

Stalin's cult of personality

A **cult of personality** is where a leader uses propaganda to convince people to worship him or her, and treat them like a god.

Joseph Stalin developed a cult of personality after December 1929, following a celebration of his 50th birthday. For the rest of Stalin's rule, the Soviet press presented Stalin as an all-powerful, all-knowing leader. From 1936 the Soviet journalism started to refer to Joseph Stalin as 'the Father of Nations'.

Stalin's image in propaganda and the mass media

The Soviet press constantly praised Stalin, describing him as "Great", "Beloved", "Bold", "Wise", "Inspirer", and "Genius". It portrayed him as a caring yet strong father figure, with the Soviet people as his "children". Stalin often took part in public gift giving exchanges with Soviet children from a range of different ethnic backgrounds. Beginning in 1935, the phrase, "Thank You Dear Comrade Stalin for a Happy Childhood!" appeared above doorways at nurseries, orphanages, and schools. Children even chanted this slogan at festivals.

Stalin also became the focus of literature, poetry, music, paintings and film that exhibited fawning devotion. An example was A. V. Avidenko's "Hymn to Stalin":

Thank you, Stalin. Thank you because I am joyful. Thank you because I am well. Everything belongs to thee, chief of our great country. And when the woman I love presents me with a child the first word it shall utter will be :
Stalin

Numerous pictures and statues of Stalin were hung in public places. Statues of Stalin depicted him as tall and strong, but photographic evidence suggests he was between 5 ft 5 in and 5 ft 6 in (165–168 cm).

Rewriting of early Soviet history

Stalin rewrote Soviet history to give himself a more significant role in the overthrow of Tsar Nicholas II. According to this revised history, Stalin, not Leon Trotsky, had been Lenin's second-in-command during the October Revolution. To help change the facts of the past, Stalin concealed and destroyed historical documents, claiming that they were incomplete or inaccurate. Instead, Stalin presented himself as the leading authority in Party history and philosophy.