

The Leader Cult in Communist Dictatorships

Stalin and the Eastern Bloc

Edited by

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79. CKQ-E-03 PF1B, p. 4, 14 September 2003 (female informant, b. village, Chelyabinsk province, 1934.)
80. Larry E. Holmes, *Stalin's School: Moscow's Model School no. 25, 1931-1937* (Pittsburgh, 1999).
81. Paola Messana, *Kommunalka: Une histoire de l'Union soviétique à travers l'appartenance communautaire* (Paris, 1995), p. 91.
82. Valentina Bogdan, 'Memoirs of an Engineer' in S. Fitzpatrick and Yu. Slezkine (eds) *In the Shadow of Revolution: Life Stories of Russian Women from 1917 to the Second World War* (Princeton, NJ, 2000), pp. 415-16.
83. This is based on personal information, 2000, from a woman brought up in Kazan' in the late 1930s and 1940s for the last case.
84. On fear of standing out as a motive for belief in the Stalin cult, see Anninskii, 'Monolog', p. 55.
85. A. Belousov (ed.) *Russkii shkol'nyi fol'klor: ot 'vzyvaniu' Prikovoi damy do semeinykh rasskazov* (Moscow, 1998), p. 436.
86. On the 1930s, see Gabor Rittersporn, 'Formy obshchestvennogo obikhoda molodezhi i ustanovki soverskogo rezhima v predvoennom desyatiletii' in T. Vihavainen (ed.) *Normy i tselnosti povsednevnui zhizni: Stanovlenie sotsialisticheskogo obraza zhizni v Rossii, 1920-e i 1930-e gody* (St Petersburg, 2000), pp. 347-67.
87. CKQ-Ox-03 PF 6B, p. 11, 8 March 2003 (female informant, b. Leningrad, 1931).
88. For an argument of this kind directed at a later period, see Kelli, "'Shkol'nyi val's'".
89. From a document held in the Volgograd City Archive, 71/37/32 94, quoted here from Polly Jones, *Strategies of De-mythologisation*, chapter 4.
90. See, for example, Mikhail Zhvanetsky's bitter joke: 'This isn't a nation, it's a kindergarten: radio announcers talk as if they were addressing half-wits or children' (1987): in his *God za dva* (Leningrad, 1991), p. 437. And compare Evgeny Dobrenko, 'Vse luchshee - deyam (Totalitarnaya kul'tura i mir detstva)', *Wiener Slavistischer Almanach*, 29 (1992), pp. 159-74, which draws an analogy between totalitarian culture, child consciousness and primitive thinking on the basis of their propensity for authoritarianism, reverence for the heroic, etc., and looks forward to a time when society will have evolved past this stage.
91. For the re-emergence of the 1920s interest in child creativity, see e.g. Vladimir Glotser, *Deti pishut stikhi* (Moscow, 1964).
92. Personal information, 1991.
93. Recited to me by a Leningrad male informant (b. 1935), 1999.
94. See e.g. Oxf/Lev SPb-03 PF 7A p. 50, 15 December 2003 (female informant, b. 1931) (on low retention); CKQ PF 5A, p. 2, 8 March 2003 (informant b. 1931 recalls Kirov's funeral as one of her earliest memories).
95. For the letter by N. Shvetsova, aged 12, see *Kommunist*, 1 (1990), pp. 95-6 (reprinted in M. E. Glavatsky (ed.) *Khrestomatiiya po istorii Rossii 1917-1940* (Moscow, 1994), pp. 415-17.)
96. Sarah Davies, *Popular Opinion in Stalin's Russia: Terror, Propaganda and Dissent, 1934-1941* (Cambridge, 1997), pp. 168-82.

7 Georgian Koba or Soviet 'Father of Peoples'? The Stalin Cult and Ethnicity

Jan Plamper¹

Stalin came from the periphery of the multiethnic Russian empire. Yet for most of his century he was seen as embodying the supraethnic Bolsheviks. Only recently a pronounced trend in scholarship has begun to emphasise Stalin's Georgian background and to regard him as a product of Transcaucasia rather than internationalist Marxism. This trend, which one might call the 'Georgianization' of Stalin, stresses the formative impact of his region on his behavioural patterns, rhetorical style and personality structure. Specifically, Georgianising scholars have foregrounded the role of Georgian literary models in shaping his rhetoric,² the socialising impact of the lower-class culture of violence of the Georgian village,³ the continuing dominance of the Caucasian principle of blood vendetta, and the power of personal networks along the lines of Transcaucasian clan relations.⁴

In contrast to the historical Stalin there was the Stalin as depicted in the cult. Here we explore the ethnic dimension of Stalin's portrayal in multiple media and focus in greater detail on two – oil portraiture and folklore. We shall look at the involvement of the periphery in the Stalin portrait competitions of the 1930s, which were usually organised in conjunction with the large-scale exhibitions with a Stalin focus. For folklore production, we will narrow the focus further and examine the case of Karelia, a centre of Stalin folklore. We first describe the structural features of folklore production and then concentrate on Stalin's image of 'father of peoples'.

The Soviet Union was not a nation-state but a federation composed of territories delimited according to ethnolinguistic criteria. At the same time every Soviet citizen was ascribed a nationality, which (almost) always matched one of the territories of the federation. Rogers Brubaker has described this bifurcated Soviet conception of ethnicity, which was to a large extent formulated by and under Stalin, with the terms 'ethnoterritorial federalism' and 'personal nationality'.⁵ The incongruity of these two principles belonged to the genetic code of Soviet nationalities policy, and phenotypic tensions, which contributed to the implosion of the USSR in 1991

and have dominated the post-Soviet realm to this day, were pre-programmed.

Under Stalin the dissolution of the Soviet Union would have been impossible. Not, one could argue provocatively, because of his terror regime, but because of his ethnic symbolic politics, above all the Stalin cult. The personal nationality of Stalin was Georgian, and yet he personified the federal nationality of the ethnoterritories, the Soviet Union. The cultic Stalin functioned as the representation of the federation *above* the ethnoterritories and thereby overcame the tension between the two principles of 'ethnoterritorial federalism' and 'personal nationality'. To push this point even further, the cultic Stalin largely filled the representational vacuum of Soviet national identity, that is, of the roof that spanned the various ethnoterritories. Since the symbolism of the federation was underdeveloped, especially if compared with that of the ethnoterritories, one could claim that Stalin not only embodied the federation but quite simply *was* the federation. As the Soviet Union, Stalin was metaphor and object, signifier and signified, merged into one.

The concept of ethnicity in the Stalin cult was deeply dialectical. The explosive potential of ethnic particularism (that is, personal nationality) – Stalin belongs to his ethnoterritory, Georgia! – was defused in supra-ethnoterritorial Soviet universalism. Therefore Stalin was never depicted as a Georgian. Georgia, when appearing in representations of Stalin, only did so as locally coloured background, as a folkloric wallpaper in one of the many rooms of the 'USSR as a communal apartment'.⁶ This dialectic was analogous to, perhaps even causally linked with, Stalin's 'real' nationalities ideology:

The dialectic of the Leninist approach to the question of national culture is precisely the blossoming of cultures, national in form and socialist in content, during the dictatorship of the proletariat in one country so that these cultures, when the proletariat is victorious in the entire world and socialism becomes a reality, can merge into one general socialist culture (both in form and content) with a single common language.⁷

Here a temporal dimension complements Stalin's embodiment of the federative Soviet Union: by personifying the USSR, Stalin also personified the future tense of 'socialism', before it 'became a reality' and turned into present tense.⁸

Thus a particularist ethnic representation of Stalin was possible only insofar as ethnic particularism was dialectically transcended in Soviet universalism. Following the formula 'national in form, socialist in content' this implied in practice that the background of a portrait of the young Stalin may well have depicted the Caucasus, the eyes of Stalin on a Kirghiz rug may well have been 'slanted' in Asian-Kirghiz manner, in Russian,

Armenian, and Dagestani Stalin folklore the epithets applied to Stalin may well have mobilised the respective local metaphors epic hero (*bogatyř*), the sun, and falcon (*sokol*), but the 'essence' of Stalin remained unchanged. This 'essence' or lingua franca was neither Georgian, Russian, Kirghiz, Armenian or Dagestani, but in its textual and visual vocabulary constituted a meta-national amalgam, syncretically drawn from a variety of sources. Stalin's metanational, amalgamated representations were canonised by about 1935 and experienced only minor, if remarkable, change thereafter.

The beginning of the Stalin cult is conventionally dated to 20 December 1929, when on the occasion of his 50th birthday Stalin was glorified on a large scale in various media – first and foremost the central press, especially *Pravda*.⁹ This powerful beginning was followed by several years of absence from the public stage, which lasted until the middle of 1932 and is usually explained through the attempt to avoid any association of Stalin with the catastrophic results of forced collectivisation or with his as yet unconsolidated power position in the party.¹⁰ By the mid-1930s his image in the various media had coalesced into a coherent system of signs. This image included in the visual media his benevolent face with the hair brushed back, the black moustache, his unblemished skin (without real-life pockmarks) and friendly eyes, which were always directed at a focal point in the distance outside the picture. His grey-green army overcoat, riding trousers and army boots were also part of this image, just as a number of props, mostly used in films, such as his pipe, the *Pravda* newspaper, and a map. In the textual media the canonic Stalin image included the appellation of 'leader' (*vozhid*), 'great leader and teacher' (*velikii vozhd' i uchiitel*), 'father of peoples' (*otets narodov*), 'wise father' (*mudryi otets*), 'genius', 'locomotive driver of the revolution', 'builder of communism' (*zodchii kommunizma*), 'fighter and falcon' (*borets i sokol*), as well as the adjectives 'great', 'wise', 'benevolent', and 'all-knowing'. The countless folkloric depictions of Stalin drew upon the stock mythologemes of the pictorial and associative expressive registries of a respective national culture.

These pictorial, filmic, aural and verbal representations of Stalin had solidified by the middle of the 1930s, but never become entirely static. The visualised Stalin, for example, underwent tremendous change during the Second World War and was represented during the post-war era in his white parade uniform with its single 'Hero of Socialist Labour' medal, his parade trousers, low shoes (instead of army boots) and greying hair.

The multimediality and intermediality of the Stalin cult

A great variety of media were involved in the Stalin cult, including cinema, photography, poster art, oil painting, sculpture, songs, poetry, prose, folklore, drama and crafts (from Armenian tapestry weaving to vases from the Leningrad porcelain manufacture). These media were engaged in a

continual competition for the status of master medium. It was the master medium in which particular images of Stalin were first formulated and later canonised. Other media followed the master medium. Therefore the intermediality – if defined as the relationship between multiple media – of the Stalin cult can be called multifocal but not multidirectional. Until the second half of the 1930s the visual media, particularly photography and oil painting, were the master media. Director Mikhail Romm's *Lenin in October* (*Lenin v oktjabre*), released in 1937, was the first movie with an actor starring as Stalin, and from then on cinema occupied the status of master medium. Oil painting, however, will be at the centre of much of what follows, since this is the medium that most of my research has concentrated on.

In the battle for the place of master medium the specific characteristics of a genre within a medium played a great role. Socialist Realist novels, for instance, hardly ever featured Stalin as the main hero since they followed the conventions of the genre of *Bildungsroman*. In this genre, the hero moves forward along a linear path by overcoming obstacles and in the end emerges a different and better person – usually a Soviet 'new man'. Stalin, however, could not be shown in the process of becoming, for Stalin had long completed his journey to a higher kind of personhood.¹¹ Stalin quite simply 'was': he, and only he, embodied the endpoint of the utopian timeline. As such he was beyond time and place.¹²

What is more, certain media were ethnically and religiously coded. Because of their traditional functions they lent themselves more or less for the portrayal of Stalin. It has been recently shown that Stalin was hardly ever depicted in the medium of Palekh lacquer box painting because of the traditional Russian Orthodox connotations of this medium.¹³ Cultural producers perceived lacquer boxes as looming in the collective imagination as too Russian and too religious to link them with Stalin. Other media had possessed similar connotations but were perceived as having been successfully recorded and as having acquired different meanings.

In a particular medium the portrayal of Stalin changed over time. Sometimes these changes were connected directly with the ethnic factor. In film, for instance, the Jewish actor, Semen Gol'dshtab, played Stalin in the first two movies with an actor starring as the Soviet leader, *Lenin in October* (1937) and *Man with a Rifle* (1938). After these movies Gol'dshtab was replaced by the Georgian actor, Mikhail Gelovani, and transferred to a provincial theatre in Kirov. This may coincide with an upsurge of anti-Semitism ushered in by the Hitler–Stalin pact. However, Gol'dshtab was reactivated to play Stalin in the film *Aleksandr Purkhomenko* (1942).¹⁴ At any rate, Gelovani succeeded Gol'dshtab in the role of Stalin and left a deeper imprint on the screen image of the *vozhid'* than anyone before or after him. Gelovani resembled his real life alter ego in the Kremlin not only physically but also in speaking Russian with a strong Georgian accent. In the 1948 movie *The Third Blow* he was replaced for a while by the former Gulag convict and ethnically Russian

actor of the Moscow Art Theatre, Aleksei Dikii. Dikii is said to have been installed at Stalin's personal behest in order to Russianize his image at the height of the 'anti-Cosmopolitanism' campaign and the battle against 'groveling before the West'.¹⁵ But movie-goers had a hard time accepting the new actor. 'Why, when you play I.V. Stalin, do you speak without the characteristic accent?' asked the author of an anonymous note written on scrap paper and passed forward to the stage at a public 'celebratory evening' (*tvorcheskii vecher*) with Dikii.¹⁶ Another note read: 'because we want to know comrade Stalin, we want to know him in detail down to his accent'.¹⁷ It was not just the accent that set the Russianised Stalin apart from his Georgian predecessor. Gelovani played Stalin as hardly moving, as static, whereas Dikii's body language was wild in comparison – he began unexpectedly waving with his hands or suddenly turning his head. The combined problem of canon and popular reception was a serious one. In one of the last Stalin movies, *The Fall of Berlin* (1949), Mikhail Gelovani returned to his habitual role as the *vozhid'* – at the will of the people or the whim of Stalin?

After Stalin's December 1935 pronouncement of the 'friendship of peoples' the Kremlin, with Stalin at its head, began receiving delegations from Caucasian and Central Asian republics and turned these receptions into public celebrations. The several months of receptions were followed by a newly prized vehicle for demonstrating the friendship of the Soviet family of nationalities, the Moscow-based 'weeks of national art' (*dekady natsional'nogo iskusstva*). These celebrations included art exhibitions and theatre performances from a given national republic. A first Ukrainian *dekada* in March 1936 was followed by *dekady* from Kazakhstan (May 1936), Georgia (January 1937), and Uzbekistan (May 1937).¹⁸ Stalin made an appearance at every one of these events, including the Georgian reception and *dekada*, yet in the elaborate symbolic presentations in multiple media he was not connected with his republic of origin, Georgia, in any special way whatsoever. His personal nationality, again, was downplayed while his embodiment of the federation, the Soviet Union, overshadowed everything else.

The 1930s also witnessed a number of monumental art exhibitions, some connected with the *dekady*, some not, but most with at least a Stalin cult art component if not a Stalin focus.¹⁹ In the first half of the 1930s, when the canon of Stalin depictions was still evolving and relatively few pieces of artwork were available, these exhibitions were more open-ended and invariably connected with competitions. The newspaper of the artistic intelligentsia, *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*, served as the semi-public arena where such competitions were announced and submissions sometimes even judged and criticised.²⁰ In the second half of the 1930s, after the canon had stabilised and a significant amount of Stalin artwork had already been produced, exhibitions more often collected available art and placed it in specific thematic contexts.

The stellar exhibition *I. V. Stalin and the People of the Soviet Country in the Five Arts* opened on Stalin's birthday, 21 December 1939; thanks to extensive documentation, it is a good window on the Stalin cult proper, the ethnic dimension of the cult, and the large exhibitions of the 1930s more generally.²¹ In April 1939 the visual section of the Council of People's Commissars (Sovnarkom) Committee for Arts Affairs had already sent out a barrage of letters to individual artists, to local artist unions in places as far away as Leningrad, Turkmenistan and Kiev, to museums and publishing houses, and to the directors of the 1939 *Industry of Socialism* exhibition and the Pushkin Fine Arts Museum, asking about any artistic representations of Stalin that the artist or institution might have in stock.²²

In the end, the Tretyakov Gallery was chosen as the single location for the exhibition. To pool resources, another initially separate exhibition on 'famous people of the country' (*Znatsnye lyudi strany*), devoted to images of Stakhanovites and other 'heroes' of the 1930s, was fused with the Stalin exhibition. The artwork was to be assembled from existing Stalin iconography 'plus a small number of works (about 30) that the Committee for Arts Affairs commissioned from great masters'. 'Apart from these commissioned works', the functionary of the Committee for Arts Affairs continued, 'we have collected information in the Union republics – Central Asia, Georgia, Armenia, Ukraine'.²³

Indeed, the involvement of the periphery in this exhibition was significant.²⁴ In the spring, central art functionaries visited artists in the Caucasus republics, Leningrad, Siberia, Central Asia and the Ukraine. Everywhere these functionaries communicated with local artists through the regional artists' unions, all of which were subordinate to the Moscow Union of Artists (MOSSKh) anyway (despite the fact that a single Artists' Union, *Soyuz khudozhnikov*, was founded only in 1957). Functionaries toured the republics and reported back to Moscow on the various types of artwork being produced.²⁵ In October Moscow again wrote to local artists' unions, inquiring, for instance, if paintings by a number of Kiev artists (inspected during the spring) were nearing completion; Moscow 'asked to send photographs of these works as soon as possible'.²⁶ Or, an individual Leningrad artist received the following warning: 'The State Tretyakov Gallery is informing you that after 9 November the commission for the selection of artwork for the Stalin exhibition will be in Leningrad. This commission will visit your studio and inspect your paintings'.²⁷ This was in line with the organisers' goal of 'convincing the [artists] that this [exhibition] is a very important political enterprise'; it was also consonant with the intention to 'implement stricter control'.²⁸ 'On the one hand it is indispensable to prod [shevelit] the artists', echoed Aleksandr Gerasimov, 'on the other hand we need to offer them help when they encounter difficulties. What, for example, if we have commissioned a portrait but the painter has no model?'.²⁹

Artists responded to the written October inquiries of the Committee with letters and photographs, showing the state of completion of their work. After the news of the exhibition had spread widely in artistic circles, some artists who were not invited proposed to submit Stalin busts and paintings at their own initiative.³⁰ In late November and early December a jury, composed of famous artists and culture bureaucrats, met in Moscow and judged the art that had been gathered. Certain works were accepted unconditionally, others were designated for changes, and yet others were rejected outright.³¹ As was to be expected, given the short notice, many commissions were late.³²

One of the complaints of participating artists was the difficulty of getting the *znatsnye lyudi* – the Stakhanovites, arctic explorers, biologists and kolkhoz milkmaids – to pose. 'I was ordered to do a portrait of Ostuzhev', ventured one artist. 'He came to my studio, I tried to win him over . . . He looked at everything and left – I do not know why, but perhaps my art did not convince him'.³³ A certain Isaev of the Committee for Arts Affairs agreed that getting *znatsnye lyudi* to pose often was problematic: famous scientists or Bolsheviks 'believe that if they pose, they will be accused of laziness, of wasting time on modeling, therefore they escape posing or pose at their desk'. The Stakhanovites and decorated kolkhoz farmers were 'easier to get to pose, but they want to keep the painting as a token of remembrance. That is why the Committee . . . must give a public explanation'.³⁴ Meanwhile artists accused artists, and art functionaries accused artists, of not trying hard enough to get their intended models to pose. 'As far as Fadeev, the writer, is concerned', sniped one artist, 'I suspect that Yakovlev did not look for him seriously. He is such a man of culture, understands so much, that he is always helpful'.³⁵

Just before the opening of the exhibition in late December 1939, powerful culture functionaries and party members probably walked round the rooms to see if anything needed to be changed at the last minute.³⁶ Several artists inquired with the organising commission why their pictures had been rejected, others wanted their rejected artwork back more quickly, and yet others were interested in the success of their paintings in the exhibition:

Is the exhibition well attended? Do you have a visitor comment book and do they criticize me a lot there? Were there any remarks from the government commission? These questions interest every painter, not just me, so please do not think that I am an exceptionally ambitious painter.³⁷

Once it was on, the Tretyakov Gallery was actively involved in propagandising the exhibition. In general, a lot was done so that these exhibitions reached as many people as possible from all stretches of the vast Soviet empire. Not only were people brought from the periphery to the exhibitions

in the centres in organised groups, but the main provincial towns organised their own exhibitions or hosted mobile exhibitions from the centre, both mainly showcasing reproductions.³⁸ One sure way to boost an exhibition's visitor statistics, according to the artists, was to get Stalin to visit it.³⁹ But clinging to his image of modesty and allegedly only grudging tolerance of his genuinely 'popular' cult, Stalin did not make an appearance at his anniversary exhibition; in his lifetime he only visited one (or two) of the large exhibitions of the 1920s and 1930s: the tenth AKhR exhibition in 1928 and perhaps the 1933 exhibition in honour of the Red Army's fifteenth anniversary.⁴⁰

Stalin as 'Father of Peoples': folklore in Karelia and beyond

Collect your folklore,
make a study of it,
work it over.
Maxim Gorky, 1934

One of Stalin's key images – in fact, the image connected most prominently to the question of ethnicity – was that of 'father of peoples' (*otets narodov*). In this image Stalin presided as a patriarchic father over a harmonious family of Soviet nationalities. The primary medium for the communication of this image was poetry, in particular folklore, which had been redefined effectively as a genre of poetry in 1934 at the First Congress of Soviet Writers, and in English is sometimes referred to as 'fake lore' or 'pseudofolklore' because of its artificiality.⁴¹

The collection of folklore in Russia began in the early nineteenth century, when the academic discipline of folkloristics (*folkloristika*) was established. After the Bolsheviks came to power the discipline of folkloristics entered into a period of lively theoretical debates, the boundaries of which were demarcated by the givens of the collective (over individual authorship), 'science' (over art), and materialist history (over individual genius). From the beginning, however, the coexistence of rural folklore with the urban socialist utopia and the active propagation of proletarian culture (through the Proletkult movement, for example) was perceived as an uneasy marriage. Between 1929 and 1931, literary organisations spearheaded efforts to terminate this misalliance of 'rural backwardness' with 'urban progress', clamoring for an all-out abandonment of folklore as a discipline.

All of this changed radically with Stalin's rise to power. Following the Great Break the plenitude of literary organisations was subsumed into the monolithic Union of Soviet Writers, founded in 1932. In 1934 Maxim Gorky, addressing the First Congress of Soviet Writers, strongly supported efforts by

Soviet folklorists to ascribe to folklore a meaning not of a dated art form, but of a new, national-cum-traditional, art form.⁴²

Gorky's proclamation ushered in the 20-year-long Golden Age of Soviet folklore during which Socialist Realist centrepieces such as 'Glory to Stalin shall be eternal' (in the traditional Russian epic *bylina* genre) and 'To immortal Lenin' (in the traditional lament [*plach*] genre) began appearing in *Pravda*, Karelian performers in Moscow's largest concert halls, and a Kazakh poet, Dzhabambul Dzhabaev, on Kremlin photographs with Stalin. The *bylina* was reintroduced as the composite neologism, *novina*, meaning a half-sung, half-recited oral poem in the *bylina* genre on new, Soviet subjects. While the Golden Age peaked between 1936 and 1941, the first voices doubting Soviet folklore's authenticity and branding it 'pseudofolklore' appeared in 1939. Two years later Yurii Sokolov, then the premier folklorist, publicly regretted the manipulation of performers by folklorists like himself, for the folklorist-guided reworking of their folklore resulted in 'horrifying falsifications of the traditional and Soviet folklore'.⁴³

It was this new, Soviet folklore that transported one of Stalin's images as 'father of peoples'. The image of Stalin as a father *per se* was launched in 1935 when during the summer he was pictured in the print media together with the 11-year-old pioneer girl, Nina Zdrogova, on the tribune of the Lenin mausoleum saluting a physical-cultural parade. From then on until the beginning of the Second World War he was frequently shown with young girls, all of non-Russian background such as Buryat-Mongolia's Gelya Markizova and Turkmenistan's Mamlakat Nakhangova. Consonant with his father image, Stalin 'kissed babies, shook hands with fathers, and visited almost every children's home in Moscow at least once'.⁴⁴ His biological daughter, Svetlana, was shown with her father once in a 1935 photograph, but only to fade from the public eye for decades. Few people were as appropriate to support the image of Stalin as father in the 'myth of the great family' of Soviet peoples as non-Russian, preadolescent girls.⁴⁵ For their distance to the father could not have been greater: belonging to the 'weak gender' and coming from 'backward' republics, they constituted the ideal antipode to Stalin.⁴⁶

Likewise it was not the famous male folklore performers from Central Asia or the Caucasus who lauded Stalin as 'father of peoples', but female folklore poets (*skazitelnitsy*) from Karelia. Surprisingly, much of the folklore from Karelia was not by Karelians or Finns, but by Russophone Russians (the majority of Karelia's population in 1926), and Russian women in particular. There are various reasons for the predominance of these Russophone *skazitelnitsy* from Karelia. First of all, compared with folklore performers from other parts of the Soviet Union, there were logistical advantages, since Karelia had been the chief site of pre-revolutionary folklore since the second half of the nineteenth century and since it was conveniently located in the micro-periphery, just 400 kilometres northeast of Leningrad.⁴⁷

Second, the genre of Russian Karelian folklore lent itself particularly well because it could be easily deployed as *ersatz* Russian Orthodoxy. By the time of the 'Great Retreat' the urban, socialist utopia – with its machine metaphors in Socialist Realist novels – was abandoned in favour of nature and pastoral harmony – reflected, for instance, in a switch to garden metaphors in novels.⁴⁸ The natural choice of a symbolic system for representing this shift would have been religion, but Russian Orthodoxy was unavailable for obvious reasons (the Bolsheviks' general atheist stance and Russian Orthodoxy's particular association with tsarism). Russian Karelian folklore was a good substitute because (a) it represented timeless tradition (as opposed to the utopian, time-shattering dreams of the 1920s), offering a whole stock of seemingly ancient genres (in truth invented in the nineteenth century) as well as folklore performer dynasties with their descendants of the 1930s and 1940s – Marfa Kryukova, Karelia's star performer, and Petr Riabinin-Andreev; (b) certain genres, such as the *bylina* genre with its emphasis on patrilineal male heroes (*bogatyri*), lent themselves extremely well to celebrate lines of Bolshevik male heroes; (c) language and genres were Russian, yet the veneer was non-Great Russian, which allowed for the fortification of the *de facto* national-ethnic hierarchy of the Soviet Union – the patriarch Stalin on top, Great Russians and their greatest 'sons' right below (aviation heroes, arctic explorers), followed by the rest of the children (non-Great Russian nationalities); and finally (d), it allowed for the redeployment of the father image outside the religious framework.

Folklore production

During the first Five Year Plan authors and their texts were often publicly reworked on the pages of journals and newspapers. Such tactics served pedagogical and disciplinary purposes: publicly enacted individual textual (and social) engineering was to induce larger segments of society to follow. Public pedagogy was abandoned in 1931–32, when 'Soviet Man' was expected to have emerged (if not, the penal system coercively 're-educated'), and cultural products began appearing publicly in their final form only. This shift did not signal the end to a reworking of texts, it merely pushed the process outside public purview.⁴⁹

In 1938 the folklore section of the Union of Soviet Writers passed a resolution that lambasted the infiltration of 'enemies of the people' in folklore and the resulting falsification in translations and reproduction (printing). It proposed the creation of 'a single leadership of all folklore work in the USSR' as an urgent task.⁵⁰ A 24-point list of 'necessary measures' listed, among other things, 'the systematic registration of folklorists and masters of folk art according to a single plan'. It proposed 'the complete harmonization of working plans of the central and local folklore institutions with regard to

expeditions, publications, forms of systematization, cataloguing and storage of folklore materials'.⁵¹

Folklore centres in the Soviet periphery were indeed drawing up annual plans for folklore production. The 1937–38 plan of the folklore section at the Karelian Scientific and Research Institute for Culture was entitled 'The Flourishing of Folk Arts in Soviet Karelia' and listed various objectives in publishing, exhibitions, recordings of folklore performers, including the following targets: collection of civil war folklore; recording of folklore on 'the building of socialism'; 'folk art of the post October period'; 'tales about Lenin'; 'urgent recording of major performers and Soviet material at hand'.⁵²

It is unclear who exactly – a Moscow or Leningrad folklore institute, or a higher party institution – ordered the folklore institute in Petrozavodsk to publish a 'series of collections of tales, runes, and *byliny* in Karelian and Russian'.⁵³ But we know that the Karelian folklore institute then either tapped its pool of available performers to elicit the planned folklore, or it recruited additional performers. This took the form of a memorandum sent out around 1938 to the village soviets, in which institute director Mashezerskii lamented that 'all bearers [*nositel'*] of folk arts have yet to be found... in spite of a series of... expeditions.' According to Mashezerskii, performers 'creating their songs, *byliny*, runes, and tales about our leaders Lenin-Stalin, and about the achievements of the Soviet Union' were particularly scarce. Therefore the institute asked the village soviet to conduct a search for '(a) citizens, who know many tales, *byliny*, runes, sayings, and songs' and '(b) talented citizens, who compose these songs and tales themselves'.⁵⁴

Individual work 'on' a performer took place either in the village or in Petrozavodsk. One documented case involved a Petrozavodsk folklorist, A. D. Soimonov, who sent the following instruction to kolkhoz accountant Prokhor Novozhilov:

Take upon yourself or order some young person to read and explain to the old man Zhuravlev the following books: 'Voroshilov, Stalin, and the Red Army' and 'Budennyi – warrior, citizen,' as well as the biographies of the leaders: Stalin, Lenin... Perhaps Zhuravlev will be able to create *byliny* about our leaders on the basis of this material. Talk to him, so that he remembers old *byliny*, too. The old man has nothing to do anyway, so let him work on *byliny*. Inform the institute about your results around May. Then we could summon him to Petrozavodsk or visit him.⁵⁵

In print the performers were represented in precisely the synthetic fashion that from 1939 onwards periodically aroused the criticism of Soviet folklorists. A list of performer biographies appended to the collection, *Byliny Pudozhskogo kraja*, on the one hand stresses a performer's creative, poetic talent, on the other hand accentuates the influence of contemporary themes

disseminated in the mass media.⁵⁶ It seems very likely that this type of folklore production differed little in other parts of the Soviet Union. This is not to claim that regional differences in Stalin cult production in the multiethnic state were completely erased. Research on this topic is still lacking, but one could speculate that the making of the Stalin in cult in Muslim Central Asia, for example, with Islam's prohibition of the depiction of human faces, bore some specific features.

Folklore products

Stalin loves all people
and you small children
lulla, lullaby, I'll sing you a song
sleep my grandson.⁵⁷

From a Karelian lullaby

In Soviet representations Stalin received power (and legitimacy) not only from the people or by virtue of his deeds, but also from Lenin. Some *noviny* rehearse the theme of Stalin as Lenin's legitimate heir, encapsulated in the formula 'Stalin is the Lenin of today'. As Anna Mikhailovna Pashkova, Karelia's second most prominent *skazitel'nitsa*, who saw her husband in his seventies dekulakized in 1930,⁵⁸ recited in 1939, 'Lenin and Stalin, / Were not brothers by blood, / But they were equal talents. / What Lenin had planned, / Stalin has fulfilled.⁵⁹ In this *novina* Stalin and Lenin are figured as brothers, in others Lenin is 'grandfather' to Stalin, who is 'father' to the peoples of the Soviet Union. Indeed, 'father' (*otets*) is one of the most common appellations used for Stalin in folklore, even if without the genitive object 'of peoples' (*narodov*). 'Thank you, father Stalin, / For your good thoughts. / You have done good for the world / You have fixed life,' sounded one typical folk verse *chiastushka*.⁶⁰ 'Stalin, leader of the world, / Mountain hawk-falcon, / He cares for the workers, / Just like a father for his children', proclaimed Georgian folklore, using regionally coloured imagery ('Mountain hawk-falcon').⁶¹ Above all, however, Stalin was 'father' in the Russian folklore of the female performers from Karelia: 'In the Kremlin lives our close father Stalin, / Oh, father close, dear Stalin / Oh, his eyes are so sincere, / His hair shines golden, / Oh, he has a silken beard (sic), / Yes he has a wise head / How from his wise head / Everywhere grow factories and enterprises, / And in the villages grow kolkhozes.'⁶²

Alongside the appellation 'father,' the traditional Russian term *batyushka* (father), previously used in popular parlance for fathers, priests and tsars, reappeared. It was, for example, applied to Stalin in 1938 – in the context of the Papanin-led polar expedition: 'Oh you, hail to you, father [*batyushka*]

Stalin . . . / You care about all of us. / Father [*batyushko*] Stalin will not leave you / On the faraway ice – / He will take care of you, too, / He will hurry to save you.⁶³ And Karelia's Evdokiya Kokunova composed an epic tale, entitled 'How We Saw Off our Falcons,' about Soviet mothers sending their sons to the 'Great Patriotic War', in which the mother protagonist, upon hearing of her son's death in the war, receives consolation from the fact that, 'After all, we have the Red Army, / We have our close father [*rodnoi batyushka*] / Iosif light Vissarionovich.'⁶⁴ By the late 1930s, then, the word *batyushka* had been stripped of its tsarist and Russian Orthodox connotations to such an extent that it could resurface in the context of Stalin.

It was, as we have seen, the Russian-language female folklore performers from Karelia who were vital in glorifying Stalin as their 'father' and therefore cementing the image of Stalin as 'father of peoples', presiding over a Soviet mythic family of nations connected by the 'friendship of peoples'. Poems in which Stalin was identified as Georgian are almost completely missing, even (or especially?) in Georgian folklore. One of the very rare pieces of folklore that connects Stalin to Georgia is an Evenk song from Siberia, in which Stalin is called a 'son of the Georgian people' and further, by implication, designated as 'father of the Soviet Union': 'Take pride, Georgian people, / In your beloved, great son! / Take pride, our country, mother of Soviets, / In the name of comrade Stalin!'⁶⁵ In another piece, entitled 'Lavrentii Beria in the Mountains', Beria is referred to as 'leader of Georgia'. Stalin, who also makes an appearance, is marked as Georgian in no way whatsoever.⁶⁶ National ascriptions were carefully kept apart, lest Stalin's personal nationality interfere with his embodiment of the federation of ethnoterritories.

Was everything this clean, one might ask, or was there dissonance in the harmonious, pastoral symphony of the great family, performed by the *skazitel'nitsa*? At times incestuous undertones crept into the harmony, creating a competing strand of Stalin as man/sexual object. *Skazitel'nitsa* Khoteeva, for example, composed: 'How happy would I be / If I suddenly came / To Moscow. I would see / Lenin's Mausoleum! / Well, but if I met / The most beloved, / The songs would melt, / Of the song I'd sing for Stalin!'⁶⁷ However, erotic tensions and energy were never channelled and instrumentalised as they were in the symbolic celebration of the relationship between Hitler and the female part of the German people.

Conclusion

In the beginning I introduced a dichotomy between a 'real' Stalin and a 'cultural' Stalin. Just as this dichotomy is above all heuristic, the Soviet conception of nationhood was infinitely more complex and dynamic than described at the outset with the terms 'ethnoterritorial federalism' and 'personal nationality'. During the 1920s the Soviet regime actively developed

national, non-Russian cultures and installed national cadres in positions of political power in the ethnoterritories of the Soviet Union.⁶⁸ In symbolic politics the significance of the federation, the Soviet Union, and of the largest national republic, the Russian Federation, were downplayed, lest bad memories of Great Russian chauvinism or the tsarist Russifying empire resurface. During the 1930s ethnosymbolic politics switched to more primordial concepts and began celebrating folkloristic, exoticised national cultures with ancient national poets and heroes. In February 1936 Stalin declared the danger of Great Russian chauvinism overcome and reintroduced Russian national culture in the privileged position of a 'first among equals'. At the same time, the Soviet Union proper remained remarkably underdeveloped in the national rhetoric. As I have argued, Stalin compensated for this symbolic deficit by embodying the Union. In so far as the Soviet Union itself was celebrated at all, it was the sum of the national cultures. In other words, the symbolism of the federation (the Soviet Union) was equal to the sum of its parts (the ethnoterritories). Since the Russian ethnoterritory, the RSFSR, was allowed a publicly promoted national culture only in 1936, it was not until then that it began contributing to the supranational Soviet ethnosymbolism. Since the Russian ethnoterritory, the RSFSR, began, however, playing first fiddle among the various ethnoterritories, its part in the sum that made up Soviet rhetoric was greater than that of others.⁶⁹

Up to Stalin's very death his oldest party friends used his early pseudonym, Koba, borrowed from the hero of the romantic Georgian nationalist Alexander Kazbegi's novel, *The Patricide*, when joining an underground leftist group in Tbilisi in 1898. Only on rare occasions, however, did this particularist Georgian ethnic designation enter public discourse. There he was known under his Russianised pseudonym of 'Stalin'. For photographs Stalin might dress in the folkloric costumes of the national republics, but these costumes belonged precisely to the world of costumes – they were but masquerades.⁷⁰ Underneath these costumes Stalin wore his army uniform and boots. He represented the supraethnic 'father of peoples' and in this paternal role stood in symbolically for the Soviet Union, the roof spanning the various ethnoterritories that belonged to the first socialist – federal – state. Stalin's belonging to any of the ethnoterritories by virtue of his Georgian personal nationality was carefully censored. If representations of Stalin exhibited any kind of ethnic particularism it was Russian. But Russian only to the extent that the symbolism of the Soviet Union was the sum of its ethnoterritorial parts, and that the Russian part in this sum was larger than that of others.

Notes

1. Many thanks to Chad Bryant and Malte Rolf for their comments.
2. Mikhail Vaiskopf, *Pisatel' Stalin* (Moscow, 2001), pp. 130–1, 181–98.

3. See Jörg Baberowski, *Der Rote Terror: Die Geschichte des Stalinismus* (Munich, 2003), pp. 15, 24–5, 32–3, 42–3, 88–93; id., *Der Feind ist überall: Stalinismus im Kaukasus* (Munich, 2003), pp. 17–18.
4. Alfred Rieber, 'Stalin, Man of the Borderlands', *American Historical Review*, 106, no. 4 (December 2001), pp. 1651–91.
5. Rogers Brubaker, 'Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia', *Theory and Society*, 23: 1 (1994), pp. 47–78.
6. I borrow this phrase from Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism', *Slavic Review*, 53: 2 (summer, 1994), pp. 415–52.
7. Stalin's report to the 16th Party Congress, *Pravda*, 29 June 1930, reprinted in I. V. Stalin, *Sobremenniya*, 12 (Moscow, 1952), p. 369.
8. Jan Plamper, 'The Spatial Poetics of the Personality Cult: Circles Around Stalin' in Evgeny Dobrenko and Eric Naiman (eds) *The Landscape of Stalinism: The Art and Ideology of Soviet Space* (Seattle, 2003), pp. 36, 44.
9. Jeffrey Brooks, *Thank You, Comrade Stalin! Soviet Public Culture from Revolution to Cold War*, (Princeton, NJ, 2000), pp. 59–77; Benno Ennker, 'Politische Herrschaft und Stalinskult 1929–1939' in Stefan Plaggenborg (ed.) *Stalinismus: neue Forschungen und Konzepte* (Berlin, 1998), pp. 152, 166; Reinhard Löhmann, *Der Stalinmythos: Studien zur Sozialgeschichte des Personenkultes in der Sowjetunion (1929–1935)* (Münster, 1990), pp. 27–32.
10. James L. Heizer, 'The Cult of Stalin, 1929–1939', PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 1977, pp. 80, 99, 138.
11. I owe this point to a conversation with Hans Günther in Berkeley, 1998. Also see Rolf Hellebust, 'Reflections of an Absence: Novelistic Portraits of Stalin before 1953' in Nina Kolesnikoff and Walter Smyrniw (eds) *Socialist Realism Revisited: Selected Papers from the McMaster Conference* (Hamilton, Ont., 1994), pp. 111–20. On the Socialist Realist novel as *Bildungsroman* see Katerina Clark, *The Soviet Novel: History as Ritual* (1st edition Chicago, 1981), pp. 16–17, 57.
12. There are exceptions to Stalin's absence in Socialist Realist prose. Kazimir Lisovskii, *V Turukhamskoi sylke* (Novosibirsk, 1947), deals with Stalin's escape from his Siberian place of exile. Many Stalinist novels include a trip of their hero from the periphery to Stalin in Moscow, the centre. See Rosalind Marsh, *Images of Dictatorship: Portraits of Stalin in Literature* (London, 1989), p. 39.
13. Andrew Jenks, 'Russia in a Box: The Production of Russian and Socialist Identity, 1814–2001', PhD diss., Stanford University, 2002.
14. During the openly anti-Semitic late 1940s Gol'dshtab's name was often suppressed. See Nikolas Hülsbusch, *Im Spiegelkabinett des Diktators: Stalin als Filmheld im sowjetischen Spielfilm (1937–1953)* (Alfeld, 2001), p. 78.
15. See the television documentary by Oksana Bulgakova, Frieda Gräfe and Enno Patalas, *Stalin – Eine Mosfilmproduktion* (WDR, 1993).
16. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Literatury i Iskusstva (RGALI), 2376/1/197 34.
17. RGALI, 2376/1/197 33.
18. Terry Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1923–1939* (Ithaca, NY, 2001), pp. 439–40.
19. Major exhibits of the 1930s included, among others, Artists of the RSFSR over the Past 15 Years (1932); *On the History of the Bolshevik Organisations of Transcaucasia* (1937); *Industry of Socialism* (1939); V. I. Lenin and I. V. Stalin in Sculpture (1939); I. V. Stalin and the People of the Soviet Country in the Fine Arts (1939).

20. Plamper, 'The Spatial Poetics of the Personality Cult', pp. 31–2.
21. Jan Plamper, 'The Stalin Cult in the Visual Arts, 1929–1953', PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2001, pp. 120–30.
22. Susan E. Reid, 'Socialist Realism in the Stalinist Terror: The *Industry of Socialism* Art Exhibition, 1935–41', *Russian Review*, 60: 2 (April 2001), pp. 153–84.
23. Odel Rukopisei Gosudarstvennaya Tret'yakovskaya Galleriya (OR GTG), 8.II/993 21–21ob. Stenographic record of the 'meeting for the preparation of the exhibit' of 7 October 1939.
24. Artwork from the periphery was always judged in the centre, if the exhibit took place in Moscow. The judging was then done by a commission according to majority voting (with the painter, if present in the jury, abstaining from voting). OR GTG, 18/183 3, 8. Stenographic record dated 1 October 1940.
25. OR GTG, 8.II/993 8 (Report by Veimark on his visit to Armenia). On his visit to Central Asia Veimark reported as follows: 'The art in the Central Asian Republics is more random. So far we do not see the kind of great activity as in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, where artists were mobilized for Stalin themes... In Turkmeniya we have the portrait carpet... In Kazakhstan and Kirghiziya we also have something: Kazakh tapestries with portraits... In Tadzhikistan we have murals... In Buryat-Mongolia, I believe, there should also be something fitting... I think that we could thus get a minimum of 100 pieces of artwork out of the national republics for this exhibit, even if we select rigorously.' OR GTG, 8.II/993 11–2.
26. OR GTG, 8.II/994 3.
27. OR GTG, 8.II/994 115.
28. OR GTG, 8.II/993 22ob.
29. OR GTG, 8.II/993 23.
30. See, for example, the Leningrad artist Vladimir Kuznetsov's letter in OR GTG, 8.II/993 62.
31. See the protocols of the jury in OR GTG, 8.II/993 89–92, 94–9, 105–7, 142–52.
32. For telegrams of individual artists or local artists' unions saying that their contributions were going to be late, see OR GTG, 8.II/993 119–22.
33. OR GTG, 8.II/993 25.
34. OR GTG, 8.II/993 28ob.-29.
35. OR GTG, 8.II/993 28.
36. Thus the chairman of the Committee for Arts Affairs, Platon Kerzhentsev, made last-minute changes in the way pictures were hung at the 1937 *Art of the Georgian SSR* exhibit, removed several pictures from the exhibit, and had details changed in others. The painting of M. I. Toidze, *Stalin at Lenin's in Gorki* was removed. The artist U. M. Dzharparidze was ordered to correct the position of the hand of Stalin in his picture, *Comrade Stalin and V. Ketskshoveli*, and I. A. Vepkhvadze was told to change Kirov's chin in his *Portrait of S. M. Kirov*. OR GTG, 8.II/763 3.
37. OR GTG, 8.II/993 191–2.
38. In 1938–39, for example, a 'mobile exhibition Lenin-Stalin in the fine arts', consisting mostly of reproductions and plaster casts of existing artwork, was prepared by the Tretyakov Gallery for travel through the Soviet Union. See OR GTG, 8.II/888. In 1949, the Irkutsk art museum organised an exhibit entitled *Stalin and the Stalin Era in Works of Art*, which dealt in part with Stalin's experience of Siberian exile. See the catalogue, *Vystavka: Stalin i Stalinskaya epokha v proizvedeniyakh izobrazitel'nogo iskusstva* (Irkutsk, 1949).
39. At a discussion of the organising Committee about how to increase the recently opened *Industry of Socialism's* attractiveness to visitors, one participant suggested that 'Iosif Vissarionovich Stalin should find time to visit the exhibition'. OR GTG, 18/136 28–9. Stenographic record dated 14 April 1939.
40. Evgenii Gromov, *Stalin: vlast' i iskusstvo* (Moscow, 1998), pp. 59–60.
41. See Frank J. Miller, *Folklore for Stalin: Russian Folklore and Pseudofolklore of the Stalin Era* (Armonk, NY, 1990).
42. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 22.
44. Heizer, 'The Cult of Stalin, 1929–1939', p. 169.
45. On 'The Stalinist Myth of the "Great Family"' see Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, chap. 5.
46. Eric Naiman, *Sex in Public: The Incarnation of Early Soviet Ideology* (Princeton, 1997), p. 15.
47. Karelia's regional folklore institute was ranked in importance only after those of Moscow and Leningrad in the 'chronicle' (*khronika*) section of the journal *Sovetskii Fol'klor*. See e.g. P. G. Shiryayeva, 'Fol'klornaya rabota v SSSR za poslednie tri goda,' *Sovetskii Fol'klor*, 7 (1941), p. 266.
48. Clark, *The Soviet Novel*, pp. 99, 105.
49. There were, to be sure, cases of textual reworking that entered the pages of journals even after 1931, but they are exceptions. They are also kept in a different format, in which public pedagogy is abandoned in favour of an author's 'natural' improvement upon an older version of a text. See, for example, V. Kravchinskaya, 'Novyi variant skazki M. M. Korgueva', *Sovetskii Fol'klor*, 7 (1941), p. 273. Here the Karelian *skazitel'*, Korguev, presents the folklorist with an 'improved' version of his tale 'O Chapae' ('About Chapaev').
50. 'Rezolyutsiya', *Sovetskii Fol'klor*, 7 (1941), p. 249.
51. *Ibid.*, pp. 249–50.
52. T. I. Sen'kina, 'Zabytaya stranitsa iz istorii russkoi fol'kloristiki Karelii (30–40-e gody XX veka)' in N. A. Krinichnaya and E. S. Kyuru (eds) *Fol'kloristika Karelii* (Petrozavodsk, 1991), p. 133.
53. *Ibid.*, p. 130. The targeted year is 1938.
54. *Ibid.*
55. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
56. P. N. Parlova and A. D. Soimonova (eds) *Byliny Pudozhskogo kraja* (Petrozavodsk, 1941).
57. Composed by E. S. Zhuravleva, 23 October 1932. Arkhiv Kareli'skogo Nauchnogo Tsentra Rossiiskaya Akademiya Nauk (AKNT's RAN), 1/1/9/15 51. Original: 'Stalin lyubit vsekh lyudei / i vas malen'kikh detei / bayushki bayu ia te pesenku spoyu / spi vnuček ty moi.'
58. Sen'kina, 'Zabytaya stranitsa iz istorii russkoi fol'kloristiki Karelii (30–40-e gody XX veka)', p. 136.
59. Miller, *Folklore for Stalin*, p. 165.
60. *Chastushka*, no. 285, recorded in Kotchura, 1938. Typescript in AKNT's RAN, 1/39/62 50.
61. I. V. Megrelidze, 'Iz gruzinskogo revolyutsionnogo fol'klora', *Sovetskii Fol'klor*, 6 (1939), p. 106.
62. A. V. Belovanova, 'Lenin i Stalin v tvorchestve skazitelei sovetskoi Karelii', *Izvestiya Karelo-Finskogo Filiala AN SSSR*, 2 (1950), pp. 43–52; AKNT's RAN, 1/45/78 14.

63. A. Soimonova, *Geroi Arktiki* (preface, typescript draft, 1938); AKNTIS RAN, 1/39/87 2-3.
64. Belovanova, 'Lenin i Stalin v tvorchestve skazitelei sovetskoi Karelii', pp. 43-52; AKNTIS RAN, 1/45/78 16.
65. 'Pesni o Lenine i Staline' in G. M. Vasilevich and S. D. Magid, 'Novaya evenkiiskaya pesnya', *Sovetskii Fol'klor*, 7 (1941), pp. 72-81; here song no. 9, pp. 77-8.
66. Megrelidze, 'Iz gruzinskogo revolyutsionnogo fol'klora', p. 106.
67. Belovanova, 'Lenin i Stalin v tvorchestve skazitelei sovetskoi Karelii'; AKNTIS RAN, 1/45/78 17.
68. Martin, *Affirmative Action Empire*, pp. 432-61.
69. The catchword after 1936, 'Soviet patriotism', is seen by some scholars as Russocentric nationalism packaged as multiethnic identity. See Alan Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin: Parallel Lives* (London, 1991), p. 2; David Brandenberger, *National Bolshevism: Stalinist Mass Culture and the Formation of Modern Russian National Identity* (Cambridge, Mass., 2002).
70. Miklós Kun, *Stalin: An Unknown Portrait* (Budapest, 2003), pp. 220-1.

8 Working Towards the Centre: Leader Cults and Spatial Politics in Pre-war Stalinism

Malte Rolf

The Soviet Union of the 1930s saw the emergence of a new culture. Stalin's 'building of Socialism' not only meant the radical political and economic transformation of the country. The dawn of the new era also manifested itself in the fundamental reshaping of culture. Stalin's cultural revolution was not a 'great retreat' but rather an attempt to realise the utopian vision of the new socialist person and to define the new aesthetics of a brave new world. It was less a time of 'war on the dreamers' than a period of new dream weavers who reinvented culture, and by this the Soviet Union.¹

The most emblematic cultural expression of this time was the ubiquitous leader cults. The leaders were lauded as assistants of the 'birth pangs of Socialist culture'² and were praised as the fathers of all change. Cult production in the 1930s mainly orientated towards Stalin: he was at the centre of public praise and expressions of emotionality. But Stalin was by no means the only object of veneration. His 'dearest comrades' and 'close friends' always stood next to him in such public worship and on the regional level it was the local representatives who built up a cult of the lesser leaders. As even factory directors had themselves lauded by their workers, Stakhanovites were portrayed as guiding figures, and the production of art and literature built on the narrative of the spiritual leadership of outstanding artists, it is fair to say that leader cults were an overall mode of communication in the 1930s. Worshipping the leader was at the core of the ethic and aesthetic of the new emerging culture.³

In these representations leaders figured as the 'unmoved movers' of the fundamental transformation that the country and its culture underwent in those years.⁴ They were depicted as the source of all change, as leaders who could reshape vast landscapes with a pencil's sketch on a drawing board.⁵ In this staging the leaders occupied the centres of authority and represented the eye of the cyclone: While everything was tempestuously moving the leaders stayed motionless. The whole country was twisted in circles around them. In the official Soviet cosmos the leaders occupied the centre