

Among a nation so deeply divided by ethnicity and localism, and limited by a narrowness of perspective, building unity and consensus was perhaps the major challenge to the Soviet government. In the Russian past the worship of saints and the veneration of the tsar had served that purpose well. But with the revolution, an intensification of that tradition was necessary. The result was the "cult of personality," the deliberate fixation of individual dedication and loyalty on the all-powerful leader, whose personality exemplified the challenge of creating socialist man and socialist woman.

This selection, by A. O. Avdienko, illustrates by what emotional bonds the individual was tied to Stalin, and through Stalin to the prodigious transformation of the Russian state and society that he was attempting.

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Thank you, Stalin. Thank you because I am joyful. Thank you because I am well. No matter how old I become, I shall never forget how we received Stalin two days ago. centuries will pass, and the generations still to come will regard us as the happiest of mortals, as the most fortunate of men, because we lived in the century of centuries, because we were privileged to see Stalin, our inspired leader. Yes, and we regard ourselves as the happiest of mortals because we are the contemporaries of a man who never had an equal in world history.

The men of all ages will call on thy name, which is strong, beautiful, wise and marvelous. Thy name is engraven on every factory, every machine, every place on the earth, and in the hearts of all men.

Every time I have found myself in his presence I have been subjugated by his strength, his charm, his grandeur. I have experienced a great desire to sing, to cry out, to shout with joy and happiness. And now see me--me!--on the same platform where the Great Stalin stood a year ago. In what country, in what part of the world could such a thing happen.

I write books. I am an author. All thanks to thee, O great educator, Stalin. I love a young woman with a renewed love and shall perpetuate myself in my children--all thanks to thee, great educator, Stalin. I shall be eternally happy and joyous, all thanks to thee, great educator, Stalin. 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.

O great Stalin, O leader of the peoples,  
Thou who broughtest man to birth.  
Thou who fructifies the earth,  
Thou who restorest to centuries,  
Thou who makest bloom the spring,  
Thou who makest vibrate the musical chords...  
Thou, splendour of my spring, O thou,  
Sun reflected by millions of hearts.