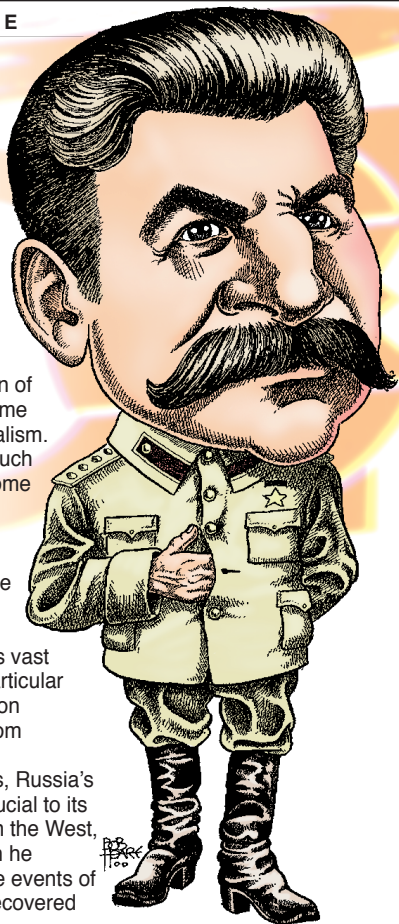


Joseph Stalin

IOSIF VISSARIONOVICH DZHUGASHVILI was born in Georgia in 1879, the son of a shoemaker. Expelled from a religious college for expounding Marxism, he joined the Bolshevik underground, working with Lenin to organize industrial action among Russian workers. His adopted name meant "man of steel", and the term Stalinism has become the definition of a cruel, draconian socialism.

Though transported to Siberia for much of the 1917 Revolution, he rose to become General Secretary of the Communist Party by 1922. Lenin died in 1924, whereupon Stalin began his ruthless, megalomaniac purging of opposition. He sent millions of Soviets not conforming to the Stalinist ideal to forced-labour camps, and he persecuted his country's vast number of ethnic groups – reserving particular vitriol for Jews and Ukrainians. Ten million peasants are estimated to have died from starvation or by execution.

Despite an initial pact with the Nazis, Russia's war effort on behalf of the Allies was crucial to its success and for some years masked, in the West, the extent of the cruelty and destruction he wreaked in Russia. Communism, as the events of the early 1990s demonstrated, never recovered from the damage of his years in power.



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Life and times...

