A program aiming at satisfying the Soviet people's material needs is well known as one of the ambitious projects of the Khrushchev era. Public speeches of the Soviet leader on this subject (including the famous remark 'overtake and surpass the United States') contributed to some stigmatization of the political significance of this campaign in the context of the Cold War and the 'competition of two systems'. The idea of constructing a society of abundance legitimized consumption and became a way of affirming the superiority of the socialist regime. This change in Soviet policy had a number of different reasons. Firstly, during the World War II, many Soviet citizens became aware, for the first time, of the gap in living standards between the USSR and Europe. Secondly, the hardships experienced during the war and post-war period made the state pay attention to the reconstruction of the country, and the amelioration of the supply problems faced by the population regarding consumer goods. This attention can be seen in the emergence of the first project of reforms in the Central Committee of the Communist Party at the end of the 1940s.\textsuperscript{1} Thirdly, improving living standards was seen as a way to persuade people of the advantages of Socialism, the prestige of which had been undermined by the revelations of de-Stalinization.

However, illusions were shattered rather quickly: the increase in prices announced 31 May 1962 followed by Novocherkassk events (where a meeting of protest of several thousand people encountered on the armed troupes who shot the participants) led to the obvious failure of this pretentious program in the field of food consumption. But what were its results in the field of clothing consumption? What did the state do to provide the population with clothes and what kind of clothes? How did it evaluate the consumers' needs in durable goods and which of them did it intend to satisfy? And how did the consumer

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{*} This paper was written in the beginning of the 2000 and its various parts were published in Zakharova (2011); Zakharova (2013), 402–435; Zakharova (2010), 393–426 and Zakharova (2007), 54–80.}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1} Pyzhikov (2002), 18.
behave in reaction to the policy of production and system of distribution of these goods?

In order to answer these questions, let's see first how Soviet economists defined the norms of clothing consumption. It is also necessary to review all the opportunities that ordinary Soviet citizens had to procure clothes. It will help us to evaluate the efficiency of the program aiming at satisfying the people's material needs to study legal and illegal consumer strategies and the state's actions to promote the former and constrain the latter. Furthermore, the correlation between socio-economic factors and the choice of consumer strategies will be analysed, essentially on the basis of income materials from the Leningrad Statistic Department (a branch of the Central Department of Statistics – TsSU which was a sort of Ministry). It is also necessary to consider the influence of cultural factors on consumer strategies. Based on interviews with consumers of the 1950s and 1960s, this part of the research aims to find some 'patterns' of consumption or consumer cultures combining different strategies. Finally, consideration will be given to the relationship between mechanisms of fashion and 'patterns' of consumption.

Evaluation of Needs and the Theory of Socialist Consumption

Despite contradictory official attitudes towards consumption, which was damned and rehabilitated several times during the Soviet period, the state had paid great attention to what Soviet citizens had consumed ever since the 1930s. At that time the Statistic Department put its forces to the front of the population's budget survey.2 This survey was continued after the war and in to the 1950s and 1960s; it had enormous theoretical and practical significance. Thus, it was necessary, firstly, for the evaluation of consumption in different professional milieus, secondly, for the elaboration of plans of consumer goods production, and thirdly, for the formulation of the theory of socialist consumption.

Such a theory was not a completely utopian project because it was based on concrete facts from Soviet reality. When some Soviet economists (Nazarov, Shvyrkov, Shnirlin and others) analysed the budget survey’s data using the methods of western econometrics, they discovered that the expenditure on clothes did not increase proportionally to income growth. When income reached a certain level, expenditure on clothes stopped increasing and became stable. This observation served as a basis for economists from nineteen institutes for scientific research to elaborate a 'rational norm' of clothing

2 Moine (2003), 481–515.