Wartime leader of Japan’s government, General Tōjō Hideki (1884-1948), with his close-cropped hair, mustache, and round spectacles, became for Allied propagandists one of the most commonly caricatured members of Japan’s military dictatorship throughout the Pacific war. Shrewd at bureaucratic infighting and fiercely partisan in presenting the army’s perspective while army minister, he was surprisingly indecisive as national leader.

Known within the army as “Razor Tōjō” both for his bureaucratic efficiency and for his strict, uncompromising attention to detail, he climbed the command ladders, in close association with the army faction seeking to upgrade and improve Japan’s fighting capabilities despite tight budgets and “civilian interference.” Tōjō built up a personal power base and used his position as head of the military police of Japan’s garrison force in Manchuria to rein in their influence before he became the Kwantung Army’s chief of staff in 1937. He played a key role in opening hostilities against China in July. Tōjō had his only combat experience later that year, leading two brigades on operations in Inner Mongolia.

Seeing the military occupation of Chinese territory as necessary to force the Nationalist Chinese government to collaborate with Japan, he continued to advocate expansion of the conflict in China when he returned to Tokyo in 1938 as army vice minister, rising to army minister in July 1940. He pushed for alliance with Germany (where he had served in 1920-1922) and Italy, and he supported the formation of a broad political front of national unity. In October 1941 he became prime minister.

Although Tōjō supported last-minute diplomatic efforts, he gave final approval to the attacks on the United States, Great Britain, and the Dutch East Indies in December 1941. Japan’s early victories greatly strengthened his personal prestige and his assertion that there were times when statesmen had to “have faith in Victory.”

When the war intensified, Japan’s losses mounted, and its fragile industrial foundations threatened to collapse. Tōjō characteristically sought to gather administrative levers into his own hands. Serving as both prime minister and army minister, at various times he also held the portfolios of home affairs (giving him control of the dreaded “thought police”), education, munitions, commerce and industry, and foreign affairs. In February 1944, he even assumed direct command of army operations as chief of the Army General Staff. Yet despite all his posts, Tōjō was never able to establish a dictatorship on a par with those wielded by Adolf Hitler and Joseph Stalin. He served

Tōjō Hideki
constitutionally at the behest of the emperor, without support of a mass party, while crucial power centers, such as the industrial combines (known as *zaibatsu*), the navy, and the court, remained beyond his control. After the island of Saipan fell to American forces in July 1944, he was forced from power, despite arguments raised by some officials close to the throne that Tôjô should be left in office to the end to accept responsibility for the loss of the war so that a court official could “step in” to deliver peace.

After Japan’s surrender the next year, Tôjô attempted suicide when threatened with arrest by occupation authorities, but he was tried and hanged as a war criminal on December 23, 1948. At his trial, he asserted his personal responsibility for the war and attempted to deflect attention from the emperor. In 1978, despite the protest of many citizens opposed to honoring the man they felt had brought disaster on Japan, Tôjô’s name, along with those of thirteen other “class A” war criminals, was commemorated at Yasukuni, the shrine in Tokyo dedicated to the memory of warriors fallen in service to the imperial family.

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Hideki Tojo was born in 1884 and died in 1948. Hideki Tojo was Prime Minister of Japan when the attack on Pearl took place plunging the Far East into a war which was to end with the destruction of Hiroshima in August 1945. For his part in leading Japan into World War Two, Tojo was executed as a war criminal.

Tojo was born in Tokyo and decided on a career in the army. He did well at military college and served as a military attaché in Germany shortly after the end of World War One. Tojo became the leader of the militarists in Japan and despised what he considered to be weak civilian politicians. His views were shared by many in the public and in the 1930’s the army and all it represented was held in much greater esteem that politicians in general. This became even more so after the army’s victories in Manchuria from 1931 on.

In the summer of 1940, Tojo became Minister of War in the government and he saw that Japan’s future lay with the European dictators – especially Hitler – who were much admired in Japan. While the European dictators were admired and respected in Japan, the opposite was true for America. The people of America were thought of as decadent, lazy and without scruples compared to the disciplined workforce of Japan that worshipped their emperor, Hirohito.

As Minister of War, Tojo made it clear that Japan should push south in the Far East and take land owned by European nations. On October 14th, 1941, Tojo was appointed Prime Minister of Japan. By this date, he was convinced that a war with America could not be avoided and he put Japan on a full war alert. He decided that a massive knock-out blow would be enough to remove America from the Pacific. As a result, Tojo authorized the attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941.

The huge success enjoyed by the Japanese Army in the months immediately following Pearl Harbor, strengthened Tojo’s standing in Japan – especially when the British Army surrendered at Singapore and Douglas withdrew American forces from the Philippines.

However, it was only a matter of time before the Americans and their allies organized themselves in the Pacific. As the Americans advanced throughout the many islands in the Pacific, Japan came into range of American bombers. With bombing raids reducing a lot of Japan to rubble, the emperor, Hirohito, believed that Tojo had lost control of events and Tojo offered his resignation on July 9th, 1944.

In November 1948, Tojo was put on trial as a war criminal. He was accused of instigating Japan’s aggressive foreign policy in the early 1940’s and of permitting the appalling abuse of prisoners-of-war, contrary to the Geneva Convention. He was found guilty and hanged.
Joseph Stalin (1878-1953) was the dictator of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) from 1929 to 1953. Under Stalin, the Soviet Union was transformed from a peasant society into an industrial and military superpower. However, he ruled by terror, and millions of his own citizens died during his brutal reign. Born into poverty, Stalin became involved in revolutionary politics, as well as criminal activities, as a young man. After Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin (1870-1924) died, Stalin outmaneuvered his rivals for control of the party. Once in power, he collectivized farming and had potential enemies executed or sent to forced labor camps. Stalin aligned with the United States and Britain in World War II (1939-1945) but afterward engaged in an increasingly tense relationship with the West known as the Cold War (1946-1991). After his death, the Soviets initiated a de-Stalinization process.

Joseph Stalin’s Early Years and Family

Joseph Stalin was born Josef Vissarionovich Djugashvili on December 18, 1878, or December 6, 1878, according to the Old Style Julian calendar (although he later invented a new birth date for himself: December 21, 1879), in the small town of Gori, Georgia, then part of the Russian empire. When he was in his 30s, he took the name Stalin, from the Russian for “man of steel.”

Did you know?

In 1925, the Russian city of Tsaritsyn was renamed Stalingrad. In 1961, as part of the de-Stalinization process, the city, located along Europe’s longest river, the Volga, became known as Volgograd. Today, it is one of Russia’s largest cities and a key industrial center.

Stalin grew up poor and an only child. His father was a shoemaker and alcoholic who beat his son, and his mother was a laundress. As a boy, Stalin contracted smallpox, which left him with lifelong facial scars. As a teen, he earned a scholarship to attend a seminary in the nearby city of Tblisi and study for the priesthood in the Georgian Orthodox Church. While there he began secretly reading the work of German social philosopher and “Communist Manifesto” author Karl Marx, becoming interested in the revolutionary movement against the Russian monarchy. In 1899, Stalin was expelled from the seminary for missing exams, although he claimed it was for Marxist propaganda.

After leaving school, Stalin became an underground political agitator, taking part in labor demonstrations and strikes. He adopted the name Koba, after a fictional Georgian outlaw-hero, and joined the more militant wing of the Marxist Social Democratic movement, the Bolsheviks, led by Vladimir Lenin. Stalin also became involved in various criminal activities, including bank heists, the proceeds from which were used to help fund the Bolshevik Party. He was arrested multiple times between 1902 and 1913 and subjected to imprisonment and exile in Siberia.

In 1906, Stalin married Ekaterina “Kato” Svanidze (1885-1907), a seamstress. The couple had one son, Yakov (1907-1943), who died as a prisoner in Germany during World War II. Ekaterina perished from typhus when her son was an infant. In 1918 (some sources cite 1919), Stalin married his second wife, Nadezhda “Nadya” Alliluyeva (1901-1932), the daughter of a Russian revolutionary. They had two children, a boy and a girl. Nadezhda committed suicide in her early 30s. Stalin also fathered several children out of wedlock.
Joseph Stalin’s Rise to Power

In 1912, Lenin, then in exile in Switzerland, appointed Joseph Stalin to serve on the first Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party. Three years later, in November 1917, the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia. The Soviet Union was founded in 1922, with Lenin as its first leader. During these years, Stalin had continued to move up the party ladder, and in 1922 he became secretary general of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, a role that enabled him to appoint his allies to government jobs and grow a base of political support.

After Lenin died in 1924, Stalin eventually outmaneuvered his rivals and won the power struggle for control of the Communist Party. By the late 1920s, he had become dictator of the Soviet Union.

The Soviet Union Under Joseph Stalin

Starting in the late 1920s, Joseph Stalin launched a series of five-year plans intended to transform the Soviet Union from a peasant society into an industrial superpower. His development plan was centered on government control of the economy and included the forced collectivization of Soviet agriculture, in which the government took control of farms. Millions of farmers refused to cooperate with Stalin’s orders and were shot or exiled as punishment. The forced collectivization also led to widespread famine across the Soviet Union that killed millions.

Stalin ruled by terror and with a totalitarian grip in order to eliminate anyone who might oppose him. He expanded the powers of the secret police, encouraged citizens to spy on one another and had millions of people killed or sent to the Gulag system of forced labor camps. During the second half of the 1930s, Stalin instituted the Great Purge, a series of campaigns designed to rid the Communist Party, the military and other parts of Soviet society from those he considered a threat.

Additionally, Stalin built a cult of personality around himself in the Soviet Union. Cities were renamed in his honor. Soviet history books were rewritten to give him a more prominent role in the revolution and mythologize other aspects of his life. He was the subject of flattering artwork, literature and music, and his name became part of the Soviet national anthem. His government also controlled the Soviet media.

Joseph Stalin and World War II

In 1939, on the eve of World War II, Joseph Stalin and German dictator Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) signed a nonaggression pact. Stalin then proceeded to annex parts of Poland and Romania, as well as the Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. He also launched an invasion of Finland. Then, in June 1941, Germany broke the Nazi-Soviet pact and invaded the USSR, making significant early inroads. (Stalin had ignored warnings from the Americans and the British, as well as his own intelligence agents, about a potential invasion, and the Soviets were not prepared for war.) As German troops approached the Soviet capital of Moscow, Stalin remained there and directed a scorched earth defensive policy, destroying any supplies or infrastructure that might benefit the enemy. The tide turned for the Soviets with the Battle of Stalingrad, from August 1942 to February 1943, during which the Red Army defeated the Germans and eventually drove them from Russia.

As the war progressed, Stalin participated in the major Allied conferences, including those in Tehran (1943) and Yalta (1945). His iron will and deft political skills enabled him to play the loyal ally while never abandoning his vision of an expanded postwar Soviet empire.
Joseph Stalin’s Later Years

Joseph Stalin did not mellow with age: He prosecuted a reign of terror, purges, executions, exiles to labor camps and persecution in the postwar USSR, suppressing all dissent and anything that smacked of foreign—especially Western—influence. He established communist governments throughout Eastern Europe, and in 1949 led the Soviets into the nuclear age by exploding an atomic bomb. In 1950, he gave North Korea’s communist leader Kim Il Sung (1912-1994) permission to invade United States-supported South Korea, an event that triggered the Korean War.

Stalin, who grew increasingly paranoid in his later years, died on March 5, 1953, at age 74, after suffering a stroke. His body was embalmed and preserved in Lenin’s mausoleum in Moscow’s Red Square until 1961, when it was removed and buried near the Kremlin walls as part of the de-Stalinization process initiated by Stalin’s successor Nikita Khrushchev (1894-1971).

By some estimates, he was responsible for the deaths of 20 million people during his brutal rule.
Benito Mussolini Biography

Dictator (1883–1945)

Benito Mussolini created the Fascist Party in Italy in 1919, eventually making himself dictator prior to World War II. He was killed in 1945.

Who Was Benito Mussolini?

Benito Amilcare Andrea Mussolini (July 29, 1883 to April 28, 1945), who went by the nickname “Il Duce” (“the Leader”), was an Italian dictator who created the Fascist Party in 1919 and eventually held all the power in Italy as the country’s prime minister from 1922 until 1943. An ardent socialist as a youth, Mussolini followed in his father’s political footsteps but was expelled by the party for his support of World War I. As dictator during World War II, he overextended his forces and was eventually killed by his own people in Mezzegra, Italy.
**Mussolini’s Death**

Mussolini and his mistress, Claretta Petacci, were executed on April 28, 1945, in Mezzegra (near Dongo), Italy, and their bodies were hung on display in a Milan plaza. Following the liberation of Rome by Allied forces, the pair had attempted to escape to Switzerland but were captured by the Italian underground on April 27, 1945.

The Italian masses greeted Mussolini's death without regret. Mussolini had promised his people Roman glory, but his megalomania had overcome his common sense, bringing them only war and misery.

**When & Where Was Mussolini Born?**

Mussolini was born on July 29, 1883, in Dovia di Predappio, Forlì, Italy.

**Family and Early Life**

Benito Mussolini’s father, Alessandro, was a blacksmith and an impassioned socialist who spent much of his time on politics and much of his money on his mistress. His mother, Rosa (Maltoni), was a devout Catholic teacher who provided the family with some stability and income.

The eldest of three children, Benito showed much intelligence as a youth but was boisterous and disobedient. His father instilled in him a passion for socialist politics and a defiance against authority. Though he was expelled from several schools for bullying and defying school authorities, he eventually obtained a teaching certificate in 1901 and, for a brief time, worked as a schoolmaster.

**Socialist Party**

In 1902, Benito Mussolini moved to Switzerland to promote socialism. He quickly gained a reputation for his magnetism and remarkable rhetorical talents. While engaging in political demonstrations, he caught the attention of Swiss authorities and was eventually expelled from the country.

Mussolini returned to Italy in 1904 and continued promoting a socialist agenda. He was briefly imprisoned and, upon release, became editor of the organization's newspaper, Avanti (meaning "Forward"), which gave him a larger megaphone and expanded his influence.

While Mussolini initially condemned Italy's entry into World War I, he soon saw the war as an opportunity for his country to become a great power. His change in attitude broke ties with fellow socialists, and he was expelled from the organization.

In 1915, Mussolini joined the Italian army and fought on the front lines, reaching the rank of corporal before being wounded and discharged from the military.
**Fascist Party Founder**

On March 23, 1919, Benito Mussolini founded the Fascist Party, which organized several right-wing groups into a single force. The fascist movement proclaimed opposition to social class discrimination and supported nationalist sentiments. Mussolini hoped to raise Italy to levels of its great Roman past.

**Mussolini’s Rise to Power**

Mussolini criticized the Italian government for weakness at the Treaty of Versailles. Capitalizing on public discontent following World War I, he organized a paramilitary unit known as the "Black Shirts," who terrorized political opponents and helped increase Fascist influence.

As Italy slipped into political chaos, Mussolini declared that only he could restore order and was given the authority in 1922 as prime minister. He gradually dismantled all democratic institutions. By 1925, he had made himself dictator, taking the title "Il Duce" ("the Leader").

To his credit, Mussolini carried out an extensive public works program and reduced unemployment, making him very popular with the people.

**Invasion of Ethiopia**

In 1935, determined to show the strength of his regime, Benito Mussolini invaded Ethiopia. The ill-equipped Ethiopians were no match for Italy's modern tanks and airplanes, and the capital, Addis Ababa, was quickly captured. Mussolini incorporated Ethiopia into the new Italian Empire.

**World War II and Adolf Hitler**

Impressed with Italy's early military successes, German dictator Adolf Hitler sought to establish a relationship with Benito Mussolini. Flattered by Hitler's overtures, Mussolini interpreted the recent diplomatic and military victories as proof of his genius. In 1939, Mussolini sent support to Fascists in Spain during the Spanish Civil War, hoping to expand his influence.

That same year, Italy and Germany signed a military alliance known as the "Pact of Steel." With Italy's resources stretched to capacity, many Italians believed Mussolini’s alliance with Germany would provide time to regroup. Influenced by Hitler, Mussolini instituted discrimination policies against the Jews in Italy. In 1940, Italy invaded Greece with some initial success.

Hitler's invasion of Poland and declaration of war with Britain and France forced Italy into war, however, and exposed weaknesses in its military. Greece and North Africa soon fell, and only German military intervention in early 1941 saved Mussolini from a military coup.
At the Casablanca Conference in 1942, Winston Churchill and Franklin D. Roosevelt devised a plan to take Italy out of the war and force Germany to move its troops to the Eastern Front against the Soviet Union. Allied forces secured a beachhead in Sicily and began marching up the Italian peninsula.

With pressure mounting, Mussolini was forced to resign on July 25, 1943, and was arrested; German commandos later rescued him. Mussolini then moved his government to northern Italy, hoping to regain his influence. On June 4, 1944, Rome was liberated by Allied forces, who marched on to take control of Italy.

Fact Check

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