1953, Schmidt, a loyal Communist, was appointed head of the State Commission for Trade and Supply, which addressed problems with consumption.³² Sensitive to the population's complaints about the poor quality and insufficient supply of clothing and shoes, Schmidt, who had been a seamstress before the war, advocated at Politburo meetings for the need for real change. However, after Russian tanks crushed the popular uprising in June 1953, the opportunity for change disappeared. Schmidt was dismissed from her position, but, as a prominent Communist, she was subsequently appointed as



FIGURE 3.17

The fourth Contest in the Culture of Dress
(from left: dresses from the Soviet Union,
Hungary, East Germany, Czechoslovakia),
Žena a móda, Prague (1953, no. 11).

director of IBK. Because the party relied on her political loyalty in her new public role, she promptly adopted a discourse that neglected the East German reality, burdened as it was with shortages, and emphasized instead a bright socialist future, visualized through the exquisite prototypes of the dresses designed in the central dress institute. In 1954, Schmidt presented IBK “as the real House of Fashion in DDR . . . which would be a true joy for our people who live in our country of workers and peasants” (fig. 3.18).³³

At the opening of the 1955 dress contest in Berlin, speeches were given by both East Germany’s minister of light industry, Dr. Feldmann, and its culture minister, Johannes Becher.³⁴ However, the culture minister was the official patron of the event, demonstrating that socialist fashion was embedded in the field of official high culture, rather than being associated with mass production. Three hundred and sixty outfits were presented at that contest, as newcomers Bulgaria, Romania, and Albania joined the established participants Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, and the Soviet Union. Under a picture of Walter Ulbricht, the East German Communist leader, models paraded in highly decorated evening dresses in front of the jury. In the picture story “Outfits at the Berlin International Dress Contest,” models in afternoon ensembles were pictured in front of East Berlin’s modernist socialist urban projects. The new socialist architecture, featuring neoclassical decorations, was an appropriate environment for the formal style of dresses and for the expressions of conventional femininity that the socialist regimes had begun to promote.³⁵

The rich reservoir of sartorial quotations displayed in the outfits presented at the dress contests symbolically affirmed both the end of utopia and the return of history. Utopia, which is by definition ahistorical, rejected the phenomenon of fashion because of its historical connotations. In contrast, socialist fashion embraced conventional sartorial quotations that corresponded to the conservative nature of the myth upon which the aesthetics of such fashion was based (fig. 3.19). Embedded in the centralized model of fashion production, socialist fashion shared with myth an inability to deal with change. In 1954, the Polish magazine *Poland* claimed that the designers within the Warsaw Institute of Industrial Design were “enthusiastic to bring beauty into everyday life,”³⁶ and yet they believed that such a goal could be achieved only in an organized way, emphasizing that “creativity could be planned.”³⁷ Preferring a mythical world to a real one, sartorial prototypes fulfilled the ontological requirements of socialist realism.

Furthermore, materialized as smart prototypes, mythical objects suited the increasingly centralized and bureaucratized industrial systems. Corresponding to the Soviet model, the “synchronic or systematic level” prevailed over the “diachronic or processive level” (Barthes 2006, 10–11) in East European fashion production. The escape into myth prevented the development of a new space in which a new dress could be positioned and consumed. As Henri Lefebvre has observed: “The revolution that does not produce a new space has not realized its full potential; indeed it has failed in that it has not changed life itself, but has merely changed ideological superstructures, institutions or political apparatuses” (Lefebvre 1991, 54).



FIGURE 3.18
The 1955 Contest in the Culture of Dress, held in Berlin, *Die Bekleidung*, East Berlin (1956, no. 2).



FIGURE 3.19
The Hungarian collection (top) and the Czechoslovak collection (bottom) at the Contest in the Culture of Dress held in Budapest in 1954, *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1955, no. 1).

The Importance of Ethnic Motif

An opulent dress adorned with ethnic-inspired decoration was a mythical object par excellence within the socialist fashion narrative. Visually, the lavishness of the ethnic motif fulfilled the myth's aesthetic criteria. Moreover, due to the richness of its complicated handmade embroidery and lace ornaments, which involved highly skilled techniques, such an outfit could not be mass-produced. Instead it languished in an everlasting, perfect mythical world. Yet dress adorned with ethnic motif was neither universally nor immediately accepted. Variations in its reception in different countries showed the retreat of utopia in front of the advancing myth. In the immediate postwar period, the Czechoslovak approach toward folk art as an inspiration for new dress was ambivalent. To the severest critics of the past, such as Jiřina Spalová, even ethnic dress belonged to the past, both feudal and bourgeois, a past that was supposed to have been abolished. Spalová emphasized that people progressing toward socialism should establish their own style of dress: "We are interested in producing garments based on a precise study of the conditions of contemporary society, garments that would perfectly suit the needs of progressive people, which would be in harmony with their worldview, and yet would not be in discrepancy with their national characteristics."³⁸

At that point, Spalová vehemently opposed the reliance on traditional ethnic clothes in the attempt to design a new dress because their wide cuts, such as the richly gathered sleeves and skirts, were impractical for a mechanized age, and their handmade embroidery was not suitable for mass production. But in 1951, only a year later, Spalová reported that women, including the female shock workers, opposed total austerity in dress, and that they demanded decorated and cheerful dresses. She admitted: "Women crave the cosmopolitan patterns that we have been fighting."³⁹ She now proposed blouses and dresses embellished with ethnic embroideries. When Czechoslovakia was faced with a popular demand for decoration in dress, the official reaction was similar to the renewed interest in ethnic attire in mid-1920s Russia: the domestic provenance and timelessness of ethnic motifs were promoted, as they were perceived as ideologically less dangerous than Western fashion. For example, the Communist ideologue Karel Lindt argued that new clothing "has to be practical and convenient. At the same time, in order to fight decadent temptations of the Western fashion industry, it has to be rooted in the national Slavic tradition and its rich folklore which provides an immense source of inspiration for our fashion design" (fig. 3.20).⁴⁰

Ethnic motif is a slowly changing sartorial code related to a traditional, and usually small, rural community. In socialist East Europe, it gained in importance when the Stalinist mythical narrative began to emerge. The increasing use of ethnic-based quotation was linked to the process of cultural isolation that was developing in the new societies. Rejecting modernist aesthetics, the regimes relied on folk art to create their own mythical style, perceiving it to be an expression of genuine creativity, spontaneously produced by the masses. In 1949, the Polish deputy minister of culture and art, Włodzimierz Sokorski, not only dismissed "the cosmopolitanism and formalism of degenerated West European and



FIGURE 3.20

Ethnic-inspired dress designs,
Žena a móda, Prague (1952, no. 2).

American art,” but also equated domestic folk art with the art of the new socialist state, claiming that both were deeply national, profoundly human and perpetually creative (Sorksi 1949). In searching for allies to establish a new socialist culture, the Polish regime engaged Wanda Telakowska who, in the 1930s, had belonged to ŁAD (Harmony), a group of designers who used domestic ethnic patterns as artistic quotations within the framework of urbanized art deco aesthetics.⁴¹ Telakowska’s postwar reliance on genuine ethnic traditions, however, lacked the previous smooth relationship of her ethnic quotations with the modernist visual language.

A professional design expert, Telakowska was an ambitious director of the Polish Institute of Industrial Design.⁴² She invited artists, ethnographers, art historians, pedagogues, sociologists, and enthusiasts of folk art to contribute to her institute’s efforts to develop new forms of socialist culture in collaboration with working women, peasants, and youth (Telakowska 1952, 12). The ethnic-related vestimentary objects that emerged from that project, presented at the institute’s exhibition in 1953, showed a preference for the rural over the urban (fig. 3.21).⁴³ The dresses, headscarves, handbags, and shoes were covered in flowery prints that literally transposed genuine ethnic motifs onto fabric. Although professional artists had assisted in developing these artifacts, the patterns were designed by countrywomen who drew on their visual traditions. In the catalog of the exhibition, Julian Marchlewski stated that the pseudo-peasant art previously proposed by ŁAD could not have been industrially produced. As a result of its dependence on foreign capital, ŁAD design had implied high prices and foreign aesthetic influences, all of which alienated it from its public. From now on, the catalog of the exhibition announced, proper art—meaning genuine peasant art—would influence industrial production.⁴⁴ Ideologically, this collaboration between countrywomen and professional artists seemed to be an ideal cooperation, as it was supposed to encourage collective creativity and to provide the system with genuinely new products designed and produced outside the Western system of production. Reliance on ethnic quotations demonstrated that Stalinist myth had visually conquered East Europe, but its success depended on having new organizational structures to disseminate its aesthetics. As a result, central institutions specifically devoted to the new ethnic-inspired dresses and accessories were hastily established in East Europe in the late 1940s.⁴⁵ But as the mythical dress narrative developed, ethnic quotation had increasingly less to do with genuine peasant art or collective creativity. On the contrary, the use of ethnic motifs became an integral part of the new grandiose aesthetics. Applied on long evening gowns, these decorative motifs fulfilled the Stalinist idea of luxury (fig. 3.22).

Telakowska had already tried to tame the potential novelty of the new socialist objects by merging them with genuine traditions from various Polish regions. But once ethnic motif entered the mythical wasteland, ethnic-related quotations became geographically vague, evoking imaginary national dresses. The geopolitics of dress demonstrates that there are no “national dresses,” but rather only local or regional dresses. To confine these within political boundaries is an ideological practice (Boucher 1952, 69). Contemporary



FIGURE 3.21
 "At the Weaving Department
 in Łódź," *Świat*, Warsaw
 (1953, no. 31).

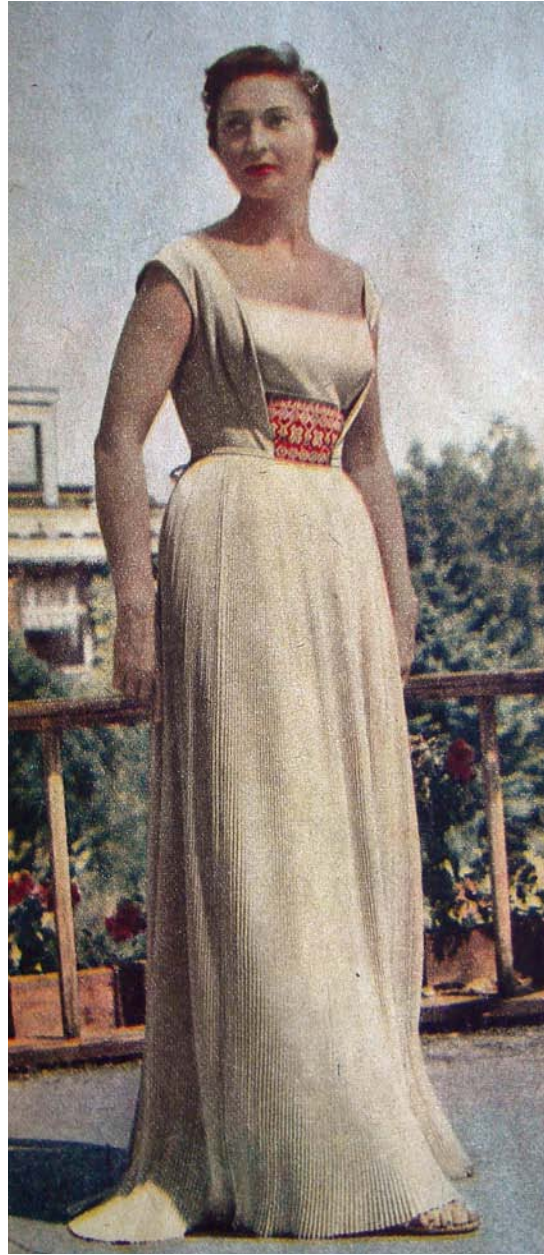


FIGURE 3.22
 "For Dancing," *Žena a móda*,
 Prague (1954, no. 1).

Western fashion, reinventing itself each season, is happy to borrow cuts, patterns, and color schemes from its own past. In contrast to “fashion [that] requires quotation to rewrite its own history” (Lehmann 1999, 308), the socialist ethnic motif was a politically imposed historical reference. While the lavishly decorated long dresses presented at the dress contests showed that precise topography did not matter anymore, their timeless style demonstrated that, within mythical dress narrative, a conventional flow of time was not important either. Drawing on Baudrillard’s analysis of abstraction and systematization of time in marginal objects, these outfits could be perceived as neither synchronic nor diachronic but as anachronistic (Baudrillard 2005, 85).

Education for a Mythical Culture

Following the Communist takeover, dress departments were set up at universities to educate “progressive” socialist fashion designers. However, little change in dress education actually took place even when such change was strongly promoted on ideological grounds. Professors at these new departments were either prewar fashion designers or people who combined knowledge of the arts with an impeccable bourgeois background. These professors formalized the academic curricula into traditional patterns. For example, at the dress department of the Prague Higher School of Applied Arts, Hedviga Vlková designed a comprehensive course on dress, including drawing, textile and dress design, cutting techniques, sewing, and fashion journalism.⁴⁶ She meticulously organized her teaching around haute couture techniques, such as draping fabric on the body and first cutting an outfit in calico (fig. 3.23).

Vlková had learned these techniques in France, where she attended a sewing school in Paris in the early 1930s and held an internship at the Jacques Heim fashion house.⁴⁷ The new department was funded by *Tekstilní Tvorba*, which was supposed to employ its graduates.⁴⁸ Regardless of their superb knowledge about fabrics and cuts, the young graduates lacked preparation for a career in industry, and consequently were often not well received in the factories. But the dress department found a new, representational role in the early 1950s, and its aesthetics changed accordingly from the functional to the grandiose. In 1950, the first student catwalk show emphasized restrained functional dresses, but by 1953 traditionally elegant suits and sumptuous evening wear, including draped Greek-style dresses, were being paraded on the school’s catwalk.⁴⁹

At the dress department of the Budapest Academy for the Applied Arts, the first generation of students had been taught neither fashion nor dress history, nor had they had any opportunity to look at fashion magazines.⁵⁰ Their trips to the countryside to study genuine ethnic dress were complemented by visits to the high art collections in the National Museum, which was the only other approved source of inspiration in dress design.⁵¹ However, this generation, consisting of just seven students, also experienced political changes in the approach toward dress in the mid-1950s, due to the rise to power of the more liberal Communist leader Imre Nagy.⁵² Vera Nádor, a former employee at the *Divat*



FIGURE 3.23

Dress department at the Prague Academy of Applied Arts, *Žena a móda*, Prague (1952, no. 9).



FIGURE 3.24

Margit Szilvitzky's graduate collection at the dress department of the Budapest Academy for the Applied Arts, 1954.

Központ (Center for Fashion), the association for prewar fashion designers, was invited to teach dress design at the Academy of Applied Arts in 1953. She immediately reintroduced the aesthetics of conventional prettiness and a set of rules about correct dress and deportment, which resembled prewar dress practices. Students learned about the different outfits suitable for different occasions, from a day suit to a cocktail dress and evening wear. Nádor taught her students through practical examples, by reintroducing them to types of fabrics and cuts beyond the previous ideologically imposed concept of pure functionality. She was also personally engaged with their work to the point that she obtained appropriate types of fabric for some students' graduate collections.⁵³ However, in a concession to the socialist system of values, all rituals had been recoded: evening dress could be justified only if worn to attend a concert of classical music, for example. The fashion shoot presenting the graduation outfits of the first generation of students of the dress department showed that they had mastered the basics of cut and the use of an appropriate fabric for a specific outfit, and that they all conformed to the canon of conventional dress aesthetics. Their enviable technical know-how served the new needs for classical, timeless dress (fig. 3.24).

Experts such as Vlková and Nádor hoped to preserve and transfer their precious knowledge of prewar dress traditions to new generations of designers. The East European Communist regimes wanted such traditional and exquisite dress, but only in order to distort its aesthetics to the requirements of socialist realism. The prewar experts and the socialist authorities had started their collaboration with different agendas, but they became odd partners in the bizarre world of socialist mythical culture and the institutions of higher education that perpetuated it. The elite background of these prewar experts smoothly matched the perfection, uniqueness, and conventional elegance of mythical dress. The regimes needed fashion designers even more than before, but now they no longer needed them to design functional and modest dresses that could have been mass-produced if the economic system had functioned properly, but to offer grandiose outfits for representational functions.

Shopping the Myth

Within officialdom, dress acquired the status of a mythical rather than an everyday object.⁵⁴ The central dress institutions planned new fashion directives—dress shapes, colors, types of fabric, sizes of clothes, style of hats, and types of shoes—down to the smallest detail.⁵⁵ Yet these directives only went as far as the administration within the systems of planned economies that drew the five-year plans, because dresses and accessories materialized merely as prototypes on the catwalk or as drawings accompanied by paper patterns in the magazines (fig. 3.25).

While the mythical thrived in such economic and cultural isolation, the functional suffered. In contrast to a representational prototype situated in an uncontested environment, unfashionable and badly executed mass-produced clothes raised complaints in the media. In 1951, the Polish weekly *Świat* discussed some utility-style ensembles that were on offer



FIGURE 3.25

"Outfits from Our Ready-to-Wear Collection,"

Žena a móda, Prague (1949, no. 4).

in the state-owned clothing retail chain MHD. The article pronounced the dresses to be modest and elegant, but criticized the Polish ready-to-wear industry for producing them only in gigantic sizes. Why buy ready-to-wear clothes if one has to waste time and energy on adjusting them afterward? the article wondered.⁵⁶ The ideal new woman was supposed to be gigantic even in a feminine dress, as if a natural body had to physically express the overwhelming ideological ambitions of the body politic. An oversize dress was the sartorial equivalent of the gigantic proportions of socialist realist architecture, which had been erected in the MDM district in the heart of Warsaw.

But the problems with sizes went beyond an ideology incarnated in an ideal body shape. Postwar poverty certainly contributed to the poor quality of many products and their deficient supply in the shops, but the new clothing industries could not deliver on their optimistic promises to their customers. In January 1949, an editorial in the first issue of the Czechoslovak *Žena a móda* promised an equal distribution of a wide choice of textiles and clothing by the following spring, neglecting the fact that the problems of rebuilding the war-devastated industries and restructuring them into a new model could not be accomplished in just over a year. Such unrealistic promises about rapid and wonderful changes in the everyday were embedded in the Stalinist myth. Because the new socialist populations were still not familiar with Stalinist rhetoric, they challenged the unfulfilled promises in their letters to the authorities and the media. A saleswoman from the Prague Brotherhood Clothing Shop sent a letter full of complaints about the clothing industry to *Žena a móda* in 1951.⁵⁷ She stated that the clothes on offer were of poor quality and produced with no real customer in mind. The width of the sleeves did not correspond to the dress size, the sleeves of the coats were too narrow, the colors of the dresses did not take into account the age groups that specific dresses were suited to, and the clothes were produced from a fabric that shrank when washed.⁵⁸

In their editorials, the magazines dared to raise such topical issues, combining their critique with promises of change for the better in the near future. In contrast to the positive image of mythical dress, everyday dress was defined in negative terms in the media. The Polish weekly *Świat* admitted that “our industry can not produce any aesthetically pleasing models. They produce clothes, but nobody wants to buy them.”⁵⁹ On another occasion, *Świat* reviewed the prototypes presented at the fashion show organized by the Ministry of Light Industry to display the ready-to-wear collection for the spring and summer of 1955. Expressing doubt that the prototypes would arrive in the shops, since the various boards that decided on the final collection might have blocked new lines, the reviewer commented: “The customer is bored with five-year-old styles and wants a change.”⁶⁰

A sudden increase in the price of clothing in 1953 in East Germany enraged the population, especially because the measure hit the most desired goods. Requiring an explanation for the 100 percent increase in the price of Perlon stockings, one worker, Elly Voigt, wrote an angry letter to Elli Schmidt, then head of the State Commission for Trade and Supply Minister of the Board of Trade.⁶¹ The situation was especially delicate because the Perlon stockings that East German women coveted so much were an everyday commodity in

West Germany. In a carefully composed answer, Schmidt wrote back: "We have a five-year plan and when one creates the basis for socialism, one can't shift from wearing rayon stockings to the general wearing of Perlon stockings from one year to the next. That is neither possible in the Soviet Union nor in the countries of the People's democracies, and in these countries there are considerable differences in the prices of stockings too. I . . . think that one should have trust in the politics and also trust in such measures that bring price hikes for certain shortage goods."⁶² The East German regime tried to buy understanding for the socialist project, while aware that the people's patience was drying up. The state hosiery industry started to develop technology for the production of Perlon stockings,⁶³ but their quality never matched that of their neighbor's, especially since West Germany soon established itself as the leader in the global market for these stockings.

The East German regime persistently downplayed the negative comparisons with Western dress practices. Following the visit of two experts from IBK to Paris in 1955, the fashion magazine *Die Bekleidung* and the daily *Berliner Zeitung* asked whether the Parisian woman wears an H- or A-line style of dress.⁶⁴ Both publications offered the same answer: the average woman on the streets of Paris does not care about extravagant Dior and Fath creations and their irrelevant dilemmas about the H- or A-line dress, for in their everyday life French women were wearing well-cut and practical suits. The prevalence of these suits almost turned them into uniforms, claimed these two articles, which helpfully added that the Parisians imaginatively used blouses, handbags, and simple jewelry to personalize their looks. Yet such carefully composed explanations only pointed toward the growing domestic discrepancies between a perfect prototype embedded in the mythical world and the poor supply of dresses in socialist everyday reality.

Western Fashion as a Myth

Although a dynamic modernist phenomenon such as fashion could not exist within an isolated and myth-based culture, its imagery did not disappear. On the contrary, Western fashion images began to appear more frequently in East European women's magazines after 1953. Following the death of Stalin, a wave of popular riots took place throughout East Europe as people protested against the poor quality of consumer goods and against restrictions on political liberties. The riots were quickly crushed; in place of greater freedom, Western fashion imagery, followed by some liberalization in the arts, provided a hint of a less severe way of life. Since socialism lacked its own attractive visuals related to the everyday and its rituals, the regimes retreated into the visual seductiveness of Western fashion trends. Sophisticated fashion imagery and the discreet appearance of abstract art played a propaganda role in persuading the citizens in East Europe that their regimes were distancing themselves from the Soviet Union. However, the promotion of fashionable Western dress in the media did not bring about an improved choice of clothing in the shops; its role was strictly political and representational, and, as fashion belonged to the ephemeral, it was only a symbolic gesture to the citizens that the worst manifestations of

the repressive, Stalinist type of socialism might soon be over. At this point, Western fashion turned into a myth which began to play an important role within officialdom.

Divisions among women's magazines started to develop in each country, based on differences in the symbolic production of fashion. In Hungary, the roles of the popular weekly *Nők lapja* and the elitist monthly *Ez a divat* were different, although they complemented each other.⁶⁵ *Nők lapja* presented modest dresses by RTV, the Hungarian central dress institution, and occasionally got involved in ideological battles against Western fashion. In contrast, the specialized fashion magazine *Ez a divat* cultivated the field of the cultural production of fashion following the rise to power of the liberal Communist Imre Nagy in 1953. Although new hopes for greater political liberties never materialized due to the permanent Soviet threat during Nagy's short rule, the acknowledgment of Western fashion occurred almost immediately. Occasionally, *Ez a divat* published reports about fashion shows held by the few remaining private fashion salons that tried to keep up with Western fashions. The discreet presence of elitist fashion shows and new fashion trends in *Ez a divat*, which itself was an elitist journal with a small circulation, demonstrates that the Hungarian regime allowed a certain amount of controlled plurality in dress (fig. 3.26).⁶⁶

Similarly, when the Polish regime introduced the New Course reform program in 1953, its circumspect struggle to secure a degree of political independence from the Soviet Union was accompanied by the reprinting of images of dresses from Western fashion magazines in the Polish press.⁶⁷ In *Świat*, Western dresses were usually promoted as "simple," an attribute that the magazine justified by a careful borrowing of images presenting perfectly tailored suits and smart shirtwaist dresses. However, despite their simplicity, those impeccable outfits clothed effortlessly polished women, wearing valuable jewelry, hats, and gloves and clutching expensive handbags.⁶⁸ These photographs advocated the concepts of femininity, grooming, and sophisticated elegance, and moreover transmitted the contemporary aesthetics of Western elitist fashion. Whether it appeared in elitist or popular magazines, the new visual construction of femininity increasingly relied on the Western system of representations, as neither the Soviet Union nor the East European states developed desirable models of the feminine after the concept of a socialist superwoman was abandoned. Simultaneously, a new set of social rules was designed to accommodate Western fashion imagery in a socialist milieu. In *Świat*, for example, a new column, "Only for Women" (*Tylko dla kobiet*), replaced its unassuming fashion column "Inexpensive and Attractive" in 1954. While the latter published unreferenced Western fashion images without much text, the new column, written by the authoritative author Anna Ziółkówna, was accompanied by a myriad of precise advice. Its subheadings were prescriptive titles such as "Attention" and "Yes and No," advising on everything that an as yet uninitiated socialist woman should know about cosmetics, hairstyles, Paris fashion trends, feminine slips, fashion accessories, and proper etiquette at concert and theater performances.

In the late 1940s, Yugoslav modernity, transmitted through fashionable dress, was mainly representational, since industry was unable to deliver fashionable dresses due to postwar poverty and backwardness. Because Yugoslavia had been liberated from the



FIGURE 3.26

"Spring Ensembles," *Ez a divat*,
Budapest, March 1954.

Germans by its own resistance movement rather than by the Red Army, the country was guaranteed a certain independence from Soviet influence after 1945. Yugoslavia's different path toward socialism was mirrored in its different symbolic and material production of dress in comparison to that of other East European countries. Although factories had been nationalized, attacks on Western fashion were never intense, and the Yugoslav regime did not establish a central dress institution to direct the design, production, and distribution of clothes. Urbanized and elegant Western dresses played an ideological role in the domestic fashion press, where they were presented in opposition to the deprivations of the Soviet type of socialism, from which Yugoslavia distanced itself after its break with Stalin in 1949.

Founded in 1953, the new Yugoslav fashion magazine *Svijet* (World) strongly endorsed Western fashion trends.⁶⁹ Reminiscing about the magazine launch, the first editor of *Svijet*, Smilja Dončević, recalled: "We would ask acquaintances who travelled abroad and fellow journalists on foreign assignment to bring back to us as many women's magazines as possible. That connection helped to inform *Svijet's* readership about fashion, news for women, and events from the other countries" (Dončević 1990, 84). Magda Weltrusky, who became *Svijet's* fashion editor in the mid-1950s, elaborated at greater length on the Western journals from which *Svijet* appropriated its aesthetics: "We mainly used French *Vogue* and *L'Officiel*, but also other journals, such as a Swedish journal and the French journal *Modes & travaux*. The last two were popular magazines, but we used them because of the paper patterns of simple dresses that we wanted to offer to our public. At the beginning, all the foreign journals arrived at *Svijet* irregularly, but we eventually subscribed to *Vogue* and some others soon afterward."⁷⁰ Weltrusky admitted that *Svijet's* covers and fashion spreads were simply transferred from Western fashion magazines, without any references to sources: "From the Western journals, we used whatever we liked; nobody ever complained till the moment when a big invoice arrived from *Modes & travaux* for the use of their paper patterns. It was paid by the publishing house, but we stopped using that journal, although we continued to use others."⁷¹

Svijet did not acknowledge the postwar reality that burdened its readers with scarcities and poverty. Instead, the abundant use of unreferenced Western fashion quotations expanded into a whole new parallel dream world to show how Yugoslav socialism was different from other types of socialism, and even luxurious. "Fashion Overview," the editor's letter published since the first issue, was preoccupied with fashionable dresses, jewels, feminine hairstyles, and new fashions from Paris. A typical piece of advice: "Pearls or diamonds combine well with an emerald-green dress, while turquoises and emeralds, combined with the same dress, suit more adventurous women. Emerald jewelry and gloves in the same color can accompany an evening dress. A short evening dress should be paired with dancing shoes in sea-blue color or ones in an emerald-green color with tiny white stripes."⁷² A proper lady was supposed to go to the theater in an elegant black evening gown and to visit the beach in Hollywood-style beachwear. On other occasions she was clad in elegant suits and coats, adorned with precious brooches, or wore fur. *Svijet*

FIGURE 3.27
Aleksandar Srnec, graphic
designs for *Svijet*, Zagreb,
February 1954.



FIGURE 3.28
Aleksandar Srnec, graphic
designs for *Svijet*, Zagreb,
May 1956.



regularly reported on Paris fashion with detailed accounts of the collections of the leading designers. In parallel, the Yugoslav visual arts were granted official approval to explore contemporary avant-garde work ranging from geometrical abstraction to abstract expressionism. The founders of the Zagreb avant-garde group Exat 51 declared in their manifesto that they aimed to create a synthesis of pure and applied arts. In the early 1950s, the graphic design of *Svijet* by Aleksandar Srnec was one of the most successful forays of Exat 51's modernist and geometrical aesthetics into the everyday (figs. 3.27, 3.28).

The politics of representation was firmly interwoven with daily politics. Fashion was used as a tool to mobilize the population for the socialist project by generating new hope for a more sophisticated lifestyle. But, because it was part of a mythical narrative, it did not offer any real-life solutions. The representational retreats into the latest Western trends showed that the regimes understood the power of fashion, whose sleek images suggested that the worst manifestations of postwar deprivation and overly ideological concepts of dress would be abandoned after Stalin's death. Yet, in the end, the domestic industries could not fulfill those dreams, and the timeless Stalinist aesthetics was already taking hold of the symbolic production of fashion promoted through the central dress institutions. From the mid-1950s, the culture of the sartorial prototype was so firmly embedded in the material and symbolic production of socialist fashion that Khrushchev's political opening toward the West and his attempts at economic reforms had little effect on socialist fashion.



CHAPTER 4

THE COLD WAR AND THE FASHION WAR

Consolidating his rule in 1956, Khrushchev abandoned Stalinist isolationism and opened the Soviet Union toward the West. This ideological turn introduced the culturally more liberal “thaw” period which brought about a change in official attitudes toward fashion.¹ From then on, the official fashion practices in the Soviet Union and East European countries ran parallel to one another. As the Cold War race in technology was supplemented by a competition in everyday lifestyles, the socialist regimes embarked on a fashion war with their Western counterparts. Since the Soviet Union had rejected fashion for decades, and the East European socialist regimes had broken with their prewar fashion traditions, they were unable to keep up with Western fashion trends. However, aspiring to control fashion changes through their centralized systems of clothes production and distribution, the socialist regimes preferred to control the vagaries of fashion on their own terms. They tried to do this in various ways, including the international lifestyle exhibitions, the managed reappearance of Western fashion in domestic fashion magazines, the opening of model department stores, a new ideological emphasis on private fashion salons, and fashion presentations at socialist fashion congresses and domestic and international fairs.

Exhibitions in Moscow and New York

The development of mass culture brought the Cold War to a new phase. By the late 1950s, having emphasized the Soviet victory in the space war, Khrushchev extended the competition with the West to everyday culture and lifestyle. Thus, in the summer of 1959 the Cold War moved to the field of cultural exchange. The Soviets organized an exhibition of their scientific, technological, and cultural achievements in New York, and the Americans followed with their own National Exhibition in Moscow. Both Russians and Americans tried to show off their best clothes on each occasion. The official repositioning of the phenomenon of fashion in socialism therefore took place within the context of a fight for cultural supremacy.

In 1959, American vice president Richard Nixon and his wife, Pat, traveled to Moscow to open the American National Exhibition. Before their visit, Pat Nixon carefully chose a new wardrobe, as reported in *Newsweek*:

*One suit of natural raw silk, a brown silk taffeta cocktail dress, a silk and cotton flowered print dress with jacket and two other dresses. Most of her clothes were bought at Henry Bendel's in New York where Pat spent an hour—and several hundred dollars. "They are costumes," she explained. "Mostly full-skirted dresses with matching accessories to make a 'picture.' They are not high fashion and they're the sort of thing I like, and which I think looks best on me."*²

At the opening of the exhibition, in the company of her husband and the Soviet deputy prime minister Frol Kozlov, Pat Nixon glowed in her natural raw silk suit and smart hat. She looked just as she was supposed to: like a sophisticated and well-heeled American housewife. The message was clear: the Russians might still be ahead in space research and education, but they could not match the sophistication of Western dress, and the easy smoothness of an American lady going about her everyday life. Pat Nixon's carefully chosen wardrobe revealed a lifestyle with which the Russians could not compete. This lifestyle was even part of IBM's electronic brain called RAMAC, present at the exhibition, which provided four thousand answers about different aspects of life in America. One of them offered information in perfect Russian about the wardrobe of an average American woman. She owned: "Winter coat, spring coat, raincoat, five house dresses, four afternoon 'dressy' dresses, three suits, three skirts, six blouses, two petticoats, five nightgowns, eight panties, five brassières, two corsets, two robes, six pairs of nylon stockings, two pairs of sports socks, three pairs of dress gloves, three pairs of play shorts, one pair of slacks, one play suit, and accessories."³

During the exhibition, American fashion was presented at four thirty-five-minute-long fashion shows that took place each day, each of them attended by three thousand to five thousand Russians. The Soviet authorities had opposed many of the American proposals for the exhibition, but eventually the Russian audiences got a chance to enjoy the American fashion shows, which consisted of youthful clothes, leisure wear, daily ensembles, and formal long evening dresses. Attempting to bring the Russians "a living slice of America," the outfits were presented by professional models as well as children, teenagers, grandparents,

and whole families. *Newsweek* described the fashion show as boring, but acknowledged the political meaning behind the clothes: “The dresses were all right, though a bit on the dull side. . . . The whole idea behind it was to show the people of the Soviet Union how the average American woman dresses at work and at play—not the glamorous girl on Park Avenue, but the young matron on Main Street, including the young Negro matron.”⁴ The choice of everyday mass-produced American clothes was very powerful propaganda.⁵ If sophisticated outfits from New York fashion salons had been shown, they could easily have been attacked as elitist clothes meant for the exploiting class. But the Americans knew only too well that the Russians could not compete in the field of decent mass-produced clothing.

While fashion contributed to the huge propaganda effect that the American National Exhibition had in Moscow, the American media commented on the shortcomings in the culture of everyday Soviet life at the Russian exchange exhibition that had taken place only two months earlier in the New York Coliseum. The *New York Times* reported: “The Soviet exhibition strives for an image of abundance with an apartment that few Russians enjoy, with clothes and furs that are rarely seen on Moscow streets.”⁶ The fashion show that was included in the exhibition drew ironic comments from Western journalists. Five female models and one male model displayed designs by Soviet fashion designers from the leading Moscow department store GUM and the Moscow Dom modelei. *Time* reported that “the textiles, mostly thick, heavy-textured woolen suits, are more impressive for their usefulness against the Russian winter than for their styles, which are clumsy attempts to copy western designs.”⁷

Though the American media declared GUM’s outfits “clumsy copies,” they were actually the most prestigious representations of Soviet-style elegance. In 1956, GUM’s general director, V. G. Kamenov, wrote a booklet describing in detail the services that the Soviet flagship department store offered.⁸ Fashion ateliers for custom-made clothes and special shops selling natural silk, artistically hand-painted silk, women’s hats, fur coats, and perfumes were supposed to present an idea of abundance and sophistication (Kamenov 1956, 10–11). In the illustrations accompanying the text, attentive sales personnel were shown offering customers these traditionally luxurious goods. One section of the booklet dealt with new sale techniques, while another praised the fashion salons within the store, which offered individual service in sumptuous surroundings (*ibid.*, 18–31). The store’s interior, filled with dark carved wooden furniture, crystal chandeliers, and heavy velvet curtains, was similar to the Stalinist concept of palaces of consumption of the 1930s. The store continued an outdated, grandiose aesthetics that promoted the mythical Stalinist concept of luxury. But this Stalinist glorification of reality, which tried to remove all conflicting and erratic elements from everyday life, could not compete with ordinary life in the West. Thus, with the opening of the Soviet Union toward the West, the disjunction between the deprivation of everyday life and its ideal representation became blatantly obvious.

By the late 1950s, in comparison with the efficiency of the large American department stores and the diversity and quality of the mass-produced goods that they offered, GUM had become outdated and provincial, as direct contacts with the West painfully revealed. The



FIGURE 4.1

Pat Nixon with her Soviet counterparts:
(from left) Mrs. Mikoyan, Mrs. Nixon,
Mrs. Khrushcheva, and Mrs. Kozlova,
cover of *Life*, 1959.

cover of *Life* magazine from August 1959 showed that the fashion war was taking place even at the highest diplomatic level (fig. 4.1). Flanked by Mrs. Mikoian (on her left), Nina Khrushcheva (right), and Mrs. Kozlova (far right), Pat Nixon appeared as a smartly dressed upper-class American housewife. The *Life* cover was a visual testament to the Soviet diplomats' wives' inability to match the sophisticated, worldly style of Pat Nixon in her silk, flower-printed dress, string of pearls, and carefully applied makeup, as well as her svelte figure. Accompanying their husbands, the ladies attended a dinner table conference at Khrushchev's *dacha*. There were significant visual differences among the three Soviet politicians' wives, which pointed to their different levels of sartorial awareness. Nina Khrushcheva was clad in the simplest dress, which buttoned at the front. Called *khalat*, this style had become a domestic uniform of Soviet women. Women wore *khalat* at home, whether going about their domestic work, cooking, resting, or entertaining. Mrs. Mikoian was dressed in a sartorially more demanding outfit: a suit, with a cut that discreetly shaped the body. Her suit was modest, but its proletarian asceticism was softened with a little hat. That fashion detail showed a certain investment in her look, transforming her simple suit into an outdoor outfit.

The formal outfit worn by the wife of the Soviet deputy prime minister Frol Kozlov showed a full awareness of the importance of the occasion. Mrs. Kozlova's evening gown, embellished with embroidery around the neckline, as well as her embroidered muslin stole, her white evening handbag, her white gloves, her hairstyle and makeup showed a new attitude toward fashionable dress. But Mrs. Kozlova could not yet match the sophistication of Western dress and the easy smoothness of an American lady of the same social standing. The ideologically informed rejection of fashion's history was imprinted on Mrs. Kozlova's dress even more so than on Mrs. Mikoian's simple suit or Nina Khrushcheva's symbolically burdened housedress. Mrs. Kozlova's appearance not only acknowledged contemporary formal Western dress, but it broke an important socialist dress code. The most important members of the political bureaucracy or *nomenklatura* had always dressed modestly in public, a practice that had started with the Bolsheviks. Stalin and his political circle had also stuck to the proletarian ideal of modesty in their public looks, although their private lives had been loaded with all the symbols of traditional luxury, from fur coats to house help, antique furniture, and fine food. The Old Bolshevik wives Nina Khrushcheva and Mrs. Mikoian respected the long-standing *nomenklatura* dress code.⁹ However, Mrs. Kozlova dared to transgress it, as the new members of the *nomenklatura* recognized that times were changing.¹⁰

Reporting on Western Fashion

Several journalists were sent to the West to report on Western fashion at the end of the 1950s. Reporters from the Yugoslav magazine *Globus* and the Soviet fashion magazine *Zhurnal mod* visited Paris to observe the seasonal fashion shows, and came back with similar stories. *Globus* had chosen Coco Chanel as its heroine because she was "a promoter of functional and comfortable fashion that emphasizes female beauty and is totally feminine, in opposition to her competitors Dior, Givenchy or Balmain, who insist on bizarre and

spectacular effects.”¹¹ The magazine stated that Coco Chanel had already caused several fashion revolutions in the past, but stressed that she rejected the role of fashion revolutionary in the latest phase of her career. According to *Globus*, Chanel understood that there was no need for a new revolution, as contemporary fashion already fulfilled all women’s needs and “allowed a woman to dress aesthetically and practically, but still look beautiful, be free in her movements, elegant, and even to attract attention.”¹² Similarly, the Russian reporter L. Efremova found only functional and simple clothes on the Paris streets in 1958. She observed that many Parisian women would go to the theater or a party in the same dress they had worked in, even though evening dresses were also available. Belonging to an artistic nation with a tradition of excellent taste and elegance, French women knew that an appropriate outfit should be modest and simple. Efremova concluded, “So, the final truth is: Paris fashion is practical, because simplicity, elegance, and modesty are always present in day dress.”¹³ The fact that Efremova, a senior fashion designer in ODMO in Moscow, could praise “Paris as a long-lasting center of European fashion”¹⁴ confirmed that the official attitude toward Western fashion had changed.

The official recognition of fashion suggested that the regimes had begun to exercise their control in more subtle ways. In 1950 the Czech *Žena a móda* had associated feminine and luxurious Western dresses with the class degeneration of the capitalist system.¹⁵ But from the late 1950s onward, Western fashion was again acceptable: “We do not wish to eliminate fashion or to separate ourselves from western fashion and dress any more than any one else in the civilized world. In contrast, we want to follow world fashion trends carefully and persistently, and we will be pleased to accept positive values and innovative fantasies from international fashion designers.”¹⁶

In East Germany, the new times called for a glamorous new fashion publication which would engage more directly with its public. *Die Bekleidung*, the mouthpiece of the Institut für Bekleidungskultur (Institute for the Culture of Dress, IBK), was too formal, and its perfect images were too distant to convey the new reality that the regime wanted to promote. In December 1955, the institute’s director, Elli Schmidt, asked the Ministry of Light Industry to make an urgent decision about the launch of a new fashion magazine.¹⁷ Just a year later, IBK began to publish a new magazine, called *Sibylle*. As the editorial of the first issue explained, its name was meant to conjure up the ancient Roman prophetesses called Sibyls, suggesting that the new magazine would foresee fashion changes. Its main role was to present the culture of dress from IBK and domestic fashion ateliers. However, because nobody could be a prophet in his or her own country, *Sibylle* would also present world fashion from Prague, Florence, Warsaw, Vienna, Moscow, New York, Beijing, London, and Paris.¹⁸ In her statement welcoming the new magazine, Elli Schmidt stated that *Sibylle* would be a charming and spirited friend not only of the public interested in fashion but also of the IBK’s employees, who would use it to present their work to a wider audience.¹⁹ In the first issue, following a visit to Paris with her IBK designers, she published a detailed report on the latest Paris haute couture collections.²⁰



FIGURE 4.2

Ez a divat, Budapest

(1957, no. 4), back cover.

When the reformist Władysław Gomułka came to power in Poland in 1956, *Świat* was already borrowing images from the American and French editions of *Vogue*, the Italian fashion magazine *Donna*, and the French journal *Marie France*.²¹ Similarly, the Hungarian *Ez a divat* started to report on Paris fashion in 1956, borrowing images from the French editions of *Elle*, *Vogue*, and *L'Officiel*, and publishing reports by Hungarian designers following their visits to Paris.²² Klára Rothschild, the head of the most prestigious Budapest fashion salon, published a report called “Ez Párizs” (This is Paris) presenting new fashions by Jacques Griffe and Dior, among others, in *Ez a divat* in August 1957,²³ while Vera Nádor, the leading designer of the Hungarian Ruhaipari Tervező Vállalat (Central Design Company for the Clothing Industry, RTV), commented on Paris fashion trends a month later.²⁴ RTV started its own luxurious magazine, *Pesti divat* (Budapest fashion), to present its collections and Western fashion trends.²⁵ Paradoxically, it was easier for the post-1956 regimes in Poland and Hungary to tolerate a moderate opening toward the West, which included a guarded acceptance of modernist arts and the reproduction of Western fashions in domestic magazines, than to institute real economic reforms that would have improved the quality of the textile and clothing industries. Although Gomułka rose to power in opposition to Soviet domination and promoted a Polish road to socialism, his power was limited, and his national version of socialism emphasized the differences between Polish visual representations and those of the Soviet Union instead of introducing systemic changes. Western fashion trends were thus both tested and tamed in the East European countries (fig. 4.2).

As long as the East European regimes did not challenge basic socialist values, their readiness and capability for change in the visual arts and fashion, far from being prevented, was discreetly encouraged by the Soviet Union, which was keen to improve its image in the West. With Khrushchev's political approval, the East European countries opened further and faster to the West than did the Soviet Union. As Elli Schmidt exclaimed in an article in 1956: “The courage for fashion is here!”²⁶

Representational Shops: Modernity on Display

As the socialist regimes opened toward the West, domestic fashion magazines began to admit to their increasingly well-informed domestic public that Western dress practices were more developed at design and retail levels, while at the same time reassuring domestic customers that the socialist regimes were aware of problems related to fashion and prepared to face them. As an example of such an approach, a reporter for the Hungarian weekly *Nők lapja* who visited the Stockholm department store H&M in 1958 wrote that only tasteful and moderately priced clothes were displayed there. The article reported that Swedish women did not need to pay for expensive custom-made clothes because H&M offered affordable, pretty dresses that were instantly available. Moreover, the sales personnel provided an extremely customer-friendly service. The *Nők lapja* reporter witnessed three shop assistants persuading a customer that a dress did not suit her; instead, they chose a more beautiful and considerably cheaper dress for her.²⁷ Such carefully composed articles addressed important

new issues related to mass-produced dress, such as the smooth distribution of decent-quality clothes, satisfactory service, and, finally, the phenomenon of fashionability itself.

During the years of political isolation, shops had been either empty or insufficiently supplied with clothes, which in any case were of bad quality. In the realm of mythical reality, stylish one-of-a-kind dresses, designed and produced within the central dress institutions, had been presented as success stories of the domestic clothing industries in the state-controlled fashion magazines. While they had previously competed successfully in heavy industry and space technology, the socialist regimes now tried to produce their own version of socialist fashion. They only acknowledged fashion when mass culture and mass consumption could no longer be held back.

The opening of the department store House of Fashion in Prague in 1956 was ideologically in tune with the Soviet opening toward the West. Its prices were higher than those in ordinary shops, but the quality of its clothes, which were produced in small batches, was considerably better. Marking the tenth anniversary of the Prague House of Fashion, *Žena a móda* claimed that one could not find a woman who had never visited the store. In fact, the Prague House of Fashion served twelve million customers in its first ten years (fig. 4.3).²⁸ Like the Moscow GUM, the Prague House of Fashion bore little resemblance to people's everyday shopping experiences. Significantly, however, its interior was not influenced by the traditional concept of luxury, which pervaded the sumptuous interiors of GUM in the same period. Instead, the modernist look of the Prague House of Fashion matched contemporary Western aesthetics. The Czechoslovak regime employed prewar architects and theater set designers, and relied on their expertise and style to impress both the domestic public and the West. The fifth floor of the Prague House of Fashion was decorated with armchairs and coffee tables covered with fashion magazines. Metal, glass, and plastic, as well as a ceramic bas-relief by two contemporary Czech artists and sculptural ceramic pendant lights, contributed to the feeling of modernist ease, which was highly praised in the applied arts journal *Tvar*.²⁹ A number of specialized schools for window dressers opened in Czechoslovakia at that time, and the 1,500 experts trained there arranged 120,000 shop windows throughout the country.³⁰ The selected flagship stores immediately communicated the preferred official aesthetics and announced the forthcoming shopping future.

Similar representative shops were being opened in the other East European countries. The Polish design journal *Projekt* (Design) announced in 1957 that the Institute of Industrial Design had opened two shops in Warsaw and reported that they were overcrowded. The journal commented that it was regretful that "this is the only way to bring goods produced by an institution experimenting in the newest artistic design into the market."³¹ In 1957, the East German women's magazine *Sibylle* reported that a new shop bearing the same name would open at the best location in Berlin, the corner of Friedrichstraße and the avenue Unter den Linden. It would be "similar to its international sisters in the West called boutiques," and "would be crammed with fashion goods," stated the magazine.³² It took another year for this new modernist shop to finally open its doors. According to Inge Kertzsch, fashion critic of the Communist party's daily *Neues Deutschland*, *Sibylle* was the "first Berlin boutique," and resembled "a paradise, a ladies' paradise" (fig. 4.4).³³



FIGURE 4.3

Interior, Prague House of Fashion,
Tvar, Prague (1958, no. 4).

Large glass walls, sputnik chandeliers, and modernist furniture were the right setting in which to sell small collections of exclusive dresses produced by the DMI, elitist workshops operating within the domestic textile industry, and fashionable imports from Austria, France, Holland, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Hungary.³⁴ While the elitist magazine *Sybille* praised the fashionability and exclusivity on offer in this boutique, the popular women's magazine *Frau von heute* despised the shop Sybille's aspirations and high prices. Maintaining its proletarian ideals, *Frau von heute* attacked the fashionable sack dresses and extravagant *lamé* evening wear on offer, declaring that they were only appropriate for a dinner with Monaco's Prince Rainier III.³⁵

Although this discourse of austerity never ceased during socialist times, the regimes were forced by their lifestyle competition with the West to start promoting the image of an imminent consumer paradise. As the East German Communist leader Walter Ulbricht wrote to Khrushchev in January 1961, his regime was well aware of the dangers brought about by the negligence of the consumer goods sector: "due to this, West Germany can constantly apply political pressure. The booming economy in West Germany, which is visible to every citizen in the GDR, is the main reason that over ten years about two million people have left our Republic" (quoted in Kopstein 1996, 44). Khrushchev, however, did not care about these concerns because, in contrast to the East Germans, Soviet citizens had few firsthand opportunities to compare their lifestyle with that of their Western counterparts. At the beginning of the 1960s, the East German authorities launched a new elitist shopping initiative by opening a chain of Exquisit shops in the big cities. Corresponding to the slow socialist master narrative, the expensive and decent-quality clothes that Exquisit shops offered conformed to the traditional sartorial aesthetics. However, the shops' names—Yvonne, Jeanette, Chic, Madeleine, and Charmant—announced Parisian aspirations.

In 1960 the Yugoslav picture weekly *Globus* described a modernist glass-flanked department store in Zagreb's city center, and perfectly expressed this selective shortcut into modernity with an exclamatory headline: "Reject the impractical and the out-of-date! The invasion of the modern begins!"³⁶ A new socialist visual narrative needed such department stores as the background for its modernist consumer stories, whether real or imaginary. In 1968 the producers of the Yugoslav film *Pusti snovi* (Empty dreams) could not find a real-life department store for their plot organized around a fashion show, so the film was shot in the white modernist building of the Belgrade Museum of Modern Art. It was an appropriate setting for the fast-developing textile industry, with its aspirations for Western fashionability.

In Budapest, the modernist department store Luxus was strategically positioned in the prestigious Vörösmarty square. In its neon-bathed shopping windows, mannequins wore fashionable coats, hats, and high heels (fig. 4.5).³⁷ Modernity was on display for everyone to see. In 1962, the *Hungarian Review* published a story about a specialized school in Budapest that educated young people in the profession of window dressing. The students were "selected on the basis of talent, skill, imagination and good taste. . . . Modern window dressing has ousted these one-time cluttered displays. . . . Emphasis is placed on simplicity as opposed to the ornate, with windows changing as the seasons change. This requires



FIGURE 4.4
Interior, Sibylle boutique,
Sibylle (1958, no. 5).



FIGURE 4.5
"For Ladies Only,"
Hungarian Review,
Budapest (1964, no. 4).



FIGURE 4.6

Dress design, salon Ewa,
Polska, Warsaw (1958, no. 8).

artistry and creativeness, for the good window dresser must at all times find something new and different to attract the shopper.”³⁸ These new East European retail spaces abandoned the archaic Stalinist heaviness that continued to inform Soviet aesthetics even after 1956. Although their new architecture of large glass facades encased in light metal frames was inviting, they were nevertheless still subject to the Stalinist concept of representation. In contrast to the earlier Stalinist opulence, which was meant only for the privileged few, the abundant display in the well-lit and carefully arranged shop windows was supposed to satisfy everyone. These new East European shops tried to turn the dull socialist city centers into exciting consumer paradises; yet the very rarity of such retail spaces, in combination with the high prices of the goods they offered, suggested their strictly representational role.

Although he engaged in competition with America on the representational level, Khrushchev was well aware that the production of good-quality industrial products was unable to meet the demand. In one of his speeches in the late 1950s, Khrushchev remarked: “No doubt, people are looking better dressed than before, but some clothes are still on the dismal side. We are producing an ever-growing quantity of all kinds of consumer goods; all the same, we must not force the pace unreasonably as regards the lowering of prices. We don’t want to lower prices to such an extent that there will be queues and a black market” (Werth 1961, 34). Observing consumption in Poland in the early 1960s, the German author Hansjakob Stehle commented that “the state rations goods by keeping prices high. . . . A model dress from the exclusive fashion salon Ewa is quite unobtainable by the great majority of women” (Stehle 1965, 4) (fig. 4.6).

The regimes made a political decision to place a high price on fashion goods, because they were not among the group of essential products that were heavily subsidized. In the elitist East German Exquisit shops, prices were set at such a high level that only wealthy citizens, such as loyal members of the intelligentsia, could afford them. These discriminating customers rushed to the Exquisit shops for their high-quality goods, which were often imported from the West or made from imported fabrics. The shops earned large revenues for the regime, especially after the Berlin Wall was erected in 1961 and the more affluent East Germans were forced to spend their savings within their country. Moreover, the Exquisit chain of shops presented the luxurious face of socialism to the other side of the Wall.

Ideological Uses of Private Fashion Salons

The new socialist industry proved unable to mass-produce any form of smart, good-quality clothing, as it lacked both adequate technological capital and appropriate cultural capital. While the state-owned clothing industries struggled, private fashion salons retained their prewar cultural capital as well as the expertise needed to produce good-quality dress, which they offered only to specific customers. Private fashion salons preserved both the physical existence of stylish dress and its symbolical role. While all East European socialist regimes allowed these exclusive fashion salons to continue to operate, the salons took different forms in different socialist countries.³⁹

In Yugoslavia, the Croatian association of private tailors, established in the late 1940s, was active in organizing seasonal fashion shows, which took place with the full approval of the regime in the headquarters of the Crafts Association in the center of Zagreb (fig. 4.7). The shows would last for ten days each September, and were attended both by members of the prewar elite and the new privileged social strata. Mila Mirković, one of the first professional Croatian models, recalled: "The private fashion salons' seasonal fashion shows were important social gatherings throughout the 1950s. They rivaled the prominent theatre premieres, and I was usually presented with flowers by the leading Croatian actress Bela Krleža at the end of the show."⁴⁰

At these gatherings, fashion brought together members of the disempowered urban elite with representatives of the new, powerful, but unsophisticated elites of rural origin. New civilizing rituals and rules of propriety were polished at such events through the medium of smart dress. In contrast, the seasonal fashion shows of the state clothing companies failed to attract such a dedicated following. Their dresses were not considered exciting, partly because they were industrially produced and presented in the unattractive premises of the Zagreb fair pavilion, and partly because they lacked the direct connection to fashion's past that the private fashion salons provided. The media also paid much more attention to the private salons' fashion shows than to those organized by the state clothing companies.⁴¹ The public enjoyed the private salons' long evening outfits, velvet bows on lace dancing dresses, romantic billowing skirts, and suits that emphasized an hourglass figure, because they were evocative of the splendid traditions of prewar fashion. Accessories, such as stoles, hats, long white gloves, high heels, and jewelry, contributed to the allure of the dresses presented by the private salons.

In Czechoslovakia, the socialist elite had discreetly enjoyed fashion shows by the exclusive fashion houses, such as *Eva and Styl*, since the late 1940s.⁴² However, a decade later, the new recognition of fashion allowed those exclusive fashion presentations to be promoted publicly in the media, for elitist dresses presented by the exclusive fashion salons were now perceived as a sign of a civilized lifestyle. The official reorganization of the Czech association of exclusive fashion houses, called *Módní závody* (Fashion Works), emphasized the new representational role of these houses. Fashion houses that belonged to *Módní závody* were required to design and execute dresses for special state presentations, foreign trade, and other exclusive purposes. Due to the new political atmosphere following the opening toward the West, the prewar sartorial traditions were, all of a sudden, approved, and the expertise of exclusive fashion houses was needed and praised in the media. *Módní závody* even proudly advertised its activities with the slogan: "Our outfits are winners at international fashion shows."⁴³

The Hungarian Klára Rothschild staged her biannual fashion shows in luxurious spaces such as the Gundel restaurant in Budapest or the ballroom of the smart Gellért hotel, while Mrs. Arató presented her Paris-inspired collection in the Budapest town hall to an exclusive audience twice a year. Both salons had been prominent in the prewar years, and Rothschild and Arató were able to stay in business thanks to their good connections with the new regime.⁴⁴ In the mid-1950s, their fashion shows were attended by the new political elite, whose

FIGURE 4.7

The first postwar fashion show by local private fashion salons, *Naša moda*, Zagreb (1946, no. 10).

FIGURE 4.8

The finale of Klára Rothschild's fashion show held in Budapest, October 1960.



FIGURE 4.9

Bormann Magdeburg,
dress design, *Sibylle*,
East Berlin (1956, no. 2).



members were also their customers. The attention that Klára Rothschild's fashion presentations commanded in the Hungarian popular and fashion press in the early 1960s served as a declaration of the new atmosphere (fig. 4.8). *Ez a divat* regularly covered fashion shows by other private salons as well. Just as in Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, pictures of elegant, luxurious dresses from the private salons met the new official needs. Because domestic industry was not able to produce such clothes, the regimes borrowed from the existing sartorial reservoir.

In the East German fashion scene of the 1950s and 1960s, Heinz Bormann played a role similar to that of Rothschild and Arató in Hungary. He had started his private fashion house immediately after the war, but developed his business and advanced technologically only after he entered into partnership with the state in 1956. The regime, which eventually owned fifty percent of the business, needed Bormann as much as he needed the state's political and material support. Specializing in haute couture-style outfits, the fashion house continued to act under his name in the city of Magdeburg (fig. 4.9). Bormann regularly presented his exclusive collections at the Leipzig Trade Fair, and, with the full approval of the regime, took his sumptuous outfits to fashion shows in Stockholm, Cairo, and Beirut. Bormann was nicknamed the "Socialist Dior" in both the domestic and Western media.

In 1959, the Yugoslav magazine *Globus* introduced a new weekly feature, "Diors Are among Us," dedicated to the owner-designers of domestic fashion salons. In one feature, Tilda Stepinska, owner of a domestic private fashion salon, emphasized that she was always inspired by French haute couture, but only chose ideas suitable for "our conditions."⁴⁵ Like Christian Dior, who dressed the French upper class and nouveau riche, the Yugoslav "Diors" catered for the socialist elite. Stepinska commented that she dressed "women who held high political office in the country, or represented it abroad, and therefore needed elegant and functional clothes."⁴⁶ The publication of such a statement in a mass magazine at the end of the 1950s was all part of the new politics of style (fig. 4.10).

Privately owned fashion salons were officially recognized in Yugoslavia but were legally restricted, as private companies were allowed to employ only up to five people. Even the most prestigious among them, such as that of the Croatian designer Žuži Jelinek, could not develop into proper fashion houses. Jelinek was well informed about the latest fashion trends, but her innate minimalism fitted well with the ideal of socialist simplicity, while adding a much-craved dose of glamour.⁴⁷ Jelinek's loyalty to the concept of conventional elegance throughout the 1960s turned her into a national media celebrity; though her private fashion salon was based in Zagreb, she was well known throughout Yugoslavia. In 1960, her first independent fashion show in Belgrade was held in the prestigious space of Dom sindikata (Trade Union House), usually reserved for important state events, and was attended by two thousand people. *Globus* reported that many of those who did not obtain a ticket on time were paying five times the normal price on the black market (fig. 4.11).⁴⁸

In 1959, Jelinek attempted to establish her fashion house in New York, a move closely followed by the Yugoslav media.⁴⁹ Although she enjoyed enthusiastic and professional support in America, her project failed, as she could not produce her clothes in sufficient quantities for the American market.⁵⁰ The regime invested Jelinek's dresses with an ideological



FIGURE 4.10

Day suits by the Croatian designer
and private fashion salon owner
Tilda Stepinska, *Globus*, Zagreb
(1959, no. 15).

task: to present Yugoslavia as a liberal and civilized country. The media attention from American and Yugoslav magazines served that purpose to perfection (fig. 4.12). However, the domestic magazines showed little interest in the production and delivery problems which prevented Jelinek's success in America, and instead presented her business trips to the United States as a great achievement. Jelinek confirmed her talent in dealing with the media abroad by playing with the image of the socialist fashion designer in an interview for the *New York Times* during her 1959 business trip. When asked if there was any common denominator between her and her American counterparts, she answered: "It's Paris, of course. What happens to fashions every season depends directly on what the French couture does. But, of course, I copy them."⁵¹

That is precisely what the owners of the established socialist fashion salons were supposed to do by the end of the 1950s. Klára Rothschild traveled regularly to Paris at that time to learn about the latest trends and to buy lavish fabrics for her outfits. Her luxurious and Westernized seasonal collections were direct copies of Givenchy and Coco Chanel dresses, which, she said, were preferred by her clients.⁵² Rothschild's connections with the Hungarian ruling party and in the West enabled her to travel abroad and obtain top-quality fabrics. However, while Rothschild conformed to the expectations of the regime, Jelinek's entrepreneurial attitude was punished.⁵³ The owners of the private fashion salons were not expected to be serious businesspeople in their own right; they were supposed to confer some sophistication and glitter to the image of socialist fashion at a time when the regimes wanted to reconnect socialist sartorial codes with Western fashion. Yet the "socialist Diors" were not allowed to follow into footsteps of their famous French colleague. The Dior reference merely signaled that the official perception of fashion had started to change.

With the official reconceptualization of fashion, private fashion salons were brought to the attention of the socialist media, and previously rejected bourgeois practices and dress codes were recoded to suit the new socialist lifestyle. The new official discourse recognized the private fashion salons as a useful medium for presenting fashion styles that suited the slow socialist flow of time: classical, elegant, timeless, and possessing a tradition that socialism suddenly desired. Thus, the fashion shows put on by the politically neutralized and economically incapacitated private fashion salons were, for a while, permitted to promote smart dress. But it was not long before the socialist regimes gave their own annual fashion congresses the main role in proposing and affirming new socialist fashion trends.

Under a Bureaucratic Gaze: Socialist Fashion Congresses

Beginning in the mid-1950s, the central dress institutions displayed socialist fashion at the annual dress contests. On the catwalks, socialist fashion ignored both the everyday reality of badly mass-produced clothes and the latest Western trends. Turning away from fashionability, socialist fashion embarked on its search for an eternal style. At the seventh Contest in the Culture of Dress in Warsaw in 1956, the jury divided into two camps over the appropriate style for a classic suit. One supported a traditional suit consisting of a jacket with a



FIGURE 4.11
 Žuži Jelinek with models in
 her dresses, "Ambassador
 of Fashion," *Globus*, Zagreb
 (June 1960).



FIGURE 4.12
 The American model Suzy
 Parker wearing clothes by
 the Croatian designer Žuži
 Jelinek, *Globus*, Zagreb
 (1959, no. 2).

blouse beneath it, while the other supported a high-buttoned jacket without an accompanying blouse, called *garçonne*-style.⁵⁴ This search for classic forms revealed the relation of socialist fashion to the aesthetics of socialist realism and its fascination with the heritage of classical aesthetics. As Leonid Heller observes, “the very idea of a classic depends on classification, on judgments of normativity, on categorization—thus was the doctrine of socialist realism formulated through debates about norms and categories” (Heller 1997, 55).

While the Warsaw fashion event was still called a “contest,” symbolically retaining the initial aim of those gatherings to promote a new “culture of dress,” the more imposing name of “congress” was introduced in 1957 in Moscow. *Rabotnitsa* reported that six socialist countries took part in the eighth fashion congress, held in July 1957, and that each of them presented a collection of fifty-three prototypes, each meant for a different purpose. Although women’s magazines only published images of evening wear and luxurious dresses and ensembles, the participating countries always included working wear, sports clothes, and men’s and children’s clothes in their collections. At the Moscow fashion congress, fashion professionals from Poland, Hungary, Romania, East Germany, Bulgaria, and the Soviet Union met to exchange experiences, and an international jury chose the most successful outfits.⁵⁵ The unity of the participating socialist countries in choosing future fashion trends was continually stressed in magazine reports on those congresses in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. The result was an “elegant and contemporary style, which did not copy Western fashion.”⁵⁶

Unlike the early restrained and professionally oriented contests, the fashion congresses between the socialist countries developed into a display of luxurious fabrics and extravagant cuts. Models paraded up and down the catwalk in ball gowns with ruffles and long, wide skirts, taffeta evening coats with huge collars, and low-cut cocktail dresses. The outfits were accessorized with excessive amounts of costume jewelry and high heels. The socialist day wear that was shown was not casual, as serious ensembles of overcoats and matching dresses were accompanied by hats, gloves, and matching shoes and handbags (figs. 4.13, 4.14).

The dresses presented at the congresses defined the socialist relationship toward Western fashion. These congresses were a channel through which Western fashion trends could be controlled and recoded. In his book *Mythologies*, Roland Barthes argues that “ideologically, everything that is not bourgeois is obliged to borrow from the bourgeoisie” (Barthes 1976, 139). In that context, the bourgeois dress was constitutive of socialist fashion as an internalized negative image. In the late 1940s and in the first half of the 1950s, Western fashion promoted traditional and ladylike clothes, but by the end of the 1950s socialist fashion was even more traditional, ladylike, and luxurious (fig. 4.15). These exaggerations only confirmed that, after being rejected, Western fashion continued to exist as an eternally threatening Other within the socialist sartorial subconscious. The excessive style of dress presented at the annual socialist fashion congresses ultimately reflected isolationism and a fear of competition with contemporary Western dress.⁵⁷ Although the socialist countries now desired Western fashion, they were not really interested in the latest Western styles.

Central dress institutions repositioned themselves in compliance with the growing representational role of socialist fashion, and changed their names accordingly. IBK launched an



FIGURE 4.13

T. Kuznetsova (The All-Union House of Prototypes, ODMO), dress design, *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1958, no. 2).



FIGURE 4.14

A model from the Czechoslovak Collection at the ninth International Fashion Congress held in Bucharest, *Sibylle*, East Berlin (1958, no. 3).

official seasonal fashion forecast, *Modelinie*, in 1956, emphasizing that it would be inspired by international fashion rhythms.⁵⁸ Its new image was confirmed by its change of name from IBK into Deutsches Modeinstitut (German Fashion Institute, DMI) in the following year. In 1958, the Polish Bureau for Fashion Presentation at the Leipzig fair became the central fashion institution *Moda Polska* (Polish Fashion), with Jadwiga Grabowska as its artistic director. Grabowska's main duty was to add a dose of serious glamour to socialist fashion. The regime relied on her high bourgeois upbringing and the impeccable dress rituals that she had acquired growing up in a family of wealthy architects.⁵⁹ Grabowska played a similar role in *Moda Polska* to that played by the Hungarian Nádor and the East German Schmidt in their respective central fashion institutions. Her aesthetics, influenced by Paris haute couture, corresponded perfectly to the regime's representational needs. During the preparations for the Polish participation at the Leipzig fair in 1959, she was photographed in the authoritative pose of a fashion dictator, critically inspecting the right length of a model's skirt (fig. 4.16).

The length and the style of a dress no longer needed to conform to an ideologically imposed rule of modesty and restraint.⁶⁰ In 1958, the Czechoslovak *Tekstilní Tvorba* (Textile Production) became *Ústav bytové a oděvní kultury* (Institute of Material and Dress Culture, *ÚBOK*). The change of name announced much deeper changes, bringing the whole field of lifestyle activities under the control of *ÚBOK*, which in future would be in charge of all international Czechoslovak fashion presentations. In Hungary, the *Ruhaipari Tervező Vállalat* (Central Design Company for the Clothing Industry, RTV) strengthened its representational role after 1956 when it employed the first generation of Vera Nádor's students from the dress department of the Academy of Applied Arts. Vera Nádor joined RTV in 1957 and, with her students, promoted a smart, conventional aesthetics of dress in prototype collections to represent Hungary at socialist fashion congresses (figs. 4.17, 4.18).⁶¹

Since socialist fashion congresses were under Soviet organizational and stylistic dominance, there were no official channels for direct confrontation, collaboration, or even comparison with contemporary Western fashion. Although they were formally called International Fashion Congresses, these events presented only the collections created within the culturally isolated socialist world. In her review of the eleventh International Fashion Congress in Bucharest, published in *Sibylle*, Margot Pfannstiel observed that the Western fashion world was burdened with industrial espionage. In contrast, there were many instances of comradely cooperation in Bucharest. While the Soviet, Czech, Hungarian, Romanian, Bulgarian, and East German delegations were studying each others' collections, "you could often hear the words: 'We like your model. We will introduce it in our collection'" (fig. 4.19).⁶²

One of the leading designers in the Hungarian central fashion institute RTV, Éva Mészáros, confirmed: "The role of fashion congresses was to propose new socialist trends, in the same way as Paris launched new western fashions. I must tell you that the Soviet Union was usually the winner, with Hungary and Czechoslovakia competing for the second-best award. However, I do not imply that political reasons lay behind the Soviet victories. The Soviets usually presented excellent collections."⁶³ While the supply of clothes in the shops was much worse in the Soviet Union than in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland, and East



FIGURE 4.15

Dress design, Deutsches
Modeinstitut, *Sibylle*,
East Berlin (1958, no. 3).



FIGURE 4.16

Polish fashion designer
Jadwiga Grabowska with a
model, "Warsaw Dior," *Polska*,
Warsaw (1959, no. 4).



FIGURE 4.17

Vera Nádor, the Hungarian
Central Design Company for
the Garment Industry (RTV),
dress design, 1961.



FIGURE 4.18
Zsuzsa Ökrös, the Hungarian
Central Design Company for
the Garment Industry (RTV),
dress design, 1961.



FIGURE 4.19
Jury at work at the Bucharest
fashion congress, *Sibylle*,
East Berlin (1958, no. 4).

Germany, the Soviet efforts at the congresses showed total dedication to the ideological role of these events, and a profound understanding of the importance of representational dress. The Soviet authority over the congresses imposed both insularity and an excessive aesthetics. Under Khrushchev, the Stalinist grandiose aesthetics was officially dismissed in the mass media, but the Soviet regime reserved the right to use it to provide a highly representational response in sartorial battles with the West.

Take a Look: Trade Fairs and Fashion Shows

Socialist fashion was not hermetically sealed within the socialist countries, but was also displayed in the West. Apart from the regular annual fashion congresses between the socialist countries, the realm of socialist fashion spread from the regularly held international commercial fairs to the occasional representational socialist fashion shows. At the end of the 1950s, socialist fashion was being presented at such events in both the West and the socialist countries. Those presentations of socialist fashion were informed by the five-year plans, which were the most important products of the ideologically constructed reality.⁶⁴ Consequently, the international commercial fairs that were held in the socialist countries filled huge halls with beautiful clothes and other consumer goods that never found their way to the shops. The dresses were presented in the surreal environment of an invented reality. The ambitious presentations of socialist dresses in the West also belonged to that invented world. While the shops were empty or badly supplied at home, the abundance of extravagant, luxurious, and smart dresses on the catwalks provided the only answer that the socialist regimes could offer to meet the Western challenge in the new battle of lifestyles, without any political or economic risk to the system.

The socialist countries prepared seriously for the Brussels World Exhibition in 1958.⁶⁵ Czechoslovakia won first prize for its presentation at the event, which included glass, ceramics, jewelry, textiles, and clothes in a series of dramatic displays which resembled theater sets.⁶⁶ Although shops in Czechoslovakia suffered from serious shortages and poor-quality goods, the country's trade fair displays became an extravagant art form. Following Czechoslovakia's international success in Brussels, the applied arts journal *Tvar* dedicated a whole issue to the presentations at the fairs.⁶⁷ *Tvar* presented the medium of the exhibition as an essential tool on the road to progress, and called for a special school that would educate young artists in the art of exhibition presentation. Furthermore, the Hungarian collection, consisting of 120 outfits designed by RTV, and mainly including elegant cocktail dresses and evening wear, won a grand prix in Brussels (fig. 4.20).⁶⁸

Time magazine reported: "In contrast to the heavy-handed Soviet exhibit, the Czechs, the Hungarians, and the Yugoslavs contributed some of the fair's most striking displays, with a high standard of workmanship and design—as if in echo of the aesthetic free world to which they once belonged."⁶⁹ RTV's leading fashion designer, Vera Nádor, praised Hungary's success on the world stage in an article published in *Ez a divat*.⁷⁰ *Hungarian Review* commented that the Brussels grand prix "pays tribute to the skill and talent of Hungarian designers and the development of the Hungarian fashion industry."⁷¹



FIGURE 4.20
The Hungarian Central
Design Company for the
Clothing Industry (RTV),
dress design at Brussels
World Exhibition, *Ez a divat*,
Budapest (1958, no. 10).

Throughout the 1960s, Hungary actively continued to promote socialist fashion at fashion shows held in the West. The Hungarian state company Hungarotex organized fashion shows in Copenhagen, Oslo, Bergen, West Berlin, Rome, Milan, New York, and Toronto, presenting clothes that could not be bought in shops at home.⁷² Vera Nádor and her team from the central fashion institution were trusted to prepare the shows in the West.⁷³ Similarly exclusive export collections, designed within the East German Fashion Institute and small workshops such as VEB Elegant, also traveled the world, from Düsseldorf to Cairo and Helsinki, spreading the news about “Berliner chic.”⁷⁴ *GDR Review* reported that DMI had paid special attention to the design of the textile, clothing, and fur collection for the Textile Fair in Finland: “Their efforts were well rewarded, for such models as ‘Northern Lights,’ ‘Polar,’ ‘Fiord’ and the many delightful hats were received with great enthusiasm by the Finnish women.”⁷⁵

The twists of fate in socialist fashion in Czechoslovakia in the 1960s further demonstrated that fashion was purely a part of the regime’s ideological discourse. In the short period of general political and cultural relaxation leading up to the Prague Spring of 1968, the Czechs made serious attempts to reconnect with Western fashion, taking part in the Paris Prêt-à-Porter in autumn 1965 and spring 1966, “the first socialist country to present its ready-to-wear collection among three hundred other western companies.”⁷⁶ After a significant period of isolation during which it had been affected by poverty and lost traditions, the Czech contribution at the Paris Prêt-à-Porter was ambitiously organized by the official textile exporter Centrotex. Dresses were designed and executed by the prototype ateliers at the clothing factory Prostějov, ÚBOK, and the Prague branch of the *Oděvní služba* (Clothing Services), which employed the most experienced tailors. Although they had clean lines and were pretty and functional, the dresses were not an industrial product but rather the result of the best craftsmanship. *Žena a móda* emphasized the lace evening dresses embellished with crystal beads that had been praised at the Paris Prêt-à-Porter.⁷⁷ While the Czechs were eager to prove themselves sartorially after years of politically imposed isolation, by presenting exclusive, handmade evening dresses at a prêt-à-porter event they were still operating within the field of representational dress.⁷⁸

Designed by the central fashion institutions, such exclusive collections were moved from one representative event to another. Traveling between annual socialist fashion congresses, the Leipzig international fairs, and lavish presentations in the West, these prototype collections produced a new sartorial reality that sharply differed from everyday dress. Enforced by power, this reality complies with Michel Foucault’s idea of productive power. He argues that the effects of power should not be described in negative terms, and abandons the idea of power that “excludes,” “represses,” “censors,” “abstracts,” “masks,” or “conceals.” Instead, power produces reality, its objects, and rituals of truth (Foucault 1991, 194). In that context, socialist fashion was in its most natural habitat at the socialist fairs where both Western and domestic goods were on show. Domestic fairs were an opportunity for the regimes to compete with the West on their own territory, and to set the rules of the game. Carefully choreographed displays of beautiful clothes that were not available in the shops perfectly suited their ontological status. The East German state advertising agency, DEWAG, employed one



FIGURE 4.21

"Belgrade Fashion Babylon," Italian outfits (above), Croatian outfits (below), at World Fashion Fair, *Globus*, Zagreb (1960, no. 69).

thousand people in its Leipzig branch who were responsible for the design of the Leipzig fairs,⁷⁹ suggesting the highly representational role of this biannual event. The catwalk at the Leipzig international fair had been a meeting point with Western fashion since the mid-1950s.⁸⁰ As the daily *Berliner Zeitung* lyrically stated, the fair was always the most convenient stage for a “short rendezvous with Frau Mode.”⁸¹ As their race to catch up with the Western lifestyles grew in speed, the socialist countries displayed more extravagant dresses, big hats, high heels, and costume jewelry in Leipzig, year after year. French, Dutch, Belgian, and Swedish clothing companies arrived in Leipzig with trade on their minds, only to be confronted by a display of socialist fashion that was not affected by the market. While the West was always represented by specific clothing companies, the socialist fashion presentations were mainly state-orchestrated. When, rarely, the East and the West took part in the same fashion shows, the style of socialist dresses was carefully orchestrated in an attempt to defeat the Western clothes. For example, the 1961 international fashion show in Leipzig included the Soviet Union, East Germany, Poland, Hungary, Holland, Sweden, and France. Its finale, engaging all the participants, revealed the highest representational level of socialist sartorial ambitions.⁸² Reporting on that fashion show, the Soviet *Zhurnal mod* quoted the East German daily *National Zeitung*’s praise of Soviet fashion:

*ODMO has shown a lot of fabulous overcoats and ensembles, restricted in color (mainly beige), and daily dresses made of wool with beautiful rose patterns. Spectators were especially charmed by the dress “Russian Song” (bright red roses on a dark blue background), inspired by Russian ethnic motifs, and accompanied by a scarf with a fringe. Another dress with a pattern of golden-yellow roses on a green background was accompanied by a green overcoat. A black astrakhan coat with a grey mink collar, an astrakhan jacket with cuffs in white mink, and a sport overcoat in white lambskin demonstrated the abilities of the Soviet fur industry.*⁸³

Socialist fairs thus permitted real contact with Western modernity, while the risk remained small in the spatially controlled and time-limited surroundings (fig. 4.21).

With their technologically up-to-date settings, which displayed attractive socialist goods, the international fairs organized in socialist countries enabled comparisons with both Western consumer goods and goods produced by socialist companies for a specific fair or destined for export. This approach was questioned in the Yugoslav media: “Why can we not find these wonderful clothes in our shops? We can only hope that, one day, our companies will export to their own country as well.”⁸⁴ Such concerns were often raised in the relatively liberal Yugoslav society. The Zagreb-based daily *Narodni list* (People’s newspaper) challenged the fashion show by the clothing company Nada Dimić at the Zagreb international fair in 1957.⁸⁵ What was the purpose of presenting house robes, morning dresses, and swimwear in modern colors and attractive prints if they never arrived in the shops, asked the newspaper, and continued: “In fact, Nada Dimić does not manufacture these clothes but obviously produces just a couple of prototypes each year, with fashion shows in mind.”⁸⁶ The

journals also reported that even textile supplies suffered terrible delays, and that fabrics presented at the fairs would arrive in the shops only at the end of the season.⁸⁷

In Hungary, the media's praise of the export success of the domestic industry and its admiring descriptions of desirable and attractive goods at fair displays were also increasingly challenged. *Nők lapja* quoted female visitors to the Budapest international fair in 1968: "We really hope that the goods will appear in the shops and that we will not need to walk our legs off looking for them."⁸⁸ The regimes knew only too well that they could not offer such exclusive dresses to every woman, but they needed the dresses' luxury, smoothness, and elegance in order to compete with the West. When realized as an object, socialist fashion was perceived as a piece of art rather than as a commercial product to be worn, even at the end of the 1960s. The Budapest *Fair Chronicle* stated:

The visitors are practically walking in the halls and gardens of world-famous museums or Renaissance palaces. As we enter the pavilion we glimpse the facade of the Louvre. In front of this shop dummies represent the cotton industry. To the sound of a gong the two dummies rise, a designer and a model step up to the platform. The former improvises in full sight of the public and dresses up the model by winding pieces of cloth around her body. When he is ready, he steps to the microphone and announces the manufacturer and the brand name of the cloth he has worked with. After a deep gong the light goes out and color fashion films run on the screens. . . . One can find here a novelty as well: the mannequin dummies stand on 2.5-diameter discs. There are control tables hidden in the flower-beds surrounding the exhibition and the visitors can spin the mannequins by pushing the buttons. The mannequins take two slow turns to display the dress they wear. An illuminated sign indicates the producer company's name. At the location of last year's fashion show four paternosters work with a mannequin in each box. The elevator moves the dummies between the two floors.⁸⁹

Such extravagant displays obviously tried to divert the consumers' attention from the real problems with dress in socialist countries. The enthusiastic public applauded the fashion show, according to *Nők lapja*, but also asked when those dresses would arrive in the shops. The answer was: "Soon."⁹⁰ At their own fair, which attracted fourteen hundred participants from thirty-six nations to Budapest in 1968, the Hungarians could compete only with representational dress.

East Germany started to hold the Berliner Modewoche (Berlin Fashion Week) in 1958. The first event, which took place in the Berlin Sports Hall and attracted twenty thousand people, consisted of a large exhibition of outfits produced by textile companies in contemporary styles, including trapeze and sack dresses. In addition, a series of catwalk shows were held, as well as numerous meetings between fashion professionals and members of the audience. The Fashion Week culminated with a grand Fashion Ball. Besides getting a chance to talk to designers from DMI and the clothing industry, the public was invited to watch dresses being made, from drawing to final product. All these outfits were, however, only prototypes which

did not enter mass production.⁹¹ Loudly announced, the Berlin Fashion Week was supposed to take place twice a year, but was quietly abolished in 1962 after only a few seasons, as the contrast with everyday reality had become too obvious.⁹² On the other hand, public interest in fashion grew, fueled by visits to such fairs, easier access to Western fashion magazines, and also by the occasional visits of leading Western fashion designers to the socialist capitals. After Dior presented his latest collection in Prague in 1966, the Czech popular women's magazine *Vlasta* commented that Christian Dior produced everything that a modern woman needed, from clothes to perfumes, cosmetics, and fashion accessories.⁹³

But the most serious, officially orchestrated, direct meeting with Western fashion took place at the International Fashion Festival, held in Moscow in 1967. The festival was a unique event and was intended to demonstrate that the socialist system had caught up with the West in fashion. The Moscow festival hosted fashion shows by top Paris houses Coco Chanel and Christian Dior with their latest collections. By this gesture, the Moscow Festival acknowledged changes in Western fashion, and allowed them to be shown on the domestic catwalk. Organized by the Soviet ODMO, the Moscow Festival presented both Western and East European collections, as official socialist fashion suddenly dared to compete with Western fashion trends, at least in a festival context. The Soviet *Zhurnal mod* announced in its editorial: "Twenty-four countries told us about their current life through clothes and fashion. We visited the streets of Paris and Rome, Tokyo and New York, Stockholm and Oslo, Prague and Warsaw, Berlin and Bucharest, Madrid and London. We not only visited streets, but also the homes, the countryside, and parties."⁹⁴ However, the centralized way of proposing and approving fashion trends within the socialist world never changed. In order to present their unified vision at the Moscow International Fashion Festival, the socialist countries had met beforehand at their own fashion congress in the Bulgarian city of Varna. *Zhurnal mod* commented on their presentation on the catwalk of the Moscow International Fashion Festival: "The SEV countries presented very integral collections, which reflected fashion trends for 1968. East Germany, Romania, Hungary, Poland, the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia presented collections using the principles laid down at the last meeting in Varna."⁹⁵

While apparently incorporating new trends, socialist fashion was supposed to develop a new sartorial style that would fulfill the laws of classical beauty and harmony (fig. 4.22). Socialist fashion would then escape the constant change of decadent bourgeois fashion and become as eternal as classical art. The poster that the Polish graphic designer Roman Cieslewicz designed in 1959 for the central fashion institution *Moda Polska* perfectly encapsulates the image of timeless beauty that the central fashion institutes sought for their works. While Cieslewicz's use of the modernist technique of photomontage corresponded to the regime's desire for modernity, the heroine of his poster—the Egyptian queen Nefer-titi—firmly positioned Polish socialist fashion in an eternity infused with classical values. Socialist fashion maintained the stiffness of formal dress codes well into the 1960s, a decade after Western fashion left them for more relaxed and youthful styles (fig. 4.23).

FIGURE 4.22

Dress design, dress department
at the Prague Academy of
Applied Arts, *Tvar*, Prague
(1957, no. 5).

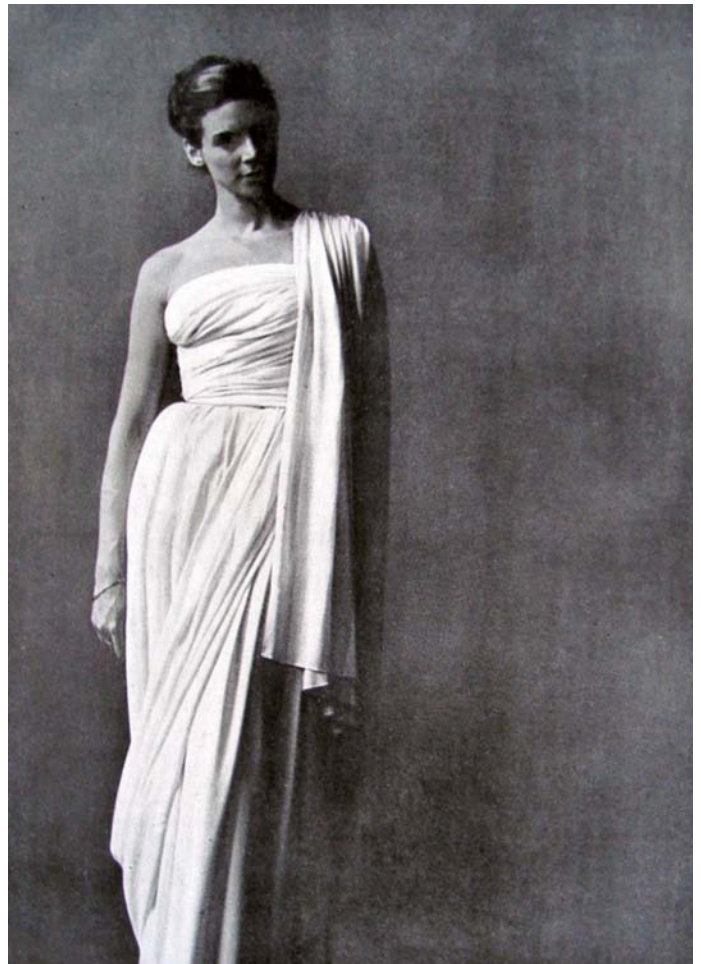


FIGURE 4.23

Roman Cieslewicz, poster
for the Polish central fashion
institution Moda Polska, 1959.



Socialist Fashion: A Prisoner of Time

Socialist fashion existed within a different time frame from conventional fashion time, which engaged in regular, and often radical, seasonal changes. In an article published in *Neues Deutschland*, the East German party leader Walter Ulbricht admitted that socialism always lagged behind the latest Western fashion trends. He said that socialist producers would not begin to advertise pointed shoes until a year after they had been fashionable in Italy, by which time some other fashion, such as broad shoes, would have become the latest fashion in the West. His fuming statement, “We just cannot keep up with running behind,”⁹⁶ pointed toward the main problem of socialist fashion. The centrally organized field of official fashion production was not only an economic phenomenon; time itself was differently inscribed on socialist fashion than on Western fashionable dress. Socialist fashion was a prisoner of time. The annual collections designed within the socialist central fashion institutions condensed real time into an ever-repeating controlled cycle, similar to the one that Jean Baudrillard observed in his analysis of collections of antiques: “And no doubt that is the collection’s fundamental function: the resolving of real time into a systematic dimension. . . . Indeed it abolishes time. More precisely, by reducing time to a fixed set of terms navigable in either direction, the collection represents the continual recommencement of a controlled cycle” (Baudrillard 2005, 102). The slow and controlled socialist world could not deal with change in fashion because, as a system, socialism was disturbed by the discontinuity of time. The socialist predilection for stability led to the design and production of conventional, repetitive clothes.

When reporting changes in Western fashion styles, socialist women’s magazines would produce nervous reports that revealed the system’s atavistic fear of change: “Fashion was never so moody as in the last couple of seasons. Several fashion trends appeared and disappeared in a short time, and women welcomed only the simple and elegant options that suited them. There were bits of such options in previous trends. Anyway, the latest fashion, the sack-style dress, will hardly find any admirers among women, although fashion designers insist that a woman was never as elegant as in the sack dress.”⁹⁷ While this negative report was published in the Croatian daily *Večernji vjesnik* (Evening reporter), the women’s magazine *Svijet* carefully announced that women would wear “reasonable” sack dresses. However, even that cautious prognosis was expressed in an article with a vigilant title, “Fashion Does Change but It Does Not Make Sudden Leaps” (fig. 4.24).⁹⁸ This fear of discontinuity was applied to both future and past Western fashions. The field of socialist fashion was permanently on the defensive against historical references, as they disturbed its ideological and organizational structure based on the nationalization of previously existing fashion establishments and the central control of all clothing and textile factories.

There was no similar contradiction between structure and history in Western fashion. Attacks on the sack dress in the Western fashion press in the late 1950s acknowledged that it was created by the same designers who had launched previous trends and would launch new ones again next season. Writing about French haute couture, Pierre Bourdieu observes that the field of fashion production has a structure that is the product of its earlier history



FIGURE 4.24

"Fashionable Sack," *Svijet*,
Zagreb (1958, no. 9).

and the principle of its subsequent history (Bourdieu 1993, 136). In contrast, the socialist concept of time attempted to negate both the preexisting structure and the previous history of fashion. In “A Fashion Letter from Rome,” the Hungarian *Nők lapja*, commenting on the latest fashion trend for black lace, reported that “the designers have brought back those old lines which might have been nice in their own time, although not very comfortable. But today they seem anachronistic . . . what is shown in the great salons is not wearable for the workingwoman. . . . We hope that this unfavorable and not very tasteful fashion will be short-lived.”⁹⁹ In an article about a fashion show that *Svijet* had organized with Žuži Jelinek, the magazine announced that changes had been avoided in devising the fashion trends for the new season: “As fashion for the coming spring and summer season is overwhelmed with enormous changes, the outfits at our fashion show were cleverly designed. The middle ground was applied between this year’s and last year’s fashion. All outfits are adjusted to our women and to our circumstances; if our ready-to-wear industry accepts them, we can claim in advance that our women will be dressed very nicely and tastefully.”¹⁰⁰

Rapid and uncontrolled fashion changes were resisted the most in those countries with completely centralized fashion production, which rejected the free market. The article “Fashion Travels” published in *Rabotnitsa*, for example, began with the statement that fashion was born in Moscow, within ODMO, and claimed that instructions about the length of skirts and the shape of stiletto heels came directly from the Kuznetskii Most.¹⁰¹ But the artistic director of ODMO, L. F. Turchanovskaia, denied that her institution imposed changes and dictated rules. Fashion used to be careless and despotic, stated Turchanovskaia, but the new 1966 season was going to be reasonable and nondictatorial. She envisaged a practical, acceptable, simple, comfortable, but also more versatile fashion.¹⁰² In an article dedicated to the tenth anniversary of DMI, its artistic director, Katja Selbmann, also rejected false effects and searches for forced originality, and advocated “a balanced dress—classic in line, practical, modern and beautiful.”¹⁰³

When the opening toward the West started, fashion change became the most sensitive issue for the magazines and books on fashion, which began to offer ideologically appropriate explanations of fashion. In 1962, the Soviet author Olga Rusanova rhetorically asked: “Do we need fashion?” in her *Thoughts on Beauty and Taste*. While her answer was positive, caution prevailed, as Rusanova insisted that Soviet fashion designers should educate the masses in beauty and taste. Armed with adequate knowledge, the citizens would learn to say “no” to the latest fashion crazes which were bombarding them from the West. Preoccupied with uncontrollable change, Rusanova dedicated a whole section of her book to criticizing the phenomenon of the latest fashion craze, a practice that, she argued, had nothing to do with socialist fashion, which was devoted to the noble task of cultivating the culture of dress (Rusanova 1962, 152–157).¹⁰⁴ The concept of the latest fashion craze had to be addressed urgently because Soviet women were vulnerable to its siren call. Dreaming about the sartorial future of Communism, Rusanova did not see any fashion changes on the horizon (ibid., 158–165). In contrast to the Western practice of imitating the latest fashion trends, Communist fashion would fulfill individual tastes developed on the basis of aesthetic appreciation. The Czech Zdenka Fuchsová expressed a similar negative opinion of fashion crazes. As an

experienced prewar fashion designer who regularly traveled to Paris to learn about new fashion trends, Fuchsová knowledgeably called it “le dernier cri” (“the latest fashion,” but literally “the latest scream”) in an interview in 1958. Arguing from her influential position within the Czech central fashion institution, she commented that the latest fashion crazes did not work for Czech women. Fuchsová suggested that they knew how to be well dressed in a discreet, quiet way, and that they possessed inherent elegance that created harmony in their appearance.¹⁰⁵

When in the late 1950s change was ideologically recognized as a legitimate part of fashion practices, socialist fashion time started to move both forward and backward. In order to accept contemporary fashion, socialism first had to recognize the past of Western fashion. Yet socialist fashion time continued to tick along according to its own slow pace. Socialist fashion drew on an incredible range of quotations, which were neither stylistically interrelated nor related to the latest Western fashion trends. These arbitrary quotations could equally have been indebted to antiquity, to proper ladylike ensembles, to crinoline-style long evening skirts, to ethnic motifs combined with Hollywood glamour, and to an image of a sophisticated hostess dress (fig. 4.25). The choice of quotations from Western fashion’s historical reservoir was a significant element in the socialist return to fashion. The method resembled archeological excavation, as the “excavated” sartorial fragments were related to neither contemporary Western fashion nor socialist everyday dress. They lagged behind the latest trends in the former case, and were distanced from reality in the latter. In other words, the dresses displayed at the socialist fashion congresses adhered to the “synchronic or systematic level” of fashion and neglected the temporal, “diachronic” level. The otherness of socialist fashion only revealed its synchronic relationship with the ideological dictate of the day. On a practical level, these erratic quotation choices revealed the confusion of socialist fashion practitioners, who suddenly came into possession of Western fashion magazines and started to visit Paris fashion shows for the first time.¹⁰⁶ Professionally, it was impossible for them to catch up with Western trends after the long gap during which socialist fashion had been isolated from Western fashion practices due to political reasons. Though socialist fashion practitioners craved Western fashion, the strange fragments that they happened to choose from its reservoir led to the design of clothes that were traditional and pompous, precisely what the regimes wanted socialist fashion to look like.

At the same time, domestic ethnic quotations were not abandoned entirely. In the frozen Cold War atmosphere, the originality of socialist fashion involved the application of ethnic motifs to Western-style dresses. The Polish company Cepelia had been founded to promote folk art as an expression of the socialist ideals of collective creativity, but its 1962 dress collection moved away from that aim. Its use of richly embroidered ethnic motifs on long evening dresses presented an elitist sartorial style. Commenting on this dress collection, the magazine *Polska* noted that international recognition of Polish fashion would only follow from the combination of such stylized ethnic quotations with new dress lines, and emphasized that this approach was the only way to compete with French couture and the recent successes of Italian fashion.¹⁰⁷ Ideologically, the distorted use in socialist fashion of



FIGURE 4.25

Soviet collection at the Budapest
Socialist Dress Contest, *Zhurnal mod*,
Moscow (1955, no. 1).

the most disparate domestic ethnic styles and Western fashion quotations perfectly suited the socialist slow flow of time. In that sense, the Iron Curtain not only divided the two opposing political, economic, and social types of organizations; it was also a time barrier, and as long as it existed, the concept of time was geographically determined.

Occasionally, change was mimicked in the safe surroundings of representation. In the early 1960s the East German regime declared imminent reforms in the economy and in lifestyles, and the fashionable dresses promoted in *Sibylle* fitted into that ideological discourse. Dorothea Melis, a young graduate of the Berlin Dress Department at the Academy of Applied Arts, became *Sibylle*'s fashion editor in 1962. She secured the job on the basis of her graduate collection dedicated to fashion for young people, which had caused a sensation. According to Melis:

Sibylle's orientation toward haute couture proved to be pointless. Nobody needed haute couture in the first place, but it became even more useless at the beginning of the 1960s. My ideal woman was employed; she was highly intelligent, natural and free-spirited. Margot Pfannstiel, who was an economics journalist by profession but held a post of Sibylle's editor in chief at the time, called me for a meeting in October 1961. I clearly expressed my thoughts why change was needed. Pfannstiel said: "Well, I expect you to put your ideas into practice." It took me a year to build up my team of young photographers, graphic designers and stylists. I was also a stylist on the fashion shoots that Sibylle was producing. My idol was the French photographer Peter Knapp, and my bible was French Elle.¹⁰⁸

In her first editorial, Melis identified three groups of young women and the dresses that they wore: art students dressed in bohemian gear, romantic girls in ruffles, and the mass of young industrial and professional workers, who had neither the time for nor interest in dressing up, in unremarkable gray clothes.¹⁰⁹ As a young woman interested in fashion, Melis was attracted to the first two groups and their lively dress styles. Yet she was after not extravagance but modernist simplicity, and considered her mission to be to convert the third group into acquiring some sartorial savoir faire. In her wardrobe, Melis argued, a young woman needed a straight coat, a sporty raincoat, a little suit, a pleated skirt, a straight sport skirt, a casual pullover, a blouse, and a little festive dress. All these clothes should have classic cuts and should be made from quality fabrics, such as flannel, silk, cotton, and tweed.¹¹⁰ Photographers such as Arno Fischer and Roger Melis produced these urban sartorial visions in dynamic, grainy images full of movement. While socialist fashion had previously been depicted in the sumptuous surroundings of museums and palaces, its representation now moved into the street (fig. 4.26).

The young woman that Melis envisaged was a clever student, an ambitious professional worker, or an intelligent actress at the start of a brilliant career. Such an image perfectly suited the regime, which was no longer interested in promoting images of loyal but badly dressed female factory workers. It wanted to secure the loyalty of a new urban social group.



FIGURE 4.26

A coat designed by VEB
Quintett-Moden, Glauchau,
Sibylle, East Berlin
(1963, no. 1).



FIGURE 4.27

Deutsches Modeinstitut, model
presented at the thirteenth
International Fashion
Congress in Budapest, *Sibylle*,
East Berlin (1962, no. 2).



FIGURE 4.28

Polish salon Ewa, dress design,
Sibylle, East Berlin (1959, no. 3).

However, classic elements soon began to prevail over youthfulness in dress. The “little suit” turned out to be a clone of Chanel’s famous suit with a braid-trimmed loose jacket.¹¹¹ *Sibylle* published many versions of that Chanel classic in the years to come, which were designed either by MDI, other socialist central fashion institutions, or export clothing companies, or were produced by the magazine itself for its fashion stories.¹¹² However, *Sibylle*’s fashionability was tamed when the country entered a new cycle of economic recession and political stagnation in the 1970s (figs. 4.27, 4.28).

Dorothea Melis was not alone in her opinion that a Chanel suit was a modern classic.¹¹³ Croatian fashion designer Žuži Jelinek, who had learned her trade in prewar Paris working at the Nina Ricci fashion house, was especially inspired by Coco Chanel.¹¹⁴ In her postwar period, back in her Zagreb salon, Jelinek stayed true to the aesthetic conventions of Paris chic, which continued to rule French fashion throughout the 1950s. The weekly *Globus* announced in 1960: “Concerning her design style, Žuži Jelinek is our Coco Chanel. She says: ‘I hate overdressed women. Therefore, I suggest simple fashion to our women. Simple fashion is always elegant, and thus a woman that dresses simply but tastefully is always elegant.’”¹¹⁵

In the mid-1950s Chanel was already considered conservative by the Western fashion media because her seasonal collections did not present any significant changes to her well-established style. Moreover, she was challenged by newcomers such as Pierre Cardin and Andre Courrèges who brought radical novelty into Paris fashion imagery. Roland Barthes analyzes the big change that occurred in 1960 in the Paris fashion world by opposing its two main antagonists, Chanel and Courrèges. Barthes writes that Chanel chic could not stand “the look of newness,” and that a change in a “discreet detail” was the only distinction in dress it allowed for, while the revolutionary newcomer Courrèges advocated violent change in his radically new and youthful shapes of dress. Barthes emphasizes: “So, it is the notion of time, which is a style for one and a fashion for the other, that separates Chanel from Courrèges” (Barthes 2006, 106–107). Jelinek’s style matched that of the “classicist” Chanel and her eternal chic, which was, conveniently, the aesthetics that other socialist fashion designers also embraced. Although Coco Chanel might have seemed an unlikely comrade for her socialist counterparts, she was a natural choice because she was merely perfecting, season after season, the smart woman’s work suit that she had designed in the mid-1950s.

At that time, the ideological turn brought about a change in official attitudes toward fashion in the Soviet Union and the East European socialist countries. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, the encounter between socialist fashion and Western fashion brought a huge clash between the two systems of representations. Forced into a competition in everyday lifestyles, in which they lagged far behind the West, the socialist regimes suddenly had to try to produce their own version of socialist fashion. In the end, socialism failed to design and produce a new socialist dress that could have competed with the West’s fashionable dress. As Western fashion thrived, conforming to Barthes’s concept of the sleek and rich Myth on the Right, Khrushchev’s sharp turn toward the original austerity and modesty of the Myth on the Left failed, both as an aesthetics and as an attempt to significantly improve the supply in shops and the quality of goods.¹¹⁶

A black and white photograph of a woman standing, facing slightly to the right. She is wearing a wide-brimmed hat with a polka-dot pattern, a matching polka-dot dress with a dark belt, and a light-colored jacket. She is also wearing high-heeled shoes.

CHAPTER 5

FROM RED TO BEIGE

A Set of Rules

The emergence of new socialist middle classes helped to reconcile socialism to fashion. The new middle classes owed their appearance in the public arena to their tacit deals with the socialist regimes. They were expected to follow official rules on dress practices and social rituals. While these deals gave the middle classes visibility, they also provided them with a new socialist official taste, which combined the socialist values of modesty and moderation with the petit bourgeois values of prettiness and conventional elegance. Because the middle classes needed civilian clothes, women's magazines and etiquette books channeled the new policies on fashion and femininity to ensure compliance with the socialist rules of appropriateness. Starting in the late 1950s, the aesthetics of socialist fashion demonstrated the contradictory relationship between the concept of socialist good taste and the grandiose style of representational dress, which was established in Stalin's Soviet Union and survived throughout the socialist period.

Dressing Up the Socialist Middle Classes

The new socialist middle classes were composed of social arrivistes, members of the old bourgeoisie, and the petit bourgeois strata. They played two important roles. First, the regimes needed a loyal middle class to support the system once the revolution settled into quiet societal patterns. Second, the regimes required a large and relatively mobile social group that they could trust with the public performance of middle-class rituals, in order to compete more convincingly with the West. The nomenklatura could not serve such a purpose, as it secretly reveled in privilege and luxury. Its members practiced their rituals behind closed doors even when they were engaged in the same activities as the rest of the population. At GUM, members of the nomenklatura could purchase scarce fashionable goods using special coupons issued through invitations for a precise time and date.¹ One of its former members, Michael Voslensky, recalled in a memoir published after he defected to the West:

On the third floor of the GUM store there is a spetsseksia (a special department officially called Section No. 100), access to which is an exclusive privilege of the families of the highest dignitaries. Imported goods of excellent quality, the mere existence of which is unknown to the ordinary Soviet consumer, are sold there at low prices. Soviet products such as, for instance, magnificent furs that are obtainable at no shop that is open to the public, are also on sale. (Voslensky 1984, 238)

In contrast to the nomenklatura's clandestine enjoyment of expensive status symbols, the new middle classes were publicly encouraged to move into the socialist version of pretty and pleasing clothing. Once the private vices of the nomenklatura became public virtues, rules on appropriate style were disseminated so that every member of the new socialist middle classes could master them (fig. 5.1).

Tacit Deals

Consumption and fashion practices were legitimized through a series of tacit deals that can be traced between the respective socialist regimes and their nascent middle classes. In the Soviet Union, Khrushchev inherited Stalin's middle classes, but tried to reshape them to fit into his vision of the new modern society. Similar processes took place in East Europe in the 1960s, when the socialist regimes invented their own new middle classes. In his analysis of the political and social changes in socialist countries in the 1960s, Ken Jowitt argues that the relationship between each regime and society was changed from domination through terror to domination informed by symbolic manipulation. This was a more efficient and smarter form of domination, and politically it indicated that "the Party recognized the need to address the imbalances between the regime and society" (Jowitt 1992, 99–100). In place

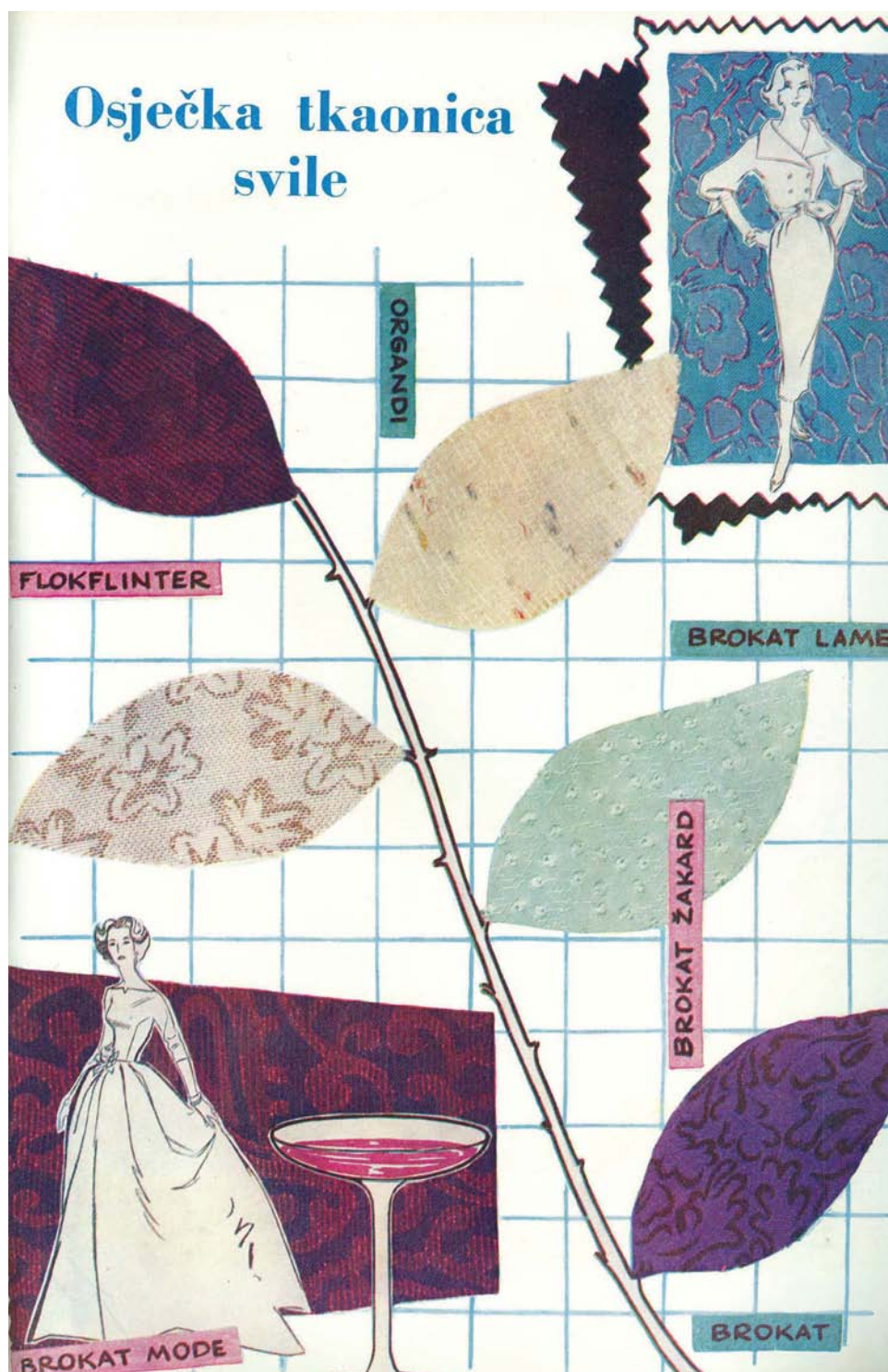


FIGURE 5.1

Advertisement for the Osijek
Silk Factory, *Svijet*, Zagreb
(1957, no. 11).

of open repression, the regimes bought the loyalty of their middle classes with material rewards and imposed a culture of propriety on them, drawn from the previously despised bourgeois culture. For example, although the personal styles of the Yugoslav president Tito and the Hungarian president János Kádár were extremely different—Kádár and his wife lived very modestly, while Tito and his wife adopted an opulent, grandiose style²—their economic reform efforts were the same. Both leaders raised the quantity and variety of products on offer and encouraged their middle classes to consume, in order to secure their loyalty for the socialist project. The unofficial, unwritten deal of the late 1960s and 1970s between the ruling elite and the Hungarian majority has been called “Pax Kádariensis” (Hankiss 1990). Under this deal, Hankiss argues, the Hungarian leadership assumed the role of a benevolent monarch, and allowed the socialist middle classes to develop with help from the “second society” of unofficial economies and unofficial social networks.³

In 1963, the East German regime introduced significant economic reforms, accompanied by a political thaw and an emphasis on raising the supply and quality of consumer goods. In Poland, Gomułka combined de-Stalinization with increased consumption and new liberties in the arts. A deal was also struck between the leadership and the middle classes in Yugoslavia in the 1960s which allowed even more freedoms to engage in consumption and travel abroad.⁴ Yet in all East European countries, an essential element of the deals struck between the regimes and their new middle classes was that freedom in consumer practices should not bring the nature of political rule into question.⁵ Emphasizing the role of consumption in post-Stalinist societies, Václav Havel claims that the system was “built on foundations laid by the historical encounter between dictatorship and the consumer society” (Havel 1985, 38).⁶

The regimes needed a loyal middle class that would mimic the advanced and sophisticated everyday rituals of their Western counterparts, without questioning the socialist system. The state therefore had a crucial role in the creation and dissemination of the culture, imagery, and etiquette of the new socialist middle classes, which became an important part of the cultured lifestyle. In his book *To Moscow and Beyond*, the American newspaper correspondent H. E. Salisbury recalls the pleasant small talk he exchanged with the Soviet trade minister Anastas Mikoian at a late-1950s diplomatic party. Mikoian had been very pleased by the compliments from some Swedish businessmen on the fine appearance of the Moscow citizenry: “It’s true. Our people do look much better. Their clothing has improved. In fact there are times when you can’t tell them from Americans.’ He turned to me. ‘Isn’t that true, Mr. Salisbury?’ I was happy to support Mr. Mikoian. ‘Yes,’ he said. ‘Today when you see them on the streets you can’t always tell the Russians from the Americans, especially in the summer’” (Salisbury 1960, 48).

By the early 1960s, it seemed that the Soviet middle classes were catching up with their Western counterparts in their appearance, at least on the streets of the capital. In contrast to the secretive nomenklatura dress codes, the middle classes’ sense of proper attire was paraded in public, and their smart looks suggested that they were getting better at sophisticated rituals. While the new middle classes successfully acquired professional skills through rapid schooling, they struggled to acquire other middle-class attributes and knowledge,

FIGURE 5.2
Advertisement for the
department store White Swan,
Tvar, Prague (1958, no. 4).

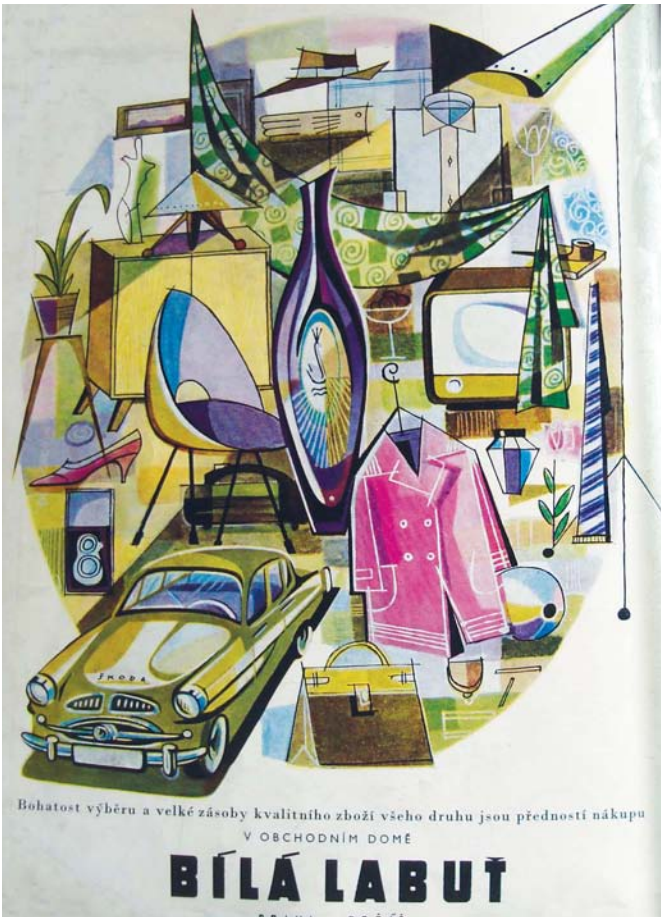


FIGURE 5.3
"Meeting at the Leipzig Fair"
(dresses called "Martini,"
"Cortina," "Margarita,"
"Symphony in Gold"), *Zhurnal
mod*, Moscow (1956, no. 3).



from good manners to sophisticated taste in clothes or home decorating. In her book *On the Culture of Dress*, L. Efremova offered advice on appropriate dress for the theater, concerts, work, home, dancing, walking, and the beach (Efremova 1960, 10–37). Varying in tone between gentle recommendations and strong disapproval, Efremova advised her readers that attention to detail was essential, and that women should not wear taffeta and moiré evening wear at work. Luckily, Efremova wrote, fashion had moved toward functional and easy-to-wear shapes. The book's illustrations presented attractive dresses and ensembles that perfectly suited sophisticated urban rituals.

A whole new culture began to be presented in the media. Recipes for exotic cocktails accompanied images of smart new dresses in fashion magazines, while advertising promoted desirable products that accompanied a modern lifestyle (fig. 5.2). Advertisements were filled with fast cars, TV sets, streamlined furniture, and women in evening wear made of brocade or drinking cocktails in dresses called Martini, Cortina, Margarita, Symphony in Gold, Solferino, Five o'clock Tea, Camellia, and Chrysanthemum (fig. 5.3).⁷ The fact that those rituals, and the dresses that accompanied them, belonged to bourgeois culture no longer worried the regimes. Acting as a cultural agent for the state, Žuži Jelinek, the owner of a Croatian private fashion salon, was enraged to find large quantities of an ugly orange wool fabric in the state textile company she was consulting on the patterns, colors, and quality of their products. In her new educational role of enlightening the state-appointed managers, and eager in her mission to bring a dash of style to the masses, Jelinek acted swiftly: "I advised them not to produce any more of that horrible color. . . . If a fabric in that ugly orange color was not to be produced at all, customers would be forced to choose a nice beige color and would slowly get accustomed to it. After some time, the customers will refine their taste and they would themselves be shocked by the idea that they could have previously worn something that ugly" (Jelinek 1961, 139).

The Importance of Proper Advice

The state-controlled media and the books on etiquette that started to appear offered a safe educational context in which inappropriate fashion desires could be disciplined and refined, for the new socialist middle classes comprised disparate social strata, mainly those with only a limited knowledge of culture and of its diversified practices.⁸ Each area and each situation was covered: travel, work, home, beach, dancing, balls, theater premieres, political meetings, the First of May Parade, birthday parties, dinner, lunch, weddings, funerals, walks in the park, and picnics. Some rituals were old and some were new, but a new consensus on proper dresses, the right colors, and suitable accessories, had to be reached about all of them.

An article on "Making a Visit, at the Theater, at the Concert," published in *Zhurnal mod* in 1958, reflected the regimes' urge to dress up their newly installed middle classes in civilian clothes (fig. 5.4). The strong pedagogical content demonstrates that the members of the middle classes possessed little information about refined sartorial and everyday rituals:

We have repeatedly written that the choice of clothes should follow the basic rule: time of day and particular circumstances. During the day, for example, it is not appropriate to pay visits or receive guests in a smart evening dress. On that occasion, a strictly elegant day dress is appropriate: of short length, high or just slightly open neckline, with short or long sleeves. . . . Such a dress is not served by loads of jewelry, it is better to restrict oneself to one piece: a brooch, a hairpin or a bracelet. Shoes, hats and gloves should be matched with such a day dress. Of course, everything should be coordinated according to the color. Let us repeat: a dress that you wear during the working day should be modest and restrained in appearance. Matinéés, parties at 1 pm, cocktails and “a la furshet” parties from 5 till 8 pm, require a smarter day dress and a little elegant hat, which you are not supposed to take off. Evening dress, made from an expressive and decorative fabric that is not worn during the day, is necessary for grand receptions, theater premieres and gala concerts, especially if they happen after 8 pm. Although not necessary, the evening dress is characterized by a lower neckline, short sleeves and a long skirt. Silk or lacy gloves can be added to such a dress; their length depends on the length of the sleeves: the shorter the sleeve, the longer the gloves, and the other way round. A small elegant handbag accompanies evening wear. Light open shoes with high heels, or medium heels for older women, serve those occasions; shoes can be made from silk, brocade, or from golden or silver leather. Day shoes are not appropriate for evening wear. Evening wear may be embellished with jewelry. Here, a sense of measure is welcome, as always.⁹

As the official Soviet fashion publication through which the system's policies on fashion were channeled, *Zhurnal mod* was quite clear about the regime's intentions in its editorial note, “Clothes for Going Out and Formal Occasions,” which preceded the article itself. The magazine exploited the usual tactic of the socialist press in promoting new state policies: the citation of readers' letters. Claiming that their editorial team had received a number of letters with queries about the proper way to dress for various occasions, *Zhurnal mod* suggested “a set of rules that have been established long ago, and are accepted almost everywhere,” and emphasized, “We recommend that our readers follow them.”¹⁰ The editorial also drew a precise profile of the strata that needed to dress up:

Naturally, these questions interest our readers but, in a broader sense, they also appeal to certain groups of the Soviet people who attend official and government events on public holidays, who meet foreign visitors at international competitions and academic congresses, who go to parties at embassies and consulates, and attend theater premieres, and, especially, family celebrations—weddings, birthday dinners, and high school graduation parties.¹¹



FIGURE 5.4

"Making a Visit, at the Theater,
at the Concert," *Zhurnal mod*,
Moscow (1958, no. 3).

This description of an ideal member of the new class, along with other similar articles appearing in socialist women's magazines of the same period, emphasized the institution of everyday culture for the middle classes.

Few details were left out of socialist magazines and etiquette books aimed at the middle classes. A dress had to be appropriate but pretty; functional but not extravagant; feminine but not vulgar. The Hungarian etiquette book *How Should We Behave?* clearly distinguished between good and bad taste through practical advice. Members of the socialist middle class were reminded of even the most trivial details: "However harmoniously and well combined the elements of dress, if a button is missing, or a stain spoils the beauty of a dress, we could hardly say that this woman is pretty" (Oblath 2000, 45).¹² Another Hungarian etiquette manual smoothly combined three elements—good taste, modesty, and patriotism: "Hungarian women and girls are famous for their fine clothing all around the world. . . . They are women who are real artists in variety. Sometimes they work miracles with a skirt that is too wide or tight at the waist, and with one or two pullovers, or a scarf. They say: if money is scarce, add an idea!" (Réczey et al. 1960, 252). In Yugoslavia, the first socialist etiquette book appeared in 1963.¹³ It advocated a similar set of values: tidiness, appropriateness, and a modest style in dress. A clear division was made between clothes for work, for home, and for going out; and the last category was further divided into morning, afternoon, and evening attire. Severe rules of propriety applied to evening dress: it could be made from taffeta, brocade, lace, chiffon, or organza, and accompanied by fur, jewelry, gloves, and a special pair of shoes. But at the same time, it was suggested that "at a certain point, the imagination should be restrained" (Zelmanović 1963, 52), whether for financial reasons or out of pure self-control.

The socialist etiquette books that appeared in the 1960s were more similar to manuals on good manners from the mid-nineteenth century than to the Western etiquette books of the late 1950s. Just as the nineteenth-century manuals had accompanied the rise to power of a new middle class in the West,¹⁴ the socialist manuals sanctified the introduction of a new social class and the invention of social rituals that would be suitable for it. In contrast, Western etiquette books of the 1950s legitimated the social adjustments of societies that were returning to conventional societal patterns following the end of World War II.¹⁵ The socialist civilizing process was linked neither to democratization nor to the openness of society, but rather reflected a reconfiguration of state power over the individual. New desires were emerging, of which fashion and dress were among the most important. Still, fashion had to subject itself to the rules of appropriateness before it could be politically recognized. As Pierre Bourdieu argued, "concessions of *politeness* always contain *political* concessions" (Bourdieu 1977, 95). Since the socialist civilization process was channeled through dress and good manners, women became the main recipients of the new approved taste.

Back to Femininity: Socialist Ladies Wear Hats and Gloves

At the end of the 1950s, the image of a proper lady in a smart ensemble that appeared in socialist women's magazines was a visual testament to the official reconceptualization of gender. The official approval of the traditional female ideal reflected the failure to create a new socialist woman, a failure that became even more obvious during the opening to the West with its sophisticated rituals of femininity. The regimes' failure to generate a new everyday socialist culture, as well as the repression of the market and its changing depictions of femininity, contributed to the official reintroduction of gender difference in its most traditional and fixed form. The column "School for Clothes" in the Hungarian *Nők lapja* demonstrates the process through which proletarian sartorial asceticism was carefully recoded into a controlled version of femininity: "Thus, do not dress in a scandalously different way from what is usual or acceptable in our society. The astonished glances will hardly ever express appreciation. Of course, don't go from one extreme to the other. A grey uniform is nothing to be proud of either; it marks a lack of good mood. A woman should start wearing a hat if it is well shaped, or put on a new dress if it makes her pretty and yet she can remain tasteful."¹⁶

An official reconceptualization of gender also took place in the other socialist countries. Reporting from the Cannes Film Festival in *Žena a móda*, a Czech male reporter was charmed by the beauty and grooming of French women. After that, he looked at Czech women from a new perspective: "It has occurred to me many times that over the past ten years we have greatly wronged our women. A remarkable dress and perfect harmony of color was for us eccentric and we rarely said: let us give our women all that is the best and the nicest because they deserve it!"¹⁷ Along similar conciliatory lines, the Polish magazine *Polska* acknowledged that a woman could be happiest while attending a fashion show: "Did I hear you say this is not happiness? ... But you are frightfully mistaken. If you could have seen the flushed cheeks of women viewing the summer fashion show at the Ewa shop, if you had seen their sparkling eyes, animated gestures, heard their short gasping whispers, suppressed cries of delight—then you would say with me: 'This is the way a happy woman looks!'" (fig. 5.5).¹⁸

Initially, the creation of the new woman was part of a larger project to master nature. Fashion had been completely rejected, as it belonged to a decadent and frivolous bourgeois lifestyle that had nothing to do with the serious and hard-working masculine world into which the socialist superwoman was allowed to enter. In the later phases of socialism, the reintroduction of traditional femininity opened a space for fashion. Against the backdrop of the Cold War, the return to traditional femininity promoted in socialist women's magazines presented a new, softer, and sophisticated face of socialism to the West (fig. 5.6). Yet once women were again allowed to be playful, they lost their place in the serious male world.

As the new visual construction of femininity took place, even political activists officially abandoned their ascetic style: "The opinion that the politically engaged woman worker does not need to take care of her dress style is wrong. On the contrary, her appearance will be more appropriate if she is dressed tastefully but simply. A lot of people take an interest

FIGURE 5.5
Fashion show, salon Ewa,
Polska, Warsaw (1957, no. 8).



FIGURE 5.6
Modeli sezona, Moscow
(1961, no. 1), cover.



in her looks, many women have her as a role model and she has to give an example by the way she dresses" (Jelinek 1961, 115). So, what was the most appropriate style for a political activist? It was a simple but elegant jacket and skirt made out of a good-quality fabric in colder months, or a cotton chemise dress in the summer, or an ensemble consisting of a little blouse with three-quarter sleeves combined with a pleated skirt. A little feminine hat, short white gloves, and a string of pearls or a brooch could be added in more socially demanding situations, such as at official party meetings, formal parties, cocktails, important anniversaries, and the First of May Parades (ibid.). The Polish *Świat Mody* promoted the same style in a fashion spread dedicated to spring fashion, showing simple princess-line dresses accompanied by strings of pearls and kitten heels (fig. 5.7).¹⁹

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, when the back-to-femininity campaign was at its fiercest in the Soviet Union, women were actively discouraged from wearing trousers. Khrushchev's mass mouthpiece on lifestyle issues, the weekly *Ogonek*, advocated that only young women who were slender and tall should wear trousers, and preferably only at home.²⁰ In his 1962 travel book *House without a Roof: Russia after 43 Years of Revolution*, Marcel Hindus also reported that women wanted to wear trousers and shorts but were prevented from doing so, except at home (Hindus 1962, 377–378). The Soviet advice books on beauty, taste, and the culture of dress stressed that trousers jeopardized not only a woman's femininity but also her modesty. Because it did not challenge the traditional conventions of gender distinctions, the Soviet concept of femininity thus remained trapped in traditional practices. Women were required to divide themselves between their obligations in the all-important male world and in the traditional women's world, from motherhood to dressing up.

The image of a coquettish young woman in a pretty dress chatting on a telephone in the photo-essay "Appointment at the National Theater at 7 pm," published in the Hungarian *Nők lapja*, perfectly embodied the new female ideal (fig. 5.8). The fashion story had a numbered script corresponding to eight pictures showing the young lady preparing for a date and choosing appropriate clothes to suit the occasion. She was feminine and elegant, and happy to please the man in her life. Her thoughts evolved around dancing, strolling through the park, and sipping coffee in a little café. Her billowing skirts were accompanied by hats, gloves, satin bows, tiny handbags, and jewelry. Moreover, all these fabulous clothes were produced by the central fashion institution RTV. The text reads:

- 1 "At seven o'clock? ... Yes, I will be there ..."
- 2 "Sure I will be there, but what should I wear? ... Big trouble ... But today I have the opportunity to put on not just my own clothes but also dresses by the Design Company for the Garment Industry. Well ..."
- 3 "If we do not go anywhere special, just for a little walk or for a coffee in a small café, I may put on this pink-and-purple-polka-dot suit with this tiny blouse. But ..."
- 4 "If we are going for a stroll at Margit Island, I'd better dress in this silk afternoon dress with a wrap ..."



FIGURE 5.7
"Spring Fashion!," *Świat*
Mody, Warsaw (1962, no. 51).

- 5 *"Although for that occasion a printed nylon dress with a tiny waist and a huge skirt might fit better, as it is great for dancing..."*
- 6 *"Or should I rather choose this black-and-white silk-like dress with white ornaments. It's quite discreet accompanied with white gloves; he does not like me dressing too loud..."*
- 7 *"Again, for the same reason, he would be glad to see me in this skirt with a transparent blouse. What do you think about it?"*
- 8 *"So, what do we think? Each outfit is very nice, but to give one more idea: how about putting on the very same nice white skirt and silk blouse in which we have seen you at the telephone? Anyway, have a nice evening."*²¹

Women's media began to publish columns on appropriate dress and proper behavior. Some of the regular columns in socialist women's magazines included "The ABC of Good Manners," "Fashion Lexicon," and "A Pocket History of Fashion" (*Svijet*), "School for Clothing" (*Nôk lapja*), "Sibylles Modebonbon" and "Little Fashion School" (*Sibylle*), "Only for Women" (*Świat*), and "Women, This Is for You" (*Ogonek*). Their educational texts and images insisted that only simplicity is elegant and beautiful. These texts were also regularly accompanied by paper patterns for home dressmakers so they could recreate the simple attire recommended by the columnists.

Besides advocating simplicity, socialist women's magazines also promoted the wearing of hats because they were perceived as a shortcut to ladylike traditional femininity. An article in *Svijet* gave information on the history of women's hats, describing the shapes and fabrics of various historical styles.²² Advice was also given on the proper style of hat for different types of faces,²³ and new styles of appropriate hats were publicized in women's media and picture magazines.²⁴ Hats were supposed to be accompanied by the right gloves and handbags, and failure to maintain a proper ladylike style was criticized (figs. 5.9, 5.10).²⁵ Repetition played an important role in imposing the newly approved feminine image. The new rules were simple and were preached by socialist women's magazines ad nauseam: shoes and handbags should match, more than three colors should never be used in an outfit, be pretty but do not overdress. As Françoise Thom remarks in her analysis of the Soviet type of "Newspeak": "Repetition here is more than a pedagogic process. Stylistically, it incarnates the invincible clarity and supreme authority of the idea" (Thom 1989, 85).

The education of women in appropriate fashion and grooming started early. In 1960, the Soviet advice book *To You, Girls* treated fashion in the context of classical Russian literature, urging its young female readers to see Natasha Rostova of *War and Peace* and Anna Karenina as their role models in dress: "The first ball! An unforgettable array of memories for the rest of your life! Remember Natasha Rostova! There is a moment in each girl's life in which she puts on her first evening dress with the same palpitation like Natasha" (Suda-kevich 1960, 219). While choosing a dress for their high school graduation ball, girls sought advice on colors, cuts, and types of fabric. Such advice, informed by the aesthetics of modest socialist good taste, was offered in the manual, but girls were also reminded that Anna



FIGURE 5.8

"Appointment at the National Theater at
7 pm," *Nők lapja*, Budapest (July 1958).



FIGURE 5.9
Svijet, Zagreb
(1956, no. 9), cover.



FIGURE 5.10

Modenschau, East Berlin

(1962, no. 61), cover.

Karenina had never sought to attract attention with her clothes; her ball gowns were simply a frame through which her beauty and personality could shine. Soviet girls should follow that example: “Do not try to attract attention with your dress. Be interesting and refined yourself” (ibid.). Ideologically, the new Soviet ritual of a high school ball dress had little to do with contemporary Western fashion trends, for socialist ball dresses were inspired by the luxurious and ultrafeminine gowns worn by the tragic, aristocratic Russian literary heroines.

East German women also received advice about style from an early age. During her visit to the Pestalozzi School in Berlin’s Hohenschönhausen area, DMI’s artistic director Katja Selbmann counseled the pupils on the “do’s and don’ts” of fashion in an informal conversation: “Soon she had her listeners smiling at their little weaknesses. Quickly, the youngsters understood that skin-tight riveted jeans or flamboyant satin and simulated leather jackets betray very poor taste. The girls were also given a lantern slide demonstration on such subjects as the badly matched partnership of circular cut skirts and blousy tops.”²⁶ By the end of the 1950s, Western fashion had already abandoned traditional femininity in favor of youthful styles that challenged the gender roles of both women and men.²⁷ In contrast, throughout the 1960s socialist women were relentlessly educated into being “proper ladies” through major politically dictated campaigns.

Grandiose or Modest: Two Aesthetics of Socialist Official Taste

Since the new aesthetics of middle-class dress had to be decided quickly, promoted through the media, and applied in everyday life, socialism was forced to borrow its new official dress style from the reservoir of bourgeois culture, just as Stalinism had done. In contrast to the Stalinist preference for grandiose excesses, the official socialist discourse now appropriated another stylistic expression of the petit bourgeois: good taste.²⁸ While Stalinist grandiosity promoted an outdated concept of luxury, petit bourgeois good taste tied in with the socialist concept of modesty. Both concepts demonstrated the predilection in socialist fashion for synchronicity rather than diachrony. Although modesty was officially promoted, and luxury was supposed to be banished along with Stalinism, the outdated concept of luxury was never actually abandoned. In each country, both modesty and luxury were promoted through the different types of women’s magazines.

Socialist Grandiose Taste

Besides informing the style of socialist fashion in its representational version, such as the collections presented at the socialist fashion congresses, the aesthetics of grandiose taste also informed the exclusive outfits displayed on the catwalks of domestic and international trade fairs, and the dress styles published in elitist fashion magazines such as the Soviet *Modeli sezona*, the Hungarian *Ez a divat* and *Pesti divat*, the Czech *Žena a móda*, and the East German *Sibylle*. The concept of luxury in socialist fashion relied on the formal and socially rigid dress codes of Western fashions up to the mid-1950s. Such an obsolete



FIGURE 5.11

"Festive Dresses" (detail), *Modeli sezona* (Autumn/Winter 1956–1957).

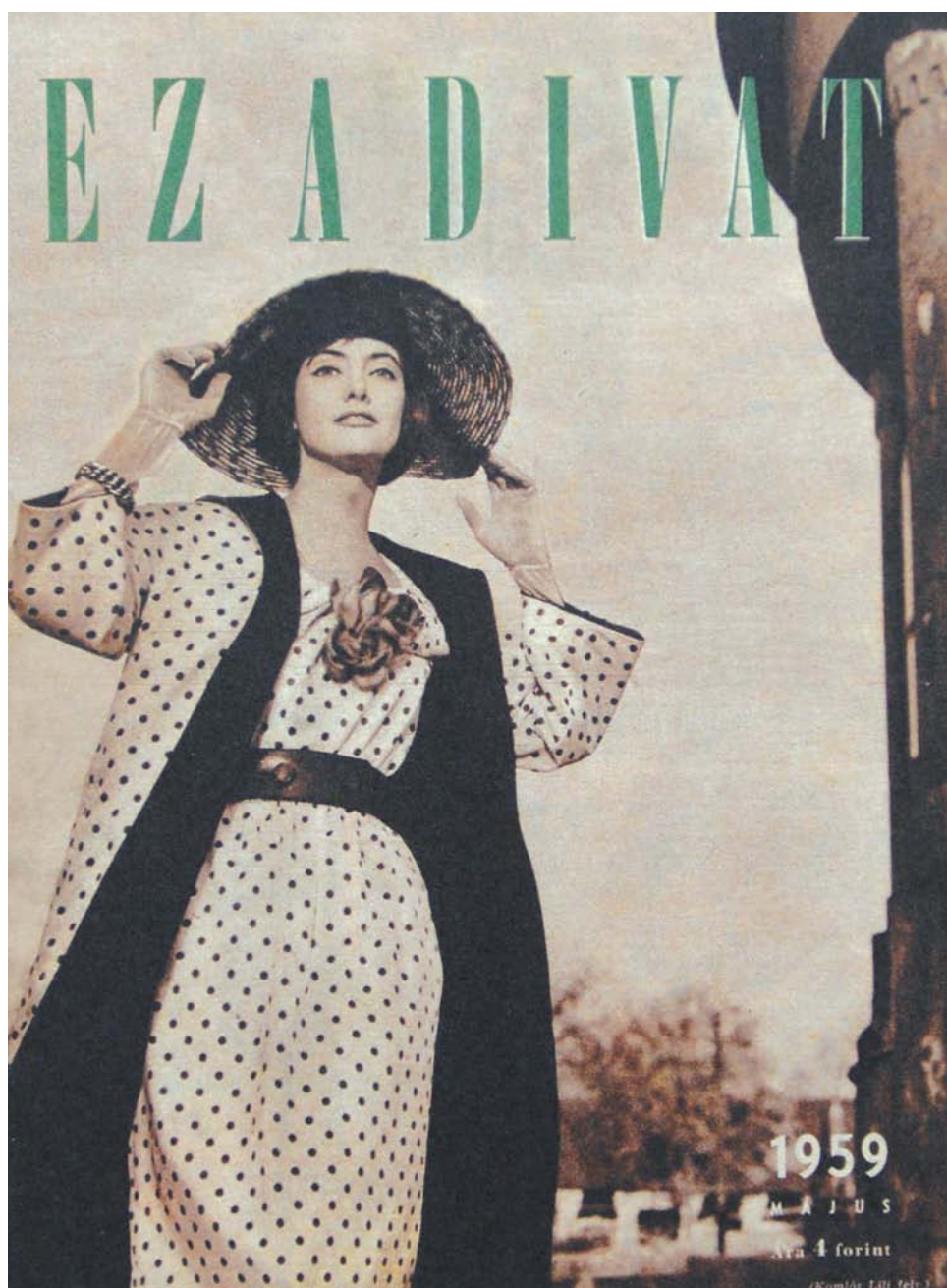


FIGURE 5.12

Ez a divat (May 1959), cover.

aesthetics was due to political isolation and cultural autarky, and eventually developed into a self-conscious, carefully preserved choice (figs. 5.11, 5.12).

These grandiose dresses were welcomed by the ruling bureaucracies, as they implied that changes within fashion production were not needed. Indeed, the political relaxation of attitudes toward fashion did not mean that the regimes wanted, or could possibly risk, changes in existing practices, for those changes might bring their rule into question. The field of fashion production could not be organized on principles different from those on which the whole system was organized. Trends were centrally imposed on textile and clothing companies, which, due to the hierarchical levels of decision making, caused delays in promoting new styles and diluted their quality. When journalists from the American newspaper *Christian Science Monitor* visited the Czech Institute of Material and Dress Culture (ÚBOK) in 1967, they discovered that the central institution imposed trends on the fashion designers in the Czech textile and clothing factories. The experts from ÚBOK were the only ones in the industry to travel to the Western fashion capitals and to possess Western fashion magazines. The directors of the institute observed that fashion designers in state-owned companies would be fools if they did not accept the new trends proposed by their institute, because they were receiving “the very latest trends and for free!”²⁹

The timelessness of grandiose taste mirrored socialism’s concept of slowly moving time. In their vigorous attempts to present their reality as the best possible world, the highly bureaucratic socialist leaderships showed they had internalized the Stalinist logic of mythical perfection. Outdated luxury was supposed to illustrate stability and continuity in socialist fashion. As the mouthpieces of the central fashion institutions, the elitist fashion magazines perpetuated the mythical as reality by publishing images of traditionally luxurious dresses. Rooted in a totalitarian vision, their glamour was prescriptive. Because the aesthetics of these dresses was defined within the boundaries of the traditional, “classic,” and chic, this style forbade any transgression and prevented any emotional relationship between the individual and a dress. The glamour of socialist fashion was state-imposed and authoritarian.

The elitist fashion publications existed in their isolated, myth-oriented world until the final days of the socialist system, answering only to the ideological requirements of the highest authorities. In contrast, because they dealt with everyday reality, the mass women’s magazines were allowed, in a quiet way, to discuss problems in current ready-to-wear production. By the end of the 1950s, when the regimes decided to communicate to the masses the new official style uniting modesty and prettiness, they delegated the responsibility of disseminating that information to the mass women’s magazines.

Socialist Good Taste

The second stylistic expression of socialist fashion was socialist good taste. While grandiose taste had a highly representational role, socialist good taste provided a guide to everyday life by merging proletarian style with petit bourgeois “good taste.” Their mutual characteristics, such as modesty, blandness, appropriateness, and comfort, contributed

toward its aesthetics, but socialist good taste also incorporated two new categories—prettiness and elegance. At the end of the 1950s, these categories were needed to soften the asceticism of proletarian style. Socialist good taste was an ideal medium to filter, neutralize, and slow down fashion changes, and to offer safe sartorial choices to those who were new to the sophisticated rituals of dressing up. While luxurious dress fulfilled the representational role of socialist fashion, the modest but pretty dress was presented in the women's mass magazines as the perfect choice for members of the socialist middle classes (fig. 5.13).

The Soviet popular weekly *Rabotnitsa* admitted that socialist fashion's grandiose dresses were unrelated to the shoddy clothes sold in the shops. In the mid-1960s, the magazine regularly interviewed designers from ODMO about new trends,³⁰ but also discreetly acknowledged that the style and quality of ready-made clothes were still very poor. The designer-correspondent E. Semenova shared with her readers a story about how her clever young neighbor bought a ready-made dress and, being very unhappy with its bad quality and standardized style, embellished the dress herself.³¹ Leaving grandiose-style dresses to the mythical world of the elitist fashion publications, the women's mass press in other countries also covered everyday sartorial problems. The elitist outfits presented in the East German magazine *Sibylle* stood in sharp contrast to the popular approach to attire by magazines such as *Frau von heute* and *Praktische Mode* (fig. 5.14). Similarly, the Hungarian and Yugoslav mass magazines, such as *Nők lapja* and *Svijet*, borrowed images for their fashion pages from the French *Femme d'aujourd'hui* and *Femme pratique*, and the German *Burda* and *Neue Mode*, whose style calmed down the latest trends and disciplined them into conventional and easily copied versions.³²

Beginning in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s, socialist good taste forged a truce between socialism and fashion, so that the new middle classes could be dressed up. In the 1960 operetta *Gisela's Fair Hit*, the Leipzig international fair is the setting for a metaphorical sartorial struggle between extravagant Western style and socialist good taste. Gisela, a young fashion designer employed in the clothing factory VEB Berliner Schick, designs a simple but pretty four-piece dress collection. In its review of the performance, the magazine *Sibylle* called Gisela "a woman of the 1960s" because she recognized that a modern socialist woman wanted simple tasteful clothes. In the operetta, Gisela's capsule collection is an instant hit with all her colleagues in the factory. However, the director of the VEB Berliner Schick, Robert Kuckuck, tries to prevent the promotion of Gisela's design at the Leipzig fair, because he wants to present his own collection on its catwalk. In contrast to Gisela's tasteful dresses, the director's collection, apparently inspired by a visit to Paris, includes clothes that resemble decadent costumes from a risqué Parisian nightclub. Gisela's final victory on the international catwalk symbolizes the victory of socialist good taste (fig. 5.15).³³

In 1964, the Yugoslav magazine *Svijet* decided to introduce an award for ready-to-wear dress. The potential winner had to "be of simple but original cut, to be elegant, practical and capable, with little alterations or with the addition of some details, to serve different purposes. Obligatorily, it has to be produced from domestic fabric and for the domestic market, and be executed in a solid and correct way. These criteria result from many letters by you, our readers, letters that daily arrive at our magazine. In them you ask us to suggest

FIGURE 5.13

Outfits from the eighth International Fashion Congress, held in Moscow in 1957 (Czechoslovak on the left, East German on the right), *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1958, no. 1).

FIGURE 5.14

"Summer Time," *Praktische Mode*, Leipzig (1963, no. 6).





FIGURE 5.15

Gisela's fair collection, *Sibylle*,
East Berlin (1960, no. 5).

to you the type of clothes which would serve not only one occasion but be suitable almost for any time of the day, naturally, with slight changes.”³⁴ And which dress won? A little navy princess-line dress, with a satin collar and tiny satin-covered buttons which, in the true style of socialist good taste, tamed Western fashion trends through the application of the socialist concepts of practicality and modesty.

Once neutralized with simplicity and functionality, previously despised categories, such as prettiness, femininity, and elegance, contributed significantly to the aesthetics of socialist good taste. The little black dress fulfilled the new socialist criteria of “timeless” elegance, and was presented as the latest fashion. “A lady in black is the most fashionable,” declared the Polish *Świat Mody* in its fashion story dedicated to the new sartorial favorite.³⁵ The little black dress appeared to be an efficient shortcut to Western smoothness and femininity, yet it also seemed simple, functional, and democratic. In her book *On the Culture of Dress*, L. Efremova called it a universal outfit, and offered a drawing with three options for the same dress. The office version was accompanied by a pretty blouse with dots and a wide belt; a short, smart jacket completed a leisurely walking variant; and the most elegant version, adorned with pearls, stole, and black gloves, was meant for the theater. *Rabotnitsa* also suggested that its readership accessorize a little black dress with different details, such as a lace collar and cuffs, a silk blouse with a ruffle, a tiny fur detail, or a white collar. These details were not only supposed to embellish the dress; they also stressed its versatility and functionality.

The little black dress was also the most praised sartorial choice in the 1960s Yugoslav media (fig. 5.16). At that time, the most stylish event in Yugoslavia was the annual music festival held in the coastal town of Opatija. Featuring vocalists crooning about love to the accompaniment of a large orchestra on the stage of a grand hotel, the music festival emulated the contemporary Italian festival held in San Remo. The dress codes also corresponded to the Italian style, albeit with moderation. Reviewing the 1964 Opatija festival, *Svijet* stressed that each female performer and presenter wore a little black dress. The magazine described the dresses as being simply adorned with “roses and only roses—white, green, red, pink, blue, and black.” The little black dress was a winner, because “its simplicity proved once more to be elegant and beautiful.”³⁶

In *Rabotnitsa*, women’s desires for adornment were cooled down with a barrage of advice, which recommended caution and a sense of measure. Should a woman wear an extravagant brooch on the lapel of her coat? A young woman, Klara Chebanova, wrote to the magazine in 1959 that she had seen a woman on the street dressed like this and had discussed the appropriateness of her dress with colleagues at work. While some thought that jewelry suited women, others considered a huge brooch an excessive statement. Chebanova was confused, and wrote an agitated letter to *Rabotnitsa* to resolve the dilemma. The answer was given in the title of the magazine article: “Bejeweled? Yes, but Not Excessively.”³⁷ Moderation was the key concept in the new stylistic synthesis of modesty and prettiness. While the regimes encouraged the middle classes to copy the everyday rituals of their Western counterparts, they simultaneously tightly controlled them. There were clear boundaries between the categories of appropriateness and inappropriateness, and socialist good taste had to operate



FIGURE 5.16

"Festive Black Dresses,"
Svijet, Zagreb (1956, no. 11).



FIGURE 5.17

"Sibylles Modebonbon," column,
Sibylle, East Berlin (1960, no. 1).

within those boundaries (fig. 5.17). By preaching socialist good taste, the socialist mass magazines and manuals on fashion tried to prevent any transgression. The socialist middle classes had many rules to learn, and they had to learn them very quickly:

There are different approaches to the search for beautiful combinations of colors in dress. The simplest principle is the combination of various shades, or different intensities of the same color. For example, it is suitable to combine a sky-blue suit with dark blue hat, blue handbag and blue shoes. Or, if you have a yellow or beige coat, then brown details are appropriate. . . . Such combinations are always beautiful and they do not require a refined feeling for color, or any knowledge of the color palette. The second simple principle of color combination in dress is the use of neutral tones, i.e., white, black, and gray. In these variants it is easy to achieve a lot of effects, without the risk of appearing tasteless. . . . The most difficult and interesting principle in the combination of colors is contrast. For example, a very risky combination of red and green can be beautiful, if the colors are taken in the right proportions. This also applies to combinations of yellow and blue, sky-blue and pink, red and sky-blue, and so on. It is better to combine two colors in dress, but we can even approve the combination of three colors, if the third one belongs to the family of tones of one of the first two in the combination. (Sudakevich 1960, 222)

Under the title “Simplicity! Simplicity! Simplicity!” Anna Ziółkówna also offered advice on color combinations in her column “Only for Women” in the Polish illustrated weekly *Świat*. She advised, for example, that pink and gray was a safe combination, as well as red and blue and black and white, while pink and green, violet and burgundy, and light blue and green should never be paired together.³⁸ Similar articles on color choices appeared in all the women’s mass magazines. *Svijet* approved all shades of green and blue for redheads and women with dark hair, while blondes were recommended purple, pink, blue, and red. But caution was most necessary in the combination of colors. Any creative and individual intervention was forbidden in advance: “Never mix these colors in your wardrobe: purple with red, yellow with orange, blue with purple, red with pink, and brown with black and navy.”³⁹

In the 1960s, *Rabotnitsa* consistently reminded women that dresses made from brocade and velvet were evening wear and were not an appropriate sartorial choice for work, implicitly admitting that the practice was widespread. The magazine also attacked another widespread women’s habit: arriving at work without makeup and wearing hair curlers, and then performing their beauty routines in public. While modesty in dress was expected at the workplace, a controlled tidiness was the new recommended look for the home.⁴⁰ When Khrushchev came to power, the ugly truth was exposed about the Stalinist mythical vision of an ideal superwoman who was dressed smartly both at work and at home. It was officially recognized that women carried a double burden, and the regime promised to help them with modern appliances at home, a better choice of consumer goods in the shops, and



FIGURE 5.18

"At Home," *Zhurnal mod*,
Moscow (1958, no. 3).

more efficient childcare. In return, working women were expected to take better care of their looks at home (fig. 5.18).

Women's magazines declared war on the messy housewife who spent her time at home in a scruffy and stained dressing gown, wearing rollers in her hair and a pair of old slippers. The magazines acknowledged that the traditional Russian dresses, the *sarafan* and *khalat*, covered the overweight bodies of overtired women, who were too exhausted to care about their looks at home.⁴¹ In *Ogonek*, the Soviet woman was now envisioned in a well-equipped home of clean modernist lines in which she could move about easily in her aesthetically matching, simple and undecorated clothes. Numerous articles advised that the cut of dress meant to be worn at home depended upon what one was doing, one's company, and the time of day, taking into account the rules of moderation and prettiness.

Grandiose and Modest: Fighting Fashion Together

Zhurnal mod filled its January 1958 issue with a luxurious photo presentation of the eighth socialist fashion congress in Moscow. In contrast, *Rabotnitsa* covered the event with a short text and a few small drawings of dresses from the congress.⁴² The elegant dresses paraded at the socialist fashion congresses, accompanied by sophisticated accessories and luxurious evening wear, belonged to a completely different world from the one shared by the millions of readers of *Rabotnitsa*. The drawings of pretty and modest dresses that were published in *Rabotnitsa* and *Ogonek* embodied the new official aesthetics. Although they could easily have been mass-produced, unlike the prototypes of extravagant dresses made from luxurious fabrics, these simple and functional dresses never appeared in the shops in the required quantity or quality. Why did modesty, in the new form of minimalist socialist modernity, not materialize in the Soviet Union, despite the huge politically imposed campaign and its appealing aesthetics which acknowledged prettiness and elegance? Dress was just one element in Khrushchev's process of de-Stalinization of the fine arts, applied arts, and everyday objects, which embraced architecture, furniture, and kitchen appliances as well as clothes. He planned to leave Stalinist overdecoration behind, because the space age was supposed to be served by an uncomplicated and practical style in dress that would be easy to manufacture on a mass scale. Yet, while Khrushchev's political project to weaken ideological pressures was welcomed by the intelligentsia and artists, his project to reconstruct Soviet industry failed. When Khrushchev denounced Stalin, he met an even more dangerous enemy: the bureaucracy. In planned economies, a powerful bureaucracy governed all hierarchical levels of decision making, and it would not condone any change.⁴³

Since the mid-1950s, the West had been able to provide cheap and fashionable dress for the masses, thanks to technological advances. In the East, the socialist textile factories fell behind their Western counterparts both technologically and stylistically. The West effectively defeated socialism in everyday culture and lifestyle, and Khrushchev was powerless to do anything about it. His political efforts exhausted themselves in the mass magazines and specialized applied arts magazines, such as *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* (Applied art of the USSR), and failed to significantly transform everyday life and the production of its

objects.⁴⁴ Simple, functional dress never had a chance. There were too many decision makers, organized in boards, committees, and working groups which depended upon and overlapped with each other, and the taste of that powerful set of bureaucrats was informed by grandiose aesthetics. Khrushchev was foiled by this bureaucracy, which benefited from the maintenance of a rigid hierarchical structure at all levels of society, and drew huge privileges from the status quo.⁴⁵ Neither did he succeed in overthrowing grandiose style, which had held sway as the official aesthetics since Stalinist times.

Khrushchev's ideologues correctly called that aesthetics *petit bourgeois*, and argued fiercely against it. His aesthetics, which united functionality with modesty and prettiness, differed entirely from Stalinist stylistic extravagancies. However, Khrushchev's aesthetics, expressed through socialist good taste, also belonged in its own way to the *petit bourgeois* world, and gained political approval because it was ordinary, anonymous, moderate, and banal. Its visual blankness could be called "untroubled prettiness." René König recognized the *petit bourgeois* essence of socialist good taste: "The union of the beautiful and useful, which was sometimes called functionality, is in no way humanistic, but, in the best of ways, 'petit bourgeois,' as it can embellish everyday life without a trace of transgression, at the same time damaging any impulse toward real creativity" (König 1988, 272).⁴⁶

At the end of the 1950s, socialism absorbed a random collection of half-knowledges and well-worn pronouncements on "true" style. Such a style was an easy choice, which required minimal previous knowledge or sophistication on the part of the unskilled textile worker or the new socialist consumer. Fashion was permitted in socialist countries at that time, but only through the controlled and dull *petit bourgeois* style of socialist good taste. Developing under a bureaucratic gaze, socialist fashion respected rules of appropriateness, comfort, practicality, and moderation. The conservative nature of socialist good taste was willingly accepted by both the socialist regimes and their new apolitical middle classes, as it offered the appearance of democracy without challenging the status quo. In a book called *The Secret of the Well-Dressed Woman: The Rules of Attractiveness and Good Taste*, Žuži Jelinek stressed that a woman did not need to feel obliged to wear the latest fashion. The fashionable woman "is in danger of becoming a fashion doll, and nobody appreciates that. Fashion fads change so fast that it is very difficult to keep up with their pace. The most fashionable dress will be out of fashion before you even have the chance to put it on three times" (Jelinek 1961, 91).

Generally, there are significant differences between changing fashions and "good taste" in Western dress, mainly related to the latter's aesthetic neutrality and its slower changes. Good taste manifests itself in the Western dress codes of different strata of society, from the upper class to the lower middle classes. All the versions of "good taste" share its main characteristics: anonymity, neutrality, strictness, conformity, prettiness, and slow change.⁴⁷ Regarding the rate of change, socialist good taste had similar characteristics. Both versions of "good taste," *petit bourgeois* and socialist, were almost immutable, and equally afraid of unpredictability and individuality. The socialist regimes reserved the right to eventually change dress standards. In that way, they introduced a slow movement in socialist fashion meant for their middle classes, but always within their master narrative of modesty,

simplicity, and appropriateness. At first glance, it might seem that socialism had turned in desperation to old-fashioned petit bourgeois sartorial codes when the luxurious prototypes that had served the representational needs of socialist fashion from the mid-1930s could not clothe the new middle classes in real life. In contrast, petit bourgeois sartorial codes were ready-made and could be used immediately. But the reasons that socialism adopted the petit bourgeois style, and not some other style, were also rooted in socialist poverty, the lost traditions of dressmaking, and the previous rejection of past fashion styles, both domestic and foreign. Without its own fashion heritage, socialist fashion found the easiest applicable reservoir of fashion quotations in petit bourgeois style.

Both versions of socialist taste, grandiose and modest, served the official politics of style throughout the 1960s. The grandiose version testified to the continuity of the system and the power of the bureaucratic stratum. On the other hand, by advocating modesty in the cut and quality of fabric, and by suggesting creativity within standardization, socialist good taste fulfilled the new stylistic synthesis of modesty and prettiness. Though initially socialist good taste was introduced in order to oppose Stalinist grandiose style, these two stylistic expressions continued to support different aspects of socialist ideology and were promoted through different sets of women's magazines. In the end, both traditional luxury and socialist modesty served the same ideological need: to fight contemporary Western fashion trends and the concept of change that they would have introduced. Socialist good taste was, however, crucial to socialism's official recognition of fashion. Smoothly blending proletarian asceticism and petit bourgeois prettiness, socialist good taste was the agency through which fashion was eventually reintroduced as a legitimate practice in the socialist countries.



CHAPTER 6

THE DECLINE OF SOCIALIST FASHION

At the end of the 1960s, the central fashion institutions began to adopt the latest Western fashions, using them to create aesthetically updated dresses. However, these dresses were only displayed at socialist fashion congresses or as illustrations in fashion magazines. In parallel, the ethnic motif continued to be used in socialist fashion as an imposed ideological quotation. In the 1970s and 1980s, when the central fashion institutions were officially encouraged to promote change, they still controlled and tamed Western fashion trends within their highly bureaucratized structure. Embedded in this rigid hierarchical system, the state fashion designers and magazine editors mediated between Western and socialist fashion, but were unable to introduce genuine changes in the design and production of clothes. Socialist fashion was thus fatally wounded by self-imposed causes. In addition, the regimes gradually lost control over the sartorial choices of their middle classes due to their improved connections with the West and easier access to information on Western fashion trends. The increasingly self-confident members of the middle classes shunned socialist fashion in their search for clothing more appropriate to their new social standing, thus critically contributing to its demise.

Central Fashion Institutions: Taming Fashion Trends

The socialist presentations at the 1967 Moscow International Fashion Festival recognized Western fashion trends by abandoning the traditional socialist aesthetics of the previous decade. The jury acknowledged Chanel's presentation as the best current trend, but the Grand Prix was awarded to the Soviet designer Tat'iana Os'merkina from ODMO for a dress called "Russia." Chanel's classicism was politely pronounced old-fashioned in the editorial of *Zhurnal mod* covering the festival:

Classical form, classical show, classical music. Chanel presented this new collection abroad for the first time. On the catwalk, despite its enormous size, there was only one model wearing clothes, moving slowly to the music by Mozart and Lully. Discreet makeup, just highlighting her eyes, smooth hair. The style of Chanel outfits (the artistic hand of this outstanding French woman has already become a style) is well known all over the world. They are distinguished by their sophisticated taste, their eternal uninhibited elegance, and they are so refined that they seem almost old-fashioned.¹

The socialist central fashion institutions had started to show miniskirts and mini-shorts in their collections a season or two earlier, and the festival now gave its official blessing to that youthful trend (fig. 6.1). In a review of the Paris autumn-winter collections for 1966–1967, *Zhurnal mod* brushed aside the “old” French fashion houses which conformed to the traditions of the classical school of French elegance, and focused its admiration on “brave innovators” like Pierre Cardin, who presented youthful collections inspired by geometrical lines and space style.² Western space-inspired fashion trends were eagerly accepted by the socialist central fashion institutions. Their radical new imagery based on new shapes and proportions, with no references to past fashions, seemed the right choice for socialist fashion, which had long dreamed of inventing a genuinely original dress.

As part of the modernist tradition, Western fashion trends combine the new with selective elements of previous trends. As Ulrich Lehmann observes: “In order to become the new, fashion always cites the old, not simply the ancient or classical, but their reflection within its own sartorial past” (Lehmann 2000, xx). In contrast, socialism ideologically rejected the past of bourgeois fashion. Thus, such a pure novel style as space fashion could easily be incorporated into the socialist master narrative. The socialist enthusiasm for this trend was clearly linked to the achievements of contemporary Soviet science and to the socialist victories over the West in the space race. In 1964, Valentina Tereshkova had been launched into the stratosphere in a cosmonaut suit, demonstrating to the world the equality of Soviet women and the technological achievements of Soviet space science. In contrast to all previous Western trends, a cosmonaut-inspired dress could be perceived not only as the latest frivolous craze but also as a socially progressive style. Soviet officials had been visiting Paris couture shows since the late 1950s. As a result, the increasingly better educated



9, 10. ПОЛЬША



11, 12. ЧЕХОСЛАВСКАЯ



FIGURE 6.1

Outfits at the International Fashion Festival in Moscow: Czechoslovak (top left), Hungarian (top right), Polish (below left), and Czechoslovak (below right), *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1968, no. 2).

and skilled designers working in ODMO were able to produce perfectly executed prototypes that reflected contemporary Western fashion trends. In the late 1960s, they excelled in designing domestic versions of space fashion. The Czech ÚBOK also adopted “astro-fashion,” but translated its minimalist style into ladylike trouser suits. Czech craftsmanship in cut and finish was applied to the pastel-colored suits, while the motorcycle goggles and helmet-style hats pointed toward the new space age (fig. 6.2).³

The Polish central fashion institution Moda Polska, under the creative leadership of Jadwiga Grabowska, had previously been loyal to Chanel’s classic aesthetics. In 1966, however, it showed a youthful collection inspired by Courrèges at the autumn Leipzig fair (figs. 6.3, 6.4).⁴ In the Yugoslav magazine *Svijet*, the column “The Latest Fashion Craze” presented Paco Rabanne’s tiny metal minidresses in 1968. *Svijet* commented that they resembled medieval armor, but nevertheless pronounced them incredibly stylish.⁵ As these examples show, information on Western fashion could no longer be suppressed while youth culture and rock music were rapidly gaining momentum in the mass media around the world. A heavily made-up girl, her black hair a mess, screamed the message “Hello, the World Wants Informal Fashion” in the Czech *Žena a móda*.⁶ Reporting that the youth generation rejected formal dress, the magazine presented a younger style of suits on young women with fashionably loose long hair and eyes lined with black kohl. In the ÚBOK interpretation, the new styles consisted of elegant outfits with short jackets in the Jackie Kennedy mode, sewn from sporty fabrics such as tweed and checked woolens (fig. 6.5).

New, more youthful images of women’s styles also appeared in a 1964 issue of *Sibylle* that offered sophisticated variations on the little black dress. Its fashion editorial, “Sibylle Modelle,” claimed that a little black dress emphasized a woman’s personality, charm, and beauty.⁷ The accompanying images showed young women in casual poses, their hair coiffed in deliberately untidy bobs, and their eyes made up with thick black eyeliner and false eyelashes (fig. 6.6).

Despite these shifts toward fashionability beginning in the mid-1960s, textile and clothing factories were unable to produce fashionable goods or to supply the shops with greater variety. While the Soviet ODMO presented the most fashionable designs, the supply in the Russian shops was at a lower level than in other socialist countries (fig. 6.7). Those fashionable dresses continued to exist in the mythical reality of the international trade fairs and fashion congresses.

The Hungarian daily *Népszabadság* described the 1969 socialist congress held in Budapest:

After a week of symposia, the meeting of the working committee on Dress Culture of the COMECON Standing Committee on Light Industry, which was being held in Budapest, ended on Monday with a plenary meeting at which fashion designers and representatives of the fashion industry from seven countries—Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, GDR, Romania, the Soviet Union, and the host, Hungary—exchanged views. Delegates from the participating countries demonstrated



FIGURE 6.2
"Astromoda," Žena a móda,
 Prague (1970, no. 7).

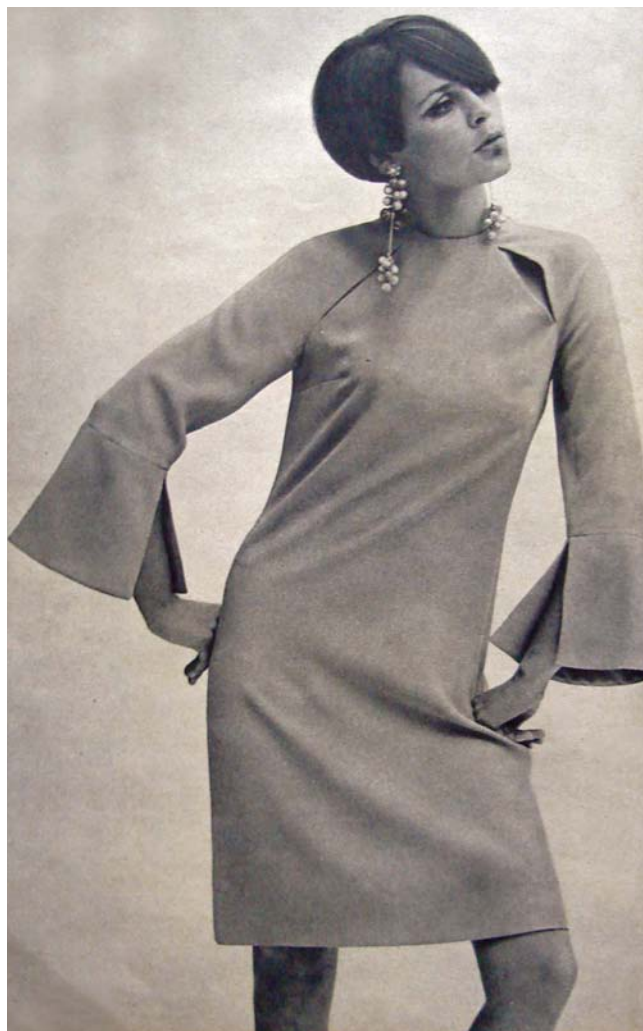


FIGURE 6.3
 Moda Polska at the 1966
 Leipzig fair, *Sibylle*, East
 Berlin (1967, no. 1).



FIGURE 6.4
Moda Polska at the 1966
Leipzig fair, *Sibylle*, East
Berlin (1967, no. 1).



FIGURE 6.5
"Hello, the World Wants
Informal Fashion," *Žena a móda*,
Prague (1970, no. 9).



FIGURE 6.6
 "Sibylle Modelle," column, *Sibylle*,
 East Berlin (1964, no. 5).

FIGURE 6.7
 "This Spring," outfits (from left) by
 S. Zaitsev, L. Telegina, G. Mecen,
 S. Zaitsev, L. Pavlova, *Zhurnal mod*,
 Moscow (1967, no. 1).



their 1970 fashion collections and textile samples, and exchanged brochures. The professionals who participated in the meeting of the Working Committee visited a number of plants on Monday, including the “1st May” Clothing Factory, the “Red October” Men’s Clothing Factory, the National Worsted Spinning and Weaving Factory, the “Hungaria Jacquard” Factory of the Hungarian Silk Company, the “Danube” Shoe factory, the Rákospalota Leather and Plastics Processing Company, and the Fashion Design Factory, among others.⁸

Formal discussions and endless meetings during the fashion congresses, and official visits by designers and officials from the central fashion institutions and the ministries of the light industries to model factories glossed over the insufficient and inadequate supply in the shops. While censoring everyday reality, socialist fashion congresses were actively producing another reality. The central fashion institutions were symbolically important for the regimes due to their ability to perpetuate representational dress within the field of socialist fashion. Over time, the central fashion institutions increased their staff, and their management of the fashion design process became increasingly more complicated. The Soviet ODMO, for example, employed sixty-six fashion designers, and engaged ever more managerial and administrative staff.

By 1974, the Hungarian central fashion institution, now called Magyar Divat Intézet (Hungarian Fashion Institute, MDI), employed over two hundred people in its three departments.⁹ MDI mediated between the state and the Hungarian fashion industry. As expressed in the ministry’s founding act, the tasks of MDI stretched to marketing, advertising, organizing exhibitions, participating in fashion presentations abroad, coordinating both domestic production and exports, disseminating information on the new fashion trends and technological developments, educating designers and managers within the clothing companies, and educating the general public in the culture of dress. When information about fashion became more readily available in the 1970s and Hungarian clothing companies started to export to the West on a larger scale, MDI intensified its activities, even choosing the buttons on outfits produced by the clothing industry and carefully coordinating the styles and colors of clothes, knitting, and shoes, in order to avoid stylistic clashes between them (fig. 6.8).¹⁰

In the late 1970s, the East German fashion historian Erika Thiel observed that the role of fashion designers was “to merge the ‘art of production’ with the ‘purposefulness of beauty’” (Thiel 1979, 194). By repeating the Stalinist misuse of Varvara Stepanova’s constructivist ideas, this statement shows that the official discourse did not change even in late socialism: socialist fashion still preferred science and technology to creativity and change. East Germany held a special place within the countries of the socialist bloc, as it was delegated to research the application of plastic in industrial design and man-made fabrics.¹¹ In the socialist media, plastic and nylon were perceived as the ultimate socialist materials—technological, modern, scientific, aesthetic, and able to satisfy consumer demands. In an attempt to impose itself as a world leader in the production of nylon, East Germany changed the internationally accepted name Perlon into Dederon, which evoked the name



FIGURE 6.8

Advertisement for the
Debrecin Fashion
Company, *Pesti divat*,
Budapest, 1973.

of the country—Deutsche Demokratische Republik. At fashion shows abroad, outfits designed by the Deutsches Modeinstitut (DMI) using Dederon and traditional Plauen lace were presented as unique products of socialist Germany.¹² Apart from Dederon, DMI was instrumental in promoting other man-made fabrics, such as Wolcrylon—a blend of wool and the synthetic fiber Polyacrylnitril.¹³ East Germany constantly connected its development of new synthetic fabrics to socialist progress. For example, Präsent 20, launched on the twentieth anniversary of the GDR, was praised as an ideal material for outerwear and as a versatile fashion fabric.¹⁴ However, as an extraordinarily static fabric, Präsent 20 was also an ideal metaphor for the country's stalled progress. The Hungarian women's weekly *Nők lapja* admired DMI because of its strong connections with the textile research institutes, especially in Karl-Marx Stadt: "Thus, the chemical industry has a very important role in the GDR's clothing production. That is why they export to every part of the world, including France. The main advantage is that each outfit is worked out scientifically. . . . The other secret is that everything is made out of nylon, but using a special methodology that allows air to circulate through the dress."¹⁵

Starting in the early 1960s, in addition to the well-established ODMO, another Soviet institution dealing with fashion, VIAlegprom (All-Union Institute for Light Industry Goods), gained in importance. Embedded within the highly bureaucratized Ministry of Light Industry, VIAlegprom acted through a highly organized structure, consisting of many sections covering wool, silk, cotton, linen, fur, man-made fabrics, weaving, knitting, fashion accessories, and professional clothes.¹⁶ Though the two institutions competed against each other, their tasks overlapped. ODMO was more dedicated to fashion design, while VIAlegprom was more closely connected to the textile and clothing industries. In 1989, VIAlegprom changed its name to the Center for Fashion of USSR, but its structure and mode of operating stayed the same. Its highly specialized experts coordinated all the design, production, and distribution of clothes at the national level. Their work consisted of numerous presentations and meetings with the representatives of industry and retail. Not one dress was supposed to be designed, produced, or sold without their input and approval. The process started with the experts on color and fabrics briefing the textile factories on the new trends. When the samples following those consultations had been designed, an exhibition would be organized at the Center for Fashion to present them, and the experts' jury from the center would choose the best textile samples for production. New dresses were supposedly sewn afterward only from the previously approved textiles. Experts on fashion design, construction, and cut coordinated the colors and styles of dresses, while another group of experts coordinated the technological side of the industry, advising managers on new developments in the textile and clothing industries.

Besides holding a commanding position as the chief coordinator of all national textile and clothing production, the Center for Fashion further exercised its power through the organization of annual artistic conferences for each of the industrial branches whose activities it covered. Those gatherings provided an opportunity for direct meetings between the representatives of industry, experts from the Center for Fashion and related artistic

institutions, and representatives of the Ministry of Light Industry. They were also an occasion for professional juries to review and judge industrial achievements, and to award prizes to the best factories. The Ministry of Light Industry also engaged the Center for Fashion to organize an annual wholesale trade fair, at which the center's experts facilitated meetings between factory managers and large retailers. The biggest buyers came from the state-owned Rostorgodezhda (Russian Organization for Trade in Clothing), which existed both at the national level and at the level of all the Soviet republics. Direct contracts were also brokered at these trade fairs between the factories and prestigious department stores, such as the Moscow GUM and the Univermag (General Department Store).

These many levels of decision-making and the administrative machine that still existed at the end of the 1980s slowed down fashion changes in the Soviet Union. Bureaucracy, the main enemy of change, took on a life of its own. The reformer Mikhail Gorbachev was as powerless in front of the immovable bureaucratic machine with his *perestroika* program as Khrushchev had been thirty years earlier. Even when the highest levels of bureaucracy, informed by *perestroika*'s entrepreneurial spirit, began to advocate fashion changes, little happened. The Ministry of Light Industry eventually instructed the textile factories to introduce a minimum number of new products because their managers had been too lethargic to consider making changes themselves. Lacking individual incentives, managers relied on the easy option of repeating the same patterns and fabrics in order to fulfill their planned production quotas effortlessly. In the new climate of change, the Center for Fashion's annual gatherings of experts and representatives of industry introduced special prizes for companies that introduced new fabrics. Change was also encouraged at the center's annual wholesale fairs in the late 1980s. Closely cooperating with the center's experts who acted as agents of change, the clothing companies produced pilot collections. The same experts tried to "enlighten" the wholesalers to recognize these novelties and to offer them to the mass market. Additionally, a regular fashion show took place at the Center for Fashion each week to improve the general public's taste in dress.

Indeed, the drive to educate citizens in the socialist culture of dress never disappeared. Catwalk shows became ubiquitous in the public arena, as everyone was now welcome to participate in the myth. Lavish dresses on the catwalks corresponded perfectly to the mythical reality of socialist fashion, both representationally and aesthetically (fig. 6.9). Valéria Kovács, a prominent Hungarian model in the 1970s and 1980s, recalls that fashion presentations of that period included trade fashion shows for company management and their Western business partners, seasonal fashion shows by the central fashion institute and private fashion salons, shows at the Budapest international fair, shows organized by the export company Hungarotex, local shows at department stores, and summer fashion shows touring small towns and villages that were organized by the central fashion institute and the state-controlled association OKISZ (Országos Kisipari Szövetkezet, the National Association of Craftsmen), which also included small fashion businesses.¹⁷ The element of entertainment became increasingly important in these shows. On International Women's Day on 8 March, the managers of some companies would treat their female workers to a



FIGURE 6.9

Valéria Kovács on the catwalk of Clara Salon in an outfit designed by Véra Nádor, Budapest, the late 1970s.

FIGURE 6.10

The Soviet Collection at the socialist fashion congress, *Moda stran socializma*, Moscow, 1985.



FIGURE 6.11
Deutsches Modeinstitut,
dress design, *Sibylle*,
East Berlin (1971, no. 3).

FIGURE 6.12
"First Summer Dresses,"
Žena a móda, Prague
(1977, no. 4).

fashion show, while others indulged their workers with a fashion show during New Year's celebrations. Such fashion shows followed the pattern of theater performances, both in their length and in having intermissions. Those which featured popular singers were always sold out, even though their tickets were more expensive than theater tickets.

Socialist fashion congresses continued annually until 1990. In the Soviet Union, the Center for Fashion was in charge of their organization, while the collection was designed and produced by a special atelier within ODMO (fig. 6.10). Similarly, the East European central fashion institutions—the Hungarian Fashion Institute, the Polish *Moda Polska*, the East German DMI, and the Czech ÚBOK—continued to design special collections for the fashion congresses. Burdened by state control exercised through the central fashion institutions, the dresses presented at these congresses remained within the mythical official discourse. As an essentially everyday object, ever-changing fashionable dress did not fulfill the timeless criteria that socialism required from its ideal objects (figs. 6.11, 6.12).

Slava Zaitsev and Socialist Fashion Designers

After graduating from the Textile Institute in the 1960s and 1970s, a group of professionally educated designers entered the field of Soviet fashion, many of whom were employed by ODMO.¹⁸ Designs by Slava Zaitsev, Tamara Mokeeva, T. Os'merkina, Galina Gagarina, and L. Telegina appeared frequently in *Zhurnal mod*, announced as ODMO's outfits. These designers were employed in a special experimental atelier, established to deliver representational dress for domestic and foreign fashion shows. Another sixty designers employed at ODMO were supposed to serve industry, overlapping with the Center for Fashion. ODMO eventually developed a commercial relationship with industry, to which it sold its industrial collection. The designers from that section produced four or five models each month as prototypes for industrial production that would be judged by the artistic council, which included the administrative officials from ODMO. The designers feared that day, being only too aware that an opinion such as "I would never wear something like this" could negate all their creative efforts during the previous month.¹⁹ While the designers from ODMO's experimental atelier enjoyed relative creative freedom and perks such as foreign travel and access to Western magazines, the designers of collections for industry were artistically frustrated because their carefully created prototypes were never mass-produced in their original version, even in the 1980s.

The most prestigious socialist fashion designers enjoyed their privileges in exchange for their obedient cooperation. After graduating with the best grade from the Moscow Textile Institute, Slava Zaitsev was appointed artistic director at the Experimental Technical Clothing Factory (*Mosoblsovnařhoz*) in 1962.²⁰ While there, he was asked to design a collection of *telogreika*, traditional, warm Russian work clothes. Zaitsev's intervention, which turned boring gray uniforms into a series of colorful outfits, drew the attention of *Paris Match*. In 1965, he presented his new collection in Moscow, together with Pierre Cardin, Marc Bohan (Dior), and Guy Laroche. Zaitsev's garments were immediately appreciated, and he was

promoted to the post of artistic director of ODMO's special experimental atelier. Although that was the most prestigious post a Soviet fashion designer could have hoped for, Zaitsev was recognized even more widely. The influential American fashion daily *Women's Wear Daily* selected him as the focus for an article entitled "Kings of Fashion," which covered the Moscow fashion meeting. The article was accompanied by images of Zaitsev with Cardin and Bohan. *Paris Match* also published an article on Zaitsev with the title "He Dictates Moscow Fashion" (fig. 6.13).

Western interest in the designer who dared to be different grew to the extent that Zaitsev was nicknamed the Red Dior. Zaitsev recalled: "The director was angry with me, and summoned me to his office, only to tell me: 'We do not have one Dior in this fashion house, we have sixty Diors here.'"²¹ Zaitsev was not allowed to travel to the West for twenty years but continued to be the most respected fashion designer at home, and his dresses continued to represent Soviet fashion to the rest of the world. His position was paradoxical. While craving Western fashion and trying hard to stay informed about the latest fashion trends,²² Zaitsev dutifully designed dresses inspired by Russian ethnic motifs; these dresses became a trademark of his style, and made his name both at home and abroad. In the West his dresses were admired because they fulfilled Western preconceptions of an exotic, faraway culture. At home they were appreciated because they did not capitulate to the Western concept of fast change, while their quotations privileged Russian historical imagery over Western fashions. His decorative ethnic-style dresses perfectly fitted the official ideology. Whether he was being calculating or intuitively understood that both the West and the East cherished Russian ethnic motifs, Zaitsev established himself with the collection called "Russian Series" in 1965. Representing ODMO, his ethnic-decorated dresses traveled the world from Canada to Japan, France, Italy, and Yugoslavia from 1965 to 1976, without their designer (fig. 6.14).

Although his designs inspired by Russian ethnic motifs brought unprecedented fame to Slava Zaitsev, in 1978 he decided to quit ODMO.²³ He made that decision on impulse, one evening after presenting two fashion shows for the general public in a packed Moscow cinema hall. Women in shabby coats waited for him outside after the presentation, desperate to know where they could obtain such gorgeous clothes. The answer was the usual one: nowhere. Suddenly, Zaitsev fully understood that such fashion shows were just a charade, that everything was a lie, especially the use of ethnic motifs. Women wanted beautiful clothes, and they did not like ethnic applications. His impulsive decision to leave ODMO completely changed his position within the Soviet system, and all doors were closed to him for a year. In his words, he believed in socialism, and it was only on that evening in 1978 that he finally understood that the Soviet fashion system and the use of ethnic motifs were blocking the development of fashion.

Zaitsev was eventually allowed to start a design studio under the scheme of artistic ateliers in 1979. He stayed in the public arena by designing the uniforms for the Soviet Olympic team, writing a book on fashion, teaching university classes, and creating theater costumes. His studio eventually started to attract private clients, such as lawyers, academics, and people from show business. In 1982, he started once again to present his collections,



FIGURE 6.13

Slava Zaitsev, coat design,
Zhurnal mod, Moscow
(1966, no. 1).



FIGURE 6.14

Slava Zaitsev with his
models, *Soviet Export*,
Moscow (1975).

having changed his style completely. Classical English tweed suits and traditional Chanel-like suits were paraded on the catwalk, because his clients craved an attractive and feminine look. Significantly, Zaitsev switched from one anti-fashion statement to another, by replacing Russian ethnic-inspired dresses with the most conventional bourgeois suits. His atelier became the Slava Zaitsev House of Fashion in the late 1980s.²⁴ The sympathy toward entrepreneurship during perestroika enabled him to show his dresses under his own name again, and also finally allowed him to personally present his work in the West. Once again, he gradually returned to ethnic-inspired dresses. Zaitsev explained that he had opposed ethnic style in the early 1980s because it was an imposed aesthetics, but that he returned to it in the late 1980s because he perceived himself mainly as a Russian artist with a Russian soul.²⁵ On the other hand, he knew quite well that the West would be very interested in clothes adorned with Russian ethnic motifs. He received unreserved ovations and honors on the catwalks in Munich, Stockholm, Paris, Vancouver, Helsinki, Rio de Janeiro, Boston, and many other world cities. On those occasions, his dresses were often shown as part of Russian Week, a program of cultural events that tried to present the perestroika face of Russia to the West: dynamic and open to the world, but still true to its best traditions. Zaitsev again proved to be an ideal representative—socialist, but entrepreneurial and rooted in Russian national tradition.

The Uses of Ethnic Motifs in Late Socialism

The Russian ethnic motifs used in Slava Zaitsev's dress design drew on his personal aesthetics. However, considering the symbolic importance of his position within socialist officialdom, his use of the motifs also demonstrated the official relationship toward ethnic heritage and the dynamics of its changes. Once ethnic motifs had been introduced in order to counteract Western influences on socialist dress codes, they never disappeared from socialist fashion. While in the earlier period ethnic motifs had been an ideological barrier against Western trends, they acquired a new symbolic role in late socialism. At home, women disliked dresses embellished with ethnic motifs. Furthermore, as the supply of fashionable dresses became more diversified with the growth of informal economies, the regimes found it hard to prevent women from appropriating Western trends in their everyday dress practices. In an ideological turn, ethnic style was no longer mobilized in the domestic battles against Western fashions, but was used to fight the socialist sartorial battles abroad.

As an example, Hungarian ethnic-inspired dresses entered a dynamic relationship with the latest Western fashion when they were presented at state-sponsored fashion shows in the West in the late 1960s. Relying simultaneously on contemporary Western fashion trends and Hungarian ethnic motifs, Véra Nádor's style perfectly embodied the aesthetics of socialist fashion. The article "Miss Hungary and the Others" in *Nők lapja* reported on the Hungarotex fashion show that took place in Sweden and Finland in 1968 (fig. 6.15).²⁶ Although the official aim of the lavish Hungarian fashion presentations held in luxury Western hotels had been to find new opportunities for Hungarian fashion exports, they

were mainly exercises in propaganda. According to the *Nők lapja* report, the clothes were made in the most modern European style, with a touch of Hungarian ethnic motifs. A stylish drawing of a princess-line cocktail dress was in accordance with late-1960s fashion, as were the feminine mules with kitten heels, embellished with daisy embroidery that matched the dress. The headdress, with its long ribbons decorated with a rose pattern, was taken from a traditional ethnic dress. It could belong to a number of traditional peasant styles from the Central European region, but in an ideological interpretation the dress, embroidery, and headdress appeared as parts of an exclusive Hungarian heritage. While the drawing was stylized, the accompanying photographs from one of the fashion shows on the Hungarotex tour emphasized another reality. As a literal transposition of peasant styles from an imaginary, distant past, these clothes revealed the slow-moving socialist environment from which they originated. Triumphant reviews in the domestic press described the presentations of dresses adorned with ethnic embroidery and lace motifs that apparently enchanted the West with their beauty and originality.

The use of ethnic motif in socialist fashion continued to be an ideologically informed quotation. Such decoration perfectly suited socialism's isolationism, fear of competitiveness, and idea of its own uniqueness (fig. 6.16). At its highest representative level, an ethnic-embellished garment was seen as an art piece. The Serbian fashion designer Aleksandar Joksimović presented richly embroidered dresses in his 1967 collection "Simonida," inspired by the opulent Byzantine style of the eponymous Serbian medieval queen. Cleverly combining simple cuts with lavish decoration, Joksimović created a collection that the domestic media immediately declared to be the first Yugoslav haute couture. Presented in the grand surroundings of the Hall of Frescos at the Belgrade National Museum, the collection's opulent aesthetics, infused with national heritage, supported the representational needs of the regime.

While Western fashion, then under the influence of hippy culture and its cosmopolitan iconography, was also interested in ethnic motifs, its use of ethnic quotations was different. Ethnic quotations in contemporary Western fashion were transnational and transhistorical, borrowing and blending indiscriminately from India, Nepal, Russia, and East Europe. However, in socialist fashion, the ethnic motif was embedded in historicity even when it embellished hippy-style dresses. Grażyna Hase, the art director of the Polish cooperative *Moda Damska* (Women's Fashion), acknowledged hippy fashion as an inspiration, but emphasized: "Women wearing our skirts of Łowicz striped fabrics or in long flower-patterned, pleated, bias-cut skirts could be seen in greater numbers in the streets of Warsaw. We have adopted the severe line of the Podhale costume, as well as the beautiful plant embroidery; the rich embroidery of Kaszuby (gold thread) is used to adorn evening gowns."²⁷ Moreover, Hase stressed another role for a garment embellished with an ethnic motif: this handmade, lavish, and exotic object became an important export item for socialist economies struggling to procure hard currencies (fig. 6.17).

While the cooperative *Moda Damska* had previously produced ethnic costumes for numerous folk-dancing groups, from the mid-1970s it began mainly to export its products to

FIGURE 6.15
“Miss Hungary and Others,”
Nők lapja, Budapest
(August 1968).

FIGURE 6.16
“Fashionable Embroidery,”
Zhurnal mod, Moscow
(Winter 1966–1967, no. 4).

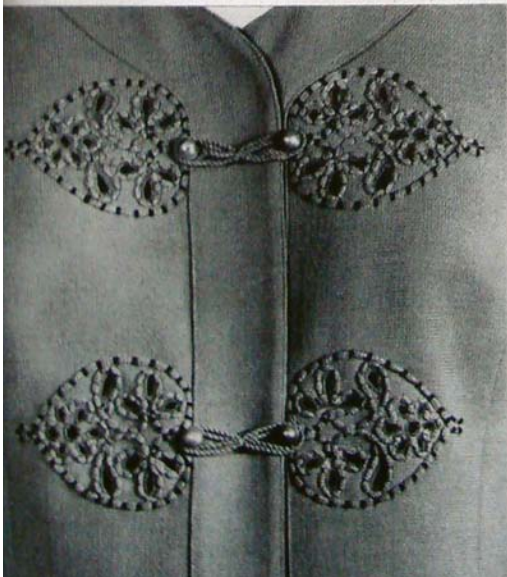
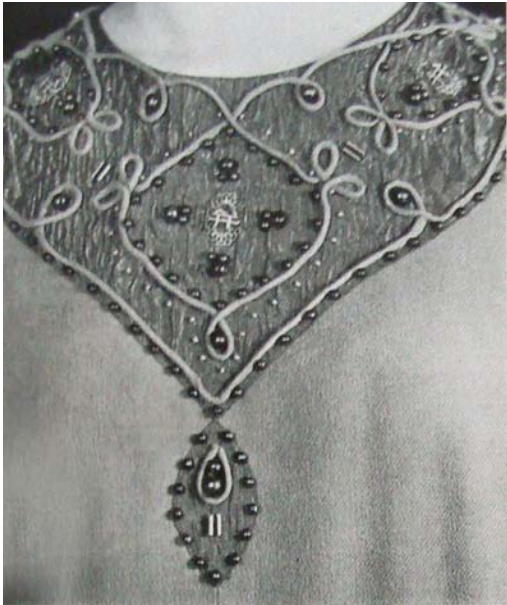




FIGURE 6.17

Art-industry cooperative Moda
Damska, ethnic-inspired dress design,
"The Vogue for Folklore," *Poland*,
Warsaw (1974, no. 10).



FIGURE 6.18

"Exporting Soviet Fashion,"
Zhurnal mod, Moscow
(Summer 1967, no. 2).

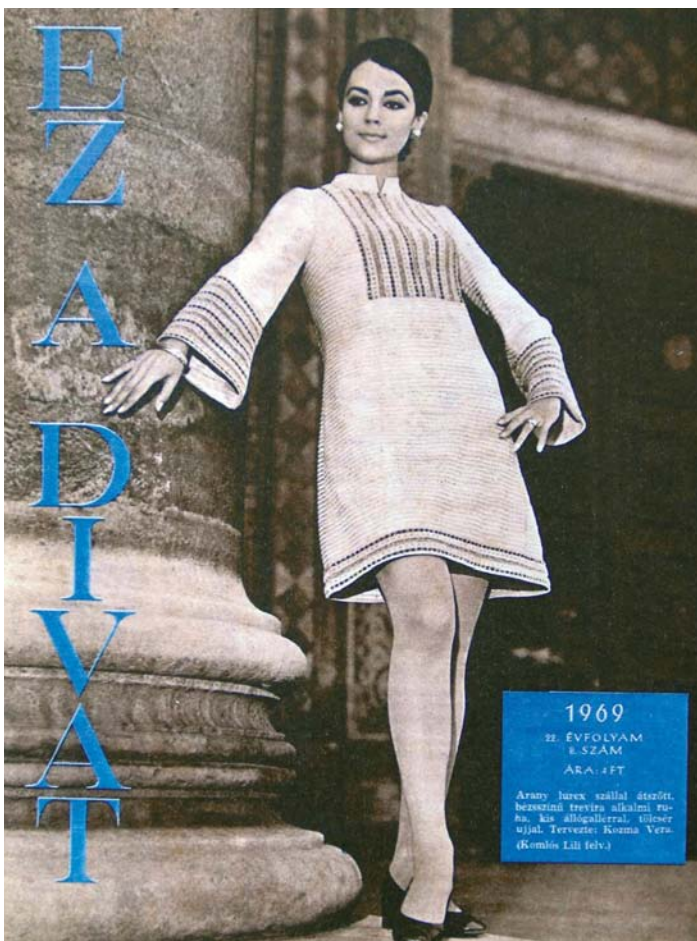


FIGURE 6.19

Ez a divat, Budapest
(1969), cover.

the West: “Like the Zakopane sheepskin coats at one time, our latest collections inspired by Polish ethnic dresses go out into the world. They are known in Paris, London and New York, in the Federal Republic of Germany Belgium and Holland.”²⁸ At the same time, the Polish firm Cepelia already had marketing branches in Brussels and New York and exported to twenty-five countries. The luxurious, ethnic-inspired dress collections that Cepelia designed in cooperation with Moda Polska were mainly sold in Western markets.²⁹

The permanent reliance on ethnic motifs suggests another significant difference between socialist fashion and Western fashion. While the latter disrupts and distorts representation through its interplay between the synchronic and diachronic levels, socialist fashion relied on representation, just as genuine ethnic dress does. Even when ethnic motifs embellished hippy-style dresses or fashionable minidresses, socialist attempts at fashionability were mediated through national traditions, whether those dresses appeared in *Sybille*, *Ez a divat*, or *Zhurnal mod*, or were offered by socialist companies engaged in ethnic-related dress design meant for export (figs. 6.18, 6.19).

Fashion Magazines: Glamour under Control

In the late years of socialism, several determined editors started to organize their own fashion shoots. Lydia Orlova, a fashion and interiors editor of *Rabotnitsa*, introduced many novelties during her editorship of the Soviet mass magazine from 1970 to 1986.³⁰ Orlova emphasized: “I believed my role was to publish more information on Western fashion, in order to break through the isolationism of the Soviet system, and to educate the public by presenting fashion in a historical and social context.”³¹ She introduced more pages on fashion, and started to present fashion through fashion editorials. Orlova also succeeded in making ubiquitous paper patterns more reliable and attractive to her readers by obtaining permission from the German *Burda* to use its paper patterns in 1978.³² By the end of her time at *Rabotnitsa*, the circulation of the magazine had reached 26 million.

The Soviet *Burda* appeared in March 1987, printed in 240,000 copies, as the first joint venture between the Soviet Union and the West, and fully supported by Gorbachev.³³ *Burda*’s launch in the symbolically prestigious Column Hall of the House of Unions in Moscow and the related meeting between Raisa Gorbacheva and Mrs. Burda were trumpeted in the media. The conventional and functional style of *Burda* suited the Soviet Union during its opening toward the West. In that context, *Burda*’s Soviet edition was welcomed by both the public and the Communist daily *Pravda*, which approvingly wrote that *Burda* proposals did not follow the latest fashions but promoted practical clothes for normal women.

A couple of months before *Burda*’s launch, Lydia Orlova had become the editor-in-chief of three Soviet fashion magazines: *Zhurnal mod*, *Modeli sezona*, and *Moda stran socializma*. Although perestroika required changes in their style and content, those changes still needed to be facilitated through official channels. Orlova remembered: “I believed that the Soviet Union deserved its own fashion magazine, and fought for it by writing letters to the Communist party’s newspaper, *Pravda*. I secured political support from the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Aleksandra Biriukova, and found a printing

house in Leningrad. When everything was ready for the start of the new series of *Zhurnal mod*, there was no paper of the required quality. I published a letter about it in *Pravda*. Gorbachev got angry after reading it and called Biriukova, who reassured him that the problem was already resolved. Indeed, she provided paper in one day.”³⁴

Zhurnal mod was finally relaunched in 1988, feted by a promotional party that was attended by the Moscow political and social elite, including foreign ambassadors. Due to the problems with acquiring paper, the initial circulation of one million was well below the public demand, and sold out in a couple of hours. In both its ambitions and its production, *Zhurnal mod* was the first proper fashion magazine in the Soviet Union. Located on the historic fashion street, Kuznetskii Most, its studio contained the latest photographic equipment. Fashion journalists, professional photographers, and makeup artists were employed, as well as a correspondent from Paris. In her editorial in the first issue, Orlova told women that they had been forced to prove themselves as workers and sportswomen for decades, but that they were “simply women.”³⁵ In 1986, such a statement would have provoked feminist rage in the West, but in the Soviet Union it sounded liberating. The fashion shoots resembled those in contemporary Western magazines, but the designers who created the clothes still came from ODMO, and these outfits were not available in the shops (figs. 6.20, 6.21).

By the beginning of the 1970s, the ambitious fashion editor Dorothea Melis had left the East German magazine *Sibylle*. While her modernist fashion shoots had embodied the optimistic 1960s master narrative and general hopes about economic reforms, the images of dresses published in *Sibylle* from the mid-1970s conformed to an outdated glamour. Although both youthful and conventionally glamorous images of dresses were embedded in the field of fashion representation, the latter marked the return to the aesthetics of mythical socialist fashion just when East Germany entered a serious economic crisis. In the 1980s, the Hungarian *Pesti divat* also started to photograph its own fashion stories. In presenting fashion as having its own narrative, these stories visually resembled the style of fashion photographs in Western fashion magazines. However, the outfits and the chosen locations, which included sumptuous museum interiors, continued to refer to the representational style of socialist fashion.³⁶ By continuing to present mainly prototype dresses from the central fashion institutions in professionally produced fashion editorials, socialist women’s magazines perpetuated the mythical status of socialist fashion.

The Middle Classes and the Demise of Socialist Fashion

The tacit deals between the socialist regimes and their middle classes were continually renegotiated as the latter’s self-confidence and acquisitive ambitions kept increasing. Once they were firmly established, the socialist middle classes expressed professional ambitions and consumer aspirations in which fashion featured prominently. Controlled consumer practices seemed the least dangerous way for the regimes to introduce social distinctions in a supposedly classless society, but they could not keep up with escalating consumer demands. Among those demands, well-made, fashionable clothing became increasingly



FIGURE 6.20

Moda stran socializma,
Moscow (1990), cover.



FIGURE 6.21

Modeli sezona, Moscow

(1989, no. 2), cover.

important. Following the Hungarian economic reform in 1968, companies in Hungary came under political pressure to improve the quality of goods on the domestic market, and better-quality clothes appeared in flagship department stores in Budapest such as *Luxus*. Smart dresses could be distinguished from mass-produced ones by their limited production runs and high prices,³⁷ and this exclusivity suited the discriminating members of the middle classes. The Hungarian central Fashion Institute opened its own shop in the early 1970s, selling samples and small batches of dresses, which appealed to the more style-conscious Budapest women.³⁸ In Prague, the House of Modern Dress sold high-quality clothes and adapted Western fashion trends to suit the dictates of socialist good taste. Their dresses were produced in small batches by the designers in the central Institute for Material and Dress Culture (ÚBOK), as well as by experts from the previously privately owned fashion salons and by the small specialized ateliers within the big clothing companies.³⁹ Officially, the House of Modern Dress was a laboratory for fashionable attire, whose limited production was meant to encourage the acceptance of fashion trends and to guarantee quality. In practice, its discreetly fashionable and expensive dresses catered to the more prosperous and sophisticated members of the middle classes. The Polish central fashion institution *Moda Polska* also opened an elite chain of shops in Warsaw and other big cities where small collections of its expensive and conventionally elegant dresses were sold.⁴⁰

By the 1980s the East German regime had opened a chain of four hundred *Exquisit* shops in response to the increased spending power of its middle class and the desire of its members to dress up. The expensive dresses and fashion accessories in *Exquisit* shops were made entirely from Western fabrics, and were produced by state factories which exclusively supplied that elite chain. *Exquisit*'s chief designer, Arthur Winter, previously the leading designer at the *Deutsches Modeinstitut* (DMI), selected those factories and recruited their best designers.⁴¹ The Politburo abandoned its initial doubts about the ideological suitability of *Exquisit* because it brought large revenues to the state budget. Moreover, the middle class was willing to pay high prices for good-quality dresses, and especially decent shoes, which were otherwise practically unavailable. Such elite shops could not meet the demand of the growing numbers of middle-class consumers, however, because their styles were predictable and their supply was limited.

The fulfillment of the middle-class consumer dream seemed even further away when the socialist economies started to decline in the mid-1970s. In reaction, the middle classes relied more and more on their own independent ways to obtain the clothes they desired. An informal network of connections had always existed under socialism, with the role of smoothing over the everyday difficulties in obtaining various goods. Commenting on the processes of commoditization in different economies, Igor Kopytoff observes that socialist societies tried to control it by political means, but eventually expanded it "into novel areas, in which the consumer, in order to purchase goods and services, must first purchase access to the transaction" (Kopytoff 1986, 73). Those informal channels became increasingly important. Like every expanding class, the socialist middle classes were interested in legitimizing their social standing by acquiring all the status symbols that historically defined

their class. Studying Poland in the early 1980s, Janine Wedel observed that citizens were divided not only by money but also by access to connections. Those without connections were “destined to live on society’s margins” (Wedel 1986, 91). Reminiscing about her Soviet life after moving to the West, the film critic Maya Turovskaya described herself as a typical member of the Soviet middle class who had a car, expended a great deal of effort to obtain a flat at a good address, had her clothes custom-made, and got her hair styled at the best hair salon in Moscow (Turovskaya 2002). Using her highly desirable status as a film critic to obtain various favors, clothes, and grooming, Turovskaya eventually recognized that in the Soviet Union one could survive without money, but not without the right connections (*blat*).⁴²

The middle classes also became ever more resourceful during the economic downturn. Fashion designer Irina Krutikova reflected on the peculiar geographies of the distribution of imported fashionable goods, which were supposed to please the fashion-conscious inhabitants of the big cities but rarely reached them:

*Moreover, the ten percent of imported fashionable goods would soon disappear, as their distribution followed the illogical bureaucratic rules on the immense Soviet market. You could find an exciting knitted pullover from Japan in some village cooperative shop in the middle of nowhere, displayed together with milk, bread and sacks of sugar. While somebody in Moscow would be delighted to find such an original piece, a country woman wanted conventional clothes. Personally, I profited from this irrational system when I became a fur designer, as I had to travel to factories in the provinces to check on the production of my designs. I would always return to Moscow from such trips with fashionable clothes that I would find in the most unexpected places.*⁴³

The increasing self-confidence of the middle classes in the later phases of socialism made both the temporal and aesthetic expressions of socialist fashion superfluous. As much as the appearance of the middle classes had been instrumental in the establishment of socialist fashion, their role in its demise was equally critical. Instead of relying on what was in the elite shops, the middle classes started to practice their own versions of fashion. Now better informed about the latest fashion trends, they were supported by the second economies made up of networks of small privately owned businesses, from small fashion salons and boutiques to shoe repair shops, hair salons, and beauty parlors. In Hungary from the 1960s, the first, official society and the second, unofficial society existed simultaneously and complemented each other (Hankiss 1990).⁴⁴ Similarly in the Soviet Union, informal practices, from the second economy to corruption, showed “the Soviet regime’s ability to ensure that for the most part they contributed to, rather than subverted, the Party’s tasks and interests” (Jowitt 1992, 121). Once they had established their consumption patterns within the second economies and second societies, the members of the socialist middle classes needed to acquire new cultural capital. Although this still included the officially endorsed socialist cultural capital, it also involved more diversified and unofficial types of knowledge, such as awareness of contemporary Western culture. This new cultural capital enabled members

FIGURE 6.22

Katja Filippova, dress
design, Moscow, 1988.



of the socialist middle classes to function in both official and unofficial modernity, which had gained in strength with the advance of the second societies. Because economic capital was not recognized under socialism, the process of acquiring diversified cultural capital became even more important for the socialist middle classes. Foreign travel, Western fashion magazines, and Western films and music not only provided experiences that enriched the cultural capital of the middle classes, but also encouraged them to explore new sartorial choices.

In East Europe, members of the middle classes could acquire Western clothes on their trips abroad, but they also increasingly relied on domestic boutiques for fashionable clothing, or procured alternative garments from small independent ateliers. In contrast to the boutiques, which followed fashion fads, independent ateliers provided unique, one-off dresses. By the end of the 1980s, such ateliers appeared in East Europe and the Soviet Union, serving the artistic middle-class youth: writers, actors, and filmmakers. Starting their fashion design business in their apartments at the edge of Moscow, Katja Filippova and Katja Mossina were two such designers who operated outside the Soviet centralized fashion system. They also differed from discreet socialist dressmakers who diligently copied Western trends from outdated Western fashion magazines. Filippova and Mossina declared themselves to be fashion designers, and offered to their young customers an ironic but colorful sartorial reading of the Russian and Soviet times. Their loud and “trashy” style stood in total opposition to the concept of socialist fashion. By transgressing the old, they announced the new times that would bring new and diversified dress codes in the 1990s (fig. 6.22).

The middle classes’ dress practices thus took place within a limited Western type of modernity which ran parallel to the official modernity in the socialist countries for almost thirty years. Toward the end of socialism, the seductive elements of Western modernity gradually penetrated everyday life. As Gilles Lipovetsky observes: “The empire of seduction has been a euphoric gravedigger for the great ideologies. Taking into account neither the singular individual nor the requirement of freedom to live *hic* and *nunc*, those ideologies found themselves poles apart from temporary individualist aspirations” (Lipovetsky 1994, 210). When they turned their back on socialist fashion, the members of the middle classes brought about its demise. In doing so, they contributed to the creation of an alternative unofficial modernity in which everyday fashion was embedded, and they became its main practitioners.

CHAPTER 7

FASHION RISING

In everyday life, women in socialist countries found alternative ways to acquire pretty and fashionable dresses, whether they made their own clothes, purchased them on the black market or at private fashion salons, acquired them through their networks of connections, or had them made by seamstresses. Starting in the 1960s, these unofficial channels gained in importance, with the discreet approval of the regimes. Dress and beautifying practices developed within the second economies, which offered superior goods and services compared to those provided by the state. Mediated through such informal channels, everyday dress practices indigenized and adjusted Western fashion trends to the needs of socialist women. Women also merged Western fashion trends with their desires for prettiness and femininity in everyday dress. An immaculate, individualized look became the ideal for millions of women in socialist countries, who made great sacrifices trying to achieve it. Everyday fashion existed within a different field of material and symbolic production from both utopian dress and socialist fashion. In contrast to socialist fashion, everyday fashion undermined the system by introducing change, encouraging individual expression, and breaking through socialist isolationism.



It was embedded in an unofficial modernity, which existed parallel to the official socialist modernity and became ever more significant during late socialism. This unofficial modernity, although confined and fragmented, enabled women to dress up in ways that pleased them. The activities of the black market increased the availability of many fashion goods, especially those imported from the West which never ceased to fascinate socialist citizens.

Tête-à-Tête with Fashion: Do It Yourself!

Under socialism, everyday pretty or fashionable clothing could not be bought in state shops. In fact, the socialist market was so limited that women could not become the consumers that they were encouraged to be by the regimes. As fashion became a part of the approved cultural capital, women's magazines advised their readers to take responsibility for dressing themselves up. The existence of do-it-yourself columns and paper patterns hinted that the strange impasse between the fantasy world and the dysfunctional socialist consumer reality could be overcome through self-provision. In contrast to the mythical world of socialist fashion and its timeless opulence, everyday fashion, set in a faster, unofficial modernity, acknowledged change and individual desire. Advice given in women's magazines about home dressmaking played a dual role: while it fulfilled female desires for prettiness and femininity and disseminated Western fashion trends, it also controlled the processes of dissemination and fulfillment.

In general, paper patterns offered two possible types of dresses: either conventionally pretty or fashionable. The conventionally pretty conformed to the aesthetics of socialist good taste, while the fashionable allowed the occasional foray into a self-provided Western sartorial modernity. Paper patterns that facilitated women's desires for prettiness prevailed, as they offered only slightly more of what was already allowed. The aesthetics of socialist good taste was so strongly promoted through the media that women interiorized its rules on moderation in stylishness and prettiness. However, as they were unable to buy dresses complying with the officially promoted aesthetics in the shops, they achieved the approved ideal in do-it-yourself versions. This practice allowed for some difference, such as an individualized play with color or the use of an unusual fabric. Since the regimes discreetly acknowledged both the necessary and the symbolic roles of do-it-yourself dress, the choice of fabrics for home dressmaking was more varied than the fabrics used for mass-produced clothes (fig. 7.1).

In contrast, paper patterns that offered fashionable dresses were less common, since they did not fit smoothly into socialist modernity. Promoting a faster concept of time through seasonal changes in dress, such paper patterns threatened to introduce dangerous sartorial practices. They appeared in women's magazines only rarely, whenever the regimes wanted to visually promote radical economic and political changes. In the end, both paper patterns offering pretty dresses and those offering fashion corresponded to the ideological dictate of the day. Paper patterns were an ideal medium, as they provided templates for desirable dresses, without the regimes' having any obligation to deliver the finished product.



FIGURE 7.1
 "Your New Dress,"
Rabotnitsa, Moscow
 (1957, no. 5).

Self-Provided Prettiness

In January 1964 a new column, “A Little Alphabet of Cutting,” appeared in *Svijet*, designed to help women sew their clothes by themselves, using the magazine’s paper patterns. The presentation of do-it-yourself dress in *Svijet* differed significantly from that of Western dresses regularly featured in the magazine. While the latter evoked the mythical world of fashion, the aesthetics of homemade dress was informed by modest prettiness and conventional elegance. In its November 1964 issue, *Svijet* reported on the ladylike models of hats from the latest Western collections, accompanied by advice on how to make such a hat.¹ On another occasion, the instructions for a self-made fur collar began with vivid advice about how to treat an animal skin prior to cutting it into the right shape, and how to glue the parts together on an old suit in order to rejuvenate it into the latest fashion.² In the do-it-yourself columns, practicality was continually interwoven with modesty. *Svijet*’s other regular column, “One Cut—Three Outfits,” accompanied by the slogan “Tête-à-Tête with Fashion,” ran an article that declared: “The statement ‘One Cut—Three Outfits’ evokes magic. But so it is. The cut is the same for all the three dresses, only some details change; thus, truly, the concept changes.”³

The dichotomy between the smartly and expensively dressed woman and the amateurish home seamstress appeared in *Svijet* throughout its history. This duality was expressed through the use of different imagery and language. A sophisticated lady smiled effortlessly in a color photograph reproduced from a Western fashion journal, while the outfits for home seamstresses were placed at the back of the magazine and illustrated in simple black-and-white drawings. Two worlds—fantasy and reality—also met in *Svijet*’s column “Sew Yourself” dedicated to a New Year’s Eve dress (fig. 7.2).⁴ Every woman wanted to be beautiful and dressed up on New Year’s Eve, the text stated, but she might not have time to make a new dress herself. The magazine claimed that it had a simple but efficient solution: a slim white dress, accompanied by a wide belt and a bolero. While the drawing of the cutting pattern secured the practical side of the proposal, *Svijet* added: “You could decorate this very simple type of dress with a silk rose, a decent necklace, a hair ribbon, a decorative hairpin, and, obligatory, long white gloves.”⁵ A pair of long white gloves connected what was for most women a fantasy world of elegant opulence with the reality of an overexhausted woman, wife, and mother sewing her dress herself in her brief spare time. Similarly, *Svijet* opted for a glamorous approach to a large body. In its regular features for large women, *Svijet* republished dresses from Western fashion magazines in an attempt to hide the problem of unkempt female bodies under a veneer of stylish Western clothes. The magazine’s advice was general: opt for vertical lines, keep the line simple, and choose long necklaces. Expensive fabrics, perfect execution, and stylish accessories transmitted the message that a woman could be elegant and perfectly dressed even though overweight (fig. 7.3).⁶

Each situation in a woman’s life was covered by women’s fashion magazines with a drawing or a picture of a suitable dress, and an accompanying paper pattern. In do-it-yourself magazine columns, practical suits and dresses or sporty clothes addressed the desire for

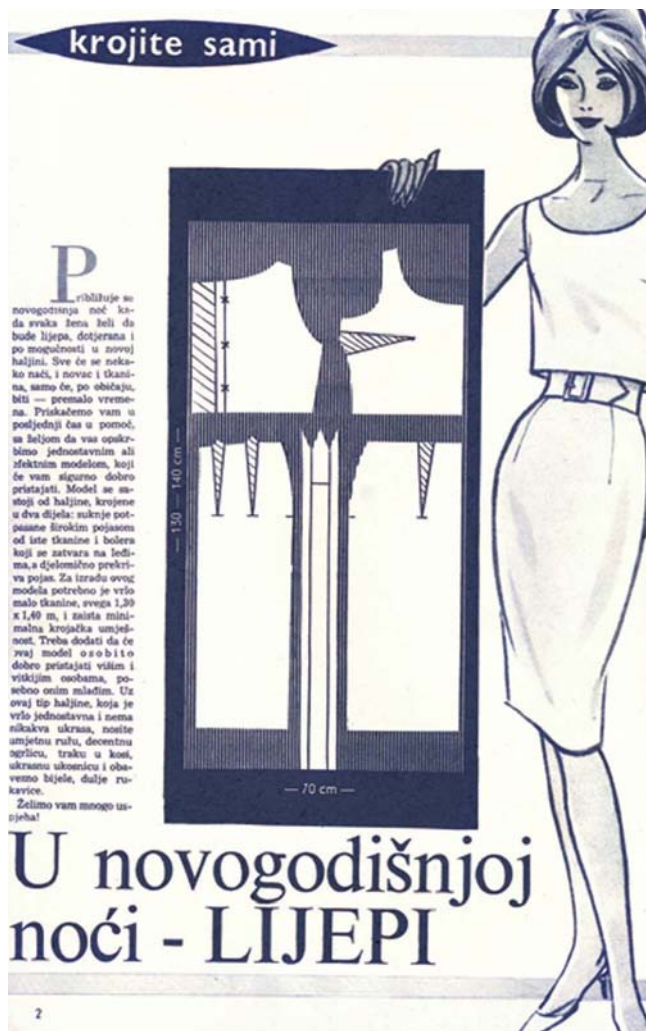


FIGURE 7.2
 "Beautiful on New Year's Eve,"
Svijet, Zagreb (1964, no. 24).



FIGURE 7.3
 "One Cut—Three Outfits,"
 column, *Svijet*, Zagreb
 (1976, no. 24).

pretty outfits to wear for mundane daily activities. In 1968, both the Czechoslovak illustrated weekly *Květy* (Flowers) and the Hungarian women's weekly *Nők lapja* literally domesticated the miniskirt into an apron. In both magazines, models adopted Western 1960s hairstyles and makeup, and their outfits resembled youthful trapeze-line minidresses, but these were presented as aprons and instructions on how to make them were supplied.⁷ Women's magazines downplayed radical fashion changes, whether their do-it-yourself instructions were for home-wear or evening clothes. The latter category featured prominently in such columns, not only because it was difficult to find in the shops, but also because women wanted feminine dresses for special occasions. *Świat Mody* published drawings of dresses dedicated to exotic dances, such as the Charleston, samba, cha-cha-cha, and rumba (fig. 7.4).⁸ Paper patterns were provided, but amateur dressmakers would not have been able to sew such extravagant dresses. Their complicated cuts, comprising draperies and ruffles, and the use of lace and taffeta, drew on haute couture techniques, and would have been challenging even for a professional seamstress. Nevertheless, such dress patterns were widely disseminated. Their conventional aesthetics fitted into the slow socialist concept of time. Moreover, socialist women were pleased with dresses that emphasized their femininity, in preference to the latest fashions. Because they lived in an ideological and economic limbo, their ideas of what they longed to wear and how they dreamed of looking were informed both by the scarcity of information on Western fashion trends and by official socialist concepts of gender and taste.⁹

Thus, the appropriation of Western fashion was informed by a mixture of the cultural isolation of socialist women and their limited material resources. The timeless chic of Coco Chanel, which was ideologically approved by the regimes, was embraced by many women who favored her effortless elegance over the new fashion trends. Whether a woman internalized the official concepts of gender and taste or simply could not afford a new suit each season, a Chanel-style suit seemed to be an ideal option. Although encouraged to wear such suits, women were supposed to make them themselves. In 1971, *Žena a móda* published two features related to Chanel and her style in one issue. The first presented the designer and images of suits from her latest collection,¹⁰ while the second depicted two Chanel-style suits.¹¹ The latter appeared in the do-it-yourself column, and were meant to be crocheted rather than being made of Chanel's signature soft tweed (fig. 7.5). Instructions for making a similarly modest yet attractive outfit were offered in "A Little Sewing Course" in *Praktische mode*. This outfit consisted of a black skirt and a white blouse for a New Year's Eve party. Both were modest in style, but a discreet ruffle at the front of the blouse added a note of prettiness to the ensemble.¹² Like the Chanel-style suits, the simple styles accompanied by paper patterns which appeared in *Praktische Mode* conformed to the aesthetics of socialist good taste in their combinations of functionality and prettiness (fig. 7.6).

East German women increasingly made their own clothes from the late 1960s on, due to the rising aspirations of the middle classes. One market research study showed that many home dressmakers were women with higher-than-average incomes.¹³ Such a home dressmaker could have been *Sibylle's* ideal modern woman, described as "professionally educated,



FIGURE 7.4

"Charleston! Samba! Cza-cza-cza!"

Ramba!," *Świat Mody*, Warsaw

(Winter 1961–1962, no. 50).

intelligent, self-confident, and stays young for a long time.”¹⁴ The magazine recognized that its modern woman “needs a plain, functional dress, based on simple, mass-produced cuts, and made from easily maintained synthetic fabrics.”¹⁵ As women could not find any desirable dresses in the shops, do-it-yourself dress gave them control over their appearance. The courses offered by the many sewing schools that spread all over East Europe transformed generations of women into skillful seamstresses. These expert home dressmakers gained a certain power through their personal efforts and engagement. Through such limited tactics, women negotiated with the official strategies, in Michel de Certeau’s terms. As Certeau observed, in contrast to strategies, which seek to conquer visible and well-defined space and master time and knowledge in order to exercise their power and domination, tactics are “an art of the weak,” and their concept of space and time is dispersed (Certeau 1988, 35–38).

As industry continued to lag behind the middle classes’ growing consumerist dreams, the women’s magazines in all the socialist countries tried to compensate for its failings by providing a better-quality service in paper patterns. To this end, *Svijet* entered into collaboration with the West German fashion magazine *Neue Mode*.¹⁶ While the paper patterns from the German partner did not provide the latest fashion trends, they provided even more desirable attributes, such as credibility, accuracy, and technical perfection. A smart dress, as the well-informed readers already knew, depended on these elements. *Nók lapja* also began to provide paper patterns for its readers together with the German *Burda* in the late 1960s. *Burda* also enjoyed cult status in the Soviet Union, as the paper patterns in domestic magazines were often imprecise; however, it was available only on the black market until 1978, when the mass magazine *Rabotnitsa* was granted a free copyright for its paper patterns by Mrs. Burda herself.

Self-Provided Fashionability

Two skilled hands, a piece of fabric, and a paper pattern could easily deliver a pretty, feminine dress, but could also construct a garment embodying the latest Western sartorial trend. Fashionability achieved through self-engagement not only brought personal pleasure to the dressmaker, but also introduced a different concept of time which disturbed the slow socialist master narrative. Paper patterns attached to Western fashion magazines, obtained on rare trips abroad or bought on the black market, facilitated self-made fashionability, whereas the paper patterns in domestic magazines mainly promoted outfits conforming to socialist good taste. However, paper patterns with the latest Western styles were occasionally also offered as short cuts to modernity in socialist women’s magazines (fig. 7.7). When fashion fads such as shorts could not be found in Yugoslav shops, for example, *Svijet* offered practical advice on how to make them, encouraging its readers with the words: “You cannot fight the shorts, you can only join in!” The advice included how shorts should and should not be worn, and instructed the reader on how to sew a sleeveless blouse to go with the shorts.¹⁷

Throughout Dorothea Melis’s editorship of the East German *Sibylle*, the magazine resembled sophisticated Western fashion magazines, but there was still a huge difference between



FIGURE 7.7
Dress designs for which
paper patterns were provided,
Świat Mody, Warsaw
(Spring 1969, no. 79).



FIGURE 7.8

"Sibylle Modelle," *Sibylle*,
East Berlin (1964, no. 2).

FIGURE 7.9

"Sibylle Modelle," *Sibylle*,
East Berlin (1964, no. 2).

FIGURE 7.10

"Let's Sew Our Clothes
Ourselves at Home,"
Žena a móda, Prague
(1958, no. 2).



them. Melis rejuvenated the magazine's aesthetics simply by offering paper patterns of fashionable clothes in a regularly published fashion editorial called "Sibylle Modelle." The clothing depicted in these editorials was generally unavailable because it either belonged to the Deutsches Modeinstitut's seasonal collections of exclusive prototypes or consisted of perfectly executed custom-made clothes by the elitist, state-owned VEB Maßatelier. Occasionally, these garments were produced by the magazine itself for specific photo shoots by talented photographers. The humble institution of the paper pattern helped *Sibylle* to fit smoothly into the modernist, youthful narrative of the 1960s (figs. 7.8, 7.9).¹⁸

The presentations of the latest Western trends in socialist fashion magazines were usually directed toward the young urban public. In its fashion feature "Let's Sew Our Clothes Ourselves at Home," the Czech *Žena a móda* presented drawings of a few practical shirt dresses, but the place of honor was reserved for a one-page photo of a full skirt with a wide-belted waist. A black turtleneck pullover tucked into the skirt and ballerina flats on the model's feet suggested that this young woman was going to a jazz club rather than to a traditional dance venue (fig. 7.10).¹⁹

The Polish designer Barbara Hoff presented youthful dresses in the Polish picture weekly *Przekrój*. Her designs were exclusively for the young: dresses with barrel-shaped skirts, little suits, summer sheaths, bikinis à la Brigitte Bardot, mannish white blouses, beach shorts, and striped narrow trousers. They were presented on young models with long loose hair or pigtails, depicted in the street or on the beach. Although the shoots were carefully styled to convey an impression of relaxed informality, they always contained practical advice. Through drawings and suggestions on lengths and types of fabric, Hoff helped young Polish women to achieve styles unobtainable in the shops. She carefully chose modern check- and stripe-patterned fabrics and suggested the few shops in which they could be found, bringing fashionability within the reach of an ambitious home dressmaker. Although the styles it described were youthful, there was a seriousness to Hoff's do-it-yourself column, for her project acknowledged the growing desire of young urban women for a style of their own. Moreover, Hoff's designs were presented under her surname as *Przekrój's* exclusive collections, and were protected by copyright.²⁰ Hoff knew her public well. In the early 1960s, various Western visitors commented on how fashion-conscious the young women of Poland were. Maurice Hindus observed, "Brigitte Bardot's coiffure had caught the fancy of a conspicuous number of Polish young women" (Hindus 1962, 508). A young woman visiting from America noted in 1960: "The whole orientation of the style of young women in Warsaw was French. Not the high fashion, but rather the mode worn by the younger, prettier white-collar workers and students, and presented in French magazines such as *Elle*. This particular style is also worn by France's leading export Miss Bardot, which may account for so many young Polish girls having such mops of high tousled curls."²¹

Socialist Fashion Services

Although making one's own fashionable clothes was officially encouraged through state-owned women's magazines, the institution of the dressmaker belonged to the vast unofficial



FIGURE 7.11

Custom-made outfits by the
Czechoslovak salon Styl, *Žena a móda*,
Prague (1971, no. 7).

field of everyday dress that the state was unable to completely control. The dressmaker appeared in a variety of guises in different socialist countries. There were skilled seamstresses who would visit clients' homes to make new clothes and repair old ones, self-employed dressmakers working in small private premises, and even owners of respected fashion salons who tried to produce a socialist version of haute couture dresses. In East Europe, such a variety of choice enabled women to acquire the outfits they wanted (fig. 7.11).

In contrast, the relationship between the desire for modern clothes and the conceptual order had a different dynamic in the more isolated Soviet Union, where sartorial expressions of Western modernity were much more secretive. The Soviet Union officially recognized only two types of dress production: the mass manufacturing of clothes by large state companies, and the production of custom-made dresses controlled by the state-owned fashion ateliers. The ateliers appeared in the USSR in the mid-1930s, when they served only privileged social groups, from the praised shock workers to the highest echelons of the bureaucracy. From the 1950s the fashion ateliers increased in number, offering custom-made clothes and accessories to all categories of citizens in order to make up for the poor quality and limited variety of sizes of mass-manufactured clothes.²² However, the services of state-owned ateliers varied. Some ateliers were connected with professional associations. As a result, customers in the more appreciated professions, such as politicians, writers, cosmonauts, and athletes, were guaranteed excellent fabrics, discreetly imported from the West, and the best service in the ateliers connected to their professional associations. The well-known film critic Maya Turovskaya, who was a customer at the fashion atelier of the Writer's Association, amazed her Munich hosts during an official visit in 1967 when she told them that her suit was custom-made. After those left-wing Western intellectuals commented that they could not afford custom-made clothes themselves, Turovskaya tried to clarify that her dressmaker was very cheap, and that she could not get a nice suit in an average shop anyway (Turovskaya 2002). "You went to the atelier if you wanted anything more fancy than [a] boring gray dress of the low quality that was on offer in the shops," confirmed Tat'iana Kozlova, who emphasized that the fashion ateliers were ranked in three grades, depending on the quality of the fabric. As a member of the artistic intelligentsia, Kozlova obtained her clothes at the state-owned atelier run by the fashion designer Alla Levashova.²³

This atelier, the *Special'noe khudozhestvenno-konstruktorskoe byro* (Special Bureau of Artistic Construction, SKhKB), was established in the 1960s under the umbrella of the *Mosgorsovnarhoz* (Moscow city branch of the National Economic Council). Headed by Levashova, the atelier employed a group of young professional designers and was supposed to provide custom-made outfits and small batches of perfectly executed dresses, as well as mass-produced clothing. Due to the underdeveloped and bureaucratized Soviet clothing industry, though, the last goal was never realized. However, through her good political connections and shrewd maneuvering, Levashova was given a chance to produce small batches of her designs in two factories, the small and technologically backward Moscow-based *Berezka*, which specialized in underwear, and the larger *Izmailovo* factory, which regularly mass-produced dull Soviet outerwear. Even under such difficult conditions, Levashova's

atelier managed to produce stylish fashion collections. These small batches could not satisfy the voracious Soviet market, as they would typically contain a mere five hundred pieces of each item. However, the regime was happy to be able to present Levashova's collections as good examples of what would soon follow, and the lucky middle-class buyers who had finally found a decent dress in a domestic shop were also pleased.

Custom-made dresses designed and executed in Levashova's atelier had a more secretive fate. Lydia Orlova, a regular customer, reminisced that there was no proper door to the atelier, nor any sign on the building to indicate that it was located there. The only entrance was a side door, situated in the courtyard and meant for official use.²⁴ In the SKhKB's light and open space, Levashova would show exquisite dresses, executed after Dior's paper patterns, to the upper echelons of the socialist middle classes. The existence of SKhKB demonstrated that the same regime which had brought Dior's collection to Moscow in 1959 was still fascinated with haute couture. The idea of dressing up the Soviet female population in Dior dresses survived into the Khrushchev period despite his regime's opposition to the Stalinist myth. Official delegations led by Levashova regularly visited haute couture shows in Paris, and Levashova even obtained the copyright for Dior's paper patterns, enabling her atelier to provide stylish dresses to her artistic customers. Nevertheless, the regime was able to secure elitist dresses only for the privileged few.²⁵ There were hundreds of fashion ateliers in Moscow, and many of them were highly specialized, offering only a specific item of clothing, whether blouses or hats, knitted goods, wedding dresses, or clothes for large women.²⁶ Though officially all fashion ateliers were supposed to be the same, there was in reality a significant difference between the elite ateliers and those that served the average customer. Although the latter also provided custom-made outfits, the quality of their service was often very low and the choice of fabrics was inadequate. Fighting rudeness and poor service in the state-owned fashion ateliers, the popular magazine *Rabotnitsa* demanded: "Let Fashion Enter the Atelier!"²⁷ Although they charged higher prices and were supposed to create custom-made dresses, the state-owned ateliers adopted the inefficient practices of industrial production, even borrowing the brigade technique from mass production in which each worker constructed a different part of the garment in a mechanically organized process (Malinina 1958). Such military-style division of labor in the production of each outfit left no space for creativity. In the end, the ateliers that served the ordinary customer showed no thought for either their customers' individual body shapes or for their individual desires (figs. 7.12, 7.13).

For many Soviet women, therefore, the discreet service provided by a skillful seamstress was the most important tactic in their efforts to dress smartly and to challenge socialist cultural isolationism. The current editor of *Russian Vogue*, Aliona Doletskaya, recalls that a seamstress from a small town would visit her home two or three times a year to make new dresses for her mother. Although her surgeon mother was not especially interested in the latest trends, the dresses she produced in collaboration with her seamstress nevertheless corresponded to the spirit of the time. Doletskaya even called her mother's dresses "couture," as they were unique, beautifully crafted pieces.²⁸ Many women engaged seamstresses, yet

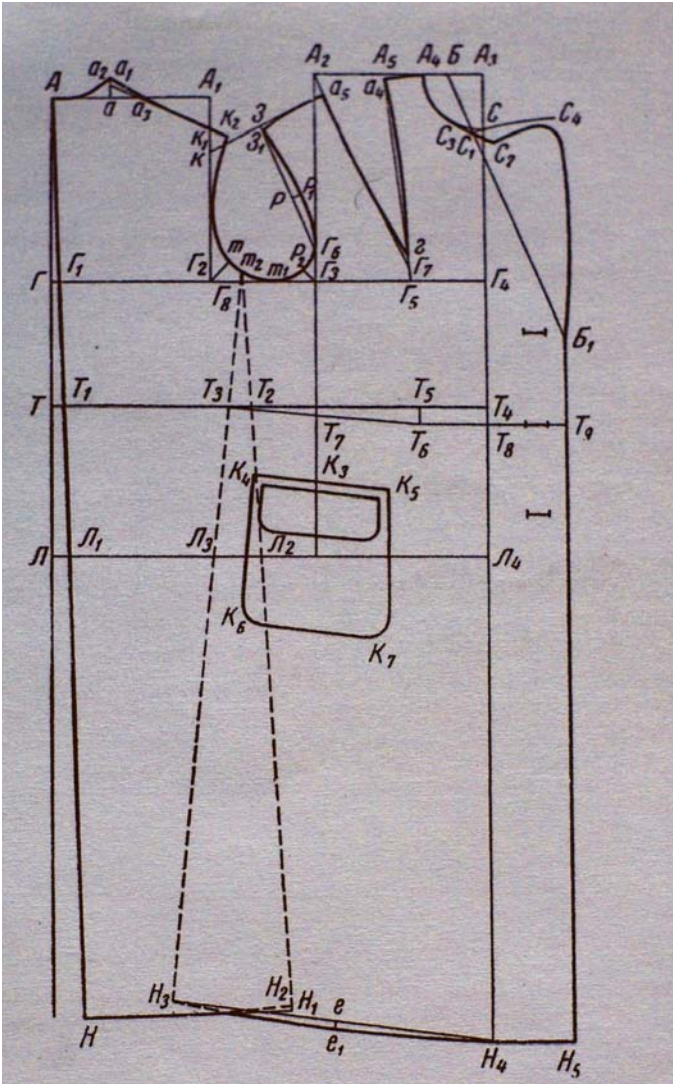


FIGURE 7.12
 "Construction of Female Fashionable Dress," in *Krasivaia odezhda: iz opyta raboty mosk. atel'e* (Moscow, 1958).

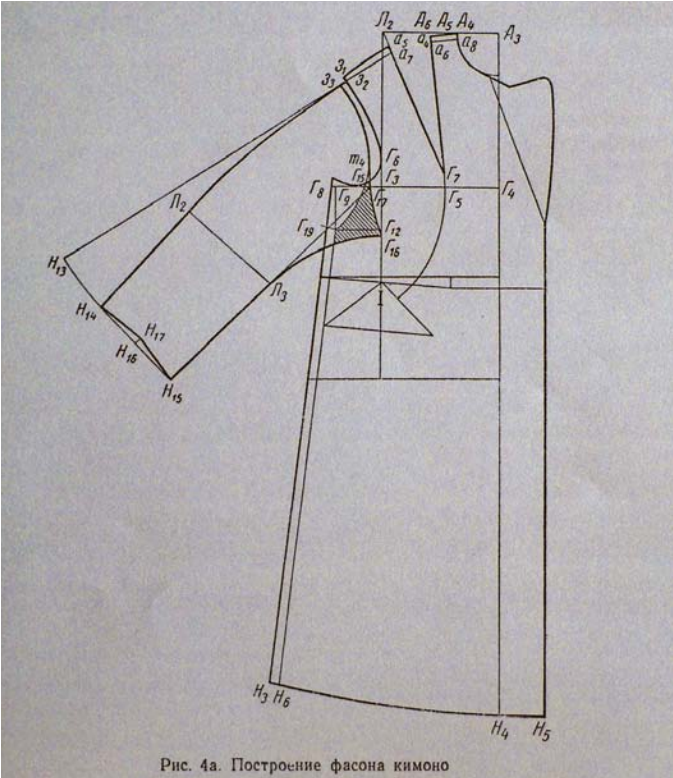


FIGURE 7.13
 "Construction of Female Fashionable Dress," in *Krasivaia odezhda: iz opyta raboty mosk. atel'e* (Moscow, 1958).

Рис. 4а. Построение фасона кимоно

both the client and the seamstress had to be careful, as the institution of self-employment was not legally recognized. However, the discreet army of small dressmakers acted as unrecognized *couturières* by using their skills and the occasional old copy of a Western fashion magazine. They were women's unique allies in their fight against uniformity and the poor quality of state-produced clothes. Even when the first small private clothing shops opened during perestroika, seamstresses maintained their prestigious role among women interested in smart dress, as they continued to guarantee decent quality rather than the cheap copies of Western clothes provided by the private shops.

While the Soviet media never reported on these secret fashion agents who operated in the unofficial field of fashion production, in the East European countries dressmakers were officially recognized. A 1960 Hungarian etiquette book suggested: "If a woman is skillful with her hands, she may sew her clothes herself. If she is not, why not ask for the help of a clever *couturière*, or a home seamstress?"²⁹ A high-ranking Hungarian official, Agi Oblath, had her three-piece gray flannel suits made to order by the domestic *couturière* Véra Nádor, who adhered to a timeless and restrained aesthetics. Oblath claimed that these classic, perfectly executed suits were ideal for her work, but she also ordered dresses from Conchita, a small fashion salon owned by a Mrs. Zsóka, who willingly adjusted Western trends for her clients.³⁰ Mrs. Zsóka had been a prominent dressmaker before World War II, and her prewar cultural and symbolic capital made her clothing very appealing for members of the new socialist upper middle class. On the other hand, such clients, with their relatively easy access to the West, imparted a certain allure to Mrs. Zsóka's salon, as she herself was not allowed to travel to the West. When Mrs. Zsóka was approached by Agi Oblath with a piece of tweed that her husband had bought for her on a business trip to the West, both parties carefully negotiated their respective positions. Following serious and lengthy discussions, Oblath and Mrs. Zsóka decided that a Chanel-style suit would be the best option.³¹

While Mrs. Zsóka managed to keep her salon after the war only by downgrading its size and location, Klára Rothschild enjoyed the best Budapest location and could offer the best fabrics to her clients, due to her good contacts with the Hungarian regime and with Western designers. According to Katalin Dózsa, Rothschild's catwalk clothes were not perfectly executed because they were hurriedly made, a week after her return from the Paris fashion shows. However, Rothschild's advantage was that her dresses were made from excellent fabrics and were highly fashionable, being copied from the leading Paris fashion designers. Her prices, which were twice as high as those in the state shops, were not even that extraordinary, considering their fashionability and the fact that they were custom-made.³²

A subtle symbolic transaction between the socialist middle-class customer and the socialist *couturière* also took place in Yugoslavia, where the owners of the most appreciated Zagreb salons, such as Žuži Jelinek, Tilda Stepinska, and Terka Tončić, came from a similar pre-World War II professional and social background. New civilizing rituals and new rules of propriety were polished in the socialist fashion salons through the medium of a smart dress. In 1961, Žuži Jelinek dedicated one chapter in her book *The Secret of a Well-Dressed Woman* to the relationship between a seamstress and her client. While delicately advising

on proper etiquette, Jelinek emphasized that representatives of her profession also filled a role as cultural agents. She argued that the dressmaker had to speak French and Italian in order to learn firsthand (and certainly before her clients) about the latest trends from the leading fashion magazines (Jelinek 1961, 159). One of Jelinek's clients in the late 1950s was the fashion editor of *Svijet*, Magda Weltrusky, who recalled:

I dressed at Žuži Jelinek before I got married. It did cost a lot of money, but my father was paying for it, while afterward money mostly went to acquire a house, and refurbish it. It was a period of grand fashion salons, but for me Žuži was the best, as she owned the latest Western fashion magazines, such as Vogue. You would flick through magazines, and choose a model and fabric as well, as Žuži offered to her clientele fabrics that she procured from the West. Žuži was not really a fashion designer, but she was definitely an excellent seamstress. She knew how to reproduce the cut of a dress from the picture, as those journals did not have paper patterns. However, Žuži was not supposed to be left on her own; you had to be active as a client. On the occasion when I relied on her to choose the fabric and the style of dress, I ended up owning an outfit that I never put on.³³

While Jelinek's dresses in the 1950s and 1960s were perfectly executed, their style conformed to the rules of conventional elegance. Outfits mainly consisted of a dress with a jacket, shirt-waist dresses, or cocktail dresses. They were highly priced, but acquiring custom-made dresses in private fashion salons was the only way to dress stylishly in Croatia at that time.³⁴ Most of the new elite ordered their outfits at Jelinek's fashion salon because of her close connections with the regime, although some were customers of other, competing private fashion salons. Tilda Stepinska kept her prewar clients, for example, but also made clothes for the most important members of the Croatian nomenklatura.³⁵

Throughout the 1960s, the Hungarian designer Margit Szilvitzky catered to a different elite at the Model Divat Stúdió (Model Fashion Studio) in Budapest.³⁶ After graduating in Dress Design from the Academy of Applied Arts in the mid-1950s, Szilvitzky secured her first job at the publishing house Corvina. Since de-Stalinization had already brought some liberties to the arts and fashion, Szilvitzky's job was to draw copies of the latest Western fashion trends, based on images from foreign magazines such as *Vogue*, *Harper's Bazaar*, *L'Officiel*, and *Jardin des modes*. Szilvitzky was therefore well informed about Western fashion changes by the time she established the Model Divat Stúdió with a group of colleagues in 1958. Although she was inspired by Balenciaga, Dior, and Yves Saint-Laurent, she was not interested in their extravagant haute couture outfits. Instead, Szilvitzky drew on the sophisticated simplicity of these Parisian designers, having a young career woman in mind (fig. 7.14).

That woman was a worker, but was no longer a proletarian working woman. Because János Kádár's regime also courted this new professional and sophisticated working woman, the Model Divat Stúdió enjoyed full financial and organizational support from the state, which covered their salaries and provided the premises and machinery they needed. The



FIGURE 7.14

Margit Szilvitzky, Model Divat Stúdió,
Budapest, Collection 1959–1960.



studio designed and produced small prêt-à-porter collections, executed in batches of fifty to seventy pieces for each outfit, made by their own cutters and seamstresses. Their designs were sold in a small shop attached to their premises, and at prices below those charged by Klára Rothschild, but above those charged by department stores. The Model Divat Stúdió later changed its name to Komplex Textil Stúdió, branching out to textile design, knitting, and making fashion accessories such as hats and artistic jewelry, and eventually employed twenty people, including eight fashion designers. Their customers, comprising intellectuals, doctors, journalists, and artists, enjoyed the studio's catwalk shows, which took place in unusual locations such as the artists' club Fészek Klubban. The activity of Komplex Textil Stúdió came to an end following the introduction of the New Economic Mechanism in 1968 which emphasized economic criteria. A sartorial project whose representational allure reached only a small group of the Budapest intelligentsia was too expensive for the regime to maintain.

Everyday dress was well served by the professional small dressmakers' associations, which included thousands of small tailoring businesses, and which existed in all the East European countries. Competing for customers on the restricted socialist market, some of those small dressmakers gathered a loyal clientele, who appreciated their craftsmanship and personalized service. The Croatian Nada Drnovšek, wife of a prewar industrialist, preferred the discreet, skillful seamstresses and the small professional hatmakers to the services of the more famous fashion salons. Drnovšek stated that she always succeeded in finding highly skilled craftspeople to custom-make her dresses, suits, blouses, hats, and shoes.³⁷

In both Hungary and Yugoslavia, fashion salons and dressmakers began to be joined in the late 1970s by boutiques—small private retail outlets that offered clothes and accessories. Although they were officially approved, the status of the boutiques remained ambivalent. The Hungarian satirical weekly *Lúdas matyi* ridiculed a young woman named Marika, who foolishly spent too much money on a fashionable dress she spotted in the window of a privately owned boutique, only to spend more money on the alteration of that outfit, as its “freakish” style did not suit her body shape. Marika suffered nausea because of all the trouble she went through, but she was still very happy. As the satirist commented, she was well aware that one had to suffer for fashion. The article concluded that only a fool who unreasonably wanted to be dressed in the latest fashions would go to the private boutique, where dresses were both silly and expensive.³⁸

The phenomenon of the boutique gradually diminished the symbolic role of the traditional private fashion salons. From the early 1970s, their craftsmanship and insistence on the rules of conventional elegance appeared old-fashioned in light of the arrival of youth culture and the generally easier access to the latest Western fashions. The boutiques were small, but usually occupied the best locations in the city centers. Hundreds were located along Budapest's central avenues, situated mainly in the corridors of the capital's historic buildings.³⁹ The success of each boutique depended on its owner's flexibility in reacting quickly to the latest fashion trends. The entrepreneurial owners of Yugoslav boutiques would travel to Italy, obtain the most fashionable item, cut it into pieces at home to master

the cut, and reproduce several thousand cheap copies for the masses interested in fashion fads. The levels of trade that the owners declared to the tax authorities disguised the truth about their business activities and huge profits. The owners also benefitted from a cheap work force in the shadow economy, which contributed to their sudden wealth. In the 1950s and 1960s, the Yugoslav authorities imposed a limit of five employees on the owners of private fashion salons, and tightly controlled their activities. In later decades, the more relaxed attitude toward boutiques showed that the regimes valued their ability to deliver fashion to the increasingly fashion-aware masses more than they insisted upon the strict application of the law.⁴⁰ In parallel with the slow and monotone official version of modernity, everyday fashion in the Hungarian and Yugoslav boutiques was bound up with the dynamics of Western modernity. Embedded within the unofficial socialist modernity, everyday fashion reflected the new dynamics between the regimes and their peoples. While fads that had previously appeared on the socialist streets were either self-produced or purchased on the black market, the new socialist boutiques finally offered the opportunity to buy the latest trends in the regular shops which emerged within the second economies, almost two decades later than similar shops had developed in the West.

Dressmakers, private fashion salons, and boutiques eventually went in and out of fashion themselves, but their smart and fashionable dresses provided the socialist woman with a brief experience of Western-type modernity. Such a dress was precious, as it respected a woman's individuality and expressed her personal aesthetics, while reaching out toward international trends.

The Fascination with Western Fashion

In Czech writer Josef Škvorecký's story "Little Mata Hari of Prague," a budding jazz musician in 1960s Prague is besotted with a beautiful young woman named Geraldine (Škvorecký 1998).⁴¹ Black taffeta dresses, cocktail outfits, elegant suits, and antique jewelry, all unavailable in Prague shops, enhance her beauty. The musician and Geraldine were treading a thin line between the permitted and the forbidden, as both jazz and Western fashion were dangerous pursuits after the failure of the Prague Spring. Geraldine is the one who eventually pays a high price: accused of being a Western spy, she is sentenced to five years in prison. Škvorecký does not reveal whether Geraldine's obsession with Western culture and its objects actually turned her into a spy, or whether she was just a young girl totally infatuated with Western fashion.⁴² Nevertheless, her interest in different sartorial codes, expressed through the open display of Western dresses, transgressed the boundaries imposed by the regime. Škvorecký's heroine thus embodied the socialist fascination with Western dress in the extreme.

Although women in socialist societies relied on home dressmaking techniques and services supplied by their dressmakers, they also craved Western-produced clothes and accessories in their everyday lives. Western fashion goods held a multifaceted allure for socialist consumers, due to their diversified styles, fashionability, and superior production

in comparison with the poor quality and functionalist aesthetics of socialist fashion items. The desire for Western-produced items was also stimulated by the closed world of the socialist economy, which provided only limited amounts of foreign merchandise. On the other hand, cultural isolation prevented the development of any critical relationship toward Western fashion and its expressions. Millions of women in the socialist East yearned unreservedly for Western dress.

Whereas Westerners had a casual attitude toward mundane objects such as clothes because they were so plentiful in the saturated Western markets, in the socialist world of isolation and restricted supply in the shops, consumers had an “absolute need” for such products.⁴³ Western clothing acquired the status of a fetishistic commodity in socialist societies due to its rarity. Different types of consumption of Western items developed on the distorted socialist markets, with otherwise normal objects such as shoes, dresses, and jeans acquiring exciting social life. Western fashion goods were sometimes purchased clandestinely, sometimes illegally, and sometimes with the discreet approval of the regimes through special chains of state-owned shops. The existence of such shops showed that the regimes wanted both to control the arrival of Western goods and to make a profit out of selling them to their budding middle classes, which effectively turned the state into a black marketeer. In Poland, Hansjakob Stehle observed that citizens would sell the contents of their parcels from the West to the state shops, which would resell them for a higher price in a chain of shops called *Komis* (Stehle 1965, 172). The unofficial second economy in Hungary provided desirable clothes smuggled from the West through the state-owned Company of Commission Stores (*BÁV*). The fact that the system officially prosecuted smuggling confirms that the first and second societies were not two separated worlds, but two dimensions of the same system. Citizens moved between and belonged, more or less openly, to both of these “societies.” In Yugoslavia, a series of state-managed shops called *Komisiona* sold mainly smuggled foreign goods, from jeans to Italian shoes. The seller would offer his or her items to the shop, which would keep a percentage of the selling price with the tacit approval of the state.

In Prague, the foreign goods that were sold in *Tuzex* shops earned hard currency for the state budget. In his travel memoir, Maurice Hindus observed that these shops supplied pure-wool pullovers, cardigans, overcoats, suits, trousers, pajamas, leather coats, tweed jackets, cashmere scarves, socks, shirts, pure-silk and cashmere dress materials, woollen blankets, pure-woolen cloth, and cotton or linen sheeting (Hindus 1962, 518–519). Goods were sold for the so-called *Tuzex* currency, which meant that the shop exchanged the customer’s foreign currency before the purchase took place. When they wanted to treat themselves, the Czechs frequented *Tuzex* shops, to buy Western goods, from jeans to Dior lipstick. A similar East German chain, *Intershop*, was established in 1962 to earn hard currency from the sale of goods to Western tourists. *Intershop* eventually opened its doors to the domestic public but continued to trade in West German marks, which enabled the state to collect its own citizens’ foreign currency savings in exchange for highly desirable Western goods.⁴⁴

In Moscow, a chain of secondhand shops called Komok discreetly offered Western fashion items.⁴⁵ They were supplied by foreigners or by Soviet diplomats who would buy Western goods abroad and resell them for a profit in the Komok. However, the erratic and scarce supply could not satisfy the lust for Western goods, and many Soviet women wasted days cruising the Komoks in failed attempts to find a pair of shoes or a silk blouse with a Western logo. Observing her Soviet friends' obsession with foreign-branded goods, American writer Francine du Plessix Gray claimed that they spent an incredible amount of time studying each other's clothes while sitting in a research library. One of them verbalized her stream of thoughts, articulating the role of dress: "This one's Italian skirt must have been bought in that new consignment shop off Petrovskaya Street . . . that one's blouse is French and she may be the girlfriend of a foreign diplomat, nice little detail on the collar, I must reproduce it on my sewing machine . . . as for those shoes and pocketbook they must have been bought from the latest Polish team, or even more likely on a recent trip to Hungary, so she must be a member of the Party" (Gray 1990, 161).

Western fashion items, from jeans to corduroy trousers and dresses, could also be purchased by the privileged few in a special chain of shops called Beriozka, which offered mainly Finnish merchandise. Although its prices were higher than those in normal shops, the desirable Western items were not sold for money; instead, merchandise was purchased exclusively by special checks called foreign exchange certificates.⁴⁶ Chosen by Soviet officials, the merchandise in the Beriozka shops did not attract really fashionable people.⁴⁷ Yet many less discriminating middle-class consumers bought Beriozka checks on the black market, as the goods were still very fashionable in comparison with standard Soviet goods, and worth the huge risk.⁴⁸

Western fashion items retained the capacity for symbolic investment because the regime was able to closely control their availability. Their scarcity encouraged an active black market, which perpetuated their status as fetish commodities. The black marketeers delivered genuine Western fashion items to the general public, and the middle classes made huge sacrifices to get hold of *importny* (imported) or *firmeny* (branded) goods, which they considered to be necessary prerequisites of a good life.⁴⁹ As a Russian scientist confirmed to his American acquaintance: "People want something that is not Soviet—anything, a shirt, a tie, a handbag, any little thing at all. It makes them feel better than other people" (Smith 1976, 63–64). In her autobiography, Russian ballerina Maya Plisetskaya remembered a black marketeer named Klara and her big bag full of Western clothes: "The items were always new, with the cheerful labels and brand names of foreign shops. The prices, however, were not cheerful—the luxury items were fabulously expensive. But you can't go around in rags. You have to dress as well as those who go abroad. . . . Everything I wore I purchased from Klara. At three times the original price. She was no altruist" (Plisetskaya 2001, 169).⁵⁰

In the Soviet Union, jeans were the one clothing item whose symbolic and material value was transformed the most through the black market, which developed mainly in port cities and tourist destinations, like Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Tallinn, Riga, Odessa, and Sochi. Young people obsessed with Western artifacts were accused of *veshchism* (object

dependence) by the media. Their obsession led to criminal activities, as the price of jeans was out of reach. In the article “How much does fashion cost?” the magazine *Sovetskaia kul'tura* (Soviet culture) stated that “22 percent of thefts, robberies, and muggings are committed by teenagers because of fashionable goods with branded Western labels.”⁵¹ The official politics did not stop young people from purchasing their jeans on the black market. One such young man declared in *Komsomol'skaia pravda* that, though he would prefer not to buy from speculators, he was forced to do so, just as the textile factory workers who produced the Soviet jeans had no choice in how they were made. He said that the quality of Soviet jeans was so low that he did not consider it patriotic to be seen wearing them.⁵²

A black market dealer proudly announced: “I have never felt any guilt about my job. People need me.”⁵³ Truly fashionable people bought their clothes only from the black marketeers who were in direct contact with Westerners and could provide the latest fashion trends. Dressed in Western attire, the black marketeers were a regular feature in front of Moscow hotels visited by foreigners, whom they tried to engage in conversation and business. In his memoir about Moscow, Harrison Salisbury observed them selling neckties, sport shirts and sport shoes, sweaters, jazz records, lipstick, cosmetics, and nylons, and ironically called them *biznismen* (Salisbury 1960, 81). In fact, they were the proto-businessmen in an environment unfavorable to private entrepreneurship. Although black marketeers had some sophisticated and well-informed customers, most of their middle-class clientele valued items with a Western logo more than the quality of the commodity. Original brands and fakes alike enjoyed a similar cult status among these customers. In the tightly enclosed socialist world such as the Soviet Union, a Western fashion item was a signifier materialized.⁵⁴

Fashionable dress thus was the result of various compromises and paradoxes, and was often associated with economic crime. As the *New York Times* reported:

A female underground began producing and selling black-market lipsticks, brasieres, girdles and nylons to those who could pay. Bits of lace and face creams were sold at outrageous prices but the supply could not keep up with the demand. Some of the stuff was smuggled in from abroad, but most of it was manufactured underground. In 1958, after such items had begun to appear on the open market, an official war was declared on speculators. Black market factories were uncovered in Riga, Tashkent, Moscow, and most of the other major cities of the Soviet Union. (Topping 1963)

Such illegal activities were organized as a sideline production, either by the factory managers themselves or by someone outside the factory, assisted by the management within. These activities began because the system could not meet the increasing demands of its growing middle classes. While in the more liberated socialist systems, such as Yugoslavia, Hungary, and Poland, the second economy was allowed to develop, it was criminalized in the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, because it performed the same, useful social role and its activities compensated for the inefficiencies of the economy, it was discreetly allowed to

function even there.⁵⁵ The first Soviet entrepreneurs who appeared during perestroika arrived directly from the black market, offering cheap, poor-quality copies of Western brands in the cooperative shops.⁵⁶ Initially, they were very successful, as the public still desired Western merchandise. In her essay “In Defence of Shopping,” Mary Douglas argues that choosing between commodities entails choosing between cultures and, furthermore, “commodities are chosen because they are not neutral. . . . Hostility is implicit in their selection” (Douglas 1997, 17). Hostility toward the system that forced people to depend on a world of functional and uniform objects lay beneath the socialist publics’ fascination with Western goods. From their perspective, it seemed as though the diversified Western market allowed everyone to make an individual aesthetic statement.

Internal geographies of consumption developed within the socialist world. Since the Soviet Union lagged behind East European countries in information and supply, Soviet women craved the better-quality and more fashionable dresses available in East Europe. Moscow’s leading department store GUM consisted of hundreds of individual shops, and mile-long queues regularly formed in front of them, especially when news spread that some desirable goods were arriving. The queues confirmed that the state was the ultimate master of both the time and consumption of its citizens.⁵⁷ Russian women queued for Polish-made bras, Yugoslav winter boots, woolen sweaters, leather gloves, and umbrellas, Czech fabrics and bright summer dresses, and East German lace underwear and rayon dresses. Items from the other East European countries had an almost snobbish appeal for Soviet women, who traveled to the outskirts of Moscow to search for more sophisticated clothes and accessories in shops named after other socialist capitals, such as “Belgrade,” “Prague,” “Sofia,” “Budapest” and “Leipzig.” These shops offered reasonably priced goods produced in the respective socialist countries, with “Leipzig” being the most attractive for Soviet women.⁵⁸

In other socialist countries, the same drive was behind the obsession with Western objects, although they were often more easily accessible. In Hungary, jeans were approved at the beginning of the 1960s, when the children of the *nomenklatura* and the more affluent urban youth started to wear them in public. Known by the ideologically more appropriate name *farmer*, jeans were endorsed in the official youth media in order to show the Kádár regime’s relaxed approach toward Western influences. Although schools and official youth organizations objected to the wearing of jeans, the critique in the media was mild and forgiving. One would have expected that evening wear would be the only appropriate attire for attending a performance at the Budapest National Theater, but in 1967 *Ifjúsági magazin* (Youth magazine) commented gently on the appearance of an artistic-looking but jeans-clad young man in the company of two young women, who looked perfect in their little black dresses and kitten heels: “Our photographer took a picture of these two elegantly dressed girls and the boy in jeans in the hall of the National Theatre. An evening suit would have been more in style, wouldn’t it?”⁵⁹

The availability of jeans varied from country to country. The Soviet Union began to produce them in 1975, under the Ninth Five-Year Plan, which was dedicated to an increase in mass consumption.⁶⁰ But Soviet jeans were of poor quality. In 1978, a new denim fabric

Orbita (orbit), the first made wholly out of cotton, went into production. It was the fifty-sixth attempt to produce a denim fabric. Some of the previous attempts had even contained over 20 percent wool (Flint 1997, 27). While the Soviet Union never bought any Western jeans licenses,⁶¹ Yugoslavia secured a license for Lee Cooper in the late 1970s, and both Yugoslavia and Hungary eventually started to produce the licensed versions of the highly coveted Levi's in the 1980s.⁶² The production of Western jeans in these two socialist countries mirrored the more relaxed relationship between their regimes and their peoples. In contrast, due to their ideological and cultural isolation, Soviet citizens saw jeans as the ultimate symbol of rebellion and freedom. In addition, unlike the Yugoslavs, Hungarians, and to a certain extent the Czechs and the Poles, the Soviets hardly traveled to the West, so they could not purchase jeans themselves.

In general, liberated travel provided an opportunity for exploring fashionability in everyday life. While the Soviets indulged in consumption on their tourist trips to East Europe,⁶³ the Yugoslav borders were opened to the West in the mid-1960s, and Hungary started to relax controls on travel abroad soon afterward. The increasingly open borders enabled Yugoslav and Hungarian citizens to participate in Western consumption practices, but also eased the path for smugglers. Newspaper articles about smuggling revealed the deficiencies of the socialist market. A highly ranked Yugoslav customs officer declared in 1972: "Smuggling is like fashion. Smugglers are perfectly informed about the desires and the needs of the market. They do their trade by following their market instincts. That is why the smuggled goods arrive at our country in stages. It started in Slovenia and Croatia by smuggling nylon raincoats and nylon shirts from the Trieste open market, Ponte Rosso. While that stage was spreading to Serbia and Macedonia, the western parts of Yugoslavia were already into smuggled technical goods and appliances."⁶⁴

Cheap nylon overcoats, smuggled from Italy at the beginning of the 1960s, were the first fashion fad that reached Yugoslavia on a mass scale. A humble raincoat from an Italian flea market gained a new significance and, in combination with a twin set and a Terylene pleated skirt, was miraculously recoded into an elegant though informal everyday dress code. There was something joyfully Italian about that look, although a twin set, usually adorned with a string of pearls, hinted at the refined but relaxed appearance of an American housewife from the late 1950s. In this way, the first socialist casual looks emerged from an intricate hybridization of disparate Western meanings. Nylon coats soon also reached East Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and quickly became the latest craze there as well. Fashion items from the West traveled from one socialist country to the other, smuggled by truck drivers or by well-organized chains that included corrupt customs officers. Their clandestine and undignified routes revealed their ambivalent status: unwanted by the regimes, but craved by the people. Keeping open borders and being geographically close to the West, Yugoslavia was either the final destination for the smuggled goods or an intermediary between the West and the other, more closed socialist countries. The open market in Budapest where the smuggled goods were traded was ironically called the Comecon Market, alluding to the official trade agreement between the Communist states.⁶⁵ Because

those goods were allowed to be sold in public at open markets, the authorities were tacitly acknowledging the needs that they were unable to fulfill.

Yugoslav citizens did not rely on smugglers for very long. Shopping trips to the West, known as shopping tourism, began in the 1970s, and eventually developed into a complex activity that combined leisure, education, rebellion, fun, and semiotic warfare, all on a mass scale. In 1974, 27 million Yugoslav citizens crossed the border,⁶⁶ and in 1983 alone turnover from shopping tourism between Italy and Yugoslavia amounted to 501 billion lire,⁶⁷ which was close to one-third of Yugoslavia's annual import from the West.⁶⁸ Shopping tourism, even in a softer version of socialism, was a serious symbolic protest, putting at stake much more than the dubious fashionability or inadequate quality of the commodities at home. However, the Yugoslavs who crossed the western borders to buy shoes, dresses, jeans, magazines, and records, never openly protested against the system, and hardly ever felt strongly against it. Shopping tourism effectively legitimized the Yugoslav socialist system. All the latest Western fashion trends arrived in Yugoslavia simultaneous with their appearance in the West, mainly from Italy, Austria, and Germany, bought by ordinary citizens on their perpetual shopping excursions. After nylon raincoats, new items and styles followed: mini-skirts, wedges, maxi coats, exotic Indian fashions, African prints, serious business suits for women, high heels, ballerina flats, and many others.

The Yugoslav regime had no choice but to respect the tacit deal with its middle classes, as even the young model Communists went on shopping trips to the West. When *Svijet* presented a new member of the party in 1968, for example, that young Zagreb woman was dressed in a discreet suit with a sensible miniskirt, accompanied by white shoes and a lady-like white handbag. Her looks conformed to socialist good taste, and, appropriately, she stated that her idol was Indira Gandhi. Yet she also revealed that her only trips abroad were to Trieste and Klagenfurt, notorious shopping destinations under socialism.⁶⁹ The tacit deal that allowed Yugoslavs to shop abroad applied to both parties: the regime expected the citizens to behave themselves. Writing about the smuggling of foreign goods to Yugoslavia during 1975, the leading Croatian daily *Večernji list* (Evening post) stated that the customs officers were "usually ready to close one eye when it comes to a pullover bought abroad, or some similar item, but they get angry at the answer: 'Nothing to declare,' when there is obviously in question a bag full of little 'nothings.' Because the law is clear on that: the passenger should declare all the items he is taking back to the country and the customs officer will decide if the goods are going to be taxed or not."⁷⁰ Although the individual was eternally seen as immature in the paternalistic eyes of the state, the relationship between the citizen and the state also revealed the concessions that both parties were willing to accept. The authorities wanted dutiful citizens, and the citizens did not oppose the regime in return for a new Beatles record, the latest model of Italian shoes, or a cool leather jacket.⁷¹

For most, wearing the latest Western fashions was not an act of subversion but an act of communication with their fellow class members. For the socialist middle classes, consumption was as much about the purchase of the commodity itself as about acquiring the commodity as a sign, and transgressively applying it to the new social situation. Socialist

citizens on the shopping frontlines abroad were passionate semiotic warriors, united in interpreting the cultural meanings and the social functions of desirable commodities. Once safely back home, those commodities acquired new meanings, the most important being that they had originated in the West. Although such practices were tacitly approved by the regimes, the approval differed from one country to another.⁷² In the more ideological societies, Western objects spoiled the social purity of the state, threatening their whole system; whereas the more liberated societies allowed social hybridization to take place, allowing Western objects to enter their countries, and eventually become naturalized and recoded to fulfill local needs and desires.

Shopping tourism, just like the do-it-yourself dress and the latest fashion fad bought in a boutique, belonged mainly to unofficial modernity. It allowed individualistic looks to appear not only in a symbolically different space but also in a different timeframe. In opposition to the slow-to-change “good taste” aesthetics of socialist fashion, the practice of fashionable dress reflected change, which took place through many short and fast fragments.

Western fashion, which had colonized socialist women’s subconscious for decades, arrived in East Europe and the former Soviet Union by the beginning of the 1990s. Its arrival announced a change in the politics of style, imagery, gender representation, and consumption practices. A complex process of negotiating new meanings and practices in relation to postsocialist dress and beautifying rituals took place. Yet, although the ideological barriers to fashion had disappeared, most women were still unable to acquire a fashionable dress for economic reasons. The middle classes lost the social standing and relative economic security they had negotiated for themselves with the socialist regimes, and had to start negotiating new consumption practices under very unfavorable circumstances.

NOTES

PREFACE

1 T. Troitskaia, “Parizh pokazyvaet mody” (Paris fashion show), *Ogonek* (Moscow), no. 26 (June 21, 1959). All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

INTRODUCTION

1 Vladimir Paperny claims that different concepts of time in the 1920s and 1930s informed two radically different cultures. An unstable and fluid time facilitated the avant-garde experiments of Culture One, while the conservative and static style of Culture Two was embedded in time that had lost its plasticity and mobility (Paperny 1993).

2 Debord’s original thesis was that “The spectacle is capital accumulated to the point that it becomes an image” (Debord 1995).

CHAPTER 1

1 For an overview of visual representations of early Bolshevik woman, see Waters 1991 and Bonnell 1991. On the concepts of the New Woman and New Man, see Attwood 1999; Attwood and Kelly 1998; Clark 1993. On the concept of the Nietzschean superman within the Bolshevik culture, see Rosenthal 2002.

2 For an overview, see Lefebvre 1995.

3 *Rabotnitsa* had been irregularly published before and after the revolution.

4 In Russia, cubism developed into different branches, such as cubo-futurism and suprematism, by different artists, including the constructivists Popova, Stepanova, and Aleksandr Rodchenko, as well as Kazimir Malevich, Natalia Goncharova, and Mikhail Larionov.

5 The word *prozodezhda* merges two words: *proizvodstvennaya* (industrial) and *odezhda* (clothing).

6 In the same article, Stepanova introduced two other variants of *prozodezhda*, called *sportodezhda* (sports clothing) and *spetsodezhda* (protective clothing).

7 At the 1925 Paris International Decorative Exhibition, Rodchenko was the designer for the Soviet Workers’ Club and the Soviet applied arts section, which held some constructivist textiles by Stepanova and Popova, as well as drawings of Stepanova’s sports wear and her theater costumes. Rodchenko’s letters from Paris to Stepanova, covering his three-month visit, were published in the constructivist journal *Novyi Lef* (1927, no. 2), 9–21, and republished in Rodchenko 1982. For an English translation, see Lavrentiev 2005, section “In Paris: From Letters Home, 1925,” pp. 148–187.

8 All Russian textile and clothing firms were nationalized by decree in 1918, and organized in ten trusts. The Moskvoshvei (Moscow Sewing Trust) consisted of thirty-two factories; the Ivanovo-Voznesensk trust, located in a region traditionally famous for embroidery, comprised twenty-seven factories; and the Leningradshvei (Leningrad Sewing Trust) comprised seventeen plants (*Krasnaia gazeta* [Red gazette], 24 August 1921, quoted in Sutton 1968, 225). The expropriated factories did not function effectively under the new trust scheme because they were poorly administered.

9 On Stepanova and Popova's manifesto and their work in the factory, see Lavrentiev 1988, 81.

10 Following the Civil War, the Russian economy was in total disarray. Its key industries had been thrown back to their pre-1861 levels, and the production of cotton fabrics reverted to the level of 1857. For an overview of the social, economic, and political situation in the aftermath of the Civil War, see Lewin 1995; on the post-1917 textile industry, see Douglas 1992.

11 For an overview, see Lavrentiev 1988 and Kiaer 2005.

12 As Valerie Steele comments, "the real secret of Chanel's success was not that her clothes were practical and comfortable, but that they made the rich look young and casual" (Steele 1998, 248).

13 Constructivism resulted from the merger of two parallel but very different artistic movements: futurism and Proletkul't. While futurism rebelled against bourgeois culture and lifestyle in a series of anarchistic practices, Proletkul't was a politically motivated mass movement that promoted a separate culture for the proletariat.

14 In contrast, the art critic Iakov Tugendkhol'd (1925b, 989), who was in Paris at the same time, covering the Paris exhibition for various Soviet journals, observed rather neutrally that fashionable Parisian women chose not to have motherly figures but to emulate the looks of young boys and girls.

15 Although Stepanova and Popova shared constructivist aesthetics in their promotion of textile designs based on abstract geometric patterns, they also differed in many ways, from their background—Stepanova's family was working-class while Popova's was highly privileged—to their artistic development (see also Douglas 1999; Kiaer 2005).

16 Christina Kiaer calls Popova's dress designs the "Constructivist flapper dress" and the "Constructivist comrade," following Boris Arvatov's theory that transparent socialist everyday objects were a socialist person's "comrades" (Kiaer 2005).

17 For an overview of Western social anxieties concerning the newly liberated 1920s woman, see Roberts 1993.

18 The NEP was initiated in 1921 by Lenin in a desperate attempt to improve the supply of basic goods following the Civil War, and came to an end in 1929 with the start of Stalin's centralization of the whole economy and the introduction of the First Five-Year Plan. For an overview of the political, economic, and social circumstances of the NEP, see Ball 1987.

19 Although *Atel'e* was aligned with the Moskvoshvei (Moscow Sewing Trust), it was not initiated by the official women's organization Zhenotdel, as *Rabotnitsa* was. On *Atel'e*, see also Misler 1989.

20 From the early 1910s, the new aestheticized ethnic style flourished amid the broader modernist interest in peasant themes and naive art, leading Sergei Diaghilev's journal *Mir iskusstva* (World of art) to adjust its earlier art nouveau aesthetics to the new artistic sensibility. The futurists, cubists, and suprematists exhibited embroidery alongside their paintings. Their abstract artistic images were embroidered by peasant women working in a few handicraft enterprises in Ukraine (for an overview, see Douglas 1999).

21 As one of the leaders of the Communist women's association Zhenotdel, Kollontai was very disappointed with the NEP because it threatened the existence of Zhenotdel. Kollontai believed that her love story would more strongly emphasize the NEP-related dangers to Communist ideals than theoretical and propaganda articles would.

22 Further, Nina Konstantinovna is described as "not one of us, she is not a worker" (Kollontai 1999, 130). Officially, she is a secretary, but there are hints that she is a kept woman and an altogether frivolous and irresponsible person, who cares more about obtaining the powder L'Origan Coty than anything else.

23 Although the Bolshevik press and literature always presented the NEP men as fat, greedy capitalists, only two percent of the NEP men were rich (Ball 1987). Through bribes with the officials in power, they were privileged buyers of the scarce state goods, which they would resell at much higher prices. Their connections also helped them to import goods. However, the majority of the NEP men were small tradesmen. After Stalin came into power, the NEP men were stripped of all their possessions, including housing, their children were thrown out of schools, and they lost their civil rights. On sexual anxieties about the NEP woman, see Wood 1997 and Naiman 1997.

24 The Subsection of Art and Production (*Khudozhstvenno-proizvodstvennyi Pototdel*) was founded in 1918 and initially headed by Ol'ga Rozanova, with Rodchenko as her deputy. In 1919, one of the subsection's activities was the establishment of workshops that were supposed to merge the arts and industry either through new theoretical and educational initiatives or through experiments in the production process itself (see *Iskusstvo v proizvodstve* 1921, 36–37).

25 Gor'kii was influenced by his wife, the actress Mariia Fedorovna Andreeva, who was Lamanova's client. For an overview of Lamanova's prerevolutionary career, see Durst 2000 and Korshunova 2002.

26 See *Protokoly i Vserossiiskoi konferentsii po khudozhestvennoi promyshlennosti* 1920, 37–38.

27 "Attestat I-i stepeni Prisuzhdennyi 'Atel'e mod na Vserossiiskoi khudozhestvennoi promyshlennoi vystavke" (The Certificate of the First Order at the First All-Russian Exhibition of Art in Industry to Atelier of Fashion), *Atel'e*, Moscow (1923, no. 1), 48.

28 For the ethnic section's display, see "Section des 'Koustari'" in the catalog *Union des Républiques Soviétistes Socialistes. Exposition internationale des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes* 1925, 79–118 (Lamanova's dresses are listed on p. 86). The craftsmen's association Kust-export was founded in 1920. By the mid-1920s, 400,000 local artisans were producing traditional ethnic objects, advised by professional artists.

29 See *Union des Républiques Soviétistes Socialistes* (catalog), 1925, 45–60.

- 30 *Encyclopédie des arts décoratifs et industriels modernes au XXème siècle* 1977, vol. 9, 31.
- 31 *Ibid.*, vol. 6, 56.
- 32 In the textile section, the Soviet designer Sergei Burylin was awarded the gold medal for his textiles, while Liudmila Maiakovskaia's technically demanding abstract patterns on velvet won the silver medal. Covering different categories and consisting of French and foreign members, the various juries eventually awarded between seven thousand and eight thousand prizes.
- 33 "Inostrannaia moda. Russkaia moda" (Foreign fashion: Russian fashion), *Krasnaia niva*, Moscow (1923, no. 30), 32.
- 34 The fate of the main protagonists of the Bolshevik artistic dress took different paths after 1923. Lamanova and Pribyl'skaia stayed in the Soviet Union, where both occupied a series of important functions related to fashion and theater design, and ethnic art, respectively, while Alexandra Ekster emigrated to the West in 1924.
- 35 See Arkin 1929b, 459.
- 36 For Lamanova's private commissions in the 1920s, see Korshunova 2002.
- 37 At that time, Delaunay was collaborating with Edmond Courtot from Redfern, and had published an article on the same topic in *Femme de France* on 22 January 1928.
- 38 "Zadachi 'Zhenskogo zhurnala'" (Tasks of the "Women's journal"), *Zhenskii zhurnal*, Moscow (1926, no. 1), 1.
- 39 A photograph of Lelong's model illustrated an interview with him: "Iskusstvo odevat'sia" (The art of dressing), *Zhenskii zhurnal*, Moscow (1927, no. 5), 35.
40. The Soviets imported about 1,700 American, German, and French films in the ten years between 1921 and 1931; see Youngblood 1992, 51.
- 41 TsKa VLKSM, "Obzor o rabote Komosomola sredi devushek" (Review of Komsomol's work with girls), 1928 F. 1, Op. 23, Doc. 863, p. 14 KA; quoted in Brovkin 1998, 149.
- 42 Vladimir Maiakovskii, "Marusia otravilas'" (Marusia poisoned herself), *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (4 October 1927), 3.
- 43 The film *Bed and Sofa* (original title *Tret'ia Meshchanskaia* [Third Petit Bourgeois Street]) dealt with the problems of young urban working people, from their lack of accommodation to the uncertainties of civil marriages and the emotional turmoil in relationships.
- 44 The Stenberg brothers were among the founders of constructivism, but moved toward commercial design after the introduction of the NEP.
- 45 Quoted in Koenker 1995, 1463.
46. For an overview of the changes in the perception of political activists, see Wood 1997.

CHAPTER 2

- 1 Due to their political influence in the early 1920s, the constructivists were able to promote

their theories on production art through new cultural institutions, such as the Institute of Artistic Culture (INKhUK) and the Higher State Artistic and Technical Workshops (VKhUTEMAS), at which Varvara Stepanova taught textile composition from 1924 until 1925 (for an overview, see Lodder 1983).

2 During its reorganization in 1927, the Higher State Artistic and Technical Workshops became the Higher Artistic Technical Institute (VKhUTEIN). The latter was closed in 1930, and its textile faculty was incorporated in the art department of the new Moscow Textile Institute.

3 The whole article, “The Task of the Artist in the Textile Industry,” was published in Noever 1998, 190–193. A shorter version was published in the daily *Vechernaia Moskva* on 28 February 1929 as “Ot kostiuma—k risunku i tkani” (From dress to pattern and fabric).

4 Sof’ia Beliaeva-Ekzemplierskaia, “Tsvet v odezhde” (Color in dress), *Shveinaia promyshlennost’*, Moscow (1932, nos. 8–9), pp. 24–30.

5 G. Ryklin, “Spered traktor—szadi kombain” (Tractor in front, combine-harvester in the back), *Pravda* (Moscow), 6 September 1933.

6 Stakhanovism acquired its name from the coal miner Aleksei Stakhanov, who overfulfilled his work quota by 1,400 percent on 30 August 1935. “Shock work” had existed before, but Stakhanovism differed in material stimuli, as it was accompanied by the public promotion of consumer values. For an overview of the Stakhanovites, see Siegelbaum 1988.

7 F. Owen, “Stakhanovism,” *Daily Express*, London (6 January 1936), 10.

8 *Geroini sotsialisticheskogo truda* (Heroes of socialist labor), Moscow (1936), pp. 6–7; quoted in Fitzpatrick 1993, 227.

9 “New Soviet Heroes on Shopping Spree,” *New York Times* (25 November 1935), 8.

10 *Leningradskaia pravda* (12 June 1934); quoted in Lebina 1999, 224.

11 The name itself, the House of Prototypes, already announced the future of socialist fashion.

12 *Vechernaia Moskva* (26 November 1935). Dom modelei was established in 1934, but it opened to the public only in 1935. The date of its opening is given differently in various sources. The article in *Vechernaia Moskva* states that the event took place on 22 November 1935, and that the Dom modelei was attached to the Mosbel’e Trust and located on Sretenka Street. The editorial in the first issue of the journal *Dom modelei* states that the new institution was opened in October 1935. In her autobiography, Schiaparelli (1954, 92) mentions that she was invited to open the Moscow Dom modelei on Sretenka Street in December 1935.

13 *Vechernaia Moskva* (26 December 1935).

14 *Vechernaia Moskva* (29 December 1935).

15 Editorial, *Dom modelei*, Moscow (1936, no. 1).

16 Members of the Dom modelei’s artistic board included the most prestigious artists: N. Al’tman, E. Lansere, Vera Mukhina, Sara Lebedeva, M. Rodionov, A. Tyshler, and Vladimir Favorskii. They were joined by the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Youth

Organization, T. Vasil'eva, and by the secretary of the Moscow Communist Youth Organization, L. Sidorova.

17 Although drawings were also still the prevailing medium for presenting new trends in the Western fashion magazines, by the mid-1930s they were already using fashion photography.

18 Editorial, *Dom modelei*, Moscow (1936, no. 1).

19 The Exhibition of Samples of French Light Industry was conceived by the French politician Edouard Herriot. It brought the best of French luxury to Moscow in November 1935: Chanel, Coty, and Guerlain perfumes; Courvoisier brandy; Heidsieck and Pommery champagnes. Its location, the somber and dignified Chamber of Commerce, emphasized the political and strictly representational nature of the event. Accompanied by the photographer Cecil Beaton, Schiaparelli glided from one diplomatic party to another and attended state-orchestrated events.

20 A photograph of Favorskii's mural, which was painted in 1935, can be found in the encyclopedia *Istoriia russkogo iskusstva* (History of Russian art) (Moscow: Izd-vo Akademii nauk SSSR, 1961), vol. 12, 310. Favorskii was one of the members of the Dom modelei's artistic board.

21 J. Lee, "Mannequins in Moscow," *Daily Express*, London (26 March 1936), 8. Jennie Lee, the wife of the Labour politician Aneurin Bevan, and a politician and left-wing activist in her own right, published four articles in *Daily Express* on her visit to the Soviet Union in 1936.

22 Ibid.

23 I. Legas, "Mode à Moscou" (Fashion in Moscow), *Regards*, Paris (26 March 1936).

24 For an overview on shortages in everyday life during the 1930s, see Osokina 2001; Lebina 1999; Fitzpatrick 1988 and 1993.

25 M. Iurina, "Plat'ev mnogo, a vybrat' nechego" (Lot of dresses, nothing to choose from), *Rabotnitsa* (1937, no. 3), 14–15.

26 In 1949, the existing Moscow Dom modelei was transformed into the central Obshchesoiuznyi Dom modelei (ODMO). Simultaneously, the regional Moscow Dom modelei was established in line with the institution of other regional Dom modelei.

27 Editorial, *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1945, no. 1).

28 Cited in Lebina and Chistikov 2003, 204.

29 N. Khliustova, "U khudozhnikov model'eroi g. Gorkogo" (Visiting artist-prototype-maker in Gor'kii), *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1954, no. 4), 16.

30 For an overview of the principles that guided the socialist economy, see Kornai 1990.

31 Surov was an author loyal to the regime who also wrote a play called *The Mad Haberdasher* (1949) criticizing American president Harry Truman.

32 While the style of opulent Stalinist clothes was similar to that of outfits designed by the leading Hollywood costume designer Adrian, the uses of the clothing differed. Ordinary American women could buy copies of Adrian's designs in a wide variety of qualities and prices.

33 J. Lee, "Mannequins in Moscow," *Daily Express*, London (26 March 1936), 8.

34 Schiaparelli's visit to Moscow was reported neither in the Soviet media nor in Western fashion magazines. While presenting the new Paris collections, British *Vogue* dedicated a whole page to Schiaparelli's parachute dress, hinting at her visit to the USSR with the caption: "Schiaparelli Salutes the Soviet" (*Vogue*, London [1936, no. 4], 69).

35 For example, the Leningrad fashion journal *Modeli plat'ia* (Samples of the dresses) reproduced its fashion drawings from the French journals *Le tailleur de luxe*, *Costumes manteaux*, and *Le grand tailleur* in 1938 (see also Gronow 2003, 96–97).

36 As Jukka Gronow states: "The Soviet Union of the 1930s was a unique historical case: almost all its material culture was invented and created from nothing. . . . The rapidly increasing assortment of consumer goods was thus created in a highly conscious and reflective manner. . . . The problems of packaging, paper wrapping or, say, new tops to perfume bottles, were all decided at the highest level" (Gronow 2003, 7–8).

37 For an overview of the Stalinist cultured trade, see Hessler 2000.

38 For an overview of the concept of *kul'turnost*, see Dunham 1990; Fitzpatrick 1993, 1988; Kelly and Volkov 1998.

39 As Dunham observes when discussing the Big Deal between Stalin and his middle classes, even Stalin's regime was not held together simply by pure terror (Dunham 1990, 13).

40 *Rabotnitsa*, Moscow (1937, no. 2), 15; quoted in Attwood and Kelly 1998, 281.

CHAPTER 3

1 *Asszonyok* (Budapest), 12 February 1947. *Asszonyok* was published by the Democratic Alliance of Hungarian Women, a women's organization connected to the Communist party.

2 *Asszonyok*, Budapest (15 October 1947, no. 20).

3 Ibid.

4 G. Berger, "Frau Mode—Entschleiert" (Mrs. Fashion unveiled), *Frau von heute*, Berlin (February 1946, no. 1), 23. *Frau von heute* was started in 1946 as a platform of the leftist women's associations connected to the Communists. After the establishment of the two German states in 1949, *Frau von heute* continued its publication as an East German edition.

5 J. Spalová, "Uniformita—a je vůbec možná?" (Uniformity—Is it at all possible?), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1950, no. 3), 22. *Žena a móda* was started in 1949 by the new centralized institution Tekstilní Tvorba (Textile Production) and the Council of Women, a women's organization aligned with the Communist party.

6 J. Spalová, "Elegantní nebo příjemný?" (Elegant will not be nice?), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1949, no. 12), 19.

7 Berger, "Frau Mode—Entschleiert," 23.

8 For an overview on the popular fashions in the West in the 1950s, see Partington 1993.

- 9 J. Spalová, "O nový styl obleku" (About the new style of clothes), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1949, no. 2).
- 10 Quoted in Dózsa 1991a, 22–24.
- 11 J. Spalová, "Od theorie k praxi v nové módě" (From theory to the practice of new fashion), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1950, no. 1), 22.
- 12 E. Hauser, "Die Pariserin—wie sie wirklich ist?" (The Parisian—Who is she really?), *Frau von heute*, Berlin (March 1946, no. 3), 5.
- 13 "Susret s pariškom modom" (An encounter with Paris fashion), *Naša moda*, Zagreb (1947, no. 1). *Naša moda* was published from 1946 to 1948 by the Croatian state publishing house Vjesnik.
- 14 See *Žena a móda*, Prague (1949, no. 5), 6–9; (1951, no. 7), 2–3; (1952, no. 6).
- 15 *Nők lapja* (1952, no. 21), cover. The Hungarian *Asszonyok* was renamed *Nők lapja* (Women's journal) in 1949.
- 16 "Člověk dělá šaty" (The Man makes the clothes), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1950, no. 10), 19–20.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 For the development of the post-World War II Czech fashion, see also Hlaváčková 2000.
- 19 J. Spalová, "Pracovní oděv" (Work uniforms), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1950, no. 7), 22.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 H. Vlková, "Stejnokroj pro ženu" (Uniform for a woman), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1952, no. 11), 12.
- 22 The first Tekstilní Tvorba fashion show was announced in *Žena a móda* only a few months after the centralized system of textile and clothing industries was established in 1949. The magazine announced that the fashion show would take place in Prague's prestigious Lucerne hall, and that new clothes for women, men, and children, including work clothes, would be presented in three consecutive evenings and at a Saturday matinee (*Žena a móda*, Prague [1949, no. 3]).
- 23 *Žena a móda*, Prague (1949, no. 4), 2–5.
- 24 J. Danielis, "Tekstilní tvorba a její úkoly" (Textile production and its tasks), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1953, no. 1), 24.
- 25 "Sukienka musi być ładna" (Dress must be attractive), *Świat*, Warsaw (1951, no. 9), 17. *Świat*, founded in 1951, was a picture weekly covering current affairs, politics, culture, arts, and fashion.
- 26 J. Spalová, "ČSR zvítězila v módní soutěži" (Czechoslovak Republic won the fashion contest), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1951, no. 5), 25.
- 27 "Úspěch československého oděvnictví v Německé demokratické republice" (Success of Czechoslovak clothes in the German Democratic Republic), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1952, no. 12), 23.
- 28 Ibid.

29 “Přehledka mezinárodní soutěže v odívání” (Fashion show at the international dress contest), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1953, no. 11), 2.

30 The Budapest dress contest was widely covered in the fashion magazines of the participating countries: *Ez a divat*, Budapest (1954, nos. 5–6); *Žena a móda*, Prague (1954, no. 12), 2–5; and *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1955, no. 1), which dedicated a fifteen-page feature to the event.

31 E. Schmidt, “Das Institut für Bekleidungskultur und seine Aufgaben” (The Institute for the Culture of Dress and its tasks), *Die Bekleidung*, Berlin (1954, no. 1), 4. The fashion magazine *Die Bekleidung* (Clothing) was founded in 1954 and published by IBK in order to promote its activities. Accordingly, the main contributor was the institute’s director Elli Schmidt.

32 For an overview of Elli Schmidt’s activities as head of the Trade Board, see Pence 2001.

33 Schmidt, “Das Institut für Bekleidungskultur und seine Aufgaben,” 4.

34 The program of the 1955 Contest in the Culture of Dress in Berlin was published in *Die Bekleidung*, Berlin (1955, no. 2), 20.

35 “Modelljei a Berlini nemzetközi ruhaversenyen” (Outfits at the Berlin international dress contest”), *Ez a divat*, Budapest (1955, no. 5). Other references to the Berlin dress contest include “Náš úspěch na mezinárodní oděvní soutěži v Berlíně” (Our success at the international dress contest in Berlin), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1955, no. 10), 4–5; E. Schmidt, “Internationaler Bekleidungswettbewerb 1955 in Berlin” (International dress contest in Berlin in 1955), *Die Bekleidung*, Berlin (1955, no. 1), 15. The daily *Berliner Zeitung* put the Berlin dress contest on its front page on 26 August 1955 and 24 September 1955.

36 “How Does It Suit Me?,” *Poland*, Warsaw (1954, no. 1), 28–29. *Poland* was a propaganda magazine promoting the socialist lifestyle. Apart from Polish, it was published in six other world languages, and was meant mainly for the foreign markets.

37 Ibid.

38 J. Spalová, “Snahy o novou módu” (Attempts at new fashion), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1950, no. 2), 22–23.

39 J. Spalová, “Navazujeme na lidové umění: Výšivka” (We bring in folk art: Embroidery), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1951, no. 9), 4–5.

40 K. Lindt, “Úkoly oděvní tvorby” (Tasks of dress production), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1951, no. 4), 20.

41 See, for example, the images of elongated modernist dresses decorated with purified ethnic applications, in the review of an exhibition of dresses designed by the Warsaw School for Girls, published by ŁAD’s mouthpiece *Arkady*: “Pod arkadami,” *Arkady*, Warsaw (August 1935), 253.

42 Established in 1950 by the Ministry of Light Industry, the Polish Institute of Industrial Design produced prototype collections of dresses, textiles, furniture, and other design samples that fitted into a socialist lifestyle.

43 “W łódzkiej tkalni” (At the weaving department in Łódź), *Świat*, Warsaw (1953, no. 18), 23.

- 44 Marchlewski's text is quoted in *Świat*, Warsaw (1953, no. 18), 23.
- 45 For example, the Polish Centrala Przemysłu Ludowego i Artystycznego (Center of Peasant and Artistic Industry, Cepelia), established in 1949, developed within a year into a centrally managed organization of 292 producers of handicrafts whose products were sold in 128 shops; see Żygulski 1987, 95.
- 46 Vlková published an article about the activities and aims of the dress department: H. Vlková, "Oděvní škola a její poslání" (Dress school and its mission), *Tvar*, Prague (1951, no. 2), 52–55.
- 47 See Kybalová and Lamarová 1986, 10.
- 48 H. Vlková, "Oděvní škola" (Dress department), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1952, no. 9), 12–13.
- 49 Picture stories covering the dress department's catwalk shows were published in *Žena a móda*, Prague (1950, no. 6), 14–15; (1953, no. 5), 12; (1953, no. 10), 10–11 and 18–19.
- 50 The dress department was established in 1950.
- 51 Margit Szilvitzky, interview by author, Budapest, November 2007.
- 52 Éva Mészáros was among the first generation of the students at the Academy for Applied Arts (interview, Budapest, 2004). Mészáros gave an account of that time in her autobiographical book *In My Own Way* (2003).
- 53 Mészáros, interview by author, 2004.
- 54 As Ivan T. Berend comments: "Almost none of the megalomaniac first Five-Year Plans was fulfilled in Central and East Europe. In 1953–4, all were revised and moderated. There was no war to justify a policy which turned out to be highly irrational and, from many points of view, counterproductive" (Berend 1996, 81).
- 55 See, for example, the detailed planning concerning IBK's 1956 spring and summer collection described in the East German trade magazine *Textil und Faserstofftechnik*, Berlin (1955, no. 1), 53–56, and the design and color coordination of the representational collection for the autumn Leipzig International Fair in the same magazine (1955, no. 9, 500–503).
- 56 "Ubieramy się w M.H.D." (We dress at MHD), *Świat*, Warsaw (1951, no. 3), 18.
- 57 The letter was signed "R.M., Prague" and appeared in the column "Dopisy" (Letters), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1951, no. 8), 22.
- 58 Ibid.
- 59 "Tanio i ładnie" (Inexpensive and attractive), *Świat*, Warsaw (1953, no. 47), 23.
- 60 "Tanio i ładnie," *Świat*, Warsaw (1954, no. 37), 23.
- 61 Elly Voigt's letter is quoted in Pence 2001, 241.
- 62 Ibid., 244.
- 63 See, for example, "Das Nähen der Perlon- und Monofilstrümpfe," *Textil und Faserstofftechnik*, Berlin (1954, no. 3), 170–171.

64 W. Kahl, “Modische Streiflichter und Erkenntnisse aus Paris und Mailand” (Fashionable highlights and experiences from Paris and Milan), *Die Bekleidung*, Berlin (1955, no. 2), 21–22; I.K., “Trägt die Pariserin A- oder H-Mode?” (Does the Parisian wear A- or H-line?), *Berliner Zeitung* (31 July 1955).

65 *Ez a divat* was established in 1950 as the first postwar fashion magazine in Hungary.

66 See *Ez a divat*, Budapest (1954, no. 2; 1955, no. 1; 1955, no. 3).

67 In 1955, textiles with abstract prints were promoted as part of the same discourse; see *Przegląd Artystyczny* (Art review), Warsaw (1955, no. 1). Articles on Western artists with leftist credentials, such as Pablo Picasso and Fernand Léger, appeared in the media, and domestic abstract art was soon officially endorsed, as seen in the arts journal *Przegląd Artystyczny*, especially 1955–1956.

68 See, for example, *Świat*, Warsaw (1953, no. 14), 23; (1954, no. 7), 23; (1954, no. 18), 23; (1954, no. 50), 23; (1955, no. 6), 23.

69 *Svijet* was founded by the state publishing company Vjesnik.

70 Magda Weltrusky, interview by author, Zagreb, 2005. She came to *Svijet* in the mid-1950s and became a fashion editor soon afterward.

71 Ibid.

72 “Modni pregled” (Fashion overview), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1954, no. 9), 3.

CHAPTER 4

1 The Thaw was named after Il’ia Erenburg’s novel *Ottepel’* (Thaw), published in 1954.

2 “Lady Packing for a Trip,” *Newsweek* (27 July 1959), 42.

3 *New York Times* (5 August 1959). The Soviet media reacted nervously to the emphasis on consumerism, as well as to the interest it provoked among the domestic public. *Izvestiia* questioned whether the U.S. exhibition in Moscow was a national exhibition from a great country or from a branch of a department store (quoted in “Ivan Takes a Look at American Life,” *US News and World Report* [10 August 1959], 42).

4 “Fuss over Fashions,” *Newsweek* (27 July 1959), 21.

5 On the advice of the diplomats in the American Embassy in Moscow, the organizers of the U.S. exhibition concentrated on consumerism rather than on freedom of speech or other political issues. For an overview of both exhibitions, see Hixson 1998 and Caute 2003.

6 M. Frankel, “Coliseum Exhibition Depicts Nation Not as It Is, but as It Wishes to Be,” *New York Times* (30 June 1959).

7 “Foreign Trade: Red Sales,” *Time* (6 July 1959), 68.

8 GUM is the abbreviation for the State Department Store. Opened at the end of the nineteenth century, GUM was originally financed by Moscow tradesmen and craftsmen. Located in Red Square, GUM consisted of numerous small, individually owned shops before 1917. Following the

revolution, GUM was nationalized and became the biggest and most important Soviet department store.

9 Describing the political elite attending the November parade in Red Square, Michael Voslensky made note of their expensive fabrics and precious furs. He stated that these luxurious items of clothing did not fit very well and had not been worn very smartly, as if the nomenklatura was symbolically still paying a modest tribute to its mythical proletarian origin (Voslensky 1984, 442).

10 Whereas Mikoian had joined the Communist party in 1915 and Khrushchev had joined in 1918, Kozlov, a close ally of Khrushchev, rose to the high position of a full member of the Presidium and then became deputy prime minister in the late 1950s. The caption of the *Time* cover (13 July 1959) calls Kozlov a potential heir to Khrushchev, but he fell out of power after Khrushchev's resignation.

11 "Chanel 1959. Pariz: Jesenja moda za normalne žene" (Chanel 1959. From Paris: Autumn fashion for normal women), *Globus*, Zagreb (22 August 1959).

12 Ibid. Observing similarities to her styles from the 1920s and 1930s, the Western media pronounced Chanel's 1950s collections conservative and old-fashioned (De la Haye and Tobin 1994). Valerie Steele (1993) observed that, contrary to the French and English magazines, only the American magazines, which themselves feared fashion changes, praised Chanel after her comeback in 1954.

13 L. Efremova, "Chto takoe Parizhskaia moda i kak odevaiutsia zhenshchiny Parizha?" (What is Paris fashion and how are the Parisian women dressed?), *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1958, no. 3), 24–25.

14 Ibid.

15 "Člověk dělá šaty" (The man makes the clothes), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1950, no. 10), 19–20.

16 "Módní linie" (Fashion directions), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1957, no. 2), 11.

17 Letter from Elli Schmidt to Ministry of Light Industry, Berlin, 1 December 1955, Modearchiv, Stiftung Stadtmuseum Berlin, MO SM1–14.

18 "Ich über mich" (I about myself), editorial letter, *Sibylle*, Berlin (1956, no. 1), 9.

19 E. Schmidt, "Willkommen Sibylle" (Welcome Sibylle), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1956, no. 1), 9.

20 E. Schmidt, "Wir sahen in Paris" (What we saw in Paris), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1956, no. 1), 12–13.

21 *Świat*, Warsaw (1956, no. 20), 23; (1956, no. 21), 23.

22 See, for example, *Ez a divat*, Budapest (1956, no. 5; 1956, special summer issue; 1957, no. 2; 1957, no. 3; 1957, no. 5).

23 K. Rothschild, "Ez Párizs" (This is Paris), *Ez a divat*, Budapest (1957, no. 8), 4–5.

24 V. Nádor, "Őszi-téli divatbemutatókon Parizsban" (Paris autumn-winter fashion shows), *Ez a divat*, Budapest (1957, no. 9), 10–11.

- 25 Established at the beginning of the 1960s, *Pesti divat* was a quarterly publication of the Hungarian central fashion institution with a small circulation of a couple of thousand copies.
- 26 E. Schmidt, "Mut zur Mode!" (Courage for fashion!), *Die Bekleidung*, Berlin (1956, no. 6), 1.
- 27 "Stockholm, Augusztus" (Stockholm in August), *Nők lapja*, Budapest, August 28, 1958.
- 28 H. Procházková, "Deset let Domu módy" (Ten years of the House of Fashion), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1966, no. 7), 16–17.
- 29 V. Svačinka, "Páté patro Domu módy v Praze" (Fifth floor at the House of Fashion), *Tvar*, Prague (1958, no. 4), 126–128.
- 30 "International Conference of Advertising Workers," *Naš publicitet* (Our advertising), Zagreb (1956, no. 3–4), 33.
- 31 *Projekt*, Warsaw (1957, no. 6), 32.
- 32 "'Sibylle' kämpfte um Sibylle" (*Sibylle* fought its way into *Sibylle*), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1957, no. 5), 23.
- 33 I. Kertzscher, "Berlin hat seine erste Boutique" (Berlin has its first boutique), *Neues Deutschland*, Berlin, 16 August 1958.
- 34 S.G., "'Sibylle' besuchte Sibylle" (*Sibylle* visited *Sibylle*), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1958, no. 5), 58–59.
- 35 "Neues und Altes von der Sibylle" (New and old from *Sibylle*), *Frau von heute*, Berlin (1958, no. 50), 17.
- 36 "Tržnica ukusa" (The market for taste), *Globus*, Zagreb (15 May 1960, no. 46), 28–29.
- 37 "For Ladies Only," *Hungarian Review*, Budapest (1964, no. 4), 12–13. *Hungarian Review* was a propaganda monthly published in several foreign languages and meant mainly for Western audiences.
- 38 S.N., "The Art of Window-Dressing," *Hungarian Review*, Budapest (1962, no. 3), 23–24.
- 39 Private fashion salons did not exist in the Soviet Union. A large number of state-owned ateliers provided custom-made clothes for both the privileged strata and ordinary citizens, although the former were better served.
- 40 Mila Mirković, interview by author, Zagreb, May 2001.
- 41 "Modna revija" (Fashion show), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1956, no. 5). Although the review covered the presentations of both the clothing industry and the private salons, the accompanying images showed only the salons' outfits.
- 42 Following the Communists' rise to power, the most famous prewar fashion salons Rosenbaum and Podolská were nationalized, and their names were changed: Podolská became Eva, and Rosenbaum became Styl.
- 43 See Módní závody advertisement in *Tvar*, Prague (1958, no. 5).

44 Officially, Rothschild's salon did not carry her name anymore. It was called Különlegességi Női Ruhaszalon (Special Dresses Salon for Women), and renamed Clara Salon in 1976. Similarly, the prewar Arató salon was called Budapest Szalon after the war. I am grateful to the Hungarian fashion designer Éva Mészáros, who worked in Arató's salon in the mid-1950s, for sharing her experiences with me (interview by author, Budapest, 2004).

45 B. Stošić, "Diori su među nama" (Diors are among us), *Globus*, Zagreb (1959, no. 15), 40-41.

46 Ibid., 40.

47 I am grateful to Mrs. Jelinek for granting me an interview and giving me access to her private archive (February 2001).

48 "Ambasador mode" (Ambassador of fashion), *Globus*, Zagreb (1960, no. 49), 29.

49 "Žuži of Yugoslavia," *Globus*, Zagreb (1959, no. 2), 40-41.

50 Following a series of Jelinek's New York fashion shows, her American public relations representative Martha G. Palmer wrote a desperate letter to her in Zagreb in December 1959, reminding her of the media attention Palmer had secured for her and the department store orders that had followed, and demanding that the orders be delivered. Thanks to Palmer's PR connections, Jelinek was presented in the *New York Times*, the *Herald Tribune*, *Women's Wear Daily*, the hotel industry's magazine *Host*, and the National Broadcasting System (Martha G. Palmer's letter is in Jelinek's private archive).

51 G. Emerson, "Yugoslavs Also Copy Paris Style," *New York Times* (4 May 1959).

52 "The New Class," *Time* (13 August 1965). The article also states that Klára Rothschild received "a state-paid salary of \$20,000 a year" and was thus "one of János Kádár's most generously valued national assets."

53 In her interview with me (February 2001), Mrs. Jelinek claimed that President Tito proclaimed her an enemy of the people in a public speech on 22 February 1962 (though I have not been able to find any evidence to support that claim in the contemporary media). She eventually left for Switzerland to become a successful and rich businesswoman, but returned to Croatia in 1964 to run her private fashion salon. In her educational role, Jelinek wrote a newspaper column and several books on proper style and acceptable elegance.

54 A. Ziółkówa, "Spór o kostium klasyczny" (Dispute on classical suit), *Świat*, Warsaw (1956, no. 29), 23.

55 "Mezhdunarodnyi kongress mody" (International Fashion Congress), *Rabotnitsa*, Moscow (1957, no. 7), 28-29; V. Michal, "Osmý mezinárodní kongress módy v Moskvě" (The eighth International Fashion Congress in Moscow), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1957, no. 9), 2-4. In addition to the Soviet ODMO, the Czechoslovak TT, Hungarian RTV, the Polish Central Textile Laboratory, and East German IBK, other national organizations joined the socialist fashion congresses, including the Bulgarian Center for New Goods and Fashion and the Romanian Fashion Institute. Mimicking its political interests within the socialist world, China was present as an observer. China, Albania, and Cuba continued to be the observers at the socialist fashion congresses, occasionally joined by Yugoslavia in the same role.

56 L. Efremova, “Mezhdunarodnyi kongress mody” (International Fashion Congress), *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (Winter 1959–1959), 37.

57 The special annual magazine *Moda stran socializma* (Fashion of the Socialist Countries), published in Moscow, covered the socialist fashion congresses from 1959 until their end in 1990. With a few hundred thousand copies distributed throughout the participating countries for free, the magazine served as a propaganda tool for the socialist fashion. Its contents consisted only of fashion images from the socialist fashion congresses.

58 G. Malik, “Am Anfang war das Institut” (At the beginning was the Institute), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1961, no. 5), 39.

59 H. Groszowa, “Warszawski Dior” (Warsaw Dior), *Polska*, Warsaw (1959, no. 4), 17–19. The article pointed out that Grabowska had learned about colors and proportions during her upbringing.

60 Ibid.

61 Although the same designers continued to work in the central fashion institution, the Hungarian Ministry of Light Industry constantly changed its name and structure, increasing its representational role with each new reorganization. In 1963, three units—clothes, knitting, and shoes—were merged into the Ruházati Mintatervező Vállalat (Prototype Clothing Design Company), only to be transformed into Divat Tervező Vállalat (Fashion Design Company) in 1968.

62 M. Pfannstiel, “Rendezvous der Mode” (Fashion rendezvous), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1958, no. 4), 31.

63 Mészáros stated that the collections presented by the participating countries served to share ideas and information with colleagues from other national fashion institutions, but denied that one unique collection was forced on all as an obligatory trend at the end of these annual gatherings (interview by author, Budapest, 2004).

64 For an overview of the concept of the ideological construction of reality, see Epstein 1995.

65 Even the size of the space became an issue in the extremely competitive circumstances of the event. While the United States occupied 28,000 square meters, followed by the Soviet Union with 25,000 square meters, Czechoslovakia decided on 11,000 square meters, while Hungary and Yugoslavia resigned themselves to much smaller exhibition spaces, 3,000 and 2,800 square meters respectively. See *Exposition universelle et internationale de Bruxelles, 1958*, vol. 1, *L'organisation et le fonctionnement* (Brussels, 1961), 116–117.

66 The professor of textile design at the Prague Academy of Applied Arts, Antonín Kybal, drew on his prewar modernist experiences in arranging a large space within the Czechoslovak pavilion. The photo-stories on the Czechoslovak display in Brussels were published in *Tvar*, Prague (1958, nos. 9–10); *Žena a móda*, Prague (1958, no. 10), 20–21.

67 *Tvar*, Prague (1958, no. 6–7),.

68 The Brussels jury awarded 619 grand prix, 887 golden medals, and 620 diplômes d'honneur (*L'organisation et le fonctionnement*, 272).

69 “All’s Fair,” *Time* (28 April 1958).

70 P.J., “Világjáró Magyar ruhák,” *Ez a divat*, Budapest (1958, no. 10), 2–3.

- 71 "Budapest Fashion Letter," *Hungarian Review*, Budapest (1958, no. 11), 19–21.
- 72 Agi Oblath, who throughout the 1960s and 1970s was in charge of the organization of Hungarian fashion presentations in the West, shared her memories about those events in an interview with me (Budapest, 1999).
- 73 Ibid. Agi Oblath remembered these fashion shows as being perfectly organized and said that the dresses were perfectly executed. She credited Nádor for that success.
- 74 "Berliner Chic in aller Welt" (Berlin chic in all the world), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1958, no. 5), 31.
- 75 "Berlin Fashions in Helsinki," *GDR Review*, Berlin (1958, no. 12), 11. *GDR Review* was a propaganda monthly published in several foreign languages and meant mainly for Western audiences.
- 76 M. Vitoušková, "Poprvé v Paříži" (First time in Paris), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1966, no. 1), 6–7.
- 77 V. Hrubá, "Jeden den na Porte de Versailles" (A day at Porte de Versailles), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1966, no. 7), 12–13.
- 78 The Czechs had no time to learn from their experiences in the West. The Soviet military intervention in 1968 and the period of "normalization" stopped the process of liberation in all fields.
- 79 For an overview, see Neuman and Cullars 1992.
- 80 "A Lipcsei nemzetközi vásár" (At the Leipzig international fair), *Ez a divat*, Budapest (1955, special spring issue); E.P., "Jarní veletrh v Lipsku" (Spring fair in Leipzig), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1955, no. 5), 4–6. Although Elli Schmidt's plan to invite the leading Paris couturiers to present their collections at the Leipzig fair could not be realized due to a lack of funds, mid-range Western fashion houses were present.
- 81 "Ein kurzes Rendez-vous mit Frau Mode" (A short rendezvous with Mrs. Fashion), in "Leipziger Frühjahrsmesse 1956," supplement of the *Berliner Zeitung*, 29 February 1956.
- 82 A. Donskaia, "Pokaz mod v Leiptsige" (Fashion show at Leipzig), *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1961, no. 3), 14.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 "Dvije sajamske medalje" (Two fair medals), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1968, no. 22), 6–7.
- 85 "Cijene su važne" (Prices do matter), *Narodni list*, Zagreb (17 April 1957).
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 "Sajam mode 1958" (Fashion fair 1958), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1958, no. 6).
- 88 *Nők lapja*, Budapest (24 May 1968).
- 89 Hungexpo, *Fair Chronicle*, July 1968; quoted in Gescer and Kitzinger 2002.
- 90 *Nők lapja*, Budapest (24 May 1968).

- 91 M. Pfannstiel, "Rückblick und Auftakt" (Look back and start), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1958, no. 5), 16; "Berlin—a New Fashion Centre?," *GDR Review*, Berlin (1958, no. 11), 11. See also Stitzel 2005, 74–77, for the public's reactions to the Berlin Fashion Week.
- 92 For more on the Berlin Fashion Week, see Stitzel 2005, 74–77.
- 93 M. Pribramska, "Christian Dior," *Vlasta*, Prague (1966, no. 48), 16.
- 94 Editorial, *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1968, no. 2), editorial.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 W. Ulbricht, "Über Standardisierung und Mode" (On standardization and fashion), *Neues Deutschland*, Berlin (13 August 1959), 4.
- 97 "Moda je hirovita. Ona izmišlja koješta" (Fashion is moody: It keeps inventing nonsense), *Večernji vjesnik* (Evening reporter), Zagreb (10 May 1958).
- 98 "Moda se mijenja, ali ne pravi skokove" (Fashion does change but it does not make sudden leaps), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1958, no. 9).
- 99 "A Fashion Letter from Rome," *Nők lapja*, Budapest (5 June 1958).
- 100 "Modna revija" (Fashion show), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1958, no. 4).
- 101 "Puteshestvenie v mody" (Fashion travels), *Rabotnitsa*, Moscow (1966, no. 1). ODMO was located on the central Moscow street Kuznetskii Most, which traditionally had been the city's smartest fashion address, accommodating luxurious shops in the prerevolutionary times.
- 102 Ibid.
- 103 K. Selbmann, "10 Jahre Deutsches Modeinstitut: 10 Jahre Dienst an der Schönheit" (Ten years of the German Fashion Institute: Ten years of work on beauty), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1962, no. 5), 9.
- 104 In different Slavic languages, such as Russian, Czech, Croatian, and Serbian, the word for "the latest fashion craze" is *krik*, literally meaning "scream." The literal translation of the title of Rusanova's section on the latest fashion craze is "The Latest Fashion Scream! Scream! Scream!" With this title, Rusanova probably intended to address the hysterical nature of the fashion craze, but she also subconsciously expressed her own deep fear of change.
- 105 Z. Mrkvičková, "30 let práce oděvní výtvarnice" (Thirty years of a clothing artist), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1958, no. 7), 25.
- 106 All socialist fashion designers whom I interviewed, from the Russian Slava Zaitsev to the Hungarian Éva Mészáros and the Croatian Žuži Jelinek, stressed that their subscriptions to Western fashion magazines were the most important milestones in their work. The fashion practitioners from the East German, Hungarian, and Czech central fashion institutions also started to be allowed to attend fashion shows in the West at that time.
- 107 M. Holzman, "24 godziny z życia kobiety" (24 hours in the life of a woman), *Polska*, Warsaw (1962, no. 8), 44–45. The article "Pan bóg stworzył kobietę" (God created woman) promoted the same aesthetics and values (*Polska*, Warsaw [1962, no. 6], 7–9).

- 108 Dorothea Melis, interview by author, Berlin, January 2008.
- 109 T. Bertram, “Jugendmode im Examen” (Examining young fashion), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1962, no. 1), 11.
- 110 Ibid.
- 111 “Das kleine Kostüm” (A little suit), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1962, no. 3), 25.
- 112 See, for example, the fashion editorial “Ein schöner Tag für Sie allein” (A nice day just for her), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1964, no. 3), 36–49.
- 113 Melis, interview by author, Berlin, January 2008.
- 114 In 1945, the prewar fashion designer Žuži Jelinek returned to liberated Zagreb to open Prvi partizanski modni salon (The First Partisan Fashion Salon), located at the best address, the city’s main square. Her political loyalty and connections facilitated her relationship with the socialist regime.
- 115 “Ambassador mode” (Ambassador of fashion), *Globus*, Zagreb (6 June 1960), 28.
- 116 In his *Mythologies*, Barthes (1976, 145–151) stated that the revolutionary made the world, while the already established bourgeois conserved it. The language of the former aimed at transforming the world, while the latter wanted to eternalize it. Barthes insisted that the poverty of the Myth on the Left was based on that, and that only the Myth on the Right was rich, theatrical, sleek, taking hold of everything and inventing itself ceaselessly.

CHAPTER 5

- 1 Olga Vainshtein, interview by author, London, 2005.
- 2 Tito’s wife, Jovanka Broz, wore bead-embroidered satin gowns designed by leading Yugoslav designers, such as Aleksandar Joksimović and Žuži Jelinek, as well as by the Hungarian designer Klára Rothschild.
- 3 Various authors have observed the development of unofficial economies and unofficial social networks in the Soviet Union and the Central European socialist countries beginning in the 1960s. Hankiss calls that phenomenon a “second society,” arguing that the “first” or official society and the second, unofficial society existed in parallel in Hungary, complementing each other (Hankiss 1990).
- 4 For an overview, see Vejvoda 1996 and Lampe 1996.
- 5 For the negotiations between the regime and the middle classes under Brezhnev, see Millar 1988.
- 6 But the Czech middle class betrayed that unofficial deal in 1968 by trying to obtain more political freedoms during the Prague Spring. Their deal was then revoked, and a deal was renegotiated only in the early 1970s, during the period of normalization. Depoliticization after the Prague Spring was expressed through an emphasis on consumption, which rose by 36.5 percent between 1970 and 1978.

7 See *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1956, no. 3), 38–39, and *Sibylle*, Berlin (1956, no. 1), 20–21.

8 Central and East Europe, with the exception of Czechoslovakia, were not highly urbanized before World War II. Nearly two-thirds of the population of Poland and Hungary and three-quarters of the Balkan population lived in the countryside. For an overview, see Berend 1996 and Cohen 1989.

9 A. Maskuliia, “V gosti, teatri i kontsert” (Making a visit, at the theater, at the concert), *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1958, no. 3), 34–35. An “a la furshet” party, obviously derived from the French word *fourchette* (table fork), is a buffet party. Maskuliia explained in a footnote the concepts of both “cocktail” and “a la furshet” party: “Cocktail is an event that takes place between 5 and 8 pm, at which tea, wine, juices, pastries, and sweets are served. The name comes from the English word meaning mixture of drinks. An ‘a la furshet’ party is a gathering at which people do not eat seated at the table, but standing. Appetizers are arranged at the table, and guests serve themselves.”

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Oblath (2000) translates this quotation from Burget and Kovácsvölgi 1959.

13 In the following twenty-two years, the Yugoslav etiquette book *The Illustrated Etiquette* came out in seven editions altogether; fifteen thousand copies were printed of each of edition. Its author, Đorđe Zelmanović, claimed in the seventh edition: “The book expressed huge social changes, as the urban population doubled in Yugoslavia in those two decades, from 2.1 to 4 million, and many of its members were in desperate need to refine their manners” (Zelmanović 1985, 6–7). In my interview with Mr. Zelmanović (Zagreb, February 2001), he also remarked that the publisher had put enormous pressure on him to write the manual in the first place, presenting him with an already existing collection of French, English, and German etiquette books, and agreeing to pay him a high fee for writing it.

14 See Elias 2000 and Perrot 1994, 87–89.

15 In the West in the 1950s, the independence of middle-class women was controlled and channeled into socially acceptable rituals such as embellishing the home, organizing parties, and cooking sophisticated meals.

16 “Az öltözködés iskolája” (School for clothes), Lesson no. 39, *Nők lapja*, Budapest (2 January 1958).

17 L. Veselý, “Festivalová pohlednice” (Festival postcard), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1956, no. 8), 24.

18 “Co to jest szczęście?” (What is this thing called happiness?), *Polska*, Warsaw (1957, no. 8), 28–29.

19 “Modna wiosna!” (Spring fashion!), *Świat Mody*, Warsaw (1962, no. 51).

20 *Ogonek*, Moscow (4 March 1962, no. 10), 31.

21 “Hétre várom a Nemzetinél . . .” (Appointment at the National Theater at 7 pm . . .), *Nők lapja*, Budapest (24 July 1958).

- 22 “Ženski šeširi” (Female hats), column “Modni leksikon” (Fashion lexicon), *Svijet*, Zagreb (15 November 1964, no. 22), 14.
- 23 “Does This Hat Suit You?,” *Rabotnitsa*, Moscow (December 1957, no. 12), 30.
- 24 *Květy*, Prague (22 August 1957, no. 34), 23; (26 December 1957, no. 52), 23; *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (Winter 1958–59), 36; *Svijet*, Zagreb (1964, no. 20), 39.
- 25 *Svijet*, Zagreb (1964, no. 18), 8–9.
- 26 “Lesson in Good Taste,” *GDR Review*, Berlin (1960, no. 4), 49.
- 27 In February 1960, the Croatian picture magazine *Globus* still showed a group of models from the current fashion trade fair wearing full-skirted dresses on its cover. French designer Jacques Griffe had already designed a sack dress in 1958, and such less-structured lines became the prevailing look of the next decade.
- 28 Each definition of good taste is arbitrary. I refer throughout the text to petit bourgeois good taste, which I consider to be ordinary, banal, anonymous, and avoiding any transgression.
- 29 “Czechoslovaks Seen as Fashion Conscious,” *Christian Science Monitor* (10 February 1967).
- 30 The representatives of ODMO would usually stress that fashion was not about to change in the new season; see “Nashe intervyyo” (Our interview), *Rabotnitsa*, Moscow (1966, no. 1), 29; and “Puteshestvenie v mody” (Fashion travels), in the same issue.
- 31 E. Semenova, “Kak odevat’sia i doma” (How to dress at home), *Rabotnitsa*, Moscow (August 1963).
- 32 More opened to the West than other socialist countries, Yugoslavia and Hungary literally copied popular Western fashions from Western mass magazines, as discussed earlier. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, adopted the style but did not publish actual copies from the Western sources, while Czechoslovakia continually relied on its domestic fashion designers, presenting clothes of high craftsmanship and conventional style in its fashion magazines.
- 33 G. Steineckert, “War’n Sie schon im Metropol?” (Have you been to the Metropol recently?), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1960, no. 5), 74–75. The operetta *Messeschlager Gisela* (libretto Jo Schulz; music Gerd Natschinski) was staged at the Metropol Theater, but, because it challenged the existing ways of designing and producing fashion, it was so controversial that it was banned after a few weeks.
- 34 “Nagrada koja čeka ime” (Award in search of a name), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1964, no. 17), 10.
- 35 “... i znów najmodniejsze ‘damy w czerni’” (... And again the most fashionable is the “lady in black”), *Świat Mody*, Warsaw (Winter 1961–1962, no. 50).
- 36 N. Vrbanić, “U znaku ruža” (Under a sign of roses), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1 November 1964), 32.
- 37 E. Semenova, “Ukrasheniia? Da, no v mery” (Bejeweled? Yes, but not excessively), *Rabotnitsa*, Moscow (1959, no. 2), 32.
- 38 A. Ziółkówna, “Prostota! Prostota! Prostota!” (Simplicity! Simplicity! Simplicity!), *Świat*, Warsaw (1956, no. 46), 23.

- 39 “Nekoliko riječi o bojama” (A couple of words on colors), *Svijet*, Zagreb (July 1957, no. 7).
- 40 *Rabotnitsa* published two articles on the same page in August 1963, one attacking evening wear at work (“Na rabote” [At work]), and the other one recommending pretty dresses to wear at home (E. Semenova, “Kak odevat’sia i doma” [How to dress at home]).
- 41 A *sarafan* is a wide dress without sleeves, while a *khalat* is a simple, shapeless dress that buttons at the front down its whole length. Generally, both shapes are forgiving for women with bigger figures.
- 42 *Rabotnitsa*, Moscow (1957, no. 7), 28–29.
- 43 Moshe Lewin argues that the “cult of Stalin” was replaced by the “cult of the state,” and that bureaucracy had turned the party into its own “ruling servant.” Lewin calls the Soviet system “bureaucratic absolutism” and argues that Khrushchev’s project failed because the radical changes that he planned did not suit the ruling bureaucracy (Lewin 1995, 204–208). Dunham (1990) also claims that Khrushchev’s failure was due to his attempting to make revolutionary changes.
- 44 Throughout the late 1950s and the 1960s, the applied arts magazine *Dekorativnoe iskusstvo SSSR* dedicated many pages to rehabilitating and reintroducing the 1920s avant-garde, especially the constructivists, whose work and ideas had been completely abandoned during Stalinist times.
- 45 Various authors have recognized the power of bureaucracy during socialism; see, for example, Djilas 1957, Nove 1979, and Lewin 1995.
- 46 R. Hutchings recognized the dangers of such a bland and unremarkable style as seen in the 1960s Soviet design: “A tasteful monotony of visual forms, which would be only one degree better than the tasteless monotony of the past, therefore figures among the dangers looming for Soviet society” (Hutchings 1968, 84).
- 47 Ted Polhemus and Lynn Procter (1978) argue that any “good taste” in Western clothes, ranging from the upper-class to the middle-class or the petit bourgeois version, is an “anti-fashion” statement.

CHAPTER 6

- 1 I. Andreeva, editorial, *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1968, no. 2).
- 2 “Dve mody Parizha” (Two Paris fashions), *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1967, no. 3).
- 3 “Astromóda na minikola,” *Žena a móda*, Prague (1970, no. 7), 10–11.
- 4 “Jedes Jahr zur Leipziger Messe: Moda Polska” (Each year at the Leipzig fair: Moda Polska), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1967, no. 1), 23–29.
- 5 “Viteški oklop i plastična haljina” (Knight’s armor and plastic dress), column “Modni krik” (The latest fashion craze), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1968, no. 22), 5.
- 6 “Haló, svět chce neformální módu” (Hello, the world wants informal fashion), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1970, no. 9), 8–9.

- 7 "Schwarze Kleider" (Black dresses), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1964, no. 5), 64–69.
- 8 "The COMECON Fashion Congress Is Over," *Népszabadság*, Budapest (18 February 1969).
- 9 This information on Magyar Divat Intézet comes from my interview with Éva Mészáros (Budapest, 2004), who spent forty years as a designer at the Hungarian central fashion institution.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 For an overview, see Stokes 2000.
- 12 See, for example, "Dederon and Plauen Lace," *GDR Review*, Berlin (1959, no. 11), 57.
- 13 "We Love Woolens," *GDR Review*, Berlin (1960, no. 1), 28–29; "Wolcrylon: Wolfen Polyacrylnitril," *GDR Review*, Berlin (1960, no. 2), 20–23.
- 14 "Präsent 20," *GDR Review*, Berlin (1971, no. 2), 6–7.
- 15 "Divatséta az NDK-ban" (A fashion excursion in the GDR), *Nők lapja*, Budapest (13 April 1968), 20.
- 16 Established in 1958, VIAlegprom (All-Union Institute for the Light Industry Goods) was mainly engaged with the textile and clothing industries, but it also coordinated design and production of mass-produced goods for the home market, such as furniture fabrics, carpets, and porcelain. See also Andreeva 1976.
- 17 Valéria Kovács talked about fashion shows at the conference "Clothing and Fashion in Socialism," Budapest History Museum, November 2007.
- 18 Following in the footsteps of the 1920s schools VKhUTEMAS and VKhUTEIN, the Textile Institute was established in 1929. After initially educating only textile engineers, it gradually included textile design during the 1930s, and introduced the study of fashion design only in the late 1950s (interview with Tat'iana Kozlova, dean of the Textile Institute, Moscow, June 2004).
- 19 Details about the inner functioning of ODMO during the 1970s and 1980s come from my interview with the Russian designer Slava Zaitsev, Moscow, June 2004.
- 20 Slava Zaitsev, interview by author, Moscow, 2004.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Ibid. Zaitsev told me that he was very happy when he could get hold of Western fashion magazines, and stressed that he always shared his information with all his colleagues, for whom he conducted seminars on Dior, Givenchy, Balenciaga, and Cardin. The designers would study them, getting informed and inspired, but their design proposals often were not accepted by ODMO's artistic council, said Zaitsev.
- 23 Ibid. This is Zaitsev's version of the story.
- 24 Slava Zaitsev House of Fashion still exists, sustained by the profits from the sale of the perfume Maroussia that he launched with L'Oréal in 1992.
- 25 Zaitsev, interview by author, 2004.

26 “Miss Hungary és a többiek” (Miss Hungary and others), *Nők lapja*, Budapest (31 August 1968), 20–21. Hungarotex was the state company in charge of textile exports.

27 G. Hase, “The Vogue for Folklore,” *Poland*, Warsaw (1974, no. 10), 44–45.

28 Ibid.

29 E. Krumbholz, “Folklore und Mode” (Folk and fashion), *Sibylle*, Berlin (1970, no. 6), 46–49. The article stated that Cepelia employed one hundred experts, including ethnographers, historians, and painters, as well as twenty thousand local artisans who were organized in cooperatives. On the activities of Cepelia, see also Taylor 1997.

30 Lydia Orlova shared with me her experiences as editor of *Rabotnitsa*, and of three other Soviet fashion publications which she edited after 1986, in an interview (Moscow, June 2004).

31 Ibid.

32 Orlova emphasized that she had been granted foreign currency in order to buy Western fashion magazines. Her favorites were *Jardin des Modes* and *Burda*. Showing an independent spirit, Orlova wrote to Mrs. Burda asking her for permission to reprint the magazine’s paper patterns, and finally obtained the permission for free.

33 The circulation could not satisfy the huge public demand. The Soviet *Burda* was published in West Germany because the Soviet partner, the official publisher for the Ministry for Commercial Trade, could not provide adequate printing premises. In our interview (2004), Orlova stated that the Soviet side, from Gorbachev on, had been disappointed to see that the Soviet edition was a direct translation of the German one.

34 Orlova, interview by author, 2004.

35 L. Orlova, “Nash adres: Kuznetskii most” (Our address: Kuznetskii Most), editorial, *Zhurnal mod*, Moscow (1988, no. 1).

36 Mészáros, interview by author, 2004. Éva Mészáros was the editor of those fashion stories in *Pesti divat*.

37 The clothing companies were used to export decent-quality goods, either to the West or to the socialist COMECON market; in the latter case, the companies were subsidized by the state. When the companies came under political pressure to deliver good-quality clothes to the domestic market as well, they tended to keep their prices at the export levels in order to compensate for the lost state subsidies. See G. Réti, “Price Level in Clothing and Price Politics,” in Monthly Trade Report of the [Hungarian] Ministry of Home Trade and the Ministry of Foreign Trade, November 1978, pp. 20–24.

38 Mészáros, interview by author, 2004. Mészáros stated that the Fashion Institute’s shop was very popular and had regular customers.

39 The House of Modern Dress was established in 1966 by a merger of the department store House of Fashion, the association of the formerly private fashion salons, and the shop Darex, which used to sell exclusive goods for foreign currency. See H. Procházková, “Deset let Domu módy” (Ten years of the House of Fashion), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1966, no. 7), 16–17.

40 Kasia Murawska-Muthesius, interview by author, London, October 2007.

41 My information on the activities of Exquisit comes in part from my interview with Dorothea Melis, who, after the ideological pressures rose, left *Sibylle* in 1970, and became Exquisit's managing director. Once fully developed, the Exquisit chain had an annual trade valued at three billion deutsche marks (Melis, interview by author, Berlin, January 2008). For an overview of the Exquisit chain, see also Heldmann 2001 and Stitzel 2005.

42 Turovskaya's article eventually provoked a violent reaction from Revekka Fumkina, who claimed that, although she was Turovskaya's contemporary and an academic, she did not enjoy any of those nice possessions herself, because her social status was not convertible; see R. Fumkina, "Proposed Circumstances," *NZ* (2002, electronic version). Although they differed in their definitions of the Soviet middle class and its social standing, both Turovskaya and Fumkina emphasized the importance in everyday life of having the right connections.

43 Irina Krutikova, interview by author, Moscow, April 2007.

44 See also Hann 1990.

CHAPTER 7

1 "Šubara bez krznara" (Fur hat without a furrier), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1964, no. 21), 29.

2 "Krzneni ovratnik koji može obnoviti vaš kostim" (Fur collar which can rejuvenate your suit), column "Little Lesson in sewing," *Svijet*, Zagreb (1964, no. 20), 15.

3 "One Cut—Three Outfits," column, *Svijet*, Zagreb (1981, no. 17).

4 "U novogodišnjoj noći—lijepi" (Beautiful on New Year's Eve), column "Šivajte sami" (Sew yourself), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1964, no. 24), 2.

5 Ibid.

6 "Slavljenički: Čak i ako niste posve vitki" (Celebratory: even if you are not quite slim), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1976, no. 26), 60–62. See also, for example, "Nisam sasvim vitka" (I am not quite slim), *Svijet* (1964, no. 14), 26; "Proljeće-ljeto 75 u punijoj liniji" (Spring-Summer 1975 in a fuller form), *Svijet* (1975, no. 5), 62–63.

7 "Vezmi si zástěru!" (Take an apron), *Květy* (Flowers), Prague (1968, no. 43), 46; "Házias divat" (Fashion for home), *Nők lapja*, Budapest (10 February 1968), 19–20.

8 "Charleston! Samba! Cza-cza-cza! Ramba!," *Świat Mody*, Warsaw (Winter 1961–1962, no. 50).

9 In contrast to their socialist counterparts, Western women developed their own techniques, from rebellion to subversion, to deal with the pressures that commercialized expressions of femininity imposed on them. For an overview, see Evans and Thornton 1989; Wilson 1990 and 1993.

10 H. Solarová, "Ženy mohou být krásné i bez brilantů a safírů" (Women can be beautiful even without diamonds and sapphires), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1971, no. 8), 8–9. *Svijet* also published a couple of stories on Chanel, depicting her life and her fashion (1971, no. 2; 1974, no. 20).

- 11 "Háčkovaný kostým" (Crocheted suit), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1971, no. 8), 18–19.
- 12 "Kleiner Schneiderkursus" (A little sewing course), *Praktische Mode*, Leipzig (1963, no. 12), 20–21.
- 13 This research is quoted in Stitzel 2005, 151.
- 14 "Moda Polska," *Sibylle*, Berlin (1967, no. 1), 23.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 "Vještina krojenja u vrećici" (The art of sewing in an envelope), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1974, no. 19), 21. The title of the article referred to the fact that readers could order these paper patterns by mail, while *Svijet's* regular paper patterns were attached to each issue of the magazine.
- 17 "Ne možete se boriti protiv šortsa, preostaje vam samo dam u se pridružite. Ali ..." (You cannot fight the shorts, you can only join in! But ...), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1971, no. 6), 48–49. Shorts were first introduced in *Svijet* in the "Model N1" column in the previous issue, entitled "Viva shorts," *Svijet*, Zagreb (1971, no. 5), 3.
- 18 According to Melis, *Sibylle* was only meant to inspire its readers, not to depict their sartorial reality. Dorothea Melis, interview by author, Berlin, January 2008.
- 19 "Šijeme si doma samy" (Let's sew our clothes ourselves at home), *Žena a móda*, Prague (1958, no. 2), 18–19.
- 20 Barbara Hoff, "Dziś—Letnia kolekcja własna Przekroju" (Today—*Przekrój's* own summer collection), *Przekrój*, Kraków (1960, no. 793), 16–17; (1960, no. 798), 16–17.
- 21 "A Look at Two Cities," *East Europe: A Monthly Review of East-European Affairs* (1960, no. 1), 22–30.
- 22 In 1975, for example, the state spent 34 million rubles in Moscow alone on repairs due to the bad quality of industrially produced clothes (for an overview, see Gerasimova and Chuikina 2004).
- 23 Tat'iana Kozlova, interview by author, Moscow, June 2004. My other Moscow interviewee, Lydia Orlova, was also Levashova's client.
- 24 L. Orlova, "Rezhisser ulitcy," *L'Officiel*, Moscow (1999, no. 11), 59. Orlova writes that Levashova's atelier was situated within the Russian Center for Fashion.
- 25 When Dior presented his collection in Moscow in 1959, Alla Levashova, who worked at that time at the All-Union House of Fashion, was able to establish contacts with the house of Dior. In 1965, as head of the SKhKB, Levashova led the official Soviet delegation on visits to the haute couture houses of Christian Dior and Jacques Griffe, and to some well-known French textile companies. Another member of the delegation was L. K. Efremova, who had also been a designer at the All-Union House of Fashion, and later became chief fashion designer at the SKhKB.
- 26 Kozlova, interview by author, June 2004. Tat'iana Kozlova also stressed that, apart from ateliers for people with special needs, such as the obese or the very tall, who could not find clothes in their size in the shops, there were also ateliers which would renovate old clothes or clothes that

did not fit anymore. In Moscow, one of the Houses of Fashion specialized exclusively in dresses for large women, supplying the many state-owned ateliers scattered around the city with prototypes and paper patterns.

27 “Pustite modu v atel’e!” (Let fashion enter the atelier!), *Rabotnitsa*, Moscow (1960, no. 10), 26–27.

28 Aliona Doletskaya, telephone interview by author, March 2005. Doletskaya mentioned the same story in her first editorial letter in *Vogue*, with less detail, but emphasized that both her parents resembled neorealist Italian actors in the photos in their family album (*Vogue*, Moscow [1998, no. 1], 173).

29 Réczey, Pekáry, and Gondi 1960, 252.

30 Agi Oblath, interview by author, Budapest, 1999. Oblath was the wife of the general director of Hungarotex and a high-ranking official in her own right.

31 The event was described in Oblath 2000.

32 Katalin Dózsa, interview by author, Budapest, November 2006. Dózsa had two dresses made by Rothschild as a young girl that were ordered and paid for by her mother.

33 Magda Weltrusky, interview by author, Zagreb, July 2005.

34 Maja Kosić (whose mother was Jelinek’s client), interview by author, Zagreb, July 2005.

35 These included Marija Bakarić, president of the Croatian Women’s Anti-Fascist Organization and wife of the president of the Croatian government Vladimir Bakarić, and Anka Berus, a prominent member of the Croatian Resistance movement who was later a highly placed political figure. I obtained this information on Tilda Stepinska’s activities and her clientele from the Croatian PR Tomislav Javorčić, whose mother worked as a seamstress in Stepinska’s salon from the 1950s till 1970s (interview, Zagreb, November 2005). As a boy, Javorčić would deliver dresses to Stepinska’s clients for his pocket money. He also recalled that Stepinska’s luxurious fabrics arrived as parcels from Switzerland to different Zagreb private addresses, including the homes of her seamstresses. In such a way, customs duties could be avoided.

36 Margit Szilvitzky, interview by author, Budapest, November 2007. Szilvitzky thought that Corvina exported her drawings. For an overview of her fashion and artistic activities, see also Szilvitzky 2007.

37 Nada Drnovšek, interview by author, Zagreb, February 2002.

38 “A divat végletei” (The extremes of fashion), *Lúdas matyi*, Budapest (21 July 1977), 7. The article also emphasized that the state-owned establishments did not charge for alterations and that their prices were generally cheaper.

39 Éva Körtvélyes, interview by author, Budapest, July 2005.

40 Hungarian sociologist Péter Zsolt (1995) also understands the legalization of the Hungarian private boutiques in the late 1970s as a process in which the regime depoliticized fashion in order to legitimize its rule.

- 41 The story is narrated in the first person, and all other stories in the book have an autobiographical note.
- 42 The narrator is aware that Geraldine, whose mother was of British origin, was indulging her passion for Western fashion through an official of the British Embassy; eventually this official is also accused of industrial espionage and expelled from Czechoslovakia.
- 43 This obsession brought the socialist relationship toward the Western object close to Baudrillard's definition of a fetish: "The fetish performs this miracle of erasing the accidentality of the world and substituting for it an absolute necessity" (Baudrillard 1990, 114).
- 44 For an overview of the state-run black market in East Germany, see Heldmann 2001.
- 45 The names of the shops—Komis, Komisiona, and Komok—suggest their relation to consignment shops, which sell someone's goods for a commission.
- 46 The Soviet Union introduced a system of foreign exchange certificates in the 1960s. They were given to Soviet citizens who worked abroad, whether as diplomats or civil technicians, and to writers and inventors receiving money for copyrights from abroad. The foreign currency that such people would earn abroad was kept by the state, which would compensate them with these checks.
- 47 In the 1970s, Beriozka shops did not sell the most desired jeans brands, such as Levi's, Lee, or Wrangler, but instead sold the Italian brand Super Riffe.
- 48 A guard at the door had the right to check the identity of any person trying to enter the Beriozka shop, as only the original owners of the checks were supposed to shop there. Others could be prosecuted. Olga Vainshtein, interview by author, London, 2005.
- 49 Under perestroika, a pair of shoes from the West could cost the equivalent of seven hundred dollars and a Western designer suit up to three thousand dollars, prices which were several times higher than their retail value on the well-supplied Western markets (Gray 1990, 159).
- 50 Plisetskaya was forced to buy on the black market, as she was initially not trusted by the regime to travel to the West. Once she gained the regime's approval to travel on foreign assignments with the Bolshoi Theater, her wardrobe started to fill with odd Chanel and Cardin pieces, which were mainly presents from the respective designers (see Plisetskaya 2001).
- 51 *Sovetskaia kul'tura* (Soviet culture) (15 April 1986).
- 52 *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (12 November 1982).
- 53 "Moda i ekonomika" (Fashion and economics), *Komsomol'skaia pravda* (14 November 1979).
- 54 Here I am paraphrasing Emily Apter's claim that "[the] fetish holds a status of material signifier," in her introduction to Apter and Pietz 1993, 3.
- 55 When in 2002 I asked my Moscow acquaintances about the underground production of fashion merchandise under socialism, they all confirmed that it existed and was widespread, and that everybody knew about it.

56 The cooperative shops were started under the new perestroika laws that allowed people to start a small private business. The shops offered, for example, fake jeans, produced in India and Afghanistan.

57 On queues, see Verdery 1996, 40–46.

58 Vainshtein, interview by author, 2005.

59 *Ifjúsági magazin* (Youth magazine), Budapest (1967, no. 5), 58; quoted in Hammer 2008, 65. Also see Hammer 2008 for an overview of the reception of jeans in Hungary.

60 In 1975, the domestic production of jeans also started in East Germany and Poland.

61 In 1978, the Soviet Union was very close to cutting a deal with Jesus Jeans, but the start of the Afghanistan war, followed by a new outburst of the Cold War, prevented it from happening. Negotiations with Levi's, Wrangler, and Lee also took place, but did not materialize into licensed domestic production.

62 The Serbian company Beko manufactured Lee Cooper beginning in 1978, while the Croatian textile company Varteks produced Levi Strauss from 1983. At the same time, Wrangler was produced in Macedonia. The Western partners strictly controlled the quality of production, and all of these companies supplied the whole Yugoslav market with these Western brands of the jeans. For the history of jeans in East Germany, see Menzel 2004.

63 For an overview of the Soviet tourists' trips to East Europe and their consumption patterns, see Gorsuch 2006.

64 "Gospodari mračnih putova" (The masters of the dark roads), *NIN*, Belgrade (30 July 1972).

65 Comecon was started in 1949 as an institution for economic cooperation, trade, and mutual assistance between the countries of the Eastern bloc.

66 "Najgore riječi: 'Nemam ništa!'" (The worst words: "I have nothing"!), *Večernji list*, Zagreb (18 February 1976). Yugoslavia had twenty million citizens at that time, which means that some citizens crossed the border many times during that year.

67 George Horváth, "Suffering and Legitimacy," paper given at the conference "Culture with Frontiers: Shopping Tourists and Traveling Objects in Post-War Central-Europe," Budapest, 26–28 April 1998. This sum applied only for the goods that the citizens acquired privately and smuggled back to the country themselves.

68 This figure amounted to approximately one-third of Yugoslav annual imports from the West, which in the early 1980s were close to \$1,220 million; Lampe 1996, 273.

69 "Mladi vole romantične junake" (Young prefer romantic heroes), *Svijet*, Zagreb (1968, no. 21), 34–35.

70 "Najgore riječi: 'Nemam ništa!'" In that article, *Večernji list* reported that 544,000 Yugoslavs had to pay customs duties while passing the border in 1975, and that 17,117 of them were not willing to declare goods to be taxed, thus breaking the law. Those citizens had to pay fines, and goods with a total value of sixty million dinars were taken from them.

71 Similarly, Adele Marie Barker states: “It was precisely in this area of the unofficial that most of Soviet life flourished. It was here in the everyday that the grand master narrative of the Soviet Union moved in a Bakhtinian sense from the monologic to the polylogic as Soviet citizens proceeded to reformulate or subvert it—not with the intent of bringing down the system, but simply to buy a decent pair of shoes” (Barker 1999, 22).

72 On the practices of shopping tourism in the Hungarian context, see Dessewffy 2002.

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East Germany

Die Bekleidung [Clothing], fashion bimonthly, 1950s

Berliner Zeitung [Berlin newspaper], daily, 1950s

DDR Revue [later, *GDR Revue*], illustrated monthly, 1950s–1970s

Frau von heute [Woman of today], 1940s–1950s

Neues Deutschland [New Germany], daily, 1950s–1960s

Praktische Mode [Practical fashion], 1950s–1960s

Sibylle, fashion monthly, 1956–1989

Czechoslovakia

Květi [Flowers], illustrated weekly, 1960s

Tvar [Form], applied arts journal, monthly, 1940s–1960s

Vlasta (women's weekly), 1960s–1970s

Žena a móda [Woman and fashion], fashion monthly, 1949–1980

Hungary

Asszonyok [Ladies], 1946–1949

Ez a divat [This is fashion], fashion monthly, 1950–1989

Hungarian Review, illustrated monthly, 1950s–1960s

Nők lapja [Women's journal], women's weekly, 1949–1989

Pesti divat [Budapest fashion], fashion quarterly, 1970s–1980s

Poland

Polska [Poland], illustrated monthly, 1950s–1980s

Świat [World], illustrated weekly, 1951–1956

Świat Mody [World of fashion], fashion magazine, 1960s–1970s

Soviet Union

Delegatka [Female delegate], women's monthly, 1923–1929

Iskusstvo odevat'sia [Art of dressing], fashion monthly, 1928–1929

Krasnaia niva [Red field], illustrated weekly, 1920s–1930s

Krokodil [Crocodile], satirical weekly, 1920s–1989

Moda stran socializma [Fashion of the socialist countries], annual, 1959–2000

Modeli sezona [Prototypes of the seasons], fashion biannual, 1938–1989

Ogonek [Little flame], illustrated weekly, 1923–1989

Poslednie mody [Latest fashions], fashion monthly, 1920s

Rabotnitsa [Working woman], women's weekly, 1923–1989

Shveinaia promyshlennost' [Clothing industry], 1930s

Soviet Union, monthly, 1950s and 1960s

Stakhanovets [Stakhanovites], monthly, 1930s

Udarnitsa Urala [The female Stakhanovite of the Urals], monthly, 1930s

USSR under Construction, monthly, 1930s and 1940s

Zhenskii zhurnal [Women's journal], women's monthly, 1926–1929

Zhurnal dlia khoziaek [The housewives' magazine], fashion monthly, 1920s

Zhurnal mod [Fashion journal], fashion monthly, 1945–1989

Yugoslavia

Globus [Globe], illustrated weekly, 1950s and 1960s

Naša moda [Our fashion], fashion monthly, 1946–1948

Svijet [World], women's biweekly, 1953–1989

Ukus [Taste], fashion monthly, 1940s

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