1947, June. International Labor Day, May 1. Demonstrators on the Red Square carry a huge portrait of Stalin with the inscription: “Glory to the great Stalin!”

1949, December. This set commemorates 10 years of the so-called “re-unification of the brotherly peoples of Ukraine and Belorussia.” In 1939, Stalin signed a secret pact with Hitler, which included the partition of Poland between Germany and the Soviet Union. After the war, a large part of Eastern Poland remained within the Soviet Union, while Poland received territorial compensation at the expense of Germany.

1950, April. Celebration of May 1. First appearance of the “foursome” emblem of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin on a Soviet stamp was probably related to Stalin’s determination to remain at the helm of the world Marxist movement. The stamp exists in two sizes.

1950, June. Fifth anniversary of the victory in WWII. The larger stamp shows Stalin’s profile on the Victory medal and the Order of Victory beneath it. The latter was the highest Soviet military decoration awarded to only nineteen top-ranked commanders and politicians (among them, Eisenhower and Montgomery). Stalin received the Order of Victory twice – in 1944 and 1945.

1950, December. The 50th anniversary of the first issue of the radical newspaper “Iskra” (Spark). The newspaper was published abroad by a group of radical political émigrés from Russia. Stalin never lived in emigration and had nothing to do with the publication of “Iskra.”
70 лет со дня рождения Иосифа Виссарионовича Сталина

21 декабря 1949 года

1950. Stalin 70th birthday souvenir sheet.
Stalin’s Birthday Souvenir Sheet, 1950

The souvenir sheet was issued to honor Stalin on his 70th birthday and was, strictly speaking, the only Soviet issue dedicated to Stalin personally. Although the official birthday had been celebrated on December 21, 1949, the sheet was issued only January 14 next year. At 175x220 mm, it is one of the largest known souvenir sheets. It was allowed to cut the sheet and use individual stamps for postage.

After reaching power, Stalin falsified his political career and carefully concealed his personal life. In particular, Stalin changed his date of birth. As established recently by Russian historians, in 1922, when Stalin started his rapid ascent to power, he changed it from December 6, 1878, to December 21, 1879. The exact reason for this is not known, and two plausible explanations exist.

One is his traditional rivalry with Trotsky. By changing his date of birth, Stalin wanted to demonstrate that he joined the communist party at a younger age than Trotsky. Another explanation is that Stalin wanted to turn the future celebration of his 50th birthday into a demonstration of his overwhelming dominance in the party. Thus, he wanted to give himself one extra year to fulfill his plan.

Individual stamps of the sheet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stamp Description</th>
<th>Image</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A hut in a small town of Gori, Georgia, in which Stalin was born to a family of poor cobbler. See its transformation on the next page.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This image is based on a drawing by E. Kibrik “Lenin is arriving to Smolnyi during the night of October 24.” The Bolshevik coup occurred on October 25, 1917, and the headquarters of the uprising were located at Smolnyi monastery in St. Petersburg. In fact, neither Stalin, nor Lenin were present at the headquarters on the day of the uprising.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>This photograph of Stalin visiting gravely ill Lenin was used by the former to demonstrate their closeness. The photograph was taken in late 1922 probably by Lenin’s sister. Soon after that visit, Stalin rudely insulted Lenin’s wife, and Lenin did not allow Stalin to visit him till his death in January 1924.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portrait of Stalin by Boris Karpov (1946).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Postcard (1950) shows the hut in Gori, a town in Georgia where Iosif Dzhugashvili was born to a family of poor cobbler and spent the first four years of his life. Dzhugashvili later changed his name to Stalin. In the 1930s, the hut was restored and then covered with a large marble pavilion opened in 1936 (architect – M. N. Neprintsev). This transformation was but a part of the notorious campaign of Stalin’s aggrandizement.
1951-1952. The 34th and 35th anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution. The two sets were designed by the same artist and are rather similar, especially the 1 rub. stamp. The 1 rub. stamp of 1951 carries Stalin’s quote “We stand up for peace and we struggle for the cause of peace,” while the 1952 stamp carries a more generic slogan “Forward, to the triumph of communism!”

1953, April. The stamp shows the medal of the laureate of the “International Stalin Award for Strengthening Peace among Peoples.” This prize was established in 1949 to reward political activists who supported the aggressive “struggle for peace” declared by Soviet propaganda.

March 5, 1953. Stalin dies of massive stroke. No mourning stamps were issued.

1953, November. 36 years of October revolution. The design of the stamp is based on the same drawing by E. Kibrik as one of the stamps of the Stalin souvenir sheet of 1950.

1953, November-December. 50th anniversary of the Communist party of the Soviet Union. The absence of Stalin is quite conspicuous. This philatelic item hinted at major political changes in the USSR.
Both covers were mailed by the same sender who listed his return address only as “P. O. Box 787.” The upper cover is labeled “Air Mail,” but for some reasons went by sea. May be it exceeded the 20 g limit. The bottom letter went by air with the same franking. It was addressed to a well-known stamp dealer.
1954. Stamp from the set dedicated to 30th anniversary of Lenin's death reproduced a painting by Soviet sycophant artist Vladimir Serov (no relation to Russian impressionist Valentin Serov). In this version of his painting "Lenin declares Soviet Rule" young Stalin stood right behind Lenin. The painting was shown to the public in 1947.

1967. The same painting reproduced on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of October revolution on a stamp and souvenir sheet. However, this time there was no Stalin. The dates were deliberately messed up. The first stamp with Stalin was issued in 1954. However, the date of the painting without Stalin on the 1967 stamp is 1953. In fact, V. Serov finished his painting without Stalin in 1962, when it became clear that the partial destalinization began by Khrushchev was irreversible.

1954, April. First anniversary since Stalin’s death. The stamp was issued with two different perforations.

1954, November. The last appearance of the foursome of Marxist saints on Soviet stamps. Registered cover franked with a pair of these stamps was sent from Varkovichi (Rovenskaia oblast, Ukraine) to Ol’khovets (Leningradskia oblast) in November 1956. The rate was overpaid exactly two-fold, probably for philatelic purpose.

1954, December. A set of two stamps was issued commemorating Stalin’s 75th anniversary (see title page). Recently declassified decisions of Soviet politburo recommended to keep memorial events at low profile throughout the country.

1956, February. XX Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union. On the last day of the Congress, Nikita Khrushchev delivered his famous secret speech, in which he disclosed the murderous nature of Stalin's regime and its unparalleled crimes against humanity. Although the text of the speech was distributed only among Party members and was not published in Russia for another forty years, it dramatically changed Soviet society. The speech marked the beginning of partial de-Stalinization of Soviet Union and most of other socialist countries.

Post-Soviet Russia

1995. Stamp from Russian set “50 years of Victory in WWII” showed the Big Three during Yalta conference in the spring of 1945. Russia was the only former ally who depicted political leaders on stamps dedicated to this anniversary.

2004. Russia issued a set of stamps with reproductions of paintings by Sergei Prisekin, among them this portrait of marshal Zhukov. The familiar double profiles of Lenin-Stalin are seen on the symbolic banner in front of Zhukov's horse.

Kyrgyzstan

2005. Kyrgyzstan issued a set dedicated to 60th anniversary of the Victory in WWII. The set consists of 20 stamps with portraits of military leaders and politicians embossed on thin sheets of yellow metal. The set has four high values of 15 som showing Stalin, FDR, Churchill, and King George VI.
Albania issued this set in 1949 to commemorate Stalin’s 70th birthday. At that time, Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha joined Stalin’s side in his conflict with Yugoslavian leader Tito and the stamps demonstrated his loyalty.

Registered cover below franked with this set was sent from Tirana to Berlin (Soviet Zone) in January 1950. Transit postmark in Budapest, arrival postmark.
Albania, 1963

Twenty years of the Battle of Stalingrad. In 1962, Enver Hoxha strongly protested the denunciation of Stalinism by CPSU and sided with China in its conflict with Soviet Union. Thus, the relations turned sour, and the date of secondary importance was used by Albania to affirm its disagreement with Soviet leadership.

Registered cover from Himara, Albania, to Massa [d’Albe], Abruzzo, Italy, 1963. Himara is a tiny town in Epirus. Transit postmarks in Vlorë (the center of Albanian Epirus) and Tirana and arrival postmark. It is not clear how the cover reached its destination, because there are eight towns called Massa in Italy.
Albania, 1967-81

1967. Fifty years of the Bolshevik revolution in Russia. Each stamp illustrates a major concept of Soviet Stalinist propaganda: “Stalin as a faithful follower of Lenin” (15 q); “Lenin personally lead the Bolshevik coup in 1917” (25 q); “During Revolution, Stalin was the second in command in the Bolshevik party” (50 q); “The Winter Palace (the residence of the Provisional government of Russia in 1917) was taken over as a result of a heroic military operation” (1.10 L). All these theses are refuted by most historians.

1966, 1981. Congresses of Albanian communist party held in 1966 (left) and in 1981 (above). Stalin always remains a member of the foursome of communist “saints.”

1969. The 90th anniversary of Stalin. This uneven date was chosen for political reasons of the moment. After the occupation of Czechoslovakia in 1968 by the armies of Soviet Union and other members of Warsaw pact, Albania formally withdrew from the pact. Although it denounced the democratization in Czechoslovakia, it wanted to avoid potential occupation for the reason of its own disagreement with Soviet Union. This set is another small act of defiance against Soviet leadership.
Postcard sent in 1973 by air mail from Korçë to Poland and franked by a 1.10 Lk stamp from the Stalin anniversary set (1969).

1979. Albania and People's Republic of China were the only countries which honored the 100th anniversary of Stalin on their stamps. The 1.10 Lk stamp shows Stalin and Albanian dictator Enver Hoxha. Hoxha met Stalin in 1947, when he was allowed to visit Moscow in a humiliating role of the head of a trade delegation. Apparently, no official photographs survived, and the picture on the stamp is a collage of two different images.

1986. Forty five years of Albanian Workers (Communist) Party. The foursome of communist "saints" is still there. By that time, Albania became one of the most isolated country in the world, considering itself the only truly communist society. This is the last appearance of Stalin on the stamps of communist countries. In 1991, the communist dictatorship in Albania ended and the country adopted political pluralism.
Bulgaria, 1948, 1949

1948. This stamp was issued in a set dedicated to Soviet Army. Although Bulgaria was Hitler’s ally, it never fought on the Russian front. Bulgarian people remained grateful to Russia for its role in their liberation from Ottoman dominance and sincerely greeted Soviet Army in 1944.

1949. Like most communist countries, Bulgaria issued stamps to honor Stalin’s 70th birthday. The design of the 40 L stamp is based on the 1939 painting by Soviet courtier artist A. Gerasimov (see below). In 1949 communist countries led an aggressive propaganda campaign for “World peace,” and ingenious Bulgarian artist used Stalin’s gesture to add a pigeon to the composition.

1949. Card-maximum with the set dedicated to Stalin’s 70th anniversary
This “Philatelic” maxi-card canceled in November 1948 commemorated Bulgarian-Soviet friendship. By that time, on Stalin’s insistence, Bulgaria broke all ties with other Balkan states, and the USSR became its only ally and economic partner. The mosaic images on this postcard and the one on the next page have been created using Soviet and Bulgarian patriotic stamps, some of which are shown below.

Enlarged elements of the mosaic

Bulgaria, 1946.
Establishment of the Republic.

Bulgaria, 1948.
Christo Botev, Poet.

Bulgaria, 1948.
The Soviet Army.

USSR, 1945.
Elite Guard Badge.

USSR, 1945.
Order for Bravery.
1948. Stalin and Georgii Dimitrov in Moscow. This maxi-card was cancelled in July 1948, when Bulgaria broke all relations with “renegade” Yugoslavia. A year later Dimitrov was invited to Moscow and died (see details on the next page).

1949. Another “philatelic mosaic” maxi-card dedicated to Stalin’s 70th anniversary. The stamp on the right commemorates the first anniversary of the creation of “United Front” in Bulgaria, i.e. suppression of all political opposition by Bulgarian dictator Dimitrov.