



# Ukrainian Fashion Houses as Centers of Soviet Fashion Representation

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The study examines Soviet fashion houses as fashion corporations with an extensive structure and a certain autonomy which served as centers for the development and representation of Soviet fashion. These state institutions were created in the capitals and large cities of the Soviet republics. The Moscow All-Union Fashion House acted as a methodological center for fashion houses of all Soviet republics. The Ukrainian SSR was one of the important centers of fashion development in the Soviet Union, and it included six general orientation and five specialized fashion houses, as well as the Ukrainian Institute of Assortment of Light Industry Products and Clothing Culture. Based on a wide range of archival sources and interviews with fashion house workers, the article reveals the structure and operation of Ukrainian fashion houses in the period between 1940 and 1991 and also examine their cooperative endeavors with garment enterprises and research institutions. The technology of clothing production by designers, the processes of approval to which these technologies were subjected by art councils, and the organization of exhibitions in the USSR and abroad are also considered.

Keywords: Soviet fashion, fashion house, light industry, Soviet Union, Soviet Ukraine, fashion corporation, art council.

As the nineteenth-century Russian playwright Anton Chekhov wrote in his comedy *The Wood Demon*, “In a human being everything should be beautiful: the face, the clothes, the soul, the thoughts.” Although Chekhov was not referring to the USSR and its fashion industry, his now famous saying served as a slogan for the so-called “new Soviet person.” The “new Soviet person,” a hard-working, selfless member of Soviet socialist society, was cast as the embodiment of the harmony of individual and societal interests. This person was supposed to express this harmony through his or her every act and accoutrement, including clothing, to which particular attention was devoted in the second half of the twentieth century.

Soviet fashion is a complex phenomenon which combines cultural, social, aesthetic, and ideological aspects. Clothing is arguably also one of the most important symbolic languages of a given society, and the production of clothing

is a way to control the appearance and visual vocabulary of the population, as well as a way to interfere in everyday life through a regulated market for fashion products.

Today, Soviet fashion is being made the subject of study by representatives of various disciplines, including art criticism, culturology, philosophy, and sociology. Rather recently, it also began to be actively studied by historians. Among the studies on the history of Soviet Ukrainian fashion, it is worth noting the works of Ukrainian culturologists Zenovia Tkanko and Maria Kostel'na.<sup>1</sup> In her book *Fashion in Ukraine of the Twentieth Century*, Tkanko points out the most distinctive features of the styles and trends that influenced the development of Ukrainian fashion.<sup>2</sup> Kostel'na focuses in her research on the ethnic direction in the work of Ukrainian fashion houses designers who were active in the middle of the twentieth century or the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>3</sup> She attempts to reconstruct the stages of development of Ukrainian fashion houses, focusing on the evolution of the ethno-paradigms of the Kyiv, Lviv, Odesa, Kharkiv, and Donetsk schools of fashion design.<sup>4</sup> She also covers the creative path and the development of ethnic trends of Ukrainian designers such as Marta Tokar, Lidia Avdeeva, Hertz Mepen, and others. While both Tkanko and Kostel'na consider mainly the cultural aspects of the development of fashion trends, including the period of Soviet Ukraine, they also examine the distinctive elements of fashion development in Ukraine and Soviet light industry in general.

The works of the Russian historian Sergej Zhuravlev and the Finnish sociologist Jukka Gronow are significant for the study of the history of Soviet fashion.<sup>5</sup> Zhuravlev and Gronow consider the history of fashion industry development in the USSR and analyze changes in the attitudes of the authorities and society towards fashion.<sup>6</sup> Their works deal with various aspects of Soviet fashion, including the creation of the design system in Soviet Russia, discussions about fashion in the Soviet public discourse, individual tailoring and designing clothing based on the example of the State Department Store (GUM), and so on. Their detailed examination of the Tallinn House of Fashion Design,

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1 Tkanko, *Moda v Ukraïni*; Kostelna, "Tvorchist dizaineriv."

2 Tkanko, *Moda v Ukraïni*.

3 Kostel'na, "Tvorchist dizaineriv."

4 Ibid.

5 Gronow and Zhuravlev, *Moda po planu*; Gronow and Zhuravlev, *Fashion Meets Socialism*.

6 Ibid.

which is based on interviews and archival materials, is of particular value to the scholarship on the broader subject.<sup>7</sup>

Historians Larissa Zakharova and Natalia Lebina are also actively studying the fashion world of Soviet Russia, and Djurdja Bartlett and Judd Stitzel are studying socialist fashion as a phenomenon. Historian Larissa Zakharova has examined the trips taken by Soviet fashion designers to France and attempts to cooperate with the Parisian fashion house *Christian Dior*, and they have called attention to the significant French influence on fashion trends in the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup>

Natalia Lebina's works are dedicated primarily to the study of Soviet everyday life and the image of Soviet people, including aspects of their appearance, clothing, and behavior.<sup>9</sup> In the monograph *Man and woman: body, fashion, culture. The USSR – Then*, in which Lebina scrutinizes the relationship between a man and a woman from various perspectives, she also examines fashion as well.<sup>10</sup> Lebina also considers the activity of the All-Union Fashion House and the Leningrad House of Fashion Design, which is particularly important for this study.

In *Fashioning Socialism: Clothing, Politics, and Consumer Culture in East Germany*, German researcher Judd Stitzel thoroughly examines the emergence and development of the socialist fashion industry and analyzes discussions about the aesthetics of clothing, drawing on the example of East Germany.<sup>11</sup> Stitzel reveals the economic and political conditions under which the fashion industry in Germany operated.

*FashionEast: The Spectre that Haunted Socialism* by British researcher Djurdja Bartlett is dedicated to the phenomenon of socialist fashion. Bartlett considers the institutionalization of fashion and the formation of the “official socialist costume” as an ideological construct.<sup>12</sup> She also touches on the roles of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), within the framework of which the USSR also cooperated with the socialist countries in the formation of socialist fashion, where corporate ethics and culture were also visible. In addition to considering clothing design in the USSR, Bartlett also devotes considerable

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7 Gronow and Zhuravlev, *Moda po planu*, 320–44.

8 Zakharova, “Kazhdoy sovetskoy zhenshchine,” 339–66.

9 Lebina, *Povsednevnyaya zhizn'*; Lebina, *Muzhchina i zhenshchina*.

10 Lebina, *Muzhchina i zhenshchina*.

11 Stitzel, *Fashioning Socialism*.

12 Bartlett, *Fashion East*.

attention to Eastern European countries such as Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, the GDR, and Yugoslavia.

Thus, the research topic on which I focus in this inquiry is relevant and interdisciplinary and has broad potential for further research, though it has not yet gained the recognition it merits among professional historians. My inquiry is the first in the field to consider Ukrainian fashion houses as Soviet corporations responsible for representing fashion in Soviet Ukraine and abroad. Questions about fashion houses, the features of their internal structures, and the hierarchies within which they functioned remain poorly studied.

This paper is based on a wide range of sources, including archival documents, interviews, and periodicals. In particular, I have done considerable work in archives in Ukraine and Russia. The materials include documents from the Ministry of Light Industry, fashion houses, garment and shoe factories, tailor shops (*atel'ye mod*), department stores, and other institutions that were directly involved in the development and production of fashion goods. Especially valuable are the materials which were produced by the fashion houses, including documents on their organization and functioning, their trips abroad, exhibitions, and cooperative endeavors both within the republic and abroad.

However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, most of the materials on Ukrainian fashion houses disappeared, and they are not found in the state archives. For the time being, only two archival funds have been identified, namely for the Kyiv and Lviv Houses of Fashion Design. But they are incomplete and do not cover the entire period under study. In contrast, the All-Union Fashion House fund is available in a more extensive format at the Russian State Archive of Economics. Since the All-Union Fashion House was a methodological center for all the Soviet republics, its materials also contain aspects pertaining to corporate cooperation with Ukrainian fashion houses. Additional sources include private archives of fashion houses workers, which contain sketches, photos, documents, etc.

Interview materials are an important part of this paper. Since the interviews were done with fashion houses workers, the features and specifics of work in the fashion houses were shared firsthand by the interviewees. This made it possible to consider the subject from different perspectives, including the perspective of a clothing maker (*konstruktor odezhd*), a fashion designer (*kbudozhnik-modelyer*), a fabric artist (*kbudozhnik po tkanyam*), a clothing demonstrator (*demonstrator odezhd*), a chief art director (*glavnyy kbudozhbestvennyy rukovoditel*), the director of a fashion house, and the head of the raw materials rationing department.

These historical records are valuable sources, since very few “witnesses” were still alive and available for questioning. However, it should also be taken into account that the interviews were done several decades after the fashion houses closed, so respondents may tend to forget or miss some facts. Moreover, the current political situation and public opinion affect how the past is remembered and evaluated today. In some cases, there was a feeling that the people who were being interviewed were still afraid of State Security Committee (KGB) surveillance. For example, respondents refused to speak on tape about the illegal activities of fashion houses or some real statistical information. Against this background, an attempt was made to reach as many fashion houses workers and members of their professions as possible in order to collate the data and determine their relevance.

Regarding periodicals, the emphasis was on Ukrainian magazines, in particular the socio-political journal *Radianska zhinka* (Soviet Woman) and the fashion magazine *Krasa i moda* (Beauty and Fashion). They were two of the most popular and widely distributed magazines in Soviet Ukraine. In these magazines, reports were published on the latest achievements of the light industry in Ukraine and the functioning of fashion houses, and they also contained writings on the image of a modern fashionable person and certain fashion dogmas. The materials of the socio-political magazine *Rabotnitsa* (Worker) and the fashion magazine *Zhurnal mod* (Fashion Magazine) were also used, since they were the most popular such publications in the Soviet Union and contain valuable information on the general Soviet context.

### *The Soviet Fashion Concept*

From the second half of the twentieth century onwards, there were lively discussions in periodicals about the place of fashion in Soviet society, discussions which involved specialists from various fields.<sup>13</sup> As a result of these discussions, fashion was recognized as one of the components of the ideological education of the “Soviet person.” The concept of “Soviet” fashion began to be broadcast in every possible way, but primarily through periodicals. Based on periodicals and special literature about fashion by Soviet fashion experts, the characteristic features of “Soviet” fashion were simplicity, modesty, convenience, relevance,

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13 In particular, there was an active discussion in the magazine *Dekorativnoye iskusstvo SSSR* (entitled “Discussions about Fashion and Style”). The collection of articles “Fashion: pros and cons” about the role of fashion in Soviet society is also important to my inquiry.

sense of proportion, and good taste. Any slight deviation from the norm in clothing met with a negative assessment.

Emphasis was also placed on the availability of goods: “Dressing nicely does not mean wearing expensive things. Clothing should be inexpensive and elegant at the same time. After all, we create samples for workers.”<sup>14</sup> The fabric also did not have to be expensive, even when it was used to make samples which were used in international exhibitions: “Use of cheap colorful fabrics is very important for sewing because it makes clothes accessible to the general public.”<sup>15</sup>

Fashion was supposed to reflect the success of Soviet industry. At the same time, the concept of Soviet taste was being formed in the official discourse. It was believed that “the cultivation of taste is one of the important forms of struggle for the formation of Soviet socialist culture, for the cultural growth of all Soviet people.”<sup>16</sup> Taste was considered “inseparable from the general culture of a human,” and it was regarded as playing an important role in the regulation of consumer behavior and was therefore brought in line with Soviet values.<sup>17</sup>

The question of how to learn good taste was discussed in the pages of newspapers and magazines: “Taste is what we need today. Excess is bad.”<sup>18</sup> Periodicals received letters asking for help in understanding what “tastefully dressed” meant.<sup>19</sup> Sometimes, Soviet fashion designers or art historians personally answered these questions in the pages of magazines. In particular, the fashion designer of Kyiv Fashion House Natalia Kalashnikova advised readers to improve their knowledge of culture, visit museums and galleries, and read fiction to cultivate their tastes. “While visiting museums,” she advised, “one should pay attention to the color scheme of paintings and their composition, and one should look closely at the plastic expressiveness of sculptures. Clothing also ‘sculpts’ a person’s figure. It is necessary to read more fiction and to be interested in all branches of the arts, especially applied art. This will nurture an artistic sense, and then you can accurately identify everything that is marked by good taste, whether it is a painting, a sculpture, or a dress.”<sup>20</sup>

Many publications with characteristic headlines were devoted to the cultivation of taste and the art of dressing in the 1960s–1980s. I am thinking of

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14 “Mody,” 31.

15 Rovna, “Medali,” 32–33.

16 Zhukov, “Vospitaniye vkusa,” 159.

17 Ivanova, “Pro vykhovannia,” 22.

18 Mertsalova, “Chto chereschur,” 30.

19 Kalashnikova, “Yak odiahatys,” 30.

20 Ibid.

titles such as “Taste and Fashion,” “Needs, Tastes, Fashion,” etc.<sup>21</sup> Importance was attached not only to clothing, but also to manners, behavior, correct posture, and the ability to maintain a conversation. In one of the responses printed in the socio-political journal *Radianska zhinka* (Soviet Woman) to a reader’s letter, the author contended that “Tastefully selected clothes and shoes may look ridiculous if a person does not maintain his posture.”<sup>22</sup>

Advice on how to look beautiful was also given to men: “Dear men, look for it, try it out. The concept of ‘fashion,’ although feminine, applies equally to you.”<sup>23</sup> Referring to the “commandment” to men from the famous French couturier Pierre Cardin, one of the publications emphasized that “a tie which is too bright and expressive and immediately catches the eye is a man’s sin number one.”<sup>24</sup> The same was true of bright socks. Tips about fashion trends in men’s clothing often were made by professional Soviet men’s fashion designers.<sup>25</sup>

Considerable attention was also devoted to children’s clothes, because it was believed that one had to make an effort to begin cultivating good taste when a child was still in the cradle: “Have you noticed how a child reaches for a bright toy, a colorful scarf? Specialists, artists, and educators believe that this is the first manifestation of the aesthetic perception of the world. What about children’s clothes? They play perhaps the most important role in the complex process of crystallization of good taste.”<sup>26</sup> The fact that Ukrainian SSR had a separate fashion house, the Dnipropetrovsk House of Fashion Design, which specialized only in children’s clothing, offers clear testimony to the importance given to the concept of fashion in children’s garb.

One of the most important features of Soviet fashion was the appeal to folk traditions: “Although new equipment and new materials suggest and sometimes dictate new forms of clothing, we should not forget about the importance of nationality. The history of the traditional national costume has left us brilliant examples of the organic unity of the texture of the fabric and ornaments, decorations, a rich synthesis of delicate taste and culture of color. If you follow these patterns, study them thoroughly, our suit in modern processing will be safe from inconsistency, deliberateness, disharmony.”<sup>27</sup>

21 Bezvershuk, *Potrebnosti*; Golybina, *Vkus i moda*.

22 “Zovnishnii vyhlad,” 24.

23 “Cholovikam,” 33.

24 “Khochesh buty krasyvym?” 19.

25 Khokhlov, “Palta,” 19.

26 “Malechi,” 32.

27 Rovna, “Mody tsoho roku,” 30.

Soviet fashion designers collaborated with folk artists, studied national art, visited specialized museums and galleries, were inspired by natural materials, and created their collections on the basis of these influences. Folk clothing was based on the use of ancient ornaments, embroidery, lace, and sewing.<sup>28</sup> The originality and uniqueness of the clothing was seen in the appeals of folk motifs and the ways in which they were combined with newer fashion trends.

Another trend involved the use of motifs from narratives concerning the heroic past of the country, which included the sewing of women's coats with materials from military overcoats, hats in the form of helmets, *budyonovka* created according to the sketches of artist Victor Vasnetsov, etc.<sup>29</sup> It should be noted that the folk theme was relevant throughout the entire period under study. In the pages of women's magazines, in addition to a large number of publications concerning national traditions in clothing, quite often there were samples of folk clothing or national ornaments.<sup>30</sup>

The periodicals also systematically covered competitions for the best drawings of fabrics, clothing samples, knitwear, and hats using Ukrainian folk motifs. For example, in 1965, 72 enterprises in the textile industry and six republic fashion houses participated in such competitions. This shows a fairly high interest and involvement in similar events.<sup>31</sup>

Another feature of Soviet fashion was the creation of clothing ensembles. The ensemble signified a combination of things which were in harmony with one another in color, shape, and decoration. The ensemble was complemented with shoes, a hat, a bag, a scarf, and gloves. It was important to arrange the outfit according to the purpose (were they to be worn in the theater, during a visit to an exhibition, for a casual walk, etc.). The correct creation of an ensemble of clothes was also covered in the section of fashion tips for readers. Taisiya Rovna, a fashion consultant in the Kyiv Fashion House, offered the following suggestions in response to her own rhetorical question: "What makes up the ensemble? A coat and a dress, a coat and a suit, a coat and a blouse with a sundress or skirt, a suit and a blouse, a suit and a vest and a blouse, a jacket and a dress, a half-coat and trousers with a blouse, trousers, a blouse and a vest should be in harmony."<sup>32</sup> The development of the ensemble depended not only

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28 Rudenko, "Nevianucha krasa," 24–25.

29 Rovna, "Moda sohodni," 30–31.

30 Rovna, "Za narodnymi motyvamy," 33, "Vizerunky," 33.

31 Malikova, "Mody," 28–29.

32 Rovna, "Ansambl," 31–33.

on the tailoring of the clothes, but also on the proposals made by textile artists, shoemakers, fur masters, and headdress masters.

### *Soviet Fashion Corporations*

In the Soviet Union, a network of state institutions was created which was aimed at development of the fashion industry and its promotion and engaged in clothing production and the formation of the Soviet fashion concept (this network included fashion houses and research and oversight organizations).

Fashion houses were gradually created in all the Soviet republics with a methodological center in Moscow. They were divided into general orientation (houses of fashion design) and specialized (houses which focused on shoes, knitwear, leather goods, workwear, etc.). The first fashion house was opened in Moscow in 1934. With the outbreak of World War II, it was closed, only resuming its activity in 1944. The gradual restoration of clothing and shoe factories throughout the Soviet Union also began in the postwar period. In 1949, the Moscow Fashion House was reorganized into the All-Union Fashion House, and it gradually became a kind of fashion institute with a large number of services and divisions which dealt with the main theoretical, practical, and methodological aspects of fashion.<sup>33</sup>

In the period between 1944 and 1948, fashion houses were established in Kyiv, Leningrad, Minsk, and Riga. These institutions were merged into a single system, headed by the All-Union Fashion House in Moscow. At the beginning of 1949, twelve republican and regional fashion houses had been organized.<sup>34</sup> By the second half of the 1950s, there were 16 of them. In 1977, there were 38 fashion houses in the Soviet Union, 18 of which were in the RSFSR and seven of which were in the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>35</sup> There was by one house of fashion design in each of the other Soviet republics.<sup>36</sup> Thus, given the total number of fashion houses in Soviet Russia and Ukraine, it can be argued that these two republics were the centers of fashion development and promotion in the USSR. It is also worth considering that these republics had large territories and extensive light industry in general.

33 Strizhenova and Temerin, "Sovetskiy kostyum," 1.

34 Gronow and Zhuravlev, *Fashion Meets Socialism*, 79; Gronow and Zhuravlev, *Moda po planu*, 94.

35 The article indicates that Soviet Ukraine had seven fashion houses with a general orientation, but in fact there were six of them. Most likely, this imprecision is due to the fact that the specialized Republican House of Knitwear Models "Khreshchatyk" had a strong position and was often considered to have a general orientation.

36 "Ukraina," 25; "RSFSR," 23; "Sovetskoye modelirovaniye," 3.

In addition to large designing institutions such as fashion houses, there were research organizations that were also entrusted with the responsibilities of providing scientific and methodological guidance and coordinating the work of other fashion designing structures. These organizations included the All-Union Research Institute of the Garment Industry, the Special Art and Design Bureau, and the All-Union Institute for the Assortment of Light Industry Products and Clothing Culture.

The All-Union Research Institute of the Garment Industry was the main scientific institution in the Soviet Union. It dealt with virtually all issues concerning scientific and technological support for light industry. In particular, its functions included the improvement of technologies for design and tailoring, analysis of materials for manufacture, the study of the performance properties of clothing, rationing, making clothing production more efficient.<sup>37</sup>

The Special Art and Design Bureau (SHKB) was established in 1962. Its main tasks included the development of projects for mechanical engineering products and goods for cultural and household purposes, the generalization and promotion of best practices in the field of artistic design of industrial products, the preparation of proposals for phasing out products which were obsolete and unsatisfactory in terms of artistic design, and staging for the production of new types of goods which met modern expectations.<sup>38</sup>

It was this organization that developed a method which made it possible to create various samples, such as items of clothing, according to one basic form and a single constructive basis. According to the Bureau management, the constant renewal of collections through the use of new or different fabrics, décors, and the imaginative redesign of samples without the introduction of any fundamentally new cuts would allow the industry to rebuild easily and provide a wide variety of garments in stores.<sup>39</sup> Articles in periodicals were often dedicated to the study of the experiences of the Bureau's clothing department.<sup>40</sup>

The All-Union Institute for the Assortment of Light Industry Products and Clothing Culture (VIALegprom) was launched in the second half of the 1960s. The Institute studied the range of goods produced by light industry enterprises. It selected the best samples and made recommendations for their introduction, monitored the timely introduction of a new range of fabrics and light industry

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37 Gronow and Zhuravlev, *Moda po planu*, 134.

38 Volovich, "Spetsialnoye khudozhestvenno-konstruktorskoye byuro," 6.

39 Parmon, *Kompozitsiya kostyuma*, 128–29.

40 Efremova, "Modelyer rabotayet," 16–19.

products into mass production, and promoted the development of fashion in clothes and the artistic design of fabrics, shoes, and other light industry products.<sup>41</sup>

The Ukrainian Institute of Assortment of Light Industry Products and Clothing Culture (UIALegprom) was founded in 1977. It was entrusted with the task of coordinating the work of and providing methodological guidance for the creative team, which dealt with the creation of a new fashion range. The institute's responsibilities included studying the demands of buyers for light industry products, organizing advertising, and promoting products through television, radio, and print media, organizing art and technical councils, developing, in cooperation with research institutes and fashion design organizations, proposals for introducing a new range of fabrics and other materials clothing and footwear manufacture.<sup>42</sup> It should be noted that the Institute of Assortment of Light Industry Products and Clothing Culture operated only on the territory of the Ukrainian SSR and the RSFSR.

The fashion corporations described above interacted with each other, forming a single mechanism aimed at the development of the Soviet fashion industry. The approach to the design and creation of clothing was meticulous and thought-out to the smallest detail. At the same time, there was a high corporate culture at the all-union, republican, and local levels. Methodological meetings, contests and fashion shows, creative business trips, and employee exchanges were regularly held at the all-union and republican levels. For example, the All-Union Fashion House designer Vyacheslav Zaitsev often visited fashion houses in Soviet Ukraine, where he gave lectures and shared his experience in fashion design.<sup>43</sup>

To unite the team at the local level, joint creative trips were organized to cultural and historical places, as well as “skits” (*kapustniki*).<sup>44</sup> Designers were given creative days and had opportunities to go on creative business trips both within the country and abroad. There were cases when one specialist had the opportunity to work in three Ukrainian fashion houses (Lviv, Kharkiv, Kyiv).<sup>45</sup> The cohesion of the team is also indicated by the fact that when the new building of the Kyiv

41 RGAE Doklady, dokladnyye zapiski, spravki i pisma, napravlenyye v TsK KPSS po razvitiyu otrasley legkoy promyshlennosti (6 yanvarya – 11 sentyabrya 1965 goda), f. 198, op. 1, d. 85, l. 16.

42 “Moda i vyrobnytstvo,” 36.

43 UFHDA Uvarkina, interview, Kyiv, 2017; Avdeeva, interview, Kyiv, 2020.

44 A skit (*kapustnik*) is a comic performance based on humor and satire. In this case, there was a theme about the life of the collective of a fashion house, and some unusual cases were dramatized in a comic manner. The participants were employees at the fashion house.

45 Mikhail Bilas worked as the chief artistic director at different periods in the Lviv, Kyiv, and Kharkiv fashion houses. There is an art museum in his honor in Truskavets (Ukraine).

House of Fashion Design was being built, all employees tried to be involved in the process. At the same time, Svetlana Titova, the director of the fashion house, donated her precious jewelry, throwing it under the foundation of the new building of the fashion house as it was being laid. (Fig. 1.) All of the above served to build a sense of unity among the various colleagues and coworkers, and this made it possible to establish horizontal connections within the fashion house and between fashion houses both within the republic and at the all-union level.



Figure 1. Svetlana Titova (on the right), the director of the Kyiv House of Fashion Design, throws her precious jewelry under the foundation of the new building of the fashion house as it is being laid, 1973. (Private collection of the Kyiv Fashion House designer Lydia Avdeeva, with Lydia Avdeeva's permission)

## *Ukrainian Fashion Houses: Structure, Operation, and Cooperation*

### Opening

The Ukrainian SSR was one of the main centers of fashion development in the Soviet Union. There were six fashion houses located in the largest cities in Soviet Ukraine. The first house of fashion design, which was created in 1944, was in Kyiv.<sup>46</sup> Ten years later, the Lviv fashion house opened.<sup>47</sup> During the period of its existence, the Lviv fashion house was reorganized several times. In 1962, it

46 Kostel'na, "Dialnist ukrainskykh budynkiv modelei odiahu," 40.

47 LMA Zalesskaya, E. *Istoriya Lvovskogo Doma modeley odezhdy*, 1980, p. 3.

was transformed into the Design and Engineering Institute of Light Industry. Shoe and knitwear laboratories were opened at the institute, as was an artistic and experimental laboratory for creating sketches for fabrics, embroidery, lace, and various haberdashery and a laboratory for weaving and printing fabrics. In 1968, it was made back into a fashion house.<sup>48</sup> In the period beginning in 1958 and stretching to the end of the 1960's, Odesa, Donetsk, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk established their own fashion houses.<sup>49</sup> Much like during the Khrushchev period, the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s saw the opening of specialized fashion houses in the Ukrainian SSR as well.

Fashion houses with general orientation were entrusted with the task of designing and developing clothes for industrial production and making samples which would be used abroad as examples of the fashion work being done in the Soviet Union. It was also responsible for publishing in fashion magazines, holding fashion shows, and educating Soviet society by implementing the “correct,” ideologically consistent canons of Soviet fashion.

The specialized fashion houses, including the Republican House of Footwear Samples, the Republican House of Leather and Haberdashery Goods, the Republican House of Knitwear Samples “Khreshchatyk,” the Republican House of Workwear Samples, the Republican House of Model Household Items, served as supporting fashion organizations.<sup>50</sup> In practical terms, there was a need for them, because the main principle of creating fashion collections was the stylistic combination of all elements, or in other words, the creation of an ensemble (clothing, shoes, hats, leather goods).

Each Ukrainian general fashion house specialized in a unique range of products. For example, the Odesa House of Fashion Design worked on the creation of leisure clothes, Kharkiv fashion house focused on light women's dresses, Dnipropetrovsk on children and clothing for teenagers, and Donetsk on creating women's outerwear.<sup>51</sup> The Kyiv and Lviv fashion houses developed an entire product range and were the leading modeling centers of Soviet Ukraine.<sup>52</sup>

48 Ibid., p. 10.

49 TsDAVO Perepiska s Gosplanom USSR i drugimi respublikanskimi organizatsiyami po voprosam legkoy promyshlennosti, 19 iyulya – 15 dekabrya 1962, f. R–2, op. 10, d. 959, l. 54.

50 “Moda i vyrobnytstvo,” UFHDA Uvarkina, interview, Kyiv, 2017.

All these fashion houses, except for the Republican House of Household Models, were directly subordinate to the Ministry of Light Industry of the Ukrainian SSR.

51 LMA Nikiforuk, interview, Lviv, 2015; UFHDA Nikiforuk, interview, Lviv, 2018; Uvarkina, interview, Kyiv, 2017.

52 LMA Nikiforuk, interview, Lviv, 2015; “Moda i vyrobnytstvo;” “Zadum i vtilennia;” “Ukraina.”

It should be noted that such specialization by region was a feature of Ukrainian fashion houses.

According to Nadezhda Nikiforuk, the director of the Lviv House of Fashion Design, the Lviv institution was considered the leader in the field of clothing design in Soviet Ukraine.<sup>53</sup> In particular, this was influenced by its relative proximity to Poland, from where it was possible to be the first to get “information from all over the world,” as well as the generations of old Lviv masters who had significant experience in clothing design.<sup>54</sup> However, according to official documents, the Lviv fashion house was considered the second in the republic by capacity after the one in the capital.<sup>55</sup> It should also be emphasized that all fashion houses were directly subordinate to the Ministry of Light Industry of the Ukrainian SSR. The fact that two fashion houses were under the same leadership at once is a characteristic element of the Ukrainian fashion industry.

Constant competition between the Kyiv and Lviv fashion houses contributed to their transformation into fashion corporations which had a certain degree of autonomy and also exerted an influence on the development of fashion and fashion trends in Soviet Ukraine. This fact is also confirmed by the number of employees and their extensive structure. From the perspective of the total number of workers in fashion houses in 1962, the largest number of workers was in Lviv (370 people) and Kyiv (298 people) and the smallest was in Dnipropetrovsk (100 people).<sup>56</sup> This indicates the importance of these fashion houses.

## Structure and Operation

The structure of fashion houses was quite extensive and consisted of many departments and workshops.<sup>57</sup> Based on the example of the Lviv Fashion House, these included the departments of planning and production, supply and sales, implementation, culture and propaganda, design outerwear, light dresses, rationing of raw materials and the development of technical documentation, and experimental and methodological workshops.<sup>58</sup>

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53 LMA Nikiforuk, interview, Lviv, 2015.

54 LMA Nikiforuk, interview, Lviv, 2015; UFHDA Nikiforuk, interview, Lviv, 2018.

55 TsDAVO Peregiska s Gosplanom USSR i drugimi respublikanskimi organizatsiyami po voprosam legkoy promyshlennosti, 19 iyulya – 15 dekabrya 1962, f. R–2, op. 10, d. 959, l. 59–60.

56 *Ibid.*, l. 46.

57 LAD Prikazy po domu modeley za 1968 god, Labor Archive Department of the Lutsk District Council, f. 56, op. 1, d. 1, l. 16–31.

58 *Ibid.*

Separately, a department of so-called “exposition hall” (*demonstratsionnyy zal*) workers was created, where models were employed to wear garments and show them to the public). In 1968, 16 people were officially employed in this department, including two laboratory assistants and 14 models.<sup>59</sup> This fact indicates the relevance of this profession and its perception as a necessary position in fashion houses. In the employment record, the position was listed as a “clothing demonstrator.”<sup>60</sup> It should be emphasized that it was quite difficult to get this position, because alongside a given applicant’s appearance (including his or her measurements), his or her education, knowledge of languages, and reputation were also taken into consideration, as was the question of whether he or she belonged to the Communist Party. These various considerations were regarded as important because so-called clothing demonstrators often traveled abroad to show fashion collections, and they were expected to represent the country appropriately.<sup>61</sup>

Fashion shows were held both inside and outside the buildings of fashion houses. There were two halls in the houses of fashion design, the exhibition hall and the exposition hall. The exhibition hall was open daily, except on weekends, and it was accessible to the general public. Collections of fashionable clothes by seasons were shown in the exposition hall. These kinds of fashion shows were held for the Soviet population once a week.<sup>62</sup> Each fashion show was accompanied by comments from an art critic.<sup>63</sup> The art critic provided details for each item of clothing, indicating its style, fabric, the age for which it was sewn, where it could be worn, and what other garments and accessories it should be worn with.<sup>64</sup> A striking example is a shot from the film *The Diamond Hand* (*Brilliantovaya ruka*), directed by Leonid Gaidai, in which the art critic describes each item of clothing at a fashion show for the Soviet public. Such detailed information was needed in order to ensure that a woman who attended a particular show would understand which items would be most suitable for her and what things she might be able to sew at home on her own.<sup>65</sup> (Fig. 2–4.)

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59 Ibid., l. 30.

60 UFHDA Yasinskaya, interview, Kyiv, 2018.

61 UFHDA Uvarkina, interview, Kyiv, 2017.

62 UFHDA Avdeeva, interview, Kyiv, 2018.

63 LMA Zalesskaya, E. *Istoriya Lvovskogo Doma modeley odezhdy*, 1980, p. 13.

64 UFHDA Uvarkina, interview, Kyiv, 2017.

65 Ibid.



Figure 2. Exhibition hall of the Kyiv House of Fashion Design, 1964  
(TsDKFFA od. obliku 2–91364)



Figure 3. Fashion show at the Kyiv House of Fashion Design, 1965  
(TsDKFFA od. obliku 2–98033)



Figure 4. Fashion show at the October Palace of Culture in Kyiv, 1962  
TsDKFFA od. obliku 2–109980)

Visiting fashion shows were held in factories and plants, at universities, and at other public places. Soviet art critics and fashion designers often held lectures to familiarize the population with the latest trends and promote Soviet style and fashion. Based on archival materials, these visiting fashion shows were popular and in demand among Soviet citizens.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>66</sup> TsDAVO Perepiska s Gosplanom USSR i drugimi respublikanskimi organizatsiyami po voprosam legkoy promyshlennosti, 19 iyulya – 15 dekabrya 1962, f. R–2, op. 10, d. 959, l. 58.

The department of Culture and Clothing Propaganda was in charge of organizing fashion shows and thematic lectures which influenced the formation of perceptions concerning fashion among Soviet citizens. The department consisted of art critics and fashion consultants who systematically prepared the necessary materials for the print media, radio, and television.<sup>67</sup> It also contained the most recent foreign literature on fashion and fashion magazines, which were translated, carefully reviewed, and scrutinized by the fashion consultants.<sup>68</sup> The staff also included a photographer who regularly shot fashion shows and work processes and took pictures of items of clothing for periodicals published in the republic, primarily fashion magazines. The Lviv house of fashion design had its own photo laboratory, which was headed by Tanas Nikiforuk.<sup>69</sup>

Fashion magazines and booklets in which new fashion trends were popularized among the Soviet population were mainly published in the capital by the Kyiv House of Fashion Design. Certain attempts to organize the publication of the *Zhurnal mod* (Fashion Magazine) were made by the Lviv House of Fashion Design.<sup>70</sup> In 1959, the fashion house published two editorials of the fashion magazine, but due to the decision according to which fashion magazines could only be published by the fashion houses which were regarded as important on the level of the entire republic, publication of the magazine ceased.<sup>71</sup> This suggests the dominance of the fashion house in the capital. However, the Kyiv Fashion House did not publish a fashion magazine with circulation as wide as, for example, the Tallinn *Siluet*. Basically, the magazines published by the Kyiv Fashion House were small booklets. The most popular Ukrainian fashion magazine was *Krasa i moda* (Beauty and Fashion), published by the publishing house *Reklama* (Advertising), which was also in Soviet Ukraine. Most of the items of clothing featured in the magazine were designed by the fashion houses in the capital and made in the Kyiv clothing factories. This once again underlines the dominance of the fashion houses in Kyiv. Other fashion houses were able to make patterns and illustrations of the new clothing models that were sold to the public. Also,

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67 DAK Peregiska s Glavnym Upravleniyem shveytnoy promyshlennosti po voprosam proizvodstvennoy deyatel'nosti Doma modeley (19 fevralya – 15 dekabrya 1955 goda), f. R-1219, op. 1, d. 68, l. 8.

68 DAK Spravka o rabote Doma modeley za 1955 god, f. R-1219, op. 1, d. 69, l. 42.

69 LMA Zaleskaya, E. Istoriya Lvovskogo Doma modeley odezhdy, 1980, p. 11.

70 TsDAGO Pisma redaktsiy zhurnalov i izdatelstv o rabote respublikanskikh zhurnalov, f. 1, op. 70, d. 2385, l. 16.

71 LMA Zaleskaya, E. Istoriya Lvovskogo Doma modeley odezhdy, 1980, p. 9.

there was a practice of using periodicals to inform the Soviet citizenry about the purchase of clothing patterns in a particular house of fashion design.<sup>72</sup>

### *The Role of the Designer and the Creation of Fashion Collections*

Fashion designers played an important role in the formation of collections and fashion trends in general. Since the task was to create their own Soviet fashion (without blindly copying Western trends), designers had to create original and distinctive items. Artists developed motifs and patterns drawing on folk art, in particular, and actively designed folk themes. For example, Lviv fashion house artists went to the villages in the Carpathian Mountains, where they collected materials and studied embroidery, fabrics, and jewelry and created a folk costume based on what they had found. They were assisted by employees of the Lviv Museum of Ukrainian Art, the Museum of Ethnography and Arts and Crafts, and art critics from the House of Folk Art. They organized classes on various types of Ukrainian arts and crafts, such as embroidery, weaving, knitting, and needlecraft.<sup>73</sup>

In addition, Lviv artists drew sketches for fabrics and independently produced fabrics on hand machines, which made these fabrics unique.<sup>74</sup> They also engaged in cooperative endeavors with masters of folk art from Kosovo.<sup>75</sup> In 1959, the Lviv fashion house established its own weaving workshop, where hand-made looms were used to produce fabrics in the Ukrainian folk style, both decorative and for tailoring.<sup>76</sup> The garments and fabric created in this experimental textile laboratory were presented at prestigious international exhibitions (in cities such as Marseille, Tokyo, and Leipzig).<sup>77</sup>

Fashion designers who had higher special education and proved to be capable artists in the creation of new items of clothing for mass production or as samples of presentation were given a creative day once a week.<sup>78</sup> On this day, they did not come to work. Rather, they were able to visit art museums or galleries, work outside or in the library, and spend time outdoors or in the mountains.<sup>79</sup>

72 “Dytiachi mody,” 31.

73 LMA Zalesskaya, E. *Istoriya Lvovskogo Doma modeley odezhdy*, 1980, p. 7.

74 *Ibid.*

75 UFHDA Tokar, interview, Lviv, 2018.

76 LMA Zalesskaya, E. *Istoriya Lvovskogo Doma modeley odezhdy*, 1980, p. 8; Tokar, *Akvarel*, 10.

77 Tokar, *Akvarel*, 11.

78 LAD Prikazy po domu modeley za 1968 god, f. 56, op. 1, d. 1, l. 36–37.

79 UFHDA Uvarkina, interview, Kyiv, 2017.

In short, they did everything that might inspire them to create a new collection of clothes. Once in six months, they had to report on their creative work. Those who did not report on time were deprived of the right to use their creative days for the next six months.<sup>80</sup> To increase their skills and further the improvement of the designs for sample items of clothing and developed sketches, fashion designers were also provided with studio days.<sup>81</sup> Advanced training courses were held in which participants studied the composition of a drawing,<sup>82</sup> for instance, and there were creative business trips, after which reports were submitted.<sup>83</sup>

To maintain fair competition among designers, contests were often held for the best samples of new garments. There was a book of reviews at the exhibitions in which visitors could write their impressions of a certain item, often noting the creator of the garment in question.<sup>84</sup> Competitions for the best item of clothing were also held among light industry workers at both the all-union Soviet level and within the republic.

In the process of preparing the collection, fashion designers worked very closely with clothing makers and clothing demonstrators. Fashion collections were developed according to certain regulations. The director of the fashion house and the chief art director were responsible for the final results.<sup>85</sup> Collections were divided into industrial and exhibition formats. Industrial collections served as a guide for garment enterprises and were aimed at introducing the items in the collection into mass production within the country. Exhibition collections were also regarded as a forward-looking undertaking (*perspektivnaya kolleksiya*). Samples of exhibition clothing were included in seasonal collections for display to the public and for international fashion shows and exhibitions.

Particular importance was attached to the exhibition collections, because the garments made by Ukrainian fashion houses represented not only the republic, but the whole country. The best fashion designers were selected for the production of such collections. For example, in the Kyiv House of Fashion Design, two leading fashion designers were always engaged in making sketches for

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80 LAD Prikazy po domu modeley za 1968 god, f. 56, op. 1, d. 1, l. 37.

81 Ibid.

82 Ibid., l. 71–72.

83 DAK Otchety o tvorcheskoy komandirovke po obmenu opytom v Vengerskuyu Narodnuyu Respubliku i gorod Rigu, 1959 god, f. R-1219, op. 1, d. 142, l. 1–24; DAK Otchety o tvorcheskoy komandirovke po obmenu opytom v gorod Moskvu i Leningrad, 1960 god, f. R-1219, op. 1, d. 161, l. 1–12.

84 DAK Kniga otzyvov i predlozheniy za 1951 god, f. R-1219, op. 1, d. 25, l. 1–18.

85 UFHDA Yasinskaya, interview, Kyiv, 2018.

exhibition collections, namely Lydia Avdeeva and Hertz Mepen.<sup>86</sup> The sketches made by the designers were approved by the art council. After the sketches were approved, the designer and constructor in the team began to create items of clothing. During this time, clothing demonstrators constantly came to try on the clothes which were being made by the designers involved in the process. Each piece of clothing existed in only one version and was sewn for a specific clothing demonstrator. When the collection was completed, a mini-show of clothes was held with the participation of demonstrators, where the art council approved the final products. The best items were selected for inclusion in the final collection, and things with certain defects were eliminated.<sup>87</sup>

The Art Council of the Ministry of Light Industry of the USSR was responsible for all areas of light industry. Art councils for various branches of light industry were singled out separately from it. In 1967, there were 17 such art councils in various fields.<sup>88</sup> For example, there were art councils on silk fabrics, hats, garments, knitwear and hosiery, footwear, textile haberdashery, etc. Usually, the council consisted of 25 to 40 people. It included a chairman, a deputy chairman, the executive secretary, and members of the art council.<sup>89</sup> The members of the art council were representatives of the Ministry of Trade of the USSR, the State Planning Committee, the Planning and Production Department of the Ministry of Light Industry of the Ukrainian SSR, research institutes, the Republican House of Assortment, sewing and specialized fashion houses, and large sewing enterprises.<sup>90</sup>

In the fashion houses, art councils for garments, divided into big and small, were held. Big councils met approximately once a month and included economists, representatives of trade, the Ukrainian Research Institute of Light Industry, the State Planning Committee, chief art directors, fashion designers, and clothing makers.<sup>91</sup> Small councils met as needed and included representatives of a one of the fashion houses, specifically the director, the chief art director, the chief clothing maker, and fashion designers. They discussed and resolved whatever issues needed to be addressed. There were also councils at sewing enterprises.

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86 UFHDA Avdeeva, interview, Kyiv, 2020.

87 UFHDA Yasinskaya, interview, Kyiv, 2018.

88 DALO Prikazy i direktivnyye ukazaniya Ministerstva legkoy promyshlennosti za 1967 god, f. R–2002, op. 1, d. 352, l. 10–12.

89 *Ibid.*, l. 12–32.

90 *Ibid.*

91 *Ibid.*, l. 17a–18.

It should be pointed out that new items of clothing were not released without the approval of the art council. Furthermore, samples of clothing images of which had been published in periodicals had to be pre-reviewed and



Figure 5. Meeting of the members of the Art and Technical council of the Kyiv garment factory *Zhovten'*, 1983 (TsDKFFA od. obliku 0–207692)



Figure 6. Fashion designers discuss a new collection at the Kyiv House of Fashion Design, 1967 (TsDKFFA od. obliku 2–111619)

approved by the art council before being published. (Fig. 5–6.) These facts show the significant influence of art councils on the development of fashion in the country, and they also offer a grasp of the bureaucracy of the processes.

### *Foreign Fashion Exhibitions*

The Lviv and Kyiv Houses of Fashion Design actively participated in foreign exhibitions and fashion shows and successfully represented the Soviet Union on the international level. For example, they were involved in creating a collection of clothing for fashion shows in countries such as Canada, France, the USA, Belgium, and Argentina.<sup>92</sup> There were cases when Ukraine and Ukrainian fashion were singled out separately, for instance at the World Exhibition in Montreal (Canada) in 1967.<sup>93</sup> The Soviet Union was represented by four fashion houses (Kyiv, All-Union, Leningrad, and Riga) and three socialist republics (Ukrainian, Russian, and Latvian). For the collection of fashion clothing of the Ukrainian SSR, 160 ensembles of women's and men's clothing were made. The collection was based on the use of folk clothing motifs from various regions and districts of Ukraine. Over the course of a month and a half, the Kiev Fashion House held 80 fashion shows, and a film was made about Ukraine and Ukrainian fashion.<sup>94</sup>

One finds evidence of great interest in the Ukrainian collection in the 383 instances of positive feedback in the guestbook from different countries, including the USA, Canada, England, France, Switzerland, and Argentina. There were also many articles in the foreign press, for example, in the newspapers *Montreal Star*, *La Presse*, and *Ottawa Citizen*.<sup>95</sup> In particular, attention was focused on the modernness of Ukrainian fashion. According to an article in the *Montreal Star* entitled “Kiev fashions ‘play’ to a crowded Expo house,” “the colors might have been considered conservative by Western tastes, but most of the designs were up to any Paris or New York standards.”<sup>96</sup> In an article entitled “La mode de Kiev: plus americaine que cosaque,” correspondent Michele Boulva pointed out that “the typical Russian or Cossack fashion, which is so popular to meet,

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92 UFHDA Avdeeva, interview, Kyiv, 2020; LMA Zalesskaya, E. *Istoriya Lvovskogo Doma modeley odezhdyy*, 1980, p. 14.

93 TsDAVO Spravka o demonstratsii modeley odezhdyy v Sovetskom pavilone na Vsemirnoy vystavke v gorode Monreale (Kanada) Kiyevskogo Doma modeley USSR v period s 25 iyulya po 5 sentyabrya 1967 goda, f.572, op. 4, d. 332, l. 1–78.

94 *Ibid.*, l. 1–3.

95 *Ibid.*, l. 9.

96 *Ibid.*, l. 11.

has almost disappeared. According to the fashion show in the Russian pavilion, the American and European influence is felt in most of the items presented.<sup>97</sup> Thus, on the international level, Ukrainian fashion was identified by its use of folk traditions combined with modern forms and silhouettes.

### *Cooperation*

When creating collections, fashion houses collaborated with other Ukrainian light industry enterprises. These enterprises included specialized fashion houses (footwear, knitwear) and related light industry enterprises. Such enterprises provided fabrics for creating fashion clothes, as well as additions to clothing ensembles (shoes, accessories).<sup>98</sup> In general, Ukrainian designers preferred to work with domestic fabrics and materials, so each fashion house collaborated with certain textile and related enterprises when creating their collections.<sup>99</sup> In particular, this was due to the orientation to the domestic market and well-developed Ukrainian light industry.

There was another option for cooperation which involved the development of technical documents and the implementation of fashion houses' designs into the mass production of clothing.<sup>100</sup> The technical documentation consisted of patterns and sewing technology for a certain product.<sup>101</sup> Annually, more than 70 percent of the entire industrial collection (technical documentation) was made in fashion houses in the republic.<sup>102</sup>

It should be emphasized that such documentation was not free of charge, but agreements were concluded and a fixed fee was set for the development of a certain product. Thus, this was one of the ways in which fashion houses earned compensation. It is noteworthy that Ukrainian fashion houses were not limited in their cooperative endeavors to sewing enterprises from their regions.<sup>103</sup> For example, as of 1970, the Odesa House of Fashion Design had provided technical

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97 Ibid., l. 14.

98 Ibid., l. 4–7.

99 UFHDA Avdeeva, interview, Kyiv, 2020.

100 DAK Materialy (akty, otchety) po okazaniyu pomoshchi shveynym fabrikam Ukrainy za 1954 god, f. R–1219, op. 1, d. 62, l. 1–192; DAK Materialy okazaniya pomoshchi shveynym fabrikam i otchety po komandirovkam za 1957 god, f. R–1219, op. 1, d. 113, l. 1–27.

101 LMA Nikiforuk, interview, Lviv, 2015.

102 “Moda i vyrobnytstvo,” 36.

103 UFHDA Mateyko, interview, Lviv, 2018; Nikiforuk, interview, Lviv, 2018.

documentation for 54 garment enterprises throughout the Ukrainian SSR.<sup>104</sup> In contrast, the system of regional consolidation for the provision of technical documentation was relevant for fashion houses in the Russian SSR.<sup>105</sup>

Furthermore, Ukrainian fashion houses were able to conclude contracts with sewing enterprises both throughout the territory of the Ukrainian SSR and in other republics of the Soviet Union, as well as with socialist countries.<sup>106</sup> However, this mainly applied to the Kyiv and Lviv fashion houses. Quite often, fashion designers and clothing makers and engineers from the production department visited sewing enterprises to provide practical assistance in the manufacture of certain items of clothing.<sup>107</sup>

It should be noted that the vast majority of garment and knitting enterprises in the Ukrainian SSR had their own experimental shops, laboratories, and sections which were also engaged in the development and creation of new items and styles of clothing.<sup>108</sup> For instance, the state audit of 1962 showed that the Vorovsky Sewing Association in Odessa had its own experimental workshop where 52 people were employed, including 13 designers and clothing makers. At this time, Kharkiv had experimental sewing laboratories in 14 out of 15 sewing enterprises, where 53 fashion designers and clothing makers were employed.<sup>109</sup> The situation was similar in Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kyiv, Lviv, and other Ukrainian cities.

In addition, some factories were able to cooperate directly (legally or illegally) with foreign enterprises. According to archival materials, the Lviv garment factory Mayak tried to cooperate with the United States in 1963 (Maidenform, Phoenix Clothes firms).<sup>110</sup> Based on oral history materials, the Tinyakov Kharkiv garment factory sewed clothes for France, and the Lviv shoe company Progress sold shoes for the GDR in the 1980s.<sup>111</sup> As Kharkiv resident Mikhail Stanchev recalls, “[o]nce I went to Lille in France. We were in a sewing shop, where we were

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104 Oleksiienko, “Navit u liutomu,” 31.

105 Gronow and Zhuravlev, *Moda po planu*, 482.

106 TsDAVO Perepiska s Gosplanom USSR i drugimi respublikanskimi organizatsiyami po voprosam legkoy promyshlennosti, 19 iyulya – 15 dekabrya 1962, f. R–2, op. 10, d. 959, l. 50.

107 Fedosiieva, “Donetskyi budynok modelei,” 32; UFHDA Mateyko, interview, Lviv, 2018; Nesmiyan, interview, Kyiv, 2018.

108 TsDAVO Perepiska s Gosplanom USSR i drugimi respublikanskimi organizatsiyami po voprosam legkoy promyshlennosti, 19 iyulya – 15 dekabrya 1962, f. R–2, op. 10, d. 959, l. 46.

109 Ibid., l. 47.

110 DALO Perepiska direkcii firmy ‘Mayak’ s inostrannymi firmami za 1963 god, f. R–2002, op. 1, d. 55, l. 4–5.

111 UFHDA Stanchev, interview, Kharkiv, 2014; Tokar, interview, Lviv, 2018.



Figure 7. Focus on the number of items of clothing produced.  
The leaders of the Communist labor of the Vorovsky Odessa Sewing Association,  
who exceeded the norm in terms of the number of items of clothing, 1962  
(TsDKFFA od. obliku 2–75686)

encouraged to buy a suit according to French fashion. However, I then heard someone say, ‘Do not rush to buy, it is all made in Kharkiv on Tynyakovka.’”<sup>112</sup>

Though garment factories generally used the materials produced by the fashion houses, clothing samples could often differ from the originals. This was particularly influenced by the availability of the necessary fabric, accessories, and equipment and the production capacity at a given factory, as well as the amount of time allocated for the manufacture of a certain item of clothing.<sup>113</sup> It should be noted that there was a disparity in the development of heavy and light industries in the Soviet Union. Hence, light industry suffered from insufficient capacity and technical backwardness of the technological base. In addition, not all garment factories were able to sew clothing prototypes in the version prescribed in the technical documentation due to a lack of necessary materials.

As a result, a given sample was adapted to the production conditions at the factory and to the available fabrics and accessories. In addition, there was a stronger focus on quantitative indicators than on qualitative ones in the planned Soviet economy. (Fig. 7.) The caricature on this topic from the Ukrainian satirical

112 UFHDA Stanchev, interview, Kharkiv, 2014.

113 Bitekhtin, “Trudnosti shveyного.”

magazine *Perets*' (Pepper) is telling. (Fig. 8.) In this depiction, an item of clothing introduced in a fashion house and the same item of clothing in a garment factory differ greatly.<sup>114</sup>

It should also be noted that the consumption of raw materials and fabrics at light industry enterprises was subjected to control. In particular, there was a Laboratory for Rationing Raw Materials and Fabrics with authority within the republic located on the territory of the Kyiv House of Fashion Design. It was entrusted with the task of analyzing the consumption of materials in garment factories. Laboratory specialists (an engineer and a fabric distributor) visited textile factories and checked the consumption of fabric for garments

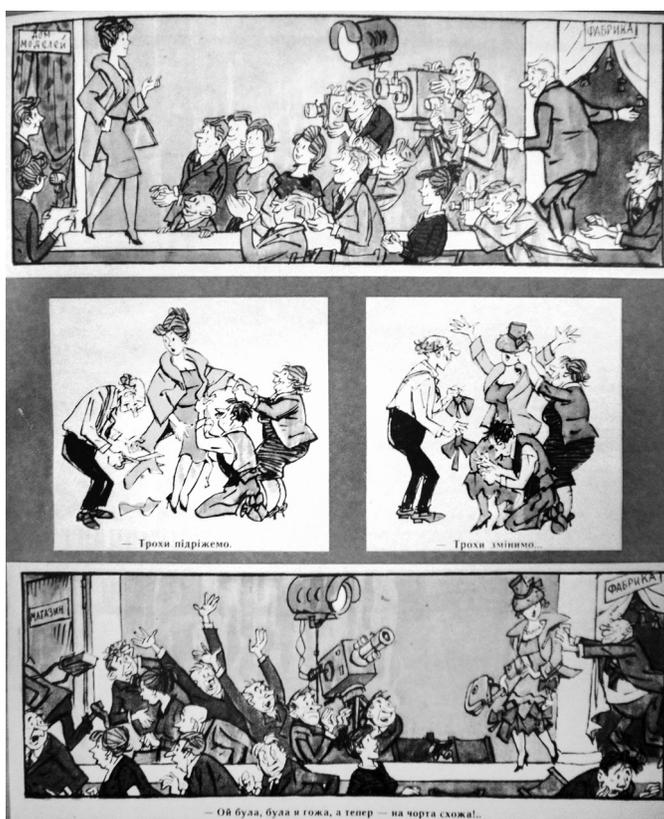


Figure 8. A caricature from the satirical magazine *Perets*' (cover) showing the contrast between an item of clothing as presented by a fashion house and the same item of clothing in use after production in a garment factory, 1965

114 *Perets*', 1.

produced by enterprises. If the amount of fabric consumed exceeded the norm, the specialists offered their own cutting system, which was more economical. Thus, the overall savings that the factory could achieve were revealed.<sup>115</sup> In turn, the factory was obliged to comply with the laboratory's recommendations.

### *Conclusion*

Fashion in the USSR underwent a gradual transformation from something which was perceived as negative by the Soviet authorities to something which was perceived as positive and having a role in the evolution of a socialist society, though this process was admittedly complex. Soviet fashion was opposed to Western "bourgeois" fashion and had a clear ideological tone. Through the development and creation of "socialist" fashions, the Soviet authorities sought to show the advantages of the USSR over the capitalist countries not only in heavy but also in light industry.

As of the second half of the 1940s, the active development of light industry in the Soviet Union and the Ukrainian SSR in particular was a characteristic feature. Several state institutions were created for the development of the fashion industry and its promotion in Soviet society (fashion houses, research and control organizations). Fashion houses were given a crucial role. They were the main fashion corporations responsible for Soviet fashion's image both within the country and abroad. Methodological meetings, fashion shows and contests, creative business trips, and employee exchanges were regularly held at the all-union, republic, and local levels.

The Ukrainian SSR developed an extensive system of clothing design, which included the Ukrainian Institute of Light Industry and Clothing Culture and six general orientation and five specialized fashion houses. This fact indicates that the Ukrainian SSR was one of the main centers of clothing design in the Soviet Union. Along with the development of technical documentation and new clothing samples for introduction into mass production, the fashion houses produced exhibition samples that were part of the seasonal collections for public display within the Soviet Union and at international fashion shows and clothing exhibitions.

Art councils played a crucial role in shaping the fashion trends and developing Soviet fashion in general. They included representatives of the Ministry of

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115 UFHDA Uvarkina, interview, Kyiv, 2017.

Trade, the Ministry of Light Industry, the State Planning Committee, research institutions, fashion houses, and big garment factories. All clothing samples had to be checked given approval by the art council before they were released and before images of them were published in magazines. This indicates the significant influence of the art councils on the development of fashion in the country, as well as the bureaucratization of the process and strict censorship of this direction.

Fashion houses served as clothing design centers and at the same time acted as fashion promoters for the Soviet citizenry. They regularly presented new fashion designs and developed permanent collections of new items of clothing, which were displayed in their exhibition halls. They also organized group trips to factories, plants, and institutes, where they showed their new fashion collections and made reports on how to dress tastefully.

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