Trotsky was depicted as the founder of the Red Army ... from the mid-twenties this role was transferred to Lenin, and from the thirties to the mid-fifties it was shared between him and Stalin’. 39

As extensive biographical research by Simon Sebag Montefiore and Deutscher has revealed, Stalin was indeed active in both the October Revolution and the Civil War. Speaking of the early days of power after the October Revolution, Fiodor Alliluyev (Nadia’s brother) noted in his unpublished memoirs: ‘Comrade Stalin was genuinely known only to a small circle of people who had come across him ... in the political underground or had succeeded ... in distinguishing real work and real devotion from chatter, noise (and) meaningless babble.’ 40 Lenin drafted a memo in which only he, and his personal assistants, Trotsky and Stalin, were to be permitted entry to Sovnarkom, 41 and Polish Bolshevik Stanislaw Pestkovsky noted: ‘Lenin could not get along without Stalin for a single day ... Our Smolny office was under Lenin’s wing. In the course of the day, he’d call Stalin an endless number of times and would appear in our office and lead him away.’ 42

Deutscher notes that Stalin was crucial to Lenin from the inception of the Soviet government due to the ‘soft-heartedness’ and vacillations of other Party members once the Bolsheviks seized power:

> It cannot be said that the outlook of that first team of commissars corresponded to those standards of ‘ruthless determination’ or ‘fanatical zeal’ which later came to be associated with the very term Bolshevism. On the contrary, the ‘soft-heartedness’ of most commissars very soon placed the Government in quite a number of tragic-comic situations ... Their vacillations filled [Lenin] with apprehension and alarm. He saw his Government confronted with almost insuperable adversities: internal chaos, economic paralysis, inevitable counter-revolution, and a legacy of war. He looked around to see which of his colleagues in the Government and in the Central Committee could be relied upon to form a close nucleus capable of the determined and swift action which would be needed in the emergencies to come. 43

41 Council of People’s Commissars, responsible to the Council of Soviets for general administration of the affairs of state.
42 Montefiore, Young Stalin, pp. 367–68.
During the Civil War, Lenin despatched Stalin to Tsaritsyn (later renamed Stalingrad) in mid-1918, initially to take charge of food supplies. This key strategic city looked likely to fall to White forces. Stalin took military control in July and, with his status raised to commissar, killed off a group of Trotskii’s ex-tsarist specialists, and played a significant part in the victory of the Red Army in that city.44

Beginning in 1938, several posters highlight Stalin’s achievements in the Civil War. The poster titled ‘The Civil War 1918–1920’ (poster no. 6 in the series — Fig. 4.2) features a black-and-white photographic portrait of the young Stalin gazing out at the viewer in military-style jacket, and includes copies of a telegram from Stalin dated 19 July 1918 and the transcript of a recorded phonecall discussing the food situation on 24 July 1918.45 Stalin is depicted as central to the Civil War leadership, as a close and trusted comrade of Lenin, and as associated with the military effort, while Lenin is carrying out construction tasks. In one of the poster’s vignettes, Stalin is shown rallying the first cavalry. In others, Lenin carries a large log during a subbotnik46 and Mikhail Kalinin agitates amongst the crowd. Trotskii is nowhere to be seen.

In poster no. 13 from the same series, titled ‘Defence of the USSR’ (Fig. 4.3), Stalin and Kliment Voroshilov are depicted together as equals in an informal, comradely scene. Voroshilov was the centre of his own personality cult and was honoured with ‘Voroshilov rations for the army’, and the ‘Voroshilov Marksman’s Prize’, as well as featuring on trading cards with other Soviet leaders.47 His birthday was celebrated in elaborate fashion, with Stalin giving a famous speech, and he was the subject of a historical book published by English author Dennis Wheately in October 1937 — Red eagle: the story of the Russian Revolution and of Klementy Efremovitch Voroshilov, marshal and commissar for defence of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

45 The telegram and dates are significant as propaganda in the late 1930s made much of Stalin’s successful intervention in the Civil War at Tsaritsyn and the telegram provides factual proof of the trust placed in Stalin by Lenin.
46 Day of voluntary public labour.
47 Montefiore, Stalin, p. 170.
In poster no. 13, Stalin wears his unadorned, military-style tunic as head of the Party and the nation, while Voroshilov in full uniform is clearly a military leader. They are depicted as standing for peace, and as defenders of the world against fascism. The poster text consists of Stalin's words on the need for preparedness and defence, which follow two quotes from Lenin on the same theme. Famous cartoonist Boris Efimov's sketch at the bottom left of the poster depicts the huge fist of the NKVD\(^{48}\) crushing a monstrous but small enemy while Trotsky and Hitler cower together in the corner. Trotsky has now been transformed from the creator and champion of the Red Army into its enemy, in league with Germany. Scenes of military parades on Red Square, and a sky full of aircraft illustrate Soviet might and preparedness as Europe moves closer to the brink of war.

S. Podobedov's 1939 poster 'Comrade I.V. Stalin at the Front in the Civil War' (Fig. 4.4) consists of a vast map of Soviet territories with the locations at which Stalin served in the Civil War marked with a red star. Beneath each star are the dates of service and dashed lines mark out the route between locations. Filled red stars indicate the main places on the Front at which Stalin stayed, while the unfilled stars show his field trips. The use of a map with lines, labels, dates and a key gives this content a documentary verisimilitude, providing evidence that Stalin was heavily involved in the Bolshevik military victory. The bottom of the poster contains a quotation from Voroshilov that confirms the centrality of Stalin to the Bolshevik cause, whilst also offering a plausible explanation for Stalin's apparent low profile during the Civil War years — Stalin was entrusted with the most terrible, dangerous missions and would suddenly appear in the direst circumstances to ensure victory for the Red Army:

>'In the period of 1918–1920 Stalin was probably the only person the Central Committee sent from one battlefront to another, choosing the most dangerous, the most terrible places of a revolution. Where it had been relatively peaceful and prosperous, where we had success — there Stalin was not visible. But where, for a number of reasons the Red Army was broken, where the counter-revolutionary forces were becoming successful and threatened the very existence of the Soviet regime, where confusion and panic could at any moment turn into helplessness and catastrophe — there Stalin appeared. He did

\(^{48}\) The People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs/Secret Police.
not sleep nights, he organised, the leadership was lying in his steady hands, he broke them and was ruthless — creating a turning point, a healing environment.’ K.E. Voroshilov

The golden cameo portrait of Stalin suggests a medallion or coin, with Stalin’s head reminiscent of the heads of monarchs or caesars on coins and of sacred figures in icons. The map is framed in sacred colours associated with the icon — red and gold — and illustrates the mythic and sacred history of the Bolshevik Party. Voroshilov’s statement allows Stalin to preserve his modesty and also contains many of the elements of the developing Stalin myth — a sense of almost magical omnipresence and the ability to appear out of nowhere whenever needed; the leader who doesn’t sleep at night; and the strong but caring leader who is ruthless with his enemies. The map is stamped on the top right corner with a picture of the Order of the Red Banner, signifying Stalin’s courage.

Stalin and the Party leadership may well have envisaged themselves as warriors in the battle for socialism, not only using battle metaphors from the time of the Revolution throughout the life of the regime, but also referring to themselves and each other in quasi-military terms. In conversation with Beria, Stalin referred to the Bolsheviks as ‘a sort of military-religious order’, and, in a 1921 draft article, ‘On the political strategy and tactic of the Russian communists’, he wrote of: ‘The communist party as a kind of order of swordbearers within the Soviet state, directing the organs of the latter and inspiring its activity.’ When Feliks Dzerzhinskii, head of the Cheka, died in July 1926, Stalin referred to him as ‘a devout knight of the proletariat’. In fact, Stalin himself came to be endowed with the qualities of the bogatyr, the mythical Russian knight–hero, along with the other Old Bolsheviks in the top Party leadership, and this
term was also applied to ‘everyday heroes’ like the Stakhanovites.\textsuperscript{55} Lenin and Stalin were both referred to by the term \textit{vozhd’}. This term, meaning ‘leader’, originally denoted a military leader and, prior to the October Revolution, was applied only metaphorically to a political leader.\textsuperscript{56} Battle metaphors saturated Bolshevik vocabulary, beginning with the central Marxist concept of ‘class war’.\textsuperscript{57} In propaganda, each campaign involved a ‘struggle’ and a ‘front’ (e.g. the ‘construction front’), and art and cultural production in general were viewed as ‘a weapon’. ‘Enemies’ were potentially everywhere. In his analysis of the language used in \textit{Pravda}, Jeffrey Brooks notes that ‘[t]he Party became an army, and a good Party member “an honest soldier of the revolution” … To join was to enter “our ranks” … Industry became “the production front” and slackers were traitors …’\textsuperscript{58}
In the late 1930s, as Europe teetered on the brink of war, posters of Stalin were produced on a number of domestic themes, including the constitution, elections, and industrialisation; as well as posters that focused on the Red Army and on Soviet aviation, associating Stalin with achievements related to each of these fields. In some of these, Stalin continued to appear alongside Voroshilov.\textsuperscript{59} Deni and Nikolai Dolgorukov’s ‘The enemy’s fate is predetermined: we have crushed them before and we will crush them again’\textsuperscript{60} of 1938 depicts the relaxed and friendly pair of Stalin and Voroshilov, civil and military leader respectively, chatting under a portrait of Lenin, who is in characteristic collar and tie. The three figures form a ‘holy trinity’ that watches over and protects the Soviet Union, and the text of the poster, invoking fate and predestination, lends a sacral aura to the notion of righteous victory. Beneath the trinity is a map of Europe in which Russia’s enemies flee as a series of red flags springs up around Europe. Another poster featuring both Stalin and Voroshilov (Fig. 4.5) takes a documentary approach to the personality cult of Stalin. The centre of Podobedov’s 1939 poster is dominated by copies of the Military Oath (as it was in 1939)\textsuperscript{61} signed and dated by Stalin and Voroshilov on 29 February 1939. The oath documents are framed in gold and surrounded by banners, the coat of arms of the USSR, a red star and hammer-and-sickle emblems. On either side of the sacred documents are black-and-white photographic portraits of Stalin (left) and Voroshilov (right) each framed in gold. Under Stalin’s smiling portrait, in which he looks at the viewer, is Article 132\textsuperscript{62} of the 1936 constitution which reminds citizens that military service is

\textsuperscript{59} See also, for example, ‘Long live Soviet pilots — proud falcons of the Motherland!’, by Vatolina and Denisov (discussed in Chapter Three).

\textsuperscript{60} For image, see redavantgarde.com/en/collection/show-collection/1342-the-enemy’s-fate-is-predetermined-we-have-crushed-them-before-and-we-will-keep-on-crushing.html?authorId=77.

\textsuperscript{61} Decree of the Presidium of the USSR Supreme Soviet, 03 Jan. 1939: Military oath. ‘I, a citizen of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, joining the ranks of the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army, do hereby take the oath of allegiance and do solemnly vow to be an honest, brave, disciplined and vigilant fighter, to guard strictly all military and State secrets, to obey implicitly all Army regulations and orders of my commanders, commissars and superiors. I vow to study the duties of a soldier conscientiously, to safeguard Army and National property in every way possible and to be true to my People, my Soviet Motherland, and the Workers’ and Peasants’ Government to my last breath’ (J.V. Stalin, \textit{Works}, vol. 14, London, Red Star Press Ltd., 1978, www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1939/02/23.htm (accessed 28 Jan. 2013)).

\textsuperscript{62} Universal military service is law. Military service in the Workers’ and Peasants’ Red Army is an honourable duty of citizens of the USSR.
their honourable duty. Under Voroshilov’s stern portrait, which does not engage the viewer but looks out of the image, is Article 139, a reminder of the penalties for treason. The poster serves several related functions: it emphasises the imminence of war; it educates the public about their rights and obligations under the constitution and publicises the text of the Military Oath; it highlights leadership by example, as two of the country’s leaders have already signed the oath; by emphasising the sacrosanct nature of the text it enshrines it as higher than mere secular law, giving it a sense of permanence and immutability usually associated with divine or religious law; and it reinforces the identification of Stalin and Voroshilov with the tasks of leading and saving the Fatherland (as it is in this case). The grinning portrait of Stalin highlights the Father and Teacher archetypes, while the steely Warrior archetype resides in the popular military figure of Voroshilov.

This distinction between the two roles carried over into 1940, as in another poster by Podobedov featuring Stalin and Voroshilov engaged in a jolly, informal chat (Fig. 4.6). Neither of them look like they are particularly worried, or in the process of preparing for war. The black-and-white photograph of the pair is bordered with the usual formal accoutrements, banners, ribbons, stars and wreaths. In fact, the photo looks as though it may have been taken on Stalin’s 60th birthday in December 1939. The text is of interest in this poster, paying tribute to both Stalin and Voroshilov, and clearly differentiating their roles: ‘Long live our leader and teacher, best friend of the Red Army, our dear and beloved Stalin! Long live the leader of the Red Army, first marshal of the Soviet Union, Kliment Efremovich Voroshilov!’

As discussed in Chapter Two, throughout the 25 years of his leadership, Stalin frequently appeared in posters alongside the image of Lenin. In ‘Long live our dear invincible Red Army!’ (Fig. 4.7) of 1938 by Dmitrii Moor and Sergei Sen’kin, Stalin and Lenin are both featured in large individual black-and-white photographic portraits, each under a red (sacred Bolshevik) aircraft, and above scenes showing battle-ready armed forces of all branches. They are both depicted as ‘real’ people

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63 Defence of the homeland is a sacred duty of every citizen of the USSR. For high treason: violation of the oath, desertion to the enemy, impairing the military power of the state, espionage — is punished with the full rigor of the law as the most heinous of crimes.
64 I base this conjecture on its similarity to other photographs taken on that occasion.
and as equals. In 1938 Stalin is no longer portrayed as the disciple and student of Lenin, but as a leader and thinker in his own right. Under each of the leaders is a quotation from them which essentially makes the same point by stressing the popular nature of the Soviet armed forces as an army for the people — that is, the workers and peasants. Lenin: ‘For the first time in the world an army has been created, an armed force that knows what it is fighting for.’ Stalin: ‘Our army is the only one in the world that has the sympathy and support of the workers and peasants. Therein lies its strength, that is its stronghold.’

Facing inwards, Lenin and Stalin appear as sentries over the flags of the armed services and the text of Article 132. Everything else in the poster faces out — soldiers, aircraft, guns, turrets, tanks, horses and ships. Stalin and Lenin protect the homeland from within, while the armed forces are ever-vigilant and demonstrate their preparedness to go out to war if necessary.

In 1939, as much of the rest of Europe went to war, and Russia and Germany signed the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact that would delay their arguably inevitable engagement in battle for almost two years,⁶⁵ the Soviet Union tried to use this bought time to prepare for war. Propaganda posters featuring the image of Stalin continued to deal with a number of themes, and a number of posters were released that praised the Red Army and the airforce, and which also attempted to rally the population to mobilise around their leader. While most of the propaganda posters of 1939 exhibit a general atmosphere of bravado and battle-readiness, although not a desire for war, one Ukrainian poster by M. Kaminskii (Fig. 4.8) focuses on the desire for peace to prevail. The poster features a slab of text in large font that quotes from Stalin’s ‘Report on the work of the Central Committee to the Eighteenth Congress of the V.K.P(b)’ speech delivered on 10 March 1939. This speech, which is quoted more extensively in a 1940 Russian poster, is a strongly worded pronouncement on the USSR’s desire to avoid war and to live harmoniously with its neighbours. This text consists of the first two of the four tasks outlined for the Party in Stalin’s speech about foreign policy. The two conditions that do not appear on the poster, possibly so as not to leave any possibility of provocation or misunderstanding, are the conditions that involve strengthening the might of the Red Army and Red Navy to the utmost and strengthening

⁶⁵ The pact was in force from 23 August 1939 to 22 June 1941.
the international bonds of friendship with the working people of all countries. Stalin himself appears in a small and relatively unobtrusive oval-shaped cameo at the top centre of the poster, perhaps as a means of authenticating the text and visually identifying the speaker. This was also the year of Stalin's 60th birthday and, although he continued to appear in posters with Lenin and occasionally Voroshilov, he was also frequently depicted alone as a central inspirational figure.

Another 1939 poster by Podobedov (Fig. 4.9) is an example of a genre of poster that was becoming predominant in the years immediately prior to the Great Patriotic War and which served to strengthen the association of Stalin with the Red Army, remind the public of the threat of war, and glorify the persona of Stalin. The text celebrates Stalin as the organiser and inspirer of the victories of the Red Army — 'Long live the organiser and leader of the victorious Red Army great Stalin!' While attempts are being made to bind the persona of Stalin to the entire history of the Red Army from its inception, and to credit him with responsibility for many of its victories, the poster caption again stops short of overtly claiming that Stalin himself created the army. The word *vdokhnovitel'* carries a connotation of leader and creator, as well as the inspiration behind. It is less explicit in expressing the notion of 'creator' as 'founder' or 'originator' than the words *sozdatel'* and *tvorets*, which are used in other posters, particularly the contemporaneous posters that celebrate Stalin as the creator of the constitution. Stalin appears as a statue on a plinth looking down protectively over the viewer and dwarfing the pale spire of the Kremlin. In his left hand is a scroll — Stalin's weapons are still his words and these words take on the nature of the sacred or divine. The statue of Stalin is monolithic and immovable, but it is also associated with history and the past. One erects monuments to founding fathers and it is the visual symbolism, more than the text, that embeds the idea that Stalin is responsible for the existence and success of the Red Army. Stalin is far less coy in claiming that he created the Red Cavalry. 'Long live the creator of the first cavalry, best friend of the Red Cavalry — Comrade Stalin!' (Fig. 4.10) by an unidentified artist makes the claim explicit and features an oval Stalin portrait with diagonally oriented banners that suggest the forward jarring motion of riding on horseback.
A 1939 poster by Deni and Dolgorukov, ‘Stalin’s spirit makes our army and country strong and solid’ (Fig. 4.11), depicts a Stalin of superhuman magnitude and grants him supernatural powers. Men, tanks and aircraft all take on the proportions of ants below, scurrying about in forward motion, but Stalin is still and calm, paying them no heed. His focus is upward and outward, on a vision that comes to him from the heavens. He does not act, nor seem to move — in fact he does not have legs, but emerges from the ground in a monolithic block at mid-calf. Stalin becomes fused with the banner, an extension of its protective function. The dark tones on the lower portion of his figure and the shapelessness of his greatcoat depict him as strong, solid and monolithic as the text claims. Growing out of the earth, he is the symbolic embodiment of the Russian land.

In general, in the propaganda posters of 1940, war preparation and battle-readiness is played down and, instead, the posters promote the USSR as working toward peace. An Izostat66 poster by an unidentified artist (Fig. 4.12) has for its caption a substantial text quoted from Stalin’s speech of 10 March 1939. The text stresses that the Soviet Union offers ‘moral’ support to the workers of all countries, and the final words state specifically that the foreign policy of the Soviet Union aligns it with countries who are not interested in breaching the peace. This landscape format poster is a colourful offering in this otherwise black, white and red era,67 with Stalin at a podium in the foreground, papers in hand, seemingly at the beginning or end of his speech, and a crowd of multinational citizens, many in national dress, walking up behind him. They appear to be of all ages, including children, and come from all walks of life. A child holds aloft a red balloon, while on the left this action is paralleled by the raising of a red flag from the open turret of a tank. The gesture is one of salute, but is akin to the gesture of truce or surrender, which is usually made with a white flag. The tank is motionless and the personnel exposed — they are prepared, but are not heading off to war. The background is a colourful and busy tribute to Soviet achievement — tractors, lorries and harvesters are

66 The All-union institute of pictorial statistics of Soviet construction and economy. Izostat was set up in 1931 to train Soviet designers and technicians in the effective use of pictorial statistics, particularly as an instrument for propaganda and agitation. The institute was closed in 1940.
67 It must be borne in mind, as noted in the Introduction, that the restricted colour scheme of wartime posters may have been due to time constraints and the availability of materials.
busy in the lush green fields, smoke plumes out of the factories in the distance, aircraft fly in formation in the blue sky, and buildings at the side highlight the end results of successful construction.

The disastrous early war years

In 1941, the campaign to stay out of a war that had been raging through the rest of Europe for two years failed. During those two years, political propaganda had first indicated the Soviet Union’s preparedness for war if attacked, and highlighted her military capabilities, especially with regard to aviation. Subsequently, in 1940, propaganda shifted focus to express a desire for peace and reluctance to enter the war. Throughout this time, and coinciding with Stalin’s 60th birthday in December 1939, a persona was being created for Stalin that symbolised strength, unity and wisdom. Stalin was depicted as a father figure, as a wise leader and a teacher. Although Voroshilov was the marshal of the army, and Stalin held no military rank, Stalin was presented as a friend of, and inspiration to, the armed forces. Propaganda allowed Stalin to enter the war years with a mythic visual biography that depicted him as heavily involved in the Soviet Union’s military affairs since the inception of the Red Army, as the creator of the Red Cavalry, and as the figure responsible for record-breaking feats in aviation.

Stalin’s past as a Red warrior was not the only task that the Soviet propaganda machine approached creatively. Despite copious intelligence advising that Germany was going to invade Russia in 1941,68 Stalin refused to believe it, trusting that Hitler would be bound by the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact. He was taken by surprise when German troops entered Russian soil on 22 June 1941. Vyacheslav Molotov69 made the announcement of the German invasion to the

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68 According to Christopher Andrew and Julie Elkner, the KGB later counted ‘over a hundred’ intelligence warnings of the German intention to invade, forwarded by Pavel Fitin, head of foreign intelligence from 1939, to Stalin in the first six months of 1941, all of which were ignored. There was also military intelligence to support Fitin’s claims (‘Stalin and foreign intelligence’, Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions, 2003, 4:1, pp. 69–94, p. 78).
69 According to Montefiore, the other members of the Politburo proposed that Stalin announce the onset of war, but Stalin refused to do so, although he dominated the drafting of the speech (Stalin, p. 325).
Soviet people the same day,⁷⁰ and Stalin made his first public speech on the radio (or elsewhere) in two years⁷¹ on 3 July,⁷² broadcast from a room in the Kremlin at 6 am.⁷³

Stalin and other members of the Politburo worked furiously for the first seven days after the German invasion. On 28 June, as he left the People’s Commissariat of Defence, Stalin appeared distraught, blurting out to his comrades ‘Lenin left us a great inheritance, and we, his heirs, have f**ked it all up!’⁷⁴ before informing them that he was resigning from office. On 29 and 30 June, Stalin appears not to have shown up for work and may have had some sort of collapse.⁷⁵ Montefiore poses the question of whether this ‘collapse’ was real, or ‘for effect’, as Molotov and Anastas Mikoyan speculated.⁷⁶ In any case, when Stalin returned to work he had the full support of his Politburo colleagues.

⁷⁰ See www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1941molotov.html for text of this speech.
⁷¹ As Deutscher points out, the rarity with which Stalin spoke in public imbued those occasions on which he did with a special significance: ‘To the public he spoke rarely; and every statement of his was made to appear as a milestone in history. As a rule these statements, which were in the nature of an autocrat’s orders, did, indeed, have a practical significance for people in every walk of life’ (Deutscher, Stalin, pp. 360–61).
⁷² See www.ibiblio.org/pha/policy/1941/410703a.html for text of this speech.
⁷³ The speech went for 21 minutes and was not rebroadcast, although the text of the speech was re-read by others in a variety of settings, and was also published in the newspapers and a separate brochure. Thus, even on this highly significant occasion, Berkhoff claims that few people actually heard Stalin deliver the original speech condemning the Germans for breaking the non-aggression pact, and call on the population to mobilise for this life-or-death situation (Motherland in danger: Soviet propaganda during World War II, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2012, p. 25).
⁷⁵ ‘Stalin “had shut himself away from everybody, was receiving nobody and was not answering the phone”. Molotov told Mikoyan and the others that “Stalin had been in such a state of prostration for the last two days that he was not interested in anything, didn’t show any initiative and was in a bad way”. Stalin could not sleep. He did not even bother to undress but simply wandered around the dacha’. Montefiore relies on accounts by Molotov, Mikoyan, Beria via Krushchev and Chadaev, which agree on the general outline of events, although there are some variations in exact reporting of speech (Montefiore, Stalin, pp. 330–31).
⁷⁶ ‘So had Stalin really suffered a nervous breakdown or was this simply a performance? Nothing was ever straightforward with this adept political actor. The breakdown was real enough: he was depressed and exhausted. It was not out of character: he had suffered similar moments on Nadya’s death and during the Finnish war. His collapse was an understandable reaction to his failure to read Hitler, a mistake which could not be hidden from his courtiers who had repeatedly heard him insist there would be no invasion in 1941 … . Yet Molotov and Mikoyan were right: it was also “for effect”. The withdrawal from power was a well-tried pose, successfully employed from Achilles and Alexander the Great to Ivan. Stalin’s retreat allowed him to be effectively re-elected by the Politburo, with the added benefit of drawing a line under the bungles up to that point. These had been forgiven: “Stalin enjoyed our support again”, Mikoyan wrote pointedly’ (Montefiore, Stalin, pp. 333–34).
Preparations for war, although in progress, were far from satisfactory\textsuperscript{77} and by the end of 1941 there had been numerous defeats in battle, Leningrad was under siege and the Germans were advancing towards Moscow — at one point they were only eight kilometres away.\textsuperscript{78} As Berkhoff points out, these early disasters on the war front were covered up in the newspapers, as were the details of the implementation of the scorched earth policy\textsuperscript{79} that Stalin had proclaimed in the 3 July speech. To reveal them would also have exposed the futility of the propaganda leading up to the war, which had focused on the preparedness of the Red Army and on the superiority of Soviet aviation. Stalin’s purges of 1937 and 1938 had also decimated the top leadership of the Red Army.\textsuperscript{80} As Ronald Suny points out: ‘Stalin killed more Soviet generals than would be killed in World War II. Fifteen out of the sixteen army commanders, 60 of the 67 corps commanders, and 136 of the 199 divisional commanders were executed.’\textsuperscript{81}

Propaganda posters on domestic themes receded into the background and all efforts were harnessed for mobilisation of the people and the military for the Great Patriotic War. Large numbers of posters were produced on war themes, including appeals to men to protect the motherland, as well as their vulnerable women and children; depictions of the enemy as subhuman and unusually cruel (this latter appears to have some basis in fact);\textsuperscript{82} and exhortations to kill and expel the fascist

\textsuperscript{77} Deutscher argues that Stalin used the time gained by the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact effectively: ‘Despite all his miscalculations, Stalin was not unprepared to meet the emergency. He had solidly armed his country and reorganized its military forces. His practical mind had not been weeded to any one-sided strategic dogma. He had not lulled the Red Army into a false sense of security behind any Russian variety of the Maginot Line … he could rely on Russia’s vast spaces and severe climate’ (Deutscher, \textit{Stalin}, p. 462).


\textsuperscript{79} Part of the dam of the Dnieper Hydroelectric Station was blown up by Soviet engineers, as were mines in Kryvy Rih, and wharves in Mykolaiv. Berkhoff claims that Stalin planned to demolish Moscow with mines if it was taken by the Germans (\textit{Motherland in danger}, p. 38).

\textsuperscript{80} Rieber argues that the rationale behind Stalin's purge of the Red Army leadership was to eliminate potential opposition that might seek to overthrow the government in the event of war. 'The precise proportions of political calculation and psychological derangement that drove Stalin to these extreme measures will always be a matter of speculation. But their effect cut two ways. When the Germans invaded there was no alternative to his leadership even though he had led the country to the brink of disaster. But in order to secure this position he destroyed what was arguably the most talented group of general staff officers in the world …' (‘Stalin as foreign policy-maker: avoiding war, 1927–1953’, in Davies & Harris, \textit{Stalin}, pp. 143–44).

\textsuperscript{81} Suny, \textit{The Soviet experiment}, p. 285.

\textsuperscript{82} About 3 million, or approximately 57 per cent of Soviet prisoners of war in German captivity died before the end of the war, compared with only 3.5 per cent of British and
invaders. Stephen White points out that, during the course of the war, Iskusstvo alone produced about 800 posters in a total of 34 million copies, while about 700 were produced in Leningrad. Despite this overwhelming propaganda effort, the incidence of images of Stalin in posters appears to have dropped during the war years, relative to the three years immediately prior to the war, which saw a boom in images of the vozhd’ in posters. This may reflect a tendency, noted earlier in relation to unsuccessful or difficult campaigns, to dissociate the leader from failures and catastrophes, and associate his image only with success, but may also simply reflect a preoccupation with other themes. Indeed, as research by Brooks indicates, Stalin’s presence in the newspapers also diminished, with some of his authority and the ‘culture of obligation’ shifting to others and, although his portrait continued to appear, it was frequently in the form of a frame from a documentary film, rather than a photograph of a current event.

Where Stalin does appear in the war posters of 1941, he is depicted as calling to the nation; inspiring the nation (along with the spirit of Lenin); and leading soldiers into battle. Stalin made few public speeches. Berkhoff cites fewer than 10 occasions on which Stalin spoke in public during the entire war, and only about 12 occasions on which his voice was heard on the radio. Stalin never went near the Front; however, his image as a strong-willed leader gained in credibility when he refused to evacuate Moscow with the rest of the government. ‘If the leader calls …’ (Fig. 4.13), a 1941 poster by Viktor Koretskii, features a verse from Maiakovskii’s poem Barabannai Pesnia accompanied by a black-and-white portrait bust photo of American prisoners (Suny, The Soviet experiment, p. 343). In June 1941 Adolf Hitler said to his general staff: ‘A Communist is not and can never be considered a fellow soldier. This war will be a battle of annihilation … It will be very different from the war in the West. In the East harshness will guarantee us a mild future. Military leaders must overcome their humanitarian reservations’ (Suny, The Soviet experiment, p. 342). See also Deutscher, Stalin, p. 474.

83 Moscow publishing house.
85 As Brooks points out, the ‘soldiers’ obligation was no longer to Stalin, but instead to their families, towns and villages, and to the nation. The press in turn stressed the population’s debt to the Red Army, and published stories of citizens’ gifts to ordinary soldiers (‘Stalin’s politics of obligation’, Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions, 4:1, 2003, pp. 47–67, pp. 61–62).
86 Brooks, Thank you, Comrade Stalin!, p. 160.
87 This includes four speeches to the Moscow City Council on the anniversaries of the October Revolution, an address to the Red Army on 7 November 1941, and the Victory Day speech on 9 May 1945 — even the annual May Day address was delivered in writing (Motherland in danger, p. 24).
88 Drum Song.
of Stalin and a quotation from his 3 July speech. At the bottom right, troops march across Red Square, the holy centre of Bolshevik ceremonial space, with Lenin’s tomb occupying the central position of the background and some battle-ready soldiers photomontaged into the foreground. The diagonal thrust of their rifles and the diagonals of the platoon formations suggest motion and activity, the mobilisation of large numbers of troops for the forthcoming battle. Maiakovskii, the deceased poet of the Revolution, utters a mobilisation battle-cry that hearkens back to revolutionary days and draws an association between the two situations. The suggestion is that the Soviet people should rally behind Stalin now in the same way as they rallied behind Lenin then. The excerpt from Stalin’s speech announces the formation of the State Defence Committee and asks the people to rally behind the committee, the government, and the army and navy. It concludes with the cry ‘Forward to our victory!’ The poster is sombre, stark and relatively unadorned. Stalin’s portrait is serious, his eyes directed at the viewer, calling him to mobilise. It was becoming less common in propaganda images for Stalin’s eyes to engage the viewer, his view usually directed either down over the people assembled beneath him or up and out of the poster to a future that only he can see.

The attempt to associate the crisis situation of the Great Patriotic War with the days of Revolution is made even more explicit in a 1941 poster by an unidentified artist, ‘“The spirit of the great Lenin and his victorious banner inspires us now in the Patriotic War as it did 23 years ago.” Stalin’ (Fig. 4.14). The poster shows a tank flying a banner with a Stalin portrait, racing off to battle, accompanied by the ghostly red shadow of a Civil War tank flying the banner of Lenin. The text of the poster, taken from Stalin’s speech on the

89 ‘Yesli vozhd’ zovet, Ruka, na vintovku lyag! Vpered, za vzvodom vzvod! Gromche pechat’ — shag!’ This verse is difficult to translate sensibly into English. Its meaning is: If the leader calls, Take up your rifle, Forward! Platoon after platoon! Louder … stamp … march.
90 This committee consisted of Stalin as president, Molotov as deputy, and Voroshilov, Malenkov and Beria.
91 ‘In order to ensure the rapid mobilisation of all the forces of the peoples of the U.S.S.R. and to repulse the enemy who has treacherously attacked our country, a State Committee of Defence has been formed and the entire state authority has now been vested in it. The State Committee of Defence has entered on the performance of its functions and calls upon all our people to rally around the Party of Lenin and Stalin and around the Soviet Government, so as to render self-sacrificing support to the Red Army and Red Navy, to exterminate the enemy and secure victory. All our forces — to support our heroic Red Army and our glorious Red Navy! All the power of the people — to defeat the enemy! Forward to victory!’
23rd anniversary of the October Revolution, makes the link explicit: ‘The spirit of the great Lenin and his victorious banner inspires us now in the Patriotic War as it did 23 years ago.’ It is not just the situations of crisis that are paralleled in this poster but also, by extension, the role of the leader. The connection is also made explicit in a 1941 poster by A.V. Vasil’ev and S.F. Yanevich (Fig. 4.15) that pairs Lenin and Stalin as profile friezes on a red banner. The portraits of Lenin and Stalin are not photographic, nor are they sketches from life. Both the dead Lenin and the living Stalin are apotheosised onto the banner as mythic historic beings with supernatural powers. Unlike earlier uses of Lenin to bolster legitimacy for Stalin’s leadership, the two are now shown as equal, with Lenin often depicted behind (or in the shadow of) Stalin. In many instances, Lenin now also serves as a means by which to apotheosise Stalin, taking him into the heavens. While in earlier propaganda Stalin used Lenin’s image to legitimise his earthly powers, now he also hitches himself to Lenin’s spiritual and inspirational powers.

Not all of the war posters of Stalin also featured Lenin. Iraklii Toidze’s 1941 poster ““All our forces — to support our heroic Red Army and our glorious Red Navy! All the power of the people — to defeat the enemy!” Stalin’ (Fig. 4.16) quotes from the same famous speech as the Koretskii poster of that year and shows a determined Stalin striding to the right accompanied by Soviet tanks and aircraft. The figure of Stalin forms a curious mixture of motion and stability. His gaze is steady and unflinching. The extended arm, showing the way forward with pointed index finger, is rigid and firm. Stalin is fixated on victory and the strength of his will carries the army and airforce with him. The force of his forward momentum is revealed by the way in which his coat lapels fly about him, and by the swirling motion of the clouds in the sky. These stormy clouds part above Stalin’s head, suggesting that even the forces of nature bend to Stalin’s will, making way for his unstoppable progress towards victory.

Many posters of this era are captioned with quotes from Stalin. Quoting Stalin had become akin to quoting scripture, and the posters are captioned as if these words contain deep wisdom, spiritual guidance, and unimpeachable truth. Writing in 1942 about Stalin’s speeches during the war thus far, Kalinin said: ‘We call these historic
speeches not only in the sense that they are documents but because of their influence on our people and on our army. They are speeches that make history.92

Konstantin Cheprakov’s poster of 1941 (Fig. 4.17) shows Stalin (who looks slightly ethnically Uzbek in this poster) in a similar pose to the Toidze poster. He appears in profile, right arm rigidly indicating the way forward to victory. His tunic and coat-tail swirl, but here he appears to have been depicted just as he has come to a halt. Soldiers, tanks and aircraft surge forward past him, set on reaching the indicated destination. Diagonal banners and a raised bayonet in the foreground reinforce the violence of the forward motion, as do the aircraft diving in on a diagonal. The poster’s caption, in Uzbek and Russian, reinforces the notion of the allegiance owed to Stalin as the wise father of the people: ‘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!’ Images that appear to be photographic purport to tell the truth and, if Stalin is depicted as physically leading the troops into battle, it is easier to associate him with qualities of vision, bravery, heroism and steadfastness, even if this is at a subconscious level.

Despite the fact that Stalin was portrayed as leading the troops into battle, he was not yet depicted in military uniform. Insignia of rank were abolished in 1917, immediately after the Revolution, however, in 1935, Stalin reintroduced personal ranks and, in 1940, general officer ranks. Insignia of rank were fully restored in 1943. Stalin is usually shown hatless or, on the rare occasions when he does wear a cap, it is unadorned.93 To represent Stalin as a military genius at this point in time may have been risky and may even have opened him up to ridicule. Lack of preparedness for war, poor decision-making, and a blatant misreading of the enemy could all be placed at Stalin’s feet, as could the consequent losses of Soviet life. Despite the advantages in wartime of portraying a strong and successful warrior and military strategist, the propaganda machine was as yet unable to unambiguously drape

93 For example, Toidze’s ‘“All our forces — to support our heroic Red Army and our glorious Red Navy! All the power of the people — to defeat the enemy!” Stalin’, 1941 (Fig. 4.16). Plamper dates the appearance of the ‘general’s cap’ to February 1942, and Stalin can be seen in posters with the red star affixed to the band of his cap from this point forward (The Stalin cult, p. 53).
Stalin in the mantle of the warrior. Instead, the established archetypes of Father and Teacher were called upon in an effort to maintain some legitimacy for the leader and to mobilise the population behind him in this crisis.

Stalin and the enemy

As discussed in Chapter Two, it was relatively uncommon for Stalin to be depicted with the enemy, and even more uncommon for him to be pictured alongside any kind of brutality. The war was cruel and the Soviet people suffered harshly under German occupation. The propaganda of the preceding decades, which emphasised the unity of the working classes around the world and their shared goals and interests, had been largely successful, and some of the Russian soldiers saw this confrontation as an opportunity to reach out to the working classes of other less fortunate nations. Atrocities committed on Russian soil, a series of punishing defeats, and a concerted propaganda campaign with highly emotive images that highlighted the risk to women and children under German occupation, turned this pacifist attitude on its head, and troops were encouraged to fight savagely in order to win the war. Many of the posters of the time (in which Stalin's image does not appear) focus on fear, brutality and German atrocities, as well as depicting the enemy as subhuman or vermin.

94 In one of Stalin's rare appearances with the enemy, a 1930 poster by Viktor Deni, 'With the banner of Lenin we won in the battles for the October Revolution ...', the small caricatures of a priest, a capitalist, an 'oblomov', and a Menshevik line up down the left side of the poster gesturing angrily at Stalin, who faces them off from the right with a large profile head, unperturbed gaze, and the machinery of Soviet industrialisation and construction bolstering him.

95 Ilia Ehrenburg recalled that the Russian people did not initially have any hatred for the German soldiers: 'The men defending Smolensk or Bransk repeated what they had heard first at school and later at political meetings, or read in the newspapers: in Germany the working class was strong, it was a leading industrial country; true, the fascists, supported by the Ruhr magnates and the social-traitors, had seized power, but the German people were in opposition and were carrying on the struggle. "Naturally," the Red Army men said, "the officers are fascists, and of course there must be misguided men among the rank and file, but millions of soldiers advance only because otherwise they'd be shot".' (Men, years — life, vol. 5, The war: 1941–45, Tatiana Shebunina & Yvonne Kapp (trans.), London, MacGibbon and Kee, 1964, p. 26). Ehrenburg recalls feeling enraged when gunners on the front line refused to shell a highway when commanded to do so. One of the gunners explained: "We can't just shell the road and then retreat. We must let the Germans approach and try to explain to them it's time for them to come to their senses and rise against Hitler, and that we'll help them to do it". The others feelingly supported him. A young and intelligent-looking artillery man said: "Who are we shooting? Workers and peasants. They think we're against them, we don’t leave them any choice".' (Men, years — life, vol. 5, pp. 27–28).
In these most desperate years of the war, a few posters contained both an image of Stalin and an image of the hated enemy. A simple war poster of 1941 by an unidentified artist (Fig. 4.18), published in Leningrad, is dominated by a large diagonal banner on which Stalin’s profile appears only in white outline silhouette. Beneath Stalin’s head, the words ‘Under the name of Stalin we won. Under the name of Stalin we will win!’ separate his faint image from the battle scene below. The crude graphic shows two aircraft above a Soviet tank that is crushing the enemy beneath it. The enemy is depicted in cartoon fashion as a skull in a helmet with long sharp-clawed paws protruding from the sleeves of its Nazi uniform — in both the Civil War and the Great Patriotic War, the enemy was often depicted with animal characteristics so as to highlight either the danger posed by the enemy, or its vermin-like, subhuman qualities. Alternately, the enemy could also be depicted in cartoon-fashion as cowardly and ridiculous.  

In 1942, war propaganda was at the forefront across most media, and Agitprop informed editors of the district newspapers that their main task was to:

educate the workers in a fiery hatred of the German–fascist scoundrels, who are encroaching upon the life and freedom of our motherland; to inspire our people to a great patriotic war of liberation; and to mobilize the workers for the fulfillment of the concrete tasks in the matter of active support of the front standing before the raion … all the work of the newspaper editors must be subordinated to the interests of the front and the tasks to organize the crushing defeat of the German–fascist invaders. The papers are obliged to daily explain to the workers the danger that is threatening our country, to overcome carelessness

96 The cartoon enemy makes a brief appearance in the 1938 poster by Deni and Dolgorukov (already discussed), and in a curious undated war poster by Georgi Zarnitskii. Three-quarters of the landscape poster consists of a characteristic depiction of a young fighter (not in standard military uniform) holding a rifle and a long banner with a frieze of Lenin and Stalin and the words ‘For the motherland! For Stalin!’ emblazoned across it. The backdrop is full of conventional imagery — the silhouettes of fighters, rifles ready, bayonets thrust forward, and signs of successful Soviet industrialisation and agriculture in the background. The right edge of the poster, a section demarcated by the pole of the banner, is stark black with a depiction of small frightened enemies, two cowering whilst looking up at the frieze of Lenin and Stalin on the huge red banner, and the hind leg of one visible fleeing, in white outline. Above the frightened enemy is a dogfight between aircraft, with smoke and falling debris. The caption to the poster is in large, bold type and reads: ‘Workers stand to defend our beloved Socialist Motherland!’ While the style of the major portion of the poster is conventional and heroic, the part of the poster devoted to the enemy is cartoon-like and slightly comical. The enemy looks anything but menacing.
and indifference, to develop Soviet patriotism, to cultivate hatred of the German occupiers and readiness to give up all one’s strength for the crushing defeat of the enemy.\textsuperscript{97}

Scenes of German callousness and brutality became a major theme in posters, as well as scenes in which the enemy was being defeated by Russian troops. A 1942 poster by Boris Mukhin, ‘The spirit of the great Lenin and his victorious banner inspires us now in the Patriotic War as it did 23 years ago’ (Fig. 4.19), is dominated by a large, ‘fleshed-out’ Lenin, while the image of Stalin on a banner on a tank is so small and finely sketched that one could almost miss it. Most of the left side of the poster is filled with the figure of Lenin with outstretched arm and pointing finger. Lenin’s hand resembles the hand of God in Michelangelo’s \textit{The creation of Adam}. God reaches out to impart the spark of life to Adam. Similarly, Lenin reaches out to breathe inspiration into the Soviet troops. Behind Lenin is a large red banner showing scenes of fighting during the Civil War. The text on the banner is taken from Stalin’s speech at the parade on Red Square on 7 November 1941. The foreground of the poster shows a Soviet tank rumbling forward with gun blazing, crushing German artillery and barbed wire fortifications, and about to roll over the corpses of German soldiers. Behind the tank one German soldier is falling under its tracks, and two more flee for their lives. Behind this, a similar scene is repeated in the middle distance in lesser detail. The text in the bottom left corner also looks as if it is being crushed by the tank, and refers directly to the scene of carnage above it — ‘Who can deny that our Red Army makes the much vaunted German army flee in panic?’

Less graphically brutal in terms of visual imagery, but explicit in text, is V. Mirzoe’s ‘We can and must clear our Soviet soil of the Hitlerite filth!’ (Fig. 4.20). Dating from approximately late 1942 to early 1943,\textsuperscript{98} the poster quotes Stalin’s Order no. 345, the Order of the People’s Commissar of Defence, 7 November 1942. The text occupies almost half of the picture plane and instructs the Red Army to defend the front line, not retreat, wear down the enemy and destroy his machinery. It urges strict discipline and order and the expansion of a popular guerilla movement to the rear of the enemy. Above the text, a military

\textsuperscript{97} TsDAHOU, 1/23/67/19/21V: Upravlenie propagandy i agitatsii TsK VKP(b), rabote raionnykh gazet, March 3, 1942, cited in Berkhoff, \textit{Motherland in danger}, pp. 11–12.

\textsuperscript{98} The poster is undated and does not include publishing details.
portrait bust of Stalin appears grave and concerned. Both Stalin and the text are coloured red and sit separated from the scene below, a black-and-white battle scene, with daubs of red provided by small red stars. Soviet tanks and troops advance on a much smaller Nazi enemy, which already appears defeated. Only one German soldier appears, sprawled over his tiny tank.

The turning tide

In his 1941 address on the anniversary of the October Revolution, Stalin cautiously told the military parade that victory was possible in 1942: ‘Some more months, another half year, perhaps a year, and Hitlerite Germany will have to break under the weight of its crimes.’

In this speech he called on the memory of the heroic Russian warrior ancestors to inspire the populace to victory — Nevskei, Dimitrii Donskoi, Kuzma Minin, Dimitrii Pozharskii, Aleksandr Suvorov and Mikhail Kutuzov. This appeal to a pre-Soviet feudal or autocratic past seemed at odds with previous Soviet attempts to dissociate from the rule of the tsars, and marked an increased focus on continuity with the heroic Russian past as a society of victors against aggression and oppression.

It also allowed the population to interpret the current chaotic retreats from battle as a repetition of the brilliant tactical retreats of Kutuzov and Nevskei, which ultimately resulted in victory. In 1942, Kalinin also suggested that the Red Army might defeat the Germans that year, and evidence that at least some of the people believed this to be possible is provided by an open letter to Stalin signed by 1,017,237 people, published in the newspaper Trud, which stated:

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99 I. Stalin, O Velikoi Otechestvennoi voine Sovetskogo Soiuza, 4th edn, Moscow, Gospolitizdat, 1944, p. 36.
100 Like D.L. Brandenberger and A.M. Dubrovsky, I interpret this apparent move toward Russian nationalism, which began around 1937, as pragmatic, rather than genuine Russian nationalism. This argument is outlined in greater detail in their essay, “‘The people need a tsar’: the emergence of national Bolshevism as Stalinist ideology, 1931–1941”, Europe–Asia Studies, 50:5, 1998, pp. 873–92.
102 Kalinin, ‘Stalin and the Patriotic War’.
For Hitler the year 1942 is a fateful date, the year of shameful ruin, of dishonorable death. In this new year that is starting, Hitler’s predatory empire shall fall apart under the weight of the crimes of fascism, crushed by the grave soil of the thousands of cemeteries in Europe and Africa.\(^\text{103}\)

It was too early yet, though, to feel confident that the Germans would be defeated.

In 1942, rather than moving forward as in 1941, Stalin’s image in posters became increasingly motionless, moving into the sky or onto friezes, and banners. Sometimes he even appeared as a spirit, like Lenin. Veteran poster artist Nikolai Kogout’s ‘Under the invincible banner of the great Lenin — forward to victory!’\(^\text{104}\) (Fig. 4.21) shows Soviet people of all nationalities, civilian and military, male and female, clustered under a huge red banner featuring golden portraits of Stalin and Lenin in profile, uniting for the war effort. The people carry weapons and, for the first time since the early years of the Soviet regime, women are dressed in working clothes and also carry tools. Behind the people to the left are a mass of Soviet tanks with guns blazing, and red aircraft dive in to battle in the sky. In the background to the right is a representation of Soviet industry, the source of supplies for the war effort, and the showcase of Soviet achievement.

A striking Uzbek poster featuring Lenin and Stalin, Pen Varlen’s 1942 ‘The path to our glory is immutable — Fascism will die! …’ (Fig. 4.22), shows an infinite wedge\(^\text{105}\) of Soviet peoples surging forward to take on the enemy. The huge mass moves as one body and consists not only of military personnel, but also of nurses and civilians of a variety of ethnicities. The sky is dominated by the huge diagonal field of a sweeping red banner, with hammer and sickle thrusting forward, and behind it the sketched figure of Stalin is shadowed by the ghostly white silhouette of Lenin. The sketch of Stalin has distinguishing features, tone and depth; however, he does not occupy the same space as the Soviet citizens. Stalin inhabits the world of the banner and simply disappears below the waist. His right arm is flung out, the hand extended to indicate the way forward to victory, palm

\(^{103}\) Cited in Berkhoff, *Motherland in danger*, pp. 44–45.

\(^{104}\) The text is printed in Uzbek and Russian and is a quote from Stalin’s May Day order.

\(^{105}\) This wedge may reference the famous abstract poster by El Lissitsky ‘Beat the whites with the red wedge’ of 1920.
open almost as if it is he who provides the momentum for the people below. Stalin appears on a giant scale and dwarfs the silhouette of the Kremlin. The spirit of Lenin appears as Stalin’s shadow, almost morphing them into the same person, and is even larger than Stalin. While Lenin’s pose is almost exactly that of Stalin, the same upthrust jaw and outstretched arm, Stalin’s left arm hangs at his side whereas Lenin’s is bent and held high against his body. While Lenin’s coat-tail flaps, Stalin’s clothing is orderly and undisturbed. These minor variances highlight the difference in rhetorical style between the two men — Lenin speaking urgently, leaning forward, moving his body; Stalin calm and still — and also the fact that, while Lenin was on his way to socialism, Stalin has already arrived. The full text of the poster reads: ‘The way to our glory is immutable — fascism will die! The enemy will fall! We were inspired by the great Lenin — the great Stalin leads us in battle!’ The caption names Lenin as the inspiration for both Stalin and the Soviet people, although it is Stalin who now leads the battle, bridging the spiritual and corporeal worlds. Voroshilov, who had committed serious errors as marshal of the Soviet Union during the Russo–Finnish War of 1940, has disappeared.106

A 1942 poster by head of the Leningrad section of the Artists’ Union, Vladimir Serov (Fig. 4.23), utilises the same concept of the spirit of Lenin from beyond the grave, and the spirit of Stalin in the present, but is considerably more graphic in its depiction of the war.107 Almost the entire top half of the poster is filled by a huge red banner infused with the head of Lenin looking calmly into the distance. Lenin’s sacred head emits white light which illuminates the right arm and face of Stalin below him. Stalin’s right arm is raised and outstretched, but his fingers are spread and his palm turned down, and he appears to be blessing or sanctifying the action below him. The outstretched arm is a symbolic element continued from posters of Lenin.108 Just as Stalin guides his troops and their actions, Lenin sits on Stalin’s right shoulder to bless and guide him. The torso of Stalin emerges from a swirling mist of smoke above the battlefield, and in this poster Stalin is nearer to the enemy than in any other, although the implication is that he is there in spirit, not flesh. The bottom half of the poster depicts the battlefield

107 Serov was based in Leningrad during the siege.
108 For example, Sokolov, ‘Let the ruling classes shudder before the Communist Revolution’, 1922.
in closeup. In the immediate foreground is a trench with barbed wire, and a Russian soldier bayoneting a German soldier. The German has lost his gun and sprawls helpless on the ground, a dead comrade arched over barbed wire next to him. The bayonet-wielding Russian steps over the body of another dead German soldier, and next to him a comrade prepares to throw a grenade, while a poised bayonet gleams in the hands of a soldier behind him. A tank rumbles through in the background. The red text is simple and direct — ‘Under the banner of Lenin, forward, to victory!’

Also in 1942, Viktor Ivanov and Ol’ga Burova (Fig. 4.24) move the portrait bust of Stalin back into the heavens and add dramatic colour with a blood-red sky and male fighters in their various coloured uniforms. The extensive text quotes Stalin’s speech from Red Square in 1941: ‘Comrades of the Red Army, the Red Fleet, commanders and commissars, men and women of the guerilla forces! The whole world regards you as a force capable of destroying the marauding hordes of the German invaders!’ A sea of bayonets symbolises the personal and heroic courage needed from each person — bayonets are an ‘up close’ and personal means of killing, in contrast to guns and tanks which can kill at a distance. Although the text of the poster, and the speech from which it is taken, include women among the forces defending the Soviet Union, the poster itself shows only men. Depicting women (and indeed children) as combatants engaged in fighting was taboo.

**TASS posters**

TASS window posters were a return to the earlier idea of ROSTA windows, which originated in 1919 as satirical posters that were heavily influenced by the traditional *lubok* and featured political

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110 Berkhoff claims that the Soviet leadership neither encouraged nor prevented women from becoming soldiers in the Soviet Army. In 1941, tens of thousands of women volunteered for the army, but only 300 were mobilised. In 1942 women were mobilised for both noncombat functions, such as radio operation and secretarial work, and also as anti-aircraft fighters. Berkhoff states that during the entire war about 520,000 women were members of the field army and 120,000 of these engaged the enemy as soldiers (*Motherland in danger*, p. 53).

111 Berkhoff notes that, although 25,000 children served in the Red Army, this topic was totally taboo and the press was not allowed to report the feats of any of these children (*Motherland in danger*, p. 53).
themes. In 1919 ROSTA began publishing newspapers, but chronic shortages of paper led to the idea of pasting short news articles and agitational materials up onto walls and in empty shop windows. The windows drew crowds and the idea expanded from Moscow to the provinces. By the end of the Civil War there were 47 ROSTA agencies across the Soviet Union. Many notable artists and writers of the avant-garde worked on the posters in the early years — artists such as Vladimir Maiakovsky (who wrote the text for 90 per cent of the posters), Aleksandr Rodchenko, Mikhail Cheremnkh and Moor.

On 23 June 1941 Aleksandr Gerasimov, head of the Organising Committee of the Union of Soviet Artists, approved a proposal by Cheremnkh, Nikolai Denisovskii and Pavel Sokolov-Skalia, to create a new propaganda studio in Moscow based on the ROSTA model. Several of the original ROSTA artists were still active, including Cheremnkh, Deni and Moor; and the revolutionary poet Dem’ian Bednyi, who was in poor health, returned from Kazan to assist the war effort. The first TASS poster appeared on 27 June 1941. Some of the first windows were produced in only one copy and, until the end of December 1941, none was produced in more than 120 copies. While initially the subject matter of posters was derived from Party directives, orders, news items and then Stalin’s speeches, artists and writers were soon able to submit their own ideas for designs for approval. Some posters even illustrated episodes from Russian and Soviet history. TASS posters were seen as an important part of the war effort, with Sokolov-Skalia claiming in 1943: ‘My weapon is the three hundred posters I created during the war.’

During the war, the TASS poster workforce increased from about 12 to nearly 300 employees, and one poster was produced for nearly every day of the war. TASS was controlled by the propaganda department and, during the short-lived spirit of cooperation among Allied forces,

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113 Kenez, The birth of the propaganda state, p. 115.
115 Spring, ‘The TASS poster series from the Hallward Library’.
many posters were sent abroad to Allied countries. The posters were large in scale and, unlike most other posters of the Soviet period, were usually created from complex stencils rather than lithographs, some demanding 60 to 70 different stencils and colour divisions. The use of stencils meant that each poster was printed by hand, hence the painterly look of the posters. This was a labour-intensive process and mobilised a number of artists and craftspeople in the service of the war, while limiting reliance on machinery. It also meant that editions were limited, usually to an issue of a few hundred each. Aleksei Morozov notes that edition numbers were also limited by decree — editions of 200 in posters produced in Kuibyshev and Tashkent, and 300 in Moscow, rising to 500 from the summer of 1942. Failure to comply with these restrictions could result in criminal liability for the chief editors.117

Like the ROSTA Windows before them, TASS posters were intended to be quickly responsive to the evolving war situation; however, in practice they often lagged behind current affairs by weeks or even months.118 The 1942 TASS poster by Vasilii Bayuskin and A. Shpier, titled ‘Great Patriotic War’,119 serves as a graphic illustration of Order of the Day, No. 55,120 issued by Stalin on 23 February 1942, the 24th anniversary of the founding of the Red Army. The poster itself appeared in July 1942. In the order, Stalin discusses the history of the Red Army as the defender of the Soviet people, and emphasises its role in expelling foreign invaders since 1918.121 The order concludes with

117 Aleksei Morozov, Agit-Okna, Okna TASS, 1941–1945, Kontakt-Kultura, Moscow, 2013, p. 7. Denisovsky states, however, that TASS posters were subsequently reproduced in a variety of media in large quantities: ‘nearly 75,000 copies of TASS Windows were reproduced in the film cassette series Poslednie izvestiia (The Latest News) and from March 1943 on slide films with reproductions of 40–50 TASS Windows on each reel. Nearly 26,000 silk screen (shelkografiki) posters were made and over a million lithographic reduced size copies were made by the TASS collective from the beginning of 1942’ (Okna Tass 1941–45, cited in Spring, ‘The TASS poster series from the Hallward Library’).

118 Morozov, Agit-Okna, pp. 5–7.

119 For an image, see Aleksei Morozov, Agit-Okna, Okna TASS, 1941–1945, Moscow, Kontakt-Kultura, 2013, p. 408.

120 Full text available in English at www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1942/02/23.htm; and in Russian at grachev62.narod.ru/stalin/t15/t15_19.htm.

121 Stalin states that the Red Army has already been successful in expelling the Germans once before. While acknowledging Soviet losses at the beginning of the war, he attributes these to the surprise nature of the German attack, and states that the fortunes of war are already turning in favour of the Red Army. Stalin stresses that Soviet hatred is not directed at the German people themselves, as the USSR is intolerant of racial hatred, but at Hitler’s clique, and that Soviet aims extend no further than the expulsion of the Germans from Soviet territory.
several patriotic declarations, the last of which makes up the subtitle of the poster: ‘Under the banner of Lenin onward to the defeat of the German-fascist invaders!’ From the right, a gigantic, determined Stalin in plain greatcoat and characteristic workers’ boots, strides towards the battlefield, right arm outstretched, finger pointing ahead. He is accompanied by a sky full of aircraft.

The poster uses the landscape format to display a number of battle scenes — multiple scenes and a ‘storyboard effect’ are reminiscent of the lubok and a device to which the ROSTA and TASS windows were particularly suited. Six battle scenes are featured, each captioned with a quotation from Stalin’s order. The first shows the birth of the Red Army on 23 February 1918, in the battle against the Germans at Narva and Pskov. Soldiers, sailors and civilians all fight from the trenches to defend the motherland. The caption to the image reads: ‘Young detachments of the Red Army, which entered war for the first time, routed the German invaders at Pskov and Narva on February 23, 1918.’ Immediately beneath this image is another image relating to 1918 in which the Red Army is shown liberating Ukraine and Belarus. The caption to this image states: ‘The Red Army successfully defended our country in the battles with the German invaders in 1918 and drove them beyond the confines of the Ukraine and Byelorussia.’ The top middle picture juxtaposes Great Patriotic War troops in the foreground, with the cavalry of earlier days in the background, all riding forward to engage the enemy. Aircraft appear in the distant sky, accompanying the ground troops. This image is captioned: ‘It is essential that in our country the training of reserves in aid of the front should not be relaxed for a moment. It is essential that ever-new military units should go to the front to forge victory over the bestial enemy.’ Beneath this is an image of Soviet might in the current battle — an array of tanks rolls towards the viewer, while behind them, Soviet industry belches out smoke as it produces the weapons needed for the Front. The image shares a caption with another image that shows all means of transport — road, rail, and river — being utilised in service of the war effort. The caption reads: ‘It is essential that our industry, particularly our war industry, should work with redoubled energy. It is essential that with every day the front should receive ever more tanks, planes, guns, mortars, machine-guns, rifles, automatic rifles, and ammunition.’ The bottom of the poster is dominated by a large, darker image of contemporary battle, complete
with explosions, aerial bombnings and troops in action. The scene is dramatic and frenetic, the sky and the earth swirling and breaking apart in the heat of the battle. It is in this scene that Stalin’s feet are firmly planted. The caption for this image highlights the horrors of war and outlines the task of the Red Army: ‘The Red Army’s task is to liberate our Soviet territory from the German invaders; to liberate from the yoke of the German invaders the citizens of our villages and towns who were free and lived like human beings before the war, but are now oppressed and suffer pillage, ruin and famine; and finally, to liberate our women from that disgrace and outrage to which they are subjected by the German-fascist monsters.’ The whole of the poster, including the figure of Stalin, is bathed in golden light, reinforcing the sanctity of the mission, the iconic nature of the image of Stalin, and the dogmatic nature of his words.

1942 saw some victories for Soviet troops, and propaganda made much of good news at last. Monumentalist and graphic artist Nadezhda Kashina’s TASS poster of April 1942 (Fig. 4.25), produced for May Day festivities, celebrates Soviet success in forcing the Germans to pull back from Moscow in January. Although Moscow remained under threat for some considerable time, this constituted a significant victory after a string of heavy battle losses and was used to encourage the population in the belief that the USSR would ultimately prevail in the war. This horizontal format poster takes the form of a tryptich. The largest central image, in pastel tones with splashes of festive red, blue and yellow, shows the Spassky tower in the background, defended by aircraft flying in formation in a golden sky and a barricade of tanks. In the foreground, a partisan raises his right hand in a gesture of victory, while his left hand holds that of his wife, who carries their toddler in her arms — Moscow is now safe for women and children. The left side of the middle panel is devoted to the military sphere, which includes another partisan, a line of soldiers, and one woman in military uniform. Significantly, the military personnel are departing. The right side of the panel is devoted to the domestic sphere and is populated by women, some dressed in overalls and carrying tools, one an aviatrix, and another, perhaps, a nurse. On either side of the main image are portrait-oriented images of Soviet soldiers. On the left, the soldier wields a banner with the slogan ‘Long live the 1st of May’ and sharply outlined profile images of Lenin and Stalin, both with plain collars. The banner crosses over into the panel of the central image and
protectively covers the departing soldiers of the Red Army, as well as the aircraft in the sky. On the right, a soldier looks to the sky with binoculars, still vigilant against the return of the enemy. Both soldiers look away from the central image, in the manner of sentries watching for external threats. The poster is captioned at the bottom with the words ‘Invincible Moscow’ in Uzbek and Russian. The poster was published in Uzbekistan by UzTAG\(^{122}\) — many artists were evacuated during the battle of Moscow and continued to produce posters in Tashkent and Kuibyshev. This led to some confusion in numbering. All posters produced in Tashkent had to be published with text in both Uzbek and Russian.\(^{123}\)

Sokolov-Skalia’s November 1942 TASS poster (Fig. 4.26) shows four soldiers of various ethnicities ready for battle, rifles raised and cocked. Stalin comes down off the banners and out of the skies, and into the thick of the action alongside Soviet troops. This Stalin is ‘flesh-and-blood’, as real as the men beside him, and of a comparative size. Behind the figures a flash of orange and red illuminates the dark night, and one can see the silhouettes of bayonets and rifles, although no enemy is visible. The flash of colour is suggestive of both the ubiquitous protective banner, albeit with torn and jagged edges, and of the explosions occurring in battle. The caption to the poster reads: ‘The sons of all the peoples of the Soviet Union go into battle for the Soviet fatherland. Long live the Red Army — army of brotherhood and friendship of the peoples of the USSR!’ Not only have people of all of the republics of the USSR sent their sons off to war to fight for the nation, Stalin too sent his son, Yakov, into battle.

**Stalingrad**

Stalin was determined that he could not let the city named for him fall to the Germans, for both strategic and symbolic reasons,\(^{124}\) and in 1942 Stalingrad became the scene of a fierce and bloody battle. On 6 November the defenders of Stalingrad took an oath to Stalin:

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122 Uzbek Telegraph Agency.
124 Nicholas O’Shaughnessy contends that the propaganda value placed on Stalingrad was so high that the propaganda dictated political and military strategy (*Politics and propaganda*, Manchester University Press, 2004, p. 33).
'Before our battle standards and the whole Soviet country, we swear that we will not besmirch the glory of Russian arms and will fight to the last. Under your leadership, our fathers won the Battle of Tsaritsyn, and under your leadership we will now win the great Battle of Stalingrad.' Toidze’s ‘Stalin will lead us to victory!’ was released on 6 January 1943, a few weeks before the Soviet victory in Stalingrad, but already shows an increasing confidence that the tide of the war was turning in favour of the Soviets. A giant Stalin strides across the battlefield at the head of his troops, equipped with the most modern weaponry, and supported by heavy armoury and the technological excellence of Soviet aviation. Stalin’s face is determined, befitting his appellation as the ‘man of steel’. The steel-grey tones of the poster are broken up by the vivid red of the banner, which is picked up by the small red star on Stalin’s general’s cap. The use of red diagonals gives the poster a sense of inexorable movement forward. Stalin looks unstoppable, his aura of power increased by the vaguely phallic-shaped cloud of smoke on his right shoulder — even the forces of nature are harnessed by the magnetic power of Stalin.

On 2 February 1943, the Germans troops at Stalingrad surrendered. Although the war had not been won, there was finally some good news to spread to the populace and, in 1943, Stalin’s image began slowly to be associated with victory. ‘OKNO TASS No. 669/669A’ by Petr Shukhmin was published in Moscow on 20 February 1943, just weeks after this Soviet victory. A grim-faced Stalin appears amid a sea of soldiers, one of whom wields the protective palladium over all of them. The mood of the poster is serious and reflective. Despite victory in the battle, no one smiles, there is still much hardship ahead. The caption of the poster calls for the continuation of momentum: ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin, forward to the complete defeat of the German occupiers and their expulsion from our motherland!’

Many of the posters of 1943 continued on the same themes as those of 1942. The disembodied Stalin in the sky is employed in some posters, as in the 1943 poster by Vlasob’ (Fig. 4.27) in which Stalin praises the Red Army for its battle victories, for defending peace and friendship, and for protecting construction. The text, in Russian and Azerbaijani,

125 Pravda, No. 310, 6 Nov. 1942.
126 For an image, see www.artic.edu/aic/collections/exhibitions/TASS/artwork/209848.
is from Stalin’s Order of the Day, No. 95, 23 February 1943, the day of the Soviet victory in Stalingrad, and reflects increasing confidence in ultimate victory: ‘During the war the Red Army personnel became a professional army. They learned how to defeat the enemy with a certain view of its strengths and weaknesses, as required by modern military science.’ In this order Stalin describes the reversal of fortunes in the war, but warns against complacency, quoting Lenin: ‘The first thing is not to be carried away by victory and not to get conceited; the second thing is to consolidate one’s victory; the third thing is to finish off the enemy.’ The Red Army’s praises are sung again in a poster by Nikolai Zhukov and Viktor Klimashin127 (Fig. 4.28) in which Soviet forces move forward into battle. With some victories finally in hand, the divisions advance under their identifying banners: the 331st Red Banner Smolensk Infantry Division (‘Red Banner’ was a special title given to Soviet armies after the award of the Order of the Red Banner); the 5th Guards Tank Corps Stalingrad (a ‘Guards’ army was an army that distinguished itself in the Great Patriotic War); and the Poltava Tank Regiment (instrumental in liberating the town of Poltava in September 1943). Ground forces are accompanied by ever-present aircraft in the skies, and all fly beneath a huge banner that is emblazoned with the profile portraits of Stalin and Lenin enclosed in a medallion.

In other posters, Stalin has been brought back to earth, while Lenin remains in the heavens, as in ‘“The spirit of the great Lenin and his invincible banner inspire us now in the patriotic war.” (I. Stalin)’ by People’s Artist of the Soviet Union, Veniamin Pinchuk (Fig. 4.29). This poster visually references the 1942 Serov poster already discussed (Fig. 4.23), with minor but significant differences. Stalin appears before a chalky red banner, right arm outstretched and palm down in a gesture suggestive of blessing. Over his right shoulder is the ghostly head of Lenin. In these details the 1943 Pinchuk poster closely resembles the top half of the 1942 Serov poster. In the 1943 poster, the entire

127 Both Zhukov and Klimashin worked as military artists in the studio named after M. Grekov and also worked as artists on the battlefront. ‘Klimashin Viktor Semenovich (1912–1960)’ artgallery.krasno.ru/IMAGES/Grafics/Klimashin.htm (accessed 15 Aug. 2015). Zhukov was awarded People’s Artist of the RSFSR (1955) and People’s Artist of the USSR (1963) and was the winner of two Stalin Prizes, second degree (1943, 1951) (‘Zhukov, Nikolai Nikolaevich’, ru.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D0%96%D1%83%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%B2_%D0%9D%D0%B8%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B9_%D0%9D%D0%B8%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BB%D0%B0%D0%B5%D0%BB%D1%87 (accessed 15 Aug. 2015)).
bottom section of the poster — that unconventional section which shows the brutal slaying of the German enemy — has been removed. Both posters show a bust of Stalin; however, where in the 1942 poster his lower body had been dissolved in a bank of mist and battle smoke, the 1943 poster shows Stalin’s body as solid to the edge of the image while his eyes directly engage the viewer.

A 1943 poster resembling a newspaper broadsheet was released by Smolgiz128 in which the ‘headline’ confidently proclaims ‘The Red Army crushes the enemy’. Beneath the headline is a small black-and-white portrait of Stalin and a textbox containing part of the text of the military order given by Stalin on 23 February 1943. A small banner at the top proclaims ‘Death to the German occupiers!’ The rest of the poster consists of documentary black-and-white photos of recent Soviet successes with explanatory captions. These captions read: ‘Stalin falcons fly to perform a mission’; ‘Soviet infantry storm the fascist hordes’; ‘Glorious tank crews bravely advance on formidable enemy machines’; ‘The heads of the fascists will come to grief on Cossack swords’; ‘Our artillery is a devastating fire for the invaders’; ‘Fritz Cemeteries in Vyazma. The same cemetery in Sychevka, Gzhatsk’; ‘Hundreds of thousands of Nazi fighters captured by the advancing Red Army’; and ‘Thousands of tanks, guns and vehicles seized from the Germans at Stalingrad’. Nothing in the poster overtly glorifies Stalin. The Red Army is given credit for its victories, and Stalin does not appear in the photographs below. His portrait is of modest proportions and merely accompanies his instructional words, identifying them with him and bolstering their legitimacy as an order to the troops and civilians.

In contrast, Koretskii’s 1943 poster, ‘On the joyous day of liberation …’ (Fig. 3.13) lays responsibility for victory wholly at Stalin’s feet. Stalin’s portrait is hung in a ‘Lenin corner’ or ‘Stalin room’ as they were now sometimes called, with great reverence by a young, blond child who appears to be instructing his peasant family in the virtues of Stalin’s beneficence. The little Russian boy represents the future of the motherland. Stalin is the glorious father who is to be venerated above all others. As art historian Erika Wolf observes: ‘The family resembles the Holy Family, with a mother and child accompanied by

128 Smolensk publishing company.
an older and impotent man, akin to Saint Joseph. Stalin thus stands in as the absent father of the family, as well as the “father comrade” of the Soviet people.129 Stalin’s portrait is soft and paternal and the icon’s talismanic powers are juxtaposed with Soviet military success. The frame of the portrait balances the window frame through which a large red flag and some departing soldiers can be seen. The Red Army soldiers have restored peace and the village is intact and safe. Koretskii’s poster celebrates the liberation of an occupied village and inspires the population with hope for victory in the war. The extensive text makes it clear who is responsible for the victory, and to whom a boundless and unpayable debt of gratitude is owed: ‘On the joyous day of liberation from under the yoke of the German invaders the first words of boundless gratitude and love of the Soviet people are addressed to our friend and father Comrade Stalin — the organiser of our struggle for the liberation and independence of our homeland.’ Stalin is addressed as ‘friend and father’ and does not yet appear in full military uniform. Despite being appointed marshal of the Soviet Union in 1943 and accepting the award of the Order of Suvorov, First Class, in November 1943,130 he may still have been cautious about claiming military and strategic brilliance until ultimate victory was assured.

Stalin as marshal of the Soviet Union

One of the most significant developments in the image of Stalin as of the year 1944 is that, from this point on, he appears in the military uniform of the marshal of the Soviet Union.131 As confidence in

130 The Order of Suvorov, created in July 1942, was awarded for exceptional leadership in combat operations.
131 In fact, the only poster from 1944 examined during my research that does not depict Stalin in marshal’s uniform is a poster by Vasilii Nikolaev, published by Iskusstvo in Leningrad — ‘Forward for the defeat of the German occupiers and their expulsion from the borders of our motherland!’ This poster, for a Leningrad audience, must predate the lifting of the siege, as Vasilii Aleksandrovich Nikolaev died in Leningrad in 1943. The message of the poster encourages the population to defeat the German invaders and expel them from the motherland. Like its predecessors of the past two years, this poster places Stalin in the sky before a huge red banner, his right arm outstretched. His hand, palm down, both points the way forward and blesses the troops beneath him. The Soviet coat-of-arms, in gold on the red banner, almost forms a halo, and the sky is a golden colour reminiscent of the background in icons. Beneath the large banner is a line of soldiers stretching off into the distance, with the turrets of tanks visible above their heads. The soldiers are illumined by a golden glow over their heads, and above them, also stretching off into the infinite distance, is a row of red banners with golden medallions
ultimate victory increased, Stalin officially took his place as the head of the armed forces. Leningrad had been under a devastating siege by the Germans since 8 September 1941. This siege, which lasted 872 days and was one of the most destructive and costly in terms of loss of human life, was finally ended on 27 January 1944. A 1944 Tajik TASS poster followed closely on the heels of the lifting of the Leningrad blockade. The poster by Mikhail Karpenko\textsuperscript{132} is dominated by a giant red head of Lenin, eyebrows furrowed, chin jutted forward, inspiring Stalin and the troops to victory. His broad red shoulders, which sit above the soldiers, have become the palladium that protects those rushing into battle. Stalin stands on the right side of the poster, his body oversized and powerful in his marshal’s uniform, and his outstretched right arm points the way to victory. Beneath Lenin and Stalin, troops rush in to victory in an image that, with its sweeping lines to suggest rapid motion forward, is reminiscent of the 1942 poster by Pen Varlen (Fig. 4.22). The text, in Tajik and Russian, reads: ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin — forward to the complete defeat of the German invaders!’ In Nina Vatolina’s 1944 poster ‘For our great motherland!’ (Fig. 4.30), the familiar pairing of the profile portraits of Lenin and Stalin on a banner is employed once more. Here, although hatless, Stalin is now depicted wearing the collar of the marshal’s uniform, rather than the large turned-down collar of his greatcoat.

While employing many familiar motifs, A.A. Babitskii’s poster of 1944 (Fig. 4.31), shows an increase in confidence in ultimate victory. The ghostly head of Lenin on a large red banner dominates the sky; the sacred Spassky tower glows red-gold in the background; and a tank rushes forward to battle under the protective red banner. The giant figure of Stalin in his marshal’s uniform dominates the poster, however here Stalin is not static and motionless, nor does he merely inspire from the sky. Stalin is rushing forward into battle, carrying a large map, the red territories showing the ground held by Soviet forces. Stalin is shown as a man of action and as an active participant in the battle — Stalin the military strategist! In the background is a little

\textsuperscript{132} For an image, see Aleksei Morozov, \textit{Agit-Okna, Okna TASS, 1941–1945}, Moscow, Kontakt-Kultura, 2013, p. 435.
The victorious Generalissimus

By 1945, after the surrender of Germany, Stalin could unequivocally claim victory for his troops and, with justification, lionise the Soviet role in the victory of the Allied forces. On 24 June 1945, Stalin and Marshal Zhukov stood atop Lenin’s mausoleum and reviewed a parade of the Red Army. In a manner reminiscent of Kutuzov after the Patriotic (Napoleonic) War, captured German banners were thrown at Stalin’s feet by the passing soldiers. Victory in the Great Patriotic War was one of the greatest of Soviet achievements to be celebrated in posters and other forms of propaganda, and the image of Stalin as military genius and master tactician remained a prominent genre in his personality cult until his death in 1953. The writer Leonid Leonov wrote on 11 May 1945: ‘This man defended not only our life and dignity, but the very title of the person, which fascism wished to take from us. And because of that, the first spring flowers, the first dawn light, the first sigh of joy go to him, to our Stalin!’ As in most other aspects of Soviet life, Stalin had been minutely involved in the conduct of the war, taking the final decisions on many military, political and diplomatic matters. In June 1945, just weeks after the victory over Germany on 9 May, Stalin was awarded the Hero of the Soviet Union and, against his protestations, the military rank of generalissimus. Despite Stalin’s apparent modesty, Molotov claims that he changed

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133 Deutscher, Stalin, p. 534.
134 Leonov, quoted in Brooks, Thank you, Comrade Stalin!, p. 192.
135 Deutscher, Stalin, p. 456.
136 Montefiore notes that Stalin’s reply to the proposal by Koniev that he be made generalissimus was: ‘Comrade Stalin doesn’t need it … Comrade Stalin has the authority without it. Some title you’ve thought up! Chiang Kai-Shek’s a Generalissimo. Franco’s a Generalissimo — fine company I find myself in!’ (Stalin, pp. 504–05).
after victory in the war: ‘He became conceited, not a good feature in a statesman.’ Victory was celebrated exuberantly in posters, and Stalin was acclaimed for his role in this triumph.

In some posters this was done with some subtlety. Koretskii’s 1945 poster ‘Our banner is the banner of victory!’ celebrates the victory of the united Soviet people — the soldier, the munitions factory worker and the agricultural worker — although all appear to be ethnically Russian in this case. Although both military and civilian personnel contributed to this victory, it is the soldier’s head that is wreathed by a victory laurel, and it is he who wields the protective banner, wearing decorations of the Order of the Great Patriotic War and the Order of Glory. Stalin and Lenin appear as small profile portraits in bas-relief on the banner that has protected the Soviet people. They too are framed by the victory laurel.

Similarly, Vladimir Kaidalov’s ‘Glory to the great heroic Red Army, defending the independence of our country and winning victory over the enemy!’ (Fig. 4.32) pays tribute to the army, and features a line of heavily decorated personnel from the various military services, this time including women. The text of the poster is taken from Stalin’s radio broadcast on 9 May, the day of the victory of the Soviet troops. In contrast to the generally subdued palettes and the stark black, white and reds of the war years, this poster is a riot of colour, with the Kremlin drenched in holy red surrounded by a brilliant sky full of fireworks. Once again, Lenin and Stalin appear in profile portrait on the banner that hovers protectively over all. The length of the portrait bust of both men extends to the high chest area, allowing Kaidalov to depict Lenin wearing a collar and tie, while Stalin is resplendent in his marshal’s uniform with a chest full of war medals. Lenin’s head sits at a peculiar and unnatural angle on his body, and the only reason for portraying Lenin in this way is to highlight the fact that he is dressed as a white collar worker, in direct contrast to the warrior Stalin.

It is interesting to note that, where soldiers and citizens appear in these immediate postwar posters, they all appear to be ethnically Russian. A TASS poster of 1945 No. 1291/1292 by Andrei Plotnov and Aleksandr Danilichev makes the association of victory with the Russian people explicit — ‘Glory to the great Russian people!’ The poster features the ubiquitous red banner with silhouette profiles of Lenin and Stalin (both of whom are faceless in this poster) under which a soldier, a male worker, a female agricultural worker, and an old man stand, framing a plaque etched with the names of a number of great and famous Russians — Plekhanov, Lenin, Belinskii, Chernishevs, Pushkin, Tolstoi, Glinka, Chaikovskii, Gor’kii, Chekhov, Sechenov, Pavlov, Repin, Surikov, Suvorov, and Kutuzov. Victory in the war had now become a Russian affair, and Russia was singled out as a ‘big brother’ and ‘leader’ in the family of nations that made up the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The text at the base of the poster continues its glorification of the heroic people who, in this case, are merely accompanied by Lenin and Stalin: ‘Glory to the people, / Bulwark of the truth, / Glory to the people — a hero! / Your path is wide, / Your lot is high, / Lenin and Stalin are with you!’

Released in May 1945, TASS No. 1242, ‘Long live the great organiser and inspirer of historic victory against German imperialism — our beloved leader and teacher Stalin!’ dates from the time of Allied victory and, like several other posters of that year, places the credit for that victory, as organiser and inspiration, with Stalin alone. TASS No. 1242 is one of 40 posters designed by Petr Shukhmin for TASS between 1941 and 1945, the period of Soviet involvement in the Great Patriotic War. Stalin’s profile is emblazoned on a billowing banner with a gold aureole surrounding his head. The red flag, with its iconic emblem, flies over the nation once more. The red star, which crowns the Spassky tower, glows faintly gold, a beacon of hope in the dark sky, criss-crossed with coloured lights and fireworks. Stalin is still referred to in the text by the familiar epithets ‘leader’, ‘teacher’, ‘organiser’, ‘inspirer’, but now his profile displays the collar of his marshal’s uniform and, primarily by visual association at this stage, the Warrior archetype is moving to prominence alongside the other existing archetypes of the personality cult.

139 For an image, see www.artic.edu/aic/collections/exhibitions/TASS/artwork/206075.
140 Stalin was, of course, Georgian, and Lenin had mixed ancestry.
141 For an image, see www.artic.edu/aic/collections/exhibitions/TASS/artwork/192613.
This none-too-subtle promotion of the Warrior archetype is evident in posters of the time that apparently deal with other themes. The second election of candidates to the Supreme Soviet was held on 10 February 1946 and, as was the case in the historic first elections of 1937, even Stalin had to run for his own seat in the Moscow electoral district. In 1945 a poster campaign was launched that promoted Stalin’s candidacy. Stepan Razvozzhaev’s poster (Fig. 4.33), in the sacred colours of red and gold, contains many of the formulaic motifs of victory posters, although the text links the images firmly to Stalin’s candidacy in the upcoming elections: ‘Great Stalin — first deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR’. A similar tactic is used in a poster released by Izdatelstvo Krasnyi Krym142 (Fig. 4.34) around 1945,143 captioned ‘Long live the creator of the constitution of socialist society, the leader of the Soviet people, great Stalin!’ In the poster, possibly produced as part of the electoral campaign, Stalin is lauded as the leader of the people and is depicted in marshal’s uniform wearing a number of war medals.

In 1945, Stalin’s role as hero and saviour of the nation was made even more explicit. Koretskii revisited his highly successful poster of 1943 (Fig. 3.13), made some notable alterations, and re-released it with a new caption just three days after the German surrender: ‘The Soviet people are full of gratitude and love for dear STALIN — the great organiser of our victory’ (Fig. 4.35). While the basic composition remains the same as that of 1943 — a young boy hangs an icon of Stalin on the wall of the family home — the scene outside the window, previously a scene of soldiers departing after making the village safe, has been replaced with a lush and blossoming orchard. The icon of Stalin has also changed. The humble, unassuming Stalin in his habitual tunic, the Stalin uncertain of ultimate victory, has been replaced with a portrait by Boris Karpov of Stalin in his marshal’s regalia. Stalin looks stiff and proud, and does not look at the viewer. The use of the word ‘rodnomu’ in the text continues the association of Stalin as the father of the Soviet peoples, while the marshal’s uniform and the association of Stalin with victory facilitate the development of the Warrior archetype.

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142 Izdatelstvo Red Crimea.
143 The poster itself has no date or year; however, the portrait of Stalin used in the poster is by Karpov and dated 1945.
The association of Stalin with the Warrior archetype is made most concrete with a sketched contribution by Deni (Fig. 4.36). Deni portrays Stalin with his usual sparse style in military uniform, this time without a multitude of medals or ornate braiding on the collar. According to Robert Service, Stalin felt that the title of generalissimus was too ostentatious and he refused to wear any of the new uniforms designed for this new rank, remaining in the uniform of the marshal of the Soviet Union. Stalin also asked Winston Churchill to call him marshal instead of generalissimus and frequently stated that the Red Army did not have a rank of generalissimus.144 Stalin looks over his shoulder at the Kremlin, which flies a huge banner carrying the word ‘Victory!’145 It is the text that is most laudatory, occupying almost half of the poster area: ‘Long live generalissimus STALIN — great leader and general of the Soviet people!’

In 1946 Stalin’s modesty apparently prevailed and, although he is almost always depicted in marshal’s uniform, regardless of the purpose of the poster,146 the trimmings have been pared back. With one exception, the ornate gold braid on his collar either disappears or is replaced by a simple red strip, and the multitude of medals on his chest have disappeared. From this point on, the only medal Stalin wears is the Hero of Socialist Labour, a simple gold star containing the hammer and sickle emblem, dangling from a short red ribbon. The Hero of Socialist Labour was awarded for cultural and economic achievements, not military feats.

The sole exception I have discovered to this total paring back is a 1946 poster by Toidze (Fig. 4.37) which references the posters of the war years. Stalin appears in full ornamental braid amid a windswept sky, however he is wearing only two medals — the Hero of Socialist Labour and the Order of Lenin. He adopts the familiar static pose with outstretched right arm and extended index finger, but this time there is no gesture of benediction. Stalin clearly points the way forward, his head uplifted, his determined gaze directed at the future. Behind and beneath Stalin are the Soviet masses, a mix of military, urban workers, agricultural workers, men and women. In the deep

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145 *Pobeda!*
146 A large number of posters from this year which contain an image of Stalin are promoting his candidacy in the upcoming election or celebrating the 29th Anniversary of the October Revolution.
background an industrial complex puffs out smoke on the horizon. The people, who stretch as far back as the eye can see, are all travelling in the direction of Stalin’s extended finger. The caption names the destination: ‘Forward, to new victories of socialist construction!’ and is reminiscent of the poster messages of the prewar years. In its black, white and red colour scheme (with touches of gold) this poster clearly references the tradition of the posters of the war years and is visually similar to Toidze’s 1941 ‘All our forces …’ (Fig. 4.16) and his 1943 ‘Stalin will lead us to victory’.

After the war, the ‘battle’ was to continue on ‘new fronts’ and Stalin appeared in posters exhorting the public to keep making sacrifices in order to achieve full communism. The task of reconstruction after the Great Patriotic War was incredibly difficult. Official statistics list 70,000 villages, and 1,700 towns and cities in the Soviet Union as destroyed between 1941 and 1945.\(^{147}\) Despite the generally festive air and visual implications of abundance of post-victory posters, hunger and hunger-related diseases took the lives of two million Soviet people in the famine of 1946–48.\(^{148}\) Stalin’s appearance in military uniform served as a reminder that he had already led the people to victory in the Great Patriotic War, while poster texts referred to ‘new victories’, ‘victories of socialism’, and ‘new victories of socialist construction’ as a reminder that Stalin had guided the nation to many victories over the years. The implications are that, with the successful achievement of socialism and victory over external foes in the war, the achievement of communism is now possible, and that it is imminent under the leadership of Stalin. Propaganda to mobilise the population for this task was particularly important because, as Robert Tucker points out, after the war the Soviet population were suffering from profound passivity and apathy:

> The root of the matter was not the incapacity of people to endure another season of privation, but rather the meaninglessness of the sacrifices they were called upon to make, the pointlessness of Russia’s being in eternal conflict with the rest of the world, the total lack of prospect for tranquility in their time.\(^{149}\)

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148 Brooks, Thank you, Comrade Stalin!, p. 196.
Viktor Koretskii’s ‘1917–1946 Glory to the Red Army, defending the gains of the great October socialist revolution!’ (Fig. 4.38) of 1946 celebrates the history of the Red Army and juxtaposes the soldier of the Civil War (in *budenovka*, the pointed cap that was reminiscent of the dress of the *bogatyri*) with the soldier of the Great Patriotic War (in helmet). The arrangement of the soldiers in the foreground reflects the now habitual pairing above it, of Stalin and Lenin in bas-relief frieze. Just as Lenin led the cause in 1917 and the Civil War that followed, so Stalin led the population to victory in the Great Patriotic War and continues to lead the population to both the victory of communism and victory over the regime’s enemies. Stalin, Lenin and the Red Army share credit for the war victory and for the victories of socialism.

One of Toidze’s 1946 contributions (Fig. 4.39) credits the Party with victory in a poster laden with sacred overtones. The poster is dominated by the figure of the Rodina, wielding a huge banner with the cameo images of Lenin and Stalin in profile enclosed in a gold medallion, and a bunch of flowers — symbol of fertility, abundance and celebration. The Rodina is serene and maternal with an ample bosom and wide hips. She is also like the Virgin in the icon, her banner serving the same protective function as the Virgin’s veil. Behind the Rodina the background consists purely of rays of light and the colour scheme, rich reds and golds, is reminiscent of the icon. The text at the base of the poster reads ‘Long live the V.K.P(b) — the party of Lenin—Stalin, inspirer and organiser of our great victories!’ Despite Stalin’s apparent modesty in both his choice to retain the marshal’s uniform and in allowing the Party and the army to be credited with victory in the war, the production of personality cult posters celebrating his leadership flourished in 1946. For example, Ukraine publisher Mistetstvo published a poster by Onufriichuk with the caption ‘Long live the leader of the Soviet people — great Stalin!’ (Fig. 4.40) in which a gold-tinged Stalin in marshal’s uniform gazes out at the viewer, framed by oak and laurel leaves against a red background.

After several years of aborted attempts to get an appropriate biography of Stalin into the public domain, *Joseph Stalin: a short biography* was finally published in 1947. In terms of Stalin’s Warrior archetype,

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150 Personification of the motherland.
151 See Chapter Two.
the biography states that Tsaritsyn was saved due to ‘Stalin’s iron will and masterly foresight’;\textsuperscript{152} that Lenin conferred with Stalin on all major matters of military policy, strategy and tactics;\textsuperscript{153} that Stalin confounded the ‘military “science”, “art” and “training” of the enemy’;\textsuperscript{154} that the Bolshevik Party, headed by Lenin and Stalin, created the Red Army;\textsuperscript{155} and that Stalin alone was responsible for inspiring and organising the subsequent victories of the Red Army, having assumed leadership responsibilities once Lenin had become ill.\textsuperscript{156}

Despite the laudatory tone of the biography, the state archives reveal that the published version was substantially pared back by Stalin. His criticism of the version proposed for publication in 1946 was directed at biographers making exorbitant claims for the singularity of Stalin’s role: ‘It’s as if [Stalin] arrived and did everything on his own. There were many people and they ought to have been listed’.\textsuperscript{157} Stalin asked for a greater cast of characters to be added to the sections on the war, specifically those who ‘gathered around the Supreme Command’.\textsuperscript{158}

Stalin’s biography was able to stand as a legitimator of his rule, with Lenin’s cult and his role in Bolshevik victories sliding ever further into the background. Lenin still appeared in posters as the saintly creator of the new order, but it was Stalin who was now to be seen as the leader responsible for the victories of the Party and state across a wide variety of fields of achievement.

The iconic treatment of the military portrait of Stalin became an important genre in 1947, with a number of posters produced wishing long life or glory to Stalin as the leader of the Soviet people. Mukhin (Figs 4.41 and 4.42), and the Pravdin and Denisov team (Fig. 4.43) both produced posters that focused on a framed military portrait of Stalin with the caption ‘Long live the leader of the Soviet people, great Stalin!’, while Georgii Bakhmutov, who was awarded the Order of the Great Patriotic War Medal, produced a similar poster in the Ukrainian


\textsuperscript{153} Alexandrov et al., \textit{Joseph Stalin}, p. 68.

\textsuperscript{154} Alexandrov et al., \textit{Joseph Stalin}, p. 69.

\textsuperscript{155} Alexandrov et al., \textit{Joseph Stalin}, p. 70.

\textsuperscript{156} Alexandrov et al., \textit{Joseph Stalin}, pp. 70, 75.

\textsuperscript{157} RGASPI f. 629, op. 1, d. 54, 1.25, cited in David Brandenberger, ‘Stalin as symbol: a case study of the personality cult and its construction’, in Davies & Harris, \textit{Stalin}, p. 266.

\textsuperscript{158} RGASPI f. 629, op. 1, d. 54, 1.26, cited in Brandenberger, ‘Stalin as symbol’ in Davies & Harris, \textit{Stalin}, pp. 266–67.
language with the caption ‘Glory to the leader of the Soviet people — great Stalin!’ (Fig. 4.44). Stalin also makes a military appearance in posters encouraging the people to go forward to the victory of communism159 and to increase their knowledge and study patiently.160

In 1947, Nikolai Bulganin succeeded Stalin in the role of minister of the armed forces and Victory Day was made an ordinary working day, remaining so until 1965. Posters appeared on a variety of themes, although victory in the war continued to be celebrated. Aleksandr Druzhkov and I. Shagin’s ‘Stalin is our fighting banner!’ (Fig. 4.45) of 1948 cements the identification of Stalin with the protective banner over the motherland and the three flags of the army, navy and airforce. Mukhin’s ‘Glory to great Stalin!’ (Fig. 4.46) features an icon-like portrait of Stalin enclosed in an oval medallion surrounded by hagiographic scenes of Stalin’s life as a warrior and the three banners of the armed forces. The mid-section of the poster features painted scenes from life. On the left Stalin is instructing the soldiers in the trenches during the Civil War,161 and on the right, Stalin is pictured, pipe in mouth and hand-in-jacket, in his office with Aleksandr Mihailovich Vasilevskii162 during the Great Patriotic War. The lower portion of the poster depicts a military parade in Red Square in front of Lenin’s mausoleum. The socialist realist style of painting in these scenes gives them a historical-factual air, suggesting that these events really happened. As in the posters of the preceding years, Stalin is portrayed as having a military biography that extends back to the days of the Civil War, and which has always brought success.

A 1948 poster by N. Petrov (Fig. 4.47) shows Stalin in uniform seated at his desk, wholly absorbed in writing in a large book. Behind him, the Spassky tower juts into a hazy sky, the red star atop the steeple blazing like a beacon, even in daylight. On the top right is a simple framed portrait of Lenin, Stalin’s teacher and inspiration. The text of the poster quotes Molotov’s speech of 7 November 1945, which credits

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159 For example, Petr Grechkin, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin — forward to the new successes of the Soviet motherland, to the full victory of communism in our country!’’, 1947.
160 For example, Ruben Shkhiyan’, ‘“In order to build, we need to know, we need to master science and to know, to learn, to study hard, patiently”. I. Stalin’, 1947.
161 The caption reads ‘Civil War. I.V. Stalin at Tsaritsyn’.
162 Vasilevskii was the chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces and deputy minister of defence during the Great Patriotic War, and was made marshal of the Soviet Union in 1943.
Stalin with victory in the war. By putting the attribution of credit for victory to Stalin into the mouth of Molotov, Stalin can retain his personal modesty. It is interesting to note that, while the poster is in full colour, featuring soft pastel hues, Stalin is in black-and-white, except for his military insignia. His hair and flesh are in grayscale, as is Lenin’s portrait in the background. Druzhkov and Shagin’s poster, mentioned above, also shows Stalin in grayscale amid the bright colours of the banners that form the backdrop. Many, although certainly not all, posters depict Stalin as a photograph, a cameo, or a sketch, often amid an otherwise colourful and ‘realistic’ background. This tactic seems to support the idea that, although Stalin acts in the real world, he is not a real man, made of flesh and blood, but an image and symbol, whose presence in the poster stands for a number of other referenced qualities and values.

Three posters of 1948 lay credit for victory at the feet of the Party: B.I. Lebedev’s ‘Long live the V.K.P.(b) inspirer and organiser of the victory of the Soviet people!’ (Fig. 4.48), F. Litvinov’s ‘Long live the party of Lenin-Stalin, inspirer and organiser of our victories!’ (Fig. 4.49) and Druzhkov’s ‘Long live the VKP(b). The party of Lenin—Stalin, battle-seasoned vanguard of the Soviet people, inspirer and organiser of our victories!’ (Fig. 4.50). In these posters the victory theme has expanded to encompass military victory in the Great Patriotic War and the multitude of other victories of the Soviet people — victories in industry, agriculture, construction and aviation.

In 1950 the focus continued to move away from the war and military battles, and onto other ‘fronts’. These new fronts may be specifically named, as in Vladislav Pravdin’s ‘To the new achievements of soviet aviation!’ (Fig. 3.19) and Kaidalov’s Uzbek ‘We will struggle to reap a big cotton harvest! (Fig. 4.51), or come under the more general umbrella of the ‘Victory of communism’ — Iosif Ganf’s pared-back format and shortened slogan, ‘Forward to communism!’ is almost an abbreviated shorthand for this somewhat overworked theme. Boris Belopol’skii gives the slogan a slight twist and reinforces the increasingly dogmatic nature of Stalin’s words by showing Stalin speaking at a podium and featuring a quotation from Stalin’s Report to the Eighteenth Party Congress on 10 March 1939 — “We move further, forward towards Communism.” I.V. Stalin’ — in which Stalin examines the successes
of the socialist phases of Soviet society and maps out the route to be taken to full communism. Stalin’s Warrior archetype is hence extended to all of the other battlefronts on which he leads the Soviet people.

Stalin: man of peace

Once victory celebrations had quietened, the task of rebuilding and getting back on track to the ultimate goal of communism moved to the forefront of propaganda. Alongside this, from 1947, was an attempt to merge Stalin’s Warrior archetype into that of the Saviour by presenting him as the bringer of peace. A 1947 poster by Boris Berezovskii (Fig. 4.52) shows Stalin conspicuously out of military uniform as he proclaims the Soviet desire for peace — “We stand for peace and we defend the cause of peace.” I. Stalin’, a quotation taken from Stalin’s report to the Seventeenth Party Congress on the work of the Central Committee, 26 January 1934. Stalin appears softer, rounder and more genial than in most of the contemporaneous posters and, by wearing his pre-Victory plain tunic, plays down the Warrior archetype that is so prevalent in the other posters.

Toidze created two posters in 1947 which are laden with symbolism for the initiated. In one (Fig. 4.53), Stalin stands in three-quarter view before a large red banner bearing the portrait frieze of Lenin. His left hand rests on the familiar red marble of Lenin’s mausoleum, his right hand is raised in the air, as if taking an oath. This image immediately invokes Stalin’s oration at Lenin’s funeral in which he took a series of oaths, on behalf of the people, to carry on Lenin’s work. The caption “Long life and prosperity to our motherland!” I. Stalin’, is from the final words of a speech that would have been immediately recognisable to the Russian people — Stalin’s address to the nation on 2 September 1945 in which the unconditional surrender of Japan was announced, finally ending all Soviet war engagements. The text of the speech was printed in Pravda on the following day. The symbolism of the

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163 ‘Stalin’s kindness illuminates the future of our children!’ (Fig. 3.2) is discussed in Chapter Three and also later in this chapter.
165 In the rest of the speech Stalin outlines the long history of Japanese aggression towards Russia and the Soviet Union and proclaims the war over and the nation at peace at last.
poster suggests that Stalin has fulfilled his sacred vow to Lenin, by bringing peace to the nation, and also that the rest of the promised work to bring communism to the nation can continue.

By 1950, the only victory referenced in most posters of Stalin was the victory of communism and Stalin’s propagandists were taking increasing pains to promote his image as a man of peace. The election propaganda of 1950 focused on Stalin as the creator of the constitution and as a friend of all peoples, rather than as victorious warrior. Stalin had proposed a ‘peace-pact’ between the USSR and the United States in January 1949 and a World Congress of Peace Advocates met in Paris in April of that year. The World Peace Council was set up by the VKP(b) in 1950 to promote peace and disarmament on an international scale. The Soviet Union sponsored many of the world’s peace movements during the years of the Cold War and a concerted propaganda effort was made to portray the Soviet Union as the peace-loving victim of capitalist aggressive tactics.166

Viktor Ivanov’s 1950 poster captures Stalin the peacemaker in his pristine marshal’s uniform before a billowing red banner (Fig. 4.54). Stalin, looking out of the poster as if lost in contemplation, holds an edition of Pravda. The headline states ‘The Soviet people vote for peace!’ This makes a tidy symbolic reference to the 1950 election and suggests that a vote for Stalin is indeed a vote for peace. Just in case the message isn’t clear enough, it is emblazoned across the banner in large gold letters — ‘For peace!’ — and once again in the caption: ‘Stalin is our great standard-bearer of peace!’ The banner, which fills more than half of the poster, billows as if in a fresh wind — the winds of change — to reveal a pale blue sky and huge white sun radiating beams of light.

Koretskii’s 1950 ‘Great Stalin is the banner of friendship of the peoples of the USSR!’ (Fig. 4.55) promotes Stalin as a unifier and saviour of the people. A smiling Stalin in marshal’s uniform stands above the multinational crowd, looking down on them with paternal affection. In the background there are 16 flags, representing the 16 republics of

166 As Jan Behrends observes: ‘In the Stalinist peace narrative, it was the Soviet leader who prevented the outbreak of yet another world war, which was pursued by the “Anglo-American warmongers” and their “German henchman”’ ('Exporting the leader: the Stalin cult in Poland and East Germany' in Balázs Apor, Jan C. Behrends, Polly Jones & E.A. Rees, The leader cult in communist dictatorships: Stalin and the Eastern Bloc, Hampshire, Palgrave, 2004, p. 171).
The people pay floral tribute to Stalin, and the poster merges the archetypes of Warrior, Father, and Saviour. Petr Golub’s poster of 1950 (Fig. 4.56) takes an audacious step further. In his white marshal’s uniform, Stalin’s figure fills the picture plane. His right arm points the way to a future of victorious communism and a young man and woman gaze, as in a trance, in the direction he indicates. The young man wears a suit and tie and the young woman wears the blouse of a national costume. She holds a bunch of carnations that are not offered to Stalin, and probably signify postwar abundance. The caption, which must have been particularly galling to the Latvian people, states ‘Great Stalin is the best friend of the Latvian people!’

Two posters of 1952 by Belopol’skii address the peace theme, one which features Stalin in military uniform, the other without. “We stand for peace and we defend the cause of peace.” I. Stalin’ (Fig. 4.57) features a large red banner as a backdrop with Stalin, in marshal’s uniform, standing in front of, but isolated from, a thronging crowd. The diagonal crowd filling the space suggests the movement of a never-ending river of people, and is reminiscent of the posters of the mid-1930s, although now it is no longer just the Soviet people who are giving their thanks and support to the great man, but the people of the whole world. Stalin gazes into the utopian future. He holds a pencil and a piece of paper; however, the pencil is not held in the manner in which one holds it for writing, but flat between the thumb and index finger with the tip pointing out at the viewer. It looks as if the pencil is being used as a conductor’s baton, or even as a wand. This unusual gesture incorporates the suggestions that Stalin is the author of the document he is holding, which is probably some sort of declaration, that he is the orchestrator of this great mass movement, and also that he is the bearer of magic powers — a magician. This is one of the few instances I have found in posters containing Stalin’s image in which the archetype of the Magician is employed, although one could argue that Stalin is associated with magical properties, such as control over

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167 In September 1939 the number of republics in the Soviet Union increased from 11 to 16 — Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldavia, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia. The Baltic states (Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia) had been incorporated into the USSR under the Molotov–Ribbentrop pact in 1939, then occupied by the Germans in June 1941, before being ‘liberated’ by the Soviets in 1944.

168 The poster was published in Moscow and Leningrad in the Russian language and was most likely intended for a Russian audience.
the elements and spiritual powers, in the visual symbolism of some of the posters produced by Toidze, and is depicted with talismanic and spiritual–inspirational properties in a number of posters. Although many of the epithets of the cult ascribe superhuman or supernatural qualities to the Stalin persona, it is only on comparatively rare occasions that the visual symbolism makes this so explicit. Stalin’s figure in this poster is strangely elongated, making him appear taller and slimmer than is usually the case.

Belopol’skii’s second poster on this theme, one in which Stalin appears shorter and more squat in his plain tunic, is captioned “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’ (Fig. 4.58), with the words ‘Peace to all nations!’ inscribed in the background at the top of the poster. The caption comes from ‘A conversation with the correspondent of Pravda’ on 17 February 1951. In contrast to the other Belopol’skii poster, there is no background – no banner, no crowd, just light. Stalin leans on a textbox bearing his own words and is greyer in skin and hair, and softer and more rounded, than in the other poster. His left hand rests on a copy of Pravda, while his right hand points loosely in the direction of the future, on which his transcendent gaze is also focused. This is a quieter, softer Stalin, the teacher or wise man who neither commands nor exhorts.

Stalin’s military victory in the Great Patriotic War proved to be the ultimate tool in shoring up legitimacy for his leadership. As a result of this victory, the Soviet sphere of influence extended beyond the nation’s prewar borders to include much of the territory of Eastern Europe. Molotov recalls that Stalin was in fact planning on retiring after the war, saying at an informal dinner: ‘Let Vyacheslav take over now. He is younger.’ Stalin apparently changed his mind after Churchill’s ‘Iron Curtain’ speech of March 1946.

While legitimacy was at its zenith in the home territories, there was an urgent need to gain legitimacy in the newly occupied territories. Highlighting the image of the victorious warrior in countries that

169 I.V. Stalin, ‘A conversation with the Pravda correspondent’, Pravda, 17 Feb. 1951, www.marxists.org/russkij/stalin/t16/t16_29.htm (accessed 04 Aug. 2013). This speech was printed but was not actually delivered publicly as a speech.
had been defeated by the Soviet Union would have been insensitive and counterproductive. It was essential that Stalin, and the system of government and regime for which he was a symbol, be presented as liberators who saved the world from fascism. Presenting Stalin as a saviour imbued his persona with sacral and quasi-religious overtones, although these had been present in his cult from the late 1930s and were likely inevitable consequences of the nature of Bolshevism as a political religion, the cult of personality, the use of mythic archetypes to create a persona for Stalin, and the use of the Stalin symbol to represent both abstracts such as Bolshevik ideals and Marxist vision, and concrete entities like the Party, the state and the nation.

Stalin as icon

It has already been noted that while Stalin was not portrayed in posters as ‘performing miracles’ in the way of Christ, pictorial elements of some poster images conveyed a sense that he was able to harness superhuman or supernatural elements. This was particularly the case in some images on the battlefield, where clouds broke apart above Stalin’s head, formed a fist, or swirlled turbulently alongside the thundering troops led by Stalin, and where a gigantic Stalin in the sky appeared as if sanctifying Soviet troops, but was also a feature of more ‘mundane’ matters, such as the ‘transformation of nature’, the transformation into the new Soviet man and even the ‘engineering of souls’ by writers who were, in turn, taught and led by Stalin. Stalin was depicted as being atemporal and ubiquitous, as magically appearing where he was most needed, and as concerning himself (like Christ) with the personal matters of the ‘little people’. Natalia Skradol has analysed reminiscences of encounters with Stalin for mythopoetic and folklorish elements, and quotes a number of such reminiscences in which people attribute healing knowledge and abilities to Stalin, and the ability to make the impossible come true.

171 It is beyond the scope of this book to examine the nuances of either the Stalin cult or local leader cults in the Warsaw Pact countries. This subject is tackled extensively in Apor et al., The leader cult in communist dictatorships.

4. STALIN SAVES THE WORLD

This phenomenon is not unique to the Stalin cult and draws on a long Russian tradition of attributing special knowledge to the tsars. The tsar was regarded as divinely instituted and fused both secular and spiritual power in his sacred personage. For example, Mikhail Bakunin said of the tsar that he is ‘the ideal of the Russian people, he is a kind of Russian Christ’.\textsuperscript{173} On hearing of the death of Nicholas I the poet Fiodor Tiutchev remarked ‘it is as if one had been told that God is dead’,\textsuperscript{174} a sentiment that was echoed en masse at the time of the death of Stalin. Old Believers described the death of Tsar Aleksandr II as a second crucifixion, and similar statements to this were made when Lenin died.\textsuperscript{175} In fact, the writers Andrei Belii, Aleksandr Blok, Sergei Esenin and Nikolai Kliuev all linked the October Revolution to the second coming of Christ.\textsuperscript{176} Tsardom was not seen as an unequivocal blessing, but also as a burden. In the 16th century the tsar was perceived as being obligated to intercede with Christ for the souls of his subjects, while 19th-century, writer Ivan Aksakov referred to tsardom as a penance.\textsuperscript{177} Jan Plamper cites an incident that provides a somewhat surprising parallel, in which, after Stalin’s death, a woman cut his portrait from the paper and placed it in the Bible, explaining to her son\textsuperscript{178} that ‘Stalin took on his soul everybody else’s sins, that everyone is going to criticize him now and that someone has to pray for him’.\textsuperscript{179} There is also a long history, particularly amongst Western monarchs, of associating magical healing abilities with the king, and this political symbolism influenced the Russian tsars, and was carried over into the personas of charismatic leaders. Napoleon was shown as a healer and saviour in history paintings.\textsuperscript{180} Lenin was depicted as having magical abilities, particularly after his death, including the

\textsuperscript{173} Mikhail Bakunin, quoted in Michael Cherniavsky, \textit{Tsar and people: studies in Russian myths}, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1961, p. 179.

\textsuperscript{174} Fiodor Tiutchev, quoted in Cherniavsky, \textit{Tsar and people}, p. 178.

\textsuperscript{175} Cherniavsky, \textit{Tsar and people}, p. 188.


\textsuperscript{177} ‘The Russian Tsar with his innate, hereditary power is not ambitious or power-mad: power, for him, is a penance and a burden; to be tsar is a true sacrifice [podvig]’ (quoted in Cherniavsky, \textit{Tsar and people}, pp. 183–84). Nina Tumarkin argues that even after the secularisation of the monarchy under Peter the Great, the people [narod] still clung to their pre-Petrine beliefs in relation to the tsar (\textit{Lenin lives! The Lenin cult in Soviet Russia}, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 7).

\textsuperscript{178} The future dissident Aleksandr Zinoviev.

\textsuperscript{179} Quoted in Plamper, \textit{The Stalin cult}, p. 226.

ability to come back to life and walk the earth. In the years after Stalin, in Communist China it was taught that the correct application of Maoist thought could lead to miracles in ‘every human activity and condition, such as curing cancer, healing deaf-mutes, and improving labor productivity and human understanding’. In Cuba, Fidel Castro was viewed as a saviour sent from heaven, with one Presbyterian minister proclaiming: ‘It is my conviction which I state now with full responsibility for what I am saying, that Fidel Castro is an instrument in the hands of God for the establishment of His reign among men.’

In addition to such historical precedents for endowing the leader with superhuman or supernatural abilities, the Soviet people had a culturally specific tradition on which to draw for representations of unearthly power — the Russian Orthodox icon. Ancient Rus’ converted to Orthodox Christianity in the 10th century and inherited an icon tradition from Byzantium, which gradually developed local features and a tradition of its own. By the end of the 17th century, under the westernising influence of the Romanovs, the icon tradition began to lose its distinctly Russian character and to show the influences of Western art. In the late 19th century there was a revival of interest in the specifically Russian tradition of icon painting, and many icons, blackened by age, varnish and soot in the Church, were restored to their original state. Many of the avant-garde artists of the turn of the century were interested in returning to indigenous artistic forms and the tradition of icon painting had always been central to Russian art. After the October Revolution, Kazimir Malevich, who held the essence of the icon to be central to his work at all stages of his

181 See Tumarkin, Lenin lives!, pp. 198–99.
185 Artists like Kazimir Malevich, Aleksandr Rodchenko, Natalia Goncharova, Mikhail Larionov, Wassili Kandinskii, Vladimir Tatlin, Kliment Redko and the Hungarian Bela Uitz, among others, all showed the influence of the icon in their works. As Andrew Spira has noted: ‘Throughout the period leading up to the Russian Revolution, icons provided a meaningful and legitimising precedent for almost every aspect of the new avant-garde art; its stylised visual languages, its sense of national identity, its universal social application, its physical materiality, its functionality and the irrelevance of self-expression’ (The avant-garde icon, p. 120).
artistic career, employed his artwork in the service of the Revolution and the new regime. Poster artists like Moor and Deni also noted the influence of icons on their graphic work. These influences were passed on through the teaching careers of these men: for example, Malevich taught Gustav Klutsis, who subsequently taught colour theory at VKhUTEIMAS (Higher Art and Technical Studios); and Moor taught the Kukryniksy, Dolgorukov and Aleksandr Deineka, all leading artists of their times.

Despite Bolshevik hostility to religion, which included the outlawing of religious practice, the burning of icons, the tearing down of churches, and the exile and murder of priests, many of the formal elements of the icon were used by artists of the regime in their propaganda work. As Andrew Spira notes: ‘icons continued to be invoked — partly ridiculed, partly exploited — in the early Soviet period. Initially it was the narrative and didactic conventions of icon painting, subliminally associated with the transmission of truth by the Russian people, which were harnessed to the new ideology.’

Léonide Ouspensky notes that the art of the icon was ‘intended not to reflect the problems of life but to answer them, and thus, from its very inception, is a vehicle of the Gospel teaching’. In a similar manner, the Stalinist propaganda poster did not reflect the problems that beset the troubled regime, but portrayed them as already solved and, through the use of slogans and pictorial demonstration, portrayed the correct attitudes and demeanours by which obstacles were overcome and positive outcomes attained.

By Stalin’s time, some of the forms and conventions of icon painting were employed not only for didactic purposes, but also in portrayals of the leader — without overt satirical intent. The nuances of these quasi-sacred portrayals of Stalin were not lost on people who had been raised in the tradition of engaging with icons. Images that may look similar to the uninitiated often contained subtle references to or, indeed, divergences from the canon, which would be immediately apprehended and understood by a viewer habituated by a lifetime of viewing such images. In fact, as Spira suggests, the acute interest of Stalin’s regime in classical conditioning, as demonstrated by Ivan

186 Spira, The avant-garde icon, p. 10.
187 Ouspensky & Lossky, The meaning of icons, p. 27.
Pavlov’s work with dogs, meant that ‘the associative power of certain physiological aspects of icon-veneration was known to be familiar and effective and it was put to new use’. The icon was a visual form that was not restricted to serving an elite, and was as available to the peasant as to the boyar. Before the Revolution, almost all Russian homes had an icon corner. 

The Bolsheviks established Red corners as early as 1921, which, after Lenin’s death, became Lenin corners and then, in some cases, Stalin rooms. There is much evidence that Stalin’s portrait was often treated like an icon. Iliia Ehrenburg noted in his memoirs that the soldiers on the front ‘fervently’ believed in Stalin, cutting his photograph out of newspapers or Ogonyok and pasting it to the walls of the ruins of Berlin. Plamper notes that, just as icons in the home were often covered during spousal arguments to ‘block the saint’s gaze’, a group of war veterans turned a portrait of Stalin to face the wall when they wished to discuss their true feelings about the war. Sarah Davies’ research into popular opinion in Stalin’s Russia found considerable evidence that people treated the portraits of Stalin and the other leaders as icons, cutting them out, pasting them up on walls, and praying to them. Davies notes that this was viewed by Party agitators as a negative practice and a distortion of official policy.

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188 Rosa Ferré notes that Lenin was influenced by Ivan Sechenov’s work on conditioned reflexes and both he and Stalin gave protection to Sechenov’s disciple, Pavlov, despite Pavlov’s anti-Soviet stance ('Time is accelerating', in Rosa Ferré, Red cavalry: creation and power in Soviet Russia from 1917 to 1945: 07.10.2011 – 15.01.2012, Madrid, La Casa Encendida, 2011, pp. 46–94, p. 68).

189 Spira, The avant-garde icon, p. 192.

190 Little Flame, a weekly illustrated magazine.

191 Ehrenburg, Men, years — life, vol. 5.

192 Plamper, The Stalin cult, pp. xvi, xiv. Czeslaw Milosz quotes the example of one man who consulted a portrait of Stalin to request guidance: ‘I approached Stalin’s portrait, took it off the wall, placed it on the table and, resting my head on my hands, I gazed and meditated. What should I do? The Leader’s face, as always so serene, his eyes so clear-sighted, they penetrate into the distance. It seems that his penetrating look pierces my little room and goes out to embrace the entire globe. I do not know how I would appear to anyone looking at me at this moment. But with my every fiber, every nerve, every drop of my blood I felt that, at this moment, nothing exists in this entire world but this dear and beloved face. What should I do?’ (The captive mind, Jane Zielonk (trans.), New York, Knopf, 1953, p. 149). Jiehong Jiang reports an interesting ritualised parallel to this in the cult of Mao Zedong. In public interiors Mao portraits were placed high at the centre of a main wall. In the mornings workers came and asked the portrait for political instructions and at night they reported back to the portrait on their progress (Red: China’s cultural revolution, London, Jonathan Cape, 2010, p. 60).

193 Davies, Popular opinion in Stalin’s Russia, pp. 163–64.
Aside from the fact that both the icon and the propaganda poster were egalitarian artforms accessible to the masses, icon painting also had in common with posters of Stalin that they were part of what Ouspensky refers to, in relation to church architecture, painting, music, and poetry, as a ‘liturgic whole’: ‘From forms of art with separate aims, they all become transformed into varied means for expressing, each in its own domain, one and the same thing — the essence of the Church. In other words, they become various instruments of the knowledge of God.’ This is close to the Bolshevik conception of the uses and functions of art in which all forms of art are harnessed towards the one overriding goal of mobilising the population for the achievement of communism. In addition, in both icons and posters of Stalin there existed a strict canon that did not tolerate subjectivity or divergence. Iconography was regulated by podlinniki, while official guidelines, publications like Iskusstvo, and the existence of a set of approved images of Stalin, regulated and formalised the way in which Stalin could be portrayed. Both icons and posters of Stalin functioned as didactic artforms, rather than being prized for aesthetic value alone, and both featured idealised subjects rather than aiming at mimetic verisimilitude.

In the Orthodox tradition, Christ’s authentic image was the mandylion, or image ‘not made by human hands’, and all subsequent images were based on this miraculous image of Christ on the cloth. Stalin’s image was carefully constructed by human hands, and a small canon of officially approved images became the source material upon which all subsequent images were based. While it is true that portrait painters and graphic artists did have access to photographic images of Stalin from which to create his image, these were centrally controlled and usually heavily retouched. Plamper notes that, until 1937, when the first Stalin movie was released, press photos, most of which appeared first in Pravda, were the ‘master medium’ for the canonisation of Stalin’s image. Stalin is not known to have sat for any portraits during the 1930s and there were few occasions on which portrait artists

195 Manuals of iconography.
196 By early 1930 the circulation of Pravda was already one million (Matthew Lenoe, Closer to the masses: Stalinist culture, social revolution, and Soviet newspapers, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2004, p. 17).
197 Plamper, The Stalin cult, p. 31.
198 Plamper, The Stalin cult, pp. 141–42.
could get close enough to Stalin to make good sketches.\textsuperscript{199} The painter Evgeni Katsman complained about this to Voroshilov as Stalin’s 60th birthday approached:

\begin{quote}
Let us begin with the main thing. There is no Stalin portrait from life. We need one! This has to be done all the more since Joseph Vissarionovich in life is so expressive and beautiful. We must depict J.V. the way he is. We owe this to history. We owe this to the peoples. We owe this to Soviet art and science … If we accomplish this I will also paint J.V. from life — that will be the high point of my life and the good fortune of an artist.\textsuperscript{200}
\end{quote}

The process of photographic retouching removed pockmarks, wrinkles and uneven colourations from Stalin’s skin, transfiguring his flesh into an unearthly perfection. In posters where Stalin is either portrayed as the source of light, or is lit from above, a further transformation occurs. Stalin’s image comprised a set of key features that symbolised the idea of the man, making him almost unrecognisable in the flesh, as Ehrenburg noted.\textsuperscript{201} This transformation was so pronounced that a member of the Soviet embalming team stated in a television interview that his primary task, while Stalin lay next to Lenin in the mausoleum between 1953 and 1961, was to achieve the greatest possible likeness between Stalin’s corpse and the photographs and portraits of him so that people would not be shocked.\textsuperscript{202}

With the Soviet propaganda poster becoming, in Sidorov’s words, a ‘contemporary icon’,\textsuperscript{203} there are three major ways in which the Stalin posters visually referenced the Orthodox icon: images in which Stalin’s portrait is hung or carried like an icon;\textsuperscript{204} images in which Stalin

\begin{enumerate}
\item \textsuperscript{199} Artists appear to have sometimes employed doubles, equipped with Stalin props, to sit as Stalin (Plamper, \textit{The Stalin cult}, p. 103). As already mentioned, Klutsis complained that he needed a telephoto lens to be able to take photographs of the leaders (see Margarita Tupitsyn, Gustav Klutsis and Valentina Kulagina: photography and montage after constructivism, New York, International Center of Photography, 2004, p. 66).
\item \textsuperscript{200} Quoted in RGALI, f. 2368, op. 2, d.48, l-1ob, cited in Plamper, \textit{The Stalin cult}, p. 144.
\item \textsuperscript{201} Ehrenburg, \textit{Men, years — life}, vol.5, p. 302.
\item \textsuperscript{202} Plamper, \textit{The Stalin cult}, pp. 201–02.
\item \textsuperscript{204} Viktor Deni & Nikolai Dolgorukov, ‘Long live the Leninist VKP(b), organiser of victorious socialist construction’, 1934 (Fig. 4.60); Efim Pernikov, ‘The Soviet constitution is the only truly democratic constitution in the world’, 1937; Galina Shubina, ‘Long live the first of May!', 1937; Viktor Koretskii, ‘On the joyous day of liberation …’, 1943 (Fig. 3.13); Viktor Koretskii, ‘The Soviet people are full of gratitude and love for dear Stalin …’, 1943; Viktor Govorov, ‘Glory to the first candidate for deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, great Stalin!’, 1946; V. Paradovskii, ‘Glory
adopts a pose reminiscent of Christ; and images that employ devices associated with icon painting. A large number of posters of Stalin depict the vozhd’ as a bust portrait enclosed in a sketched frame. This is often the case in election posters where Stalin is being promoted as a candidate and is in keeping with long-standing traditions around the globe for portraying electoral candidates. In some posters, whether or not they are election-themed, the frame within the poster is more elaborate, sometimes in gold colours, at other times made of flowers and plants or folkish motifs, and may even incorporate a sprig of cotton, or a branch of laurel or oak leaves. Some posters depict scenes in which these framed portraits are being carried in a procession or

to great Stalin!, 1947 (Fig. 4.61); Nikolai Zhukov, ‘We’ll surround orphans with maternal kindness and love’, 1947 (Fig. 3.15); Elena Mel’nikova, ‘Best friend of children …’, 1951; Unidentified artist, undated, 1952; Konstantin Ivanov, ‘Happy New Year, beloved Stalin!’, 1952 (Fig. 4.39).

205 Nikolai Dolgorukov, ‘Swell the ranks of the Stakhanovites’, 1936; Genrikh Futerfas, ‘Stalinists! Extend the front of the Stakhanovite movement!’, 1936 (Fig. 3.27); Viktor Koretskii, ‘“Our government and the party does not have other interests and other concerns than those which the people have.” Stalin’, 1938 (Fig. 4.64); A.I. Madorskii, ‘Be as the great Lenin was’, 1938 (Fig. 2.11); Marina Volkova & Natalia Pinina, ‘Long live the equal-rights woman in the USSR …’, 1938 (Fig. 3.32); Nikolai Denisov & Nina Vatolina, ‘Greetings great Stalin, creator of the constitution of victorious socialism’, 1940; Iraklii Toidze, (in Armenian) ‘… the party is unbeatable if it knows where to go and is not afraid of the difficulties.’ (I Stalin), 1940; Vladimir Serov, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, forward to victory!’, 1942 (Fig. 4.23); Veniamin Pinchuk, ‘“The spirit of the great Lenin and his invincible banner inspire us now in the patriotic war.”’ (I Stalin), 1943 (Fig. 4.29); Vlasob’, ‘During the war, the Red Army personnel became a professional army …’, 1943 (Fig. 4.27); Vasilii Nikolaev, ‘Forward for the defeat of the German occupiers …’, 1944; Vladimir Serov, ‘Stalin will lead us to victory’, 1944; Nikolai Asvакumov, ‘Long live our teacher, or father, our leader, comrade Stalin!’, 1946 (Fig. 3.28); Boris Berezovskii, ‘“We stand for peace and defend the cause of peace.”’ I. Stalin’, 1947; I. Shagin, ‘The reality of our program — it’s real people …’, 1947 (Fig. 4.65); Iraklii Toidze, ‘“Long life and prosperity to our Motherland!”’ I. Stalin’, 1947 (Fig. 4.53); Boris Berezovskii, Mikhail Solov’ev & I. Shagin, ‘Under the leadership of the great Stalin — forward to communism!’, 1951 (Fig. 4.66).

206 Unidentified artist, (in Armenian) ‘June 12. With enormous gratitude and best regards, we send greetings to great Stalin’, 1938; Mikhail Zhukov, ‘Leader of the peoples of the USSR and workers of the whole world …’, 1938; Viktor Koretskii, ‘Workers of collective and cooperative farms and machine and tractor stations …’, 1939; Vladimir Kaidalov, ‘Departing from us, Comrade Lenin urged us to strengthen and extend the union of republics …’, 1940 (Fig. 2.13); Vasilii Bayuskii & A. Shipier, ‘The Great Patriotic War’, 1942; Viktor Ivanov & Ol’ga Burova, ‘Comrades of the Red Army …’, 1942 (Fig. 4.24); Iraklii Toidze, ‘Long live the VKP(b) …’, 1946; Iraklii Toidze, ‘Stalin’s kindness illuminates the future of our children!’, 1947 (Fig. 3.2); Aleksandr Druzhkov & I. Shagin, ‘Stalin is our fighting banner’, 1948 (Fig. 4.45); Naum Karpovskii, ‘Labour with martial persistence …’, 1948; Mikhail Reikh, ‘For communism!’, 1948; Vladimir Pravdin, ‘Long live the Bolshevik party …’, 1950; Mikhail Solov’ev, ‘“Such women didn’t and couldn’t exist in the old days.”’ I.V. Stalin’, 1950 (Fig. 3.33); N. Talipov, ‘Long live Comrade Stalin …’, 1950; B.V. Vorontsov, ‘Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin’, 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); Konstantin Ivanov, ‘I wish you good health and success in teaching and social work …’, 1952.
hung on a wall. This treatment of the leader’s portrait parallels the carrying of icons in religious processions, or the hanging of icons in the icon corner in the Russian home. Several posters in which Stalin’s portrait is hung as an icon on the wall have already been discussed. Viktor Koretskii’s ‘On the joyous day of liberation …’ of 1943 (Fig. 3.13) and ‘The Soviet people are full of gratitude and love for dear STALIN — the great organiser of our victory’ of 1945 (Fig. 4.35), Nikolai Zhukov’s ‘We’ll surround orphans with maternal kindness and love’ of 1947 (Fig. 3.15), and Konstantin Ivanov’s ‘Happy New Year, beloved Stalin!’ of 1952 (Fig. 4.59) all highlight the talismanic and protective properties of the leader portrait while hung on the wall like an icon.

‘Long live the Leninist VKP(b), organiser of victorious socialist construction’ of 1934 by Deni and Dolgorukov (Fig. 4.60) is an early example of the Stalin portrait being carried in a parade. Five hands hold a sketched portrait of Stalin under the protective banner of the Leninist Party amid a sea of Klutsis-style open-palmed hands, all raised in the air and pointing upward in the direction of the victory of socialist construction. No other part of the body can be seen in the crowd, the hand itself symbolises the socialist worker. Efim Pernikov’s ‘The Soviet constitution is the only truly democratic constitution in the world’ of 1937 is in tryptich format and shows a crowd of people demonstrating in support of the 1936 constitution. Two posters are carried on poles by the marching crowd: one very large poster featuring the entire upper body of Stalin with right arm raised; and a much smaller poster of the head of Lenin. Stalin’s image is given precedence as the 1936 constitution supersedes the 1924 constitution drafted under Lenin’s leadership. The other two panels of the poster feature Article 125 of the constitution, which guarantees freedom of speech, freedom of the press and freedom of association, and a dynamic montage image showing Trud and Pravda hot off the presses, with two men reading copies of Pravda and Bolshevik. Article 125 states:

In conformity with the interests of the working people, and in order to strengthen the socialist system, the citizens of the USSR are guaranteed by law, a. freedom of speech; b. freedom of the press; c. freedom of assembly, including the holding of mass meetings; d. freedom of street processions and demonstrations. These civil rights are ensured by placing at the disposal of the working people and their organisations printing presses, stocks of paper, public buildings, the streets, communications facilities and other material requisites for the exercise of these rights.
By the time of V.C. Paradovskii’s ‘Glory to great Stalin!’ of 1947 (Fig. 4.61), the Stalin portrait on a pole has become more exalted and thus more overtly icon-like. A procession of Kyrgyz citizens holds aloft a huge portrait of Stalin in marshal’s uniform with a chest full of medals, surrounded by an elaborate border of flowers, with a red banner billowing behind. No other portrait appears in the parade and the caption makes clear that, 30 years after the October Revolution, it is Stalin alone who is glorified and celebrated. In contrast to the Russian Orthodox icon, Stalin does not look directly at the viewer, but out to the left at something that we cannot see. Stalin’s portrait receives similar treatment in an uncaptioned poster by an unidentified artist of 1952. This time, a huge portrait of Stalin in uniform is enclosed in a living border of lush flowers and fruits. It emerges from a sea of red banners billowing in such a way that they all converge on the Stalin portrait. Beneath the portrait and almost merging with the floral border are a crowd of children of various nationalities, wearing either national costume or Pioneer uniforms. They are smiling and many look directly at the viewer as if they had posed for a jolly family snapshot. While the children are colourful, the Stalin portrait is black-and-white and Stalin does not look at the children, nor do they look at him. His image has mere symbolic presence.

Posters of Stalin tend to show him in a relatively small number of characteristic poses. With only a few exceptions he is usually static. He makes speeches, receives homage, looks to the future or, when motion is implied, is usually caught at rest the moment after arrival. Sometimes Stalin holds a newspaper or book or document.

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207 A.A. Babitskii, ‘Under the leadership of Comrade Stalin, forward to complete victory over our enemy!’’, 1944 shows Stalin rushing forward into battle carrying a map, while in Toidze’s ‘‘All our forces — to support our heroic Red Army and our glorious Red Navy! All the power of the people — to defeat the enemy!’’ Stalin (Fig. 4.16), of 1941 shows a rigid Stalin but suggests motion through swirling coat-flaps.

208 Iu. Tsishevskii, ‘Expand the ranks of the Stakhanovites of the socialist fields’, 1935; Viktor Ivanov, ‘Reach for prosperity!’, 1949 (Fig. 3.30); Boris Karpov & Viktor Viktorev, ‘VKP(b)’, 1949; Viktor Ivanov, ‘Stalin is our great standard-bearer of peace!’, 1950 (Fig. 4.54).

209 Viktor Ivanov, ‘Great Stalin is the beacon of communism!’, 1949 (Fig. 3.7).

210 Vasili Elkin, ‘Be as the great Lenin was’, 1938 (Fig. 2.10); E.M. Mirzoev, (in Azerbaijani), 1938; Unidentified artist, ‘The electors, the people, must demand that their deputies should remain equal to their tasks’…’, 1939; Unidentified artist, ‘The foreign policy of the Soviet Union is clear and explicit …’, 1940 (Fig. 4.12); Viktor Govorkov, ‘Stalin takes care of each of us from the Kremlin’, 1940 (Fig. 3.8); Viktor Klimashin, ‘The All-Union Agricultural Exhibition 1940’, 1940; Konstantin Cheprakov, ‘We swore an oath to our leader to fight the enemy’, 1940; Babitskii, ‘Under the leadership of Comrade Stalin, forward to complete victory over our enemy!’, 1944; and, Boris Belopol’skii, ‘Glory to Stalin, the great architect of communism!’, 1951 (Fig. 3.10).
— often the document is rolled up in the form of a scroll. Christ Pantokrator, Christ the Teacher, is often shown in icons with his right arm raised in blessing and left hand holding a book or a scroll. There are a few Soviet variants of the ‘raised right arm’ gesture, although in none of these is Stalin’s hand in the identical pose to Christ in the icon. Understandably, the similarities are suggestive rather than a direct appropriation. In some posters in which Stalin raises his right arm, he is saluting or acknowledging — this is particularly the case in posters in which he is watching a parade or an airshow. The meaning of the gesture is less clear in posters like Klutsis’s ‘“Cadres decide everything.” I. Stalin’ of 1935 (Fig. 4.62). Stalin’s right arm is raised to shoulder height, bent up at the elbow, with the palm facing out toward the viewer. This could be a form of greeting, or a means of acknowledging the homage paid by the crowd, although Stalin does not engage with the crowd. In Klutsis’s 1936 ‘Long live the Stalinist Order of Heroes and Stakhanovites!’ (Fig. 4.63) and Madorskii’s ‘Be as the great Lenin was’ of 1939 (Fig. 2.12) Stalin speaks to a large crowd of Stakhanovites from a podium at the Bolshoi Theatre. This time his palm is turned sideways, as if to emphasise what he is saying; however, the coupling of the podium with the gesture emphasises the Teacher archetype and as such may call to mind the figure of Christ as teacher. Elkin’s 1938 ‘Be as the great Lenin was’ (Fig. 2.10) pairs a similar gesture, this time with upturned palm, with a sheaf of documents in Stalin’s left hand to similar effect. A 1940 poster by Toidze comes closer to the icon. In ‘“the party is unbeatable if it knows where to go and is not afraid of the difficulties.” I.V. Stalin’, Stalin is illuminated by a shaft of white light from above and is shown looking directly at the viewer in front of a billowing red Party banner. His right arm reaches forward at chest height, his fingers loosely curled in the direction of the viewer, while his left arm rests on a podium.

There are several posters that reproduce Stalin’s pose in a press photograph taken at the 1935 conference of Stakhanovites. In the earliest of these posters from 1936, Stalin raises his right hand high in the air, his palm open and facing outwards towards the viewer.

This is a gesture of greeting and of acknowledgement of the crowd. In 'Stalinists! Extend the front of the Stakhanovite movement!' of 1936 (Fig. 3.27), Stalin's outstretched arm is the focal point of the image. Immediately beneath him are Nikita Krushchev and Lazar Kaganovich and beneath them are a wave of Stakhanovite workers fanned out across the poster to form a 'front' in the battle for socialist construction. The figures in the poster are arranged in a hierarchical form reminiscent of Byzantine and Russian Orthodox icons. At the top Stalin, like Christ Pantokrator, oversees all beneath him. Below, Krushchev and Kaganovich take the place of angelic messengers. Below them are the legion of saintly worker–heroes marching forward to bring to fruition the Promised Land. Dolgorukov’s ‘Swell the ranks of the Stakhanovites’, also of 1936, shows Stalin at the Stakhanovite conference, flanked on either side by his Politburo colleagues, arranged around him in a manner reminiscent of the intercessory row on the Deesis — figures are arranged in importance from the centre outwards. Beneath the vozhdi are scenes of Soviet success, including the new Metro (opened in 1935) and thriving industrial complexes. Soviet sacred sites — the Kremlin and Lenin’s mausoleum — are also sketched in. A crowd floods in for as far as the eye can see, a holy army on the socialist battlefront led by the famous Stakhanovite workers.

By 1938 the upraised arm gesture was slightly modified so that, instead of the open palm gesture, Stalin's right hand points straight up at the heavens, invoking a higher order of law. Koretskii’s ‘“Our government and the Party does not have other interests and other concerns than those which the people have.” Stalin’ (Fig. 4.64), Madorskii’s ‘Be as the great Lenin was’ (Fig. 2.11), and Marina Volkova and Natalia Pinus’ ‘Long live the equal-rights woman in the USSR …’ (Fig. 3.32) all feature Stalin in this pose in posters which emphasise the democratic rights of the people as guaranteed under the constitution of 1936. In ‘Long live the equal-rights woman in the USSR …’ it is the figure of Stalin, engulfed in a sea of holy red, that dominates the poster, filling two-thirds of the space. The palette, the use of tone and the flat, stylised image of Stalin, all echo the Russian Orthodox icon. Stalin is the source of light. Dressed in white, with gold tones, he casts a golden hue over the entire poster, including the faces of the young women. The familiar shape of the Spassky tower is silhouetted in Stalin's golden light, rising into empty space to his right, the spire
topped with a red star echoes his upraised arm and gesturing golden hand. Ouspensky’s explanation of the light in religious icons can be applied equally well here:

all that is depicted in the icon reflects not the disorder of our sinful world, but Divine order, peace, a realm governed not by earthly logic, not by human morality, but by Divine Grace. It is the new order in the new creation … All is bathed in light, and in their technical language iconographers call ‘light’ the background of the icon.212

This poster is manifestly about the new order and the new creation. The new order is symbolised by the sea of red flags on either side of the women, and also by the Kremlin. It is particularly manifest in the army of modern, professional young women, their ranks receding into the background. Though slim and attractive, there is nothing coy or frivolous about these women. They are allowed, at best, an ambiguous half-smile, and the focus is on their eyes, which do not engage the viewer, but look out of the picture and around the viewer, to the imminent future. The woman in blue is a parachutist, literally accessing the heavens under the new order. Stalin points upward and out of the picture frame, to the heaven-on-earth of the communist utopia.

By the time of the war, Stalin’s right arm had moved once again, this time outstretched at shoulder level in front of him, sometimes with open palm, at other times pointing ahead. Serov’s ‘Under the banner of Lenin, forward to victory!’ of 1942 (Fig. 4.23), Pinchuk’s “The spirit of the great Lenin and his invincible banner inspire us now in the patriotic war.” (I. Stalin)’ of 1943 (Fig. 4.29), and Serov and Boris Leo’s Okno TASS No. 6 of 1943, all feature Stalin with his right arm outstretched and palm down in a gesture that resembles blessing and may be interpreted as Stalin protecting and sanctifying the actions of the troops beneath him.

In 1944 Stalin both sanctifies213 and points in a posture that mimics a characteristic gesture of Lenin.214 In the posters of the war years, Lenin is almost always shown pointing with his right arm outstretched, a

212 Ouspensky & Lossky, The meaning of icons, p. 40.
213 Vasili Nikolaev, ‘Forward for the defeat of the German occupiers …’, 1944; and, Vladimir Serov, ‘Stalin will lead us to victory’, 1944.
214 M. Karpenko, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin — forward to the complete defeat of the German invaders!’, 1944; and, Andrei Mikhalev, “For the complete expulsion of the German fiends from our land! Long live our Red Army! Long live our Navy!” Stalin’, 1944.
gesture already associated with Lenin for many years. The gesture is stern and commanding, suggestive of an unyielding will and absolute authority. The adoption of a characteristic Lenin pose by Stalin may have helped strengthen the visual association between the two leaders in a time of crisis in Stalin’s leadership.

After the war, with Stalin being presented as a man of peace, his right arm went back above his head, usually with his finger pointing to the heavens. In Berezovskii’s “‘We stand for peace and defend the cause of peace.’ I. Stalin” of 1947 (Fig. 4.52), Shagin’s ‘The reality of our program — it’s real people …’, 1947 (Fig. 4.65) and Berezovskii, Solov’ev and Shagin’s ‘Under the leadership of the great Stalin — forward to communism!’, 1951 (Fig. 4.66), Stalin points the way to the communist utopia above. Each of these posters uses an identical photograph of Stalin, in his old-style unadorned military tunic. With his left hand resting on a podium or, as in the Shagin poster, on a piece of paper, Stalin is associated with the Teacher archetype and with Christ as teacher.

Perhaps the most fruitful area of comparison between icons and Stalin posters lies in how the posters make use of devices and forms characteristic of the icon. It has already been noted that Stalin’s pose, the arrangement of figures, and the use of light as a background in the poster might trigger an association with the icon in an acclimatised public. One of the most common features of Stalin posters is the oval or circular medallion which encloses either the image of Lenin,

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215 Maria Gough offers a religious interpretation of Lenin’s gesture. In her analysis of John Heartfield’s untitled photomontage for the title page of USSR in construction, no. 9, September 1931, Gough likens this gesture to the depiction of God on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel by Michelangelo: ‘In both scenes of creation that which the omnipotent authority (God; Lenin) is creating (Adam; Usachevka) is pictured as having already been created. Like God, however, Lenin has still more to create … . Lenin’s hand points beyond what has already been accomplished toward that which must be accomplished in the future, namely, the Central Committee’s new plans for the city’s development and expansion’ (‘Back in the USSR: John Heartfield, Gustav Klucis, and the medium of Soviet propaganda’, New German Critique, 107, 36:2, 2009, pp. 133–84, pp. 155–56).

216 Unidentified artist, ‘Six historical conditions of Comrade Stalin’, undated; Unidentified artist, (in Ukrainian) ‘The party of Lenin–Stalin, inspirational organiser of our great victories’, undated; Semen Gel’berg, ‘Long live the All-Union Party of Bolsheviks, the party of Lenin–Stalin’, undated; M. Karpenko, ‘On the path of Lenin to joy and glory, with Stalin in our hearts we are going to victory!’, undated; Vladimir Kochegura, ‘Long live the party of Lenin-Stalin …’, undated; B. Lebedev, ‘Long live the party of Lenin–Stalin’, undated; A.A. Mytnikov, ‘Long live the candidate for deputy of the Supreme Soviet …’, undated; Georgi Zarnitskii, ‘Workers stand to defend our beloved socialist motherland!’, undated; Polenov, ‘For the victory of communism in
the image of Stalin, or both of them together. In the icon, the medallion
is usually situated at the top and encloses Christ, the Virgin or the
saints, denoting their spiritual presence and sanctifying everything
beneath them. In Stalin posters, the medallion also usually appears
at the top, often on a banner which flies protectively over the Soviet
people in the earthly realm. It symbolises the presence of the deified
or apotheosised Lenin and Stalin providing guidance and protection
from above. An unusual variant of the medallion can be found in
Shukhmin’s poster of 1945, Okno TASS No. 1242.217 A profile portrait
of a military Stalin on a banner is surrounded with an uneven glow
of golden light which, irregular in form, appears to be flickering as
it emanates from him.

The Stalinist medallion is sometimes surrounded by a wreath of laurel
or oak leaves, which provides another set of symbolic resonances.
Wreaths are associated with the dead and, in the ancient world,
formed a ritual part of the cult of the dead. Wreaths have traditionally
been used in a number of rituals: they were offered to someone who
was being petitioned and were hung around altars and temples; when
used as crowns, they formed an apotropæic circle which purified what
it enclosed, protecting newlyweds and promoting fertility, cleansing

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217 For an image, see www.artic.edu/aic/collections/exhibitions/TASS/artwork/192613.
warriors returning from war, and crowning victorious athletes at games; the branches carried the vitality and power of the plants from which they were woven and in the case of athletic games, were sacred to the apotheosised hero to whom the games were dedicated. Oak and laurel leaves have long been associated with victory and Stalin’s portrait is often enclosed in a garland of these after victory in the war. Koretskii’s ‘Our banner is the banner of victory!’ of 1945 encloses the bas-relief profiles of Lenin and Stalin in a small medallion on a red victory banner. The banner is wielded by a grinning soldier whose head, along with those of Lenin and Stalin, is enclosed inside a victory wreath.

The icon and the political poster share further common ground in their symbolic use of colour. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of the use of colour for the Soviet artist. Here, science, art and religion all merged in an attempt to engineer the ‘new Soviet man’. The Soviet leadership of the Stalinist era believed that people could be totally redesigned. The psychologist Aron Zalkind advocated the conditioning of human behaviour down to the smallest detail and the planning of human reproduction on a large scale in order that the sex drive be diverted and channeled into energy for the construction of socialism. In 1923 Nikolai Bukharin delivered a speech to the Komsomol in which he anticipated the production of ‘living machines’: ‘We must now direct our efforts at creating in the shortest time possible the greatest number of specialized living machines that will be ready and willing to enter into circulation.’ An interest in eugenics was coupled with Lamarckian beliefs, an evolutionary theory which favours environmental factors over heredity, and posits that environmentally induced mutations can be inherited. Science focused on perception and cognition, and ways in which the requisite changes could be induced. Bukharin was convinced that the science was valid, stating in 1928: ‘if we took the view that racial or national

221 Lamarckism sits quite well with Marxist thought.
peculiarities are so persistent that it would take thousands of years to change them, then of course our whole work would be absurd because it would be built on sand.  

Colour was held to have psychological effects, often at the pre-rational level, and amongst artists and propagandists, colour theory became a key area of research and investigation. Wassilii Kandinskii wrote at length on colour in Concerning the spiritual in art, noting its psychic and spiritual effects:

colour … makes only a momentary and superficial impression on a soul but slightly developed in sensitiveness. But even this superficial impression varies in quality … . But to a more sensitive soul the effect of colours is deeper and intensely moving. And so we come to the second main result of looking at colours: THEIR PSYCHIC EFFECT. They produce a corresponding spiritual vibration, and it is only as a step towards this spiritual vibration that the elementary physical impression is of importance. [capitals in original]

Malevich, El Lissitskii and Rodchenko all explored colour theory in their work, using colour with the deliberate intention of creating a direct psychological effect, and Klutsis was hired to teach ‘Colour Theory for Applications other than Painting’ at VKhUTEMAS in 1924. VKhUTEMAS was the site of unprecedented experimentation in the perception of colour and form, with the invention of purpose-built apparatus designed to monitor the senses.  

As part of their research into the effectiveness of propaganda posters on their target audience, Party agitators conducted studies of how viewers reacted to the use of certain colours in posters. Victoria Bonnell summarises some of the findings in relation to peasants viewing collectivisation posters in 1934 in her article on the peasant woman in Stalinist art:

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viewers displayed a strong preference for soft muted colors and were especially partial to one poster with a ‘delicate blue background’. They reacted negatively to bright garish colors. According to this report, the collective farmers paid attention to color and imagery and generally ignored the text.\textsuperscript{225}

Pastel colours began to dominate Stalin posters from around 1934, and were compatible with the images of abundance that were now characteristic of Stalinist propaganda. The stark blacks and whites of the period of struggle were less apparent and only came to the fore once more during the war when time was of the essence in poster production and the theme of battle held its most dire meaning.

In his highly influential work, Kandinskii argues that, while colour may operate in an associative manner (e.g. orange is hot because it is the colour of a flame), colour also has the power to directly influence the soul:

\begin{quotation}
Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand which plays, touching one key or another, to cause vibrations in the soul.
\end{quotation}

\begin{quotation}
IT IS EVIDENT THEREFORE THAT COLOUR HARMONY MUST REST ONLY ON A CORRESPONDING VIBRATION IN THE HUMAN SOUL; AND THIS IS ONE OF THE GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF THE INNER NEED. [capitals in original]\textsuperscript{226}
\end{quotation}

The icon was of particular interest for many artists because of the long tradition of using standardised symbolic colours for spiritual purposes. According to Kandinskii’s way of thinking, if the colour schemata of the icon (interacting with form) is suggested or reproduced in a poster, the viewer will both make an association between the icon and the poster, and also be moved at a spiritual level. Both of these phenomena can, and probably usually do, occur at a subconscious or pre-conscious level. Taking this line of thought further, if one wishes to imbue the persona of Stalin with sacrality, this can be achieved by presenting him in poses that may be associated with Christ, and by placing him against a red or gold background in a frame or in a medallion.

\textsuperscript{225} Victoria E. Bonnell, ‘The peasant woman in Stalinist political art of the 1930s’, \textit{The American Historical Review}, 98:1, 1993, pp. 55–82, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{226} Kandinsky, \textit{Concerning the spiritual in art}, p. 27.
The colour red was the dominant colour in Soviet posters throughout most of the Stalinist era, featuring in huge banners, as an undifferentiated background, and often as the colour of the poster text.\textsuperscript{227} It also appeared on tractors, buildings, the Kremlin, scarves and blouses. As Wolfgang Holz has argued, everything that is semantically connected with socialist ideology is often coloured red, with the colour signifying ideological transformation.\textsuperscript{228} Red was specifically associated with icons, where it often formed a background colour and represented youth, beauty and eternal life and, in posters, it imbues the figures it surrounds with an aura of sacrality. Govorov’s 1946 poster ‘Glory to the first candidate for deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, great Stalin!’ (Fig. 4.67) in which Stalin’s portrait is carried as an icon, shows Stalin sketched in gold tones against a background of pure rich red, while Onufriichuk’s 1946 poster ‘Long live the leader of the Soviet people — great Stalin’ (Fig. 4.40) encloses a gold-toned Stalin in a medallion that is placed against a red background. Icons do not employ colour in a naturalistic fashion and the colours used for faces and clothes have symbolic resonances. In a small number of posters Stalin’s face is coloured red and indistinguishable from the background. In Ivanov and Burova’s ‘Comrades of the Red Army, the Red Fleet, commanders and commissars, men and women of the guerilla forces!’ of 1942 (Fig. 4.24), a giant blood-red Stalin head looms in a blood-red sky. In Mikhail Reikh’s ‘For communism! …’ 1948 (Fig. 3.5), Stalin appears like the sun in the sky in two shades of red, while beneath him an ecstatic Uzbek crowd pay tribute. Denisov’s ‘We gathered under the red banner of Lenin …’ of 1949 (Fig. 4.68) shows both Lenin and Stalin in sacred red, although Stalin’s figure dominates due to its positioning in front of Lenin and to the touches of gold on his epaulettes. See also Be-Sha (Boris Shapoval) and Rozenberg, ‘I would like comrades to systematically influence their deputies, to tell them to keep before them the image of the great Lenin and imitate Lenin in everything’, 1940 (Fig. 4.69); and Vladimir Kaidalov, ‘We will struggle to reap a big cotton harvest!’ (Uzbek language),

\textsuperscript{227} Much of the symbolism associated with red has already been discussed in Chapter Two.
1950 (Fig. 4.51). Lenin is depicted in this way far more frequently than Stalin. Where other figures appear in these posters, they usually appear in flesh tones or without colour. Gold is another colour that is found in the icon and is frequently employed as a background, representing divine light and Christ. Stalin is often depicted in gold tones against a rich red background. Sometimes he is illuminated by a golden light. With the early

229 For example, Veniamin Pinchuk, “The spirit of the great Lenin and his invincible banner inspire us now in the patriotic war.” [I. Stalin], 1943 (Fig. 4.29); V. Reshetnikov, ‘Glory to Lenin, glory to Stalin, glory to the great October’, 1952 (Fig. 2.20); Vladimir Kaidalov, ‘Departing from us, Comrade Lenin urged us to strengthen and extend the union republics. We swear to you, Comrade Lenin, that we will fulfill with honor your behest’, 1940 (Fig. 2.13); A.A. Babitskii, ‘Under the leadership of Comrade Stalin, forward to complete victory over our enemy!’, 1944; Vladimir Serov, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, forward, to victory!’, 1942 (Fig. 4.23); Vladimir Kaidalov, ‘Glory to great Stalin’, 1949 (Fig. 2.28); Nikolai Denisov & Vladislav Pravdin, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin — forward to communism’, 1946; Unidentified artist, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin, forward to the victory of communism!’, 1948; B. Lebedev, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin, forward to the victory of communism!’, 1950; Aleksandr Druzhkov & I. Shagin, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin — forward towards new development for the Soviet motherland and a full victory of Communism in our country!’, 1947; Boris Belopol’skii, “‘We move further, forward towards Communism.’ I.V. Stalin’, 1950; Unidentified artist, (in Armenian) ‘12 June. With enormous gratitude and best regards, we send greetings to Great Stalin!’, 1938; Anatoli Kazantsev, ‘1917–1944. Forward, to definitive defeat of the enemy!’, 1944; Nikolai Denisov & Vladislav Pravdin, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, under the leadership of Stalin — forward to the victory of communism!’, 1948.

230 Some propaganda posters show Stalin in black-and-white while the environment around him appears in full naturalistic colour. For example, Druzhkov & Shagin, ‘Stalin is our fighting banner’, 1948 (Fig. 4.45) and N. Petrov, ‘… it is our blessing that in the difficult years of the war …’, 1948 (Fig. 4.47). This treatment marks him out as removed from the ordinary world and as inhabiting a symbolic or allegorical plane.

231 Marina Volkova & Natalia Pinus, ‘Long live the equal-rights woman in the USSR’, 1938 (Fig. 3.32); Nadezhda Kashina, ‘Invincible Moscow’, 1942; Nikolai Kogout, ‘Under the invincible banner of the great Lenin …’, 1942 (Fig. 4.21); Vladimir Serov, ‘Under the banner of Lenin, forward to victory!’, 1942 (Fig. 4.23); Viktor Govorov, ‘Glory to the first candidate for deputies of the Supreme Soviet of the SSSR, great Stalin!’, 1946; Emmanuil Grabovetskii, ‘Long live the 29th anniversary of the great October Socialist revolution!’, 1946; M.L. Ioffe, ‘Glory to great Stalin, creator of the constitution of the USSR’, 1946; Onufriichuk, ‘Long live the leader of the Soviet people — great Stalin’, 1946 (Fig. 4.40); Mikhail Solov’ev, ‘29 years. long live the 29th anniversary of the great October socialist revolution’, 1946; Mikhail Solov’ev, ‘We have been preparing for the elections’, 1946; Iraklii Toidze, ‘Long live the V.K.P(b) …’, 1946; Viktor Govorkov, ‘VKP(b). There is nothing greater than the title of member of the party of Lenin–Stalin’, 1947; V. Medvedev, ‘Long live the 30th anniversary of the great October Socialist revolution!’, 1947; Ruben Shkhiyan, ‘In order to build, we need to know …’, 1947; F. Litvinov, ‘Long live the party of Lenin–Stalin, inspirer and organiser of our victories!’, 1948 (Fig. 4.49); Mikhail Solov’ev, ‘All the Soviet people are closely rallied around their government …’, 1948; L. Stenberg, ‘The banner of Lenin …’, 1949 (Fig. 2.16); Boris Belopol’skii, “‘We move further, forward towards communism.” I. V. Stalin’, 1950; U. Ivanov, ‘Under the great and invincible banner of Lenin-Stalin for the triumph of communism’, 1950; Aleksei Kokorekin, ‘Be prepared to struggle for the cause of Lenin-Stalin!’, 1951.

232 Vasilii Bayuskin & A. Shpier, ‘Great Patriotic War’, 1942; Petr Golub & M. Chernov, ‘Under the leadership of Stalin — Forward to a new blossoming of our motherland!’, 1946; Naum
exception of the 1938 women’s rights-themed poster by Volkova and Pinus, golden tones became a feature of Stalin posters in 1942, as the Soviet Union experienced its first tentative victories in the war, then disappeared again until 1946, when victory was official and celebrated openly. Golden tones remain a feature of Stalin posters thereafter. By 1946 Stalin was frequently celebrated as the saviour of the USSR and of the West and propagandists became less coy in granting him a sacral aura and the talismanic properties of a miracle-working icon.

Other colours also came to take on symbolic meaning. White in the icon symbolises God the Father and eternal light. Kandinskii saw white as symbolising joy and ‘spotless purity’. After 1934 white began to feature not only in propaganda posters, but also in propaganda in the press. Stalin and the other leaders were often seen dressed all in white, as were the Stakhanovites and people in parades, with life becoming more ‘joyous’ for all Soviet citizens after the Stakhanovite conference of 1935. From the earliest days of the Revolution, black, which in the language of icons is associated with evil and death, was associated with capitalists and the bourgeoisie. In posters of the war years it was often used in association with the enemy. In early propaganda posters green had traditionally been the colour of enemies, particularly associated with the Poles but, in the 1930s, as enemy classes were purged and disappeared, green came to be associated with fertility, abundance and festivity. In the icon, green is associated with fecundity or the Holy Spirit.

Although the use of colours in propaganda posters did not always correspond directly with their meaning in icons, they held in common with the icon a fixity of symbolic meaning which encoded figures and objects in the posters in ways which were meaningful to the initiated. Symbolism and fixity of meaning extended beyond colour

Karpovskii, ‘Labour with martial persistence …’, 1948; Vladislav Pravdin & Nikolai Denisov, ‘Long live our leader and teacher the great Stalin!’, 1948 (Fig. 3.29); Vasili Surikyaninov, ‘Stalin is our banner’, 1948; Leonid Golovanov, ‘And Stalin raised us to be loyal to the people …’, 1949 (Fig. 3.21); Petr Golub, ‘Long life and prosperity to our motherland!’; 1949; Viktor Ivanov, ‘Great Stalin is the beacon of communism!’, 1949 (Fig. 3.7); F. Litvinov, ‘Long life and prosperity to our motherland’, 1949 (Fig. 3.22); Vladislav Pravdin, ‘Work well so that Comrade Stalin thanks you’, 1949; Nikolai Denisov, ‘Long live great Stalin, creator of the constitution of the victorious socialism!’, 1950; Viktor Ivanov, ‘Stalin is our great standard-bearer of peace!’; 1950 (Fig. 4.54). 233 Kandinsky, Concerning the spiritual in art, p. 40.


235 See White, The Bolshevik poster, p. 5.
to include signifying and symbolic clothing, poses, gestures, props and compositional elements. Painters and art critics spoke of Stalin portraits using the same language that had long been used to discuss icon painting, for example, the terms ‘zhivoi’, which means ‘alive’ and ‘vivid’ and denotes ‘the discharge of sacral energy’, and obraz, meaning ‘image’, which ‘signifies a Russian Orthodox, nonmimetic, performative image.’ Plamper argues that the obraz functioned as the equivalent of the podlinnik in icon painting, and ‘confined and configured’ the thematic possibilities for portraying Stalin.

In practice, the obraz corresponds roughly with our archetype, so that key obrazi in the portrayal of Stalin were the Father of the people, the Warrior, the Teacher, the Architect, the Magician and the Saviour. The ability to merge several obrazi in the one image was particularly valued and Iskusstvo praised portrait artist Aleksandr Gerasimov with the observation that ‘[t]he great value of Gerasimov the portraitist lies in his ability to convey in the images of the leaders the unity of the features of the state leader, the tribune of the people, and the man’.

In 1947 Toidze created a poster that combines the themes of childhood, victory in the war, and the bright communist future in one powerful image. Stalin is depicted in marshal’s uniform holding a toddler aloft. At first glance, ‘Stalin’s kindness illuminates the future of our children!’ (Fig. 3.2) appears to step back to the Stalin iconography of the mid-1930s, depicting Stalin holding a young child. The contact in 1947, however, is not fatherly, intimate or affectionate. Stalin holds the child at arm’s length away from his body, his hands placed in the same manner as those of Christ in icons of the Dormition of the Virgin, and the child in the position of the soul of the Virgin which is held by Christ. The feast of the Dormition commemorates the ‘falling asleep’ (natural death) of the Virgin, her salvation by Christ, and her acceptance into paradise. The child in the poster (a little blond Russian boy) does not look at Stalin, but out to the right and holds a bunch of flowers and a little red flag, sacred symbol of the Revolution and blood sacrifice, protection and intercession. He wears white, as does the soul of the Virgin in Dormition icons. Stalin stands in the position of Christ in the icon. In the icon, the Virgin’s soul is held by Christ who conveys

it to an angel who carries it to Heaven. By depicting Stalin wearing the marshal’s uniform, reference is made to his role as Russia’s saviour in The Great Patriotic War. Russia has endured much pain, bloodshed and sacrifice. From this sacrifice the pure Russian soul has emerged, to be placed into the hands of Stalin and thus conveyed through the passage of worldly suffering to the waiting gates of paradise. In a socialist reading, this paradise exists here on earth, the long-promised land of the communist utopia. The text of the poster associates Stalin with light and makes it clear it is Stalin’s care and kindness that has enabled the Russian people to survive the war and emerge into the communist paradise.

Stalin and the Virgin

Stalin is not only associated with the figure of Christ but, somewhat surprisingly, is endowed with many of the qualities of the Mother of God. He is often pictured with children, sometimes holding them in his arms; is surrounded by flowers, often roses; and is almost always engulfed in a sea of red which extends above him and often covers the small figures of the crowd below in a manner reminiscent of the veil of the Virgin\(^240\) spread protectively over the congregation at the Feast of the Intercession. In Pravdin’s 1950 poster, ‘Long live the Bolshevik Party, the Lenin–Stalin Party, the vanguard of the Soviet people forged in battle, the inspiration and organiser of Our Victories!’ (Fig. 2.22), Stalin appears with the Soviet leadership, literally situated under Lenin’s banner, which protects them in a manner reminiscent of the veil of the Theotokos in Orthodox iconography.

The Virgin is often referred to as the ‘joy of every living thing’, a mantle that Stalin seems to have appropriated for his persona and which is made manifest in the slogans on several posters,\(^241\) including those in which Stalin is thanked for providing a happy childhood. In their 1992 study of personality and charismatic leadership, House et al. were surprised to discover that charismatic leadership is positively correlated with the personality traits of femininity and nurturance and negatively correlated with masculinity, dominance, aggression

\(^{240}\) Often coloured blue or purple, except in Novgorodian icons where it is red.
\(^{241}\) For example, Viktor Koretskii, ‘Beloved Stalin is the people’s happiness’, 1950 and Viktor Ivanov, ‘For national happiness’, 1950.
and criticalness. Several eyewitness accounts of encounters with Stalin emphasise his softness, gentleness, solicitude, supportiveness, and even his feminine characteristics.

It must be noted that the androgynous characteristic of the Stalin cult is not a unique phenomenon. Mikhail Weiskopf notes that androginal evocations in eulogistic writings on the Russian tsars had a long tradition and, as has been noted earlier, Skradol has commented on the situation in which Lenin was portrayed as both father and wife to Stalin. Maksim Gor’kii wrote of Lenin as ‘the mother of mankind’, and a man who was ‘a flame of almost feminine tenderness towards humanity’. Donald McIntosh argues that, in contrast to traditional leadership, prophetic charismatic leadership appears to be heavily libidinised and sometimes manifests a leader with bisexual characteristics.

Conclusion

The Stalin persona contained something for everyone. It was not only ubiquitous in its presence, but all-encompassing. Stalin could be both human and divine; father, mother, husband, son; leader, teacher, warrior, saviour and magician. He had exceptional wisdom and unearthly knowledge, could appear magically when needed and heal or set a situation right, but was personally modest and unassuming.
and as intimately concerned with the everyday mundane aspects of
the life of the ‘little man’ as with affairs of state and world peace.
He represented concrete entities like the Bolshevik Party, the state, and
the USSR, as well as more abstract notions such as Bolshevik vision,
communist ideals, the international brotherhood of workers, the victory
of socialism, victory over enemies such as kulaks and fascists, world
peace, and paradise on earth in the form of an imminent communist
utopia. The Bolsheviks were intent on creating an entirely new type of
society peopled by a new and improved type of Soviet person, but in
order to do this within the space of one or two generations, a largely
agricultural and illiterate people had to be inoculated with the
Marxist–Leninist vision and a whole new set of principles and beliefs
had to be inculcated, driving out the outdated beliefs of the past.
Ideology and abstracts were of little interest, and often too complex,
for the newly semi-literate and rapidly urbanising workforce whose
struggle for survival in a harsh climate of deprivation consumed most
of their time and energy. Bolshevik principles and teachings had
to be made accessible to the public at least at a level, in the initial
stages in any case, where it could serve to mobilise the population
to achieve the regime’s goals (and indeed to survive as a nation) and
to view itself as a harmonious and united entity with a meaningful
shared identity. Research by agitators and propagandists among the
population indicated that these values, principles and teachings were
best absorbed, at a preliminary level, if they came to be personified in
the identity of the leader. As a vessel for all of these desirable qualities,
the image of Stalin came to be treated by some as an icon through
which one could seek comfort and spiritual guidance. This tendency,
although apparently officially meeting with disapproval, was in fact
facilitated by the application of many of the devices used in Russian
Orthodox icons to political propaganda posters. In some ways, this may
have been largely unavoidable. In order to communicate with people,
it is necessary to speak a language they understand and to use concepts
with which they are familiar. Early post-revolutionary attempts to
overhaul the language and introduce new, specifically Bolshevik,
terms met with wide incomprehension from everyone other than
committed Party members. As time passed, and the leadership applied
a Marxist and scientific approach to education and propaganda, with
particular interest in conditioned reflexes, eugenics and Lamarckian
evolution, the decision to employ a language, both verbal and visual,
drawing on the pre-existing vocabulary of the Orthodox Church,
national mythologies and universal archetypes, became conscious and deliberate. Icons were mass cult objects with two main functions: as liturgical cult images and with a didactic role. It can be argued that posters constituted a parallel mass visual cult with similar functions.

Fig. 4.1 ‘I.V. Stalin’, unidentified artist, 1930, Litografia CKKPO (Krasnodar), edn 25,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.2 ‘The Civil War 1918–1920’, unidentified artist, 1938, 92 x 62.5 cm
Source: Hoover Institution Archives
Fig. 4.3 ‘Defence of the USSR’, unidentified artist, 1938, 92 x 62.5 cm
Source: Hoover Institution Archives
Fig. 4.4 ‘Comrade I.V. Stalin at the Front of the Civil War’, S. Podobedov, 1939, RKKA

Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.5 ‘Military Oath’, S. Podobedov, 1939
Source: Russian State Library

Fig. 4.6 ‘Long live our leader and teacher, best friend of the Red Army, our dear and beloved Stalin!’; S. Podobedov, 1940, RKKA
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.7 ‘Long live our dear invincible Red Army!’, Dmitrii Moor & Sergei Sen’kin, 1938
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.8 ‘To continue the policy of peace and of strengthening business relations with all countries …’, M. Kaminskii, 1939, Mистетство (Kiev), 60 x 92 cm, edn 20,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.9 ‘Long live the organiser and leader of the victorious Red Army great Stalin!’, S. Podobedov, 1938, RKKA
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.10 ‘Long live the creator of the first cavalry, best friend of the Red Cavalry — Comrade Stalin!’, unidentified artist, 1939, RKKA

Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.11 ‘Stalin’s spirit makes our army and country strong and solid’, Viktor Deni & Nikolai Dolgorukov, 1939
Fig. 4.12 ‘The foreign policy of the Soviet Union is clear and explicit’, unidentified artist, 1940, Izostat
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.13 ‘If the leader calls …’, Viktor Koretskii, 1941, Izvestiia, 35 x 25 cm
Source: www.russianartandbooks.com/cgi-bin/russianart/Pr00233.html
Fig. 4.14 “The spirit of the great Lenin and his victorious banner inspires us now in the Patriotic War as it did 23 years ago.” Stalin’, unidentified artist, 1941, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 82.5 x 59.5 cm, edn 10,000
Source: Hoover Institution Archives
Fig. 4.15 ‘Under the banner of Lenin–Stalin we were victorious in the great October Socialist Revolution …’, A.V. Vasil’ev and S.F. Yanevich, 1941, Izdanie (Leningrad), edn 20,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.16 “All our forces — to support our heroic Red Army and our glorious Red Navy! All the power of the people — to defeat the enemy!” Stalin', Iraklii Toidze, 1941, edn 6,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.17 ‘We swore an oath to our leader to fight the enemy …’, Konstantin Cheprakov, 1941, Gosizdat (Tashkent), 60 x 94 cm, edn 10,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.18 ‘Under the name of Stalin we won. Under the name of Stalin we will win!’, unidentified artist, 1941, Iskusstvo (Leningrad), edn 25,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.19 'The spirit of the great Lenin and his victorious banner inspires us now in the Patriotic War as it did 23 years ago', Boris Mukhin, 1942, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 90 x 60 cm, edn 20,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.20 ‘We can and must clear our Soviet soil of the Hitlerite filth!’, V. Mirzoe, c. 1942, Sakhelgami, edn 1,500
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.21 ‘Under the invincible banner of the great Lenin — forward to victory!’, Nikolai Kogout, 1942, Gosizdat, edn 15,000
Source: Russian State Library

Fig. 4.22 ‘The path to our glory is immutable — Fascism will die! ...’, Pen Varlen, 1942, Gosizdat (Tashkent), edn 10,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.23 ‘Under the banner of Lenin, forward, to victory!’, Vladimir Serov, 1942, Iskusstvo (Leningrad), 89 x 63 cm, edn 10,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.24 ‘Comrades of the Red Army …’, Viktor Ivanov & Ol’ga Burova, 1942, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 88 x 59 cm, edn 30,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.25 ‘Okno UzTAG No. 123’, Nadezhda Kashina, 1942, Okno UzTAG (Uzbekistan), 84 x 183 cm
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.26 ‘Okno TASS No. 590’, Pavel Sokolov-Skalia, 1942, TASS (Moscow), 218 x 102 cm, edn 400
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.27 ‘During the war …’, Vlasob’, 1943, (Baku), edn 5,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.28 ‘For the Soviet fatherland…’, Nikolai Zhukov & Viktor Klimashin, 1943, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 25,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.29 “The spirit of the great Lenin and his invincible banner inspire us now in the patriotic war” (I. Stalin), Veniamin Pinchuk, 1943, Iskusstvo (Leningrad), edn 4,000
Source: Russian State Library

Fig. 4.30 ‘For our great motherland!’, Nina Vatolina, 1944, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 50,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.31 ‘Under the leadership of Comrade Stalin, forward to complete victory over our enemy!’, A.A. Babitskii, 1944, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 90 x 59 cm, edn 5,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.32 “Glory to the great heroic Red Army, defending the independence of our country and winning victory over the enemy!”
I. Stalin', Vladimir Kaidalov, 1945, Dal'giz, edn 5,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.33 ‘Great Stalin — first deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR’, Stepan Razvozzhaev, 1945, Izdanie (Irkutsk), edn 25,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.34 ‘Long live the creator of the constitution of socialist society, the leader of the Soviet people, great Stalin!’, unidentified artist, portrait by Karpov, Undated, c. 1945, Izdatelstvo Krasnyi Krym, edn 10,000

Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.35 ‘The Soviet people are full of gratitude and love for dear STALIN — the great organiser of our victory’, Viktor Koretskii, 1945, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 75,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.36 ‘Long live generalissimus STALIN — great leader and general of the Soviet people!’, Viktor Deni, 1945, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 50,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.37 ‘Forward, to new victories of socialist construction!’, Iraklii Toidze, 1946, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 103 x 68 cm, edn 50,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.38 ‘1917–1946 Glory to the Red Army, defending the gains of the great October socialist revolution!’, Viktor Koretskii, 1946, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 96 x 63 cm, edn 70,000
Source: www.gelos.ru/2008/bigimages/np438-6.jpg
Fig. 4.39 ‘Long live the V.K.P.(b) — the party of Lenin–Stalin, inspirer and organiser of our great victories!’, Iraklii Toidze, 1946, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 250,000

Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.40 ‘Long live the leader of the Soviet people — great Stalin’,
Onufriichuk, 1946, Mistetstvo, edn 50,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.41 ‘Long live the leader of the Soviet people — great Stalin!’, Boris Mukhin, 1947, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 300,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.42 ‘Long live the leader of the Soviet people, great Stalin!’, Boris Mukhin, 1947, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad)
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.43 ‘Long live the leader of the Soviet people — great Stalin’, Vladislav Pravdin & Nikolai Denisov, 1947, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 200,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.44 ‘Glory to the leader of the Soviet people — great Stalin!’; Georgii Bakhmutov, 1947, Mистетство, edн 70,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.45 ‘Stalin is our fighting banner’, Aleksandr Druzhkov & I. Shagin, 1948, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad)

Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.46 ‘Glory to great Stalin!’, Boris Mukhin, 1948, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad)
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.47 ‘It is our good fortune …’, N. Petrov, 1948, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad)
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.48 ‘Long live the V.K.P.(b) inspirer and organiser of the victory of the Soviet people!’, B.I. Lebedev, 1948, Izdatelstvo (Moldavia), edn 5,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.49 ‘Long live the party of Lenin–Stalin, inspirer and organiser of our victories!’, F. Litvinov, 1948, Krymizdat
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.50 ‘Long live the VKP(b) …’, Aleksandr Druzhkov, 1948, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad)
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.51 ‘We will struggle to reap a big cotton harvest!’, Vladimir Kaidalov, 1950, 86 x 58.5 cm
Source: Tom and Jeri Ferris Collection of Russian and Soviet Culture
Fig. 4.52 “‘We stand for peace and we defend the cause of peace.’
I. Stalin’, Boris Berezovskii, 1947, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad),
118 x 68 cm
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.53 “‘Long life and prosperity to our motherland!’ I. Stalin’,
Irakli Toidze, 1947, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad)
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.54 ‘Stalin is our great standard-bearer of peace!’, Viktor Ivanov, 1950, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 83.4 x 56.4, edn 100,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.55 ‘Great Stalin is the banner of friendship of the peoples of the USSR!’, Viktor Koretskii, 1950, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 200,000
Source: State Historical Museum
Fig. 4.56 ‘Great Stalin is the best friend of the Latvian people!’, Petr Golub, 1950, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 20,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.57 “We stand for peace and we defend the cause of peace.”
I. Stalin’, Boris Belopol’skii, 1952, Iskusstvo (Moscow), 82 x 64 cm, edn 300,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.58 “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’, Boris Belopol’skii, 1952, Iskusstvo (Moscow), 69 x 56 cm, edn 100,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.59 'Happy New Year, beloved Stalin!', Konstantin Ivanov, 1952, Iskusstvo (Moscow), 55.5 x 37 cm, edn 50,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.60 ‘Long live the Leninist VKP(b), organiser of victorious socialist construction’, Viktor Deni & Nikolai Dolgorukov, 1934, Izogiz (Moscow, Leningrad), 62 x 94 cm, edn 6,500
Source: State Historical Museum
Fig. 4.61 ‘Glory to great Stalin!’, V. Paradovskii, 1947, Kirgosizdat, edn 2,190
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.62 'Cadres decide everything', Gustav Klutsis, 1935, Izogiz (Moscow, Leningrad), 77 x 109 cm, edn 20,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.63 ‘Long live the Stalinist Order of Heroes and Stakhanovites!’, Gustav Klutsis, 1936, 71.3 x 101.2 cm
Source: David King Collection
Fig. 4.64 ‘Our government and the Party does not have other interests …’, Viktor Koretskii, 1938, Izogiz (Moscow, Leningrad), 86 x 61.3 cm, edn 300,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.65 ‘The reality of our program …’, I. Shagin, 1947, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), edn 300,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.66 ‘Under the leadership of the great Stalin — forward to communism!’, Boris Berezovskii, Mikhail Solov’ev & I. Shagin, 1951, Iskusstvo (Moscow), edn 500,000
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.67 ‘Glory to the first candidate for deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, great Stalin!’, Viktor Govorov, 1946, Ogiz
Source: Russian State Library
Fig. 4.68 ‘We gathered under the red banner of Lenin …’, Nikolai Denisov, 1949, Iskusstvo (Moscow, Leningrad), 89 x 60 cm, edn 100,000
Fig. 4.69 ‘I would like comrades to systematically influence their deputies …’, Be-Sha (Boris Shapoval) & Rozenberg, 1940, Mistetstvo (Kiev), edn 40,000
Source: Russian State Library
Conclusion

Despite Nikita Krushchev’s Secret Speech condemning the personality cult of Stalin in 1956,\(^1\) the removal of Stalin’s body from Lenin’s mausoleum in 1961, and the eradication of Stalin from Soviet history in the ensuing decades, some manifestations of the Stalin personality cult still exist today. In the last few years, Stalin’s portrait has been (controversially)\(^2\) carried in Victory Day parades in Russia, and his image appears on ‘Soviet’ tourist memorabilia such as T-shirts, mugs, calendars, bronze busts and poster reproductions. Surveys of popular attitudes in Russia suggest that Stalin has not only been ‘rehabilitated’ in the eyes of some sectors of the public, but that there is widespread nostalgia for the Stalinist years. A January 2005 survey carried out by the All-Russia Centre for the Study of Public Opinion in Russia reported in the *Moscow News* that 42 per cent of respondents wanted the return of a ‘leader like Stalin’. When it came to respondents over 60 years of age, this figure went up to 60 per cent.\(^3\) In 2008, Stalin ranked third in a nationwide poll to find Russia’s greatest ever person.\(^4\) Polly Jones notes that one of the major arguments against de-Stalinisation came from the military sector, which asserted that victory in the Great Patriotic War ensured Stalin a place in Soviet

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history and in the national psyche.\textsuperscript{5} The post-Stalin leadership also received numerous letters from non-military personnel claiming that the image of Stalin standing steadfastly at his post and the inspirational speeches he made to the nation were essential to the war victory. Many of these letters expressed their admiration for Stalin using the epithets of the print media and poster campaigns. A study of Soviet propaganda posters remains relevant and timely and the recent availability of extensive material in the Soviet archives has led to a burgeoning of exciting new scholarship in Stalin studies across many disciplines.

Despite the extensive literature available on the Stalin cult, there has been comparatively little focus on the visual arts under Stalin, with even fewer studies devoted to political posters of the era, and no dedicated study on the image of Stalin in posters. This book is an attempt to fill this lacuna. The political poster is shown to have been a key propaganda medium for the Stalinist regime and was central to the generation and maintenance of the cult of Stalin. Soviet public space was saturated with posters and Stalin’s image was a dominant presence in many of them. Over the decades of Stalin’s rule, as Stalin made fewer personal appearances in public life, his image in posters and paintings became the primary contact between the population and their leader. The leader became his portrait\textsuperscript{6} and, in posters of the postwar years, Stalin’s image sometimes took on apotropæic qualities.

In this study, Stalinist posters are analysed employing an art historical iconographic and iconologic methodology. The posters are examined as art objects and cultural artefacts, and placed in wider social, political and historical contexts. A major advantage of adopting this approach is that many interesting phenomena, trends and patterns are evident in the visual imagery employed in the posters that may not be specifically articulated elsewhere. By commencing with the images themselves, and conducting a comparative analysis across the large


\textsuperscript{6} Jan Plamper opens his book on the Stalin cult with an anecdote about a woman who fainted when she saw Stalin at her front door. When she recovered, Beria asked her what had happened and she answered: ‘I thought that a portrait of Stalin was moving towards me’ (The Stalin cult: a study in the alchemy of power, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2012, p. xiii).
sample of posters, subtle variations in the projections of the Stalin image over time can be detected, contributing to the discourse on the Stalin cult across a number of disciplines.

Despite the fact that Marxist systems declare themselves to be ideologically opposed to the notion of the personality cult, whether by design or default, and usually something of both, personality cults flourish in times of turbulence and strife, and particularly in circumstances when a leader needs to mobilise a population to attain urgent goals. Personality cults tap into universal myths and archetypes that provide guidance, comfort, reassurance and a spiritual dimension to a life of struggle and sacrifice. It is argued that Stalin’s image in propaganda drew on mythic archetypes that tapped into unconscious forces in the popular psyche. Posters of Stalin are analysed with reference to a number of archetypes that were employed to create an all-encompassing charismatic persona for the leader. The Father, the Warrior, the Teacher, the Saviour, the Architect, the Helmsman and the Magician became various facets of the Stalin persona — sometimes confusing, contradictory and irreconcilable — but drawing on deep, unconscious associations from mythology and the Church. Stalin was simultaneously imbued with notions of blood ties and kinship with the population, teacher and mentor, brilliant warrior and military strategist, and spiritual guide with superhuman and supernatural abilities.

It is argued that this charismatic persona was intentionally crafted for Stalin in order to mobilise an initially uneducated and illiterate population behind the Party vanguard, to adopt a single ideology and to participate in a number of tangible projects and goals that transformed the immediate physical environment. The leader figure became a symbol for a surprisingly wide number of qualities and entities, both concrete and abstract. Modern personality cults make use of mass media and communication networks with vast reach to disseminate images of the leader and hence create a ubiquitous leader presence. In states like the USSR, where the leader is able to control these networks, almost total control of the dissemination of the leader’s image is possible and the propaganda apparatus can craft an image which is marketed to the population, stressing desirable and charismatic characteristics and deleting anything which does not enhance the desired image. The argument that the use of archetypal qualities in portrayals of Stalin was intentional is supported
by evidence from other areas of Soviet propaganda, including the creation of a hagiography constructed around a series of sacred events in which archetypal roles are highlighted, and the existence of themed rooms at exhibitions that show Stalin in his various roles.

A case has been made for the inclusion of Bolshevism in the category of ‘political religion’. This concept enhances understanding of propaganda posters produced under Stalin because they borrow from, and adapt, Russian Orthodox traditions and symbolism in an attempt to induce ‘religious’ feeling toward the leader, the Party and the state. Belief in the new goals for the attainment of a communist state became a matter of faith, working to achieve these goals became a sacred duty, and veneration of the leader followed thereafter. Detailed analysis of the imagery in posters of Stalin has demonstrated how many of the devices used in the Russian Orthodox icon have been transplanted or adapted to the political poster, and that this occurred both because the icon provided a shared visual language for artists and the population and because several of the most successful early poster artists had studied the art of the icon as a Russian indigenous artform. These artists in turn held teaching posts at some of the most important Soviet art schools, influencing the next generations of Soviet artists.

The use of visual language associated with the icon imbued the image of Stalin with sacred qualities and, coupled with his increasing absence from public life, led to a persona that incorporated qualities of deity. His persona took on an increasingly sacral aura to the extent that when he died in March 1953, there was widespread disbelief. Many Soviet citizens viewed Stalin’s death as a personal crisis and something that they found difficult to comprehend. Literary scholar Raisa Orlova wrote: ‘We saw newspaper photographs of Stalin in the coffin, with arms folded and lips pressed firmly together. And it is still hard to believe that Stalin has died. Somewhere deep inside, we still keep hoping for a miracle.’7 Writer Ilia Ehrenburg reflected: ‘And we had long forgotten that Stalin was a human being. He had become an all-powerful and mysterious God. And then God died from a cerebral haemorrhage. That was unbelievable … . I did not feel sorry for the God who died of a stroke at the age of seventy-three … but I felt

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The association of Stalin with deity was complex, as Stalin’s image in posters recalled both the figure of Christ and that of the Virgin and he was endowed with both masculine and feminine qualities. Research in the field of leader studies has demonstrated that it is not unusual for a charismatic leader persona to incorporate both masculine and feminine traits.

The employment of mythic archetypes and visual reference to the Orthodox icon were not the only devices used in posters to create a charismatic leader persona for Stalin. Analysis of Stalin posters reveals that Lenin appears with Stalin in approximately one-third of the posters. It appears that the image of Lenin performed important functions in the Stalin personality cult and Stalin was frequently portrayed in close proximity to Lenin as his best student and disciple. One of the devices employed by Stalin in the struggle for leadership after Lenin’s death was to portray himself as the natural successor of the martyred founder of the regime. Throughout Stalin’s leadership, Lenin continued to be invoked as a legitimating presence for Stalin and the Party, particularly during the years of the Great Patriotic War. Over time, Stalin came out from Lenin’s shadow as a humble student and increasingly stood alongside Lenin as a revolutionary thinker in his own right. Lenin’s importance as a legitimating influence was particularly evident in that it survived Stalin and was employed after Stalin’s death to bestow legitimacy on the Party. It is also argued that Lenin’s continual presence had an effect at an unconscious, pre-rational level. The image of Lenin invoked mortality salience in the audience, which served to increase viewer identification with Stalin as leader, and hostility toward enemies of the regime. The employment of binary coding that contrasted Stalin’s image with that of despised enemies further enhanced this effect.

This study has brought to light many previously unpublished posters that illustrate in detail the evolution of the image of Stalin over the period of his leadership. The conclusions that are drawn support and supplement those arrived at in studies of other propaganda media under Stalin, making a particular contribution to the literature on the visual arts. Posters are an informative medium through which to analyse the propaganda trends under the Stalinist regime because

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poster production was particularly tightly regulated and controlled and because the medium itself invites the combination and juxtaposition of images in a stylised and symbolic manner. The addition of text to the visual image directs the viewer to the intended meaning and serves to remove potential ambiguities in the visual image. Posters thus provide an excellent record of the propagandistic priorities of the Stalinist regime, and are one of the most reliable sources of evidence for how the regime wished to present itself and its leader to the wider citizenry.
Appendix 1: Breakdown of posters in the research sample by year

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Source: Table prepared by the author

![Graph of number of posters with an image of Stalin](image)

Source: Graph prepared by the author
Appendix 2: Frequency trends in posters with images of Stalin in the research sample, and Stalin’s appearances in *Pravda*

Source: Figures for Stalin’s appearances in *Pravda* are from Jan Plamper, *The Stalin cult: a study in the alchemy of power*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 2012, p. 228. Graph created by author
Appendix 3: Posters of Stalin and Lenin by year

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*Although undated, an examination of the content of these posters places them in the 1940s, either during the war years, or after victory in the war.

Source: Table prepared by the author
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The Personality Cult of Stalin in Soviet Posters, 1929–1953


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