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The Motherland Calls!

Nationalist Propaganda in the Soviet Union during the Great Patriotic War

Carolyn Blood

December 14, 2010

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A girl is marched through the snow with a sign hung around her neck in front of a crowd of peasants and German soldiers. The girl's hair is cropped short, her face is burned and bruised, but her expression is proud as she is pushed onto the block of a makeshift gallows. Some of the peasant women are crying. The girl is making a speech even as she stands on the block. Her name is Zoya Kosmodem'yanskaya.

> "Why are you sad? It is happiness to die for your country and to die for truth. Comrades, be brave. Fight the enemy. Even so, victory will be ours. Remember, there are 200 million of us. They can't hang us all." [1]

The rope is placed around the girl's neck and the block is kicked out from under her feet. The scene suddenly changes to blasting cannons, military planes flying through the air, and Red Army soldiers making their way through landscapes filled with tanks, bodies, and debris.

These images are of the Soviet Union in November of 1941, and 18 year old Zoya Kosmodem'yanskaya has just died for her country in the beginning of the German invasion of the Motherland. Lev Arnshtam's 1944 film, *Zoya*, glorified the story of one of the Soviet Union's most beloved World War II heroes, Zoya Kosmodem'yanskaya. Zoya was the quintessential Soviet heroine: she had been a member of the Young Pioneers from the young age of 10, joined the Komsomol youth league at the age of 18 and volunteered for a partisan unit of the Red Army in October, 1941, six months after the Soviet Union entered World War II following the German invasion of Soviet borders.

On a saboteur mission in the village of Petrischevo, Zoya and her unit aimed to burn down the houses and barns occupied by a German regiment when she was caught by enemy troops. Despite torture and questioning over two days by the German Gestapo,

she refused to reveal any information throughout her interrogation. She was hanged in front of a crowd with a sign around her neck that said "Houseburner" on November 29th, 1941. After an article of her story reached members of the Bolshevik party through the Soviet political newspaper *Pravda,* the party communicated Zoya's symbolic importance to General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, Joseph Stalin. He immediately posthumously awarded her the honor of Hero of the Soviet Union, an extremely prestigious national award for any Soviet citizen to receive. Zoya was made a national heroine and beloved martyr of the Soviet Union. She became one of the images that the Soviet people were encouraged to aspire to be throughout the war. Her dedication to the party, her activism and involvement, and her ultimate, unwavering sacrifice to protect and honor her country embodied everything a Soviet citizen was encouraged to achieve during the "Great Patriotic War."

During this time nationalism, heroism, and protection of the motherland were emphasized aspects of Soviet mentality. Zoya, along with outstanding members of the Red Army, pilots, scientists, and explorers were presented to society as model, exemplary citizens throughout the 1930s and 1940s in film, posters, *Pravda* and other newspaper articles, and sometimes by Stalin himself in his speeches. The images of these Soviet heroes meant to inspire the love and admiration of the nation for their actions, achievements, and represent the strength and pride of the Soviet Union in both domestic and foreign endeavors. The Soviet press focused heavily on these heroic figures (alongside Stalin, who was omnipresent in Soviet press and propaganda from 1929 until his death in 1953) in *Pravda* and honored them with exemplary awards. These publications intended for their audiences to want to live up to the standards of these

heroes, to strive to make their nation and their fatherly leader, Stalin, proud. The war heroes of the 1940s joined the aviation and academic heroes of the 1930s as new faces in Soviet propaganda.

Upon its entrance into World War II, the Soviet Union realized a unified, collective mentality the key to achieving victory. The propaganda of the 1930s centered heavily on Joseph Stalin, General Secretary of the Communist party and de facto dictator of the Soviet Union from 1929 to 1953. Propaganda and press created what historians call Stalin's "cult of personality," in which he was venerated as a leader, genius, father, and devoted pupil of Lenin. These images framed him as infallible, and when the Soviet Union entered World War II, Stalin was well established as the father of the U.S.S.R. His promotion and praise of aviators had also created civilian national heroes prior to the war. It was not difficult for the Soviet press and propaganda to shift to the language of nationalist war propaganda. Wartime propaganda encouraged patriotism on both civilian and military levels, with many posters and articles encouraging civilians that their work at home, on the farm, and in the factories aided the war effort. These same posters also emphasized that a refusal to work condemned their comrade Red Army soldiers on the front lines.

The Germans, once Soviet allies, were now framed in a negative light in some propaganda posters, juxtaposed against images of strong Soviet men and women defending their families and their nation against "the fascist reptile"[2] of the Nazi military. In addition to the circulation of nationalist propaganda by the Soviet government during the Great Patriotic War churches reopened, Russian religious and folk traditions revived, and the struggle for honor, freedom, and victory introduced into daily Soviet life. The

Bolshevik party knew that the nation was divided at the time of Germany's invasion because of the Great Terror and military purges that occurred in the 1930s, and these efforts intended to remedy the fractured state. Propaganda and press encouraged workers to "work in the factory as soldiers fight at the front,"[3] assuring them that their efforts aided soldiers. All Soviet citizens were called to protect their Motherland, their homeland. They were called to unite in the face of German fascism, cruelty, and violence. Built upon existing propaganda methods and themes begun in the late 1920s and perpetuated throughout the 30s, nationalist propaganda during the late 1930s up to the end of World War II integrated the aforementioned themes with a wartime setting.

The Soviet Union, already well practiced in social and political propaganda techniques from the time of the October Revolution in 1917, took these Soviet-themed messages and framed them in traditional Russian imagery of motherhood, religion, and duty to protect one's home in an effort to inspire nationalism and unification of the Soviet people during the Great Patriotic War. Based upon the framework of citizen heroes in aviation and academia in the 1930s and influenced by Stalin's "cult of personality" in the press, the press presented these new figures of the 1940s to the public as the image of the ideal Soviet person, their actions serving as model behavior that the Soviet Union intended for the rest of the citizenry to aspire to follow. Built upon the pre-existing heroic and Stalin cult propaganda of the 1930s, Soviet propaganda during the Great Patriotic War used traditional and heroic imagery with the intention to inspire nationalism and unification among the citizens of the Soviet Union in order to ensure a Soviet victory in World War II and perpetuate the idea of Stalin's "New Soviet Man."

Propaganda and Censorship as a Part of Soviet Life

Prior to the October Revolution of 1917 the Soviet Union was Imperial Russia, ruled by a monarchy. A rigid caste system persisted until reforms in the late 1800s freed serfs, and peasants flooded into cities to join booming industry. The Orthodox Church had a large, influential presence in Russian politics up until the 1917 revolution. It was commonplace for most families to have religious icons in a corner of their dwellings, and church services were highly attended. Services were sometimes performed in the workplace as well, and the Church supported thousands of schools and missions throughout Russia. There were a large number of monastic communities across Russia and its clergy included over 100,000 nuns, monks, and priests. The church was integral to Russian society during the monarchy. In the early years of the Revolution, Bolshevik propaganda utilized religious images easily recognized by the population and combined them with Bolshevik and communist images. When the Bolsheviks took power in 1917, the party actively persecuted the church and religion itself was forcefully discouraged among peasants and urban populations alike. Being a priest became a blacklisted and potentially dangerous profession after the October Revolution.[4]

Just as the Bolshevik party stamped out traditional religion in Imperial Russia shortly after Bolshevism became the new creed and Russia turned into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (U.S.S.R), the roles of men and women slowly began to change upon the adoption of socialism. Prior to the revolution, men worked and women stayed at home, raising children and keeping house. Elders were respected and families often included three generations under one roof. Imperial Russia followed a patriarchal

system in which women depended on men to take care of them, and in which men were expected to provide for and protect their wives and female relatives. In old age, a woman without a husband depended on a son or a son-in-law to care and provide for her. Despite the patriarchal society, Russia itself was referred to as "The Motherland" and Russians considered themselves all children of the same country, the same common ancestor. This sentiment did not disappear after the revolution, though it was not emphasized. While women were not in charge of households, they were still respected and cared for by their male relatives. After the Revolution, socialism proclaimed men and women now equal. Women were encouraged to go out into the workplace and women could enter university and other forms of schooling more easily than before. Traditional gender roles were discouraged, though many women continued to do the majority of the child-rearing and housekeeping after the Revolution.[5]

The implementation of socialist ideology changed the way Russians, then newly Soviet citizens, were intended to think about their lives, each other, their work, and their government. The reign of the czar was over and the Bolshevik party had led a successful people's revolution to gain control of the country. The church lost its influence, land, and rights as a result of the revolution. The workplace and academics became open fields for both men and women and traditional gender roles were discouraged in the public sphere.

Directly after the October Revolution of 1917, newspapers and other printed material available to the public essentially ceased to be a source of day-to-day news due to the radical shift in political policies and the amount of censorship applied to Soviet life by the Bolshevik party. Newspapers such as *Pravda* became a daily account of political discourse, party issues, and a medium for publication of speeches or addresses by party

leaders. A citizen reading *Pravda* read what the party considered to be important, which consisted largely of establishment of party line, party opinion on public issues, and constant supporting dialogue for the construction of socialism. Upon seizure of power, the Bolshevik party immediately instituted a ban on "bourgeois" and "counter-revolutionary" newspapers to control political discourse within the new state.[6] After the political footing of the Bolshevik party secured itself in the new party-state, social propaganda and censorship began to be implemented by the new government. The Bolshevik party led an assault on the Orthodox church within the new Soviet state, a movement that resulted in the closure of hundreds of religious institutions across the Soviet Union, the confiscation of valuables to fund the new government, and an implementation of atheism, a core principle of the Bolshevik party. The government promoted an anti-religious campaign that targeted priests and citizens who continued to practice after the very public defamation of the Church as an institution and cultural symbol. As Bolshevism began to reshape society into a Soviet one, the removal of the church and the brief ban on vodka were used to better[a] society. The remaking of society included the creation of the new Soviet man and the utilization of public institutions by the state to achieve this goal. Propaganda promoting the new regime was integrated into the newspapers, film industry, and workplace. Educational institutions became an excellent springboard for the indoctrination of the growing generation that was newly under Bolshevik rule.[7]

As the first true generation of Soviet citizens, children and young adults were especially important when it came to propaganda. As they were either born into the Bolshevik regime or were young enough at the time of the revolution to be assimilated

[a] Trotsky's word in *Problems in Everyday Life*, 1923

into the developing socialist state as they themselves developed, youth became a critical target audience for the propaganda machine. Schools became the *de facto* institutions where students learned Soviet values and core principles alongside their normal studies. Youth organizations such as the Little Octobrists[b] and the Young Pioneers[c] were promoted in the educational system and educators recruited children to join from a young age. In the Young Pioneers, children wore red scarves that symbolized their membership. They participated in scout-like activities that involved the cultivation of a collective identity, crafts, and sports. Many activities were made competitions between Young Pioneer groups both within and between schools. The Pioneers introduced children to the foundational ideas of the Bolshevik party and gave a template for what kind of Soviet citizen they should aspire to be. Pioneer groups were very involved in community projects, often alongside the Komsomol, a nationalist organization for youth ages 15 and older. The most significant of these projects was the campaign against illiteracy, which began in 1923 and continued up until the beginning of World War II. These organizations aimed to mold outstanding Soviet citizens for the developing socialist state. Education of youth was organized in the schools, but the matter of how to educate and culture the general adult population after the revolution was a larger, more complicated issue that had to be expanded into multiple arenas.[8]

The "Weapon" of Propaganda and Stalin's Cult of Personality

Leon Trotsky wrote multiple pieces on the necessity to "culture" the population through the cultivation of written and spoken language, the removal of religion, the

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[b] A political organization for children ages seven to nine, much like the American Boy Scouts

[c] A political organization for children ages ten to fifteen – precursory membership to Komsomol membership

promotion of cultured behavior and the use of the cinema as a "weapon" of propaganda.[9] Trotsky cited the need for the Bolshevik government to "secure this incomparable weapon" of cinema to draw the citizenry away from the taverns and churches as "an apparatus of amusement and education" to decrease and deter public drunkenness and foul language, decrease religious observation, and promote a structured and cultured Soviet society.[10] Trotsky recognized that with the introduction of the eight-hour work day by the party in 1917, the worker now had eight hours to work, eight hours to sleep, and eight hours for leisure. Trotsky proposed filling those eight hours of leisure time with cultured activities and attractions in place of religion, alcohol, and general laziness. The state's use of cinematic propaganda was established in the 1920s with the production and circulation of revolutionary-themed films, many of which were silent documentaries or adaptations of famous Soviet works, such as Vsevolod Illarionovich Pudovkin's adaptation of Gorky's *Mother* in 1926. Pudovkin also directed *The End of St. Petersburg* (1927) and *Storm Over Asia* (1928). All three of Pudovkin's films referenced Bolshevik revolutionary policy. Prior to the war, one of the Soviet Union's intended uses for film remained a political one, hoping that through *Kinofikatsiya* (cinefication of the country), "cinema would politically educate the masses so that they would develop a conscious understanding of the Revolution."[11] Unfortunately, due to the lack of public interest in silent film in the 20s and poor distribution and lack of developing technology in the 30s, *Kinofikatsiya* was largely a failure and the films that experienced the most success prior to the war remained more entertaining than political in nature. Propaganda focus shifted towards a centralized figure and those citizens chosen for promotion and veneration in 1929, the 50th birthday of Joseph Stalin.

Joseph Stalin rose quickly through the ranks of the Bolshevik party after the October Revolution of 1917 and was elected to the rank of General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1922. He served as a close associate of Vladimir Lenin but not always as a trusted comrade. Upon Lenin's death in 1924, Stalin rose to succeed him as *de facto* leader of the Bolshevik party and by default, the Soviet Union. Though his title never officially changed and Stalin kept the vast majority of the political structures and workings of the Bolshevik party intact during his leadership, he ruled the Soviet Union from 1929 to until his death in 1953 as a dictator. Though undeniably a great political and economic thinker, Stalin ruled the Bolshevik party and Soviet Union primarily by fear and largely aided by his "cult of personality," the continuous validation of his position as leader through press and propaganda with images of Stalin as a teacher, leader, and father to the Soviet nation.[12]

Stalin demanded to be presented as a genius and a hero by the Bolshevik party and the Soviet press. However, Stalin's image of greatness was constantly tempered with modest language and his personal acknowledgement of humble origins and attribution of his ability as a leader to the Bolshevik party and the people of the Soviet Union. He was a great teacher because he was and would always be a pupil of Lenin; he was a great leader because he was a servant to the party and the nation and because he believed strongly in Marxism.[13] This cult of personality had a symbiotic relationship with propaganda of the 1930s and 40s; while it influenced much of the content, the cult itself was also in part *created* by the propaganda and techniques of these same decades. Through the ever-present and omnipotent images of Stalin in art, poetry, propaganda posters, newspaper articles, books, and even in song, the people of the Soviet Union were

conditioned to believe in his greatness and were quick to follow their fearless and flawless leader. Ironically, because the citizenry of the Soviet Union had experienced tsarist rule and therefore tsarist cults, this prior conditioning greatly attributed to the swift popularity of Stalin's personality cult. The success of the cult of his own leadership certainly benefitted from the ability of the people of the Soviet Union to recognize a singular patriarchal leadership figure, despite Stalin's personal aversion to the nation's tsarist history.

The Soviet dictator's staunch belief in himself as a hero and a genius also made him the perfect and ultimate embodiment of his "New Soviet Man," which he planned to create within the next generation of Soviet citizens and populate the nation with during his rule. Though Stalin viewed aviators such as Valerii Chkalov as excellent examples of his "New Soviet Man," no one quite reached the level of perfection that Stalin himself did in exemplifying what he believed the "New Man" should be. This was another important piece of his cult of personality: though he did not want citizens to aspire to BE him, the leader of the Soviet Union, he wanted them to aspire to be LIKE him and to aspire to be great in their own walks of life. To Stalin, this meant the realization of a fully functioning socialist country, run on the foundations of Marxism. His "New Soviet Man" was the only citizenry that would make this future nation a possibility. Thus the propaganda surrounding Stalin, especially concerning children, made him a role model and a fatherly figure to be looked up to and admired, and to some extent imitated. But his was always understood to be an unreachable position of ultimate power that Stalin considered himself the only one capable of wielding.[14]

As the Soviet Union entered the 1930s, propaganda and newspaper themes focused on Stalin. The newspapers and propaganda posters circulated throughout the Soviet Union featured a fatherly Stalin and published photographs of him smiling with children or standing next to families. Joseph Stalin's fatherly image dominated the press and poster propaganda in both words and photographs alike, and during the latter half of the 1930s, children played a large part in the imagery of Stalin's personality cult. This fatherly facet of Stalin was emphasized by numerous articles and posters featuring Stalin with a "non-related" child, often of varying ethnicity to increase connection with the multiple ethnicities that existed within the Soviet Union. A *Pravda* article on July 1, 1935, published the first image of

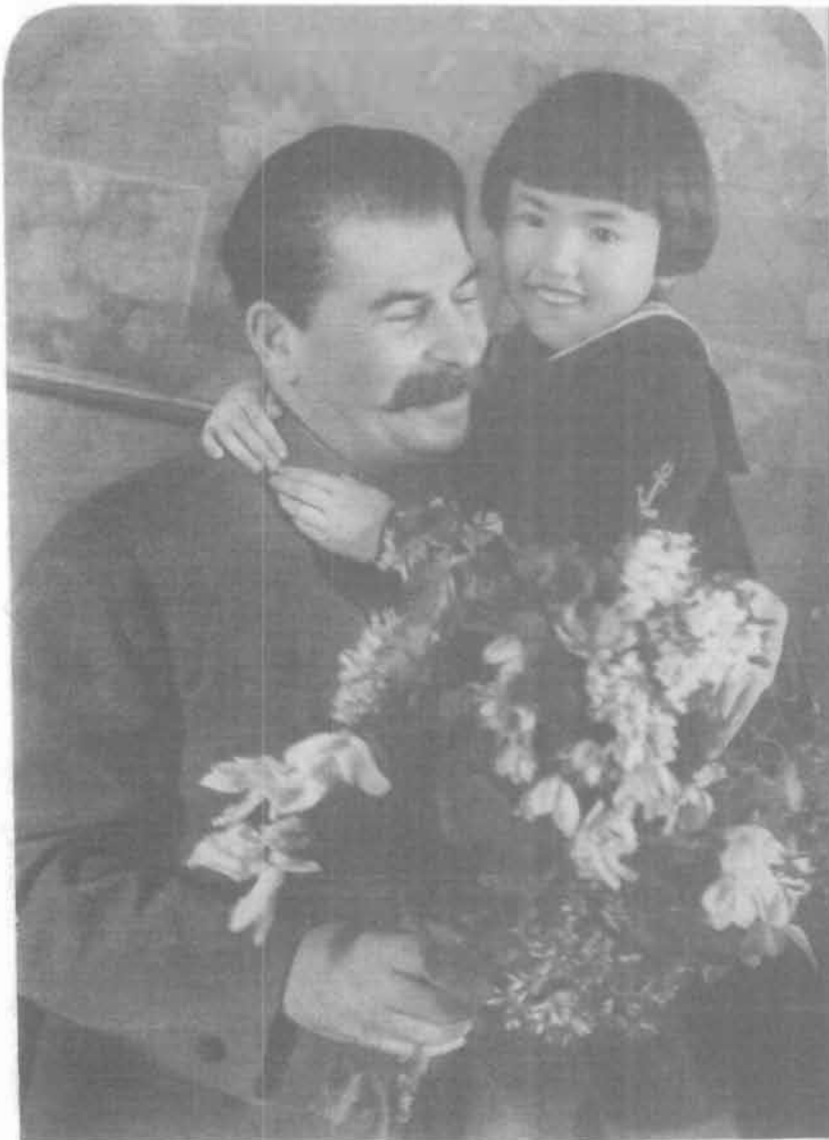

Fig. 1. Stalin and Gelia Markizova: the most famous, though not the earliest, icon of the ruler with a small child (*Sovetskie deti*, plate 1)

Stalin with a non-related child. The story, titled "I gave a bouquet to Stalin!" featured a Young Pioneer girl named Nina Zdrogova, who was thanked by General Secretary Stalin with a kiss, a box of chocolates, and a bag of cherries. The second article to follow this leader-and-child template was the most famous of the series: a photo of Stalin and a young girl from the Buryat-Mongol Republic named Gelia Markizova, published on June 29, 1936 [Figure 1]. The image shows Stalin holding the smiling child, his face turned toward her endearingly, also with a smile. He also holds a large bouquet of flowers in the photograph. The gender of the child featured with Stalin was specific, as was her ethnicity. During the 1930s, the Soviet propaganda machine was actively promoting the image of the Soviet Union as the Motherland (thus the female gender of the child) and her "oriental" features made Stalin seem more "European" in physical appearance. These images aimed to convey fatherly compassion and love for all the children of Stalin's Soviet Union. This paternal figure meant to engender affection, love, and most importantly, unified loyalty of the Soviet Union under Stalin's leadership.[15]

The news articles and photos with children were only a few of many ways that Stalin was integrated into the lives of children and youth in the Soviet Union. The phrase "Thank You Dear Comrade Stalin for a Happy Childhood" was emblazoned on doorways of nurseries, orphanages, and schools in the second half of the 1930s. Children wrote letters, poems, and stories to and about Stalin in school, and teachers encouraged them to look up to their father Stalin. This included asking him for advice in personal letters and memorization of standardized textbooks that detailed Stalin's "superhuman courage and wisdom." "Lenin corners," common in most Soviet houses, libraries, schools, and government buildings, were slowly replaced with "Stalin rooms" throughout the 1930s.

In the volume "Children Talk About Stalin," published in 1939 to commemorate Stalin's sixtieth birthday, nine children were honored by appearing in the book. The nine were of varying ethnicity, only three of them were boys, and only one of those boys was Russian. The other six children were girls of different ethnicities. This typical array of diverse children and public figures shown alongside Stalin changed during wartime, when the children, youth, and heroic figures featured in press and propaganda were almost exclusively of Russian descent.[16]

Images of Stalin surrounded Soviet children in many aspects of their everyday life. On school museum trips they saw him in paintings and statues in works like Grigory Shegal's "Leader, Teacher, and Friend," an oil painting done in 1937 of Stalin consulting a diverse group of people in the foreground with a statue of Lenin in the background. Stalin's image also appeared on items as mundane as teacups and rugs. The youth of the 1930s were bombarded with Stalin's cult of personality as the press churned out article after article, poster after poster of Stalin's fatherly figure, coupled with warm messages of pride, loyalty, and love. The children of the pre-war period were raised to love and adore their father-leader, Stalin, and to follow his every command.[17]

The press made Stalin the central patriarchal figure of the Soviet Union, the father, provider, and supporter of the Soviet people. He was created to be an ever-present and personal figure to many Soviet citizens with the patriarchal imagery in which the press and propaganda presented him. This propaganda campaign also involved the honoring of Soviet "heroes," with images and stories of Stalin presenting awards to great achievers in academia, exploration, and aviation. During one of the more difficult times to be a Soviet citizen as the population endured the famine of 1932 and the Great Terror

in the latter half of the 30s, the Soviet press glorified numerous scientists for great academic achievement. The three most important of those honored were I.V Michurin, dubbed "The Great Gardener" by Stalin and awarded the Order of Lenin, the "Professor-Bolshevik" V.R Williams, and "symbol of the Soviet scientific professions" Trofim Lysenko. These men were awarded various titles of merit, written up in *Pravda*, and made public figures alongside Stalin in the early 1930s.[18] Aviators and explorers were honored alongside scientists and *Pravda* dedicated two thirds of their total newspaper publications to young men and women who had achieved great endeavors or died trying.

Stalin realized his vision of the "New Soviet Man" in the aviators of the 1930s. Dubbed "Stalin's falcons" and "steel birds" by the Soviet press, aviators not only held an important and favored position with Stalin, but also inspired imagery of old Russian folklore. These "falcons" were likened to the bogatyri, figures in Russian mythology that were nearly immortal and "vanquished any human enemy that threatened them." Aviators were allegorical in their deeds and personas to Russian folk heroes of old, and Stalin used these men as examples of the New Soviet Man. Stalin held aviators high in importance and encouraged them to attempt great feats, no matter the cost in equipment should they need to bail out of an aircraft. "Your life is dearer to us than any machine" Stalin said to Valerii Chkalov.[19]

Chkalov was the most significant and important aviation figure of the 1930s. Young and daring, Chkalov took full advantage of his piloting abilities and pushed his own to the limit from the beginning of his aviation career. Known for general flaunting of rules and somewhat risky behavior, Chkalov eventually completed a non-stop flight from Moscow to Vancouver, Washington. For this achievement Stalin rewarded Chkalov

and his copilots with medals and a monetary reward. The leader of the Soviet Union and the young pilot were said to have a unique relationship in which Stalin considered Chkalov like a son to him. Stalin's encouragement of friendly rivalry amongst aviators to achieve greater and greater feats introduced the type of constructive work and achievement based on competition that he believed would help to create and maintain the New Soviet Man.[20]

Soviet press lauded Chkalov and other pilots consistently throughout the 1930s and expressed admiration, coupled with an ideological affirmation of the successes of socialist upbringing. *Literaturnia gazeta* said, "The heroism of our pilots . . . is splendid proof that a socialist order creates a new type of man, and that it breeds human characteristics significantly new and different from those engendered by bloody, predatory, and filthy capitalist exploitation."[21] For Stalin, Chkalov and others like him represented not only examples of his envisioned New Soviet Man, but they also added to his fatherly, mentor-like image cultivated by the Soviet press by publishing his personal praise of individual fighters and by lauding the great deeds of his "falcons." Yet another piece of Soviet society was successfully and directly attributed to Joseph Stalin for all the Soviet Union to see.

Ever-present in photographs and artists' drawings published in *Pravda,* the press continually featured Stalin in a central pose with the honored hero of the time. His constant patriarchal presence informed the Soviet citizenry that Stalin watched out for them all and took notice of those who went above and beyond what was considered "standard" Soviet citizen behavior. Youth in the Young Pioneers and Komsomol leagues were encouraged to look up to these heroes alongside their "father" Stalin, and follow

their heroic and outstanding example. A poster circulated in 1940 showed Stalin with a kindly expression, writing a letter by lamplight with the title, "Stalin in the Kremlin Cares about Each One of Us."[22] Stalin was always the figure to which youth were encouraged to admire, to dedicate their activities, and aspire to impress one day. As their collective father, Stalin encouraged all children to grow up good Soviet citizen and make their patriarch proud.[23]

As the 1930s drew to a close, Stalin and his Soviet heroes continued to be centered in the public eye. Posters encouraged workers to be active in their trade unions and the youth to remain active in their organizations. In the public sphere the Soviet people were surrounded by prosperous images and messages of Soviet greatness in the 1930s, despite the purges going on within the party and military, and the daily disappearances of "suspected" citizens, with the hopes that they would follow the examples being propagated to them as explained by historian Nina Tumarkin. "Posters, newspaper engravings, photos, propaganda films, and touched-up newsreels specialized in showing groups of happy collective farmers, mega-machines, factory chimneys spewing smoke, mighty dams conquering the Soviet Union's great rivers, and the mustachioed visage of Stalin himself."[24] Stalin's "new Soviet man" was on his way to being cultivated through the mediums of press, posters, and film as the Soviet Union grew close to entering World War II.

Nationalism and Heroism during the Great Patriotic War

Hitler's forces invaded the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941, breaking the tense peace of the Non-Aggression Pact signed with the Soviet Union in 1939 to stave off conflict between the two nations. Caught unprepared, the Soviet army faltered and the

German forces quickly captured Lithuania, part of Latvia, western Belorussia, and western Ukraine. The Soviet Union suffered catastrophic losses in the first weeks of the invasion and the Red Army gave up large pieces of Soviet territory under the onslaught of over 170 companies of German military. On July 3, 1941, Stalin delivered a speech over radio that changed the tone of the war, altering his role as patriarch of the Soviet Union to that of a comrade. He opened with a famous line, starkly different from all of his former addresses: "Comrades, citizens, brothers and sisters, men of our Army and Navy!"[25] This address put Stalin on the same level as the citizens he addressed; he dropped from the central focus of the Soviet citizenry. The defense of their "motherland" took that role immediately, and Stalin began the trend in language (both spoken and printed), images, and film that called for the Soviet Union to protect their motherland from the fascist German army.

After Stalin's July 3rd address, propaganda (in all forms) in the Soviet Union shifted its focus onto nationalist subjects and older Russian imagery with the aim to inspire a collective desire to defend the Soviet Union, the motherland. The messages perpetuated during the Great Patriotic War were similar in content to Soviet socialist propaganda before the war, but framed in a different way. Stalin was still present in the press, but images of him almost completely cease during the war and his presence limited to quotes or printed and broadcasted speeches. Propaganda during the Great Patriotic War used a large number of family and motherhood-oriented images that called Soviet citizens to protect their proverbial parent. Komsomol members were encouraged to enlist in partisan companies to fight for the motherland and workers were told their production in the factories had a direct affect on the war. This was also mentioned in Stalin's July

3rd address: "Produce more rifles, machine-guns, guns, cartridges, shells, planes." Work became the domestic front of the Great Patriotic War.

Pravda's issues almost entirely ceased to involve political discourse and instead focused on the war effort. Due to extreme censorship by the Information Bureau, *Pravda* reported victories in the first year of the war when there were actually massive losses, so as not to panic the Soviet population and maintain a victorious image of the Soviet Union[26]. As parts of the population began to realize that *Pravda* was printing inaccuracies, its editors decided to frame military and "extraordinary" ordinary citizens in the hero-mold as scientists, explorers and aviators had been in the mid-1930s. Military exploits, civilian sacrifices, and guerilla efforts to sabotage the enemy became the front-page news of *Pravda*. The Soviet Union had heroes to look up to once more in their most desperate time of crisis.

With these character narratives, emphasis was placed on the war in *Pravda* as a "struggle for 'homeland, honor, and freedom!" meant to inspire admiration and national pride within its readers[27]. The vast majority of propaganda was positively oriented and pro-Soviet rather than anti-Nazi, though a small number of anti-Nazi propaganda posters were circulated throughout the war. Posters and pictures featured in *Pravda* carried similar messages such as protect the motherland, be a Soviet hero, fight the fascists, and the inevitability of Soviet victory, a theme that was carried over from the early 1920s and 30s. Prior to the Great Patriotic War, the Red Army had been painted as an indestructible and undefeatable force. Young men and women were urged to join partisan companies or become enlisted Red Army soldiers to serve in the conflict. Russian historian Roy Medvedev explained his mentality as a young man in 1941: "I had been brought up in the

belief that our army was the strongest in the world." The propaganda of an invincible Soviet nation from the decades prior to the war had done its work in creating a confident youth of the U.S.S.R and created a generation eager to serve in the Red Army, Komsomol, and partisan units during the Great Patriotic War. "By 1941 many young Russians, Belorussians, and Ukranians had. . . turned into the kind of young men with a limited sense of their own vulnerability that could confidently throw themselves into battle, joyfully expecting quick victory in a contest of nations."[28] Propaganda before the war had created a false sense of security that the reality of the early months of the conflict threatened to crush while the propaganda imagery of the Great Patriotic War sought to keep that sense of confidence and invincibility alive despite the devastating first year of war with Germany.

Poster Propaganda

By the time of the Great Patriotic War the Soviet Union was well-practiced in poster propaganda. The Bolshevik party considered propaganda to be an essential part of education of the proletariat after the October Revolution. Revolutionary posters contained strong, positive images of Bolshevik leaders such as Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, leader of the Red Army Leon Trotsky, and triumphant proletariat. Others were negative portrayals of the "bourgeois"[d] enemies exploiting the working man: the Tsar, the Church, and capitalism. By 1941 propaganda posters were a normal part of Soviet life, seen daily in store windows, newspapers, Komsomol and Young Pioneer centers, and community education centers throughout the U.S.S.R. Both civilian and military citizens were exposed to propaganda posters during

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[d] This label was common party language for elite classes, the Church, and in general, anyone who was not pro-Bolshevik or pro-Socialism

the Great Patriotic War with the intention to stir up Soviet nationalism with Soviet messages framed in nostalgic Russian images that linked back to the time before and during the Revolution.

The circulated images perpetuated themes in speeches made by Stalin, V.M Molotov, and other Soviet leaders during the war, along with imagery of military and citizen heroes as examples of the ideal, loyal Soviet person. Animal images were used to portray the enemy early in 1941. The serpent, traditionally associated with the Devil in Orthodox Christian teachings, represented "the Fascist Reptile" in more than one poster as a snake with a swastika on its forehead to symbolize the Nazi regime [Figure 2]. The significance of animal images, which were also used in Revolutionary posters in the early 1900s, was that they were meant to dehumanize the enemy to the Soviet people, who had previously thought of the Germans as allies. A swastika-marked snake was a widely recognized symbol of evil with which there could be no confusion. Aleksei Kokorekin's "Death to the Fascist Reptile!" circulated 150,000 copies in 1941, certainly one of the more widely viewed of the World War II posters. However, while individual circulation numbers were high for posters promoting hatred of the enemy, most posters created and circulated during the Great Patriotic War were positive and Soviet-themed. One of the most important positive themes of poster propaganda of the Great Patriotic War was the idea of protecting the "Motherland" or

Figure 2: "Death to the fascist reptile!"

"Fatherland." The Russian translation for the Great Patriotic War is "The Great Fatherland War." The matriarchal and patriarchal terms were interchangeable and used at about the same frequency, though "Motherland" and images of women in nationalist propaganda were more common. One of the most historically symbolic and widely-circulated posters during the Great Patriotic War was Irakli Toidze's "Rodina Mat' Zovet!" ("The Motherland Calls!") [Figure 3]. The poster pictured a fierce-faced woman in peasant clothing and short hair holding a copy of the Red Army oath with her left arm raised and a sea of bayonets brandished behind her. The words "Rodina Mat' Zovet!" were printed above her head. This poster was published in Moscow in 1943 and circulated 100,000 colored copies throughout the Soviet Union.[29]

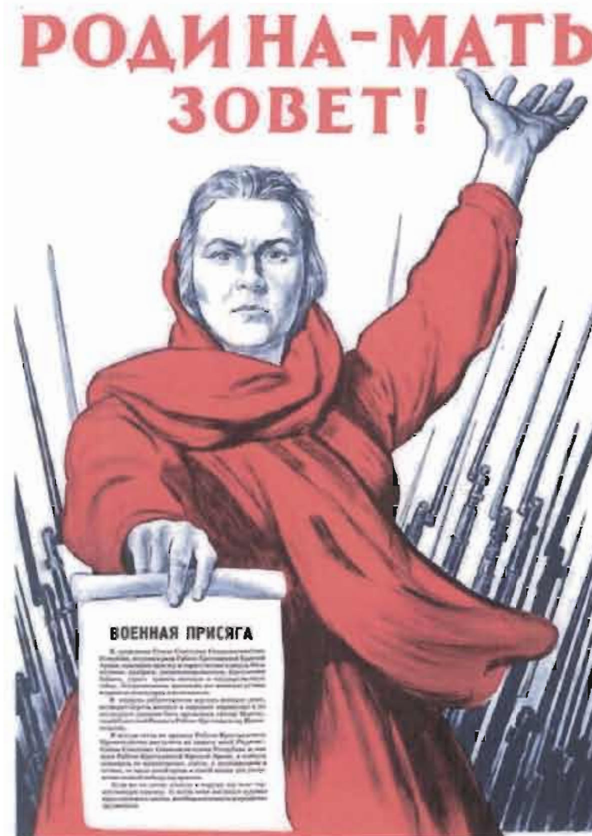

Figure 3: "The Motherland Calls!"

American historians sometimes consider this a Soviet version of the "Uncle Sam wants you for U.S Army" poster, first circulated in 1917 and used to recruit American soldiers in both World War I and World War II. This is one of the most striking and enduring posters from the Great Patriotic war, along with one of the most highly circulated. "Rodina Mat' Zovet" was meant to encourage enlistment into the Red Army and partisan companies as the Soviet Union gained the upper hand in the conflict with Germany after

the critical events of the Battle of Stalingrad in 1942. The woman was also a key component: her stern features and her short hair made her an example of a strong, dedicated Soviet woman. Other "Motherland" themed posters included images of Red Army soldiers and commanders, such as Viktor Ivanov's "Learn How to Fight for the Motherland," [Figure 4] published in 1941, which featured a Red Army soldier with a bayonet and his left arm raised in the foreground, with the title and a scene of men and women soldiers in a firing line in the background.[30] The defense of the Motherland/Fatherland was the central unification point in the effort to promote nationalism among the Soviet people. Approaching the Soviet Union's entrance into World War II, ethnic cleansing and the Great Terror had fostered a large amount of

Figure 4: "Learn How to Fight for the Motherland."

Soviet disunity because of the singling out of multiple ethnic groups for deportation and execution. The Bolshevik party knew that the Soviet Union would not survive the war if they did not think of themselves as a singular nation. Thus, the importance of promoting nationalism was unparalleled and elements of this campaign were evident in a majority of posters. N. Zukov and V. Klimashin's 1943 nationalist poster featured an image of soldiers going into battle with tanks beside them on the ground, planes above them in the

air, and flags of the Soviet Union raised above them [Figure 5]. A seal with Stalin's face (overshadowing Lenin's) was centered at the top of the poster and beneath the image read "The sons of all the nations of the Soviet Union go into battle for their Fatherland."[31] This unified, triumphant image was one of many that the Bolsheviks hoped would inspire synonymous feelings among its citizens.

Figure 5: "The sons of all the nations of the Soviet Union go into battle for their Fatherland."

The images of nameless Soviet men and women on many posters intended to promote national pride and unification among Soviet citizens, but just as Stalin had promoted Soviet greatness in the 1930s with the public commendation of "heroes" from the academic and exploration spheres, the Bolshevik party knew that the public would need wartime heroes with which to connect if they were to be successful in their campaign. Thus, hero propaganda was revived and military heroes, along with outstanding civilian Soviets, were placed in the template of the 20s and 30s and became the exemplary citizens of the Soviet Union at war.

Heroes in the Great Patriotic War

The scientists, explorers, and aviators honored by Stalin and reported on by *Pravda* and other newspapers like the *Red Star* symbolized Soviet greatness at home and

abroad during the 1920s and 30s. When Germany invaded in 1941, the war took precedence over domestic academics, aviation feats, or exploration abroad. *Pravda* specifically took their hero template and placed outstanding members of the military into the printed spotlight. Following *Pravda* articles, posters were published with the faces and deeds of these military members, calling their fellow soldiers to perform as admirably as they had. The military men and women that were glorified were not all casualties of war. In fact, many of them lived to be honored in person by Stalin and tell their stories after the war. Posters featuring heroic figures often contained images of war, requirements for certain honors, and always contained a central picture of the hero or heroine in question. G. Nisskii and V. Shtranikh's poster commending the bombing successes of pilot A. Krokhalev [Figure 6] had the hero's face centered, framed by a five-point star and the hammer and sickle above him, and below his portrait were pictures of bomber planes dropping bombs on German targets. On the very bottom of the poster was a poem by N. Panov about "the victories of A. Krokhalev." The poster's main text said "Comrade pilots, fly and bomb as did Pilot A. Krokhalev."[32]

Figure 6: "Comrades, fly and bomb as did pilot A. Krokhalev."

Figure 7: "Lieutenant-Colonel Stepan Pavlovich Suprun, twice a hero of the Soviet Union."

Another poster that featured a specific military hero had a portrait of the Lieutenant-Colonel Stepan Pavlovich Suprun in uniform with his medals pinned to his chest in the foreground, with the flags of the Soviet Union in the background [Figure 7]. Beneath his name and rank was a detailing of his deeds and his award: "Lieutenant-Colonel Stepan Pavlovich Suprun, twice a hero of the Soviet Union."[33] These specific posters were created after *Pravda* ran stories that made these men famous and well-known to their readers. *Pravda* printed many stories of military and civilian heroes during the Great Patriotic War, telling harrowing tales of snipers racking up kills on the front lines, peasants sabotaging German-occupied villages or encampments, or soldiers sacrificing themselves to take out the enemy. These stories of individual sacrifice were extremely popular and featured consistently in 1941 and 1942.[34] While these heroic tales of sacrifice did appear often in *Pravda*, the paper tended to prefer live heroes and stories that could be updated and followed as the man or woman of interest continued their work on the battlefield or in the countryside. While *Pravda* featured many outstanding citizens, a few heroic individuals created such a following during their service in the war that they remained outstanding Soviet symbols of the Great Patriotic War after its end in 1945. Two individuals of particular noteworthy

heroic status in the Great Patriotic War were Zoya Kosmodem'yanskaya, an 18 year old Komsomol member that joined the partisans in the fall of 1941, and Red Army sniper Junior Lieutenant Vassili Zaitsev, a young man from the Urals, credited with 400 kills by the end of his military service in the Great Patriotic War.[35]

Junior Lieutenant Vassili Zaitsev was one of the most highly decorated heroes of the Great Patriotic War. Zaitsev began his military service in the Soviet Navy and enlisted for front-line duty in the Red Army after hearing soldiers' stories about the brutality and heavy fighting at the front in Stalingrad in 1942. At the time, the city of Stalingrad was under heavy siege by 70 companies of the German army who were determined to cross the Volga River. After German air-raids turned Stalingrad into an uninhabitable city, civilians retreated across the river and the Red Army set up command stations, sniper nests, and dug trenches. Stalingrad became a war zone. Zaitsev began as an infantryman in the 62nd army division of the Red Army, but once his talent with a rifle was discovered, his superiors quickly transferred him to the 1047th Rifle Regiment of the 284th Rifle Division of the same army division and it was in this capacity that Zaitsev began to rapidly increase his kill count.

Zaitsev's autobiography details a childhood in the Urals hunting in the winter as early as the age of six, a history that many of his fellow soldiers attributed to his exceptional talent as a military sniper. Not only did Zaitsev serve as a sniper in the Red Army during the Battle of Stalingrad, but he also served as an instructor for the Sniper Academy that was set up in the Metiz Factory district of Stalingrad during the conflict. There, Zaitsev and other veteran snipers from the 284th trained other marksmen in stealth, camoflauge, marksmanship, and other important aspects of "sniperism." In the beginning

of Zaitsev's sniper career, his exploits were recognized by his commanding officers and then noticed by Captain Ivan Grigoriev, a journalist in the Red Army in Stalingrad. Grigoriev wrote second-hand stories of Zaitsev's exploits that were published in both *Pravda* and the *Red Star* as the battle continued in Stalingrad.[36] The reports of Zaitsev's kills were also written about by Alyosha Afanasiev, a *Pravda* journalist who was not present at the front. *Pravda* ran weekly updates on Zaitsev's kill total and extolled him as an outstanding member of the Soviet military and a terror to the German soldiers in Stalingrad. Zaitsev's incredible kill count totaled nearly 400 by the end of the Battle of Stalingrad.

After serving in the battle, Zaitsev met with numerous *Pravda* journalists and editor Pyotr Nikolaevich Pospelov to be interviewed for his story. This was then circulated as Vassili Zaitsev was awarded the title of "Hero of the Soviet Union" by Stalin in 1943 and promoted to the rank of Captain. Zaitsev's heroic actions inspired many young Red Army soldiers to join sniper divisions within their assignments, and sniper academies were set up to specifically train marksmen soldiers after the enormous success of Zaitsev at Stalingrad. A sniper academy exclusively for women was set up as well. Additionally, his exploits were featured in newsreel footage shown in the large cities of the Soviet Union during the war. Zaitsev's deeds were all the more praised because he was given a large amount of credit for the victory at Stalingrad, given his own kills of nearly 400 and the estimated 3000 kills of the snipers that he trained in the Metiz Factory. Stalingrad itself became a propaganda tool and symbol after the victory, a victory that is widely acknowledged as the pivotal turning point in the eastern front of World War II in favor of the Allies. Vassili Zaitsev became a national hero during and

even more so after his service in the Battle of Stalingrad. Zaitsev survived the entirety of the war and saw its triumphant end in 1945, and received the Order of Lenin, the Order of the Red Banner (twice), the Order of the Patriotic War 1st class, the Medal for the Defense of Stalingrad, and the Medal For the Victory Over Germany. Captain Vassili Zaitsev, a shining example of a premiere Soviet Red Army soldier, remained a national hero until his death in 1991.[37]

Zoya Kosmodem'yanskaya was born in 1923 into a post-Revolutionary Soviet world and was raised to be an exemplary Soviet citizen alongside her younger brother, Alexander. Zoya became involved with Soviet institutions at a young age and joined the Young Pioneers when she turned ten and eagerly joined the Komsomol youth league at the age of fifteen. When the Soviet Union entered World War II in June of 1941, Zoya joined the partisan resistance in the fall of that year at the age of eighteen. She participated in sabotage missions during which her unit cut telephone lines, burned barns, and mined roads. Zoya was on a sabotage arson assignment in the village of Petrischevo where a German unit was stationed when she was captured by enemy soldiers. Zoya was tortured and interrogated for two days and suffered severe beatings, burns, and rape. Despite her torture, Zoya refused to speak or reveal anything about her partisan unit. She was hanged on November 29, 1941 and her body was left in the gallows as an example to the villagers.

By word of mouth, the story of Zoya's actions and sacrifice reached journalist Pyotr Lidov with *Pravda*, and Zoya's story was published weeks after her execution. Zoya became the quintessential Soviet hero and martyr of the Great Patriotic War and Stalin posthumously awarded her the Hero of the Soviet Union in February of 1942. She

on political prison camps was that correctional institutions should do just that, "correct" the wrongdoings of prisoners and also educate them in a Soviet way of life during their incarceration. A prison administrator sums up the purpose of some correctional facilities: "correction and education must take priority over punishment."[46] This was done through physical labor and mental stimulation and censored education in the prison library systems.

The overall impact of this attempted political and nationalist educational aspect of the propaganda campaign in the prisons is extremely hard to measure, and sources indicate that on the whole prisoners did not take to this method of education nearly as enthusiastically as the state had hoped. The efforts of political and social education of prisoners lay in a few different aspects of prison life. First was the prisoners' access to a library in their institution. Though most prisoners preferred works of fiction, the state made sure to circulate a large amount of Soviet political propaganda in the libraries alongside works of fiction and history. Teaching systems within some gulags even went as far as to explain Soviet readings of newspapers and books to groups of prisoners in "red corners," rooms that had earned their name in the early 1920s as rooms specifically for communist educational purposes.[47] These "red corners" existed in some prisons as separate rooms, but in others the library itself was called the "red corner." For political prisoners, access to libraries allowed them to keep their sanity and something they clung to dearly. Instead of extra work or no rations as punishment, political prisoners lost library privileges for a month or two months at a time. Prisoners who kept their book privileges never knew when new books would come in, or what they would be, either. A prisoner with the surname Parvilahti describes his experience: "The distribution of books

was uncertain and sporadic, and they were just as likely to be political propaganda as fiction or history." With the concentration of political propaganda among the prison libraries, the "red corners," and the teaching system in the correctional camps, it is clear that the Soviet state made a concerted effort to propagandize and re-make through political education the prisoners of the U.S.S.R. It was largely a failure because for many prisoners, their position in the camps and gulags made political education fruitless, though there were some outstanding products of this prison education system during the war.[48]

Film in the Great Patriotic War

At times it is possible that the exact symbolism in propaganda can be overlooked when the method is simply a picture or a newspaper article, a reason that makes film an important aspect of any propaganda campaign. Soviet cinema experienced a significant amount of hindrances in the 1930s, owing largely to the lack of functioning modern equipment in the Soviet Union at the time. The Soviet Union herself could not produce sound film equipment, and thus many of the films released in the 1930s were silent and lacked theatrical impact. By the mid- to late thirties, Soviet filmmakers resorted to buying equipment from American companies in order to solve their equipment crisis, and by the time the Soviet Union entered World War II, filmmakers were shooting and releasing films with spoken audio and soundtracks.[49]

The Soviet film industry produced hundreds of films in the 1920s and 30s, despite their shortcomings in terms of sound and film-synchronizing technology and customized soundtracks to fiction, nonfiction, animated, and newsreel films alike. By 1928 there were over nine thousand cinemas throughout the Soviet Union, and all in consistent use.

As the crude silent films of the early to mid-twenties gave way to more artistic and documentary films, the introduction of auditory dialogue (as opposed to a silent film, where a character was shown talking, and then the scene was cut to a translation of the scene in words for the audience to read) greatly expanded the material for filmmakers. Genres expanded and new ones were created. Soviet adaptations of comedic stories were filmed, such as *Accordion*, directed by Igor Savchenko and released in 1934. One of the most successful and truly patriotic Soviet film of the 1930s was *Chapayev*, directed by Georgi and Sergei Vasiliev. The Vasiliev brothers were already prominent figures in the Soviet film industry when they produced *Chapayev*, but this 1934 film was an unequaled triumph. *Chapayev* told the story of World War I commander Vasili Ivanovich Chapayev, who, though unable to write, had an ability to describe and play out battles with models using potatoes to illustrate strategy to his all-peasant battalions.[50] *Chapayev* illustrated the essentially Soviet triumph of the people over the oppressive czar. The film that is considered the quintessential propaganda film of the pre-war period was *A Great Citizen*, directed by Fridrikh Ermler and released in 1938. The film was a fictionalized biopic of Sergei Kirov and a stylized piece that ideologically supported the Great Purges of the 1930s. The importance of this ideological support in a popular media form (it was also the first film made for TV in the Soviet Union) introduced direct support of Stalin's policies and actions into the film medium.[51]

While newspapers and posters immortalized aviation heroes and plastered image after image of Stalin in storefronts, walls, and public institutions throughout the Soviet Union, the movies made about these endeavors during the 1930s themselves remained rather small in number. Films were more entertainment-based, with the exception of

films like *Chapayev* and *A Great Citizen*, and meant to draw the public's attention away from the tension caused by the ongoing (but unacknowledged) Great Terror and Purges of the 30s. As the 1930s came to a close, the Soviet Union made a decision to try to push back the imminent war with Germany, the Non-Aggression Pact of 1939. With the signing of this pact, the Soviet film industry pulled all films that showed Germany or Hitler's Nazi party in a negative light from circulation. The invasion in June of 1941 prompted an immediate and zealous re-circulation and distribution of all the films that had been banned following the non-aggression pact. With the introduction of a new, very real, very dangerous enemy, the Soviet film industry began producing films aimed at a citizenry under attack. Films chronicled stories of heroes of the 1930s, as in Kalatozov's *Wings of Victory* (1941), the story of the famous hero pilot Valeri Chkalov. This was one of many films to call back to heroes of previous decades. Another film released in 1941, Eisimont's *The Girl From Leningrad*, was so successful in the Soviet Union and abroad that it was remade in Hollywood and released under the title *Three Russian Girls* in 1943. Kalatozov's heroic film was triumphant and inspiring, featuring a key figure of the 1930s and his relationship to Stalin, considered by some to be a father-son type of interaction. *The Girl from Leningrad* told the story of Soviet nurses on the front of the war with Finland, shot in a documentary-type style to increase realism. Lev Arnshtam's 1944 heroic war film, *Zoya*, stands out as the embodiment of dramatic Soviet propaganda film of the war period. The biopic depicts Zoya as an exceptional Soviet citizen, a member of the Komsomol and a volunteer for the front lines of the war. Her defiant, inspiring speech and her execution speak volumes of the core propaganda messages in circulation at the time. Serve your country, love your country, be willing to die for your country.

These were the ideas that Zoya's young life and untimely death were intended to invoke.[52]

As war front coverage became more and more in-demand, a new genre of documentary and newsreel film was created: the short war front series called *Fighting Front Albums*. These were compiled albums of war film from various parts of the country that also included satire or "poster films." As long as they contained a productive, pointed (and approved) statement about the war and anti-fascism, these short films were complied into a monthly *Fighting Front Album* that was distributed to theatres throughout the Soviet Union during the entirety of the war. 1941 had the highest and most consistent rate of distribution with one album for every month of the first year of the war.[53]

Newsreel film became incredibly popular as the war intensified. Film crews were sent to four different locations of the front each week to capture footage. The crews filmed side-by-side with soldiers, parachuting out of planes and hiding in underbrush with guerilla fighters in order to get the closest footage of the action to deliver to wartime cinema. Newsreel filmmakers were dedicated to their jobs on the front; their duties were taken so seriously, in fact, that film crews took up arms alongside Red Army soldiers on multiple occasions during the war. The film crews in Stalingrad participated in multiple skirmishes throughout the siege that eventually ended in a German surrender, which the filmmakers were on hand to film as it happened. Members of the film industry did not use their occupations as a way to shirk their patriotic duty. Many actors joined Komsomols and actresses joined nurses' detachments on the front. On the domestic side of the film industry, women filled studio-worker and technical positions as men enlisted

and departed for the front. The footage accrued by these multiple film crews produced dozens of newsreel films, and a few full-feature newsreel films that all ended in Soviet victories.[54]

A Day of War, one of the full-length newsreel films, included film from 140 different international "filming points" by 240 different cameramen. *The Defeat of the German Armies near Moscow*, released in 1942, was the most widely shown film of the war and included footage from Stalingrad and the siege of Leningrad, among other battles. Newsreel footage brought the struggles and eventual triumphs of the Great Patriotic War to the urban Soviet audience. The gravity and importance of these films was understood by those who toiled and risked their lives to make them. Filmmaker Alexander Dovzhenko, who was perhaps one of the most involved directors on the film and propaganda front of the Great Patriotic War, describes the significance of filming scenes on the front to be shown to a theatre public.[55]

> "When these shots of mud – in themselves saying nothing at all – were joined together in a sequence about the difficulties of the 1944 offensive on the left bank of the Ukraine, they acquired point and meaning. Now they are accompanied by a commentary on how these infinite expanses, washed in the blood of Soviet people like the fields under spring floods, saw the destiny of mankind decided, for here the military art of Nazi Germany was crushed and the liberation of Europe was assured. And instantly this vast stretch of mud begins to gleam like something precious."[56]

For the members of the Soviet film industry, their films were more than just heroic images compiled with nationalist soundtracks – they were the product of blood, sweat, and tears by not only the soldiers featured in these newsreels, but the directors, cameramen, and technical crews of the industry itself. The final production of films was

made possible through sacrifice and dedication to the Soviet nation by brave members of the Soviet film industry.

The patriotic and nationalist surge of propaganda certainly permeated the film industry, and many of the films released during the Great Patriotic War had obvious Communist and Soviet elements, along with clear patriotic symbolism and flawless national heroes. Many films released in wartime were stories of young, heroic Soviet citizens and others were depictions of old Russian heroes from before the Revolution. One such heroic film featured the Russian historical hero *Alexander Nevskii*, released just before the war in 1938. Sergei Einstein portrayed Nevskii as a Stalin-like hero who valiantly defended the motherland from invading German knights. Another film of Einstein's was *Ivan the Terrible* (1944), a two-part historical film about Ivan IV of old Russia. Stalin was said to have particularly enjoyed the first installment of what was intended to be a trilogy because of the highly individualistic narrative that Einstein created[57]. The second part of the *Ivan* trilogy, released after the war, caused Einstein to lose favor within the Bolshevik party due to the unfavorable image of Ivan it portrayed. The third piece was never filmed.

At least three of the heroic films released during the Great Patriotic War featured heroines, the first being the previously mentioned *Frontovye podrugi,(* translated as *The Girl from Leningrad)*, released in December 1941. The heroine Natasha goes to serve on the front lines as a nurse. Unlike most Soviet films, *The Girl from Leningrad* narrated a love story alongside patriotism, duty to the Motherland, and the horror of the front lines. The second of the heroine features was Lev Arnshtam's *Zoya*, perhaps one of the best examples of film propaganda during the Great Patriotic War. Arnshtam told the story of

Zoya's life from beginning to tragic end, emphasizing scene after scene Zoya's fierce patriotism and dedication to the Soviet system right up until the moment she dies. Zoya's sacrifice that had already been glorified for three years during the war before the release of the film in 1944 was made even more tangible for its audience through motion picture, audible dialogue, and a patriotic soundtrack written by Dmitri Shostakovitch, a world-renown Soviet composer of classical music. For many composers like Shostakovitch, composing soundtracks for these films was a way to survive the war financially, and it also added to the authenticity of these Soviet-produced films. [58]

A significant element of *Zoya* as a film was that its heroine was not a fictional character and that she had been a real person with a real life and had died for the Soviet Union. Her character's example set a very real standard for Soviet youth to live up to. The third movie released during the war that featured a heroine was titled *Raduga*, or *The Rainbow*. In *The Rainbow* a pregnant female partisan, Olena, is captured by German troops occupying a Soviet village and is tortured for information. The violence in *The Rainbow* is particularly graphic because the woman's child is murdered before her as a brutal effort to break her will during interrogation[59]. During the filming of *The Rainbow*, a main actress in the film, Yelena Tyapkina, received a telegram that her son had been killed on the front. During their effort to create pieces that communicated the emotion of war, men and women of the industry experienced their own personal tragedies as well. These film images meant to stir feelings of fierce hatred towards the Germans and to emphasize the importance of protecting women and children from the brutality of the Nazi army. The fixation on female heroes was symbolic in both a literal and figurative sense in terms of what these women represented. For *Zoya* in particular, the heroine

represents an outstanding Soviet youth, but she also represents "Mother Russia" herself, the motherland that the Soviet people were called to protect. The torture and brutality that the heroine endured in each of these films represented the damage the war wrought on the Soviet Union. In the written account of Zoya's story in *Men of the Stalin Breed*, the imagery in a German soldier's account of a woman he saw walking in the road captured the essence of "Mother Russia:" "There goes Russia, on and on, without faltering, and there is no force that can bring her to the dust." This was the *rodina-mat'*, the stern, Soviet mother figure that was staunch and tough, but still needed to be protected by her children. Like the images of women and children in propaganda posters and the call to protect "family" and "the motherland" in newspapers and speeches by the leaders of the Soviet Union, many of the films released in the Great Patriotic War tied family, hometown, and nation together for their audiences. The medium changed but the messages remained the same.[60]

Conclusion

The Soviet Union had plenty of experience with propaganda and censorship prior to the beginning of the Great Patriotic War. The Bolshevik party in particular perfected its propaganda machine and was unique in their approach to its use because they viewed propaganda as an essential piece of political and social education to create a new and successful communist state. The state knew the power of focused and targeted images, how to combine Russian folk and religious images with that of burgeoning Revolutionary heroes in the early 1900's, and how to censor newspapers and printed materials to consistently frame the Soviet Union in a positive and triumphant light. An article in the Soviet paper *Partiinoe stroitel'stov* published in 1940 commented on the power of words

alone: "The living word in a newspaper is incomparably stronger and more effective than any number of memoranda and directives on which secretaries of the regional communities often waste much time."[61] Thus, the newspapers were an important tool in the propaganda of the Great Patriotic War, as they reported small victories instead of the rapidly advancing German line early on in 1941, and reported on the heroic deeds and courageous sacrifices of Soviet citizens instead of the astounding death tolls that the Soviet Union suffered in the first six months of the war alone. Stalin's famous order addressed to the Red Army "Not a step back!" became a key propaganda phrase in posters and newspaper articles, despite the fact that for many Red Army soldiers this order meant the choice between death by Nazi bullets, or by their own Soviet commanders, should they retreat. The patriotism, nationalism, and heroic messages of propaganda during the Great Patriotic War were the Soviet Union's response to a foreign attack on a state that they recognized as not completely united or self-identifying as Soviet citizens.

The intention of the Soviet propaganda machine was to inspire feelings of unification and patriotism towards the Soviet Union as a singular country in the face of a German threat. By using previously established methods of hero-centered propaganda and the omnipresence of Stalin's "cult of personality," wartime propaganda adapted quickly, changing faces and names as they produced posters, films, and press releases for the Soviet citizenry. Propaganda posters used both positive Soviet images of soldiers and the widely-circulated "Rodina Mat' Zovyot!" with the intention to generate patriotism and a sense of duty among Soviet citizens, particularly the youth. Alongside this positive imagery was also the negative portrayal of Germans in dehumanized and animal forms,

or positions of defeat, which were conversely intended to generate hatred towards a common enemy. Newspapers ran issue after issue on young Soviet heroes, military and civilian alike, and martyrs became commonplace in Soviet media and art during the war. These figures were always presented alongside Stalin, with his mere presence and vocalized approval (through speeches or awards) legitimizing their heroic status. Films reminded audiences of Russian greatness and framed these old stories within new Soviet ideals and told the stories of young heroes of the ongoing war with Soviet patriotic imagery to inspire nationalism, and brutality to shock and increase hatred towards the Nazi party. Every Soviet citizen was made aware of their part in the war effort and that they could be the difference between victory and defeat. Collective duty and responsibility was pushed through all mediums in World War II propaganda in the Soviet Union because the Bolshevik party believed that a unified Soviet Union was essential to victory over Germany.

While the total impact of this propaganda campaign is difficult to measure and impossible to generalize, it is clear that a substantial effort was made to encourage Soviet nationalism during the Great Patriotic War. It is also clear that many Soviet men and women did respond to the call to unify by the enormous numbers of enlisted men in the Red Army and the astounding production rates achieved in wartime manufacturing by female factory workers. The pivotal Soviet victory at Stalingrad in 1942 and the eventual complete victory over the German military machine at the end of the second world war fulfilled many of the messages circulated during the conflict. A victorious Soviet Union emerged, severely wounded and having suffered grievous losses, but victorious nonetheless, and with Stalin triumphantly at its head. How much of this victory can be

attributed to the propaganda campaign during the Great Patriotic War is hard to measure, but it is certain that the images and messages the Bolshevik party intended to permeate the population played a vital part in this significant historical event.

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