

THE ALLIED LEADERS!

Sir Winston Churchill (1874-1965), Great Britain's greatest 20th-century statesman, best known for his courageous leadership as prime minister during World War II. Churchill became prime minister of Great Britain on May 10, 1940. During the dark days of World War II, Churchill's rousing speeches rallied the British to continue the fight. He urged the British to conduct themselves so that, "if the British Empire and its Commonwealth last for a thousand years, men will still say, 'This was their finest hour!'" By successful collaboration with President Franklin D. Roosevelt he was able to secure military aid and moral support from the U.S. After the Soviet Union and the U.S. entered the war in 1941, Churchill established close ties with leaders of what he called the "Grand Alliance." Traveling ceaselessly throughout the war, he did much to coordinate military strategy and to ensure Hitler's defeat. His conferences with Roosevelt and Stalin, most notably at Yalta in 1945, also shaped the map of postwar Europe. By 1945 he was admired throughout the world, his reputation disguising the fact that Britain's military role had become secondary.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (1882-1945), 32d president of the U.S. (1933-45); elected for an unprecedented four terms, he was one of the 20th century's most skillful political leaders. His New Deal program, a response to the Great Depression, utilized the federal government as an instrument of social and economic change in contrast to its traditionally passive role. Then, in World War II, he led the Allies in their defeat of the Axis powers. His first three months as President, known as the Hundred Days, were marked by innovative legislation. In a period of massive unemployment (25 percent of the work force), a collapsed stock market, and thousands of bank closings, Congress, at Roosevelt's request, passed a series of emergency measures calculated to provide relief for the individual and to prevent business bankruptcy. Although his ideas were very controversial, his greatest gift to the nation was his optimism and ability to reach Americans directly through press conferences, speeches, and his famous fireside chats on the radio. He inspired people's confidence in the government and in themselves. Heavily influenced by Winston Churchill early on, FDR understood the importance of British and American unity. After Pearl Harbor he quickly declared war on Japan. Soon after American troops played a major role in defeating the Axis Powers. FDR did not, however, see the end of the war. He died of a cerebral hemorrhage at Warm Springs, Ga., on April 12, 1945.

Josef Stalin (1879-1953), Soviet Communist leader, the longtime ruler who is considered by many to be the most powerful person to live during the 20th century. While studying for the priesthood, Stalin read forbidden literature, including Karl Marx's *Das Kapital*, and soon converted to a new orthodoxy: Russian Marxism. Before graduation he quit the seminary to become a full-time revolutionary. After the Revolution of March 1917, Stalin returned to Petrograd (now Saint Petersburg), and controlled decisions in the capital before Lenin arrived in April. Before his death, Lenin became nervous about the flaws in Stalin's personality. In his political "testament" Lenin attacked Stalin as being "too rude" and called for his removal. Stalin was able to hide Lenin's testament so that Russians didn't know about the conflict between the men. By his 50th birthday (1929), Stalin had cemented his position as Lenin's recognized successor and entrenched his power as sole leader of the Soviet Union. In the mid-1930s Stalin launched a major campaign of political terror. The purges, arrests, and deportations to labor camps touched virtually every family. Untold numbers of party, industry, and military leaders disappeared during the "Great Terror." Fear instilled by a political secret police formed an essential part of the system called Stalinism. In part because Stalin killed many of his own military leaders, the Soviet Union suffered greatly in World War II. Stalin personally directed the war against Nazi Germany. By rallying the people, and by his willingness to make great human sacrifices, he turned the tide against the Germans, notably at the Battle of Stalingrad. After helping the Allied Powers to beat the Germans, Stalin extended Communism to many countries in Eastern Europe, which ultimately led to the start of the Cold War.

THE AXIS LEADERS!

Benito Mussolini (1883-1945), premier-dictator of Italy (1922-43), the founder and leader (Il Duce) of Italian Fascism. Largely self-educated, he became a schoolteacher and socialist journalist in northern Italy. Mussolini and other young WWI veterans founded the Fasci di Combattimento in March 1919. This nationalistic, antiliberal, and antisocialist movement attracted lower middle-class support and took its name from the fasces, an ancient symbol of Roman discipline. By 1926 the Fascist leader had transformed the country into a single-party, totalitarian regime. Adopting an aggressive foreign policy, Mussolini defied the League of Nations and conquered Ethiopia (1935-36). This won him much Italian support. Mussolini's popularity declined, however, after he linked Italy to Nazi Germany, enacted anti-Jewish laws, and invaded Albania (1939). During WWII, Italy fought the British in Africa, invaded Greece, and joined the Germans in carving up Yugoslavia, attacking the Soviet Union, and declaring war on the U.S. In the final days of the war Mussolini attempted an escape to Switzerland with his mistress Clara Petacci. Italian citizens captured and shot them on April 28, 1945.

Adolf Hitler (1889-1945), German dictator, chancellor (1933-1945), founder and leader (führer) of German fascism (Nazism). A poor student, he never completed high school. He applied for admission to the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna but was rejected for lack of talent. In World War I, Hitler joined the German army. He proved a dedicated, courageous soldier. In April 1920 he went to work full time for the National Socialist German Workers' (Nazi) party. In 1921 he was elected party chairman (Führer) with dictatorial powers. In November 1923, he led an uprising in Germany against the postwar Weimar Republic, proclaiming himself chancellor of a new authoritarian regime. Hitler was sentenced to five years' imprisonment and spent the eight months he actually served dictating his autobiography *Mein Kampf*. When the Great Depression struck in 1929, his explanation of it as a Jewish-Communist plot was accepted by many Germans. Promising a strong Germany, jobs, and national glory, he attracted millions of voters. Once in power, Hitler relied on his secret police, the Gestapo, and on jails and camps to intimidate his opponents, but most Germans supported him enthusiastically. Making anti-Semitism a keystone of his propaganda and policies, he built up the Nazi party into a mass movement. Once in power, he converted Germany into a fully militarized society and launched World War II. For a time he dominated most of Europe and North Africa. He caused the slaughter of millions of Jews and others whom he considered inferior human beings. An officers' plot to assassinate Hitler and end the war failed in 1944. On April 30, 1945, with all of Germany overrun by Allied invaders, Hitler committed suicide in his Berlin bunker, as did his long-time companion, Eva Braun (1912-45), whom he had married the day before.

Emperor Hirohito (1901-89), emperor of Japan (1926-89) In the beginning of his reign, Hirohito was believed to be a god in human form. For 19 years, Hirohito allowed a military group to dominate the Japanese government, which led to war with China (1937-45) and military alliance with the Axis powers (1940). The alliance led to Japan's participation in World War II and its attack on the U.S. at Pearl Harbor. Toward the end of the war Hirohito sought peace, and on Aug. 14, 1945 he broadcast the unconditional surrender of Japan to the Allies. Hirohito cooperated with the Allied forces in converting Japan into a democratic nation, and he publicly denied that he was a god. He approved the 1947 constitution that created a constitutional monarchy in Japan and gave up most of his power. The Allies agreed not to try Hirohito in the war-crimes trials of 1946-48.

Hideki Tojo (1884-1948), Japanese military leader and prime minister during World War II. An extreme militarist and advocate of total war, he became army chief of staff in 1937. In 1940 he was made minister of war in the Japanese cabinet, and in 1941, two months before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, he was appointed prime minister. He controlled the government and directed the military operations of his country in World War II until 1944, when he resigned in disgrace because of reverses suffered by Japanese forces. At the conclusion of the war in 1945, he was arrested as a war criminal. Tojo was tried and convicted by an international military tribunal, and he was executed on Dec. 23, 1948.