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Alexander Kolchinsky received his Ph. D. in molecular biology in Moscow, Russia. During his career in experimental science in the former USSR and later in the USA, he published more than 40 research papers, reviews, and book chapters. After his retirement, he became an avid collector and scholar of philately and postal history. In his articles published both in Russia and in the USA, he uses philatelic material to document the major historical events of the past century. Dr. Kolchinsky lives in Champaign, Illinois, and is currently the Secretary of the Rossica Society of Russian Philately.

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Image from cover: Stamps of Albania, Bulgaria, People's Republic of China, German Democratic Republic, and the USSR reproduced and discussed in the paper.

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Abstract

Stamps, postcards, and illustrated covers present a valuable and underappreciated resource in historical research, particularly when they deal—directly or indirectly—with images of national leaders. Their content and design reflect and sometimes even anticipate political developments. The case of Stalin, leader of the Soviet Union from 1929 to 1953, is especially complex due to his extraordinary national and international influence. This work analyzes the usage of Joseph Stalin's likeness and name on stamps and other postal items in the context of contemporaneous political circumstances and the needs of domestic and international propaganda. The study examines philatelic items issued not only in the Soviet Union and other communist countries, but also in Western Europe and the United States.

Stalin on Stamps and other Philatelic Materials: Design, Propaganda, Politics

The importance of postage stamps and other mail-related materials as media for propaganda was first outlined by Carlos Stroetzer in 1953.¹ Stamps had a broader reach than any other media prior to the advent of electronic communications. Stamps carried messages that were viewed by the sender, postal employees, the recipient, and numerous collectors, and this communication was all the more efficient because of its relatively unobtrusive nature.²

Some historians have argued that historic research should treat postage stamps as primary source:

Postage stamps provide an intriguing form of political iconography as well as a means of daily communication with both a domestic and an international remit. Stamps can and should be read as texts, often with expressly political purposes or agendas which are conveyed through the images they depict ... [the] postage stamp [is] useful as a primary historical source comparable to newspapers and diplomatic records.³

Indeed, quite a few articles have been published that treated the relation between propaganda and postage stamps as historic evidence. Among the countries whose stamps have been analyzed from this point of view are the Ottoman Empire and its successor states, several Latin American countries (especially Argentina), Great Britain, Nazi Germany, and the People's Republic of China.⁴ David Scott published an influential monograph on the design and propaganda content of stamps of several Western European countries, and a whole issue of *East Asia* journal was dedicated to exploration of ideological messages of Asian stamps.⁵

Stamps of the Soviet Union, however, have received limited attention, although already in 1953 Stroetzer identified the USSR as the world leader in “political, historical, ideological, territorial, and nationalistic propaganda” on stamps.⁶ Alexis Khripounoff published a brief overview of propaganda on Soviet stamps, and Evgeny Dobrenko explored the concept of space on Soviet stamps in its relation to propaganda.⁷ Alison Rowley has published a more detailed analysis of Soviet stamps as the media of visual propaganda; she addressed, among other issues, the representation of prominent Bolsheviks as well as other historic personalities on early Soviet stamps.⁸

Other communist regimes successfully joined the USSR in efforts to infuse stamps with propaganda messages. Yet, to my knowledge, no works have been published in the English language analyzing the stamps of Eastern European Communist countries that emerged after the war.

One of the major representations found on stamps of the USSR and other Communist countries was that of Stalin, the leader of the Soviet Union from 1929 to 1953 and for a short but eventful period between 1945 and 1953, the leader of the world Communist movement. Joseph Stalin's likeness and name have been widely used on items related to postal services and philately other than stamps, such as postcards, vignettes, and illustrated covers, including privately printed philatelic media in the West.

Although philatelic Staliniana certainly deserves scholarly investigation, little research has been published on the topic. The only publication that has focused on Stalin's presence in Soviet mail-related propaganda, an article by Yakov Afangulskii published in 1990, addresses a narrow subject of renaming places (and therefore post offices) in the USSR and later in other Socialist countries.⁹ Analyzing the content and design of a wide range of philatelic material in its political and historical context reveals the significance of Stalin's image in domestic and international propaganda.¹⁰

Stalin on Soviet stamps and postcards, 1929-40

Stalin was born Iosif Dzhugashvili in the small Georgian town of Gori, and his birthdate was officially recorded as December 21, 1879. By 1899, he had become a faithful follower of Lenin's version of Marxism and had begun his activity as an underground radical activist. Stalin organized boycotts, arsons, extortions, strikes, and robberies and printed and distributed Marxist literature. In 1917, Stalin supported the Bolshevik coup and was appointed the People's Commissar (Narkom) of Nationalities, a member of the first Sovnarkom (Council of People's Commissars, equivalent to a Cabinet). In April 1922, Stalin was elected Secretary General of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party with Lenin's support. However, Lenin quickly realized that in this position, Stalin had acquired too much advantage in the intense power struggle that unraveled within the Politburo. Before Lenin died in January 1924, he prepared his political "Testament," in which he strongly advised the Party to remove Stalin from his position. Although in his Testament Lenin was critical of all members of Politburo as his potential successors, this was his only specific recommendation. Against Lenin's will, his Testament was read to Party representatives only after his death, and its discussion was essentially suppressed. As a result, Lenin's recommendation was ignored, and Stalin continued his political ascent. In the next few years, Stalin successfully defeated most of his enemies and rivals within the Party. In December 1929, on the occasion of Stalin's fiftieth birthday, the major

official newspaper *Pravda* proclaimed a new official slogan in its feature editorial: “Stalin is the Lenin of today.”



Fig. 1A. “I. V. Stalin. Artist I. I. Brodsky,” first Soviet prepaid postcard with Stalin’s portrait (1929). The portrait of Stalin by I. I. Brodsky was created in 1926.

Meanwhile, in the spring of 1929, the People’s Commissariat of Post and Telegraph (Narkompochtel) issued a series of more than forty different postcards with reproductions of Russian paintings from the Tretyakov Gallery and the Museum of Revolution. They all had preprinted postage (*indicia*) for domestic mailing, which made them official government documents.¹¹ Although some of the paintings on the postcards were ideologically neutral masterpieces of prerevolutionary Russian art, others carried clear propaganda messages directed against the Tsarist regime and in praise of the revolution and socialist construction. Among those paintings were two portraits of the Party leaders: a portrait of Lenin by A. R. Eberling and a portrait of Stalin by I. I. Brodsky (fig. 1A)¹⁵. This was the first appearance of Stalin’s image on official Soviet stationery. Despite the relatively small print run of the series—105,000—the inclusion of Stalin’s portrait emphasized his status as the heir of Lenin as the leader of the Party and was a clear sign of his rapidly developing cult. The only prepaid illustrated postcard issued by Narkompochtel prior to this series commemorated Lenin immediately after his death in 1924 and featured his photograph.

In addition to these high-quality color reproductions, between 1927 and 1934, Soviet postal authorities issued more than three hundred so-called advertising-agitational postcards prepaid for domestic mailing.¹² They were cheaply printed in single color and carried a variety of messages ranging from “Comrade peasants! Preserve and turn over sheep and goat intestines for further processing!” to “Working people! Strengthen international proletarian solidarity!” In 1931, Stalin’s portrait appeared on one of these postcards. The postcard addressed the need to improve national system of transportation and made it a political issue: “The time has come to deal with the transport challenge in the Bolshevik way and move it forward!” (fig. 1B). The slogan was taken from an official directive of the Central Committee published in *Pravda* earlier that year; this postcard was issued in one million copies.

A little later, quotations from Stalin's articles and speeches began appearing on other propaganda postcards and illustrated prepaid envelopes. He was the only Party leader whose name could be found on these issues; in most cases Stalin was associated with a major propaganda campaign called the "Six conditions of comrade Stalin."¹³ In the spring of 1933, the journal *Sovetskii kollekt-sionier* published a five-year plan of Soviet stamp issues, which included a propaganda set based on the "Six conditions" to be released by the end of the same year. The set has never been produced and is not known in essays.¹⁴



Fig. 1B. Stalin's portrait on propaganda postcard calling for improvement of transportation (1931).

According to some historians, Stalin's cult in the USSR was somewhat restrained in 1929-1933, but reached its apogee by the 17th Congress of the Bolshevik Party in January 1934.¹⁶ In his report to the Congress, Stalin proclaimed the decisive victory of socialism in the USSR, and the feature article in *Pravda*, published on the first day of the Congress, was titled "The Congress of Victors." In his closing statement, Stalin noted that the Congress "revealed an exceptional ideological, political and organizational unity of the Party," which was followed by loud collective exclamations by the delegates: "Long live the great Stalin!"¹⁷

The first Soviet stamp depicting Stalin appeared in this atmosphere of adulation as the high value of the set "Ten years without Lenin." However, it was the second set commemorating the same date within the same year, which was quite unusual. It was probably added to the five-year plan of Soviet stamp issues at the last moment, since the plan approved for publication in *Sovietskii kollekt-sionier* in September 1932 did not mention it. Five months later, in February 1933, philatelic journal *Rossica* announced a different five-year plan of Soviet commemorative issues for 1933–1937, which now incorporated both sets and described them as follows:¹⁸

- For 1933: Five years of Lenin's Mausoleum, three values
- For 1934: Ten years since Lenin's death, six values



Fig. 2A. First Soviet stamp with Stalin's image (November 1934).²³



Fig. 2B. "Under Lenin's banner for Socialist construction" (poster by Gustav Klutsis, 1930).

The first set was issued 7 February 1934, seventeen days after the anniversary of Lenin's death.¹⁹ Its subject as defined initially by the People's Commissariat of Communications (Narkomat sviazi, formerly Narkompochtel) seems puzzling. Lenin's Mausoleum, a marble-clad concrete structure that was depicted on all stamps using the identical monochrome design, had opened to the public in October 1930, and there was no reason to mention its fifth anniversary in the stamp set's description. Indeed, existing catalogs define the subject of this set as "Ten years since Lenin's death" without mentioning the Mausoleum.²⁰ Although one can only speculate why Soviet postal authorities planned and executed the issue of the second set, it was certainly a farsighted political decision. The plain picture of the Mausoleum failed to connect with the contemporary political realities. It was important to show "The Lenin of today," and in November 1934, the first stamp with Stalin on it was issued (fig. 2A).

The designers of the stamp used the relatively rare artistic device of "double profile." Stalin had previously appeared in close association with Lenin's image in a breakthrough 1930 poster, "Under Lenin's Banner towards Socialist Construction" (fig. 2B). That poster's designer, Gustav Klutsis, was arguably the most important Soviet graphic artist of the 1920s and 1930s. In this photomontage, Stalin's face was half-covered with Lenin's. Klutsis's idea was elaborated further in the photomontage published in *Pravda* on July 30, 1933

(fig. 2C). In this composition, Stalin was placed in front of Lenin, rather than behind him. Although the first Stalin stamp closely resembles the photo-montage in *Pravda*, the stamp is more impressive in its artistic quality and it combined the living Stalin with the deceased Lenin in a much more apt manner. Stalin looks fully alive, while Lenin is depicted as a bust in marble. Over the next few years, the double profile “Lenin-Stalin” became a staple of Soviet propaganda and, judging by the output of Soviet graphic artists, its execution on the 1934 stamp became the exemplar for their works.²¹

Both verbal and visual association of Stalin with Lenin in Soviet propaganda pursued three main goals. First, it demonstrated the continuity of power; second, affirmed the legitimacy of Stalin’s power; and third, implied Stalin’s infallibility by association with the irrefutable founder of the Soviet state.

Visual elements of the 1934 “Lenin-Stalin” stamp appealed to Soviet people, presenting simple, familiar icons. At the same time, as it has been noted by many authors, stamps are often used as propaganda intended for international audiences; this aspect of Soviet propaganda on stamps, however, has not received adequate scholarly attention. Meantime, the 1934 stamp was clearly designed to serve this important ideological function. Text was kept to a minimum, and the internationally recognized profiles of Lenin and Stalin were set against a background of people marching with huge banners. This energetic picture, emphasized by crimson coloring and a light orange background, created an immediate association with fire and, by extension, with revolution.²² The artfully fading background added a theatrical quality to the design.

The high value of the first “Lenin-Stalin” stamp suggests that its primary target audience was the international philatelic community, which at that time was extremely



Fig. 2C. The earliest “double profile” Lenin-Stalin (*Pravda*, artist unknown, July 1933).

large and inclusive. Indeed, as suggested in an earlier work on postal propaganda, “[t]he higher the denomination of the postage stamp, the greater the probability that the message is designed for foreign response.”²⁴ Thirty kopeks, the denomination of the stamp, was the rate charged for foreign airmail postcards and for letters to Central Europe. However, only fifty thousand copies of this top value were issued, the lowest print run for Soviet commemoratives of that period, and covers franked with this stamp are extremely rare.

Beginning in 1921, strict control of stamp collecting was introduced in the Soviet Union. All foreign stamp exchanges and sales of new Soviet issues became subject to a state monopoly.²⁵ Taking full advantage of this legislation, the Narkompochtel actively sold new Soviet issues through various foreign philatelic firms. These sales intensified after 1929, when the production quality of Soviet stamps improved noticeably. Special attention was given to stamps carrying international postal rates because they “were expected to tell the truth to the world about the victories of the workers’ country of the Soviets.”²⁶ While some of these stamps may have served as postage to foreign destinations, they were mostly sold unused to philatelic dealers throughout the world, garnering both propaganda and hard currency benefits.²⁷



Fig. 3. German official postal stationery commemorating the ascent of NSDAP to power and the first appearance of Hitler on an official postal issue (1934). The preprinted stamp value was for regular domestic mail.

As far as its design and potential propaganda value are concerned, the first Stalin stamp of 1934 seems to have been more effective than stamps showing other dictators of the era. In particular, it presents remarkable parallels to the first appearance of Hitler on official German postal stationery in 1934 (fig. 3). Hitler’s postcard contains strikingly similar elements of design: a double profile of Hitler and Hindenburg, marching crowd with banners, orange-red colors associated with fire and revolution, a theatrical nighttime image. However, German designers failed to create the integrated and dynamic miniature that was so successfully executed by Soviet artists.²⁸

Later, the use of Stalin's and Hitler's likenesses on stamps diverged completely. Hitler appeared on more and more stamps. As Germany's situation in the war became increasingly desperate, German stamps became increasingly portentous. The excessive use of the dictator's image while the country was losing the war signaled a major malfunction of the Nazi propaganda machine and a sign of Hitler's disconnect with reality.

Stalin's attitude towards his own cult of personality was much more shrewd and visionary. From time to time, he hypocritically protested the overuse of his name and likeness. For instance, in 1925, Stalin protested the renaming of the city of Tsaritsyn to Stalingrad: "I found out that Tsaritsyn is going to be renamed Stalingrad I did not and do not insist on renaming Tsaritsyn to Stalingrad I strive neither for glory, nor for tribute, and don't want to create a wrong impression." Despite the protest, the city was renamed.²⁹

In another case, Stalin wrote in response to a plan to publish for children a collection of stories from his childhood: "I am decisively opposed to the publication of 'Stories of Stalin's Childhood.' The author has been misled by ... sycophants Most important is that the book has a tendency to inculcate in the consciousness of Soviet children (and people in general) a cult of personalities, great leaders and infallible heroes. That is dangerous and harmful. The theory of the 'heroes' and the 'mob' is not a Bolshevik theory but an SR [social-revolutionary] one This little book will assist the SRs. Every such book will contribute to the SRs and will harm our general Bolshevik cause. I advise you to burn the book. —I. Stalin. 16.11.1938."³⁰

Meanwhile, by 1937, forty-four cities, towns, and villages in the USSR were named after Stalin.⁹ In addition, all kinds of institutions, streets, and even the highest mountain in the USSR carried the name of the Great Leader, and it was hard to find a place without a monument to Stalin. As far as stamps and postcards were concerned, the use of Stalin's likeness and name by Soviet propaganda was more complicated. While the Commissariat of Communications did not issue any official stationery with Stalin's portrait or name between 1934 and the beginning of the war in 1941, various Soviet publishers produced a number of non-stamped postcards with his portrait. Until 1938, these publishers usually reprinted one of a very limited number of sanctioned portraits of Stalin. Some of these postcards were issued by "Soyuzfoto," a publishing house affiliated with the Soviet agency "Intourist," and they often ended up being sent by foreign visitors to their home countries as souvenirs. These postcards conveyed an image of a benevolent, paternalistic leader (fig. 4A), sometimes with his famous pipe, in other cases sharing a good laugh with Kliment Voroshilov, Soviet Commissar of Defense and member of the Politburo. Postcards



Fig. 4A. Postcard issued by "Soyuzfoto," distributed by "Intourist" and sent home from Moscow by a Danish tourist visiting the USSR in 1936.



Fig. 4B. Postcard issued by publishing house "Children's Book Factory," c. 1938.

issued by other publishers were more in line with Stalin's ever-growing cult of personality; their design became more elaborate and included additional symbols of power, such as banners and intricate frames (fig. 4B), but these were almost never mailed to foreign destinations.

The publication of several books about Stalin's early years, culminating with his official biography in 1939, resulted in the mass production of picture postcards illustrating episodes of his early life.³¹ Many of these postcards reproduced paintings from the December 1939 exhibition called "Stalin and the People of the Country of Soviets in Visual Arts," which opened in Tretyakov Gallery on the occasion of Stalin's sixtieth birthday.³² By that time, war had overtaken Europe, virtually no foreigners visited the USSR, and these postcards were used exclusively domestically.

In contrast to the abundance of postcards, Stalin appeared on relatively few stamps. Moreover, none of these stamps issued before the war were personally dedicated to Stalin. Before 1965, the planning of new issues of Soviet stamps was the responsibility of an editorial-artistic council subordinated to the Commissariat of Communications; very little is known about that council's work.³³ At least in some instances, tight control over the use of portraits of Stalin and other Soviet leaders in mass media was exerted at the highest level of power, often through verbal orders.³⁴ The same type of control was most likely in effect when it came to the use of Stalin's image on stamps.

Unlike postcards, stamps are official documents issued by the government. Stamps of the Russian Empire traditionally displayed just the national coat of arms; however, in 1913, portraits of Nicholas II were displayed on 7 and 10 kopeck

stamps, which represented the two most common rates for domestic and foreign letters respectively, and on the high value of 5 ruble in the famous Romanov set.³⁵ Moreover, after the end of World War I, many newly formed European republics, including Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Germany, depicted their living heads of state on commemorative and even definitive stamps.

Naturally, the Soviet Union wanted to distance itself from the practice of placing images of monarchs or heads of “bourgeois states” on stamps. A book called “What a Philatelist Should Know” summarized official Soviet policy: “The main elements of design of all predecessors [of Soviet stamps], no matter where they were issued, were the emblems of oppression of working people—images of carnivorous birds and animals, which became coats of arms of capitalist countries, or portraits of kings and conquerors, who shed rivers of people’s blood. Soviet stamps for the first time in the world displayed the emblems of liberation and labor, portraits of the true masters of life—worker and peasant.”³⁶

Most probably, this was the main reason why the image of Stalin, or, for that matter, of any other living Soviet leader, never appeared on Soviet definitive stamps, and only one commemorative issue was dedicated to Stalin personally during his lifetime.³⁷ Soviet definitive stamps only portrayed Lenin after his death. During his lifetime, in fact, Lenin decisively protested several attempts to use his likeness on stamps; only essays of those attempts survive.³⁸ The Soviet Union was (with the exception of Mongolia) the world’s only Marxist state, and its national symbols had to be different from bourgeois traditions and practices.

Another reason for Stalin’s limited representation on Soviet stamps was that, paradoxically, from 1934 until the beginning of the war, he was not the head of the USSR in any official capacity, but just one of several nominally equal secretaries of the Central Committee. President Kalinin, the formal head of the Soviet Union at that time, appeared on a commemorative set in 1935 on the occasion of his sixtieth birthday. Apparently it was possible to represent him on stamps, which promoted his image as the “people’s leader,” without challenging Stalin’s authority.³⁹

When Soviet stamps did include Stalin’s likeness or name, they always mentioned him indirectly while being officially dedicated to some unrelated cause. The cause, however, was often distorted, as in the case, for example, of the 80 kopeck stamp from the set “Twenty years of the Red Army” issued in 1938 (fig. 5).



Fig. 5. “Stalin greets the First Cavalry Army” (1938), from “Twenty years of the Red Army.”

The stamp reproduced the well-known painting “Stalin greets the First Cavalry Army” (1933) by M. Avilov, which supported a major falsification of the history of the Red Army. This misrepresentation had been initiated in 1929 by K. Voroshilov’s article in *Pravda*, which claimed that Stalin created the Red Army, though in fact Trotsky had founded it.⁴⁰ The set was issued after the deportation of Trotsky and execution of two-thirds of the top officers of the Red Army during the Great Terror, so anyone who knew the real history was either dead or scared into silence.



Fig. 6A. “Stalin monument at the All-Union Agricultural Exhibition” (1940).

Another prewar stamp that indirectly featured Stalin was included in the set of seventeen stamps, “All-Union Agricultural Exhibition” (October 1940). One of these stamps (fig. 6A) showed S. D. Merkurov’s thirty-meter monument to Stalin, which stood in front of the pavilion of mechanization. The stamp was the high value of the set, and its print run of one million was higher than average. Nevertheless, it was so rarely used for postage that it can be considered a primarily philatelic and propaganda issue.⁴¹

The decision to devote to Stalin just one stamp out of seventeen was in striking contrast with the actual arrangement of the displays at the exhibition. According to the contemporary description, his presence at All-Union Agricultural Exhibition was overwhelming: “[Stalin’s] sayings on every subject ... were incised on the exterior and interior walls... His image, like his name, was omnipresent... White plaster statues of his fatherly figure were placed at the center of altar-like constructions in every pavilion.”⁴²

This apparent contradiction can be explained by Stalin’s cautious approach to his international image, which can be illustrated by an excerpt from the 1939 diary of Georgii Dimitrov, the head of the Comintern. Dimitrov discusses with Stalin and his close associates one of the traditional “May Day appeals” to all Communist parties and members of the Comintern. The appeals were written by Dmitri Manuilsky, who had been the previous head of Comintern, and one of them praised Stalin in especially overstated terms: “Long live our Stalin! Stalin means peace! Stalin means Communism! Stalin is our victory!”

- J. V. [Stalin]: [Manuilsky] is a toady! He was a Trotskyite! We criticized him... and now he has started toadying! ...
- J. V. would not allow “under the banner of Marx-Engels-Lenin-*Stalin*” to remain in the appeal but insisted on simply “Marx-Engels-Lenin.”... It is

not a question of *prestige*, but a question of *principle*. Slogans [like this one] are our own “national business,” and in this case we slipped up [the slogan had already been published]. There was no call to write them like that! But this is an *international appeal*: here we have to put things more precisely!”⁴³ (Emphasis added by Dimitrov.)



Fig. 6B. Stalin monument on the postcard published in Leningrad (1940).

It is also interesting to compare the composition of the stamp, which was intended for both domestic and international propaganda, with the composition of one of the postcards showing the same subject (fig. 6B). New issues of stamps were distributed to international markets through dealers; it was highly improbable that the postcard would be sent abroad, because very few foreigners visited the USSR in 1940. On the stamp, the monument is shifted aside, and the

pavilion, symbolizing Soviet economic success, is placed at the center of the composition. On the postcard, on the contrary, the monument is exactly at the center—a visual cue ascribing the country’s economic success to the wise leadership of one man.⁴⁴

Many other issues also carried the name or likeness of Stalin in such an inconspicuous way that it can only be seen with a magnifying glass. These might be defined as “cryptic appearances;” they became especially common after the war. These issues probably played only a marginal role in propaganda, reflecting instead the realities of everyday life in the Soviet Union. For instance, in a 1938 set commemorating Ivan Papanin’s polar expedition, Stalin’s tiny profile appears on a banner raised above the ice camp.⁴⁵ Another example of such a cryptic appearance was the 1938 stamp from the set dedicated to the twentieth anniversary of the Komsomol.



Fig. 7. “Cryptic appearance” of Stalin’s name on the stamp “XX years of Komsomol” (left, full image; right, enlarged to show detail).

Young members of the Komsomol hold books with the names of Lenin and Stalin in miniscule type on their covers (fig. 7). We can safely assume, however, that Soviet people did not need a magnifying glass to find out what books Soviet youths were supposed to be reading.

Stalin on stamps and stationery during World War II

A few days after the Germans invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, Stalin became the head of the newly formed State Defense Committee, an extraordinary organ of consolidated state power. The country was in a critical situation, and all stamp issues planned for the rest of the year were evidently cancelled. Instead, only two more stamps were produced in 1941. The first—"Be a Hero!"—appealed to the most basic national values, depicting a mother sending her son to battle. The second showed a group of volunteers and a long, virtually illegible, slogan: "In response to the appeal of the great leader of the people Comrade Stalin, sons of the Soviet motherland join volunteer militia." During the initial period of the war, when the Red Army suffered disastrous defeats, Soviet propaganda avoided associating Stalin's personal image with the losses.⁴⁶ Especially revealing in this respect was the 1942 year-set of Soviet stamps. Only twenty were issued, as compared with sixty in a typical prewar year, and none of these stamps displayed any signs of official ideology. Instead, they showed mostly heroes of the war, battle scenes, and workers on the home front. Even the hammer and sickle, the official symbol of the USSR, was limited to only one stamp. Stalin's name, portrait, or profile were largely absent from the innumerable propaganda postcards and letter sheets issued before January 1943.⁴⁷

The leadership of the country realized that Communist ideology and even Stalin's personal popularity did not provide strong enough initiatives to fight. The commander-in-chief appeared on Soviet stamps only when the immediate danger for the Soviet Union had passed, after the Red Army changed the course of the war by its victory at Stalingrad in November 1942. For the first time during the war, Stalin was depicted on stamps together with Lenin; this set commemorated twenty-five years of the Bolshevik revolution (fig. 8). The set was issued in January 1943, two months after the actual celebration.



Fig. 8. "Twenty-five years of the October Revolution" (January 1943).

One of these stamps showed workers of the military industry; another, which paid the most common postage for a regular letter, included portraits of Lenin and Stalin, the Kremlin towers as the embodiment of national unity, and rays shining from behind the Kremlin that symbolized the bright Communist future. At that moment, Soviet ideology began to refocus on building Communism: only four stamps in the set of eight were related to the ongoing war; others could be categorized as general Communist propaganda.

In 1944, the set “Ten years without Lenin” from 1934 was reissued as “Twenty years without Lenin.” Using new dates, this set introduced two new values (the lowest and highest of the set), including another “Lenin-Stalin” stamp (similar to fig. 2A) in different colors. The set was probably intended primarily for the international philatelic market; its design made for nice arrangement on an album page, and the new top value of 3 rubles was too high for any standard postal rate.

In January 1945, the Lenin-Stalin double profile appeared on a stamp depicting a medal awarded to Soviet partisans (fig. 9A). It was the first of several stamps that showed Stalin’s portrait on medals and awards. The original design was commissioned for another medal, “Twenty five years of the Soviet army,” which had never been issued, so the design was reused.⁴⁸ This explains why the double profile appeared first on the medal of relatively lesser importance.

After the partisan medal, Stalin’s profile appeared on the most common medal awarded to all who fought in the war and on a similar one for those who worked on the home front. Each was inscribed with the words, “Our cause is just, we have won” (fig. 9B). Though the victory was achieved at the cost of upward of 27 million lives



Fig. 9A. Medal: “To the partisan of the Great Patriotic War” (1945).



Fig. 9B. Medals: “For the victory over Germany in the Great Patriotic War” and “For outstanding work effort during the Great Patriotic War” (1946).

and the enormous heroism and suffering of the Soviet people, it had been appropriated by a single man. This fact has certainly attracted the attention of historians. For instance, in a 2010 biography of Stalin, Robert Service wrote: “Memoirs by generals, soldiers and civilians were banned. Stalin wanted to control, manipulate and canalize popular memory ... [Stalin’s official biography] entirely lacked ... the contribution

of other leaders or the people as a whole ... Stalin, the Party, the Red Army and the USSR were represented as indistinguishable from each other.”⁴⁹

None of the projects of victory medals submitted by major Soviet artists included Stalin.⁵⁰ Instead, they depicted foot soldiers, pilots, tank men, nurses, and other rank-and-file heroes of the war. Hardly anyone but Stalin could have made the decision to reject all of them and put his profile on the medals.

After September 1939, when Stalin signed his pact with Hitler, some European countries, especially France and Great Britain, saw a surge of anti-Stalin propaganda.⁵¹ In the United States in the late 1930s, the majority of population held isolationist views, and Stalin remained at the periphery of public attention. On January 1, 1940, after the beginning of the war, *Time* magazine pronounced him “Man of the Year” and put his portrait on the cover. However, the caption that accompanied the portrait, “Ivan the Terrible was right,” referred to Stalin’s domestic policy of political violence, not to his aggression against Poland.

After June 1941, when German attacked the Soviet Union, and after Pearl Harbor in December 1941, Stalin became the leader of the U.S.’s and Great Britain’s major ally in the war. His image in the public opinion in the West had to undergo a radical change. Although he was not depicted on stamps, his likeness and name were often used on illustrated covers, which were especially popular in the USA.

“Patriotic Covers” had first appeared in the United States and Confederate States during the Civil War. They were privately printed and sold to members of the public who wanted to express their political sentiments and loyalties, whether by mailing them or keeping them as collectibles. This tradition continued throughout American history. The Second World War saw an especially prolific production of patriotic covers by professionals and amateurs. In total, more than 12,000 such covers are known to exist.⁵²



Fig. 10A. Illustrated American Patriotic cover sent in May 1942 by a serviceman from Canton Island, a major air base in the middle of the Pacific.

Naturally, in addition to flags, slogans and military scenes, these covers incorporated portraits of political and military leaders. From 1942 on, Stalin was depicted in cartoons as a benevolent strong man beating the Germans (fig. 10A) and on more formal covers illustrating cooperation between Allies (fig. 10B) as the head of the fighting ally and a member of the “Big Three” or the “Big Four” (with the leader of China, Chiang Kai-shek). In 1945, he



Fig. 10B. Illustrated cover sent on January 20, 1944, from Army Post Office 27, which served many units in the Pacific. Note that China is still represented by Chiang Kai-shek.



Fig. 10C. Illustrated cover postmarked on the Victory Day, May 8, 1945, in Washington, DC.

appeared, of course, on covers celebrating the victory (fig. 10C). A total of about thirty patriotic covers incorporated either the likeness or the name of the Soviet leader in their design.

The last American covers showing Stalin in positive light were produced on the occasion of the Soviet Union joining the U.S. in the war against Japan in August 1945, as had been agreed during the Yalta conference (fig. 11A). After the end of the war, it did not take long for Americans to realize that the relatively brief period of collaboration was over. One of the first confrontations widely publicized in American media centered on the fate of the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria. Following a secret decree by Stalin and in violation of Yalta agreements, more than 500,000 Japanese soldiers who laid down their arms were sent to the GULAG for hard labor. Stalin did not admit this fact until 1947, despite several inquiries by the Allies. This episode became the subject of one of the earliest anti-Stalin illustrated cover produced in the fall of 1945 (fig. 11B).



Fig. 11A. Illustrated U.S. patriotic cover commemorating the USSR joining the U.S. in the war against Japan and postmarked on the day when it happened.

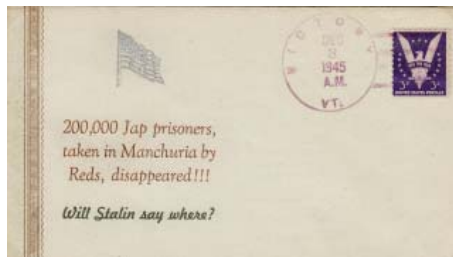


Fig. 11B. Illustrated U.S. patriotic cover with the first sign of worsening relations with the former Ally.

After that rift, Stalin's name was used on American covers as a symbol of tyranny and anti-Americanism. Instead of his likeness as a portrait or a cartoon, he was represented either by a quotation or by a mention in the message on the cover, with texts such as the following:

"Awake! Americans! Civilization on trial! Judges: Stalin, Molotov and Gromyko. Substituting for Mussolini, Hitler and Hirohito, but on a larger more wicked scale!" (Cover was issued in August 1947 in response to rejection of the Marshall plan by the USSR.)

"September 24, 1946. Joseph Stalin said: 'Democracies can live in peace with Russia.' We wonder if Stalin also means freedom for ALL peoples? If so, HOW will this apply to the countries dominated by Russia?" (The quotation was taken from an interview with the correspondent of British newspaper "The Sunday Times." Cover was issued in 1949 probably in response to political repressions in Hungary.)



Fig. 11C. Illustrated U.S. patriotic issued during the war in Korea and sent from U.S. Air Force Base on Marianas Islands in December 1951.

During World War II, visual propaganda was aimed at evoking strong emotional responses, while during the Cold War textual messages aimed at more reasoned reactions.⁵³ Interestingly, Stalin appeared in person again on American illustrated covers in December 1951, at the height of Korean War. In October 1951, the US Air Force tested a mock nuclear attack on the North, and the characteristic wartime imagery showed the Soviet leader and Kremlin cathedrals shaken by sound waves of American nuclear explosion (fig. 11C).

Axis propaganda. In Axis propaganda, Stalin, together with FDR and Churchill, personified the enemy. In addition to numerous postcards with caricatures distributed in neutral Portugal and in some occupied countries, German propaganda used Stalin's image in two instances, which imitated legitimate postage stamps.

The first one appeared on postcards intended for postage-free mailing to and from the military; these were printed in fairly large numbers. Although the exact date is not known, judging by existing postmarked postcards they were introduced in the first half of 1943. These postcards carried imprints imitating postage stamps

with caricatures of FDR, Churchill and Stalin and a caption “Worth no pfennig.” In particular, on the postcard with Stalin, his image had an exaggerated hooked nose and other Jewish-looking features, while in his hands he squeezes the hammer and sickle, broken as in a fit of despair (fig. 12A).⁵⁴ The same caricature was printed on stationery postcards intended for civilian population of occupied Eastern territories. This caricature maintained the continuous effort of German propaganda to remind its target audience that Stalin was serving Jewish interests and could have been a Jew himself. Interestingly, the Nazi leadership and printed media never claimed that Stalin was a Jew, while Hitler himself announced in all seriousness in a speech in 1942 that F. D. Roosevelt had Jewish blood.⁵⁵ Thus, the hint at Stalin’s Jewishness was intended for Germans with the lowest level of education; for the rest, the Jewish features of the cartoon character were just a reminder of the general anti-Semitic concept. As far as the Red Army and Soviet civilians were concerned, this approach to anti-Soviet propaganda turned out to have rather limited effect because the Nazi leaders grossly overestimated the anti-Semitism of Soviet people.

The caricatures on these postcards were created by accomplished graphic designer Heinz Fehling. Despite being actively involved in Nazi visual propaganda throughout the war, Fehling was not accused of any wrongdoing and successfully continued his career after 1945.

Another Nazi propaganda issue parodied 1930s British stamps that were quite familiar to both collectors and to the general public. One of them was the half penny “Silver Jubilee of George V” issue (1935); the other was a one and a half pence “Coronation of George VI” (1937) (fig. 12B and fig. 12C). On the first, the king’s profile was replaced with Stalin’s and the dates were changed to 1939–1944; on the second, Stalin’s portrait replaced the image of the queen consort. The history of these parodies is well known. They were produced as a side project of “Operation Bernhard”⁵⁶ following a personal initiative of Himmler, the head of Nazi propaganda and a paranoid



Fig. 12A. Caricature of Stalin from postage-free military stationery.



Fig. 12B. Parody of 1/2 penny George V stamp.



Fig. 12C. Parody of 1 1/2 pence George VI stamp.

anti-Semite. In ordering these stamps with their anti-Jewish messages, Himmler had to overcome the resistance of German military intelligence, who considered it a waste of time and resources. Indeed, attempts to distribute them to philatelic markets through Swedish dealers were quickly quashed by Swedish police.⁵⁷

The portraits of Stalin on both fake issues are surrounded with Stars of David, five-point Soviet stars and the hammer and sickle. The design and quality of these parodies were among the best of postal propaganda materials produced during the war. Even the monogram of the king on the 1 1/2 pence stamp was skillfully transformed into “SSSR.” However, according to the declassified CIA report quoted above, they were “late and ineffective.” Obviously, their ideological content in the summer of 1944, when they were printed, was completely obsolete. In addition, the SS men who supervised the production overlooked a major typo, missing “I” in the words “Jewsh war” on the half-penny stamp.

Stalin on Soviet stamps after the war

After the first Victory medals (fig. 9B), Stalin’s profile began to appear on other Soviet medals, and these in turn were subsequently depicted on Soviet stamps. Sculpted images of Stalin could be found already on some Soviet postcards issued in the late 1930s, and, as Victoria Bonnell noted in her book, the tendency to portray him in lasting materials – for example carved in stone – became prevalent in Soviet posters in the early 1950s (fig. 13A).⁵⁸ Designers of Soviet stamps began portraying Stalin as if cast in bronze even when the images were not related to any existing awards. Thus, almost identical stamps commemorating anniversaries of the revolution in 1951 and 1952 both imitated sculpted bas-reliefs of Stalin and Lenin (fig. 13B). The design of these stamps conveyed a sense of lasting, if not eternal, power.

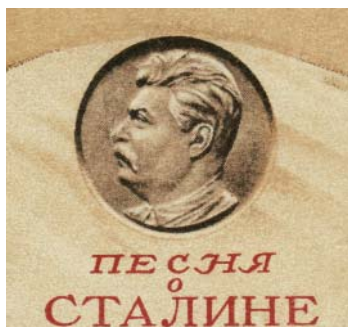


Fig. 13A. Sculpted image of Stalin – Soviet postcard, 1938 (fragment).



Fig. 13B. Sculpted image of Stalin – 34th anniversary of the October Revolution (1951).

As observed by many contemporaries and historians, after the war, ideological pressure in general and Stalin's cult of personality in particular increased substantially. Nevertheless, it seems that Stalin kept tight control over the use of his image on stamps. One striking example is his absence from stamps dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the October Revolution in 1947. A recently published catalog reproduces rejected essays of these stamps with Stalin portrayed on each of them (fig. 14).⁵⁹



Fig. 14. Thirty years of the October Revolution. Left - unapproved essays; right – two stamps from the issued set of six (November 1947).

The issued set actually had no image of Stalin. The most probable reason for his absence was the catastrophic 1946-1947 famine in the USSR, which killed between one and two million people and was caused to a large extent by government policies, in particular massive expropriation and export of grain. Quite understandably, Stalin did not want to be associated with this tragedy. Instead, some stamps of the set displayed the slogan “USSR is the country of advanced agriculture” and showed a field with abundant harvest. The decision to change the design could only have been made by Stalin personally; nobody else would have dared to do it. This is another indication that, at least in some cases, Stalin was personally involved in the decisions concerning stamp design.⁶⁰

At the end of 1951 or early 1952, a set of two stamps commemorating 50 years of workers' protests in Batumi was prepared, printed, but not released.⁶¹ The stamps showed Stalin leading a column of demonstrators. Besides the usual reluctance of the leader to allow his pictures on stamps, one could speculate that he had other reasons to cancel the issue. First, Stalin carefully controlled any public exposure of his early life, as it had quite a few episodes that would not have been officially approved even by his party comrades.⁶² Second, by the early 1950s, the party had positioned itself as the representative of Soviet people as a whole—rather than just the work-

ing class—and the depiction of Stalin leading the demonstration could have been a reminder of the “dictatorship of proletariat,” a somewhat outdated concept by that time. In any event, these stamps presented an ideological subject definitely too sensitive to be canceled by someone other than Stalin himself.

One innovative approach of Soviet stamp designers to creating a visual concept of Stalin’s popularity was displaying a large group of demonstrators marching and carrying Stalin’s portraits. Such stamps were first issued in July 1946 and June 1947 to commemorate a parade of physical culture and May Day, respectively (fig. 15A and fig. 15B). On both issues the artists conveyed the feeling of youthful energy, dynamism and popular admiration. This composition seems to be unique for Soviet propaganda: no other totalitarian regime of the era came up with a similar idea. It only re-appeared twenty years later, in 1966, on one of the innumerable stamps of People’s Republic of China (PRC) glorifying Mao Zedong.

In December 1949, Stalin officially turned seventy. To celebrate his birthday, Soviet postal authorities issued a souvenir sheet of four stamps (fig. 16). This is, strictly speaking, the only Soviet issue dedicated to Stalin personally.



Fig. 15A. Stalin’s portraits displayed at mass parades, Day of physical culture (1946).



Fig. 15B. May Day, May 1, 1947.



Fig. 16. Souvenir sheet dedicated to Stalin’s seventieth anniversary, central portion.

The first stamp showed a hut in Gori, Georgia, in which Stalin was born into the family of a poor cobbler. The second stamp reproduced a drawing by Evgeny Kibrik, called “Lenin arriving to Smolnyi during the night of October 24.” The Bolshevik coup occurred on October 25, 1917, and the headquarters of the uprising were located in Smolnyi monastery in Petrograd. The picture was fictional, both in general composition and in details: in reality, Lenin was a fugitive at that time, so he arrived in disguise wearing a wig and was not even recognized by security; Stalin arrived much later, in the middle of the night.⁶³ Most importantly, the actual leader of the Bolshevik coup was Trotsky. This falsification was exploited by Stalinist propaganda in other countries as well, and its goal was to establish the direct continuity of Marxist leadership from Lenin to Stalin at the exclusion of everybody else.

The third stamp of the sheet was based on a photograph of Stalin visiting a gravely ill Lenin, and it was intended to emphasize their closeness. Finally, the fourth stamp showed Stalin in his office in full military uniform as the victorious generalissimo (after a portrait by B. Karpov). The selection of pictures for the souvenir sheet is a perfect illustration of Stalin’s attitude toward postwar images of himself, as described by Robert Service: “He ... understood that the rarity of fresh images of him served to maintain public interest For such reasons he chose to place technical limits on his iconography to a greater extent than did most contemporary foreign rulers. He preferred to be painted than photographed [His] biography included a painting of him in his generalissimus’s uniform, [in which] his moustache appeared dark and even the hair on his head had only a suggestion of grey This painting by the artist B. Karpov was used in posters, busts and books.”⁶⁴

The design of the souvenir sheet was supposed to induce warm feelings of personal loyalty to the Great Leader. It presented a brief narrative of Stalin’s life and was lacking any symbols of the Soviet state and its official ideology; the hammer and sickle, the star, and the Kremlin towers were all notably absent. By that time, Stalin’s image itself had become the national symbol of the USSR.

At approximately the same time, at the end of 1949, Soviet propaganda began the “world peace campaign,” which was promoted in part through philately. “The struggle for peace” dominated the campaign as a theme and as an initiative that came directly from Stalin. Within a year, the USSR issued three two-stamps sets on the subject (fig. 17). On the



Fig. 17A.
“For peace!”
(December 1949).



Figure 17B.
Enlarged detail
showing the
worker’s hand
covering Eastern
Europe.

first, an oversize figure of a worker behind the globe carried the slogan “For peace! Against the instigators of war!” in one hand, while the other, in a forceful and rather symbolic gesture, covered most of Eastern Europe on the world map (fig. 17A, fig. 17B). In the lower left corner, Uncle Sam with a torch is trying to set the world on fire. Such a direct propaganda attack against an individual foreign country is rarely found on stamps, especially in the absence of ongoing military confrontation.



Fig. 17C. “We stand for peace!”
(October 1950).



Fig. 17D. “Peace will overcome war”
(October 1950).

The next set of stamps carried the slogan, “We stand for peace. We firmly move along our path led by the great STALIN!” (fig. 17C). The third set, “Peace will overcome war,” showed a classroom with Stalin’s portrait on the wall and the slogan, “Thank you, dear Stalin, for our happy childhood!” (fig. 17D). This latter stamp is an example of a tendency in Soviet visual arts to convey the omnipresence of Stalin by indirect means, or what Jan Plamper has called “representation in the absence of the represented.”⁶⁵ On another “Peace campaign” stamp of November 1951, there is a quotation from “Conversation of Stalin with the correspondent of newspaper *Pravda*, 17 February 1951,” which reads, “Peace will be preserved and consolidated if the peoples will take the cause of preserving peace into their own hands and defend it to the end.” This rather tautological quotation immediately became the staple of the international peace campaign and was endlessly cited throughout the Communist world.⁶⁶ By the early 1950s, the design of Soviet visual propaganda, including stamps, had become extremely traditional and bland, often featuring long, illegible slogans and quotations printed in tiny typefaces.

As a part of the “Peace campaign,” the Soviet government instituted an international “Stalin’s Peace Award for Strengthening Peace among Peoples,” which included, in addition to a \$25,000 prize (paid in currency), a special medal. This medal was depicted on a stamp issued in April 1953, soon after Stalin’s death, although it definitely had to have been planned in advance. By that time, the award had been in existence for three years, and twenty people had received it. The delay of three years in issuing the stamp might be explained by insufficient confidence in the loyalty of the laureates.

An ideologically important stamp was issued in the USSR in 1950 to commemorate May Day. This was the first image of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin together on a Soviet stamp.

Portraits of the great communists as equals had been combined before, in the 1933 poster by G. Klutsis, “Raise higher the banner of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin!”⁶⁷ Over time, this frontal arrangement was transformed into a set of overlapping profiles and appeared perhaps for the first time in 1936 on the cover of the magazine issued for the Red Army (fig. 18A), but not on stamps. The stamp of 1950 (fig. 18B) gave this composition an official status and international exposure. It emphasized the direct continuity of the world Marxist leadership. Before the war, the USSR had only one Marxist satellite, Mongolia, and its leading role in the movement was self-evident. By 1950, the victorious USSR had promoted or established Communist regimes in a dozen new countries, including China. Moreover, one of these countries, Yugoslavia, was already considered a deviant from Stalin’s “general line.” At that point, Soviet control over the world Communist movement should have been enforced by a strong propaganda message personified by Stalin.

The commemorations of certain events on stamps or, on the contrary, the disregard of events of significant ideological importance not only reflect political undercurrents but also, in some cases, anticipate forthcoming changes. This is particularly true in the case of totalitarian regimes. One of the most remarkable examples of this phenomenon was the fact that the Soviet Union did not issue any mourning stamps upon Stalin’s death on March 5, 1953. When Lenin died in 1924, mourning stamps were designed, printed, and made available throughout the country within five days. When Soviet president Kalinin died in 1946, the mourning stamp was issued just two days later. Nothing of this sort happened after Stalin’s death, and a number of planned issues were canceled. The absence of mourning stamps could be explained by Stalin’s failure to appoint his successor, by the struggle for power among the members of Politburo that had already started at his deathbed, or by the ensuing ideological confusion. Meanwhile, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Czechoslovakia issued mourning stamps immediately after Stalin’s death; Hungary even added a souvenir sheet.

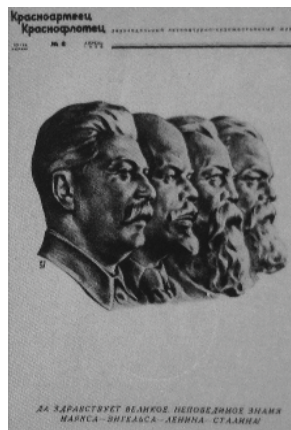


Fig. 18A. Stalin, Lenin, Engels, and Marx on the cover of the magazine “Krasnoarmeets i krasnoflotets” (“Serviceman of the Red Army and Red Navy”), April 1936.



Fig. 18B – “Forward to communism!” (Labor Day, May 1, 1950).

An astute political observer could not avoid noticing a set of two stamps issued in the USSR in November–December 1953. The set commemorated fifty years since the Second Congress of the Russian Social-Democratic Party, during which the Bolshevik faction emerged as a separate radical group. Stalin was nowhere to be found on those stamps. His conspicuous absence from such an ideologically important issue foreshadowed the emerging changes in the official attitude toward Stalin's legacy.

In March 1954, the Soviet Union issued a stamp to commemorate the one-year anniversary of Stalin's death (fig. 19A). The depiction of Stalin on this stamp was highly unusual. On one hand, he wore a military uniform with marshal shoulder straps that were introduced in the Red Army in 1943. On the other hand, it was a simple everyday uniform, not the exquisite marshal outfit in which he usually appeared in visual propaganda after the victory. This image was similar to the one published on the same occasion on March 6 in *Pravda* and other Soviet newspapers. Overall, it could have been interpreted as desacralization of the leader, his return to the ranks of the mortals. In its design, the monochrome dark brown stamp was quite reserved.



Fig. 19A. One year since Stalin's death (April 1954).



Fig. 19B. Stalin's seventy-fifth anniversary (December 1954).

The next Soviet set of two stamps featuring Stalin was issued in December 1954 to commemorate seventy-five years since his birth (fig. 19B). On these stamps, Stalin was shown in even simpler civilian clothes and at a relatively young age. The portrait seems to be based on a photograph of Stalin as People's Commissar (Narkom) of Nationalities taken in 1917.⁶⁸ This portrait had not been used in any propaganda materials since the 1920s. Thus, the stamps clearly emphasized the early period of his political life: revolution, civil war, industrialization.

Also at the end of 1954, the last Soviet stamp with a strong Stalinist ideological message was issued to commemorate the October Revolution (fig. 20A). Here, Stalin appeared within Marx, Engels, and Lenin for the second time. At least some members of the Soviet political elite still considered Stalin to have been the true follower of the Marxist-Leninist line. Indeed, a recently declassified protocol of a meeting of secretaries of the Central Committee that took place as late as November 1955 demonstrates the reluctance of some Party leaders to relinquish the legacy of Stalinism. Voroshilov, for instance, commented, “Our people will not understand us.”⁶⁹



Fig. 20A. Thirty-seventh anniversary of the October Revolution (November 1954).



Fig. 20B. Thirty-eighth anniversary of the October Revolution (November 1955), the last Soviet stamp showing Stalin's image.



Fig. 20C. Enlarged fragment of fig. 20B; the first man behind Lenin is Yakov Sverdlov, and the second is Joseph Stalin.

The last Soviet stamp featuring Stalin was included in the set celebrating the October Revolution in 1955 (fig. 20B). The stamp reproduced a 1950 painting by Dmitry Nalbandian, and had the slogan “Power—to the Soviets, peace—to the peoples.” The artist demonstrated exceptional sensitivity to the nuances of the new political realities: immediately behind Lenin stood Yakov Sverdlov, who played a prominent role in the Bolshevik coup and died too early to participate in the ensuing struggle for power; Stalin stood shoulder to shoulder with Sverdlov among other Bolshevik leaders. Just in case anyone might miss him, however, he was painted as a larger and more recognizable figure than Sverdlov.⁷⁰

In February 1956, during the closed meeting of the Twentieth Congress of CPSU, Khrushchev in his famous “secret speech” denounced the “violations of socialist legality” by Stalin and started the process of partial de-Stalinization of the USSR. Those members of the Soviet Politburo who were in open disagreement over this new course were ousted from the power, and Stalin disappeared from Soviet and Russian stamps for the next forty years.

Stamps of other Socialist countries

The establishment of the Soviet sphere of dominance in Eastern Europe was agreed upon during the meeting of the “Big Three”—Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill—in Yalta in February 1945. Despite the USSR’s commitment to “democracy,” within a few years after the end of WWII, Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, and Romania all became communist dictatorships with strong Stalinist leaders at the helm. While the USSR was going through its own cycle of changing stamp imagery, the use of Stalin’s likeness on the stamps and postal stationery of other postwar Communist nations served the common ideological goals of the Communist movement and, in many cases, provided support to their national leaders.⁷¹

Bulgaria. The relationship of this country to Stalin was a complex one. At the start of the war, Bulgaria maintained neutrality and then joined the Axis in April 1941, when the Germans requested the passage of their troops to fight in Greece and Yugoslavia. Soon, Bulgaria took advantage of the military situation and occupied large territories belonging to its Balkan neighbors. At the same time, Bulgaria never declared war against the USSR, and even diplomatic relations between the two countries were not broken. This policy was in line with the traditional Bulgarian image of Russia as the country’s liberator from Ottoman control in the 1870s. In August–September 1944, the Soviet Union declared war against Bulgaria, and the Red Army quickly occupied the country with the support of Communist-led Bulgarian resistance movement. Soon afterward, Georgi Dimitrov, Stalin’s close ally, former secret agent of Comintern, and the head of the Third Communist International in 1935–1943, arrived in Bulgaria at Stalin’s direction.

In February 1945, Bulgarian communists under Dimitrov’s leadership executed the regents of the underage king, members of parliament, top officers of the military, and a group of prominent journalists. As the result of the subsequently manipulated referendum, Dimitrov, who was still a member of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, became the *de facto* dictator of the Bulgaria. Despite these developments, Russia was still perceived as the liberator of the country from an unpopular puppet regime and German occupation, and frequent use of Stalin’s likeness on Bulgarian stamps did not conflict with the national identity.

In November 1948, Stalin appeared for the first time on the high value of the Bulgarian set dedicated to the Soviet Army. The next year Bulgaria, together with other Communist countries, celebrated Stalin’s seventieth anniversary by issuing a set of two stamps (fig. 21A). As a model for one of these stamps, artist V. Tomov,⁷²

used a well-known portrait of Stalin by Alexander Gerasimov (1939) but allowed himself to slightly modify the original picture by adding a “dove of peace” to the composition (fig. 21B).

Stalin’s attitude toward Dimitrov had changed, however, since the latter had committed a major political miscalculation by engaging in negotiations with Iosip Bros Tito, the communist dictator of Yugoslavia, in order to create a federation of the two countries. These negotiations had not been approved by Stalin, who did not want a strong Balkan state. In the summer of 1948, Stalin broke all relations with Yugoslavia, and Soviet propaganda unfolded a fierce anti-Yugoslavia campaign. Although this development was an unexpected turn in Soviet policy, Dimitrov immediately joined Stalin in his new course. Nevertheless, Soviet leadership harshly criticized Dimitrov, both behind closed doors and in Soviet media, including *Pravda*. Dimitrov’s political downfall seemed inevitable. In June 1949, he traveled to a spa in the USSR “to improve his health,” and soon died.⁷³

Dimitrov’s death was officially presented as a tragic loss of a Communist hero and a faithful Marxist, and in this capacity he was promptly deified in Bulgaria, becoming a local reincarnation of Lenin. Moreover, Dimitrov’s death several years before the beginning of de-Stalinization and his high status in the Communist world as the former head of the Comintern made it possible to retain him in the official pantheon until the very end of the Communist regime in Bulgaria.



Fig. 21A. Bulgarian stamps commemorating Stalin's seventieth anniversary.



Fig. 21B. Original painting by A. Gerasimov.



Fig. 22A. Dimitrov and Chervenkov in the traditional “double profile” arrangement on the seventieth anniversary of Dimitrov.



Fig. 22B. Congress of Bulgarian labor unions.

Chervenkov appeared in a double profile with Dimitrov. The stamp reflected a composition that was strikingly similar to the traditional Lenin-Stalin profile and a similar ideological connotation; it was repeated on another Bulgarian stamp just six months later (fig. 22A and fig. 22B).⁷⁴

During Chervenkov’s tenure, Stalin appeared on Bulgarian stamps as often as twice a year. In 1950, Stalin was shown on a stamp commemorating the one-year anniversary of the death of Dimitrov. On it, Stalin stood behind Dimitrov along with Soviet foreign minister Vyacheslav Molotov and Bulgarian prime minister Vasil Kolarov (fig. 23). Although in March 1949 Stalin had dismissed Molotov from his position as minister of foreign affairs,⁷⁵ Molotov’s descent was not widely publicized and so did not prevent the issuance of the stamp. Based on the official photograph of the signing ceremony, this stamp indicates that perhaps relatively minor propaganda issues such as this one were not tightly controlled from Moscow and instead left to the discretion of national authorities.

Also in 1950, Stalin appeared on a “struggle for peace” stamp. In 1952, two stamps featuring Stalin and Lenin celebrated thirty-fifth anniversary of the Russian October Revolution (fig. 24). The 44 stotinki stamp borrowed its design from the Soviet stamp of 1943 (see fig. 8), with symmetrical profiles of Lenin and Stalin and a shining light in the middle. The main difference was that in the Soviet stamp, the light was shining from behind the Kremlin tower, a Soviet national symbol, while

Dimitrov’s successor was the second man in the Party, Vasil Kolarov, who died after just a few months in office. He was succeeded by Dimitrov’s brother-in-law Vylko Chervenkov, the former head of the terrorist wing of the Bulgarian Communist Party and an ardent Stalinist. Chervenkov adopted not only Stalinist methods of ruling the country, but also a Soviet approach to visual propaganda. On a Bulgarian stamp issued in December 1951,



Fig. 23. Bulgaria, one-year commemoration of Dimitrov’s death (October 1950).

in the Bulgarian stamp, the source of the light was a more international symbol of communism, the hammer and sickle. The second stamp showed the Lenin-Stalin double profile with the Stamboliisky dam in the background; the construction of the dam had just been finished with the aid of the Soviet Union.



Fig. 24. Bulgaria, thirty-five year anniversary of the October Revolution.

In May 1953, Bulgaria issued a set of two mourning stamps commemorating Stalin's death. In early 1954, a stamp commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of Lenin's death depicted Stalin in a reproduction of the 1947 painting by Evgeny Kibrik, "There is such a party!" (fig. 25). The episode shown in the painting allegedly occurred during the Congress of the Soviets in the summer of 1917, when Lenin declared the readiness of the Bolshevik Party to seize power. The presence of Stalin next to Lenin is not supported by any historic evidence, and was most likely one of the Stalinist propaganda myths. Kibrik's painting was also reproduced on stamps of other Communist countries.

This was the last Bulgarian stamp to include Stalin. Cherventkov remained an unrepentant Stalinist to the end of his life in 1980, and in 1954 he was replaced by a more liberal Todor Zhivkov, who carried out partial de-Stalinization of the country and rehabilitated some of the victims of Dimitrov's and Cherventkov's regime.

Czechoslovakia. Unlike Bulgaria, which was an ally of Germany throughout World War II, Czechoslovakia was the victim of Nazi aggression, and the USSR strongly opposed the Munich agreements that resulted in German occupation in 1938. After the war, Czechoslovakia had high hopes for democratic development, and there was a popular sentiment of gratitude to the Red Army for liberation and to Stalin as its commander-in-chief. These feelings manifest in a postcard printed in 1945



Fig. 25. Bulgaria, thirty years since Lenin's death; reproduction of the drawing "There is such a party!" by Evgeny Kibrik.

by a major private publisher showing Stalin with the president of the Czechoslovak government in exile, Edvard Beneš (fig. 26). The postcard also showed Czechoslovak troops fighting together with the Red Army.



Fig. 26. "May 1945," postcard issued in Prague soon after the victory.

Three years later, in 1948, Czechoslovak communists carried out a coup and forced Beneš to appoint the former secretary of Comintern and hard-line Stalinist Klement Gottwald as the head of government.⁷⁶ The first set of two stamps that portrayed Stalin was issued in Czechoslovakia in December 1949 on the occasion of Stalin's seventieth birthday (fig. 27).

Stalin was shown in his everyday general uniform on the lower-value stamp, though the artist, well-known Czech engraver Jan Mráček, embellished the portrait by adding the Star of the Hero of Socialist Labor, which Stalin usually wore on his parade uniform. Stalin in the parade uniform, complete with insignia on the collar and marshal star, was portrayed on the higher value stamp created by another designer of numerous Czech stamps Jindra Schmidt. Both uniforms had



Fig. 27. Stalin's 70th anniversary (Czechoslovakia, 1949).

shoulder straps, which had been introduced in January 1943.

In 1951, Stalin was featured with Gottwald on two sets of Czechoslovak stamps (fig. 28A and fig. 28B). The first set celebrated thirty years of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. Two lower values of identical design showed the two dictators as equals; the third stamp displayed the foursome of Marx and his followers. The middle value of the second set reproduced the Kibrik painting “Lenin arriving to Smolnyi during the night of October 24,” which already appeared on Stalin’s seventieth birthday souvenir sheet issued by the USSR. Evidently, Gottwald used every possible occasion to enhance his standing as a faithful follower of Stalin,



Fig. 28A. Thirty years of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (May 1951).



Fig. 28B. Month of Soviet-Czechoslovak friendship (November 1951).

and Czechoslovak stamps were used for this purpose with remarkable persistence. The same year, Czechoslovakia issued one more postal item showing Gottwald with Stalin: a stationery postcard related to the “Struggle for Peace” campaign (fig. 28C). On the left, it reproduced a 1951 Soviet poster by B. Berezovskii and M. Solov’ev, “Under the leadership of great Stalin—forward to communism!” The postcard was issued in two variants with different quotations from “Conversation of Stalin with the correspondent of newspaper *Pravda*.” One was cited earlier, another reads: “The Soviet Union will adhere to its unwavering policy of prevention of war and preservation of peace.” The indicium showed a portrait of Klement Gottwald similar to that

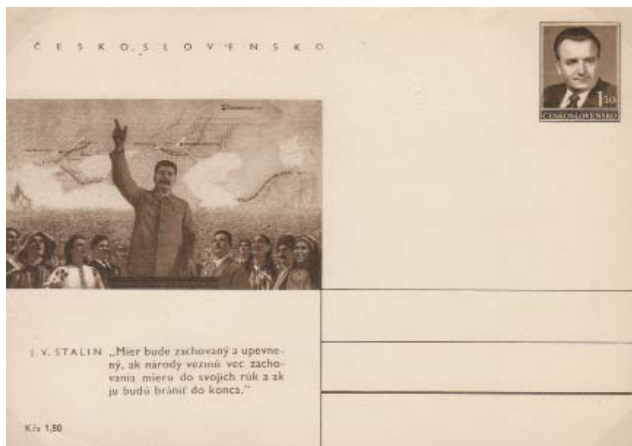


Fig. 28C. Stationery postcard for domestic use, 1951.

portraits of Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha and Mao Zedong occupy the foreground. The postcard turned out to be truly visionary; Mao Zedong and Enver Hoxha would remain the most faithful proponents of Stalinist policies after the de-Stalinization of other Socialist countries.

In 1952, Czechoslovakia commemorated thirty-five years of the October Revolution in Russia by issuing a set of two stamps of identical design. Each showed Lenin and Stalin conversing with four men, who represented the social base of the Red Army and Bolshevik power in accordance with official Soviet history: a worker, a sailor, a peasant, and a soldier returning from World War I. The design was based on a little-known drawing by Piotr Vasiliev.⁷⁷



Fig. 29. Postal stationery issued by Czechoslovak ministry of communications (1951).

found on common definitive issues of 1948–1949.

An exhibition in Prague dedicated to the Czechoslovak Communist Party’s anniversary occasioned another postcard in the same year (fig. 29). Featuring one of the central halls of the exhibition, the background displays the same poster used in the “Struggle for Peace” postcard (fig. 28C), while national flags of PRC and North Korea as well as

In 1953, Stalin appeared on an issue celebrating five years of the February coup that had ousted the last democratic institutions in Czechoslovakia. In the high value of this set, Gottwald and Stalin appeared in the familiar double profile usually reserved for Stalin-Lenin compositions (fig. 30A).



Fig. 30A. Five years of the February coup (1953).

The issue that celebrated May Day in that year also featured Stalin. The 1.50 Kč and 8 Kč stamps showed Lenin with Stalin and Marx with Engels, all cast on similar medallions (fig. 30B). The 3 Kč stamp depicted a demonstration of Pioneers carrying the portraits of Communist leaders (fig. 30C). Again, Stalin and Gottwald were shown as equals, as the crowd carried their portraits at the same level.



Fig. 30B. May Day, complete set (1953).



Fig. 30C. Enlarged detail of the 3 Kč stamp. Demonstrators carry portraits of Gottwald and Stalin (1953).

The first stamp of the issue, the 1 Kč value (fig. 30A), featured a highly unusual design, in which the obverse of the commemorative medal showed a handshake with an equilateral triangle in the background. Such a triangle was a very early symbol of the union movement in France, which had been abandoned by the early 1900s.⁷⁸ The handshake was easily recognizable as the official symbol of the largest American union organization, the AFL-CIO. However, it was not known as a symbol of the Czechoslovak union movement.⁷⁹

These symbols invited another interpretation, unrelated to unions. The triangle and handshake, with the thumb notably pointing slightly downward, are well-known symbols of Freemasonry.⁸⁰ Surrounding these symbols were branches of myrtle, a traditional symbol of love and the afterlife, which are central to Masonic teachings. One cannot help but wonder if the stamp carried a hidden subversive message of Freemasonry, which would be a unique occurrence in the history of Communist regimes. The Masonic movement in independent interwar Czechoslovakia was highly influential. In particular, Edvard Beneš, the former president and head of the government in exile, and Tomas Masaryk, the foreign minister in Beneš's cabinet, were Masons. Freemasons suffered severe prosecution during the Nazi occupation and, after the war, by the Communist rulers of the country. Thus, Masonic symbols were associated with national independence and resistance.



Fig. 31. Czechoslovakia, one year since Gottwald's and Stalin's deaths.

In March 1953, Gottwald went to Moscow to attend Stalin's funeral. Upon his return, just nine days after Stalin's death, Gottwald died of a burst artery. Czechoslovakia issued a black mourning stamp for Stalin, similar in design to the 1951 issue, and a mourning souvenir sheet for Gottwald. Like some other Communist dictators, Gottwald was embalmed and placed in a specially designed mausoleum. One year later, Czechoslovakia issued a commemorative set of three stamps showing mausoleums and bas-relief profiles of the two deceased leaders. This bas-relief-based stamp is probably the only stamp ever issued on which Stalin had a sagging fold under his chin and looked rather old (fig. 31).

After Gottwald's death, the president of Czechoslovakia, Antonín Zápotocký, working with Antonín Novotný, who later became the Secretary General of the Communist Party, continued Gottwald's conservative course and resisted de-Stalinization. Although there were no more show trials, repressions continued, and rehabilitation of the victims of Gottwald's regime did not begin until 1960. This resistance to change explains the late appearance of Stalin on a stamp issued in 1955 in commemoration of the tenth anniversary of liberation of Czechoslovakia.

The stamp (fig. 32) featured Prague's monument to Stalin, which was built of granite blocks and was the heaviest sculpture in Europe. Erected from 1952 to 1955, it weighed, according to different sources, between 14 and 17 thousand tons. Funded by public donations, the monument showed representatives of Czechoslovak people

on one side and representatives of Soviet people on the other. Because of widespread food shortages in the country as the result of Stalinist economic policies, a popular joke was that it was “the line to buy meat.”



Fig. 32. Czechoslovakia, 1955. Monument to Stalin in Prague on a maxi-card (picture postcard with the stamp showing matching image and a special cancel).

The sculpture of Stalin in front of the monument is noticeably different from other statues; he is shown as an old, slouching man with a menacing expression and disproportionately large boots. The sculptor, former avant-garde artist Otakar Švec, created this portrait despite the constant supervision of Czechoslovak secret service. During his work on the sculpture, Švec was terrorized and threatened as a traitor by people who dissented from the official ideology. Both he and his wife committed suicide before the unveiling of the monument.

In 1962, after the Twenty-first Congress of CPSU confirmed that the process of de-Stalinization would continue and Stalin’s body was removed from the Mausoleum in Moscow, the monument in Prague was blown up.

German Democratic Republic. The conversion of the Soviet occupation zone of Germany into a new state with Soviet zone of Berlin as its official capital was announced in October of 1949. Three years earlier the Social Democratic Party of Germany was forced to merge with the Communist Party of Germany to form the openly Stalinist Socialist Unity Party of Germany, and the head of the Party, Walter Ulbricht, became the *de facto* head of the new state. In 1937-1945, he lived in exile in Moscow and followed Stalin's "general line" to a tee. In particular, he enthusiastically supported the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact of 1939. The nominal head of the new state, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), was President Wilhelm Pieck, another German communist promoted by Stalin. Pieck lived in the USSR in 1935-1945, and in 1938-1943 served as the Secretary General of the Comintern.



Fig. 33. GDR-Soviet friendship, 1951.

The creation of the GDR occurred too close to Stalin's seventieth birthday in December 1949 to produce commemorative stamps in time. Stalin first appeared on a GDR stamp in December 1951 in a set dedicated to GDR-Soviet friendship (fig. 33).⁸¹ The 12 pfennig stamp was related to a propaganda campaign launched in the GDR in 1951 under the slogan, "Learn from Soviet comrades to improve productivity!"⁸² It showed Soviet worker Pavel Bykov, who proposed certain technical improvements to increase productivity, together with his East German colleague Erich Wirth, who introduced the new method at his workplace. The 24 pfennig stamp of the set showed Stalin and, slightly behind him, his faithful follower Wilhelm Pieck. The set portrayed Bykov and Wirth—rank-and-file workers—in the same visual context as the state leaders. Although this approach was in full agreement with the Marxist theory of the leading role of the working class, by the early 1950s, it was seldom used in Communist propaganda. On the contrary, bold designs introduced in Soviet posters by Gustav Klutsis around 1930 showed Communist leaders, especially Stalin, as giant men towering above the crowds. Later, Stalin was often shown

with children, who were of course literally and figuratively smaller than the leader. In this respect, the East German set appealed to the origins of Marxist movement. However, when the stamps are placed side-by-side, one can see that the eye level of the artist is located above the heads of the workers but below the heads of Stalin and Pieck, creating a clear visual impression of the leaders' superiority. Moreover, Pieck looks slightly downward, while Stalin looks slightly upward, conferring upon him an air of dominance.

Despite the efforts to improve productivity, economic conditions in the GDR rapidly deteriorated as the result of the nationalization of industry and collectivization of agriculture. Furthermore, 20 percent of the national budget was spent on the military and on reparations to the USSR, resulting in shortages of food and rampant inflation. In an attempt to quench massive discontent, East German leaders proclaimed 1953 the "Year of Karl Marx." The intensity of the campaign was clearly exaggerated, as it celebrated the relatively unimportant seventieth anniversary of Marx's death. German authorities perhaps took into account the negative attitude towards Stalin in the late 1940s reported by special services that analyzed public opinion. East German authorities decided to supplement Stalin with Marx, Engels, Pieck, Ulbricht, and other orthodox Marxists of German origin.⁸³ The set of ten stamps issued for the occasion included three stamps with the Communist foursome depicted against a red banner. In addition, two souvenir sheets were issued, one of which was decorated with additional double profiles of Stalin-Lenin.

On June 17, 1953, social tensions in East Germany resulted in an explosion of protests throughout the country. The protests began as a strike at the large construction site of a model urban development in the middle of Berlin's ruins and quickly spread to the rest of the country. The name of that development, Stalin-Allee (Stalin Prospect), became a symbol of anti-Communist resistance. The German police together with the Soviet Army suppressed the uprising.

In the meantime, the postal authorities of the GDR planned a large set of eighteen definitive stamps. They were unified by the motif of the first five-year plan of economic development. The stamps covered postal rates for various services and showed miners, steel workers, farmers, and scenes of national reconstruction. The stamp paying the most common value—24 pfennigs for a regular domestic letter—showed a view of Stalin-Allee and thus became the only definitive stamp in any country to include Stalin's name (fig. 34A). Although there was a monument to Stalin in a recess between the buildings in the middle of Stalin-Allee, the stamp instead showed



Fig. 34A.
"Stalin-Allee"
stamp from the
definitive series
of 1953.

a sports arena and two sculptures of workers located on the other side of the street across from the monument. Indeed, a portrait of a foreign head of state on a definitive stamp would defy its function as the identifier of the issuing nation.



Fig. 34B.
Propaganda
forgery of the
“Stalin-Allee”
stamp.

The whole definitive set was issued on August 10, 1953, less than two months after the uprising. However, East German authorities withheld the “Stalin-Allee” stamp until November to avoid undesirable recollections of the recent uprising.⁸⁴ Still, the stamp was immediately imitated in relatively abundant propaganda forgeries. On these forgeries, the name of the country was written as “UNdeutsche UNdemokratische Republik,” and a second name of the street was added, “Strasse des 17 June” (fig. 34B). The source of these forgeries remains unknown; they may have been printed by East German underground resistance groups, or by similar groups in West Germany who then distributed them in the East, or both.⁸⁵

At the time of the June 17 uprising, the leader of the GDR was Walter Ulbricht, who was a hard-line Stalinist until the end of his life in 1973. Paradoxically, as a result of the uprising, Ulbricht preserved and even strengthened his position of power. Under the circumstances, the Soviet leadership deemed it dangerous to undertake any change of regime. Ulbricht remained the head of the East German Social-Democratic Unity (Communist) Party, and later of the so-called State Council, until May 1971. He was the only Communist leader in Eastern Europe (except Enver Hoxha in Albania) who survived the de-Stalinization. The conservatism of the official policies of the GDR can be traced in stamps related to Stalin’s legacy.

The “Stalin-Allee” stamp was redesigned, revalued, and reprinted many times. Its last versions appeared in January 1959, three years after Khrushchev’s report, and in September 1959, when it was used in a special souvenir arrangement for the international philatelic exhibition called “Debria.”

In December 1954, East Germany issued a stamp commemorating one year since Stalin’s death (fig. 35). Printed in three colors, this was the most pompous of all Stalin stamps issued at that time. Stalin was shown in his marshal uniform in an aggrandizing style and with red banners under the portrait. This image was fully in line with East Germany’s obstinately Stalinist political course.

Although rarely noticed, Stalin appeared as late as 1970 on one more GDR stamp, which commemorated twenty-five years



Fig. 35. East Germany,
one year since Stalin’s
death (1954).

of the Potsdam Conference (fig. 36). With the exception of Albania, no other European country used Stalin's likeness on a stamp after 1955. Obviously, the designers of the stamp could have used other images to commemorate the event, but perhaps this choice represented nostalgia on the part of East German leadership for the "good old days".⁸⁶



Fig. 36. Twenty-five years of the Potsdam conference (1970), the last GDR stamp using Stalin's image.

Indeed, the GDR remained the only neo-Stalinist country of the Eastern bloc long after 1956, as noted by John Connolly: "East Germany never knew a sustained period of liberalization, either in the economy or in culture The men who made policy in the 1950s were still largely in power in the 1980s, and with the exception of several years' carefully controlled economic experimentation, they never diverged from the course entered in the Stalinist period."⁸⁷

Hungary. In July 1941, Hungary somewhat reluctantly joined the Axis countries, both under German pressure and in hope of recovering the territories lost after WWI. These hopes failed. Hungary suffered heavy human and material losses and, by February 1945, was defeated and occupied by the Red Army. At first, the Soviet administration attempted to establish Marxist rule in the country through elections. However, communist ideology and the leaders of the Communist Party, who had spent the war years in Moscow, remained highly unpopular. In February 1947, after two electoral defeats, the Communists changed their tactics, harassing, detaining and sending into exile their political rivals.



Fig. 37. Hungarian set commemorating thirty years of the October Revolution (1947).

Hungary was the first Communist country to put Stalin on its stamp. In October 1947, it issued a set celebrating thirty years of the Bolshevik Revolution (fig. 37). The set was semi-postal, meaning that the values of the stamps included a surcharge for charitable donations to the Society of Hungarian-Soviet friendship. These "friendship" stamps were practically the first Hungarian issue after the elections of August of that

year, when communists seized power. Notably, on the verge of the elections, in June 1947, Hungary had issued a set of eight stamps and two souvenir sheets commemorating Franklin D. Roosevelt. Behind Roosevelt's portraits, the stamps presented a brief pictorial history of American progress. It was an unmistakable, though desperate, appeal for help addressed to Western democracies.

The portraits of Lenin and Stalin unusually depicted both men as athletic figures with strong, uncovered necks. In real life, Lenin was short and had the appearance of an old-school, formally attired academic, while Stalin never uncovered his neck, wearing military-style clothes before the war and a uniform after.

The designer of this set, György Konecsni, became one of the most prominent Hungarian graphic artists in the 1930s, receiving prestigious awards for posters that reflected a strong influence of surrealism and abstract art and a skillful use of color.⁸⁸ Despite Konecsni's international success, his style was strongly discouraged in prewar Hungary by the totalitarian regime of Admiral Miklós Horthy. Hungarian artists hoped that the liberation of the country in 1945 would give them full artistic freedom, and this explains the unorthodox style of these portraits as well as their bold background colors. The artist quite openly emphasized the masculinity of Soviet leaders as an embodiment of their power.

After 1948, such freedom of artistic expression was curtailed in Hungary by the imposition of Soviet-exported canons of Socialist Realism. In particular, György Konecsni lost his commissions with the Hungarian post service. While in 1946 he designed almost all Hungarian stamps, his Hungarian-Soviet friendship set of 1947 turned out to be his next-to-last; he authored just one more stamp design, which was ideologically neutral.



Fig. 38A. Unapproved essay for Stalin's 70th jubilee (1949).

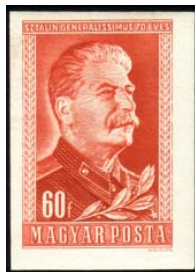


Fig. 38B. Issued stamp for same event (exists as both perforated and imperforate).

After August 1947, Communist Hungary became one of the cruelest regimes in Eastern Europe, pursuing a Stalinist policy of show trials and social cleansing. Accordingly, in 1949–1954, Stalin appeared on Hungarian stamps every year.

In 1949, Hungary celebrated Stalin's jubilee by issuing a set of three stamps of identical design. It is interesting to compare an unapproved essay (fig. 38A) with the issued stamp (fig. 38B). The main reason for the rejection of the original design seems to be the “wrong” turn of the head: in cultures employing left-to-right

writing systems, looking toward the left is considered as toward the past, while to the right is towards the future.⁸⁹ This aspect is emphasized by bright light coming from the right (East), drawing an obvious association with the dawn. In addition, the color of the issued stamp was changed from dull purple to a much more optimistic and energetic bright red.

In 1950, the Stalin-Lenin profile could be found in a set dedicated to the Communist “Congress of Working Youth.” In December 1951, a set of two stamps showed a demonstration in front of the monument to Stalin, which had been



Figure 39. Demonstration in front of the monument to Stalin in Budapest (1951).

erected in Budapest two years earlier for his seventieth birthday (fig. 39). This monument had a unique feature: underneath the sculpture, there was an elevated tribune used by Party and state leaders to greet demonstrations, making it similar in its public function to the Lenin mausoleum in Moscow. The whole monument was demolished by furious crowds during the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

In 1951, a set was issued celebrating thirty-four years of the Russian Revolution (fig. 40A). The first stamp showed “The capture of the Winter Palace,” which in fact did not take place during the revolution, but was staged in Petrograd as a public spectacle three years after the Bolshevik coup. The second stamp showed Lenin personally calling upon soldiers to charge the palace, which never happened either. The last stamp featured the traditional Stalin-Lenin profile.



Fig. 40A. Thirty-four years of the October Revolution in Russia (Hungary, 1951).



Fig. 40B. Thirty-five years of the October Revolution (Hungary, 1952).

The next year, Stalin appeared on all three stamps celebrating the Russian Revolution (fig. 40B). He was shown planning a military action as the closest comrade of Lenin, as a hero of the Civil War, and as one of the foursome of Marx and his followers with his head lifted a little higher than others.

In 1953, just four days after Stalin's death, Hungary issued a mourning stamp and a souvenir mini-sheet including the same stamp. Such a display of grief could be explained by the nature of the Communist dictatorship in Hungary, which was extreme even by the standards of other Eastern European regimes at that time. Hungarian leader Mátyás Rákosi called himself "Stalin's best pupil," and the best he was. During his rule, in a country of 9.2 million, hundreds of thousands of people were executed, deported, arrested, tortured, imprisoned, and deprived of property.

The issuance of stamps commemorating the deaths of important figures is often determined by tradition. In the case of Hungary, no such tradition had been established throughout its postal history, and the promptness of the issue reflected Stalin's importance to the regime.

In January 1954, Stalin appeared on a Hungarian stamp for the last time. The set commemorating thirty years of Lenin's death included a reproduction of Kibrik's drawing "There is such a party!" (also used in Bulgaria in 1954). By that time, Rákosi had lost some control of his power, and a very limited de-Stalinization had begun.

Poland. To reach its goal of mass indoctrination, Communist propaganda in the Socialist countries that emerged after the war had to take into account existing local perceptions of Russia, the Soviet Union, and Stalin personally. The message of the international Marxist movement, with Stalin as its leader, had to be balanced with national sentiments. In some countries, such as Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, it was a relatively simple task, but in the case of Poland it presented a major challenge for Stalinist propaganda. The efforts to overcome this challenge are reflected in Polish philatelic Staliniana.

Poland was part of the Russian Empire and had a long history of struggle for independence and brutally suppressed resistance against the Russian government. After the October Revolution in Russia, the Bolsheviks engaged in a war against newly independent Poland, and Stalin was one of the top commissars in the Red Army fighting Polish troops. In 1939, Stalin signed a peace agreement with Hitler that dismembered Poland and led to the World War. During the war, there was a unique underground “Home Army” inside Poland, and Polish servicemen and women made up the fourth largest contingent of Allied troops. By the end of the war, Poland had suffered an extremely high number of casualties relative to its prewar population.⁹⁰

The most important event in wartime Soviet-Polish relations was the 1939 Katyn’ massacre, in which the NKVD shot 22,000 Polish officers captured by the Red Army. In April 1943, the Polish government in exile in London requested an international investigation. In response, Stalin broke all relations with that government and organized an alternative Communist proxy government—the Polish Provisional National Council (PNC), which seized power in Poland after the liberation. Bolesław Bierut, a former NKVD agent in Poland, was appointed as the head of PNC.

As the result of these developments, Communist propaganda in Poland could rely on the promotion of Stalin’s cult to a limited extent only; it required instead the cult of a national leader such as Bierut, who remained in Poland or on German-occupied territory throughout the war. He was one of the first three members of the PNC to appear on a stamp as early as July 1946. In October 1948, Bierut was portrayed on a set of nine definitive stamps; two months later, Stalin was depicted on Polish stamps for the first time. This first set was dedicated to the Congress of the Unity of the working class, and Stalin was shown as a member of the traditional Marxist foursome (fig. 41A). This was in line with the official concept of Stalin as the leader of the global Marxist movement and did not challenge Polish national sensibility.



Fig. 41A. Congress of the Unity of the working class (Poland, 1948).

During the period between 1945 and the early 1950s, Poland underwent brutal Stalinization: thousands of people were prosecuted, imprisoned, and executed, and the cult of Stalin gradually became as overwhelming as it was in the USSR. Yet in 1949, Poland was the only Communist country that did not commemorate Stalin’s seventieth birthday on stamps, despite the extremely lavish festivities and total mobilization of masses for the occasion. This omission was probably caused by the

Polish leadership's cautious approach regarding public sentiment toward Stalin. This concern acquired further importance after November 1949, when Stalin appointed Soviet Marshal Konstantin Rokossovsky to the position of Polish Minister of Defense. Rokossovsky became a member of the Polish Politburo and effectively second in command behind Bierut.



Fig. 41B. Polish-Soviet friendship (1951).

November 1951 saw the issue of the only Polish two-stamp set featuring Stalin's individual portrait (fig. 41B). By then, Bierut had appeared on more than twenty stamps, both definitive and commemorative. Furthermore, after Stalin's death, Poland did not issue a single mourning or commemorative stamp in his memory. All in all, Poland issued fewer stamps featuring Stalin than any other Communist country, revealing certain peculiarities of its official propaganda. First, there was a disconnect

between the extent of Stalin's cult and the international image of the country as represented by its stamps. Second, Bierut took over the central place in domestic Communist propaganda; it was clear from the imagery of Polish stamps and also noticeable in Polish printed media of the period. Indeed, by early 1951, the pictures of Bierut in the main party newspaper had become equal in size to Stalin's, and his name was mentioned more often.⁹¹

In 1952, the Soviet Union began construction of a skyscraper in Warsaw as a gift to the Polish people. Two days after Stalin's death, the building acquired his name as a demonstration of the Polish people's gratitude and grief. "The I. V. Stalin Palace of Culture and Science" appeared on Polish stamps in 1953, when the building was still under construction, and again in 1955, in its finished state.

The process of de-Stalinization in Poland occurred later than in other Communist countries, beginning only after Khrushchev's speech at the Twentieth Congress of CPSU in 1956. Bierut attended the Congress and two weeks after the speech died in Moscow from heart attack.⁹² Only in the fall of that year did modest liberalization begin.

Romania. In 1939, the USSR occupied a part of Romania in accordance with the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact. In 1940, Romania joined the Axis countries in the war and, in 1941, invaded the USSR simultaneously with the Germans. Besides the liberation of the occupied territory, Romanian military dictator Ion Antonescu was driven by his fierce anti-Bolshevik convictions. In 1944, former Romanian King

Michael restored the monarchy and used his power to change sides in the war relatively early, in August of that year. The leaders of Romanian Communist Party were released from concentration camps where they had been held, and one of its founders, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, was appointed Secretary General. A left-leaning politician Petru Groza became the prime minister and enabled Romanian communists to seize power, although he himself never joined the Party. Romania was occupied by the Red Army and remained under full Soviet military control until the summer of 1958.

In December 1947, after a series of show trials, suppression of political opponents, and creation of a notorious penal system of hard labor, Romanian communists forced King Michael to abdicate and, in 1948, established a Stalinist totalitarian state. The regime in Romania tended to have slight yet tangible differences as opposed to other Communist countries. The formal leader of the new Romanian government, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej, differed from other Communist dictators in that he was never associated with the Comintern, but had nevertheless received strong support from Stalin. He shared power with a former employee of the Comintern, Ana Pauker, who was eventually dismissed in May 1952 because of her alleged “nationalistic” deviations from Stalin’s general line, and also due to her Jewish background at the time of an active anti-Semitic campaign. Before Pauker’s dismissal, both factions in the Party attempted to make certain decisions independently of the Soviet dictate, especially in economic planning. This was the environment in which the Stalin-Lenin profile appeared for the first time on a Romanian stamp celebrating Romanian-Soviet friendship in November 1949 (fig. 42).



Fig. 42. Romanian-Soviet friendship (1949).

The design of this stamp was rather unexpected. At first glance, it looked like two different stamps printed side-by-side (referred to as *se-tenants* in philately). On the left, there was a mother and a teenage boy bringing flowers to the bas-relief image of the great leaders Lenin and Stalin. This was obviously “the Romanian side” of the friendship. The location of the bas-relief high on the wall and the gestures of the actors with bouquets in each hand carried clear religious connotations. The right side was reserved for “the Soviet side” of the friendship and showed a parade of young people carrying oversize flags, one of which was Romanian. These two scenes can be interpreted not so much as a symbol of friendship, but rather as a statement of

Romanian submissiveness to an external force while, at the same time, maintaining a measure of independence.

A month later, Romania issued a stamp celebrating Stalin's seventieth anniversary. The stamp was printed in "military green" color and showed Stalin in uniform, emphasizing his wartime role. The text proclaimed, with somewhat excessive exaltation: "Glory to the great Stalin!"⁹³



Fig. 43A. Romanian stamp dedicated to organization of Romanian pioneers.



Fig. 43B. Original poster by N. Vatolina.

In May 1951, a set dedicated to the Romanian organization of Young Pioneers featured a stamp in which two Pioneers, a boy and a girl, were again bringing flowers, but this time to Stalin in person (fig. 43A). The picture had the same legend as the first stamp of 1949, "Glory to the great Stalin!" It was, however, a reproduction of a poster with a different title, "Thank you, dear Stalin, for our happy childhood!" created in 1950 by Nina Vatolina (fig. 43B).⁹⁴ Indeed, it hardly would be logical for Romanian children to thank Stalin for their happy childhood, even in the atmosphere of Stalin's cult. Like almost all Romanian stamps, the printing was monochromatic, so the reproduction lost the rich red color

of the roses used in the original poster. In contrast to the USSR, organized philately was officially promoted in Romania, and the Romanian postal administration produced a matching illustrated cover with the same picture.

The Stalin-Lenin profile appeared on a Romanian stamp in May 1952 in a set celebrating another anniversary of the Pioneers. This time the legend, the official slogan of Young Pioneers, was printed in an almost illegibly tiny font and said: "Ready to fight for the cause of Lenin and Stalin!" In October 1952, a stamp dedicated to Romanian-Soviet friendship featured two young men, one of whom shows the other the way to move forward. The double profile was barely discernable in the background, and the inscription did not mention Stalin. This was the last Romanian issue showing Stalin.

Overall, strong nationalistic undercurrents among the Romanian Communist leadership after the war created a complex political situation, which in turn resulted in rare and relatively reserved appearances of Stalin on Romanian stamps. More-

over, the relatively early de-Stalinization of national politics, especially the purge of Stalinist elements from the Party and improvement of relations with the West, had begun even before Stalin's death.⁹⁵ Gheorghiu-Dej, whose domestic cult was in many respects similar to those of national leaders of other Stalinist countries, appeared on a Romanian stamp only once in 1966, on the first anniversary of his death. We can only speculate if this was the result of his personal modesty, political complexities during his tenure, avoidance of associations with the recently demised monarchy, or a cautious approach to international image of Romania, which differed from other Eastern European countries of the Soviet bloc.⁹⁶

Stamps of Stalinist countries

People's Republic of China. China offers a different context in which to study the role of stamps in Communist propaganda. From 1927 to 1937, the USSR-backed Chinese Communist movement was engaged in a civil war against the central government. From 1937 to 1945, Communists entered into an uneasy union with the ruling Kuomintang Party to fight Japanese aggression, while receiving broad support from the USSR and other allies. From 1945 to 1949, Chinese Communists waged civil war against the Kuomintang, which resulted in a Communist victory and the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). It is not surprising, then, that Stalin appeared on quite a few PRC stamps. Moreover, the PRC remained the stronghold of Stalinism long after the USSR denounced Stalin in 1956.

The first stamps with Stalin's image were issued in China immediately after the official proclamation of the People's Republic by Mao Zedong on October 1, 1949. They were released in the northeast province of Port-Arthur and Darien, which was still occupied by the Red Army and had its own currency and postal administration. Port-Arthur and Darien produced a stamp with the double profile of Lenin and Stalin in November 1949 to mark the thirty-second anniversary of the Russian Revolution, and then a set of two stamps commemorating Stalin's birthday in December of the same year. It was a manifestation of the pro-Soviet politics of the province. Indeed, in 1949, the head of Darien organization of the Communist Party Gao Gang proposed to join the USSR as the seventeenth republic without the approval of the Chinese Central committee.⁹⁷ Stalin declined the offer outright, and several years later this political mistake became one of the accusations that led to Gao Gang's arrest and death.

In December 1949, Mao Zedong travelled to Moscow to attend Stalin's seventieth birthday and negotiate the Sino-Soviet treaty, which was commemorated in a set is-



Fig. 44A. Sino-Soviet negotiations and treaty (1950).



Fig. 44B. "The great friendship"; five years of the treaty (1954).

sued almost a year later (fig. 44A). Although other Communist dictators were shown on stamps together with Stalin, these stamps are unique in the closeness of Stalin and Mao, emphasized by their handshake. A warm personal relationship between the leaders was illustrated once again (posthumously for Stalin) on a stamp commemorating five years of the treaty (fig. 44B). The stamp reproduced the painting "The great friendship" by D. Nalbandian (1950). The atmosphere of the painting conveyed even more intimacy between the leaders than the handshake had done.



Fig. 45A. Thirty-five years of the October revolution (PRC, 1953). Note how Stalin displaces Lenin as the greatest Communist leader.

Another Chinese set featuring Stalin was dedicated to the thirty-fifth anniversary of the Russian Revolution and issued in 1953 after an eleven-month delay (fig. 45A). The first stamp reproduced the well-known 1947 painting by Vladimir Serov, "Lenin declares Soviet Rule," in which a young Stalin stood right behind Lenin. The second stamp showed Stalin and Mao in the Kremlin, in a composition probably

inspired by the famous 1938 portrait of Stalin strolling with Voroshilov by Alexander Gerasimov. The third stamp was based on the central part of a mass-produced Soviet poster dedicated to the fourth five-year plan.⁹⁸ The last stamp of the set depicted Stalin's granite statue near the entrance to the Volga-Don canal, which at thirty-six meters was one of the tallest in the world.

The most interesting feature of this set is that out of four stamps, only one shows Lenin, the official leader of the revolution. This reflects a major tactical shift in Soviet ideology that had started in the 1930s and intensified after World War II: Stalin gradually replaced Lenin as the main figure in the hierarchy of the greatest communists. The Chinese set was issued after Stalin's death and a full year after the actual anniversary of the Russian Revolution, and its message was clear: it reiterated the strict adherence of Chinese Communists to Stalinist ideology.⁹⁹ The primacy of Stalin over Lenin was even more evident in another Chinese stamp issued in 1954 (fig. 45B). Here, Lenin is shown attentively listening to a confident, overbearing Stalin. The sculpture on the stamp, "V. I. Lenin and I. V. Stalin in Gorki" by V. Pinchuk and R. Taurit, was unveiled in 1949 in Moscow to great critical acclaim and was a clear manifestation of this general ideological tendency.¹⁰⁰



Fig. 45B. *Thirty years since Lenin's death (1954).*



Fig. 46. *PRC, one year since Stalin's death (1954).*

In October 1954, seven months after the actual date, PRC commemorated the first anniversary since Stalin's death by issuing a set of three stamps (fig. 46). The first

stamp showed the sculpture of Stalin created by N. V. Tomskii in 1949.¹⁰¹ Stalin was shown with a small scroll in his left hand, probably hinting at his role as a Marxist theoretician. The second stamp displayed the portrait of Stalin in his plain uniform, similar to the Soviet stamp issued on the same occasion (see fig. 19A), referring to his role in the war. The third stamp reproduced the 1951 Soviet poster “Glory to the Great Stalin – the Builder of Communism!” by Boris Belopolskii.¹⁰² Here, Stalin holds a bigger scroll in his right hand. Because of its size, it looked like a blueprint, alluding to Stalin’s role in the economic development of the USSR. Accordingly, there was a hydroelectric station in the background.

Notably, all Chinese stamps depicting Stalin in the 1950s, including the mourning set, were issued with significant delays. At the same time, the majority of other commemorative stamps of the PRC during the same period appeared within one or two weeks of the actual dates, and often on the exact day of commemoration. This is true for holidays (Women’s Day, March 8), anniversaries of Marx, Engels, and national leaders, such as Sun Yat-sen. Although the delays could be explained by technical problems, one might speculate that the relations between the two countries, and especially personal relations between Mao and Stalin, were much more complex than they appeared. Stalin created quite a few humiliating moments for Mao, especially during Mao’s visit to Moscow. There is ample evidence of the ambivalence, suspicion, and animosity present between the two leaders.¹⁰³ In fact, Mao was the only leader of a Socialist country who did not attend Stalin’s funeral. This might explain why, on one hand, Stalin’s appearances on Chinese stamps abounded and, on the other, why they were always significantly delayed, as if issued after some hesitation.

For a few years after 1956, the PRC abstained from using Stalin’s image on stamps to avoid direct confrontation with the USSR over its changing political course. For instance, in 1957, only Marx and Lenin were portrayed on the occasion of fortieth anniversary of the October Revolution; in 1962, on the forty-fifth anniversary of the same event, Lenin alone led the revolutionary crowd.

This all changed after the drastic worsening of Sino-Soviet relations between 1961 and 1964. Main points of contention included Mao’s denial of any possibility of peaceful coexistence with capitalist countries, his insistence on the inevitability of a new world war, his personal hostility towards Khrushchev, territorial claims, and the sudden recall of Soviet specialists from the PRC in 1960. Soviet leaders openly accused Mao of deviation from orthodox Marxism-Leninism, while Mao kept promoting his own version of Marxism. As a result, Chinese authorities used the first convenient occasion to display their faithfulness to Stalinism. The foursome of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin appeared on a Chinese stamp in 1964 on the minor occasion of May

Day (fig. 47A). The design of this stamp imitated the propaganda posters of the Cultural Revolution that were mass-produced by inexpensive technique of black and red linocut prints on rough paper. These posters sometimes featured a Mao's profile in front of Stalin, but for some reasons the designer of the stamp depicted only the traditional foursome.



Fig. 47A. Labor Day May 1, 1964.

China was one of only two countries (Albania being the other) that commemorated Stalin's centennial anniversary on its stamps. In 1979, China issued a set of two stamps portraying Stalin's role in the war (fig. 47B). The first one reproduced the well-known photograph of Stalin taken during the military parade of October 7, 1941, at the most critical point of



Fig. 47B. Stalin's 100th anniversary (1979). These were the last Chinese stamps featuring Stalin.

the Nazi advance. In this scene, Stalin stands in front of a microphone on the tribune of Lenin's Mausoleum. Another stamp showed the commander-in-chief of the Red Army in a casual uniform. In many cities throughout the country, matching illustrated covers with various portraits of Stalin were issued for collectors. This was the last appearance of Stalin on Chinese stamps.

Stalin's cult in the PRC tapered off through a series of secret decisions made by the Department of Propaganda of the Central Committee. These ranged from a 1978 directive not to use bold font for Stalin's quotations in printed materials to the 1989 decree to discontinue the display of the portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin, and Stalin on May Day and National Day.¹⁰⁴

Albania. Occupied at the beginning of the war by Italy and later by Nazi Germany, Albania was the only country that was liberated by national partisans with almost no military support from the Allies. The partisans were united in the National Liberation Army, which later became the Communist-dominated National Liberation Front (NLF). By the fall of 1944, the NLF had defeated the occupying forces and

at the same time liquidated or driven into exile all potential political opponents. In December 1945, the NLF was able to arrange noncompetitive elections and to install a Communist government led by Enver Hoxha. Hoxha, the former chairman of the executive committee and supreme commander of the National Liberation Army, was an ardent Stalinist. Albania was a small country that had not even been mentioned in the infamous “percentages agreement” between Stalin and Churchill, which outlined the postwar division of spheres of influence in Eastern Europe.¹⁰⁵

Although Albania depended on its relations with neighboring Yugoslavia, it fully supported Stalin in his confrontation with Tito. In 1949, Albania issued a colorful set of three stamps to commemorate Stalin’s seventieth birthday.

Enver Hoxha worshipped Stalin and took every concept of Stalinism to the extreme, sometimes even going much further in the suppression of “public enemies.”¹⁰⁶ For instance, Albania became the only country that summarily forbade all religion in its constitution. Hoxha furiously resisted de-Stalinization and, after 1956, relations between Albania and the USSR began deteriorating. However, for several years after Khrushchev’s speech denouncing Stalin, Hoxha refrained from openly challenging Soviet leadership, and Stalin’s image disappeared from Albanian stamps. Of the two ideological sets issued in 1957, one was dedicated to the fifteenth anniversary of the Albanian Worker’s Party and showed a double profile of Marx and Lenin; the other celebrated forty years of the October Revolution and portrayed Lenin. In 1961, a set of two stamps celebrating fifteen years of Albanian-Soviet friendship showed just a handshake but no faces. Another set marked the fourth Congress of the Albanian Workers’ Party, again portraying Marx and Lenin. A third ideologically important set was dedicated to the Albanian youth organization and again showed only Marx and Lenin.



Fig. 48. Twenty-year commemoration of the Battle of Stalingrad (Albania, 1963).

The situation changed radically as soon as Albania sided with the PRC in its conflict with the Soviet Union over both theoretical and practical issues, and denounced Soviet rapprochement with Yugoslavia. In December 1961, Albania broke diplomatic relations with the USSR; in 1962, it left the Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance).

These developments were almost immediately reflected in the visual content of Albanian stamps. In February 1963, Albania used an opportunity provided by a relatively obscure date—the twenty-year commemoration of the Battle of Stalingrad—to feature Stalin’s profile on a stamp (fig. 48).

By 1966, when Albanian Workers' Party held its fifth congress, Albania began using the "foursome" profiles, including Stalin, as the official logo of the Party in addition to another logo, a combination of a rifle with tools of manual labor (fig. 49A).

The 1967 set dedicated to the fiftieth anniversary of the Russian Revolution went even further. One of the four stamps reproduced the drawing "There is such a party!" (used in Bulgaria in 1954). Another stamp displayed the double profile of Stalin and Lenin against a background of a red banner, a globe, and a rising sun (fig. 49B). The message was clear: the bright future of humankind is based on the teachings of Lenin and Stalin.

Although Albania nominally remained a member of the Warsaw Pact, it did not participate in the 1968 occupation of Czechoslovakia. In fact, immediately after the occupation, Albania withdrew from the pact in order to avoid the same fate for its own deviation from the Soviet general line, although its policy was the exact opposite of Czechoslovakia's. A year later, in 1969, as another act of defiance against the Soviet leadership, Albania issued a set of four stamps commemorating Stalin's ninetieth birthday, although it was not a traditional date for such an issue.

In 1979, Albania honored the one hundredth anniversary of Stalin (fig. 50). The first stamp showed a rather unusual portrait of Stalin: his squinting eyes made him look sly and apprehensive. The second stamp was based on a photograph of



Fig. 49A. Congress of the Albanian Workers' Party (1966).



Fig. 49B. Fifty years of the Russian Revolution (Albania, 1967).



Fig. 50A. Two stamps in honor of Stalin's one-hundredth anniversary.



Fig. 50B. Original photograph on which the design of the higher value is based.¹⁰⁷

Hoxha during his first meeting with Stalin in July 1947, when they attended a parade of physical culture at the central stadium in Moscow. Both designs looked very crude, especially taking into account the high quality of design and production of Albanian stamps of that period.

By the late 1970s, Albania became one of the most isolated countries in the world, considering itself the only society on the path prescribed by Stalin. Stalin appeared on Albanian stamps twice more as a member of the Marxist foursome in the official emblem of Albanian Workers' Party. A 1981 stamp of this kind commemorated the Eighth Congress of the Party, and a 1986 stamp similarly commemorated forty-five years of the Party. This marked the last appearance of Stalin on the stamps of Communist countries. In 1991, the Communist dictatorship in Albania ended.

North Korea. Interestingly, Stalin was never depicted on the stamps of North Korea. Although it was nominally a Marxist state, Marx appeared on its stamps only four times and Lenin only seven times within the first twenty years after the founding of the country, and the last Lenin stamp was issued in 1970. These statistics, together with the general ideological trends of other North Korean stamps, strongly supports the notion that North Korea is not, and probably has never been, a true Socialist or Marxist state, but rather a nationalistic one.¹⁰⁸ The only mention of Stalin on a North Korean stamp was the depiction of Stalin Boulevard in Pyongyang on a 1960 issue; the street was later renamed Prospect of Victory.¹⁰⁹

Stamps used as political language

In the nineteenth century, the positioning of stamps on letters and postcards developed into a language of personal messages expressing love, anger, friendship, and other emotions. This tradition depended on complicated and arbitrary rules, and by the 1920s was essentially forgotten. Meanwhile, commemorative stamps became much more common. Their subjects were extremely diverse and their visual content was often ideologically charged, especially in totalitarian societies. Because of these changes, stamps could be employed to convey additional meanings. Correspondents could use combinations of stamps to create new contexts and the messages of these stamps could have been understood if certain intellectual commonalities existed between the correspondents.¹¹⁰

Stalin's exceptional national and international influence, as well as the radical ideological shift concerning his legacy that occurred in 1956, made stamps with his likeness a relatively common object of such "philatelic language."

A French postcard sent in 1946 illustrates a straightforward use of such language (fig. 51A). France never issued stamps portraying Stalin, but a French admirer expressed his feelings to a Soviet leader by using a special unofficial stamp-like sticker (the so-called Cinderella or poster stamp). This Cinderella featuring Stalin's portrait was distributed by the French Communist Party to collect donations. On the cover, it was combined with the definitive stamp showing the goddess Ceres, the most common postal symbol of the French Republic.



Fig. 51A. French postcard issued by the Communist newspaper *L'Humanité* with a Cinderella showing Stalin (1946).

A sender from the GDR created a whole display dedicated to Marxist ideology (fig. 51B). It included stamps showing the portrait of Friedrich Hegel, Karl Marx, Karl Liebknecht, Stalin with Wilhelm Pieck, Mao Zedong, and the first stamp that carried the official coat of arms of GDR and the number 5, which signified the nation's five-year plan of economic development.¹¹¹



Fig. 51B. Collection of Hegel, Marx, and Marx's followers on a cover sent from the GDR in 1951.

Once ideological constraints were relaxed after Stalin's death, the expression of political views using stamps gained popularity. For the most part, postal items of this sort were produced by hard-core Stalinists, who found themselves excluded from the ideological mainstream. For instance, in 1960, a Stalin sympathizer from the Leningrad region sent an old postcard to an acquaintance, paying registered postage with an old Stalin stamp and a newer Lenin stamp. The postcard itself showed a monument to Stalin in Sochi (fig. 51C and fig. D); the sender's apparent goal was to demonstrate his conviction in the continuity of Soviet leadership. He had enough courage to create this composition, but not to sign his name legibly.



Fig. 51C. Soviet postcard sent domestically in 1960.



Fig. 51D. Reverse view of fig. 51A, monument to Stalin in Sochi. The postcard was issued in Sochi in 1950.

An opposite example of “philatelic language” is a cover sent by one Father Franciszek Cięciwa from Poland to the director of the Division of Human Rights of the United Nations in December 1951 (fig. 52A).

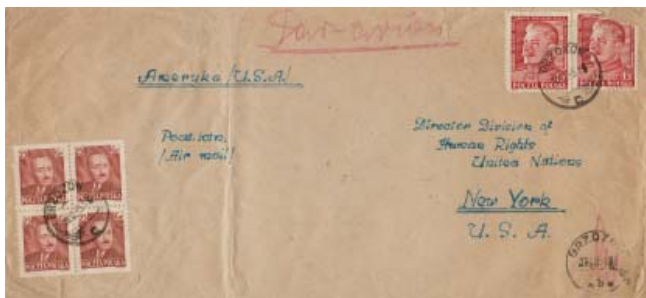


Fig. 52A. Letter from a Polish priest to the UN Division of Human Rights (1951).

The letter was sent at the time when Polish Communist authorities were subjecting Catholic clergy and organizations to severe prosecution. By 1952, about one thousand priests had been incarcerated, and all seminaries had been closed. Father Cięciwa probably had some grievances to confer to the Division of Human Rights, and he delivered his message through philately as well. He combined two stamps featuring Stalin with a block of four stamps showing Bolesław Bierut. All six stamps together paid the correct rate, but the Bierut stamps were placed incorrectly in the lower left instead of the upper right corner of the cover. One can speculate that the sender wanted to humiliate Stalin’s minion Bierut by emphasizing his inferior position, probably blaming both of them for the prosecution of the Church.

Quite a few people rejoiced upon receiving news of Khrushchev’s denunciation of Stalin. One of them was Mr. Anastassov from Bulgaria. In June 1956, he combined three stamps—two with Stalin’s portraits and one with a pig—to pay the correct postage to Turkey and to show his attitude toward the late Soviet leader (fig. 52B). Just a few years earlier, sending such a cover would have cost him dearly.



Fig. 52B. Cover sent from Bulgaria to Turkey in 1956.

Beginning in the late 1980s, during a period of growing popularity of Stalin and nostalgia for the former superpower status of the USSR, numerous covers glorifying the late leader were privately produced in Russia. They were usually “franked” with one or both stamps of the old demonetized issue, “Seventy-fifth anniversary of Stalin” (see fig. 19B). Those stamps functioned as propaganda stickers and did not pay any postage.

Post-communist world



Fig. 53A. Fifty years of Russia's Victory in World War II (1995).



Fig. 53B. Stamp from Belgium's "Millennium" set (2000).

In 1995, Stalin appeared on a stamp of the Russian Federation for the first time in forty years (fig. 53A). The stamp was one of a set of six that commemorated fifty years of the victory in World War II. It reproduced a well-known photograph of the Big Three in Yalta. Although the subject of the series justified the inclusion of this image, it represented a major deviation from former Soviet policy to avoid mentioning Stalin in public discourse. That instance was the first and last appearance of Stalin on a Russian stamp; he was not portrayed on the issues celebrating sixtieth or sixty-fifth anniversaries of the victory in 2005 and 2010, respectively.

Other former Allies commemorated the victory on stamps by emphasizing messages of peace (Great Britain), major military operations of the war (U.S.), or liberation from occupation (PRC) and, as a rule, did not use portraits of either military or political leaders.¹¹²

As for the stamps of other Western countries, there was only one that depicted Stalin.¹¹³ It was included in a large Belgian set commemorating significant events and personalities of the twentieth century. The artist created a visual representation of Stalin's role in history as viewed from the capital of Europe (fig. 53B). The design of the stamp consisted of two layers. The background displayed a photograph of the Big Three during Yalta conference of 1945, when the leaders of the West surrendered Eastern Europe to Soviet domination and the seeds of the Cold War were sown. The foreground showed a contour map of Europe with bold red dots showing the border that would divide Europe for the next forty-five years and representing a visual metaphor for the Iron Curtain.

Conclusion

The use of Stalin's image and name on stamps provides insights into the history of the international Marxist movement, especially its Stalinist version. These stamps were often targeted at international audiences, reflected major political events, and, in many cases, elucidated hidden political tendencies. Over time, Stalin's philatelic image went through several stages of development. At first, he was an iconic symbol of the Soviet leadership; after World War II, he became the central symbol of Soviet victory. Later, his image was used for worldwide promotion of Marxist movements and to support the dictatorial regimes in Eastern Europe and in China.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Alexander Pantsov (Capitol University, Columbus, OH) for stimulating discussions and valuable comments and anonymous reviewers for insightful critique.

Notes

1. Carlos Stoetzer, *Postage Stamps as Propaganda* (Washington, DC: Public Affairs Press, 1953).
2. Since historic research rarely involves philatelic materials, a few preliminary notes are necessary. All postage stamps belong to one of two categories: commemorative or definitive. Commemorative stamps are issued to mark a certain event or anniversary or to promote a certain cause. They are printed in one run or over a limited period of time in a predetermined number of copies. Definitive stamps are not associated with any specific events, have a rather generic design, and are reprinted without significant changes for many years. Sometimes stamp-issuing agencies (countries) produce so-called souvenir sheets. These consist of one or several stamps printed in the middle of a larger piece of paper carrying additional elements of design. Souvenir sheets are targeted to philatelic markets, although they are also valid as postage. Besides stamps, propaganda messages can also be carried by official postal stationery—prepaid postcards and envelopes—because of the visual content of imprinted stamps, separate graphic elements, or cancel marks. In Communist countries, all illustrated stationery required proper clearance by state censorship. In the West, especially in the United States, illustrated stationery has been produced mostly by individual artists and private companies to meet public demand and express a variety of public opinions.
3. Phil Deans and Hugo Dobson, “Introduction: East Asian Postage Stamps as Socio-Political Artefacts,” *East Asia* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 3–7.
4. Donald M. Reid, “The Symbolism of Postage Stamps: A Source for the Historian,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 19, no. 2 (April 1984): 223–49; Jack Child, *Miniature Messages: The Semiotics and Politics of Latin American Postage Stamps* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Peter Jones, “Posting the Future: British Stamp Design and the ‘White Heat’ of a Technological Revolution,” *Journal of Design History* 17, no. 2 (June 2004): 163–76; Herbert A. Friedman, “Propaganda and Espionage Philately,” <http://www.psywar.org/stamps.php>; James A. Leith, “Postage Stamps and Ideology in Communist China,” *Queen’s Quarterly* 78:2 (Summer 1971): 176–86.
5. David Scott, *European Stamp Design: A Semiotic Approach to Designing Messages* (London: Academy Editions, 1995); *East Asia* 22, no. 2 (Summer 2005).
6. Stoetzer, *Postage Stamps*, 9.
7. Alexis Khripounoff, “Un parcours parmi les timbres, des origines à nos jours,” in *Russie-URSS. 1914-1991*, edited by Wladimir Berelowitch and Laurent Gervereau (Paris: Bibliothèque de documentation internationale contemporaine, 1991), 258–64; Evgeny Dobrenko, “The Cultural Topography of the Stalin Era,” in *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space*, edited by Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 163–82.
8. Alison Rowley, “Miniature Propaganda: Self-Definition and Soviet Postage Stamps, 1917–41,” *Slavonica* 8, no. 2 (2002): 135–57.

9. Yakov Afangulskii, “Staliniana,” *Canadian Post-Rider Journal* 26 (May 1990): 54–63.

10. In the last decades, a number of minor stamp-issuing agencies (Marshall Islands, Equatorial Guinea, small Persian Gulf countries, and others) used Stalin’s image on stamps intended exclusively for philatelic markets. The subjects of these stamps are determined by commercial demand, have no ideological purpose, and are not considered in this article. Their very legitimacy is often questioned by exclusion from major catalogs and by their absence from the registry of the Universal Postal Union (UPU; <http://wnsstamps.ch/en/>).

11. These postcards were first described and catalogued by V. Yakobs in “Pervye sovetskie markirovannye khudozhestvennyye pochtovye kartochki” (First Soviet pre-paid artistic postal cards), *Filateliia SSSR* 5 (May 1974): suppl. V–VII. They are also listed in the latest edition of authoritative catalog of European postal stationery, *Michel: Ganzsachen-Katalog Europa bis 1960* (Munich: Schwaneberger Verlag, 2008): 657.

12. The most complete listing of these postcards can be found in *Michel: Ganzsachen-Katalog Europa bis 1960*: 663–680. In theory, up until 1929, picture postcards in the USSR could have been printed privately. In practice, by that time Soviet people were already well aware that all printing was under strict ideological control and subject to censorship.

13. “Six conditions” referred to Stalin’s theses aimed at the reorganization of the Soviet economy: distribution and employment of the workforce, wages commensurate with productivity, organization of labor, promotion of new Soviet specialists and employment of old specialists, and financial independence of production units. Stalin announced these “conditions” in June 1931.

14. *Sovetskii kollektioner* 8–9 (132–33) (August–September 1932): 234. The journal, delayed at the printing stage, became available only in February 1933.

15. All illustrations are from the author’s collection, unless noted otherwise.

16. Ian Plamper, *Alkimiia vlasti. Kul’t Stalina v izobrazitel’nom uskustve* (Moskva: NLO, 2010), 134.

17. For complete transcripts of the Congress, accessed July 8, 2013, see http://www.pseudology.org/Bolsheviki_lenintsy/XVII/index.htm.

18. *Rossica* 2, no. 12 (February 1933): 214. *Rossica* was published by Russian emigrants in Yugoslavia. The actual release of Soviet commemoratives quickly deviated both in timing and in subjects from either plan. For instance, in 1935, there were twelve new issues of which only three were planned ahead; two others were planned for previous years, and six were added either because of new political considerations or to commemorate current events.

19. The set consisted of five stamps instead of the planned three probably because of the introduction of new postal rates in February 1933.

20. Beginning in 1921, brief information about new stamp issues was published in the Bulletin of the Commissariat of Communications. In addition, in 1933–37, the Commissariat published a supplement to the bulletin with detailed description of all new and planned stamps. Philatelic societies, dealers, and individual collectors in the West subscribed to the supplement. Unfortunately, the supplement describing the two Lenin sets of 1934 is missing from the Library of the A. S. Popov Central Museum of Communications in St. Petersburg (Dr. L. Bakaiutova, Director of the Museum, personal communication).

21. In 1947, a set of three stamps was issued to commemorate twenty-five years of the first Soviet stamp. Two of these stamps showed groups of several different stamps (the “stamps on stamps” composition); the “Stalin-Lenin” design of 1934 was the only one repeated and displayed at the center of both assortments. Evidently, it was considered both an artistic and a political success.

22. The importance of this color palette is emphasized by the fact that it was probably chosen during the final editing process, since the original unapproved designs were created in dull purple and brown-red (Raritan Stamps Auction no. 54, Lot no. 948, September 14, 2012) and in brown and blue-green (*Katalog pochtovykh marok Rossiiskoi imperii, RSFSR i SSSR*, edited by A. V. Zverev and E. Ya. Gil'manov, Moskva, published by www.russianstamps.com, 2013): 201.

23. The set was designed by Naum Borov, Grigorii Zamskoi (also Zamskii), and Iulii Ganf, authors of several sets of Soviet stamps. Borov also worked as an architect and served in the Red Army; he was killed in action in 1942. Zamskii worked as a designer on posters, Soviet exhibits abroad, and as interior decorator of the Moscow subway. Ganf's first work in philately was a venomous parody of Swiss stamps commemorating the World Disarmament Conference in Geneva (1932); the parody caused a public outcry in Western media (*Sovetskii kollektioner* 5, no. 129 [May 1932]: 153–54). In the 1920s and 1930s, Ganf worked as a book illustrator; after the war, he specialized in anti-Western caricatures in the genre of “black propaganda.”

24. Harlan J. Strauss, “Politics, Psychology and the Postage Stamp,” in *Forty-First American Philatelic Congress*, edited by James P. Harris (The American Philatelic Congress, 1975), 178.

25. Jonathan Grant, “The Socialist Construction of Philately in the Early Soviet Era,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37, no. 3 (July 1995): 476–93.

26. O. N. Bukharov, *Marki-svideteli istorii* (Moskva, “Radio i sviaz,” 1982), 17.

27. By the end of the 1930s, over 85 percent of the total income of the Commissariat of Communications was derived from sales of stamps to philatelic organizations (Grant, “Socialist Construction,” 481). The arrangement of these sales was described by a prominent philatelic author: “[A]n agency in Moscow has charge of the production of stamps, and as soon as an issue is ready supplies are sent to a number of accredited wholesalers in strategic parts of the world, together with a release describing the person or event honored by them. The wholesaler first distributes the releases to the editors of stamp columns in metropolitan newspapers and the chroniclers of philatelic

magazines in much the same manner as a press agent publicizes a circus that's coming to town. A week or so later, the stamps appear on the market ... publicity concerning the Russian stamps has been widely published—invariably verbatim.” Ernest A. Kehr, *The Romance of Stamp Collecting* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1947), 75–76). Thus, during the “Golden Age of Philately,” the reach of Soviet philatelic propaganda was much wider than the distribution of stamps themselves.

28. Albert L. Moore, *Postal Propaganda of the Third Reich* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Military History, 2003), 50–55.

29. I. V. Stalin. “Pis'mo sekretariu tsaritsynskoi raionnoi partiinoi organizatsii B. P. Sheboldaevu. January 25, 1925,” cited in: *Kommersant-Vlast'* no. 4 (858) (February 1, 2010), accessed July 8, 2013, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc.aspx?DocsID=1311514>.

30. Cited in David Branderberger, “Stalin as Symbol,” in *Stalin: A New History*, edited by Sarah Davies and James A. Harris (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 249–70.

31. L. P. Beriia, *K voprosu ob istorii bol'shevistskoi organizatsii Zakavkaz'ia* (Moskva, Gos. izd-vo polit. literatury, 1935); *Rasskazy starykh rabochikh o velikom Staline* (Tbilisi, Zaria Vostoka, 1937); *Batumskaiia demonstratsiia 1902 g.*, edited by Lavrentii Beriia (Moskva, Partizdat, 1937); *Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin. Short biography* (Moskva, Politizdat pri TsKVKP(b), 1939).

32. Plamper, *Alkhimiia vlasti*, 204–5.

33. Earlier, the official name of this organization was “Council of assistance in charge of issues of documents of postage paid affiliated with the department of newspapers and postal services of Commissariat of Communications of the USSR.” The mechanism of decision making by this obscure committee, as well as the editorial-artistic council, is virtually unknown. The latter has been only briefly mentioned by L. Ya. Dobychina, the deputy minister of communications at the time of publication, who wrote that if necessary, the Council consulted professional organizations, such as the Academy of Sciences or Union of Writers, related to the content of stamp designs. See “Sovetskie pochtovyie marki,” in *Sto let russkoi pochtovoi marki, 1858–1958*, edited by I. G. Papinako (Moskva: Sviazizdat, 1958), 40. In 1965, the Ministry of Communications created a public committee to select the subjects of new stamps. See Decree no. 733, October 4, 1965, *Ob uluchshenii proizvodstva i prodazhi pochtovykh marok*. In 2010, the decree was available for a short time on the web site of the Ministry of Communications of the Russian Federation, but later all archival materials were removed from the site. Currently, emission of Russian postal stamps and stationery is controlled by a commission appointed by the deputy minister of communications (Decree no. 115, May 26, 1994).

34. Plamper, *Alkhimiia vlasti*, 60–62.

35. Technically, these stamps were included in the commemorative issue “300 years of the Romanov dynasty” (1913). In fact, the 7 and 10 kopeck stamps were issued in such mass quantities, including indicia and booklets, that they could be considered the first Russian definitives with the Tsar as the national symbol.

36. B. K. Stal’baum. *Chto nado znat’ filatelistu* (Moskva, Central Philatelic Agency “Soyuzpechat,” 1968), 12.

37. Another reason not to use the image of the head of state on stamps is its potential defiling by postal cancellation. This caused serious concern when the Romanov series was about to be released in Russian Empire. See Alison Rowley, “Monarchy and the Mundane: Picture Postcards and Images of the Romanovs, 1890–1917,” *Revolutionary Russia* 22, no. 2 (December 2009): 135–36; see also Rostislav Nikolaev, “Marki 300-letii doma Romanovykh,” accessed July 8, 2013, <http://pk.awards-su.com/w-colects/1996/3/marki.htm>. However, to my knowledge, there is no evidence that potential defacing of stamps with portraits of Bolshevik leaders by cancellation was ever taken into consideration by Soviet postal authorities.

38. Most of these essays are currently in the archives of *Goznak*, the printing house that produced all Soviet currency bills, postage stamps, and similar government papers. See O. N. Bukharov, *Marki-svideteli istorii*, 10; some of them are reproduced in *R.S.F.S.R. Specialized Catalogue of Postage Stamps*, 2nd ed., edited by V. Zagorsky (St. Petersburg: Standard Collection, 2004), 76.

39. Rowley, “Monarchy and the Mundane,” 147.

40. K. E. Voroshilov, “I. Stalin i Krasnaia Armia,” *Pravda*, December 23, 1929.

41. The 60 kopeck rate paid for a domestic registered letter (as of 1939) and for a domestic registered airmail postcard (as of September 1940). The entire set is quite common, although rare varieties exist. Soviet postal authorities consistently manipulated philatelic markets. For domestic consumption, they issued large quantities of stamps that were canceled without ever paying for postage; for foreign markets, they issued limited numbers of varieties of Soviet commemorative stamps, mostly imperforate. In this particular case, a small number of sets were produced in sheets combining different designs printed side by side. This resulted in eight different sheets and dozens of possible “se-tenants,” that is, combinations of different stamps. All of them are quite rare.

42. Jamey Gambrell, “The Wonder of the Soviet World,” *New York Review of Books* 61, no. 21 (December 22, 1994): 31.

43. *The Diary of Georgi Dimitrov. 1933–1949*, edited by Ivo Banac (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), entry of April, 26, 1939, 104–5.

44. The monument had to be demolished at the beginning of World War II since it was a perfect landmark for German pilots. See Alisa Romanova, “Glavnaia vystavka strany otmechaet 50-letie,” *Vesti*, June 16, 2009, accessed July 8, 2013, <http://www.vesti.ru/doc.html?id=293874&m=1>.

45. Rowley, “Miniature Propaganda,” 141–42. Rowley points out that the barely noticeable presence of Stalin’s name can be also found on a stamp issued in 1940 to honor another Soviet polar expedition, the drift of the icebreaker *Georgii Sedov*.

46. John Barber, “The Image of Stalin in Soviet Propaganda and Public Opinion during World War 2,” in *World War 2 and the Soviet People*, edited by John Garrard and Carol Garrard (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), 38–43.

47. See Albert Pfluger, *Vorwärts zum Sieg! Illustrierte sowjetische Feldpost des Zweiten Weltkrieges, Band 1, 2, 3* (Frankfurt/Moskva: Selbstverlag Albert Pflüger, 2007–11). Further corroboration of this pattern can be found in a comprehensive catalog of postcards issued during the war in Leningrad. See A. D. Gdalin and M. R. Ivanova, *Srazhaiushchiisia Leningrad. Pochtovaia otkrytka* (St. Petersburg: Info-Da, 2007).

48. See the article about the author of the medal A. Volodin, N. Merlai, *Medali SSSR [Medals of the USSR]* (St. Petersburg: Pechatnyi Dvor, 1997), 70–71.

49. Robert Service, *Stalin: A Biography* (London: Pan Macmillan, 2010), 543–44.

50. “The Academy of Russian Symbolics MARS,” http://www.simvolika.org/mars_035.htm.

51. Dozens of postcards with caricatures mocking Soviet policies and using Stalin’s image as a symbol of the USSR were privately issued in 1939–41 in France before the defeat of the country. Stalin was abundantly depicted in cartoons on private postcards printed in Italy, as well as on postcards produced in Nazi Germany for distribution via front organizations in neutral countries. In Great Britain, political caricatures were seldom printed on postcards, and just a few such postcards produced for Portugal can be found. Many of these cartoons were reproduced in a book published in Nazi Germany: Martin Pase, *Stalin im Blitzlicht der Presse und Karikatur* (Dresden: Verlagshaus Franz Müller, 1941). Most importantly, these propaganda postcards were almost never postally used, unlike American illustrated covers, most of which were properly mailed. Therefore, most European postcards issued between 1939 and 1945 remain outside the scope of this study.

52. According to the most comprehensive catalog: Lawrence Sherman, *United States patriotic covers of World War II* (Cary, IL: James E. Lee Publishing, 2006).

53. Traditionally, visual propaganda is intended to appeal to an emotional response, while verbal propaganda appeals to the rational. Discussion of this notion can be found elsewhere; for comprehensive review and references, see William F. Eadie, ed., *21st Century Communication: A Reference Handbook*, vols. 1–2 (Los Angeles: Sage, 2009). For the relative value of verbal and pictorial

message in regard to postage stamps, see Harlan J. Strauss, "Politics, Psychology and the Postage Stamp," in *Forty-First American Philatelic Congress*, edited by James P. Harris (The American Philatelic Congress, 1975), 157–80.

54. For a detailed discussion of World War II propaganda in postal and quasi-postal materials, see Friedman, "Propaganda," 5.

55. Jeffrey Herf, *The Jewish Enemy: Nazi Propaganda during World War II and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 169. Nazi propaganda did not bother to provide any evidence when it claimed that other major politicians had Jewish ancestry, such as American ambassador to the USSR Joseph Davis (see Herf, 203). However, the Nazis did not accuse Stalin of having Jewish blood.

56. The most detailed and reliable version of this story can be found in: Jon Kalish, "The Counterfeit Saga(s): What Really Happened at Sachsenhausen?" *Jewish Daily Forward*, June 25, 2008.

57. Gordon Torrey and Donald Avery, *Postal Forgeries in Two World Wars*. CIA historical review program, released 09.22.1993, pp. 67–6, accessed July 8, 2013, <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/index.html>.

58. Victoria E. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power. Soviet Political Posters under Lenin and Stalin* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 254.

59. V. A. Liapin, *The Catalog of the Postage Stamps of Russia, 1856–1991* (Moskva: V. I. Balabanov, 2008), 284. Interestingly, Stalin did not attend the celebration of the thirtieth anniversary of the October revolution in Moscow. Although no specific health problems bothered him at that time, he remained at one of his residences in the Caucasus, while Molotov delivered the main speech.

60. A stamp of very similar design was prepared in June 1948 for the set "Five-year plan in four years." It showed Stalin on the podium delivering a speech. The set was issued without it, but the essay has been released to philatelic market (New York: Cherrystone Auction, March 12–14, 2013, Lot 1543): 205; also, Liapin, *Catalog*, 290.

61. Veniamin Aloitz and Marat Gleizer, "V obrashchenie ne vypushcheny ... O nekotorykh markakh, kotorye izbezhalo unichtozheniia," *Kollektsiia-Nezavisimaia gazeta*, no. 4 (April 4, 2001), 14.

62. In 1918, the Mensheviks attempted to raise the issue of Stalin's acts of violence and banditry in the past, which even at that time did not comply with the official party policies. They were quickly silenced, however. See Simon S. Montefiore, *Young Stalin* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 184.

63. Montefiore, *Young Stalin*, 340–41.

64. Robert Service, *Stalin*, 545–46.

65. Plamper, *Alkhimiia vlasti*, 96–97.

66. The “Peace Campaign” had limited success among the masses, and sometimes its intensification led to paradoxical results: the population decided that it was a sign of increasing threat of a military conflict and swept clean the shelves of food stores. See Jan C. Behrends, “Exporting the Leader: The Stalin Cult in Poland and East Germany (1944/45–56),” in *The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships: Stalin and the Eastern Bloc*, edited by Balázs Apor et al. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 171–72.

67. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, color plate 5, and 158–59. Gustav Klutskis always had an extraordinary talent for sensing the developing undercurrents in the general line of the Party, but this did not save him from arrest and execution in 1938.

68. Reproduced in Montefiore, *Young Stalin*, 366–67.

69. Russian State Archive of Modern History, Protocol of meeting of Presidium of Central Committee of CPSU 5.11.1955, p. LXXI, F. 3, Box 8, File 324, p. 62.

70. Curiously, this picture is almost exactly a symmetrical copy of the same subject (without Sverdlov) painted in 1947 by Vladimir Serov and reproduced on several Soviet stamps with modifications that followed the changing political course. See Robert F. Minkus, “Retouching History,” *Rossica Journal* 113/114 (1990): 83.

71. Yugoslavia has never shown Stalin on stamps. In the spring of 1948, the confrontation between Stalin and communist dictator of Yugoslavia Tito, who maintained an independent position on several important issues, reached its apogee; in the summer of that year Yugoslavia was expelled from the alliance of Communist countries (the so-called Second Cominform).

72. A complete official catalog of Bulgarian stamps, *Katalog na Bolgarskite poshchenski marki 1879-2005*, is posted by Bulgarian Government, accessed July 8, 2013, at <http://www.mtitc.government.bg/page.php?category=144>.

73. Although Dimitrov suffered from well-documented health problems and could have died from natural causes, there are suspicions that his demise was accelerated by mercury poisoning. A detailed, though not universally accepted, account of this version of Dimitrov’s death can be found in Nasko Petrov, *Stalin i razgroma na politicheskata emigratsiya* (Plovdiv: Sv. Sv. Kiril i Metodii, 2002), 117–23, cited in Maria Todorova, “The Mausoleum of Georgi Dimitrov as lieu de mémoire,” *Journal of Modern History* 78, no. 2 (June 2006): 377–411.

74. Moreover, in 1953, Bulgaria issued an official postcard with an original preprinted stamp showing the “double profile” of Dimitrov and his immediate successor Vasil Kolarov (“Bulgarian Molotov”). The issue commemorated thirty years of the “September Revolution.” The postcard is listed under no. U4 in *Michel Ganzsachen-Katalog*.

75. Stalin's displeasure with Molotov's handling of foreign relations began in the fall of 1945. However, despite repetitive humiliations and various political accusations, Molotov retained some responsibilities in foreign affairs and remained within the informal inner circle of power almost until Stalin's death. See Derek Watson, *Molotov: A Biography* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2005), 23–43.

76. The last stamp portraying Beneš commemorated his untimely death soon after the coup. From that time on, he became unmentionable in his country until the collapse of the Communist regime. He appeared again on a stamp of Czech Republic in 1994.

77. Piotr Vasiliev (1899–1975) was a Soviet artist best known for numerous drawings of Lenin and especially Stalin, which were reproduced on millions of postcards.

78. The three equal sides of the triangle symbolized the workers' main demand: eight hours of work, eight hours of sleep, and eight hours of free time, and it was associated with the "Eight-Hours Movement" (Philip S. Honer, "*May Day: A Short History of the Workers' Holiday 1866–1986*" (New York: International Publishers, 1986), 9–12; see also the official site of the French Communist Party (<http://28.pcf.fr/23165>). The triangle as the symbol of the holiday was abandoned because of diversification of workers' demands beyond eight-hour workday, and national movements appropriated various traditional symbols of spring. For instance, in France, it was the lily of the valley, which had already been a symbol of spring festivities for several centuries. See Danielle Tartakowsky, *La part du rêve. Histoire du 1^{er} Mai en France* (Paris: Hachette Littératures, 2005): 63.

79. Since May Day was born as the result of union demonstration in Chicago in 1886, generally speaking, the emblem was relevant to the subject of the stamp. However, the AFL-CIO always occupied a strong anti-communist position, and Socialist countries did not use the handshake as the symbol of the labor movement. See Kim Munson, *100 Years Hand-in-Hand: A Brief History of the AFL-CIO Emblem*, accessed July 8, 2013, <http://www.library.sfsu.edu/exhibits/labels/100yearsofafflgo.pdf>.

80. Jay Kinney, *The Masonic Myth: Unlocking the Truth about the Symbols, the Secret Rites, and the History of Freemasonry* (New York: HarperCollins, 2009), 166, 169, 194.

81. Interestingly, this set was preceded by stamps showing the Communist dictator of Poland, Bolesław Bierut, and the leader of the PRC, Mao Zedong, in April and May of the same year, respectively. The latter set, dedicated to Sino-German friendship, remained the only depiction of Mao on European stamps, with the exception of Albania.

82. Anne Hartmann and Wolfram Eggeling, *Soviet Presence in the Cultural Life of the SBZ and Early GDR, 1945–1953* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1998), 124–25.

83. A. Tikhomirov, "Symbols of Power in Rituals of Violence. The Personality Cult and Iconoclasm on the Soviet Empire's Periphery (East Germany, 1945–61)," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2012): 47–88.

84. *Michel Deutschland-Katalog 2004/2005*. Schwaneberger Verlag, Munich, 422.
85. Letters and postcards that allegedly went through the regular mail stream with these forgeries as postage do exist, but there is suspicion that they are philatelic in nature and received either the so-called “favor cancels” or forged cancels.
86. Only a handful of countries ever commemorated the Potsdam conference. Afghanistan depicted the Caecilienhof Palace, where the conference took place; the USSR issued a stamp with three flags of the Allies in 1985; and Russia showed a map of divided Germany in 1995.
87. John Connelly, “The Paradox of East German Communism: From Non-Stalinism to Neo-Stalinism?” in *Stalinism Revisited: the Establishment of Communist Regimes in East-Central Europe*, edited by Vladimir Tismaneanu (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 161–93.
88. James Aulich and Marta Sylvestrová, *Political Posters in Central and Eastern Europe, 1945-95: Signs of the Times* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 21.
89. Lera Boroditsky, “How Languages Construct Time,” in *Space, Time and Number in the Brain*, edited by Stanislas Dehaene and Elizabeth Brannon (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2011), 333–41.
90. *The Oxford Companion to World War II*, edited by I. C. B. Dear and M. R. D. Foot (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 695, 702.
91. Izabella Main, “President of Poland or ‘Stalin’s Most Faithful Pupil’? The Cult of Bolesław Bierut in Stalinist Poland,” in Apor, *Leader Cult*, 181–82.
92. Although there were gross inconsistencies in the reports of Bierut’s death in Moscow and suspicions abound, no firm proof of foul play was ever published. See Andrzej Szwarz, Marek Urbański, Paweł Wieczorkiewicz, *Kto rządził Polska? Nowy początek władców od początków do XXI wieku* (Who ruled Poland? New findings regarding the rulers [of Poland] till the twenty-first century), Warszawa: Świat Książki, 2007, p. 692.
93. The only other stamp with similar wording (“To the great Stalin”) was issued as the high value of the set commemorating five years of the People’s Republic of Hungary (USSR, June 1951). The text on the Soviet stamp is barely legible.
94. Bonnell, *Iconography of Power*, fig. 6.13.
95. Steven D. Roper, *Romania: The Unfinished Revolution* (Amsterdam, Harwood Academic, 2000), 33.
96. In general, Romania has been relatively reserved in showing its political leaders on stamps. Despite his loyalty to the regime and personally to Stalin, Petru Groza, Romanian prime

minister in 1945–52, was portrayed on a Romanian stamp only once, long after his death, in the set commemorating Romanian physicians, politicians, and a writer. Even the Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu was portrayed on stamps only three times, many years after his ascent to power.

97. Dieter Heinzig, *The Soviet Union and Communist China, 1945–1950: The Arduous Road to the Alliance* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2004), 215.

98. The poster was created by I. Shagin and A. Druzhkov and incorporated Stalin's photograph (whose author is unknown), despite the fact that Soviet designers had largely abandoned the technique of photo collage by the 1940s. The poster is reproduced and discussed in Taline Ter Minassian, "L'affiche Stalinienne: du photomontage productiviste aux appels patriotiques," in Berelowitch and Gervereau, *Russie-URSS, 1914-1991*, 139. The same photograph was later used in other posters, such as "Under the leadership of the great Stalin—forward to communism!" by I. Shagin and B. Berezovsky.

99. During the preparation of the set, the artists made a mistake: the inscriptions on all stamps said "The Great October *Soviet* Socialist Revolution" (emphasis added). The stamps were on sale for two days before the mistake was noticed. They were withdrawn and issued in different colors without the hieroglyph "Soviet." The original issue became a major philatelic rarity.

100. David King, *The Commissar Vanishes. The Falsification of Photographs and Art in Stalin's Russia* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 1997), 84, 87.

101. Tomskey created several exact copies of this monument (and some others). In Leningrad alone, there were three copies of this particular statue.

102. Accessed July 8, 2013, <http://www.my-ussr.ru/soviet-posters/communist/179-communist-posters-ussr-stalin.html>.

103. See, for instance, Sergei Goncharov, John Lewis, Litai Xue, *Uncertain Partners: Stalin, Mao, and the Korean War* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993).

104. Geremie Barmé, *Shades of Mao: The Posthumous Cult of the Great Leader* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 8, 129.

105. Albert Resis, "The Churchill-Stalin secret "percentages" agreement on the Balkans, Moscow, October 1944," *American Historical Review* 83, No. 2 (April 1978): 368-387.

106. Enver Hoxha, *So Stalinym* (Tirana: Institute of Marxist-Leninist Studies, Central Committee of Albanian Labor Party, 1984).

107. From the book *Enver Hoxha. 1908-1985* (Tirana: Institute of Marxist-Leninist Studies, Central Committee of Albanian Workers' Party, 1986). The picture is reproduced on the web site dedicated to Enver Hoxha, accessed July 8, 2013, http://www.enverhoxha.ru/enver_hoxha_photogallery_8.htm.

108. Brian R. Myers, “North Korea’s Race Problem,” *Foreign Policy* 178 (March/April 2010). Historian Bruce Cumings describes the official North Korean ideology of Juche as “a state of mind ... that puts Korea first in everything.” See Bruce Cumings, “The Corporate State in North Korea,” in *State and Society in Contemporary Korea*, edited by Hagen Koo (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 213. For detailed analysis of North Korean stamps as a form of art and as a propaganda medium, see Ross King, “Monuments Writ Small: Postage Stamps, Philatelic Iconography, and the Commercialization of State Sovereignty in North Korea,” in *Exploring North Korean Arts*, edited by Rüdiger Frank (Vienna: Verlag für Moderne Kunst, 2012), 192–240.

109. Andrei Lankov, *The Real North Korea: Life and Politics in the Failed Stalinist Utopia* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013): 143.

110. An example of such a consistent usage of Soviet stamps for creating sarcastic political commentary is described in memoirs about the dissident Soviet writer Andrei Sergeev (Natalia Kamyshnikova-Pervukhina, “Kratkaia istoriia Sovetskogo Soyuza v kartinkakh: zagadka pisem Andreia Sergeeva,” *Solnechnoe spletenie*, no. 5–6, 2003: 281–89. Available at <http://blok.lit-info.ru/review/blok/001/81.htm>.

111. Interestingly, the first GDR stamp dedicated to Lenin appeared as late as 1960, so the sender had no choice but to illustrate the Stalinist version of Marxism.

112. In addition to stamps dedicated to liberation and European unity, France issued a stamp portraying Charles de Gaulle. In Russia, the newly acquired freedom of the press enabled private publishers to create numerous illustrated covers with strong Stalinist messages, and the Great Leader even appeared on illustrated covers in some Western countries.

113. Immediately after the end of the war, Columbia overprinted its definitive stamps with crude portraits of Stalin, Truman, and Attley. In 1946, Nicaragua included stamps with the Big Three in Teheran in the set that was dedicated to the memory of FDR.

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