

## ANALYSIS OF THE IMPACT OF SECOND WORLD WAR ON FASHION AND CONSUMER PRACTICES

Daria Yu. Ermilova<sup>1</sup>, Mariyat I. Alibekova<sup>2</sup>, Denis I. Eryomkin<sup>3</sup>,  
Nadezhda B. Lyakhova<sup>1\*</sup>, Elena N. Sorokotyagina<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Russian State University of Tourism and Service, Cherkizovo, Moscow region, Russia

<sup>2</sup>Kosygin Russian State University, Moscow, Russia

<sup>3</sup>Moscow Art Industrial Institute, Moscow, Russia

**Abstract.** The article is devoted to the study of fashion and consumer practices during World War II. The objectives of the study are to consider how rationing influences people's attitudes towards clothing. Wartime fashion is investigated in the case study of the Soviet Union, Germany, Great Britain, the United States of America, and France. The main features of wartime fashion are common to almost all countries and are caused by measures for the rationed distribution of clothing. The minimum amount of clothes that can be purchased with coupons (cards, coupons, stamps) forces people to sew clothes themselves, redo old clothing items, use unusual materials for making clothes, shoes, accessories, and jewelry. In all countries, thrifty consumption is considered as consumer patriotism and patriotic chic. The experience of various interactions of people with clothes in wartime can be used in modern practices in the context of current trends of slow fashion and conscious consumption, customization, and prolongation of the life of garments. The article contains examples of how this experience is applied by both manufacturers (designers) and modern consumers.

**Keywords:** *Second World War, fashion, consumer practices, rationing, slow fashion, customization.*

**Corresponding Author:** *Nadezhda B. Lyakhova, Russian State University of Tourism and Service, Cherkizovo, Moscow region, Russia, e-mail: [n.b.lyakhova@mail.ru](mailto:n.b.lyakhova@mail.ru)*

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### 1. Introduction

The topic of wartime fashion is of interest not only due to the importance of preserving the memory of the war but also because this topic can be considered from the perspective of pressing problems of modern life. Fashion and style in design during World War II began to arouse particular interest in the early 21st century and became relevant retro fashion due to the nostalgic moods prompted by the economic crisis and other negative phenomena that concerned people in the 2010s. The world is changing rapidly, the COVID-19 epidemic has become a catalyst for many trends, in particular, the fourth industrial revolution. Uncertainty about the future and the problems of the present create fertile ground for retro fashion. However, we believe that another aspect of considering this topic is also possible – the experience of the past can be valuable both for the present and for the future. In this study, we examine consumer practices that can be considered in the context of the current trends of slow fashion and conscious consumption, processing and prolonging the life of things, customization. Wartime fashion is an experience of consumer behavior driven by extreme living conditions but based on the values of previous periods, which were abandoned after World War II.

The study hypothesizes that the experience of wartime consumer practices can be used in modern practices of slowing down fashion. The subject of the research is the features of fashion in the context of World War II, the practice of using clothes in extreme wartime conditions. The purpose of this study is to identify the characteristics of people's behavior in relation to clothing during World War II. The objectives of the study are to consider how rationing influences people's attitudes towards clothing. The wartime fashion was considered in the case study of the USSR, Germany, Great Britain, the USA, and France.

Fashion during World War II has been the subject of many studies – the authors of fashion studies of the 20th century wrote about the fashion of this period in general – John Peacock, Nigel Cawtorne 1996, Charlotte Seeling, Valerie D. Mendes, and Amy de la Haye (Cawtorne, 1996; Mendes, De la Haye, 2005; Peacock, 1993; Seeling, 2000) considered both the stylistic features of wartime fashion and the impact of clothing rationing systems on fashion. In the 2000s, researchers became more interested in certain aspects of wartime fashion, rationing, and economical consumption. Geraldine Biddle-Perry devoted her research to British austerity fashion – the post-war period which was, however, based on the experience of wartime constraints (Biddle-Perry, 2016). David Gilbert analyzed the relationship between fashion and the state of the economy, in particular, wartime fashion (Gilbert, 2017). Rebecca Arnold explored the forms of fashion presentation in Britain during World War II and the development of American fashion in the 1930-40s. (Arnold, 2009). Julia Drost and Dominique Veillon wrote about French fashion during the occupation (Drost, 1998; Veillon, 2002). I. Guenther (2004) and Andrey Vasilchenko (2009) devoted their works to the study of German fashion during the Nazi era.

As for the USSR, there are much fewer works on fashion during the Great Patriotic War. Recent extensive studies by Djurdja Bartlett (2011) and Natalia Lebina (2015) on Soviet fashion and the everyday life of Soviet people do not cover this topic, focusing on the pre-war and post-war times. The topic of wartime fashion was briefly touched upon in the collection "Soviet Style" (Ermilova, 2012). The most thorough study of consumer practices during the Great Patriotic War, based on numerous different sources, was carried out in the collective monographs by E.F. Krinko, I.G. Tazhidinova, and T.P. Khlynina (2011, 2013). The most detailed description and analysis of the Soviet wartime fashion at this time (a whole chapter is devoted to wartime fashion) were done in the work on fashion in the USSR by Sergey Zhuravlev and Jukka Gronow (2013).

## **2. Materials and methods**

Within the framework of the study, a complex of historical research methods was applied. To analyze consumer practices and wartime fashion in the USSR, Germany, the USA, and Great Britain and to compare different strategies of consumer behavior the concrete historical approach and the comparative historical method were used. The method of logical analysis made it possible to analyze the ambiguous and contradictory processes in the world of fashion during the Second World War. The problem-chronological method made it possible to determine the changes in fashion during various periods of the Second World War.

In this study, clothing is understood as a part of a person's everyday life, which forms behavioral stereotypes and is an embodiment of the socio-cultural representations of the individual and society as a whole in specific historical conditions and manifests

itself in the synthesis of material and spiritual culture (Lebina, 2015, p. 6). The socio-psychological approach examines the features of human behavior in relation to clothing items that are elements of everyday life, part of daily routine actions, which are called practices. In this study, we analyze the consumer practices during World War II – various interactions of people with clothes, which are usually called wartime fashion, since this refers to mass behavior in relation to clothes caused by the realities of wartime, regardless of the specific characteristics of each country.

### 3. Results

Studies of Soviet wartime fashion do not give an unambiguous answer to the question of whether there was any fashion in the USSR during the war (Bartlett, 2011). For example, the authors of research into the everyday life of Soviet people believe that the extreme tragic experience of the Great Patriotic War brought about significant changes in people's attitude to the material side of life: "The duration and severity of this experience, huge material costs, discomfort and even catastrophic experiences that have become an integral part of everyday life for combatants and civilians suffering from the hardships of war – all this had certain consequences for the perception of the material component of life by the Soviet people" (Krinko *et al.*, 2011, p. 184). The same perspective is shared by S. Zhuravlev and J. Gronow: "The concepts of fashion and war are in many ways antipodes, since fashion flourishes, of course, in periods of peace, celebration and social welfare. Conversely, in times of disaster, fashion usually dies down... at first glance it seems that the Soviet wartime fashion actually froze, stopping in its development on the styles of the late 1930s. If there were any new trends, then, as elsewhere in the world, these trends were associated with the militarization of clothing (military style), with women's active use of trousers and other more practical items of men's clothing during the harsh time" (Zhuravlev & Gronov, 2013, p. 88-90). All this happened mostly spontaneously, without special efforts on the part of the authorities.

The idea of slowing down fashion, holding it back at the pre-war level was expressed in the United States, so as not to spend the resources necessary for military purposes on the production of clothing for civilians (Cawtorne, 1996, p. 54). When Britain joined the war in 1939, it seemed to many that against the background of aerial bombardments, raw material shortages, and the destruction of trade ties, fashion "died". In Germany, in the last years of the war, interest in fashion completely faded away due to military defeats and disasters. For example, women's makeup and manicure were regarded as antisocial behavior, for which one could get into a camp for the re-education of antisocial elements, as was the case with Swing-Jugend ("Swing Kids"), dancing in public places was prohibited (Vasilchenko, 2009; Guenther, 2004). In 1944, the entire industry of the Third Reich was converted to the needs of the army, even small sewing workshops and ateliers were engaged only in repairing old uniforms. Clothing production was suspended (Zalessky 2016). In Great Britain and especially the United States, make-up, cosmetics, and female attractiveness during the war were treated exactly the opposite – the well-groomed and fashionable image of women in the rear was supposed to increase the morale of the military – which is evident from propaganda posters, advertisements, and wartime magazine covers (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** Covers of the British magazine "Woman's Own" and the American magazine "Cosmopolitan", 1942.

(URL: [http://ivolgas.blogspot.com/2017/10/xx-1940\\_17.html](http://ivolgas.blogspot.com/2017/10/xx-1940_17.html))

(URL: <https://pulpcovers.com/tag/cosmopolitan/page/2/>)

It cannot be denied that fashion can be a means of resistance, increasing the morale of a nation. Even in the USSR, where the authorities did not pay as much attention to fashion as in Great Britain and the United States, when it became clear that victory was near, in 1944, Houses of Fashion Design were created in Moscow, Leningrad, and liberated Kiev and immediately after the war – in the capitals of the allied republics Minsk, Riga, Tallinn, and Vilnius. R. Arnold noted that clothing "due to its proximity to the body, is difficult to take away or destroy, even in austerity. Anything that could not fall to the enemy or be banned by the government became particularly significant. It is noteworthy that fashion and morale often coincided; during the war years, these were, perhaps, really close concepts" (Arnold, 2018, p. 203). In France, fashion was a form of resistance to the occupation regime (Drost, 1998; Veillon, 2002). Therefore, wartime fashion existed, despite all the difficulties.

The analysis and comparison of consumer practices were carried out based on studies of everyday life and wartime fashion, as well as the memories of survivors. There are a lot of materials at the disposal of researchers of fashion during World War II – official statistics, decrees, and provisions, newspaper and magazine publications, advertising booklets, posters and leaflets, fashion magazines (even in the USSR during the war, there were magazines "Kostyum i palto", "Mody", and "Modeli sezona" ["Suit and Coat", "Fashion", and "Cuts of the season"]). The most valuable material is eyewitness memories of everyday life during the war, family stories, which have recently also become material for academic research (Krinko *et al.*, 2011, 2013). However, so far, no comparative analysis of the features of wartime fashion in different countries has been carried out, and consumer practices of wartime have not been evaluated in terms of the concepts of slowing down consumption.

First, it is necessary to note the main circumstance that had a decisive influence on the nature of wartime fashion and was common to almost all combatant countries – measures for the rationed distribution of resources among the civilian population. Cards, coupons, or stamps gave one the right to buy most of the goods in limited quantities,

determined by special decrees in each country. The norms determined the amount of food dispensed per person per day or week, month, hygiene products (soap, washing powder) per month, and clothing per year. Unlike food cards, which strictly rationed the amount of meat, fat, sugar, canned food, bread, etc., allocated to one person (different items were rationed in different countries), coupons, stamps, clothing cards made it possible to choose what to spend them on.

In Germany, the rationing system was introduced even before the start of the war – from 25 Aug. 1939, from 12 Nov. 1939 – also for clothing. The norms in different countries were different, but, as a rule, met the very minimum needs for clothing. True, in many countries there was a common problem with the production of footwear for civilians, which was difficult to buy even with coupons – in the USSR, Germany, Great Britain (Vasilchenko, 2009; Zhuravlev & Gronov, 2013; Krinko *et al.*, 2011; Cawtorne, 1996).

The rationing system was not only designed to meet the minimum clothing needs of the civilian population but was also supposed to help save fabric and minimize production costs (Gilbert, 2017). In the UK, for example, these measures, known as "austerity", saved approximately five million square meters of cotton per year. The resources saved were to be used for military needs, in particular, for sewing military uniforms. In the United States, decree L-85, adopted in 1942, required a 15% reduction in fabric consumption in the production of civilian clothing (Cawtorne, 1996).

There was a shortage of fabrics and clothing for the civilian population everywhere, although in almost all countries there were shops selling clothes without coupons or cards (in the USSR, those were "commercial stores"), the prices were sky-high, inaccessible to most people. The shortage of clothing was caused not only by the rationing system, which significantly restricted the consumption of the civilian population but also by the loss of property during bombings or evacuations – especially in the USSR, in Great Britain during the blitz era, in Germany (especially in the last months of the war). The peaks of the deficit did not coincide in different countries. In the USSR, from the perspective of providing the population with the necessary items, the most difficult part was the first two years of the war. In the USA, cards were introduced later (the USA entered the war only on 8 Dec. 1941) and were canceled earlier than in other countries – in August 1945. In Britain and Germany, the last two years of the war, and especially the post-war period, were the most difficult (Biddle-Perry, 2016).

Regardless, there were very few things that could be purchased with coupons, stamps, or cards, as a rule, at fixed pre-war prices, only to meet the most basic needs. For example, in the USSR, workers and engineers and technicians were given 125 coupons a year, employees – 100 coupons, dependents (that is, those who did not work – the retired, people with disabilities, children, and students) – 80 coupons, and to buy a coat or a pair of shoes one had to hand in 30 coupons, a cotton dress cost 40 coupons (Ermilova, 2012). In Great Britain, according to the Utility plan, adopted on 1 Jun. 1941, an adult was given 66 coupons for a year, 48 in 1942, 36 in 1943, and 24 in 1945 (Fig. 2). To buy a coat or a suit, one had to hand in 18 coupons, men's trousers cost 11 coupons, a jumper was five coupons. Men's shoes cost nine coupons while women's cost five, but they were hardly ever on sale due to a lack of leather. If an employee was given a uniform at work, part of the coupons had to be handed over (nurses had to give ten, the police – six).

The scant amount of clothes that could be purchased with coupons made it necessary to save fabric and other materials, sew clothes, redo old clothes, use unusual materials to make clothes, shoes, accessories, and jewelry. Whereas in Great Britain

prices for clothing sold with coupons were fixed at pre-war levels (Cawtorne, 1996), in the USSR consumer demand was also constrained by high prices for clothing and footwear (Zhuravlev & Gronov, 2013). Researchers note that in the USSR, more than half of the clothes before the war were not factory-made, but home-made, especially in rural areas (Zhuravlev & Gronov, 2013). However, one should understand that this is not a specific feature of Soviet consumer practices. Home-made clothing is a part of the traditional way of life, which persisted for a long time in peasant families and the lower strata of the urban population (and wealthier people did not sew themselves, but bought made-to-order clothing from tailors, the social elite – purchased from high fashion houses); these consumer practices were widespread before the war. Everywhere, and not only in the USSR, girls were taught needlework, women knew how to sew, knit, and embroider, in contrast to many modern consumers who cannot even sew on a torn-off button. Many families had sewing machines. The author's grandmother took a hand-held sewing machine with her when she left Moscow for evacuation in September 1941, despite its heavy weight, and it helped her out. Therefore, the big problem for people of that time was not the need to make clothes on their own, but the shortage of fabrics, accessories, threads, and other supplies.



**Figure 2.** British books with clothing coupons; An illustration from the Soviet fashion magazine "Modeli sezona" [Patterns of the season], 1942

(URL: <http://sarahlouisehinchliffe.blogspot.com/2010/11/make-do-and-mend.html>)

URL: [http://maskball.ru/dress/kostum\\_vremya\\_velikoy\\_voyni.html](http://maskball.ru/dress/kostum_vremya_velikoy_voyni.html))

Wartime fashion continued the fashion trends of the late 1930s – dresses of the X-shaped silhouette with large shoulder pads were relevant (Fig. 2). Due to the need to save fabric, skirts were sewn short, knee-length, made of wedges or straight, platform shoes were worn, because they could be made hand-made (Mendes, De la Haye, 2005; Peacock, 1993; Seeling, 2000). Due to a shortage of fabrics or bans, draped models have disappeared (except for in France).

The main trend of wartime is homemade, economical, but extremely inventive fashion. In the UK, an ad campaign was launched featuring the cute ragdoll character "Mrs. SEW-and-SEW", which advised on how to alter adult clothes into children's, men's into women's, how to sew a dress from curtains or furniture covers, how to mend torn or worn clothes (Fig. 3).

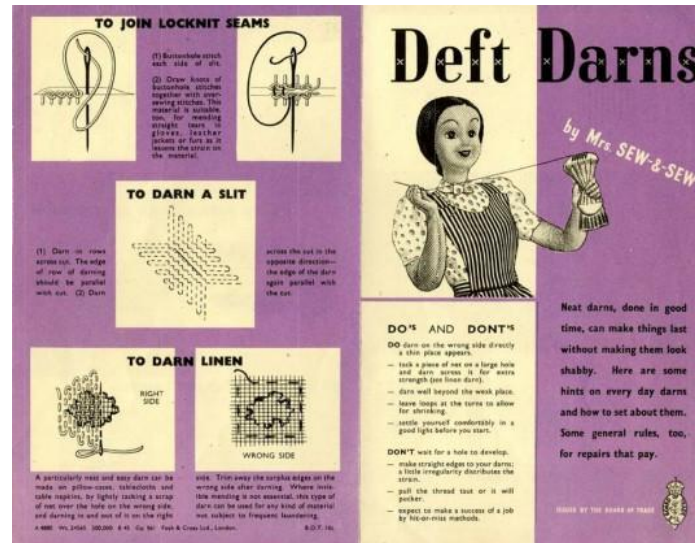


Figure 3. "Mrs. SEW-and-SEW" advises on how to mend torn clothes.

(URL: <https://diyfashionsense.wordpress.com/2012/12/12/more-than-just-darning/patch-darn-shirt-mrs-sew-and-sew-3-537x417/> )

Military uniforms were often altered – for example, the famous Italian designer G. Armani recalled that during the war Giorgio and his brother and sister wore clothes that his mother had altered from military uniforms (Molho, 2008). Clothes were often mended and reversed – unsewn and sewn again with the wrong side up instead of the worn front. Since there was a shortage of fabrics, combined items were common which were altered from several old things or had added fabric from an old thing to a new one. For example, in the USSR, using coupons, one could buy 2 meters of woolen fabric, from which one wanted to sew not a skirt, but a dress, so this fabric had to be combined with another. Instead of a full-fledged blouse, a "shirt-front" was worn under the suit – a sleeveless blouse, where only the collar and the insert in the front were sewn from good fabric, and the rest was made of cheap cotton fabric or from an old blouse. The patchwork technique was common.

Silk and nylon (nylon stockings first went on sale in the United States in 1939) were banned from civilian use because they were used for parachutes, but used parachutes ended up on the black market – parachute silk was used to make underwear, blouses, and dresses. The most unexpected things, especially for a modern person accustomed to an abundance of commodities, were used to manufacture clothes – German bandages (according to the recollections of the inhabitants of occupied Brest), mattress teak, burlap (in the USA, Claire McCardell designed dresses in a sports style from them) (Arnold, 2009). The mother of the author's friend still recalls with pleasure the brown dress that her mother sewed for her from a new kitchen oilcloth, which was soaked in boiling water, the fabric base was separated, and the dress was sewn from it, adding fabric with flowers for decoration. The author's grandmother sewed for her son, born in 1942, a baby blanket from a red satin pre-war banner. The emblem of the USSR that had been cut out of it, embroidered with silk, was then carefully hidden for many years, because it was an imprisonable offense, although the banner could no longer be used for its intended purpose – there were 11 Soviet republics on the emblem, while by 1941 there were already 15 of them.

Shoe leather was also a strategically scarce material, so shoes were made from car tires, wood, cork, sewn from fabric, and knitted from threads (Fig. 4). Even the great shoemaker S. Ferragamo invented models with a knitted top made of threads with lurex, cellophane, etc. One tried to fix the worn-out shoes to extend their use.



**Figure 4.** Hand-made shoes: a) fancy embroidered black velvet shoes with wooden wedges; b) suede shoes with wooden soles.

(URL: [https://www.liveinternet.ru/users/tatyana\\_balayan/post178131081/](https://www.liveinternet.ru/users/tatyana_balayan/post178131081/))

(URL: <https://club.season.ru/topic/27250-moda-40-h/page/9/#comments>)

The ban on the use of silk and nylon (in the United States since 1943) for civilian use led to the fact that thin stockings were the scarcest item. In the warm season, fashionable women wore short socks, as was already the case in the 1930s with sportswear. For the first time, official fashion allowed to wear shoes in the city on bare feet – before that, shoes on bare feet always indicated poverty. One would even imitate stockings, making up one's legs with wood stain or special paints produced by cosmetic companies (there is almost no mention of such a practice in the USSR and Germany). The seam on the drawn stockings was drawn with an eyebrow pencil (Fig. 5).



**Figure 5.** The woman shows a contraption for painting an even seam on the leg

(URL: [https://www.cosmo.ru/fashion/how\\_to/obuv-plyus-noski-nosit-ili-net/](https://www.cosmo.ru/fashion/how_to/obuv-plyus-noski-nosit-ili-net/))



One tried to compensate for the shortage of woollen clothing with knitting. One would knit jumpers, hats, scarves, jackets, vests, socks, gloves, and mittens (Fig. 6). In Great Britain, one even used dog wool and threads, which were sold for mending.



**Figure 6.** A head-wrap from a knitted tube. A model by the haute couture house Elsa Schiaparelli, 1941.  
Ph. Andre Zucca

(URL: [https://www.liveinternet.ru/community/lj\\_humus/post430427076/](https://www.liveinternet.ru/community/lj_humus/post430427076/))

In all countries, homemade accessories were popular – buttons and buckles covered in fabric, belts from the fabric of a dress, because it was almost impossible to get buttons in the color of the fabric – plastic was also used for military needs. Everyone wore homemade accessories, especially shoulder bags, which gained popularity during the war, their prototypes were officers' map cases and gas mask bags. Home-made accessories made from barbol paste and plexiglass were popular, as these materials were used instead of glass in the construction of military aircraft.

The attitude to used clothes was fundamentally different from that after the war, although it was more in line with tradition – even before the war, it was customary for the lower classes to wear second-hand clothes. During the war, this was regarded not only as in many cases the only possible option but also as correct patriotic behavior. In Germany, even before the war, a nationwide program to collect warm clothing for those in need, "Winter Aid", was launched. At the end of the war, the collection of clothing, especially for children, became even more relevant for the population of large cities, which were deprived of almost all their property during carpet bombing. In the USSR, already at the beginning of the war, a movement was launched to collect warm clothes for the front. In Britain, one would collect and exchange children's clothing at special locations. Used items were bought at flea markets (in the USSR such spontaneous markets were called "tolkuchka" [scrum]), second-hand stores, or "commission" stores in the USSR. Clothes could be traded on the black market for groceries. For example, the author's grandmother, in evacuation in the Ivanovo region in 1942, exchanged two silk dresses and her daughter's doll for a sack of flour and a sack of potatoes. Clothes were a kind of "movable capital" of townspeople, migrants, and evacuees, which could help out in difficult times.

One of the most unusual subjects in wartime fashion is the prototype of modern customization – pin-up jackets of American pilots. It is forbidden to modify military uniforms in the armies of other countries according to the charter but American sailors

painted their T-shirts with inscriptions, and the pilots decorated not only airplanes but also their jackets with images of naked beauties (Fig. 7).



**Figure 7.** Painted pin-up jackets of American pilots.

(URL: <https://warweapons.ru/kurtki-amerikanskih-letchikov-vtoroy-mirovoy-voynyi/>)

#### 4. Discussion

First, it should be noted that, although the economy in the USSR was planned and socialist, and in other countries – capitalist (in Germany – state-monopoly capitalism), wartime fashion, like consumer practices, was practically the same as some minor differences depending on the specific situation. This can be explained by the fact that measures to save fabric in production and a rationing system were introduced everywhere for the rationing of resources for the civilian population.

In all countries, thrifty consumption was considered consumer patriotism and patriotic chic. Too wide trousers with cuffs, long double-breasted jackets compared to the official style were regarded as defiantly unpatriotic. In the USSR no emphasis was placed on saving during the war because such practices were already widespread in the 1920s and 1930s as a result of a shortage of goods and low incomes of the population.

However, the ideas of an economical and rational attitude to clothing are not an innovation but the result of the experience of previous generations who appreciated durability, quality, and the possibility of long-term use in clothing. In museum collections, there are many 18th century dresses with seams in illogical places, indicating that such items were altered from dresses of an outdated style. One must not forget about the experience of World War I, during which such measures of resource rationing for everyone were not introduced, but there were attempts to distribute individual goods and the most severe commodity and food shortages, the memories of which prompted the introduction of national rationing systems during World War II. It can be argued that wartime fashion is an experience of consumer behavior triggered by extreme living conditions but based on the values of the past. After World War II, when rapid economic growth began, it was necessary to fundamentally change consumer behavior, introducing into the minds the idea of consumer society for the sake of economic development and, as it seemed, guarantees against new economic crises. If during the war a patriot had to

save money and try to consume as little as possible, then after the war a patriot had to buy as much as possible to support the economy of the country. As the subsequent course of events showed, the ideology of consumer society not only did not help to avoid new economic crises but also exacerbated environmental problems that are caused, among other reasons, by the modern person's excessive consumption determined by consumer practices (Ermilova, 2020, p. 203). Frequent changes in styles and models, "planned obsolescence" of clothing items, disposable clothing together with the concept of human self-expression through clothes lead to unrestrained consumption. Changing this behavior of consumers requires significant restructuring of people's consciousness, the spread of a new system of values in the spirit of conscious consumption. The experience of consumer practices during the war from this angle may turn out to be unexpectedly relevant, although until now one has turned to wartime fashion for other reasons.

For the first time since the war, military fashion began to be perceived as a source of inspiration in the 1970s when the economic and energy crisis, rampant terrorism, fear of environmental disasters, and nuclear war sparked escapist sentiments that sparked retro fashion. Since the end of the 2000s, the nostalgia for the 1940s became a noticeable trend, manifested in the popularity of music, design, styles in graphic design (for example, the design of books published by Penguin Books). The social causes of nostalgic memories of World War II were investigated by journalist Owen Hatherley in his book "The Ministry of Nostalgia" (Hatherley, 2016). Hatherley believes that the huge popularity of the poster issued by the British Department of Information in 1939 with the slogan "Keep Calm and Carry On" is determined by the combination of inscription and design ("Union Jack", the crown), which is associated with important ideas present in the historical memory of Englishmen – the blitz spirit, the cult of the BBC, a sense of national unity. British cultural scientist Paul Gilroy in his book "After Empire" noted that even during the economic boom, the Battle of Britain and the Victory were often recalled. Naturally, in times of crisis, these nostalgic tendencies only intensified (Gilroy, 2004). In an economic crisis, problems of everyday life, unstable and conflict situations in the world, memories of war become a moment of national consolidation and can inspire a sense of confidence in the future. Retro nostalgia has become a long-term trend – the reaction of people to changes associated not only with crises but also with the fourth industrial revolution, a loss of a sense of stability, which was further intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Retro fashion can be not only a reaction to unfavorable changes in life but also a positive experience of consumer practices in the context of current trends of slow fashion and conscious consumption, processing and prolongation of the life of clothing, customization. The experience of wartime consumer practices can be proposed to be used in modern practices of slowing down fashion. What is presented to modern people as a new and relevant trend has long been tested in the past but has been removed from practice and the memory of post-war generations by consumer psychology aggressively imposed after the war. This, of course, is not about rationing consumption, the introduction of a modernized rationing system, although, if we follow the forecasts about the green economy, things may come to that. This refers to a reasonable and rational attitude to clothing, economical consumption (which has long been implemented in relation to the consumption of water and electricity in households), the rejection of the principle of "use and throw away", disposable, low-quality items with a planned short-term use, the implementation of various methods of extension life of things, clothes, in particular (Brown, 2010; Fletcher & Grose, 2012; Gregson & Crang, 2019). In recent decades, this

has been an extremely popular trend in fashion design, the pioneer of which is M. Margiela, the founder of vintage fashion, who began to transform old items into new ones in the late 1980s (Ermilova, 2020). In the early 2000s, vintage came into fashion, then so did customization.

What could one use today from the experience of wartime fashion and consumer practices of that time? It would be naive to think that a modern person, who has forgotten how to make a lot by hand, can be forced to sew their own clothes. All ideas can be divided into those that are more relevant for clothing manufacturers, and those that can become "new well-forgotten old" consumer practices.

For manufacturers:

1. Careful handling of materials for the production of clothing. Reducing remnants when cutting, using these remnants to produce other items. For example, the Finnish company Pure Waste Textiles manufactures clothing and accessories from recycled denim material left over from cutting. Such practices can save millions of meters of fabrics and tons of raw materials;

2. Upcycling is reusing ready-made items or fabrics, converted items. For example, tracksuits from the Jahnkoy brand, complemented by decor, kimonos made from silk scarves from the Rianna + Nina brand, altered items from second-hand stores by the Vaquera brand, designer items mainly from old Maison Briz Vegas T-shirts (Binotto & Payne, 2019) embroidered old shirts, jackets and suits of the Russian brand *go authentic* (Fig. 8), famous bags from recycled fire hoses by Elvis & Kresse, Rachel Freire collections from factory remnants of leather. There are many examples – this is a very popular, even fashionable trend in clothing design now.



**Figure 8.** Embroidered jacket by Olga Glagoleva's *go authentic* brand, 2020  
(URL: [https://www.instagram.com/go\\_authentic/](https://www.instagram.com/go_authentic/))

3. Painted-on stockings prompted a very promising idea related to saving and recycling materials. Due to new technologies, a similar imitation of stockings has been developed in modern practice, when one can spray tights onto one's legs from a spray can and then rinse them off at the end of the day (there is no waste in the form of torn stockings or tights that do not decompose in the natural environment) or spray a special Fabrican material on the body, which solidifies and turns into clothes, and was invented by Dr. Manel Torres and Prof. Paul Luckham (<https://www.epochtimes.com.ua/ru/novosti-nauki-i-tehniki/sprey-tkan-sozdayot-odezhdu-pryamo-na-tele-fabrican-128235>). This mixture dries directly on the skin and turns into clothes that can be taken off and put on

again, washed, sprayed with paint, cut, and reconnected. If one gets tired of these clothes, one can dissolve them with a special solvent and use them again for spraying.

For clothing consumers, we can propose the following strategy of conscious consumption:

1. Reconsider the attitude to clothes: one should not buy disposable items or throw away unnecessary items – instead give them away or exchange them (thanks to social networks in many countries there are systems for the exchange of items). The second-hand movement is becoming an increasingly more popular consumer practice (Gregson and Crewe, 2003);

2. A very relevant trend – customization of items – the personification of things due to alteration for a specific person. It can be an alteration of old clothes, making an addition to a finished item, making an item from an old item with another purpose, patchwork. Wartime fashion experience fosters creativity;

3. Knitting, like all kinds of needlework in general, allows one to create the most unique individual item, but at the same time, it is a kind of leisure and hobby. Needlework was already popular in the 1970s (low-tech movement). Hand knitting is especially interesting because hand-knitted things can be unraveled indefinitely and something new can be knit, unlike machine knitwear, which is also processed, but it is almost impossible to unravel it and knit a new thing from it.

4. Hand-made jewelry and accessories as a form of creative expression.

## 5. Conclusion

In this study, an analysis of twentieth-century fashion research was carried out. As the analysis of various studies showed considered both the stylistic features of military fashion and the influence of rationed distribution systems on it, paid attention to the study of certain aspects of military fashion, rationing and economical consumption. An understanding of clothing as part of a person's everyday life was given, which forms behavioral stereotypes and is one of the embodiments of the socio-cultural ideas of the individual and society as a whole in specific historical conditions and manifests itself in the synthesis of material and spiritual culture.

An analysis of consumer practices during World War II, associated with the introduction of rationing and a shortage of resources, was carried out, the experience of using clothes in extreme wartime conditions was summarized. The common features of wartime fashion in different countries were identified, while in numerous studies of fashion during World War II, attention was focused on nation-specific characteristics.

It was shown that fashion existed even in the most difficult conditions and could be a form of resistance and increasing the nation's morale. Moreover, the scarcity stimulated creativity, ingenuity in handling garments, transforming them, and repurposing. The shortage gave rise to the widespread practice of sewing clothes, redoing old clothes, using unusual materials for the manufacture of clothes, shoes, accessories, and jewelry. Wartime fashion had many examples of customization and upcycling. The deficit also gave rise to such practices as the collection of used warm clothes for the front (for the needy), trade in spontaneous markets (purchase and sale, barter for products). There was a ban on the manufacture of clothing from strategic materials (silk, nylon). And thrifty consumption during the war was regarded as consumer patriotism. Wartime fashion is an experience of consumer behavior caused by extreme living conditions but based on the values of the time before the war.

The end of World War II and the subsequent rapid economic growth fundamentally changed the behavior of consumers in Western countries, introducing the ideas of a “consumer society” into the consciousness in order to support the economy of their country. In the 1970s in the context of the economic and energy crisis, rampant terrorism, fear of environmental disasters and nuclear war, military fashion began to be perceived as a source of inspiration that gave rise to retro fashion.

The positive experience of consumer practices during the war can be used in the context of the current trends of slow fashion and conscious consumption, processing and extension of the life of things, customization. From this perspective, wartime fashion has not yet been considered. We have proposed possible options for applying this experience for manufacturers (designers): saving fabrics in the production of clothes, upcycling, the idea of spraying clothes on the body, and for modern consumers: a more rational attitude to buying and wearing clothes, exchanging items, continuing the life of clothes (second-hand clothing), customization of clothing, the revival of needlework as a creative activity. Further studies of wartime consumer practices from the perspective of the concepts of slowing down consumption seem to be very promising.

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