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Stalin is like a fairytale sycamore tree — Stalin as a symbol

Gratitude’s a dog’s disease.
Iosif Stalin

There was a fight in a line at the factory; people were hurt and a couple of policemen showed up. People just can’t seem to appreciate how happy their lives are.

Andrei Stepanovich Arzhilovsky (ex-prisoner, executed by firing squad, 5 September 1937)

Depending on your point of view, Stalin may or not be like a fairytale sycamore tree, but this metaphor, from a panegyric by Kazakh poet Dzhambul, serves to illuminate a central tenet of this book: that ‘Stalin’, as he appeared in Soviet posters, was a construct. Indeed, we are all ‘constructs’ in terms of our perceived and performed identities in society. Stalin, however, is a construct produced by a large group of people for mass consumption with specific goals in mind. Stalin existed as a symbol for such concrete entities as the Bolshevik Party and the state, but also for more abstract concepts like communist progress, Bolshevik values and vision, and peace. The Party’s propaganda apparatus tightly controlled the use of his image and

his persona drew on emblems of leadership and sacred imagery from both the Russian and the European past, from newly forged Bolshevik symbols, and on universal archetypes. In this chapter some of the symbols and archetypes associated with Stalin in propaganda posters will be explored.

Stalin as symbol

Writing in 1936, Swiss theologian Adolf Keller observed that, in contemporary authoritarian societies, the state itself had become a myth, and was increasingly depicted as possessing personal, and often divine, characteristics that came to be embodied in the symbolic persona of the leader:

The State is a mythical divinity which, like God, has the right and might to lay a totalitarian claim on its subjects; to impose upon them a new philosophy, a new faith; to organise the thinking and conscience of its children … It is not anonymous, not abstract, but gifted with personal qualities, with a mass-consciousness, a mass-will and a personal mass-responsibility for the whole world … This personifying tendency of the myth finds its strongest expression in the mysterious personal relationship of millions with a leader … The leader … is the personified nation, a superman, a messiah, a saviour.3

States that are beset by turmoil, economic failure, social conflict or war invariably respond to these threats by seeking to strengthen the symbolic legitimation of the leadership. The leader cult attempts to create a point of reference for an entire belief system, centred on one man who embodies the doctrine. The cult is ubiquitous and aspires to universality of belief with the aim of integrating the masses into a ‘community of believers’. As E.A. Rees states:

Leader cults are part of the general process whereby the new power is symbolised and celebrated — in flags, hymns and anthems, medals, awards, prizes, stamps and coins, in the renaming of towns, streets and institutions. Leader cults are closely tied to the founding myths of new states.4

In a state that is in the process of reinventing itself, the leader cult becomes the means by which new rituals and traditions are instituted, employing symbols to bring consensus and a sense of shared identity in societies beset by latent conflict or indifference to the dominant ideology.5

The tendency of the Party to view their leader in mythic, symbolic and representational terms was already in evidence with regard to Lenin as early as 1923. For example, on 7 November 1923, Pravda declared: ‘Lenin is not only the name of a beloved leader; it is a program and a tactic … and a philosophical world view … Lenin is the suffering for an idea …’.6 After Lenin’s death, charisma came briefly to reside in the Party, however a charismatic leader’s persona could provide a more concrete and personalised symbol for Bolshevik values and vision. Rees sees Stalin’s cult in pragmatic terms, as an entity that ‘reflected the reality that Stalin could command more public support than either the state or the party, and certainly more support than the regime’s representatives and agents in the localities’.7 In fact, Nina Tumarkin argues that, by 1934, Lenin and his cult had been relegated to a supporting role as a sort of ‘sacred ancestor’ of Stalin.8

As noted in the Introduction, Stalin regarded the Stalin name as symbolic of a created persona rather than as relating to his personal qualities as an individual.9 This view of Stalin as a ‘symbol of the Party’ was shared by other members and was made explicit in propaganda posters. Nikolai Bukharin was asked in 1933 why he and the other Party members had entrusted the leadership to such a ‘devil’ as Stalin. Bukharin replied:

You do not understand, it was quite different; he was not trusted, but he was the man whom the party trusted; this is how it happened: he is like the symbol of the party, the lower strata, the workers, the people trust him; perhaps it is our fault, but that’s the way it happened, that is why we all walked into his jaws … knowing probably that he would devour us.10

7 Rees, ‘Introduction’, in Apor et al., The leader cult in communist dictatorships, p. 11.
8 Tumarkin, Lenin lives!, p. 252.
9 Montefiore, Stalin, p. 4.
A 1940 poster by Nikolai Zhukov (Fig. 3.1) features a quotation from Vyacheslav Molotov on the Stalin symbol: ‘We have a name that has become the symbol of the victory of socialism. It is the name of the symbol of the moral and political unity of the Soviet people! You know what that name is — STALIN!’ In the *Short biography* released in 1947, Stalin’s value as the symbol of a plethora of Bolshevik values is made explicit in the text: ‘In the eyes of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., Stalin is the incarnation of their heroism, their love of their country, their patriotism,’11 ‘Stalin’s name is a symbol of the courage and the renown of the Soviet people, and a call to heroic deeds for the welfare of their great country,’12 and ‘The name of Stalin is a symbol of the moral and political unity of Soviet society.’13 Writing in 1971, with the benefit of historical perspective, Roy Medvedev also regarded Stalin as a rallying symbol to unify and give hope to a suffering population during the Great Patriotic War: ‘Stalin’s image became a sort of symbol existing in the popular mentality independently from its actual bearer. During the war years, as the Soviet people were battered by unbelievable miseries, the name of Stalin, and the faith in him, to some degree, pulled the Soviet people together, giving them hope of victory.’14 Evidence exists that this was true for at least some soldiers. The writer Konstantin Simonov quoted an officer on the Stalingrad front who said he ‘gained all his strength from the idea that our great leader directs everything in our enormous cause from his office in Moscow and thus invests in him, an ordinary colonel, part of his genius and spirit’.15

The importance of maintaining central control over the image of Stalin was in evidence as early as December 1929 when, in preparation for celebration of Stalin’s 50th birthday, Glavlit16 published exact

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13 Alexandrov et al., *Joseph Stalin*, p. 203.
16 Jan Plamper notes that study of Glavlit censorship processes is substantially hindered by the fact that Glavlit archives from 1922 to 1937 are missing. Archival scholars are able to redress this situation to some extent by consulting the archives of regional Glavlit organisations. See Jan Plamper, ‘Abolishing ambiguity: Soviet censorship practices in the 1930s’, *Russian Review*, 60:4, 2001, pp. 526–44, p. 527. A. Fursenko and V. Afiani note the incompleteness of the Stalin archives, particularly from the 1940s, and advise using them cautiously: ‘The integrity of Stalin’s
regulations with regard to the use of Stalin’s image in the press, prohibiting the use of printer’s blocks bearing Stalin’s image other than those issued by the Press-klishe\textsuperscript{17} section of the ROSTA press agency.\textsuperscript{18} From the mid-1930s the journal \textit{Iskusstvo}\textsuperscript{19} ran several articles guiding artists on how to portray the leader. The first edition of \textit{Iskusstvo} in 1935 featured full-page portraits of Lenin and Stalin, with Stalin depicted adopting the ‘hand-in’ pose. The sixth edition in 1937 included illustrated articles titled ‘Lenin in portraits, 1933–37’, ‘New portraits of Comrade Stalin’, and ‘Characteristics of the art of the epoch of Stalin’, each running for several pages.\textsuperscript{20} From around 1934 Stalin was visually distinguished from other leaders in propaganda, suggesting that he was the ‘first among equals’ and had exceptional, although human, qualities. Plamper observes that Stalin was distinguished from others by his size, his position in the picture plane, the colour of his clothing (which was often retouched), by the fact that his arm was often raised higher than those of others, by the fact that his hands never touched his face, by the direction of his gaze outside the picture plane,\textsuperscript{21} by props such as his pipe, and by special mention in the poster caption.\textsuperscript{22}

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archives and historical links between documents was disrupted long ago’ (‘The death of Iosif Stalin’, \textit{International Affairs}, 49:3, 2003, pp. 188–99, p. 191). Kevin McDermott also advises using circumspection with the Soviet archives due to the lack of ‘smoking guns’, such as a personal diary by Stalin or stenographic records from the Politburo; the informal nature of much of the interaction between Politburo members; and the fact that a policy of misinformation was often actively employed by the Secret Police and others in the regime (‘Archives, power and the “cultural turn”: reflections on Stalin and Stalinism’, \textit{Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions}, 2004, 5:1, pp. 5–24, p. 8).
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\textsuperscript{19} Art.
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\textsuperscript{21} There are some interesting statements about the direction of Stalin’s gaze in the Stalinist literature. Rosenthal states: ‘Stalin’s status as the new god was indicated by his position vis-à-vis other people. Stalin looks down, but they look up’ (\textit{New myth, new world}). James Aulich and Marta Sylvestrová state: ‘Instead, the hero Stalin looks down on the world from his pedestal and, as the mediator between the profane and the divine, he has magical and superhuman powers’ (\textit{Political posters in Central and Eastern Europe, 1945–95: signs of the times}, Manchester University Press, 1999, p. 88). Plamper states: ‘Knowledge of icons will not explain the direction of Stalin’s gaze, which was invariably directed at a focal point outside the picture …’ (\textit{The Stalin cult: a study in the alchemy of power}, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2012, pp. xv, 11). In fact, in political posters, Stalin does three things with his eyes — he looks at the viewer, he looks down on the people, or he looks out of the picture plane into what one presumes is a vision of the future.
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\textsuperscript{22} Plamper, \textit{The Stalin cult}, p. 38.
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The need to closely control Stalin’s image is also evident in the type of censorship and ‘retouching’ performed on photographs of Stalin. In his books *The commissar vanishes* and *Red star over Russia*, David King documents the thorough censorship of photographic images, which included not only the deletion of newly undesirable figures from group scenes, but also the insertion of people into scenes at which they were not present, the merging of photographic images, and the insertion of extra objects into a scene. In her study of photographs of Stalin, Leah Dickerman notes the use of specific devices: ‘smoothing Stalin’s pockmarked face and removing litter from his path; inserting text on banners so that the idea becomes legible; enlarging an adulatory crowd through montage …’. Such censorship was often heavy-handed and obvious and there was no attempt to keep the role of censors beneath the public radar. Dickerman argues that the public and visible nature of censorship was itself an attempt by the state to demonstrate its dominance over the medium of photography, especially as the source images were often well known. Such censorship, Plamper notes, also had as a primary goal the removal of ambiguity.

The number of possible meanings that could be ascribed to images was narrowed and contained, a process that was aided further in the case of propaganda posters by the caption text.

Such thorough state control of representations of the leader did not originate with the Stalinist regime. In fact, the photographic depiction of Bolshevik Party leaders was centralised and placed under the control of the secret police as early as 1924. Nor was this phenomenon peculiar to the Soviet Union. As noted in the Introduction, leaders throughout history have sought to control the production and dissemination of their images amongst the citizenry using court-commissioned artists to create their portraiture, and officially sanctioned methods of reproduction. Elizabeth I of England issued edicts to regulate the way

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in which her image could be depicted on canvas.\textsuperscript{28} In Taiwan during the 1930s, contemporaneous with the cult of Stalin, the Officers’ Moral Endeavour Association (OMEA, *lizhishe*) fostered painters such as Liang Zhongming and Xu Jiuling who then drilled other artists in the correct portrayal of Chiang Kai-Shek and actively sought to learn from Soviet and American propaganda techniques.\textsuperscript{29} In 1955, a team of Soviet artists arrived in China to teach Chinese artists to paint in a socialist realist style.\textsuperscript{30} The Chinese propaganda apparatus soon set up its own guidelines for painting portraits of Mao Zedong, which took into account some purely Chinese cultural predispositions.\textsuperscript{31} Regulation of Mao’s image went a step further, with the government decreeing how the portraits were to be handled and hung.\textsuperscript{32}

The Stalin persona, like most symbols, was multifaceted, malleable, and subject to change over time. In the early days of Stalin’s rule, the Party leadership was presented as a somewhat anonymous collective with few pictures of leaders appearing in the press and Stalin often appearing alongside other leaders\textsuperscript{33} or generic workers\textsuperscript{34} in posters. Sarah Davies and James Heizer both note that in 1929, when Stalin did appear, he was generally depicted as ‘iron-willed, cold, distant, and ruthless’,\textsuperscript{35} however, in some poster images between 1927 and 1932,

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\item \textsuperscript{31} Mao’s portrait was to be painted in a style reminiscent of Soviet socialist realism, however, this became ‘further developed’ in China: ‘Cool colours were to be avoided; Mao’s flesh should be modelled in red and other warm tones. Conspicuous displays of brushwork should not be seen; Mao’s face should be smooth in appearance. The entire composition should be bright, and should be illuminated in such a way as to imply that Mao himself was the primary source of [the sun] light. If Mao were in the centre of a group of people, all surfaces that faced him should appear to be illuminated. In this way, slogans such as ‘Mao is the sun in our hearts’ could be made tangible’ (Julia F. Andrews, *Painters and politics in the People’s Republic of China: 1949–1979*, London, University of California Press, 1994, p. 360).
\item \textsuperscript{32} Mao portraits had to be handled with special care, nothing could be hung above them, and the frame was not to have any spots or blemishes. See *Chinese propaganda posters*, Köln, Taschen, 2011, p. 20.
\item \textsuperscript{33} For example, Gustav Klutsis, ‘The USSR is the leader of the world proletariat’, 1931.
\item \textsuperscript{34} For example, Gustav Klutsis, ‘These are real people, this is you and me’, 1931.
\end{itemize}
Stalin can be seen with a faint Giacondian smile. Otherwise, posters tend to focus on workers and the progress of industrialisation — Stalin is not the central image and depictions of him consist largely of headshots in which his expression is neutral and few clues are given as to his personal qualities.

Davies sees 1933 as the year in which the full-blown cult of Stalin began to emerge, and 1934 as the year in which it ‘exploded’. By 1933 Stalin was sometimes referred to with the epithet liubimyi (beloved) and, by 1935, his portrait image was softening somewhat as he smiled or waved at crowds. Despite the increasing tendency to eulogise Stalin, beginning in 1934, he was still only the man who leads the Party, first and foremost of the leaders of the people. Stalin was frequently shown in the media meeting and mixing with the people. This new emphasis on the relationship between the leader and the people can be demonstrated by the remarks of Aleksandr Ugarov, second secretary of the Leningrad obkom, in connection with the preparation for the Day of the Constitution on 6 July 1935: ‘This affair has to be organised in an essentially different way from in previous years. The political explanations should be organised so that people feel that Soviet leaders are coming to them and telling them about the achievements of Soviet democracy.’ By 1936, the cult progressed still further, with the emphasis on developing a fanatical cult following for the Party leadership and in particular, Stalin, as in this local Party report:

During agitation and propaganda in the press there must be more popularisation of the vozhd, and love for them must be fostered and inculcated in the masses, and unlimited loyalty, especially by

36 As in the ‘Young Communist League of Political Education, Middle Volga’, organisation poster of 1930 (artist unidentified), Viktor Deni’s ‘With the banner of Lenin …’, 1930; Klutsis’s ‘These are real people, this is you and me’, 1931.
38 Davies points out that Kirov was also referred to by the epithet liubimyi at the same time and that Kirov was perceived as more humane and caring than Stalin (‘The “cult” of the vozhd’: representations in letters from 1934–41’, *Russian History*, 24:1–2, 1997, pp. 131–47, p. 133; and, Davies, *Popular opinion in Stalin’s Russia*, p. 178).
39 Gustav Klutsis, ‘Long live the USSR — a forerunner of unity for the workers of every nationality in the world’, 1935; Gustav Klutsis, ‘Long live our happy socialist motherland, long live our beloved great Stalin!’, 1935; and, Gustav Klutsis, ‘Cadres decide everything’, 1935 (Fig. 4.62).
40 Provincial Committee.
cultivating the utmost love for comrade Stalin and the other leaders amongst children and young people, inculcating Soviet patriotism, bringing them to fanaticism in love and defence of comrade Stalin and our socialist motherland.42

By the late 1930s, adulation for Stalin in propaganda was increasing. Stalin became the leader responsible for all of the new socialist construction taking place, the inspiration for record-breaking flights and new feats of exploration, the creator of the glorious new constitution and the only person capable of identifying and purging the regime’s enemies. The German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 appears to have genuinely taken Stalin by surprise and undermined his confidence, especially as he had publicly maintained that Germany would not invade.43 The façade of rampaging success became impossible to maintain. Stalin’s appearances in the press decreased, although he was still quoted, and his image in propaganda posters also diminished. After victory Stalin reappeared as more triumphant than before the war and with a mandate for leadership in his own right, somewhat independent of his need to appeal to Lenin’s legacy. Victory was celebrated, with Stalin as its author, and his image was often treated like an icon. By 1949 Stalin was also portrayed as a saviour and bringer of peace.44

The persona of Stalin not only evolved and adapted to circumstances over a long period of time, but also exhibited considerable breadth, holding the widest possible appeal to diverse audiences. There was a tension between the need to control Stalin’s image through centralisation and censorship, which restricted meaning to within narrowly defined constructs, and the need to offer a plurality of meanings to reach the widest possible audience. This latter led to ‘overcoding’ of the image and a situation where symbols associated with the image contained a multitude of meanings that, if not wholly contradictory, sometimes sat together uneasily or appeared to be mutually exclusive. In other words, Stalinist symbolism can appear confusing if examined broadly and objectively and with a view to finding coherent and consistent meaning. In his study of Napoleon and history painting, Christopher Prendergast notes the same tendency

42 Cited in Davies, Popular opinion in Stalin’s Russia, p. 150.
43 To be discussed in Chapter Four.
44 See Chapter Four.
with propagandistic portrayals of Napoleon, arising largely from the fact that there was an attempt to show Napoleon simultaneously as a victorious general and a benevolent leader.\textsuperscript{45} The Stalin cult also had to reconcile within the one persona both his image as an iron-willed military victor (both in the Civil War and later in the Great Patriotic War) and the appearance of being a humane and caring leader providing for Soviet citizens. These two elements were expressed by the Warrior and the Father archetypes, and were somewhat reconciled (if not entirely convincingly) in the adoption of the Saviour archetype. Thomas Mathews’ observations with regard to portraits of Christ apply equally well here. Mathews notes that the images correspond to what people needed from Christ, rather than to any intrinsic qualities and this has resulted in a plethora of representations of Christ that, as a whole, have little consistency and sometimes demonstrate bewildering contradictions.\textsuperscript{46}

Stalin’s relationship with Lenin, as depicted in propaganda, was another area of ambiguity, and highlights the androgyny of the symbolism associated with some charismatic leaders.\textsuperscript{47} In her study of mythopoetic elements in memories of Stalin, Natalia Skradol explores how Stalin’s mythology places him both as Lenin’s son and as a sort of symbolic husband to Lenin. In this latter schema, Lenin is the mother figure who gives birth to the regime, and dies doing so, while Stalin receives the newborn into his hands and raises it. This notion is made explicit in a striking poster of 1947 by Iraklii Toidze (Fig. 3.2) which is discussed in detail in Chapter Four.

\textsuperscript{45} The resultant ‘overcoding’, arising from the tension between the nature of the event depicted and the propaganda requirements of the depiction, lead to a confusing plurality of messages: ‘Napoleon can only with difficulty be authoritative ruler, tragic victim, redemptive saviour and humanitarian benefactor in a scene of war, for which in any case he was primarily responsible in the first place …’, Prendergast argues that Napoleon is the first case in which propaganda consistently tried to reconcile these two images (\textit{Napoleon and history painting: Antoine-Jean Gros’s La Bataille d’Eylau}, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1997, p. 168).

\textsuperscript{46} Mathews goes on to note the power of images to encourage adulation and worship, even when objective analysis of the image finds it lacking in any real substance: ‘often images overwhelm the ideas they are supposed to be carrying, or dress up with respectability ideas that in themselves are too shoddy to carry intellectual weight. Images not only express convictions, they alter feelings and end up justifying convictions. Eventually, of course, they invite worship’ (\textit{The clash of gods: a reinterpretation of early Christian art}, Princeton University Press, 1999, p. 11).

\textsuperscript{47} To be discussed in greater detail in relation to religious symbolism and the icon in Chapter Four.
Igor Golomshtok observes in relation to Soviet genre painting under Stalin that the fundamental task of Soviet art was to interpret the Stalin symbol through a multitude of prisms: ‘Stalin — let alone Lenin — was more a symbol than a man, and the role of Soviet art was to decipher this symbol, to reveal different aspects of the existence of this superman in thousands upon thousands of genre paintings.’

The French biographer of Stalin, Henri Barbusse, got to the crux of the matter when he observed that Stalin had ‘the face of a worker, the head of a scholar, and in the clothing of a simple soldier’. This ‘triple nature’ immediately invites a comparison with the ‘Holy Trinity’ and highlights the ability of the Stalin persona to both combine several natures in one being, and to appear as different things to different people, a sort of magical shape-shifting ability that befits a magician or a deity. Alfred J. Rieber sees the roots of Stalin’s multiple and sometimes contradictory identities as deriving from deeper, sometimes unconscious sources from within Stalin himself as he struggled to reconcile his Georgian beginnings with his proletarian values and political life in Russia.

Stalin: ‘Man of Steel’

It is well known that the alias adopted by Stalin, inconsistently at first from around 1910, and which later came to substitute for his own surname and to symbolise his persona, translates as ‘Man of Steel’. Stalin, like Lenin and the other Bolshevik revolutionaries, had used

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50 This manner of presenting the leader does not merely belong to a ‘naïve’ Soviet past. In their article on Vladimir Putin and Putiniana, Julie A. Cassiday and Emily D. Johnson note that the cult around Putin is ‘inherently polysemantic, highly mobile and easily individualized’, with Putin’s image nebulous and all-embracing, a reflection in which everyone can see what he wishes to see. They argue that the nostalgic cult that has developed around Putin serves the same purpose as the cult of Stalin (‘Putin, Putiniana and the question of a post-Soviet cult of personality’, *SEER*, 88:4, 2010, pp. 685–86).
51 For the purposes of analysis he uses the constructs of three analytical frames — ‘the cultural (traditional Georgian), the social (proletarian), and the political (hegemonic Russian)’ — each of which contained its own kernel of truth, ‘layering of fabrications’ and set of ambiguities, to explore the ambiguities and tensions in the public image of Stalin and posits that, once in power, Stalin deliberately maintained a multiplicity of meanings in order to destabilise others and to confirm his role as the ‘master interpreter’ and supreme authority (Alfred J. Rieber, ‘Stalin, man of the borderlands’, *The American Historical Review*, 106:5, 2001, pp. 1651–91, pp. 1656–57).
many cadre names during his underground career. The two others to endure throughout his lifetime, especially amongst close comrades from the early days, were ‘Soso’ and ‘Koba’. There are, perhaps, a confluence of reasons for Dzhugashvili choosing the moniker ‘Stalin’ and also for why it stuck.52 Montefiore suggests that the appellation ‘Man of Steel’ suited Stalin’s character53 and, undoubtedly, his conception of himself. Montefiore also draws a parallel with the case of Lenin, who had 160 aliases, but kept Lenin because it was the byline he used on his What is to be done? pamphlet, the article with which he made his reputation. Stalin used the Stalin byline on his article on nationalities, which made his reputation.54 The name Stalin sounded Russian and was similar to ‘Lenin’. In addition, Stalin’s Bolshevik comrades were doing much the same thing: Scriabin became Molotov (Hammer Man) and Rosenfeld became Kamenev (Man of Stone).55

The use of ‘steel’ as a metaphor in portrayals of Stalin implied personal qualities of courage, determination, ruthlessness, toughness, and unbreakability. These qualities were compatible with those required in an underground revolutionary, and translated well into the leadership role, especially under the dire circumstances that existed in the fledgling Soviet regime, but also in view of the continued threats posed by internal and external enemies throughout Stalin’s rule. Stalin may also have had earlier metaphoric associations with the tough metals from his Georgian childhood. Rieber posits that the cult of iron and steel was a widespread and possibly unique phenomenon in the Caucasus, especially in the oral tradition of epic Ossetian tales. One of the most popular heroes is Soslan Stal’noi56 who was a defender (and sometimes vengeful destroyer) of his kinfolk.57

52 Montefiore suggests that it is possible, although he doubts that Stalin would have admitted it, that a girlfriend by the name of Ludmilla Stal was the original inspiration behind the pseudonym, as Stalin frequently fashioned aliases out of the names of his women (Young Stalin, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2007, p. 278).
53 Montefiore, Young Stalin, p. 279.
54 Montefiore, Young Stalin, p. 278.
55 Lev Davidovich Bronshtein had also used numerous aliases in his underground period, ‘Trotsky’ being the name he took from one of his jailers in Odessa when travelling on a forged passport.
56 Soslan the Iron Man.
Iron and steel also had important metaphoric associations for Soviet society. During the 1930s Lazar Kaganovich earned the nickname ‘Iron Lazar’, possibly for both his iron will in executing the orders of Stalin, and because of his position as people’s commissar for the railways, in charge of building the Moscow Metro. Iron and steel were crucial to Soviet efforts to industrialise rapidly, and construct impressive new Soviet cities, including the planned reconstruction of Moscow. During the 1930s Stalin was frequently depicted amid scenes of mammoth socialist construction, surrounded by vast structures of concrete and steel, and also as showing the way forward with steady outstretched arm and steely gaze. This display of ‘iron will’ continued in the posters of the war years, with Stalin becoming the rallying symbol of the determination of the nation to hold out against the fascist threat and to force victory. Stalin was closely associated with achievements in Soviet aviation and the aircraft of the Soviet Airforce were referred to as *staln’ye ptitsy* (birds of steel), while flyers became known as *Stalinskim sokolam* (Stalin’s falcons). The steely determination of Stalin’s gaze and posture added force to the words of poster captions, usually Stalin’s own words from speeches in which he exhorted and cajoled the citizenry to join their will for victory to his own. When Stalin refused to evacuate Moscow and the Kremlin with the rest of the government, he was seen to be living up to his appellation of ‘Man of Steel’.

Stalin and the sun

One of the key symbols associated with Stalin in propaganda is the sun, with its related qualities of light and warmth. The sun is a recurrent motif throughout propaganda associated with leaders since pre-Christian times, when leaders appealed to their sun gods to look favourably upon their leadership, their battles and their harvests. Plamper traces the association of this trope with the leader in Russia back to the 17th-century court poet Simeon Polotskii. Associating a leader with the sun suggests that he is the bringer of life and of bounty to the people. That Stalin approved of the use of this symbol for his leadership seems apparent because research into his personal

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library has shown that, in a book about Napoleon, Stalin annotated the passage ‘Had Napoleon been forced to choose a religion, he would have chosen to worship the sun, which fertilizes everything and is the true god of the earth’, with the word ‘Good’, and circled the word ‘sun’ in red.  

The sun became a central image in Stalinist propaganda, with Stalin unambiguously equated with the sun in poetry and song, while propaganda posters frequently associated Stalin with light in general. At a meeting of shock workers in February 1936, the Dagestani folk poet Suleiman Stalskii referred to Stalin as the sun who ‘illuminates the world’.  

Hymns and songs dedicated to Stalin celebrate him with the words ‘Like the sun, you have illumined the expanse’, or ‘Glory to the golden sun, glory to the stars on the Kremlin, Glory to our native Stalin’, or ‘Glory to our mother earth! Glory to the red sun in the Kremlin!’ In a 1937 editorial in Literaturnaia Gazeta it was suggested that Stalin’s warmth was so powerful that it could even protect his falcons against the freezing Arctic temperatures.  

Perhaps one of the most laboured metaphorical associations of Stalin with the light of the sun occurs in a poem by Kazakh poet Dzhambul. This panegyric forms the text of a poster by Vartan Arakelov which was released in 1939, the year of Stalin’s 60th birthday celebrations (Fig. 3.3). Stalin is celebrated as the father of children of all nations
and tribes, and the source of a radiating and shimmering light, which reflects onto everyone. Despite the fatherly connotations of the text, this poster image of Stalin emphasises his remoteness from the realm of man and endows him with the qualities of a deity. Stalin is made of stone, an honour reserved for founding fathers and those who have accomplished exceptional feats. The statue is immutable and immortal. It stands amid lush blossoms, above children, looking protectively out over the scene and beyond, a god that guarantees abundance and safety, and invites veneration and worship. The children, from various nationalities, cannot hope to access Stalin personally and instead do so through his representative in the earthly realm, the poet Dzhambul, who sings words of praise of Stalin to the children, accompanying himself on the dombra.

The 1939 Uzbek poster, ‘So — greetings, Stalin, and live for a hundred years …’ (Fig. 3.4) by Konstantin Cheprakov, dates from the immediate prewar era in which Stalin’s munificence extended beyond the borders of Russia and out to all the nationalities and states of the Soviet Union. Uzbekistan is one of the many countries that at that time made up the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. This poster illustrates the gratitude to Stalin of the Uzbek people for the building of the 270-kilometre-long Great Fergana Canal to irrigate the cotton fields, and thus create cotton independence for the Soviet Union. Stalin is surrounded by a flowing multitude of Uzbek peasants bearing flowers and displaying the fruits of their irrigated fields. Stalin gives and receives congratulations to Molotov who, due to his position in the composition and the distinctive colour of his clothing, occupies centre stage. Interestingly, Molotov is also the centre of light in the poster, with a subdued Stalin in muted tones placed off in the shadows to the right.

Despite Stalin’s reluctance to assume the limelight in the visual component of the poster, the text of the poster — ‘So — greetings, Stalin, and live for a hundred years, shine like the sun, live for victory! And lead us on the way to victory! Accept the country’s joyous
greetings!' — makes it clear to whom the Uzbek people owe their gratitude for the canal which is to be their lifeblood. In fact, Stalin is responsible for more than just water for the crops, he also provides the sunshine. Molotov takes centre stage because Stalin allows him to do so, a manifestation of Stalin’s modesty and humility. The text makes clear that all of the illustrated bounty is due to the blessing bestowed by Stalin. By appearing to be a spontaneous outpouring of gratitude from the hearts of the people, both the image and the text illustrate the correct relationship between the leaders and the people.

A 1948 Uzbek poster by Mikhail Reikh (Fig. 3.5) also celebrates abundance and Stalin as the sun. The poster is dominated by a bust of Stalin emblazoned across a red sky. Stalin appears like the rising sun, illuminating the Uzbek people below who look to the sky, arms outstretched to offer thanks to the source of fertility and abundance. In their arms they hold offerings of bouquets of cotton and ears of wheat, and blossoming roses surround the poster caption. The caption, in both Uzbek and Russian, names Stalin as the sun and is taken from a letter signed by 26,474,646 Komsomol and youth on 3 November 1947: ‘For communism! So youth exclaims, and this cry is heard in the distance. Youth swears allegiance, Comrade Stalin is the Sun of all the earth!’

Stalin’s association with warmth and the sun is also the subject of a 1949 poster by an unidentified artist, ‘We are warmed by Stalin’s affection’ (Fig. 3.6). The poster features a smiling bust of Stalin, with military collar but without cap, surrounded by the smaller heads of 15 children. Beneath Stalin is a laurel wreath that, with his military uniform and the fireworks and searchlights below, visually references victory in the Great Patriotic War. The children, who look ethnically Georgian, are encased in flowers, many of their heads appearing to grow out of the petals. The five children at the base of the poster appear to rise up from a bowl of fruit. Fruit, flowers and children all testify to the fecundity and abundance of the socialist utopia. Behind the youngest child, in the centre at the base, the spire of the Spassky tower rises, leading straight to the portrait of Stalin and thus linking the two symbols. Stalin is located at the position of deity, but also appears as the father of the children, a point that has particular resonance because of Stalin’s Georgian roots. Above their heads, but beneath Stalin, fireworks and searchlights illuminate the violet sky. Stalin glows with a white light and, in the heavenly realm that he inhabits,
the entire background consists of the white light that emanates from him. The text of the poster is in Russian and Georgian and celebrates the joys of childhood, sunny Georgia and Stalin: ‘We are warmed by Stalin’s affection, We carry joy and happiness, / We are sunny Georgian children, / Singing a song to Stalin!’ It is flanked by scenes of Georgian life — traditional architecture juxtaposed with new construction, and a train rushing through lush fields of crops.

Numerous posters depict Stalin as the source of light or as illuminated by a light from above, and Stalin was associated with both natural and artificial light. A notable example of this variant of the metaphor

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68 Marina Volkova & Natalia Pinus, ‘Long live the equal rights woman in the USSR’, 1938; Viktor Koretskii, ‘Workers of collective and Soviet cooperative farms and machine tractor station operators …’, 1939; Iraklii Toidze, ‘All our forces to support our Red Army …’, 1941 (Fig. 4.16); Vasilii Bayuskin & A. Shipier, ‘The Great Patriotic War’, 1942; A.A. Kazantsiev, ‘Forward to the definitive defeat of the enemy’, 1944; Stefan Gints, ‘The triumph of victory …’, 1945; V. Selivanov, ‘Glory to our great people’, 1945 (in which rays of sunshine emanate from the Stalin victory medal); Petr Shukhmin, ‘Long live the great organiser and inspirer of historic victory …’, 1945; I. Achundov, [text in Azerbaijani], 1946; Nikolai Avvakumov, ‘Long live our teacher, our father, our leader, Comrade Stalin!’, 1946 (Fig. 3.28); Ruben Shkhiyan, ‘In order to build, we need to know …’, 1947; Naum Karpovskii, ‘Labour with martial persistence so your kolkhoz becomes part of the vanguard …’, 1948; Naum Karpovskii, ‘Long live the Komsomol generation’, 1948; Vladimir Pravdin & Nikolai Denisov, ‘Glory to great Stalin!’, 1948; Vladimir Pravdin & Nikolai Denisov, ‘Long live our leader and teacher, the great Stalin!’, 1948; Leonid Golovanov, ‘And Stalin raised us to be loyal to the people, inspired us to work and to deeds’, 1949 (Fig. 3.21); Iraklii Toidze, ‘Long live the best friend of miners, great Stalin!’, 1949; Viktor Koretskii, ‘Great Stalin is the banner of friendship of peoples of the USSR!’, 1950 (Fig. 4.55); N. Talipov, ‘Long live Comrade Stalin …’, 1950; Nina Vatolina, ‘Thank you comrade Stalin for our happy childhood!’, 1950; Boris Berezhkovskii, Mikhail Solov’ev & I. Shagin, ‘Under the leadership of great Stalin — forward to communism!’, 1951 (Fig. 4.66); Mikhail Gordon, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin — forward to the victory of communism!’, 1951; Elena Mel’nikova, ‘Best friend of children, glory to great Stalin!’, 1951; B.V. Vorontsov, ‘Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin’, 1951.

69 M. Zhukov, ‘The leader of the people of the USSR and workers of the whole world’, 1938 (in which the sun forms part of the emblem of the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic); Viktor Deni & Nikolai Dolgorukov, ‘Stalin's spirit makes our army and country strong and solid’, 1939 (Fig. 4.11); Vladimir Kaidalov, ‘Departing from us …’, 1940 (Fig. 2.13); Naum Karpovskii, ‘People praise life in song …’, 1940; Viktor Klimashin, ‘The All-Union Agricultural Exhibition’, 1940; Iraklii Toidze, ‘The party is unbeatable …’, 1940; U. Zubov, ‘Under the guidance of great Stalin, forward to new victories’, 1941; Vladimir Serov, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, forward to victory’, 1942 (Fig. 4.23); Pavel Sokolov-Skalia, ‘Long live the VKP(b) — leaders and organisers of the Komsomol’, 1943; M. Karpenko, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin — forward to the complete defeat of the German invaders’, 1944; Viktor Govorov, ‘Glory to the first candidate for deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, great Stalin!’, 1946 (Fig. 4.67); Boris Berezhkovskii, ‘“We stand for peace and we defend the cause of peace.” I. Stalin’, 1947 (Fig. 4.32); Petr Grecchkin, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin …’, 1947; Naum Karpovskii, ‘Long live the invincible banner of Lenin–Stalin’, 1947; Iraklii Toidze, ‘Stalin’s kindness illuminates the future of our children’, 1947 (Fig. 3.2); Nikolai Denisov & Vladimir Pravdin, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin — forward to the victory of communism!’, 1948; Vasilii Suryaninov, ‘Stalin is our banner!’, 1948; Vladimir Kaidalov, ‘Glory to great Stalin!’, 1949; F. Litvinov, ‘Long life and prosperity to our motherland!’, 1949 (Fig. 3.22);
is Stalin Prize winner Viktor Ivanov’s ‘Great Stalin is the beacon of communism!’ of 1949 (Fig. 3.7). Stalin stands alone in his study, in front of a bookshelf containing the collected works of Marx and Engels, Lenin, and his own writings. Although he is lit from above, the text makes it clear that it is Stalin who is the guiding light of communism. Several posters celebrating Stalin’s role in guiding the nation to victory in the Great Patriotic War show the sky lit up with fireworks and searchlights. During holiday celebrations Stalin’s image was sometimes projected onto clouds in the night sky, so that he appeared to be hovering over the crowds on a beam of light like a protective deity.

Stalin was also associated with electric light. Lenin had been strongly associated with electricity as a result of concerted propaganda campaigns to electrify the nation using the slogan: ‘Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country.’ Lightbulbs were commonly referred to as ‘Ilich’s little lamps’ and Lenin was thanked for delivering electricity to new communes. Tumarkin parallels this situation with the Orthodox tradition of linking the saints with water sources they miraculously found. During Stalin’s leadership, electrification remained strongly tied to Lenin, although Stalin was also associated with bringing power to the nation through massive industrial projects like the Dnieper Dam. Some posters

F. Litvinov, ‘Raise higher the banner of Lenin–Stalin — banner of our great victory!’, 1949; Viktor Ivanov, ‘For national happiness!’, 1950; Vladimir Kaidalov, ‘We will struggle to reap a big cotton harvest!’, 1950; B. Lebedev, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin …’, 1950; Mikhail Solov’ev, ‘Such women didn’t and couldn’t exist in the old days’, 1950 (Fig. 3.33); V. Musinov, ‘Great Stalin is the hope of the world’, 1951; Boris Belopol’skii, ‘The world will be saved and enhanced if people take responsibility for maintaining peace into their own hands and defend it to the end.’ I. Stalin’, 1952 (Fig. 4.58).

70 A.A. Babitskii, ‘Under the leadership of Comrade Stalin, forward to complete victory over our enemy!’, 1944 (Fig. 4.31); Stefan Gints, ‘The triumph of victory’, 1945; Vladimir Kaidalov, ‘Glory to the great heroic Red Army …’, 1945; Boris Mukhin, ‘Glory to the great heroic Red Army …’, 1945; V. Selivanov, ‘Glory to our great people …’, 1945; Petr Shukhmin, ‘Long live the great organiser and inspirer of historic victory against German imperialism …’, 1945; V. Medvedev, ‘Long live the 30th anniversary of the great October Socialist Revolution’, 1947; F. Litvinov, ‘Long live the party of Lenin–Stalin, inspirer and organiser of our victories!’, 1948 (Fig. 4.49); Petr Golub’, ‘Long life and prosperity to our motherland!’, 1949; Vladimir Kaidalov, ‘Glory to great Stalin!’, 1949; Naum Karpovskii, ‘Glory to the great leaders of October!’, 1951 (Fig. 2.19).

71 This eye-catching event is captured on the cover of Ogonyok, December 1949.


73 Tumarkin, Lenin lives!, p. 131.
visually juxtapose images of Stalin and Lenin, suggesting that Stalin was carrying on Lenin’s pioneering work in electrification in the present day.\textsuperscript{74}

This focus on light in the Stalin era also extended to an obsession with light fittings and lamps, which occupied a special place in the interior design of railway stations, theatres, and public buildings. The lights in the Metro stations were so resplendent they were described as an ‘artificial underground sun’.\textsuperscript{75} A famous poster of 1940 by honoured graphic artist Viktor Govorkov,\textsuperscript{76} ‘Stalin takes care of each of us from the Kremlin’ (Fig. 3.8), shows Stalin seated at his desk in the Kremlin, working through the night, softly illuminated by his desk lamp. This lamp was to become part of the mythology of Stalin and an emblem of his care for the Soviet people. Each night, whether or not he was actually at the Kremlin, a lamp was lit in the window as a symbol of Stalin’s constant vigilance and diligence.

Stalin as the helmsman and engine driver

Although the epithet ‘The Great Helmsman’ is usually associated in current terminology with Mao Zedong, Stalin was also known by this epithet and appeared in political posters as the captain of a ship, or as the driver of a train. The helmsman image has a long history of association with skilled leadership and was a common motif in Byzantine court literature,\textsuperscript{77} and Ancient Greek and Ancient Roman literature and philosophy. Maurizio Vito also notes a usage of the helmsman metaphor by St John Chrysostom in which the helmsman is endowed with gifts that belong to divine providence.\textsuperscript{78} When a helmsman appears as a character in literature, he is often the mouthpiece for the author’s political views and, by nature of his role, demonstrates strong leadership qualities. The helmsman symbol is part of a larger field of metaphors in which the ship represents the

\textsuperscript{74} For example, Viktor Govorkov, ‘In the name of communism’, 1951 (Fig. 2.18).
\textsuperscript{75} Bowlt, ‘Stalin as Isis and Ra’, pp. 49–50.
\textsuperscript{76} Govorkov studied under Dmitrii Moor and Sergei Gerasimov and was awarded the title of Honoured Artist of the RFSFR in 1971. V.V. Andreyanova & I.I. Nikonova, \textit{Khudozhnikii Narodov SSSR: Biobibliograficheskii Slovar’}, vol. 3, Moscow, Izdatel’stvo ‘Iskusstvo’, 1976, p. 64.
\textsuperscript{78} Maurizio Vito, \textit{Terra e Mare: Metafore e Politica in Conflitto}, Rome, Aracne Editrice, 2012.
state, navigation represents knowledge, skill and care, and the journey becomes an odyssey. Michel Foucault notes the use of this group of metaphors in classical poetry and philosophy and observes that the navigation metaphor implies three types of knowledge possessed by the skilled helmsman associated with medicine, political government and self-government. The helmsman image carries within it multiple implications. The helmsman is able to care for himself and for others, exerts both self-control and political leadership, and has the wisdom to take account of the many aspects necessary to navigate a skilled course through often tempestuous waters (navigating by the stars, understanding the weather and wind, knowledge of the currents, knowledge of how the ship operates). Finally, there is the understanding that he holds his position with divine consent.

A 1933 poster by highly decorated satirist, caricaturist, ROSTA and TASS artist Boris Efimov depicts Stalin as the helmsman steering the ship of the USSR (Fig. 3.9). In his greatcoat and plain workman’s cap, a hearty and broad-shouldered Stalin grasps the helm with two large firm hands, his vigilant gaze out over his left shoulder keeping watch against enemies and potential threats. Next to him, the Soviet flag flaps in the breeze and behind him, in the top left of the poster, is the midsection of a huge ship with its red star emblem. The bottom right of the poster contains the text in small red letters, ‘The captain of the Soviet Union leads us from victory to victory!’ The text advises the viewer that not only is Stalin keeping the Soviet Union safe from harm, but he is also steering a journey of multiple victories — in fact the entire journey consists of a journey from one port of victory to another (from socialism to communism). It is implicit that without him the ship would sink. The poster is somewhat unusual in that is does not refer to Stalin by name in the text but uses the ‘captain’ metaphor instead.

79  ‘The path towards the self will always be something of an Odyssey … This dangerous journey to the port, the port of safety, implies a knowledge, a technique, an art … Three types of technique are usually associated with this model of piloting: first, medicine; second, political government, third, the direction and the government of oneself’ (Michel Foucault, Frédéric Gros, François Ewald & Alessandro Fontana, The hermeneutics of the subject: lectures at the Collège de France, 1981–1982, New York, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005, pp. 248–49).
80  Efimov was a highly decorated Soviet artist who was awarded the titles of People’s Artist of the RSFSR in 1959; People’s Artist of the USSR in 1967; Corresponding Member of the Academy of Arts in 1954; USSR State Prize Winner in 1950, 1951 and 1972; and the Order of Lenin in 1980 (I.I. Nikonova, Khudozhnikii Narodov SSSR: Biobibliograficheskii Slovar’, 4:1, Moscow, Izdatel’stvo ‘Iskusstvo’, 1983, pp. 66–68).
This poster must have been considered an important propaganda tool because it was issued in an edition of 200,000 in 1933, before such big editions became commonplace.

Another trope related to the helmsman is that of the locomotive driver. Due to the far more recent emergence of the train and the railroad, this metaphor cannot boast the same long history of use as the helmsman metaphor, although, for obvious reasons, it is related to (perhaps even an updated extension of) the helmsman metaphor, in keeping with the Soviet emphasis on modernity and progress. There is one significant difference between the ship and the train: a helmsman must use all his knowledge and skill to navigate a safe route among many possible other routes, while the train driver has no choice of alternate routes and must follow the tracks. The train driver’s role involves keeping the engine running, avoiding pitfalls, and managing speed and braking. The locomotive is often used as a metaphor for history, and there is inevitability about the destination along a route that was already laid out before the engine driver sat at the controls. This makes the train a particularly apt metaphor for the communist journey. According to Marxist theory, scientific laws govern history, and the final destination of communism is inevitable. The leader is a caretaker of the state until it is no longer needed and withers away. Once the destination is reached, neither the train nor the train driver will be needed.

The metaphor of the train is employed in a 1939 political poster by Pavel Sokolov-Skalia discussed in Chapter Two. This poster shares with the 1933 Efimov poster the notion of a strong, wise leader who has firm control, as well as that of the journey from success to success. In both posters Stalin is shown as in firm control of a huge and powerful machine. In the 1939 poster, the text makes explicit that Stalin is ‘tried and tested’, a man of knowledge and experience. He is the only one of the four Marxist theorists depicted on the banner decorating the side of the train to have real and enduring experience in making a socialist society work. This is why he drives.
Implicitly related to the symbolic identities of helmsman and train driver are the ‘path’\(^{81}\) metaphors that frequently appear in the text of posters, and which are visually represented by the outstretched arm and pointed hand, and the direction of the leader’s gaze. The ‘line’ or ‘path’ is the correct way in which to achieve socialism and communism, and implies that there is only one correct direction, ideology or strategy. In Soviet propaganda, this direction is indicated by the leader (who may be driving a train down the railroad tracks, pointing or gazing) and the citizenry are duty-bound to follow him because no other way is correct or acceptable. Jeffrey Brooks points out that, although this metaphor was frequently used by Lenin, it is not borrowed from Marx and Engels, who employed vaguer metaphors for development and growth.\(^{82}\) This metaphor is also implied in the ‘Forward to the victory of communism’ posters that are discussed in Chapter Four.

**Stalin the architect**

The notion of Stalin as the architect of Soviet communism dates to the time of the burgeoning of the Stalin cult in 1934. On 1 January 1934, in *Pravda*, Karl Radek published a laudatory article on Stalin titled “The architect of socialist society”, which was then reissued as a pamphlet\(^{83}\) in an edition of 225,000.\(^{84}\) Written after his expulsion from the Party for ‘oppositionist activities’ in 1927, and readmission to Party ranks after capitulating to Stalin in 1930, the booklet has the intriguing subtitle: ‘the ninth in a course of lectures on “The history of the victory of socialism”, delivered in 1967 at the School of Inter-Planetary Communications on the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution’, and its content is so excessively eulogistic that it is difficult to determine just how one should read it. After signing

\(^{81}\) M. Karpenko, ‘On the path of Lenin to joy and glory, with Stalin in our hearts we are going to victory!’, undated; Unknown artist, ‘The path to victory — implementation of the six conditions of Comrade Stalin’, 1932; Pen Varlen, ‘The path to victory — implementation of the six conditions of Comrade Stalin’, 1942; Aleksandr Venediktov, ‘You cleared the path for our freedom, Soviet rule gave glory to our country’, 1949; A. Mytnikov, ‘26 years without Lenin, but still on Lenin’s path’, 1950 (Fig. 2.17).

\(^{82}\) Brooks, *Thank you, Comrade Stalin!*, p. 48.


a document capitulating to Stalin in 1929, Radek was readmitted to the Party in 1930 and went on to lead Cominform and deliver a keynote address at the Writers Conference of 1934. He was arrested in the purges of 1937 and subsequently died in the gulag during a sentence of 10 years hard labour. Radek argues that Stalin, rather than Lenin, was the architect of socialism. He acknowledges that Stalin stood on the shoulders of Lenin, but claims that in executing Lenin’s will, Stalin had to take many daring independent decisions and to develop Lenin’s teachings in the same manner that Lenin had further developed those of Marx. Interestingly, Radek employs the helmsman metaphor with Stalin called upon by history ‘to take the helm and steer the proud ship of Lenin through storm and stress’, describes Stalin as ‘a pillar of fire’ who ‘marched in front of mankind and led the way’, and speaks of Stalin as being ‘steeled in the tireless struggle against the scores of shades of the petty bourgeois movement’. These and related metaphors recur with monotonous regularity throughout the pamphlet, constituting a listing of the canon of tropes associated with Stalin.

When Radek wrote in 1934, the Congress of Victors had just declared the full achievement of socialism and the new task of progressing to the higher stage, communism, had commenced. By the time the two posters celebrating Stalin as the architect of communism appeared, Stalin was an old man, already over 70, and the quest to introduce a communist society had been taking place for 17 years, complicated by the need for defence in the Great Patriotic War. A 1951 poster by Boris Belopol’skii carries the caption ‘Glory to Stalin, the great architect of communism!’ and was issued in a massive edition of half a million copies, which suggests that it was viewed as an important piece of propaganda. The poster, in pale blues and muted browns typical of the pastel shades of the ‘era of abundance’, is dominated by Stalin, depicted with attributes of leadership (his marshal’s uniform) and standard props (unlit pipe in the right hand and scroll in the left). At the literal level, the scroll is suggestive of an architect’s blueprints, but at a symbolic level it also references the scroll or logos held by

86 Radek, The architect of socialist society, p. 10.
87 Radek, The architect of socialist society, p. 23.
88 Radek, The architect of socialist society, p. 23.
89 Radek, The architect of socialist society, p. 25.
Christ. Behind Stalin, bathed in a white glow that appears to emanate from him, is the new hydroelectric work being undertaken across the Soviet territories. The inscription on the dam wall is carved in stone and reads “‘Communism is Soviet power plus the electrification of the whole country.’ Lenin’, an iconic Lenin slogan, to which Radek also draws attention in his pamphlet. In the far distance is a small statue of Lenin, the man upon whose foundation Stalin was building. There are two groups of figures in the poster, both existing only in order to react (and illustrate for the viewer the correct attitude to take) to Stalin. The group of men on the left, who appear to be professional workers associated with bringing the communist dream to fruition, stare up at Stalin with awe and respect. In the bottom-right corner, passers-by on a barge hail Stalin with visible enthusiasm. Stalin pays no attention to them and gazes out to the viewer’s right at a future that only he can see. By focusing on Stalin, the other figures demonstrate that it is Stalin who embodies the communist future. Like a priest or shaman, Stalin acts as a sort of intermediary between the vision and the people.

The second poster, by N. Petrov and Konstantin Ivanov (Fig. 3.11), was published in 1952 and carries the same slogan as the Belopol’skii poster. This poster uses black-and-white photography as a means of documentary evidence of the progress of Soviet society. Stalin is superimposed in front of a view of Moscow and is looking up the Volga River. The city appears to be bustling with pedestrians, cars and river traffic, and is bathed in a white light which also shines on Stalin from above. Stalin again looks out of the picture, this time to the viewer’s left, which is usually associated with the past, and suggests that Stalin is surveying what has already been achieved. The poster plays on the two levels of meaning of the architect symbol. Stalin is literally shown as responsible for the planning and rebuilding of Moscow, which commenced in 1935, but also responsible for planning and building the new communist society. Moscow was seen as a symbol for the whole federation, her transformation a metaphor for the moral and political transformation of the whole of Soviet society. Katerina Clark points out that, although only parts of Moscow were rebuilt, it was usually represented as being totally rebuilt, and photographs of models were often presented (as in the case of the Palace of Soviets) as if the new

buildings already existed.\textsuperscript{91} Moscow was also represented — in Stalin’s ‘Greetings on her 800th anniversary’ in 1947, for example — as a sort of symbolic saviour of the West, having liberated the West from the Tartar yoke, repulsed the Polish–Lithuanian invasion in the Time of Troubles, repelled Napoleon in 1812, and won the Great Patriotic War against the fascists.\textsuperscript{92}

Archetypes of reciprocity

The Stalin cult made use of a number of symbols and archetypes to demonstrate the many facets of the leader and his relationship to the people, which in turn served as a model for both the new Soviet person and the new society. Two of the most pervasive and fundamental archetypes associated with Stalin are those of the Father and the Teacher. These archetypes are distinct, but closely related, as both involve notions of responsibility, care and mentoring relationships, but only the Father archetype implies kinship between participants. It is here that the relationship between the leader and his people enters the realm of myth and also, it may be argued, that the deepest realms of the unconscious are tapped by cult propaganda. Before investigating how the Father and Teacher archetypes manifested in the cult of Stalin, it is necessary to briefly examine the nature of Soviet society and how these archetypes tapped into systems of reciprocal obligation already in existence.

The constructs of the ‘economy of the gift’ and the ‘politics of obligation,’ as explored by Brooks,\textsuperscript{93} are important concepts in understanding the way in which Soviet society functioned under Stalin, and also in making sense of propaganda which fostered a sense of obligation to the leader. These terms refer to an economic system whereby the citizenry receives ordinary goods and services as gifts from the leadership.\textsuperscript{94} In \textit{What was socialism, and what comes next?},

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{92} See Clark, ‘Eisenstein’s two projects for a film about Moscow’, p. 192.
\item \textsuperscript{93} Brooks, \textit{Thank you, Comrade Stalin!}
\item \textsuperscript{94} Brooks, \textit{Thank you, Comrade Stalin!}, p. xv.
\end{itemize}
anthropologist Katherine Verdery uses the simple analogy of the all-American lemonade stand to emphasise one of the pertinent points of divergence between capitalist and socialist systems:

In capitalism, those who run lemonade stands endeavour to serve thirsty customers in ways that make a profit and outcompete other lemonade stand owners. In socialism, the point was not profit, but the relationship between thirsty persons and the one with the lemonade — the Party center, which appropriated from producers the various ingredients (lemons, sugar, water) and then mixed the lemonade to reward them with, as it saw fit. Whether someone made a profit was irrelevant: the transaction underscored the center’s paternalistic superiority over its citizens — that is, its capacity to decide who got more lemonade and who got less.95

Verdery goes on to point out that goods produced in the socialist countries were either gathered and held centrally, or almost given away to sections of the population at low prices. The socialist contract guaranteed food and clothing, but not quality, availability or choice, and the goods produced often could not compete on world markets with goods produced in capitalist countries. The point was not to sell the goods, but to control redistribution, because that was how the leadership confirmed its legitimacy with the public.96

In song, film, theatre and posters, Stalin was promoted as the benefactor of all society. All bounty came from Stalin in his role as head of state. While in numerous ways the cult of Lenin formed a prototype for the cult of Stalin, the two cults differed in one important respect. As Brooks points out, nobody had to thank Lenin for their ‘happy childhood’, nor were they indebted to him personally. Lenin was not the wellspring of all accomplishments and, although he received gifts, he wasn’t deluged with them in the way that Stalin was as his cult grew.97 The celebration of Stalin’s 70th birthday on 21 December 1949, was overseen by a specially assembled ‘Committee for Preparations of Comrade Stalin’s Birthday’, with the festivities costing 5.6 million rubles and attracting thousands of pilgrims.98 Trainloads of gifts

98 Montefiore, *Stalin*, p. 537.
arrived from around the world,99 and from nationalities within the territories of the USSR.100 Accompanying the gifts, were display cases full of letters of love and gratitude to Stalin, some hand-embroidered on linen or silk, or contained in elaborately carved caskets, others simple and seemingly heartfelt.101 In Lenin’s time, citizens were made aware that they were obligated, but they owed their gratitude to the Revolution, the Party and the state, rather than to the leader. By the mid-1930s, Stalin had become a symbol for the Party, with the two entities synonymous, so that expressing gratitude to Stalin (which was easier than directing gratitude to a faceless entity) was equivalent to giving thanks to the Party and the state. Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov and Olga Sosnina point out: ‘Within this idiom of gratitude, the gifts to Stalin are counter-gifts for socialism; a gift from the socialist state as a beautiful artifact given to its citizens and embodied in the care and the “love of the leader”.’102 Viewing Stalin as the source of all benefits

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99 For example, East Germany sent 70 freight car loads, and a select group of 8,000 of the gifts from both abroad and from artisans, housewives and children throughout the Soviet Union, formed a massive exhibition at the Pushkin Museum. As social anthropologists Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov and Olga Sosnina have documented: ‘These gifts ranged from models of military hardware … to exemplars of industrial and petty-commodity production … to samples of natural resources and applied art objects such as a pipe “from the US to the Soviet people” with the carved figurines of Stalin and Truman playing chess’ (‘The faculty of useless things: gifts to Soviet leaders’, in Klaus Heller & Jan Plamper, Personality cults in Stalinism, Gottingen, V&R Unipress, 2004, p. 277). Stalin apparently never visited the exhibition, appeared unimpressed with his celebrations and ‘sat like a statue, not looking at anyone … as if not listening to the speeches in his tribute’ (Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov, ‘On heterochrony: birthday gifts to Stalin, 1949’, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, 12, 2006, pp. 355–75, p. 364).

100 For example, the massive rug woven by the workers of Azerbaijan, covering an area of 70 m² and weighing 167 kilograms, which featured a gigantic portrait of Stalin and about 70 pictorial narratives surrounding him.

101 For example, Guards Sergeant-Major Igor Nikolskii carved a tobacco box made from plexiglass for Stalin, accompanied by the following missive: ‘A participant of the war, who has traveled its hard road from beginning to end, I wish to send you my thanks for our victory. The tobacco box is made out of a piece of a downed German plane. I am not a jeweler. My tools were an awl, a penknife, a drill, and a brush; my workshop was the open air. I made it as best I could. The box holds neither gold nor jewels, but only the boundless love of a Russian soldier for his leader, Generalissimo Stalin. Please accept this gift from a soldier of the Great Patriotic War. I have written my thoughts and given of my best’ (Igor Nikolski, quoted in Boris Polevoi, ‘To Stalin from the peoples of the world’, 1950, in James von Geldern & Richard Stites (eds), Mass culture in Soviet Russia: tales, songs, poems, movies, plays and folklore, 1917–1953, Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1995, pp. 457–58).

had the additional effect of removing agency from all other actors in society, and thus reinforced Stalin’s totalitarian control and undercut the moral standing of his opponents.  

The gift of care, guidance and leadership from a benevolent Stalin to a grateful populace formed a central theme of Stalinist propaganda. By definition, gifts come without strings attached although, in practice, as Marcel Mauss points out, there is almost always a reciprocal obligation, and what separates the gift from economic transactions is the unspecified time delay between the two events. This time delay allows a mutual pretence that the two events are not causally related and reciprocity remains hidden by mutual consent. The reciprocal obligation owed to Stalin for his bountiful gifts took the form of spontaneous and extravagant displays of gratitude.

Staged ‘thanking ceremonies’ became a part of the ritual of Soviet public life. They were held in schools, and also as part of other important occasions, such as the opening of Party congresses and the celebrations for the anniversary of the October Revolution. A woman brought up in the late 1930s recalled that the ritual of thanking Stalin was ‘akin to thanking God for one’s daily bread’. The pervasive public secular ritualistic offering of thanks and praise may be somewhat unfamiliar phenomena to those raised in a Western democratic society in the 21st century, however, the ritual of thanking Stalin was not without precedent in Russian society. Traditionally, the tsar had been seen as the father figure and benefactor of the nation, as expressed in the proverb: ‘Without the Tsar, the land is a widow; without the Tsar, the people is an orphan.’ Many of the characteristics of the people’s relationship to the tsar, including the tradition of diplomatic

103 Brooks, ‘Stalin’s politics of obligation’, p. 47.
104 Mauss argues that there is always a reciprocal obligation of some sort. However, Hélène Cixous, in her discussion of the ‘feminine economy’, argues that the gifts given by a mother to a child, for example, expect no reciprocation, and it is only the predominating ‘masculine economy’ that is characterised by reciprocal obligation (‘Sorties: out and out: attacks/ways out/forays’, in Alan D. Schrift, The logic of the gift: toward an ethic of generosity, New York, Routledge, 1997).
3. STALIN IS LIKE A FAIRYTALE SYCAMORE TREE

gift giving to the tsars,\textsuperscript{108} were carried over to their relationship with the next strong leader—saviour who took the helm of government. Russian traditions of bribery, official favours and even the Orthodox gift of the sacraments, through which the believer can attain eternal life, all contributed to a culture of obligation.\textsuperscript{109}

In addition to the official state-controlled economy, a second economy coexisted during Soviet times, which grew directly from the culture of gift giving. The term \textit{blat} has an interesting and revealing etymology,\textsuperscript{110} but was not generally used in ‘polite society’ (being considered ‘un-Soviet’), and was usually alluded to with euphemisms.\textsuperscript{111} It refers to the widespread practice of obtaining life’s essentials, which were often unavailable through official channels, using a system of ‘connections’ and ‘acquaintances’. Three points are crucial in understanding \textit{blat}— the first is that, as there was no private ownership of anything, everything must be accessed through the state and state officials. The second point is that, although the transactions involved the misappropriation and misdirection of collectively owned property, \textit{blat} did not tend to refer to incidents of outright bribery, which were seen as separate and usually criminal acts. \textit{Blat} involved social networks and relationships, and the extending of favours, often separated in time, so that they took on the quality of reciprocal gift giving. The third point is that this second economy of \textit{blat} was dependent on the official economy, which controlled the means of production, and was the source of all goods and services. If one had eliminated the state-controlled economy, rather than flourishing with opportunities for capitalist entrepreneurship, the second economy would have died.

\textsuperscript{108} In fact, the Imperial Porcelain factory, which was renamed the Lomonosov Porcelain factory in Soviet times, was able to maintain a continuous business manufacturing gifts for Russia’s leaders, from the 18th century right through Soviet times.
\textsuperscript{109} See Brooks, ‘Stalin’s politics of obligation’, p. 51.
\textsuperscript{110} According to Alena E. Ledeneva, ‘\textit{blat}’ was an old word that acquired new meaning in the Soviet era, despite being banned from official discourse. It was originally used to refer to less serious types of criminal activity, and when used, as most often, in the phrase \textit{po blatu}, referred to obtaining something illicitly, by protection or patronage. In its current usage it seems to refer simply to obtaining something through connections (\textit{Russia’s economy of favours: blat, networking and informal exchange}, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 12).
\textsuperscript{111} Ledeneva, \textit{Russia’s economy of favours}, p. 13.
Blat was all pervasive because it was necessary for survival, and Soviet society consisted of vast networks of patronage that ran both vertically and horizontally. Notions of gift giving, obligation, bounty, reciprocity, and even mentorship, were integral to Soviet life, and Stalin merely sat at the top of the pyramid, as the ultimate dispenser of goods and benefits to a network below. These networks of patronage were reinforced by the strong familial connections among the top Bolsheviks. Entire family clans held leadership positions, and intermarried with each other in tight-knit circles. During the latter part of Stalin’s leadership, dutiful and obedient subordinates were given packets of cash, cars, apartments, dachas, holidays and other benefits directly as rewards for service and loyalty, and stores came into existence that sold only to a restricted clientele, regardless of how much money someone outside the circle may manage to accumulate. None of these goods was ever ‘owned’ by the recipients, everything belonged to the state, and could be removed at the whim of Stalin. Montefiore observes: ‘It used to be regarded as ironic to call the Soviet élite an “aristocracy” but they were much more like a feudal service nobility whose privileges were totally dependent on their loyalty.’

Notions of obligation and reciprocal duty saturated Soviet society at all levels and took a central position in the regime’s rituals, including such rituals as samokritika in which misguided subjects were required to apologise publicly to society for failing in their duty. These notions arose not only out of Bolshevik ideology and partiinost, but also from long Russian cultural and religious traditions that predated the Revolution. The use of archetypes to formalise and give expression to these concepts not only served to create the appearance of the existence of a long tradition in the fledgling regime, but enabled the populace to embrace their leader in a manner to which they were already accustomed, at both the conscious and subconscious level.

112 When Anastas Mikoian first moved to Moscow, Stalin allowed him to stay in his own apartment. When Mikoian declared how much he loved the apartment, Stalin gave it to him (Montefiore, Stalin, p. 44).
113 Montefiore, Stalin, p. 45.
This served to enhance the legitimacy of the leadership so that, as Pravda stated in 1941, the leaders were seen as ‘the lawful heirs to the Russian people’s great and honourable past’.  

Stalin was not only the source of all bounty, but also the source of all accomplishments. Great care was taken to ensure that Stalin was strongly associated with all the regime’s achievements, while dissociated from catastrophes and failures, such as forced collectivisation, famine and the German invasion. Failures were blamed on sabotage, ‘meddling’, and the overzealous pursuit of targets by local officials. Despite the many difficulties faced by the Soviet Union in dragging its economy into the 20th century, the achievements touted in propaganda were not always empty rhetoric. There were significant accomplishments during Stalin’s reign, even though some of these were achieved at the expense of ‘slave labour’ from the gulags and cost many human lives.

One of the ways in which the sense of obligation was reinforced in Soviet society was through the use of propaganda centred specifically around the theme of thanking and benefaction. I have divided posters on this theme into seven categories, according to the aspect of obligation and gratitude that they best reflect: posters that highlight the debt owed to Stalin for a happy childhood; posters that highlight  

116 Stalin’s article ‘Dizzy with success’ illustrates the way in which he neatly dodged his accountability for the excesses of collectivisation. His motives were always pure and unimpeachable: ‘How could there have arisen in our midst such blockheaded exercises in “socialization”, such ludicrous attempts to over-leap oneself, attempts which aim at by-passing classes and the class struggle, and which in fact bring grist to the mill of our class enemies? They could have arisen only in the atmosphere of our “easy” and “unexpected” successes on the front of collective-farm development. They could have arisen only in the atmosphere of our “easy” and “unexpected” successes on the front of collective-farm development. They could have arisen only as a result of the blockheaded belief of a section of our Party: “We can achieve anything!” , “There's nothing we can't do!” They could have arisen only because some of our comrades have become dizzy with success and for the moment have lost clearness of mind and sobriety of vision. To correct the line of our work in the sphere of collective-farm development, we must put an end to these sentiments’ (‘Dizzy with success’, Pravda, 60, 02 Mar. 1930, from J. V. Stalin, Problems of Leninism, Peking, Foreign Languages Press, 1976, pp. 483–91, p. 490).
117 A revealing example of just how difficult this rapid industrialisation could be can be found in Stephen Kotkin’s study of Magnitogorsk (Magnetic Mountain: Stalinism as a civilization, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995).
118 For example, Viktor Govorkov, ‘Thank you beloved Stalin for our happy childhood’, 1936 (Fig. 3.12); Dmitrii Grinets, ‘Thanks to the Party, thanks to dear Stalin for a happy, joyful childhood’, 1937; Nina Vatolina, Viktor Deni & Vladislav Pravdin, ‘Thank you Comrade Stalin for our happy childhood!’ , 1938; Nina Vatolina, ‘Thank you dear Stalin for our happy childhood!’,
the debt owed by women for their new equality in society to Stalin and the Party;\textsuperscript{119} posters that thank Stalin, the Party and/or the Red Army for winning the war;\textsuperscript{120} posters that acknowledge Stalin as the benefactor of all humankind;\textsuperscript{121} posters that associate Stalin and the Party with great Soviet achievements;\textsuperscript{122} posters that acknowledge

\textsuperscript{119} For example, Nikolai Mikhailov, ‘Stalin among delegates’, 1937; Marina Volkova & Natalia Pins, ‘Long live the equal-rights woman in the USSR …’, 1938 (Fig. 3.32); Mikhail Solov’ev, ‘Such women didn’t and couldn’t exist in the old days’, 1950 (Fig. 3.33).

\textsuperscript{120} For example N. Bondar, ‘Long live our dear Stalin! Long live the liberated workers of Bessarabia!’, undated; Semen Gel’berg, ‘Long live the All-Union Communist Party of Bolsheviks, the party of Lenin–Stalin — the inspirer and organiser of our victory’, c. 1945; Vladimir Kochev, ‘Long live the party of Lenin–Stalin. Inspirer and organiser of our victory!’, c. 1945; Aleksandr Zhitomirski, ‘Stalin is the greatness of our era, Stalin is the banner of our victory’, 1942 (although victory was yet a long way off); Viktor Koretskii, ‘On the joyous day of liberation …’, 1943 (Fig. 3.13); Viktor Deni, ‘Long live generalissimus STALIN — great leader and general of the Soviet people’, 1945 (Fig. 4.36); Vladimir Kaidalov, ‘“Glory to the great heroic Red Army, defending the independence of our country and winning victory over the enemy!” I. STALIN’, 1945 (Fig. 4.32); Viktor Koretskii, ‘The Soviet people are full of gratitude and love for dear STALIN — the great organiser of our victory’, 1945 (Fig. 4.35); Boris Mukhin, ‘Glory to the great heroic Red Army — the organiser of victorious armed forces of the USSR’, 1948; B. Lebedev, ‘Long live the V.K.P.(b) — the party of Lenin–Stalin, inspirer and organiser of our great victories!’, 1946 (Fig. 4.39); Mikhail Solov’ev, ‘Glory to the armed forces of the USSR and their victory over Japan’, 1947; V. Ivanov, ‘1918–1948. Glory to the party of Lenin and Stalin — the organiser of victorious armed forces of the USSR’, 1948; B.I. Lebedev, ‘Glory to the party of Lenin–Stalin — the organiser of the victory of the Soviet people!’, 1948 (Fig. 4.48); F. Litvinov, ‘Long live the party of Lenin–Stalin, inspirer and organiser of our victories!’, 1948 (Fig. 4.49); Boris Mukhin, ‘Glory to great STALIN!’, 1948 (Fig. 4.46); N. Petrov, ‘… it is our good fortune that in the difficult years of the war …’, 1948 (Fig. 4.47); F. Litvinov, ‘Raise the banner of Lenin–Stalin — the banner of our great victory!’, 1949; Vladislav Pravdin, ‘It is our blessing that during the difficult years of peace …’, 1949.

\textsuperscript{121} For example Boris Berezovskii, ‘“We stand for peace and we defend the cause of peace.” I. STALIN’, 1947 (Fig. 4.52); Petr Golub, ‘Great Stalin is the best friend of the Latvian people!’, 1950 (Fig. 4.56); Viktor Ivanov, ‘Stalin is our great standard-bearer of peace!’, 1950 (Fig. 4.54); Viktor Koretskii, ‘Great Stalin is the banner of friendship of the peoples of the USSR!’, 1950 (Fig. 4.55); V. Musinov, ‘Great Stalin is the hope of the world!’, 1951; Boris Belopol’skii, ‘“We stand for peace and we defend the cause of peace.”’ I. STALIN’, 1952 (Fig. 4.57); Boris Belopol’skii, ‘“The world will be saved and enhanced if people take responsibility for maintaining peace into their own hands and defend it to the end.” I. STALIN’, 1952 (Fig. 4.58).

\textsuperscript{122} For example, B. Lebedev, ‘Long live the party of Lenin–Stalin. Leader and organiser of the strong Soviet people!’, undated; B. Lebedev, ‘“Socialism for the USSR is what has been achieved and won.”’ I. STALIN’, undated; V. Deni, ‘With the banner of Lenin we won in the battles for the October Revolution …’, 1930; Viktor Deni, ‘With the banner of Lenin we won in the battles for the October Revolution …’, 1931; Unidentified artist, ‘Under the banner of the VKP(b), and its Leninist Central Committee …’, 1933; Unidentified artist, ‘The current workers, our Soviet workers want to live with all of their material and cultural needs covered …’, 1933; Viktor Deni,
and encourage those who strive to do their duty; and, posters that appear to acknowledge that obligation is a two-way street. Of these

‘With the banner of Lenin we won in the battles for the October Revolution …’, 1933; Gustav Klutsis, ‘With the banner of Lenin we won in the battles for the October Revolution’…’, 1933; Iraklii Taidze (sic – Toidze), ‘With the banner of Lenin we won in the battles for the October Revolution …’, 1933; Konstantin Vialov, ‘The party has ensured that the USSR has transformed …’, 1933; Viktor Deni & Nikolai Dolgorukov, ‘Long live the Leninist VKP(b), organiser of victorious socialist construction’, 1934 (Fig. 4.60); Viktor Deni & Nikolai Dolgorukov, ‘We’ve got a metro!’, 1935; Nikolai Denisov & Nina Vatolina, ‘Long live the great creator of the Soviet constitution’, 1936; Gleb Kun, Vasilii Elkin & Konstantin Sobolevskii, ‘Greetings to great Stalin. The Moscow–Volga Canal is open!’, 1937; Stenberg, ‘Long live the great party of Lenin–Stalin — leader and organiser of the victorious building of socialism’, 1937; P Yastrzhembiskii, ‘Glory to the creator of USSR constitution, the great Stalin!’, 1937; Nikolai Denisov & Nina Vatolina, ‘Long live the great creator of the Soviet constitution, beloved leader of the peoples, Comrade Stalin!’, 1937; Unidentified artist, ‘Comrade Stalin Iosif Vissarionovich …’, 1938; Unidentified artist, ‘Long live the great Stalin, creator of the constitution and victorious socialism’, 1938; Unidentified artist (Armenian language), ‘12 June. With enormous gratitude and best regards, we send greetings to great Stalin!’, 1938; Vasilii Elkin, ‘Long live great Stalin, leader of the people, the creator of the constitution of victorious socialism and true democracy!’, 1938; Unidentified artist, ‘Long live the creator of the first cavalry (horse army), best friend of the Red Cavalry — Comrade Stalin!’, 1939 (Fig. 4.10); Unidentified artist, ‘Long live the creator of the constitution of socialist society, the leader of the Soviet people, great Stalin!’, 1945(?) (Fig. 4.34); M.L. Ioffe, ‘Glory to great Stalin, creator of the constitution of the USSR’, 1946; Iraklii Toidze, ‘Long live the V.K.P(b) — the party of Lenin–Stalin, inspirer and organiser of our great victories!’, 1946 (Fig. 4.39); Aleksandr Druzhkov, ‘Long live the VKP(b)’, 1948 (Fig. 4.50); Unidentified artist, ‘We are warmed by Stalin’s affection …’, 1949 (Fig. 3.6); Leonid Golovanov, ‘And Stalin raised us to be loyal to the people …’, 1949 (Fig. 3.21); Iraklii Toidze, ‘Long live the best friend of miners, great Stalin!’, 1949; Aleksandr Venediktov, ‘You cleared the path for our freedom. Soviet rule gave glory to our country’, 1949; Nikolai Denisov, ‘Long live great Stalin, creator of the constitution of the victorious socialism!’, 1950; A.A. Mytnikov, ‘Long live the creator of the most democratic constitution in the world great Stalin!’, 1950; Vladislav Pravdin, ‘Long live the Bolshevik Party, the Lenin–Stalin Party’, 1950; Vladislav Pravdin, ‘To the new achievements of soviet aviation!’, 1950; N. Talipov, ‘Long live Comrade Stalin — creator of the most democratic constitution in the world!’, 1950; B.V. Vorontsov, ‘Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin’, 1951.

For example, Konev, ‘Our nobles. Greetings to the best shock workers — heroes of socialist labour’, 1935 (Fig. 3.26); Polyakov, ‘Worthy sons and daughters of the great party of Lenin–Stalin’, 1935; Reznichenko, ‘The Stakhanovite movement’, 1935; Iu. Tsishhevskii, ‘Expand the ranks of the Stakhanovites of the socialist fields’, 1935; Nikolai Dolgorukov, ‘Swell the ranks of the Stakhanovites’, 1936; Genrikh Futerfas, ‘Stalinists! Extend the front of the Stakhanovite movement!’, 1936 (Fig. 3.27); Gustav Klutsis, ‘Long live the Stalinist Order of Heroes and Stakhanovites!’, 1936 (Fig. 4.63); Viktor Deni & Nikolai Dolgorukov, ‘Glory to Stalin’s falcons — the conquerors of aerial elements!’, 1937 (Fig. 3.17); Viktor Deni, ‘Long live our dear Stalinist falcons …’, 1938; Nina Vatolina & Nikolai Denisov, ‘Long live Soviet pilots — proud falcons of Motherland!’, 1938; Aleksandr Druzhkov, ‘Long live the organiser of our invincible aviation, best friend of Soviet pilots, great Stalin!’; 1939; Vasilii Elkin, ‘Long live Comrade Stalin — banner of invincible Soviet aviation!’, 1939.

For example, unidentified artist, ‘“The current workers, our Soviet workers want to live with all of their material and cultural needs covered … he’s entitled to it, and we are obliged to provide him with these conditions.” Stalin’, 1933; Iraklii Toidze, ‘I am pleased and happy to know how our people fought …’, 1937; Vladimir Kaidalov, ‘Departing from us, Comrade Lenin urged us to strengthen and extend the union republics …’, 1940 (Fig. 2.13); E. Fedotov, ‘XXV years of the Komsomol’, 1943; Naum Karpovskii, ‘Labour with martial persistence so your
subgenres of the gratitude theme, posters that associate Stalin and the Party with great Soviet achievements and posters that thank Stalin/the Party/the Red Army for winning the war are by far the most numerous and could be considered together to make up a general theme of gratitude for ‘Soviet victories’. Indeed, after the Great Patriotic War, propaganda posters often referred to Soviet ‘victories’ in a manner that encompassed winning the war, the attainment of socialism, the imminent attainment of communism, and record-breaking feats in workplaces, aviation and polar exploration all at once. Posters that highlight the debt owed to Stalin for a happy childhood, and posters that highlight the debt owed by women for their new equality in society to Stalin and the Party usually engage the Father archetype in relation to Stalin, as discussed below.

When examining the archetypes associated with Stalin, it is important to remember that it is only rarely that Stalin is seen to embody only one archetype in any given poster. He is often representing at least two, and sometimes more. Sometimes he makes symbolic gestures that can be read on a number of levels, at other times his visual image may suggest one archetype while the text specifies others, often several in the one caption — Stalin can be, all at once, ‘father, teacher, leader, friend, and inspirer and organiser of victories’. As noted earlier, this can lead to a somewhat confusing blend of images and symbols which occasionally attempt clumsy reconciliations of traits that are essentially irreconcilable. It also means that attempts to separate out posters as representing particular archetypes are somewhat problematic. While the key archetypes will be addressed separately in this study for ease of interpretation, it must always be borne in mind that there is often considerable overlap between archetypal identities, and also some fairly transparent contradictions.

125 Many of these posters will be discussed in Chapter Four.
Stalin as the father of the nation

The major archetype associated with Stalin was that of Otets Narodov, the father of the people. In many ways, Stalin inherited the mantle of father from Lenin who, in turn, inherited it from the tsars, although the scope of Lenin’s ‘family’ was initially somewhat confined when compared to that of Stalin after him and the tsars before him. Under Stalin, Lenin was frequently depicted in propaganda for children as ‘Grandpa Lenin’ — in this schema Stalin is Lenin’s son who must step up and take responsibility for the family when Lenin, the father, dies. Statements by leading members of the Party after Lenin’s death indicate profound despair at the prospect of continuing without him, just as there had been deep distress among some of the peasants on hearing of the deposition of the tsar. Trotskii’s words of 22 January 1924, echoing the well-known proverb about the tsar, highlight Lenin’s paternal role in the eyes of the Party: ‘And now Vladimir Ilyich is no more. The party is orphaned. The workmen’s class is orphaned.’ Indeed, Lenin may have somewhat subscribed to this view himself. As Tumarkin observes, Lenin repeatedly spoke of Soviet Russia in terms which suggested it was a child in need of care and nurturing.

It is interesting to note that, in these early years after the Revolution, with Civil War only a couple of years behind the fledgling nation, and class struggle still at the forefront of propaganda, Trotskii does not refer to Lenin as the father of the whole nation. This is a time of the dictatorship of the proletariat as led by the vanguard party, where not everyone is equal, nor entitled to the benefits of socialist citizenship.

126 Michael Cherniavsky notes that Peter the Great was known popularly as ‘Batiushka Tsar’ (Father Tsar), a term which was also widely used throughout the 17th century, and also that the Senate granted Peter the title of ‘Otets Otechvesta’ (Father of the Fatherland). Until 1917, ‘Batiushka Tsar’ was paralleled by the commonest epithet for Russia, ‘Matushka Rus’ (Mother Russia) (Tsar and people: studies in Russian myths, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1961, pp. 83–84). The traditional term batiushka had been primarily used in relation to priests, tsars and fathers, but was used to refer to Stalin in 1938 in publicity about the Papinin-led polar expedition (Jan Plamper, ‘Georgian Koba or Soviet “father of peoples”? The Stalin cult and ethnicity’, in Apor et al., The leader cult in communist dictatorships, p. 134).

127 See Tumarkin, Lenin lives!, p. 62.

128 It is often claimed that the deposition of the tsar did not displace the need in the Russian population for a strong, autocratic ruler. See, Rees, ‘Introduction’, in Apor et al., The leader cult in communist dictatorships, p. 9, and Orlando Figes & Boris Kolonitskii, Interpreting the Russian Revolution: the language and symbols of 1917, New Haven, Conn. and London, 1999, p. 103.


130 Tumarkin, Lenin lives!, p. 59.
Trotsky names Lenin as the father of the Party and the working class. In contrast, Stalinist propaganda from the mid-1930s took pains to portray Stalin as a father of all people of all the Soviet nations, with this extending to the ‘liberated’ nations after the Great Patriotic War, and the entire world during the peace movement of the years of the Cold War. By extension, once class conflict had been eliminated and socialism achieved, Lenin too could be seen as a founding father of the whole nation.

The notion of the powerful male leader as a father to his people is widespread and, as David Hoffmann points out, even in Britain in the 20th century, the king was depicted as the father of the people with the nation taking on a female persona as a motherland, and compatriots seen as brothers and sisters. The relationship of father to son encompasses several notions: the father raises the son to be a successful and dutiful citizen, the father nurtures and protects the son, the father teaches and guides the son, and the son reciprocates by being successful, showing gratitude and respect, and by making the father proud. In Stalinist society, particular emphasis was laid on the civic duty of parents to correctly educate their children in the spirit of communism, even instilling in them a willingness to lay down their lives for their country. In order to carry authority and enhance legitimacy, it is important that the leader be seen as a father to the citizenry, rather than as a sibling or peer. This is particularly important in a regime like that of Soviet Russia, where the traditional father, the tsar, had been overthrown, and a power vacuum existed. The father figure must be rapidly replaced and re-established to prevent chaos. The Soviet population were so accustomed to thinking of Stalin as a father figure that many people were stunned when Stalin addressed them as ‘brothers and sisters’ in a speech in November 1941.

133 Speech delivered at the Red Army parade in Red Square on the anniversary of the October Revolution, 1941. In this famous speech Stalin begins by directly appealing to Soviet citizens from all walks of life in all circumstances, and uncharacteristically refers to the people as ‘brothers and sisters’: ‘Comrades, men of the Red Army and Red Navy, commanders and political instructors, working men and working women, collective farmers — men and women, workers in the intellectual professions, brothers and sisters in the rear of our enemy who have temporarily fallen under the yoke of the German brigands, and our valiant men and women guerillas who are destroying the rear of the German invaders!’ (Tovarishchi krasnoarmeytsy i krasnoflottsy, komandiry i politrabotniki, rabochyi i rabotnitsy, kolkhozniki i kolkhoznitsy,
Viewing Lenin and Stalin as fathers of the people had a further dimension. For a child, a parent has always existed and atemporality is a feature of both the cult of Lenin and the cult of Stalin. For Lenin it is embodied in the famous words of poet Vladimir Maiakovskii: ‘Lenin lived! Lenin lives! Lenin will live!’ and in the tale of Khitryi Lenin. For Stalin this timelessness was a prominent feature of many ‘reminiscences’ of ordinary people’s encounters with him, bearing in mind that the authenticity of these accounts cannot be verified (i.e. they may have been written by propagandists rather than genuine ‘simple folk’): ‘He was talking so persuasively, clearly and simply, that many of us at that moment felt as if comrade Stalin had been with us not for one month, but for many years, that we had already heard those words a long time ago and that they had taken deep roots in our consciousness.’ This phenomenon is also particularly apparent in the reactions of citizens to Stalin’s death.

A happy childhood

The use of the Father archetype in depictions of the leader enables the symbolic persona to convey both authority and benevolence simultaneously, as well as inherently encapsulating the notion of a reciprocal relationship of rights and obligations. One of the most interesting ways in which this is manifested is in the propaganda posters on the theme of the happy childhood. These posters show happy, well-fed children in joyous mood, expressing their gratitude to the man responsible, the fatherly figure of Stalin. As Catriona Kelly observes:

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135 Tumarkin, Lenin lives!, pp. 198–99.
‘Happiness’, traditionally understood as a state of fortuitous delight descending on a person unexpectedly, by act of God as it were, now became the just desert of all Soviet citizens, but above all children. But ‘happiness’ still had to be earned; pleasure was the reward for subordination of the self.\textsuperscript{137}

Happiness in Soviet terms did not refer to the emotional state of the individual or to the pursuit of individual fulfilment. Happiness, like everything else, was conceived of as a collective principle.\textsuperscript{138} Universal happiness was a duty, and to be happy was an act of loyalty to the state and to the leader. Nadezhda Mandelstam recounts:

Everybody seemed intent on his daily round and went smilingly about the business of carrying out his instructions. It was essential to smile — if you didn’t, it meant you were afraid or discontented. This nobody could afford to admit — if you were afraid, then you must have a bad conscience.\textsuperscript{139}

The theme of ‘A happy childhood’\textsuperscript{140} was adopted for the 1936 May Day celebrations in Moscow.\textsuperscript{141} One of the more interesting manifestations of this propaganda theme was announced in an \textit{Izvestiia} article of 1937: ‘The Moscow Bolshevik Factory is preparing special varieties of high-quality cookies to be called “Happy Childhood” and “Union”. The cookies will be packaged in beautifully designed boxes.’\textsuperscript{142} The first propaganda poster on this theme appeared in 1936. ViktorGovorkov’s ‘Thank you beloved Stalin for our happy childhood’ (Fig. 3.12) carries one variant of the iconic slogan, ‘Thank you dear


\textsuperscript{138} As Albert Baiburin and Alexandra Piir note: ‘Whether private individuals actually were happy was a matter of indifference, so far as the Soviet government was concerned; no interest was taken in this question. Happiness acquired an absolute significance: “universal happiness”; the happiness of all working people, of the world proletariat, of the Soviet population generally …. Thus, it was enough for someone to be a Soviet citizen and to live in the Soviet Union to experience universal happiness … Those who enjoyed this privileged access to happiness in an overall sense were in turn able to enjoy happiness at various subsidiary levels: dying for the Motherland, or [a less elevated, but still worthy and useful version of the same fate] labouring tirelessly for the benefit of the nation’ (Baiburin & Piir, ‘When we were happy: remembering Soviet holidays’, in Balina & Dobrenko, \textit{Petrified utopia}, p. 166).


\textsuperscript{140} The trope of the happy childhood pre-dates the Stalin era and can be seen in classic Russian literature, such as Leo Tolstoi’s \textit{Detstvo} (see ‘A joyful Soviet childhood: licensed happiness for little ones’, in Balina & Dobrenko, \textit{Petrified utopia}, p. 5).

\textsuperscript{141} ‘Diary of Galina Vladimirovna Shtange’, in Garros et al., \textit{Intimacy and Terror}, p. 169.

\textsuperscript{142} \textit{Izvestiia}, 15 Oct. 1937, quoted in Garros et al., \textit{Intimacy and Terror}, p. 46.
Comrade Stalin for our happy childhood!’ This slogan appeared everywhere in the world of the Soviet child — over nursery doorways, on walls in schools, on magazine and book covers — and was chanted by children at celebrations. Govorkov’s poster shows Stalin dressed in white (suggesting purity, simplicity, and also making him appear full of light), surrounded by children with toys, flowers and artworks. In the background, children play in miniature cars and on scooters, watched by their mother, who is of secondary importance after Stalin. Stalin’s figure dominates the poster, his gaze is focused on a young boy who shows him a drawing of the Kremlin. Other boys hold model ships and aeroplanes, while the girls are passive and express gratitude by gesture, and by the gift of flowers. The colour palette is mostly muted and pastel red, green and white — the colours of festivity, which emphasises the relaxed and idyllic nature of the scene. Though happy and relaxed, the children are also orderly. From the mid-1930s onwards, the ideal Soviet child was consistently depicted as obedient and grateful.

In the 1937 poster ‘Thanks to the Party, thanks to dear Stalin for our happy, joyful childhood’ by Dmitrii Grinets, Stalin adopts a fatherly pose with three children. The portrait format of the poster emphasises the intimacy and physical closeness of the scene, which is reminiscent of a family home. By depicting such a scene, with Stalin standing in as the father for non-related children, the suggestion is made that he is the father of all children of all nationalities of the USSR, intimately concerned with the prospects and fate of each child in his care. Stalin holds the smallest child against his chest, while his focus is keenly on the elder boy who plays the violin for him. The youngest boy shows ambition to join the armed forces, wearing military garb and clutching a toy aeroplane in his right arm. The older boy wears a Pioneer scarf and will be a successful musician. It is only the young girl, wearing traditional headdress, who is given no costume or prop.

143 In her memoirs, Nadezhda Mandelshtam recalled Boris Pasternak’s wife, Zinaida Nikolayevna, saying: ‘My children love Stalin most of all, and me only second’ (Hope against hope, p. 51).
144 For example, as Catriona Kelly notes, the 1937 film Cradle song, showed Stalin surrounded by children and included footage of the Eighteenth Party Congress where Young Pioneers sang songs of praise to Stalin. In the film, children were portrayed as one of two stable points, along with Stalin, in a nation characterised by the ‘frenetic motion of trains and planes criss-crossing the country’ (see Kelly, Children’s world, p. 93).
to indicate her future vocation. Perhaps her gratitude and devotion are a sufficient contribution. The caption of the poster, which is in Ukrainian and occupies the bottom third of the poster, reinforces this notion of gratitude, and is uncommon for its time in that it emphasises the thanks owed to the Party, as well as to Stalin. The word *ridnomu* (and its Russian equivalent *rodnomu*) does not translate precisely in English. Used as a term of endearment, the word also connotes a kin or familial relationship with the person to whom it is applied.

The 1938 poster ‘Thank you Comrade Stalin for our happy childhood!’, by Nina Vatolina, Nikolai Denisov, Vladislav Pravdin and Zoia Rykhlova-Pravdina, features a similar colour scheme and several of the same objects as the Govorkov poster of 1936. Significantly in this poster, the action takes place in front of a New Year tree, which had been banned since 1916, but was reinstated in 1935. The tree in the 1938 poster is decorated with traditional candles and garlands, but also with small aircraft, parachutes and red stars. The model aeroplane and ship are typical Soviet toys, inspiring boys to emulate Soviet heroes in aviation and exploration. By including these toys in the poster, oblique reference is also made to the great Soviet achievements in these fields. Stalin is not only providing a happy childhood, but also offers the children the potential for happy and fulfilling futures. In the 1938 poster, Stalin is surrounded by fair-haired Russian children who are situated on the same level in the picture plane as he although, by virtue of his status as adult male, he looks down on the children protectively. The scene is relaxed and informal, with four of the children gazing up at Stalin with affection while a fifth child has his back turned to Stalin and gazes directly at the viewer. The implication is that a Soviet childhood is a time of sacred innocence, unbounded joy, and material plenitude (the flowers in the bottom right-hand

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146 Pavel Postyshev, second secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Ukraine, wrote a letter to Pravda in 1935 calling for the installation of the New Year tree in schools, homes, children’s clubs and at Pioneers’ meetings. Much was made of the reinstitution of the New Year tree by Izvestiia. On 1 January 1937, Izvestiia reported: ‘On New Year’s Eve nearly A QUARTER OF A MILLION HOLIDAY TREES were lit up in the capital alone. The spruce tree has come to symbolise our country’s happy youth, sparkling with joy on the holiday … The clinking of glasses filled with champagne. At the stroke of midnight, hundreds of thousands of hands raised them in a toast to the health of their happy motherland, giving tribute in the first toast of the year to the man whose name will go down through the ages as the creator of the great charter of socialism’ (quoted in Garros et al., *Intimacy and terror*, p. 12).

147 Catriona Kelly notes that official New Year tree ceremonies, which in practice were open to a fairly limited elite group, ‘were in part a way of tutoring the offspring of the Soviet elite in new roles (hence the giving of telephones as gifts …)’ (*Children’s world*, p. 112).
corner are a further indication of material wealth). As the slogan
suggests, all of these things are provided by the dominating paternal
presence of Stalin, who is, by association, a kind of secular Father
Christmas. This association is not spurious, as on 30 December 1936
Stalin appeared on the cover of the newspaper Trud\(^{148}\) as Grandfather
Frost, usurping the traditional role of the secularised version of Saint
Nicholas, and making literal his role as mythical children’s benefactor.

In 1935–36, Stalin began to appear with children more frequently in
newspaper photographs. Plamper dates the launch of the image of
Stalin as father to a newspaper article in 1935 in which he appeared
with 11-year-old Pioneer Nina Zdrogova on the tribune of the Lenin
Mausoleum, saluting a physical–cultural parade.\(^{149}\) The image of the
ruler with devoted child was to become one of the most significant
genres across the various media in the cult of personality. One of these
newspaper photographs, V. Matvievskii’s ‘Young girl and the Leader’,
1936,\(^{150}\) became particularly iconic, with copies posted in schools,
children’s clubs and institutions. It even appeared in a later propaganda
poster as an icon.\(^{151}\) The photograph was taken at a meeting between
Party leaders and a delegation from the Buriat–Mongolian ASSR.\(^{152}\)
Gelia Markizova, aged seven, the daughter of one of the delegates,
presented Stalin with a large bouquet of flowers, and he reciprocated
with a kiss.\(^{153}\) In this, and other newspaper reports of children meeting
Stalin, such precise details of the ritual exchange were always noted.

As well as surrounding himself with children, Stalin also surrounded
himself with flowers, both in photographs and posters. Flowers
had formed a part of the personality cults of Aleksandr Kerenskii
and General Lavr Kornilov in 1917,\(^{154}\) however, after the October
Revolution flowers disappeared from political life, as they were not
consistent with the severe and sparse style of early Bolshevism and
its ascetic idealism. Flowers re-emerged onto the public arena in

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148 Labour.
149 Plamper, ‘Georgian Koba or Soviet “father of peoples”?’, in Apor et al., The leader cult in
communist dictatorships, p. 130.
150 See history1900s.about.com/od/people/ss/Stalin.htm#step7, image number 7. About
151 Nikolai Zhukov, ‘We’ll surround orphans with maternal kindness and love’, 1947 (Fig. 3.15).
152 Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.
153 In December 1937, Gelia’s father was arrested and later shot, and her mother, Dominika
Fedorovna Markizova, was arrested and later sent to Southern Kazakhstan, where she died
under mysterious circumstances in November 1940.
154 See Chapter Four.
the mid-1930s, even showing up in military parades, and became a constant presence in propaganda posters until the Great Patriotic War. Flowers symbolise celebration, festivity, fertility and abundance. The exchange of flowers for a ‘gift’ from Stalin became part of the ritual of ceremonial occasions. The use of flowers as symbols in Stalinist political posters embraced many of these traditional associations, as well as reinforcing the ritual that was becoming canonical. Flowers enhance the atmosphere of celebration and signify a rite of passage — a meeting with Stalin was a special milestone in the life of these select, fortunate children. The giving of flowers is a gesture of tribute and thanks to someone who has served or protected you. Flowers highlight the lush abundance of the imminent socialist utopia, which is already manifesting in the joyous lives led by these children. If Stalin took on the role of the great Father, wedded to the Soviet motherland, flowers and children symbolised the fertility of this union. While Russia had largely been regarded as a ‘fatherland’ in tsarist times, under Stalin it came increasingly to be called the ‘motherland’. David Brandenberger notes that, before 1934 in Soviet Russia, the word *rodina* had been used only to refer to ethnically homogenous home territories. As of 1934, Stalin began to continually insert the word *rodina* into slogans for press publications when referring to the Soviet Union as a whole.155 This became increasingly poignant during the years of the Great Patriotic War with several dramatic propaganda posters inciting men to protect the vulnerable motherland, often as embodied in a cowering woman, from Nazi atrocities.

Just one year after the 1938 ‘happy childhood’ poster, as war erupted in Europe and threatened the Soviet Union, key changes were already beginning to surface in propaganda posters. In Vatolina’s 1939 version of ‘Thank you dear Stalin for our happy childhood’ the children are from various nationalities within the Soviet Union, although Russian children still predominate. In earlier posters the children occupied the same space in the picture plane as Stalin, but now he is geographically isolated from them — nominally, away at the Kremlin, but in fact floating above them in the sky, looking down on them like an omnipotent god. This god-like quality is reinforced by the difference in scale in the two halves of the poster — Stalin’s head is that of a titan and it dominates the heavens. There is no sky, only light.

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(as in an icon) and the sacred spire of the Spassky tower, topped by its red star, stands like the steeple of a church bathed in fairytale light. The Kremlin is the earthly home of the benign deity and in the poster forms a link between the realms of the heavens (inhabited by Stalin) and earth (inhabited by the children). The children bring lush bunches of flowers but these remain symbolic offerings which will not actually reach Stalin. While the children salute and gaze with reverential awe, Stalin looks down on them as a symbolic father, offering protection and benefaction and radiating white light across the various lands and territories of the union. Here Stalin’s transformation from man to myth commences.

During the Great Patriotic War, Stalin’s image appeared in posters less frequently than in the years immediately before the war, and when it did appear, it was primarily to rally the population for the war effort. Visually, he was portrayed in posters as leading the people into battle, and I have located only one poster of the early war years in which he is referred to as father. During the war, the family, extended to include the larger ‘family’ of workmates and fellow soldiers, continued to be a focal point for propaganda, while there was also an increased focus on the biological family as being under threat from the Nazi invasion. By 1943, with the tide of the war turning in the Soviet Union’s favour, Stalin began to appear in propaganda more frequently and was even sometimes depicted as ‘standing in’ for absent fathers. In Viktor Koretskii’s 1943 ‘On the joyous day of liberation …’ (Fig. 3.13) a portrait of Stalin is hung on the wall like an icon and has talismanic properties; however, the child is also treating the portrait as if it were a portrait of his own father. The peasant man in the poster appears too old to be the husband of the young woman, or father of the child, and it can be safely assumed that, with the war still raging outside the window, the child’s father is away defending the nation. The family gather instead around a portrait of Stalin who, in this early version of the poster, is not wearing insignia of rank and looks humble and approachable. This reading of the poster is supported by the lengthy poster caption in which Stalin is referred to as ‘our friend and father’.

156 Konstantin Cheprakov, ‘We swore an oath to our leader to fight the enemy. We will keep the covenant of our fathers. Lead us into battle victory, wise Stalin — Clear the enemy, father of fighters!’, 1941 (Fig. 4.17). This poster, with text in both Uzbek and Russian, was published in a small edition of 10,000 in Tashkent.
Stalin is also referred to as a father and apparent husband of Lenin in a 1943 poster by Vladimir Fedotov (Fig. 3.14). This curious poster, produced on cheap paper without details of place of publication or size of edition, celebrates 25 years of the Komsomol, although the poster image itself is about the war effort. In the poster caption, a verse by Kazimir Lisovskii, Lenin takes on the maternal qualities of love and nurturing, while Stalin adopts the role of the father and raises the Komsomol generation — these are not children, but young people of fighting age. Lenin’s banner is draped protectively over the young fighters, like the veil of the Virgin, and it is his spirit that is invoked to intercede on their behalf, while Stalin leads the troops on the battlefield in the earthly realm.

In influential graphic artist Nikolai Zhukov’s ‘We’ll surround orphans with maternal kindness and love’ (Fig. 3.15) of 1947, a young orphan, born during the war years, lies in a clean bed, warm and protected under a red quilt. The young woman who cares for the child comforts it with her right hand while the left hand is raised in a gesture which suggests both protection and blessing. She is wholly absorbed in the child’s care, her gaze intently on the child’s face. She represents the motherland, the manifestation of the caring Soviet state. As we only see the back of the child’s head, and even gender is indeterminate, the child figure has a universality that encompasses not only all orphans, but all of the children of the USSR. Stalin’s portrait with Gelia Markizova is on the wall and it stands in for the father the child has lost in the war.

157 In labour and battle we are stronger
We gave the Motherland our youthful enthusiasm.
Great Lenin lovingly nurtured us,
Stalin reared us with a father’s care.
Military winds are raging over us,
With enemies not yet decisively finished.
In the battle the banner of Lenin covers us
And beloved Stalin is conducting us to victory!

158 Zhukov, a highly decorated People's Artist of the USSR (1963) with an Order of Lenin (1967), Order of the Red Banner of Labour (1962) and Order of the Red Star, was also a Soviet pilot and was the artistic director of the Studio of Military Artists from 1943. Жуков, Николай Николаевич – Википедия, ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%96%D1%83%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2_%D0%9D%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%B0%D0%B9_%D0%9D%D0%B8%D0%BA_%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B5%D0%B2%D0%B8%D1%87 (accessed 2 Nov. 2016).
3. STALIN IS LIKE A FAIRYTALE SYCAMORE TREE

In Konstantin Ivanov’s ‘Happy New Year, beloved Stalin!’, of 1952, Stalin’s portrait is hung like an icon by a young boy at New Year. It is interesting to compare the 1952 Ivanov poster with the 1938 poster by Vatolina, Denisov, Pravdin and Pravdina. Both are set amid New Year celebrations and feature a New Year tree. In the earlier poster, Stalin is physically present in the scene, a benefactor and bestower of gifts. His interactions with the children are familiar and paternal. The New Year tree is hung with baubles that predict the fulfilling futures offered to the children. In the later poster Stalin is present only as a portrait on which the child gazes in rapture. The small portion of the tree that is visible carries red stars as decorations, but none of the other earlier portents of the happy future, and is adorned with tinsel, traditional baubles, a candy cane, a fish and a rabbit, suggesting abundance. The child is alone in this poster, without siblings, peers or parents. Perhaps the child is an orphan. Stalin stands in for the absent father, but here, as in the Zhukov poster, he is a remote presence and his relationship with the child is anything but familiar.

With the war years behind the Soviet Union, there was a rapid return to the notion of thanking Stalin for a happy childhood. In June 1946 a children’s festival was held that began with the reading of a letter of gratitude to Stalin by a Pioneer, and was followed by a parade of Pioneers with balloons and flowers released from aircraft flying overhead. In his final years, Stalin almost never appeared in public, and worked locked away in his dacha, just outside Moscow, or at one of his several holiday dachas located around the empire. This increasing remoteness was paralleled in journalistic and literary texts which featured less frequent opportunities for children to have direct contact with Stalin, and emphasised more contacts in remote or mediated forms, such as receiving a letter or telegram from Stalin.

In 1950 another ‘Thanks to dear Stalin for our happy childhood!’ poster by Vatolina was released. A grey-haired Stalin appears in military uniform, standing on a podium. Although he touches the arm of the young Pioneer boy, he is separated in the picture plane from the two children and elevated above them. The girl carries a bunch of flowers to give to Stalin, but holds it off to the side, reaching up

159 Kelly, Children’s world, p. 124.
to touch Stalin with her right hand, as one might touch a holy icon. A huge bunch of red roses forms a barrier between them and the girl cannot reach him. The colour palette in Vatolina’s 1950 poster is more vivid than in the earlier posters; the flowers are depicted in a more realistic style and occupy a large space in the image. The figure of Stalin floats in an undifferentiated background of pure light, which illuminates the face of the boy. In the 1936 and 1938 posters, children are relaxed and celebrating, not all of them look at Stalin and where they do look at him, it is with friendship and affection, from within the same space. Frequently, one of the children engages the viewer by looking directly out from the image. In the later posters, the children have diminished in number and importance and are restrained and respectful. It is clear that merely to be admitted to Stalin’s presence is an honour and reward. The boy appears in profile and the girl is viewed from the rear; no child engages the viewer or embodies the ‘happy childhood’ of the poster’s text. In 1950 a happy childhood consists entirely in being loyal and dutybound to Stalin. As Stalin is portrayed wearing military uniform, the formality of the occasion is reinforced, and the viewer is also reminded that all citizens owe Stalin a debt of gratitude for victory in the war.

After 1950, the ‘happy childhood’ theme slipped into the background and poster artists focused on depicting obedient children performing their duty to Stalin, who is now almost always represented in one of three ways: as a visionary on a mission to save the world, as a portrait/icon, or as a frieze. Stalin’s special relationship with the Pioneers is illustrated in the 1951 poster, ‘Best friend of children. Glory to great Stalin!’ by well-known artist Elena Mel’nikova (Fig. 3.16). Stalin appears as a giant portrait hanging behind rows of unified, obedient children, who salute, wave flags and appear to be engaged in an oath-taking ceremony. The Soviet regime bound children to Stalin by the taking of oaths of allegiance and duty at initiation ceremonies into the Pioneers and Komsomol, and posters such as this reinforced the sense of obligation the children owed their leader. It is interesting to note that this is one of the relatively few posters of this era in which Stalin does not appear in military uniform. The text emphasises the friendly nature of the relationship between Stalin and the young Pioneers, and makes no reference to Stalin as a ‘father’. There is no interaction as
Stalin looks out into the distance and the children have their backs turned to him. Neither the Warrior nor the Father archetype is being emphasised here.

Propaganda posters that overtly thanked Stalin for a happy childhood operated on several levels in Stalin’s cult of personality. On one level, they appealed to children and instructed them in appropriate behaviour and attitude towards the vozhd’. By depicting Stalin increasingly as a mythical and iconic figure, children were further encouraged to an attitude of unquestioning obedience and spiritual faith that filled the vacuum left by the suppression of the Orthodox religion in Soviet society. With increasing emphasis on family values in Soviet society from the mid-1930s, even the lessons to be drawn from the cult of Pavlik Morozov were subtly repackaged, with the emphasis shifting away from the denunciation of his parents, and moving to his obedience and hard work as a school pupil.161 Komsomolskaia Pravda declared in 1935: ‘Young people should respect their elders, especially their parents.’162 The ‘happy childhood’ posters, like most Soviet propaganda posters, were not primarily directed at children. The real targets were adults, many of whom faced a real spiritual crisis with the outlawing of religion, who were invited to embrace the blissful utopia manufactured by the state’s artists. Obedient and faithful children not only served as models for appropriate adult behaviour, but were expected to re-educate their parents according to the new ways.

Fathers and sons

This ongoing re-education campaign to model new relationships in a new society employed the methodology of socialist realism across all genres of artistic production. In her examination of the Soviet novel, Clark discusses the two ‘types’ of biographies written in the 1930s — biographies of ‘fathers’ and biographies of ‘sons’.163 Fathers were usually represented by Party leaders like Stalin, Sergei Kirov, Kliment Voroshilov and Sergo Ordzhonikidze, or leaders in their fields like Anton Makarenko, Maksim Gor’kii and Nikolai Marr, while sons were

161 Figes, The whisperers, p. 162.
162 Figes, The whisperers, p. 162.
Soviet heroes, like aviators and explorers. While both fathers and sons served as examples to be emulated, the sons differed from the fathers in that they exhibited a childish and ‘irresponsible’ side and required guidance from the more stable and responsible father figure. Additionally, sons had not undergone the sorts of trials and suffering experienced by the fathers. As Clark points out, the sons did not move up to the status of fathers, remaining permanently indebted to and under the authoritative guidance of the father figures.

The relationship between Stalin and a number of these ‘sons’ of the nation was another prominent theme in propaganda posters during the mid-1930s. As already noted, in Soviet propaganda Stalin was not only the provider of all bounty to citizens of the Soviet Union, nor simply the benefactor of humankind. He was also the central facilitator of all motion, and the source of all achievement. Every accomplishment by any Soviet citizen reflected back on Stalin, who was an inspiration and muse to all. The notion of individual accomplishment due to exceptional personal abilities did not fit with a Marxist–Leninist view of history, which stressed that individuals were only able to accomplish great feats because they recognised the nature and significance of revolutionary times and were able to act in accordance with circumstances. A significant genre of Soviet propaganda emerged to document and publicise great Soviet achievements, to credit them all to the Revolution, the Party, and ultimately the brilliance of the great enabler whom history had placed in the role of the leader. Stalin was effusively credited with not only facilitating all of the successes of the Soviet Union, but with such apparently miraculous abilities as keeping his aviators and polar explorers warm against the Arctic cold. Stalin was able to do this by virtue of the breadth and depth of his paternal care.

165 This indeed is how Stalin saw himself, as revealed in an interview he gave to Emil Ludwig in 1931: ‘Marxism does not deny that prominent personalities play an important role, nor the fact that history is made by people. In The poverty of philosophy and in other works of Marx you will find it stated that it is people who make history. But of course, people do not make history according to their own fancy or the promptings of their imagination. Every new generation encounters definite conditions already existing, ready-made, when that generation was born. And if great people are worth anything at all, it is only to the extent that they correctly understand these conditions and know how to alter them’ (J.V. Stalin, ‘Talk with the German author Emil Ludwig’, 13 December 1931’, Hari Kumar (trans.). In J.V. Stalin, Works, vol. 13. Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1955, pp. 106–25, www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1931/dec/13.htm (accessed 12 Sep. 2012)).
One area of particular success and Soviet pride was aviation. Beginning in 1933, Aviation Day was celebrated by the Soviets every year, on 18 August, in much the same spirit as May Day and Revolution Day. The 1953 *Great Soviet encyclopedia* entry on aviation runs to several pages and credits Russia and the Soviet Union with being at the forefront of almost every aviation-related advance since 1731. The entry documents in great detail each theoretical and scientific contribution to the field of aviation, and downplays or discredits developments from other nations.\(^{166}\) The year 1936 saw the beginning of a flourishing subgenre of posters that celebrated Soviet achievements in aviation. According to Kaganovich, aviation was ‘the best expression of our accomplishments’,\(^ {167}\) and at one time or other the Soviets held 62 aviation-related world records.\(^ {168}\) The propaganda promoting Soviet aviation served several related purposes. The industry showed genuine technological proficiency, and advances made in the field were a source of national pride for Soviet citizens, and thus served to legitimate the leadership in goal-rational terms. The charismatic leader only maintains leadership for as long as he is seen to be delivering on promises and the fact that these achievements reached beyond Soviet borders, and indicated Soviet superiority in this field to the rest of the world, not only provided a wider stage on which to demonstrate Soviet achievement, but also served as excellent propaganda to promote the success of the socialist system to the rest of the world. In addition, with the possibility of war in Europe on the horizon, demonstrations of Soviet aerial superiority served as a deterrent to the Germans and any others who might wish to challenge the USSR on the field of battle.

Soviet aviators, and their analogous colleagues, the polar explorers, performed daring feats and achieved world firsts, providing the Soviet people with a pantheon of new cultic heroes outside the traditional military and political spheres (and, hence, they were no threat to Stalin’s own cult). Indeed, the first female heroes of the Soviet Union were pilots. An important component of the hero status that was accorded aviators was their ‘victory over nature’, a key concept in

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the Soviet agenda to industrialise rapidly and to bring a comfortable standard of living to the populace. As Bergman notes, the phraseology ‘Stalin’s falcons’ and ‘birds of steel’ linked the new heroes to the folkloric heroes of the past — ‘Kievan and Muscovite princes were often described in Russian folklore as falcons, and some of the heroes in these tales miraculously transformed themselves into birds’ \(^{169}\) — while at the same time still allowing the regime to separate itself from its tsarist predecessors (and Lenin), who did not have an aviation industry. The final paragraph of the aviation entry in the 1953 *Great Soviet encyclopaedia* makes this point explicit:

Thus, Russian scientists, engineers and inventors, working on the creation of flying machines, pioneered solutions to the basic problems of aviation. However, the decrepitude of Russia’s bourgeois-landowner system, the incompetence of its tsarist rulers, and the country’s technico-economical backwardness did not allow the initiatives of Russian innovators in aeronautics and aviation opportunities broad practical development. Innovators were given no support. Tsarist functionaries fawning before fancy foreigners ignored the discoveries and inventions of the Russian compatriots. Many valuable works by Russian scientists and inventors were credited to foreigners. Only the Great October Socialist Revolution gave designers, scientists, engineers, inventors and rationalizers limitless opportunities for creative work and the realization of their projects.\(^{170}\)

The promotion of aviators as ‘new Soviet men’ partially addressed the awkwardness around the concept of the heroic individual, as the element of teamwork could always be reinforced — it took a pilot, a copilot and navigator (and Stalin) to make these heroic flights. This tension was never totally resolved and, in the late 1930s, in aviation as elsewhere, individual heroic cultic figures emerged and were promoted by the Soviet leadership. One of the most notable of these was Valerii Pavlovich Chkalov, the son of a boilermaker, who in 1937 was the first person to fly (with his copilot and navigator) from Moscow to the United States via the North Pole. Chkalov became the subject of posters, postage stamps and press articles, and appeared in photographs and paintings alongside Stalin. While Chkalov gained considerable cultic and heroic status in his own right, his achievements were always linked

\(^{169}\) Bergman, ‘Valerii Chkalov’, p. 139.
to Stalin’s patronage, most notably through portraying the relationship between Stalin and Chkalov as that of father and son. A *Pravda* article of 1936 described the meeting between Stalin and Chkalov after the successful mission to the Kamchatka Peninsula as one in which they embraced like father and son, and Georgii Baidukov, Chkalov’s copilot, recorded in his memoirs that, at Chkalov’s funeral, Stalin ‘sorrowfully bade farewell to his own most beloved son’. In an article titled ‘Our father’ in *Izvestiia* in August 1938, just months before his death, Chkalov made this relationship explicit: ‘In laudatory speeches, songs, and verses the Soviet people call Stalin a lodestar and a sun. But most of all, he is the embodiment of one word, the most tender and human word of all — father.’

There was perhaps some basis, no matter how small, for Stalin sharing the credit for these heroic flights. As with many other aspects of Stalin’s leadership, Stalin was minutely involved in the planning of historic flights, discussing routes taken and other involved details of the flights. Sometimes this level of planning served his specific needs. The proposed August 1936 flight route was altered by Stalin to decrease its chances of failure, as Stalin was counting on the propaganda value of the successful flight during the upcoming show trials and purges.

The 1937 poster ‘Glory to Stalin’s falcons — the conquerors of aerial elements!’ (Fig. 3.17) by Viktor Deni and Nikolai Dolgorukov, celebrates the historic and dangerous flight from Moscow to the United States via the North Pole without identifying the men directly involved. Instead, the focus is on Stalin, whose profile image sketched on a red flag sits above the city of Moscow in the mid-left of the poster. The centre of the poster is dominated by a flat view of the

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173 Bergman postulates that an important function of the focus on aviation from 1936 onwards relates to its coincidence with the beginning of the show trials and purges. Far from distracting attention away from the trials, Bergman argues that the exploits of Soviet pilots were intended to focus attention on the trials, providing a political and ideological contrast (or binary opposition) between the selfless Soviet heroes, and the degenerate, treacherous Trotskyite–Zinovievite defendants: ‘Precisely because of the moral antithesis the two events suggested, Stalin even delayed the first Moscow trial from July to August 1936 to enable Chkalov and his crew to fly across the Soviet Union before the trial began, so that when the pilots landed safely on an island off the Kamchatka peninsula, just short of their intended destination, Soviet leaders could favourably contrast their bravery and patriotism with the moral degeneracy and treason of Zinoviev and Kamenev, and of the 14 other defendants in the trial’ (Bergman, ‘Valerii Chkalov’, p. 138).
globe from the North Pole, with the USSR positioned to the bottom, and the United States tucked away at the top. The large landmass of the USSR is coloured Soviet red, and extended by the adjoining red flag, which billows across the globe in a symbol of Soviet domination. A well-populated Moscow bustles below, the people carrying a sea of red flags and banners. The route of the historic flight is traced by a thick red line through the North Pole, the centre of the poster, which swoops upwards through Canada to the United States. While Moscow is sketched in vibrant red, features the identifiably ‘Russian’ towers of the Kremlin, and is densely populated, Washington is a colourless and unpopulated landscape of featureless and indistinct skyscrapers. The steep red line that marks out the route is reminiscent also of the line on a graph, the upward swoop registering success and progress, as well as the trajectory of takeoff. Almost as large as the globe itself, and larger than the whole territory of the United States, are the images of the two Soviet planes that sweep across the top of the poster, and to which Stalin’s gaze directs our eye. The nearer, larger plane is marked with the number 25 (the Tupolev 25 flown on the mission), the abbreviation USSR, and its body is inscribed with the words ‘Stalin’s falcons’. The text reinforces the association of this historic accomplishment with Stalin, proclaiming glory to ‘Stalin’s falcons’, rather than to the individuals involved, and also reiterates the key Soviet priority for conquering nature and the elements.

In the late 1930s the Soviet leadership watched with increasing alarm the machinations of Nazi Germany under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. It was becoming clear that war in Europe was imminent, and it was Stalin’s aim to stay out of the war for as long as possible, as the forces of the Soviet Union were unprepared for battle. With the multitude of successes on the world stage in aviation, Soviet propaganda could focus on this arena of achievement and employ it as a deterrent to Germany to engage the USSR in war. Produced in 1938, ‘Long live the Soviet pilots — the proud falcons of our motherland!’ (Fig. 3.18) by Denisov and Vatolina, emphasises this military might by showing a sky dense with aircraft engaged in an airshow. The display is watched by Stalin (in military-style tunic but as yet no uniform of rank) and Voroshilov (in marshal’s uniform). With their golden, upturned faces, and white uniforms, the two men are the centre of light in the poster. Stalin salutes the pilots in a gesture that is both a mark of respect and a form of benediction, wishing them long life and protection from the
very real dangers of their calling. Despite the defence of the nation being Voroshilov’s portfolio, it is Stalin’s image that predominates. It was perhaps particularly important for propaganda to play up the might of Soviet aviation with war imminent as, in reality, the Soviet Airforce was ill equipped for military battle. Substantial effort had been focused on the ‘higher, faster, longer’ principle in aviation, which had led to the attainment of so many world records; however, these were not the sorts of aircraft needed to engage successfully in battle, as the war would come to demonstrate.174

Despite the early lack of preparation, the Soviets were ultimately successful in winning the war, and aviation continued to be a field in which socialism could demonstrate considerable progress and success, culminating in Iurii Gagarin’s orbit of the earth in 1961. Chkalov, and other Soviet falcons, served as an inspiration to younger generations to embark on careers in aviation, which were held in high esteem and well rewarded.175 The 1950 poster, ‘To the new achievements of Soviet aviation!’ (Fig. 3.19) by Pravdin, shows a paternal Stalin in his marshal’s uniform, rewarding a Pioneer youth with a view of an airshow from his balcony. They are joined by two young men in military uniform, and a pilot, and the sky is full of aeroplanes and parachutes, providing a blaze of festive colour. The youth, holding a model aeroplane, thus indicating his desire to be an aviator, is supported in this aim by the protective, encouraging arm of Stalin, who indicates by gesture that the sky is the limit for this boy’s future. The youth is clean-cut, reverential, composed and determined — the sorts of qualities needed in the new Soviet man. Just as Stalin had been a father to Chkalov, his special paternal attention to this deserving youth will ensure that he follows the correct line for success in the future. Women are absent from the foreground of the poster, although may be assumed to be present among the indistinct spectators to the show. After the war, women were encouraged to focus on motherhood and the domestic sphere, rather than dangerous exploits that might take them away from their families.

175 As Bergman notes, after Chkalov’s tragic death, the nation was in mourning: ‘well over one million mourners filed past his bier in the Hall of Columns in Moscow before his body was cremated and his ashes placed in a Kremlin wall. Indeed, the government apotheosized Chkalov so successfully after his death that in 1939 fully 30 per cent of the babies born in Gorkii, not far from the town of Vasilevo where Chkalov was born, were named “Valerii”’ (‘Valerii Chkalov’, p. 137).
Adult children: the national anthem and the morning of the motherland

The 1944 version of the Soviet national anthem includes the lines ‘And Stalin raised us to be loyal to the people / Inspired us to work and to deeds’, formalising Stalin’s patriarchy as a matter of state. Two posters, one of 1948 and the other of 1949, quote these lines directly. The lyrics of the anthem were, of course, well known and instantly recognisable to the Soviet people, and the two lines preceding these glorify Lenin, ‘Through storms the sun of freedom shone on us / And great Lenin lit up our path’, although Lenin is nowhere to be seen in these posters, either in text or image. Petr Golub’s 1948 poster ‘Stalin raised us to be loyal to the people!’ (Fig. 3.20) combines the Father and Warrior archetypes in one pastel image. Under the protective canopy of the Soviet Navy flag, Stalin inspects the troops and addresses a young sailor who has been pulled out of line. The two stand eye-to-eye, the sailor holding the leader’s gaze, and they look remarkably alike in terms of facial features, as if they could be related. Unusually, Stalin is shown as the same height as the young man, although the peak of his cap makes his overall height slightly greater. The caption makes clear the dual nature of Stalin’s role for the sailors — as the Generalissimus of the Armed Forces, he is their military leader and as the man who raised them, he is their symbolic father.

Leonid Golovanov’s 1949 poster, ‘And Stalin raised us to be loyal to the people, inspired us to work and to deeds!’ (Fig. 3.21), consists of a triptych of images with Stalin’s profile portrait occupying the centre panel. He is serene, wise, bathed in a sea of light that emanates from his face to fill the sky in the other two panels of the poster. The left panel shows Soviet civilians under the national flag, holding a huge sheaf of wheat, the symbol of success in agriculture and of fertility in general. People wave and cheer in the background. The right panel shows Soviet military personnel from each of the armed forces with their appropriate banners and a rifle in hand. The central image of Stalin unites the military and the civilian as Stalin again displays both the Father and the Warrior archetype in this poster, which appeared in the year of his 70th birthday celebrations.
When Stalin appears in posters as the father of the people, he stands without a female partner. Stalin had been married twice, his first wife dying young of an illness, and his second wife committing suicide in 1932. The nation saw Stalin bury Nadia and, from this point on, he did not publicly have a female partner — in fact, so little is known of this aspect of his personal life that there is only speculation as to further sexual relationships after Nadia’s death. Stalin’s life centred around his role as leader and it was easy to depict him as ‘wedded to the nation’. Fyodor Shurpin’s famous painting of 1948, *The morning of our motherland*, depicts a calm, reflective Stalin in plain white tunic, isolated and alone in a muted pastel landscape, his greatcoat draped over his sleeve. Behind him in the distance, tractors plough the fields and powerlines melt into the hazy sky. Stalin is bathed in the early morning light and looks out to the right, to the dawn of the communist utopia. This well-known painting is undoubtedly the inspiration for two posters that were both published in 1949, one in an edition of 300,000 by Golub, the other in a smaller edition of 10,000 by F. Litvinov (Fig. 3.22). Both posters share the same quotation from Stalin as a caption, ‘Long life and prosperity to our motherland’. It is interesting to compare the posters to the painting that inspired them, and to each other, as the differences between them are telling. One key difference is that Stalin is slightly more face-on to the viewer in the painting than in the posters and looks considerably more tired. In the posters he is less heavily jowled, his skin brighter, and his moustache more trim. In Golub’s poster, in particular, Stalin has a more military bearing, almost standing at attention while, in the Shurpin painting, he is relaxed and leans back slightly, his shoulders soft. In both posters Stalin is wearing military uniform while, in the painting, he appears as a civilian, a private individual, alone at dawn. The posters are both in portrait format, while the painting is in landscape, hence the posters emphasise the figure of Stalin, while Shurpin’s painting makes much more of the landscape. Indeed, in Golub’s poster, Stalin is not alone, but accompanied by a young Pioneer boy who gazes silently into the future with him, the symbolic son of the wedded union between Stalin and the motherland. The landscapes have been altered in each of the posters. The Litvinov poster was published in the Crimea and it is possible that the landscape of the poster reflects the local landscape. The Golub poster features a birch tree in the foreground, standing straight as Stalin, and a patchwork of lush green fields behind the two figures. The notion of plenitude and abundance is reinforced by the
small sprig of flowers in the child’s hand. A river flows through the
landscape, continuing the dual association of Stalin with water, and
with the golden light that illuminates him from above. By drawing
so obviously on Shurpin’s painting, the posters suggest the dawn of
a new age of abundance for the Soviet Union, the arrival of the long-
awaited communist utopia after the dark nights of the Civil War, the
purges, and the Great Patriotic War. Stalin is the father of the nation
who cared for, protected, and raised the nation and, in Golub’s poster,
the hope of the future lies in the nation’s youth.

Stalin as teacher

Stalin’s role as teacher and mentor overlapped substantially with his
role as father, but introduced additional dimensions in which his
wisdom and ability to inspire and guide were emphasised over his
paternal care. As noted when discussing the politics of obligation,
patronage was an accepted part of Russian life, with many aspects of
culture contributing to this traditional social structure. Many of the
great writers acknowledged their mentors: Isaac Babel named Maksim
Gork’ii, and Gor’kii named Leo Tolstoi. 176 Mentorship, in particular,
had long been a feature of Russian intellectual life, with kruzhok 177
to discuss poetry, critique art and argue politics an established social
structure. 178 These circles provided members with access to material
resources and a sense of belonging while, in return, members tended
to venerate their leader with paintings, sculptures, poems and songs
and, after death, with obituaries and memoirs. As Plamper notes:
‘The circle members, in short, built a cult around their leader’, 179 and
these early experiences in their formative years may have helped the
Bolsheviks internalise the mechanisms of the personality cult.

Both Lenin and Stalin had been involved in circles, Stalin claiming to
have joined his first circle while still at the seminary in Georgia 180 and,
over time, worked their way from membership to leadership positions.
One of Stalin’s keenest strengths seems to have been the ability to

177  Circles.
179  Plamper, The Stalin cult, p. 20.
180  Montefiore, Young Stalin, p. 63.
surround himself with loyal followers who were rewarded with his patronage. The need for loyalty within these circles was intensified in the cloak-and-dagger atmosphere of the revolutionary underground, where the major preoccupations were delivering Lenin’s latest missives for publication abroad, obtaining Party funds by illegal means, and arguing in nitpicking detail over the finer nuances of Marxist interpretation. Arrests and exiles were commonplace and emphasis was placed on trust.

Stalin was quick to point out that he was merely Lenin’s best pupil, but his propaganda made much of his role as a teacher of the people. Over time he came to take bold decisions on his own initiative and to reinterpret Marxism–Leninism in the light of his own lived experience in a socialist society. Marx and Engels did not give specific guidelines on the day-to-day business of how to make a socialist/communist society function, and Soviet society was the first such experiment of its kind. Stalin and the Bolshevik leadership found themselves very much in reactive mode and having to ‘make it up as they went along’, as the regime seemed to lurch from one crisis to the next. Stalin was older than the other leaders, except for the old muzhik, Mikhail Kalinin, and as such could expect some measure of respect. As Montefiore reveals in his biographies of Stalin, Stalin was in fact widely read with a huge personal library, numbering thousands of volumes, much of which was heavily annotated in his handwriting. He felt qualified to contribute to academic debates in a wide number of disciplines, with the caveat that his contribution was from the perspective of a thorough understanding of the laws of Marxism–Leninism which, it was believed among the Bolsheviks, if correctly applied, could assist in bringing ‘the truth’ to light in every field of human endeavour. Stalin had also endured the hardships of the ‘school of life’ through his underground work, arrests, exiles to Siberia, and agitation among the workers of the Caucasus. If one adds to this the high rate of illiteracy when the Bolsheviks took government and the almost total lack of any awareness or understanding of Marxist ideology among the populace, it is hardly surprising that Stalin was presented to the people as a wise and experienced teacher, the ‘tried and tested’ driver of the locomotive of state.

181 Peasant.
182 Montefiore, Young Stalin; and, Montefiore, Stalin.
As indicated earlier, this view of Stalin as intelligent, wise, canny and experienced was shared by his closest comrades in the Bolshevik leadership. Stalin was also presented as a wise teacher amongst the intelligentsia. Brooks argues that by 1934, the year of the Writers Congress, Stalin came to adopt the role of ‘writer—teacher’, which had a strong tradition in both Russian history in general, and amongst the Bolsheviks, with figures like Lenin and Trotsky involving themselves in literary criticism.183 Stalin demonstrated some early promise as a poet in Georgia, with work published in leading newspapers, but abandoned this pursuit as incompatible with a career as a revolutionary.184 In his exhaustive exploration of the content of Pravda, Brooks notes that Stalin was cited as a major authority on numerous topics: ‘Pravda’s editors cited Lenin as an authority in fewer than a fifth of the lead editorials from 1921 through 1927 and Stalin in equal measure from 1928 through 1932, but from 1933 through 1939 they mentioned Stalin in more than half.’185 Detractors like Trotsky had, perhaps, ample motivation (including personal dislike) for claiming that Stalin was otherwise.186

The portrayal of Stalin as a wise teacher formed a major theme in Soviet propaganda. In posters, this was often achieved by showing Stalin in his study, or speaking to a crowd of eager listeners, but also by depicting him as a mentor to high achievers like the Stakhanovites and the Soviet falcons. In some posters, Stalin takes on a blatantly didactic role. An early example of such a poster from 1933 is Mikhail Kuprianov’s ‘We have overthrown capitalism …’ (Fig. 3.23). There are two similar versions of this simple poster, published in Moscow in small editions of 4,000, both featuring Stalin looking directly ahead as if meeting the eye of the viewer and making a direct request. The text is a quotation from Stalin and recounts socialist victories to date, while instructing the viewer that further education in the techniques of science is still needed.187 A poster of the same year by

183 Brooks, Thank you, Comrade Stalin!, p. 64.
184 Montefiore, Young Stalin, p. 63.
185 Brooks, Thank you, Comrade Stalin!, p. 65.
186 Montefiore is also of the opinion that it is time to move on from Trotsky’s portrayal of Stalin: ‘It is clear from hostile and friendly witnesses alike that Stalin was always exceptional, even from childhood. We have relied on Trotsky’s unrecognizably prejudiced portrait for too long. The truth was different. Trotsky’s view tells us more about his own vanity, snobbery and lack of political skills than about the early Stalin’ (Young Stalin, p. xxx).
187 ‘We have overthrown capitalism.
We took power.
Pikalov, published in Leningrad in an edition of 30,000, quotes both Lenin and Stalin as authorities, and then instructs the viewer to study the history of class struggle (Fig. 3.24). The left side of the poster is filled with the figure of Stalin, who again stares directly at the viewer. Beneath him is an authoritative caption of his own words about the importance of theory from the speech at the Conference of Marxist Agrarians on 27 December 1929. The right side of the poster is filled with exemplary scenes of the history of class struggle, including scenes from the French Revolution, the Communist manifesto, the 1905 Revolution, the storming of the Winter Palace, the Aurora, and scenes of collectivisation and industrialisation which comprise Stalin’s revolution. None of the scenes is captioned and it is assumed the viewer is familiar enough with the material to be able to identify the action in the poster.

A number of posters across the early 1930s outline Stalin’s six historical conditions; six guidelines for agriculture; six conditions for victory; Stalin’s six guidelines for the transport industry; the path to victory — implementation of the six conditions of Comrade Stalin, 1932; and six conditions of Stalin. All of these posters, which basically reproduce the same six conditions, use a facial portrait.

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We built a huge socialist industry.
We are the middle peasants on the road to socialism …
We have a bit more [to do]: to learn the techniques to master science.’ (Stalin)

188 ‘You know that theory, if it is genuine theory, gives practical workers the power of orientation, clarity of perspective, confidence in their work, faith in the victory of our cause.’

189 Unidentified artist, 1931.

190 Unidentified artist, 1931.

191 Viktor Deni, ‘Six conditions for victory’, 1931.


193 Unidentified artist, ‘The path to victory — implementation of the six conditions of Comrade Stalin’, 1932.

194 Unidentified artist, ‘Six conditions of Stalin’, 1938.

195 The six conditions are taken from Stalin’s speech on 23 June 1931 to agricultural workers in which he lays out the main tasks and organisation of agriculture. The conditions are: 1. Recruit manpower in an organised way, by means of contracts with the collective farms, and mechanise labour; 2. Put an end to labour mobility, do away with wage equalisation, organise the payment of wages properly, and improve the living conditions of workers; 3. Put an end to the lack of personal responsibility at work, improve the organisation of work, arrange the proper distribution of forces in our enterprises; 4. See to it that the working class of the USSR has its own industrial and technical intelligentsia; 5. Change our attitudes towards the engineers and technicians of the old school, show them greater attention and solicitude, and enlist their cooperation in work more bravely; and, 6. Introduce and reinforce financial accountability and increase the accumulation of resources within industry.
of Stalin, usually looking straight at the viewer. Lenin does not appear anywhere in the visual imagery of these posters, suggesting that it was already considered appropriate to allow Stalin to offer guidance as a ‘teacher’ in his own right. Some early posters even feature graphs and charts related to progress on the five-year plans and other statistics indicating targets to be met.\(^{196}\) Stalin usually appears in these as a cameo portrait, as if he were presenting the graphs and charts for consideration by the people. This gave the impression that Stalin was in control — he had a plan and knew exactly how progress toward it stood; that he was clever — he understood the charts and the scientific laws of Marxism–Leninism; and that he was ultimately responsible for all of this amazing progress. These didactic posters full of ideology and ‘scientific data’ required a considerable amount of time for reading, a high level of literacy and some mathematical sophistication. By and large, this content was inherently unsuitable to the medium and to a large proportion of the audience and, by 1934, a simpler approach was adopted that used more eye-catching images and symbolic figures, and used the poster text to make one concise point in a catchy slogan, rather than outline an entire complex plan.

By 1935 the emphasis went from mastermind to mentor, with Stalin’s patronage particularly highlighted in association with the Stakhanovite movement.\(^{197}\) The Stakhanovites were held up as models to be emulated by the rest of society, and were rewarded with shiny new consumer goods, like gramophone players, which the rest of the Soviet public could only dream of owning. The Stakhanovites too were emulating someone. Without fail, in all of their public speeches, they were sure to give credit to Stalin, citing his speeches as inspiring their heroic feats. Stakhanov was quoted in \textit{Pravda} in 1935: ‘To him, to the

\(^{196}\) Polenov, ‘For the victory of communism in our country’, 1927; Mikhail Dlugach, ‘10 years of the USSR Civilian air fleet’, 1933; Nikolai Kochergin, ‘What is the percentage increase in output’, 1933.
\(^{197}\) The movement was named after Aleksei Grigorievich Stakhanov, a coalminer who, in 1935, exceeded his quota of seven tons of coal per shift with an output of 102 tons, and reorganised his work brigade to increase its production through the use of improved work methods. Stalin personally praised this extraordinary achievement and founded a movement in Stakhanov’s name with the aim of increasing Soviet industrial output across the board. At the First All-Union Conference of Stakhanovites in November 1935, Stalin stated ‘The Stakhanov movement is a movement of working men and women which will go down in the history of our socialist construction as one of its most glorious pages. / Wherein lies the significance of the Stakhanov movement? / Primarily, in the fact that it is the expression of a new wave of socialist emulation, a new and higher stage of socialist emulation’ (J.V. Stalin, speech at the First All-union Conference of Stakhanovites, 17 November 1935 in Stalin, \textit{Problems of Leninism}, p. 775).
great Stalin, we are all obligated for the happy life of our country, for the joyfulness and glory of our beautiful homeland.’  

In fact, as Stalin pointed out in his speech to the Stakhanovite conference, the state did not owe the Stakhanovites a debt of gratitude for their hard work. Rather, the Stakhanovites owed Stalin, the Party and the state for providing them with the opportunity to work so hard. The new constitution of 1936 formalised this reciprocal obligation between the worker and the state in Articles 118 and 130.

The Stakhanovites were not the first record-breaking workers to be celebrated by the Soviet regime. Prior to Stakhanov’s feat, udarniki received publicity and became the theme of posters like A.M. Rumiantsev’s ‘Shock work at the machine is combined with the study of Marxist–Leninist theory’ of 1931 (Fig. 2.4); Gustav Klutsis’s ‘Shock workers of the fields engage in fighting for the socialist reconstruction of agriculture …’ of 1932 (Fig. 3.25); Aleksandr Polyakov’s ‘Worthy sons and daughters of the great party of Lenin–Stalin’ of 1935; and Konev’s ‘Our noble people …’ published in Kharkov in 1935 (Fig. 3.26). As was the case with the use of Stalin as a symbol, an individual could provide a better rallying symbol to fire the popular imagination than the collective of anonymous faces, so one man was chosen to symbolise a whole new work ethic. Sadly, there was considerable distance between the characteristics of the idealised hero and the personal qualities of the man himself, as Stakhanov apparently struggled with his new status.
The 1935 Conference of Stakhanovites generated substantial publicity and was followed by a related publicity campaign.\(^\text{203}\) Two posters that feature the Stakhanovites and the image of Stalin appeared in 1936, cementing in the popular imagination Stalin’s mentorship of these extraordinary workers. Genrikh Mendelevich Futerfas’s ‘Stalinists! Extend the front of the Stakhanovite movement!’ (Fig. 3.27) promotes the Stakhanovite movement and exhorts working people to join the ranks. The poster design resembles many others of the early to mid-1930s, and is a somewhat less skilful rendition of the style of poster so successfully executed by Klutsis.\(^\text{204}\) The technique used is photomontage, and the colour scheme is monochromatic, save for the diagonal slash of red surrounding the outstanding figure of Stalin, who heartily greets the army of enthusiastic workers beneath him. The diagonal suggests movement, as if swarms of people are indeed pouring in to swell the ranks of the Stakhanovite workers, all joyously active and working together in the upward direction indicated by Stalin’s guiding hand. Despite the multitude of workers featured in the poster, they are concentrated in the bottom third of the space, and it is the figure of Stalin that dominates and is the only figure to penetrate the upper part of the image. The subtitle of the poster quotes from Stalin’s speech at the Stakhanovite conference: ‘Life is getting better, comrades. Life has become more joyous. And when life is joyous, work goes well.’\(^\text{205}\) The first part of this refrain became one of Stalin’s major slogans, and was the inspiration for a popular song of 1936.\(^\text{206}\)

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\(^{203}\) For an in-depth discussion of how the Stakhanovite campaign was conducted at the industrial city Magnitogorsk, see Kotkin, *Magnetic Mountain*, pp. 201–15.

\(^{204}\) Stalin’s upraised hand, his palm flat and facing outwards, is a well-known recurring motif in the work of Gustav Klutsis.


\(^{206}\) *Life’s getting better*, lyrics by Vasilii Lebedev-Kumach and music by General Aleksandr Aleksandrov of the Red Army Ensemble.

Beautiful as birds, all in a row
Songs fly above the Soviet land.
The happy refrain of the cities and fields:
‘Life’s getting better and happier too!’
The country is growing and singing as one,
It forges everyone’s joys with its songs.
Look at the sun — the sun’s brighter too!
Nikolai Dolgorukov’s ‘Swell the ranks of the Stakhanovites’ also promotes the message of the Stakhanovite conference, encouraging the population to get behind the Stakhanovite movement and help spread it across the USSR. The largest of the banners publicises the organisation of a national 24-hour Stakhanovite shift on 11 January 1936, followed by a Stakhanovite Five-Day, Ten-Day, and then a Stakhanovite Month in which workers engaged in socialist competition to increase their production output.207 The lower half of the photomontage poster shows the happy population flooding in to swell the ranks, surrounded by some of the fruits of their labour — the newly opened Metro, and power plants and factories billowing smoke in the background. The ever-present symbol of the Spassky tower is like a socialist people’s church, the physical and spiritual home of the faithful, the crowning star a beacon in the sky.

The top third of the poster is occupied by a photograph of the Soviet leadership taken at the 1935 Stakhanovite conference, lined up on either side of Stalin like the saints in the Deesis. Figures from left to right are Nikita Krushchev, Anastas Mikoian, Ordzhonikidze, Stalin in the centre, Kalinin, Voroshilov, Molotov, and Kaganovich. Stalin hails the crowd with an open palm — part wave, part salute — while Krushchev and Molotov applaud. The placement of the leadership at the top of the poster provides a visual link to the widely publicised 1935 conference (the photo on which the poster is based was published in the press), and this is reinforced by the quote from Stalin appearing in red text under the photograph. It also emphasises

‘Life’s getting better and happier too!’
There’s room everywhere for our minds and our hands,
Wherever you go you’ll find you have friends.
Old age feels warmer, and youth braver still —
‘Life’s getting better and happier too!’
Know, Voroshilov, we’re all standing guard —
We won’t give the enemy even a yard.
There is a saying for folks old and young:
‘Life’s getting better and happier too!’
Let’s the whole gigantic country
Shout to Stalin: ‘Thank you, our man,
Live long, prosper, never fall ill!’
‘Life’s getting better and happier too!’
207 See Kotkin, Magnetic Mountain, p. 207.
the role of these leaders as overseers, organisers and inspirers of the Stakhanovite movement, viewing the activity of the ant-like workers from the heavens.

The Stakhanovite theme was popular in posters in 1935 and 1936, with the last poster I have located on this theme dated 1938. This poster, ‘Long live the united communist party / Bolshevik / — vanguard of the workers of the USSR!’[^208] by an unidentified artist is interesting because it is the only Stakhanovite poster I have encountered which includes an image of Lenin — Stakhanovites were a Stalinist invention. Lenin stands over the right shoulder of Stalin and both have their right arms extended: Lenin is pointing to the left, while Stalin is in almost identical pose, except that his right palm is upturned, as if he were bestowing a gift. Beneath them are two rows of distinguished Stakhanovite workers, who are introduced by a banner that reads: ‘Meet the choice of the Supreme Soviet of the RSFSR, new rising Stakhanovite movement!’

While at times extraordinary results by Stakhanovite workers may have been manipulated or manufactured by ambitious bosses and officials, the movement did inspire in some people a desire to participate as fully as possible in the building of socialism and a pride in their work achievements. It also produced real results; for example, in his private diary, Fyodor Efimovich Shirnov, manager at a building materials factory in 1936, recorded the following observation:

> We brung in teachers to teach the workers and sent dozens out to take special courses. When our mechanics come back from the courses, they was already completely trained. They changed their way of working methods like it was nothing. Stakhanovites installed themselves firmly at the helm and our factory started buzzing, it went from a yearly volume of two million to thirteen million and in 1936 it rose even higher, keep pushing it higher and higher so all of us can live happier (sic).[^209]

Such internalisation of Stakhanovite values was not universal. The words of one worker sound a justifiable note of cynicism: ‘The Stakhanovite movement has been thought up by our rulers in

order to squeeze the last juice from the toilers’\(^{210}\) and, in the next decades, the term ‘Stakhanovite’ came to be used with a degree of contempt.

From 1937, Stalin’s falcons stole the limelight and became the new Soviet heroes, with Stalin being presented in a paternal relationship with the daring young men. It is part of a father’s duties to be mentor to his son, but Stalin’s sudden change from teacher to father in relation to the adult population may have been due at least in part to the show trials and purges that began at this time. As Plamper has noted, an increase in terror in Soviet society was always accompanied by an increase in tenderness in the portrayals of Stalin,\(^ {211}\) and it makes sense that the ruthlessness of Stalin in rooting out enemies and traitors be tempered by images that showed his love for the faithful members of the Soviet family.

During the war years, propaganda was primarily focused on mobilisation for the war effort, although Stalin’s guidance and leadership were invoked in a number of posters in which he was to be seen leading the troops into battle. After the war, Stalin’s leadership and guidance were invoked in the name of new victories awaiting the socialist state that could now continue on the path to full communism. Stalin was often depicted in a marshal’s uniform and, at times, the treatment of his image resembled an icon. In some of these posters, it is only the caption that makes reference to Stalin as a teacher. Nikolai Avvakumov’s 1946 poster ‘Long live our teacher, our father, our leader, Comrade Stalin!’ (Fig. 3.28) is a bust portrait of a genial, avuncular Stalin that uses the caption to evoke three of the major Stalin archetypes, and glimpses of military uniform in the image evoke the fourth, that of the Warrior. In Pravdin and Denisov’s ‘Long live our leader and teacher the great Stalin!’ of 1948 (Fig. 3.29) a dignified Stalin in military uniform gazes out to the future with the Kremlin as a backdrop. In 1949, the year of Stalin’s 70th birthday, there was a renewed emphasis on the human side of Stalin in some posters, although he was still often alone, remote, or isolated from other figures in some manner. Two posters by Viktor Ivanov show Stalin alone in his study, caught in a moment of quiet reflection. ‘Great Stalin is the beacon of communism!’ (Fig. 3.7) shows Stalin with a book

by Lenin in his hand, reflecting on the words he has read. Behind him are the collected works of Marx and Engels, of Lenin, and his own collected works. In ‘Reach for prosperity!’ (Fig. 3.30) Stalin holds a telegram and is surrounded by a pile of correspondence. Clearly many people turn to Stalin for guidance and counsel. Posters depicting Stalin in his study stress his scholarly side, the large volume of his canonical writings, his ability to act as a wise judge, and the careful consideration he gives to all matters.

After the war, emphasis was increasingly placed on technical expertise over breakneck physical labour, with the science budget of the Soviet Union tripling in 1946. Toidze uses a richly symbolic visual image to illustrate this new emphasis, captioned by the familiar text, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin, forward to the victory of communism!’ (Fig. 3.31). This 1949 poster employs the preferred Toidze palette of black, white and red, with small embellishments of gold. The top half of the poster is dominated by the figures of Lenin and Stalin. Lenin appears as a life-size sculpture in characteristic pose, right arm extended and whole hand beckoning the crowd forward and appears to be shepherding Stalin forward. Stalin, only slightly less monolithic due to the higher contrast on his figure, mirrors Lenin’s gesture almost exactly, except that his right index finger points and his left hand drapes over the podium. The pole of the ubiquitous scarlet banner divides the background in half vertically, at exactly the place where the heads of Lenin and Stalin meet, identifying Stalin with the banner, but not Lenin, a link that is visually reinforced by the touches of red on Stalin’s uniform. The podium on which Stalin and the statue of Lenin are elevated divides the top and bottom halves of the poster. Beneath the podium, with their backs to Lenin and Stalin, are civilian members of the populace. On the left, a young female agricultural labourer, a huge sheaf of wheat over her right shoulder, stands next to a young male worker, both looking forward in the direction indicated by Lenin and Stalin. On the right, a young man holds aloft a sparkling white book with the words ‘Marx, Engels, Lenin, Stalin’ emblazoned on the front cover in gold. His pose mimics that of Lenin and Stalin, although his right hand does not point, but clutches the sacred text. Behind him is a young woman with windswept hair who

adopts the same pose and looks up to Lenin and Stalin for guidance. In her right hand is a large spray of flowers, symbolising abundance and *kultur’nost*, the postwar emphasis on living a cultured lifestyle. The left or ‘Lenin side’ of the poster is associated with the past — the two young workers are manual labourers, in the factory and field. Stalin’s side of the poster represents the present pushing on to the future. The two young people are not dressed for manual labour and rely on education and a sound knowledge of the science of Marxism, as adapted by Lenin and Stalin, for the imminent victory of communism. The early 1950s saw a continuation of the emphasis on education and the mastery of science, with a number of posters published in 1952 on these themes.\footnote{Boris Belopol’skii, ‘In order to build, we must have knowledge, mastery of science. And knowledge entails study. We must study perseveringly and patiently’, 1952; Konstantin Ivanov, ‘I wish you good health and success in teaching and social work. I hope that you successfully complete your studies and become the energetic, knowledgeable, employees, that are necessary for our country.’ IV Stalin’, 1952; Konstantin Ivanov & M. El’sulen, ‘Pioneer — an example to all children!’, 1952; M. Solomyanii, (in Ukrainian) ‘Excellent study will please the leader!’, 1952.}

A minor subgenre of posters in which Stalin appeared as teacher/mentor concerns the rights of the Soviet woman. A number of Soviet posters were produced on women’s themes, with many of them designed by women, particularly in the 1920s — the 1930s saw a return to the marginalisation of women artists.\footnote{According to Susan Reid, in her article about gender and power in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, ‘Even in the rare cases where women held office in the art administration, they were consigned to traditionally feminine spheres of responsibility having to do with the organisation and beautification of byt’ (‘All Stalin’s women: gender and power in Soviet art of the 1930s’, *Slavic Review*, 57:1, 1998, pp. 133–73, p. 161).} Of the posters that addressed women’s themes, only comparatively few of them featured Stalin’s image. When they did, despite overtly stressing gender equality and the independence of women, their message served to remind women that they owed their new equality in society to Stalin and the Party.

‘Stalin among the delegates’ is a 1937 poster by Nikolai Mikhailov, published in Moscow by Glavlit, the censorship bureau, as part of a series that included posters of ‘Kalinin among the Uzbeks’ and ‘Peasants visiting Lenin’.\footnote{Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of power: Soviet political posters under Lenin and Stalin*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1998, p. 161.} The poster highlights the new rights of women as enshrined in the 1936 Constitution of the USSR and features a verse at its base recalling the ‘slave-like’ conditions under which
women laboured in the past. The visual imagery of the poster is striking and unusual. All of the delegates are young women from the eastern republics in colourful traditional dress. A young-looking Stalin (Stalin was already 58 years old in 1937) is pictured sitting among them, as ‘real’ and ‘fleshy’ as they are, and drawn on the same scale. He is differentiated from the women only by his throne-like chair; most of the women stand. Stalin leans forward to talk intimately with a woman in blue, while a woman in a red veil listens attentively. Stalin is relaxed and friendly, superior, but not threatening, however, it is clear that he speaks, and they listen. He adopts the roles of teacher and mentor to these women from traditional societies going forth in daring new roles. Behind Stalin, the woman draped over his chair is clearly enamoured of him, as are the beaming women in the background. Two women whisper conspiratorially and giggle. The informality of the scene is reinforced by the papers scattered across the table, which imply that they have all been working together. While the purpose of the poster is to highlight Stalin’s mentorship and support of women, this is the most overtly sexual image of Stalin I have encountered. Other poster images of Stalin may suggest fertility and marital union in an abstract allegorical manner, but here he appears almost as if he is presiding over his harem, while the women seem positively titillated to be in his presence. Despite the thematic emphasis on female rights and equality, the women’s deference to Stalin is unambiguous in the composition and in the text. The poster was published in a large edition of 200,000 during the year of the Great Purge.

The 1938 poster, ‘Long live the equal-rights woman in the USSR, an active participant in the administration of the nation’s state, economic, and cultural affairs!’ (Fig. 3.32) was created by two established female

216 As a legacy of the past,
Women laboured in the darkness of slave-like conditions
With back-breaking work and
Without any rights.
The congress of workers and peasants
Needs to address
How to get rid of
These inequities.
In his discussion with the female delegates
Stalin says:
‘We are nearing a victorious conclusion’.
And the female delegates from the East,
Meditate on the clear and articulate words
Of the leader.
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poster artists, Marina Volkova and Natalia Pinus. Although the subject of the poster is the new equality of women, as evidenced by high-flying women achievers in state, economic and cultural affairs, it is the figure of Stalin that dominates the poster, occupying two-thirds of the space, engulfed in a sea of holy and revolutionary red. The ‘woman delegate’ became something of an archetype in painting during the mid-1930s. Susan Reid notes that, at this time, ‘the genre of delegates was peopled almost entirely by women’,217 and this was part of a trend in which the image of the female came increasingly to represent the stereotypic ’Soviet citizen’ in visual culture. As debtors and subordinates in the politics of obligation, the role of women was to submit, to learn, and to show gratitude.

Mikhail Solov’ev’s ‘’Such women didn’t and couldn’t exist in the old days.” I.V. Stalin’ (Fig. 3.33) of 1950 features a woman delegate making a speech, flanked on either side by attentive female delegates. Despite the depiction of women as holding positions of power, the poster again makes explicit the obligation that women have to Stalin. Stalin is positioned on a wall in a frame, removed from the action of the real world. He stands behind a lectern, an easily identifiable prop of the teacher, and his hand lies across the page of an open book. While the strong young woman on the podium in the centre dominates the image, it is clear, both visually and through the text on the poster, that it is only through Stalin’s support that she can do so — it is only by virtue of his authority that she can exist at all.

Conclusion

The Stalin persona became a symbolic vessel into which a number of idealised traits, symbols and types were deposited in an attempt to give the leader the widest possible appeal. A leader who was to mobilise and unify a nation that encompassed one-sixth of the world’s land mass and included numerous national groups, needed benevolence and the ability to convey the sense that he cared about each and every citizen and that he was not only concerned with weighty matters of state, but also with the small details of the personal battles of his subjects. Propagandists called upon the two mythic archetypes of Father and

Teacher to stress the benevolent aspects of the leader persona, while at the same time reinforcing a sense of natural authority that comes with these roles. Both roles also include a notion of reciprocal rights and duties between the leader and the citizens, so that the people felt obligated to repay, with loyalty and overt displays of gratitude, the gifts bestowed upon them by Stalin, the Party and the state. While enveloping many of the same characteristics, the Father and Teacher archetypes differed primarily in the weight that each trope gave to certain characteristics. The Teacher archetype emphasised wisdom and experience, while the Father archetype focused more on notions of care and the ability to harmonise a large and divergent family as if all were brothers and sisters. The other major archetypes associated with Stalin — those of the Warrior and the Saviour — will be discussed in Chapter Four.
Fig. 3.1 ‘Thank you Comrade Stalin for our happy life!’, Nikolai Zhukov, 1940, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 62 x 92 cm, edn 100,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.2 ‘Stalin’s kindness illuminates the future of our children!’; Iraklii Toidze, 1947, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 61 x 43 cm
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.3 ‘Stalin is the wisest of all people …’, Vartan Arakelov, 1939, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 75,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.4 ‘So — greetings, Stalin, and live for a hundred years …’, Konstantin Cheprakov, 1939, UzFimGiz (Tashkent), 62 x 94 cm
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Fig. 3.5 ‘For communism! …’, Mikhail Reikh, 1948, Uzdarnashr (Tashkent), edn 10,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.6 ‘We are warmed by Stalin’s affection …’, unidentified artist, 1949, 47 x 61 cm
Source: Russian State Library
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Fig. 3.7 ‘Great Stalin is the beacon of communism!’, Viktor Ivanov, 1949, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 74 x 52.5 cm, edn 300,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.8 ‘Stalin takes care of each of us from the Kremlin’, Viktor Govorkov, 1940, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 62 x 92 cm, edn 100,000

Source: Russian State Library
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Fig. 3.9 ‘The captain of the Soviet Union leads us from victory to victory!’,
Boris Efimov, 1933, Izogiz (Moscow, Leningrad), 62 x 94 cm, edn 200,000
Source: Russian State Library

Fig. 3.10 ‘Glory to Stalin, the great architect of communism!’,
Boris Belopol’skii, 1951, Iskusstvo (Moscow), edn 500,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.11 ‘Glory to great Stalin, the architect of communism!’, N. Petrov & Konstantin Ivanov, 1952, Iskusstvo (Moscow), edn 200,000
Source: Russian State Library

Fig. 3.12 ‘Thank you beloved Stalin for our happy childhood’, Viktor Govorkov, 1936, Izogiz, 71 x 103.2 cm
Source: Russian State Library
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Fig. 3.13 ‘On the joyous day of liberation …’, Viktor Koretskii, 1943, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 50,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.14 ‘XXV years of the Komsomol’, Vladimir Fedotov, 1943
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.15 ‘We'll surround orphans with maternal kindness and love’, Nikolai Zhukov, 1947, 79 x 57 cm

Fig. 3.16 ‘Best friend of children. Glory to great Stalin!', Elena Mel’nikova, 1951, Iskusstvo (Moscow), edn 50,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.17 ‘Glory to Stalin’s falcons — the conquerors of aerial elements!’, Viktor Deni & Nikolai Dolgorukov, 1937
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.18 ‘Long live the Soviet pilots — the proud falcons of our motherland!’, Nina Vatolina & Nikolai Denisov, 1938
Source: Russian State Library

Fig. 3.19 ‘To the new achievements of Soviet aviation!’, Vladislav Pravdin, 1950
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.20 'Stalin raised us to be loyal to the people!', Petr Golub, 1948, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 86 x 61 cm
Source: State Historical Museum
Fig. 3.21 ‘And Stalin raised us to be loyal to the people, inspired us to work and to deeds!’, Leonid Golovanov, 1949, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 76.5 x 56 cm, edn 300,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.22 “Long life and prosperity to our motherland!” I. Stalin; F. Litvinov, 1949, Krymizdat, edn 10,000
Source: Russian State Library
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Fig. 3.23 ‘We have overthrown capitalism …’, Mikhail Kuprianov, 1933, (Moscow), edn 4,000

Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.24 ‘Without a revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement …’, Pikalov, 1933, Izogiz (Leningrad), 77 x 109 cm, edn 30,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.25 ‘Shock workers of the fields engage in fighting for the socialist reconstruction of agriculture …’, Gustav Klutsis, 1932
Source: rusarchives.ru/projects/statehood/obrazovanie-sssr.shtml
Fig. 3.26 ‘Our noble people’, Konev, 1935, Obshchestvo sodeistviia oborone i aviasionno-khimicheskomu stroitel’stvu SSSR (Kharkov), 85 x 60 cm, edn 20,000
Source: Hoover Institution Archives
Fig. 3.27 ‘Stalinists! Extend the front of the Stakhanovite movement!’, Genrikh Futerfas, 1936
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.28 ‘Long live our teacher, our father, our leader, Comrade Stalin!’, Nikolai Avvakumov, 1946, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 200,000
Source: Russian State Library
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Fig. 3.29 ‘Long live our leader and teacher the great Stalin!’, Vladislav Pravdin & Nikolai Denisov, 1948, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad)
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.30 ‘Reach for prosperity!’, Viktor Ivanov, 1949
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.31 ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin, forward to the victory of communism!’, Iraklii Toidze, 1949, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 85 x 61 cm
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.32 ‘Long live the equal-rights woman in the USSR, an active participant in the administration of the nation’s state, economic, and cultural affairs!’, Marina Volkova & Natalia Pinus, 1938
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 3.33 “Such women didn’t and couldn’t exist in the old days”
I.V. Stalin', Mikhail Solov’ev, 1950, Iskusstvo (Moscow), 101 x 68 cm, edn 200,000
Source: Russian State Library