



## Winston Churchill

Winston Leonard Spencer Churchill was born on 30 November 1874 at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire. His father was the prominent Tory politician, Lord Randolph Churchill. Churchill attended the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, before embarking on an army career. He saw action on the North West Frontier of India and in the Sudan. While working as a journalist during the Boer War he was captured and made a prisoner-of-war before escaping.

In 1900, Churchill became Conservative member of parliament for Oldham. But he became disaffected with his party and in 1904 joined the Liberal Party. When the Liberals won the 1905 election, Churchill was appointed undersecretary at the Colonial Office. In 1908 he entered the Cabinet as president of the Board of Trade, becoming home secretary in 1910. The following year he became first lord of the Admiralty. He held this post in the first months of World War One but after the disastrous Dardanelles expedition, for which he was blamed, he resigned. He joined the army,

serving for a time on the Western Front. In 1917, he was back in government as minister of munitions. From 1919 to 1921 he was secretary of state for war and air, and from 1924-1929 was Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The next decade were his 'wilderness years', in which his opposition to Indian self-rule and his support for Edward VIII during the 'Abdication Crisis' made him unpopular, while his warnings about the rise of Nazi Germany and the need for British rearmament were ignored. When war broke out in 1939, Churchill became first lord of the Admiralty. In May 1940, Neville Chamberlain resigned as prime minister and Churchill took his place. His refusal to surrender to Nazi Germany inspired the country. He worked tirelessly throughout the war, building strong relations with US President Roosevelt while maintaining a sometimes difficult alliance with the Soviet Union.

Churchill lost power in the 1945 post-war election but remained leader of the opposition, voicing apprehensions about the Cold War (he popularised the term 'Iron Curtain') and encouraging European and trans-Atlantic unity. In 1951, he became prime minister again. He resigned in 1955, but remained an MP until shortly before his death. As well as his many political achievements, he left a legacy of an impressive number of publications and in 1953 won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Churchill died on 24 January 1965 and was given a state funeral.

Source:

[www.bbc.co.uk/history/people/winston\\_churchill](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/people/winston_churchill)



## Josef Stalin

(born Dec. 18, 1879, Gori, Georgia, Russian Empire—died March 5, 1953, Moscow, Russia, U.S.S.R.) Soviet politician and dictator. The son of a cobbler, he studied at a seminary but was expelled for revolutionary activity in 1899.

He joined an underground revolutionary group and sided with the Bolshevik faction of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party in 1903. A disciple of Vladimir Lenin, he served in minor party posts and was appointed to the first Bolshevik Central Committee (1912). He remained active behind the scenes and in exile (1913-17) until the Russian Revolution of 1917 brought the Bolsheviks to power. Having adopted the name Stalin (from Russian *stal*, "steel"), he served as commissar for nationalities and for state control in the Bolshevik government (1917-23). He was a member of the Politburo, and in 1922 he became secretary-general of the party's Central Committee.

After Lenin's death (1924), Stalin overcame his rivals, including Leon Trotsky, Grigory

Zinovyev, Lev Kamenev, Nikolay Bukharin, and Aleksey Rykov, and took control of Soviet politics.

In 1928 he inaugurated the Five-Year Plans that radically altered Soviet economic and social structures and resulted in the deaths of many millions. In the 1930s he contrived to eliminate threats to his power through the purge trials and through widespread secret executions and persecution.

In World War II he signed the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact (1939), attacked Finland ( Russo-Finnish War), and annexed parts of eastern Europe to strengthen his western frontiers. When Germany invaded Russia (1941), Stalin took control of military operations. He allied Russia with Britain and the U.S.; at the Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam conferences, he demonstrated his negotiating skill.

After the war he consolidated Soviet power in Eastern Europe and built up the Soviet Union as a world military power. He continued his repressive political measures to control internal dissent; increasingly paranoid, he was preparing to mount another purge after the so-called Doctors' Plot when he died. Noted for bringing the Soviet Union into world prominence, at terrible cost to his own people, he left a legacy of repression and fear as well as industrial and military power. In 1956 Stalin and his personality cult were denounced by Nikita Khrushchev.

Source: [www.biography.com/people/joseph-stalin-9491723](http://www.biography.com/people/joseph-stalin-9491723)



## Adolf Hitler

Adolf Hitler was born on 20 April 1889 in Braunau-am-Inn on the Austrian-German border. His father was a customs official. Hitler left school at 16 with no qualifications and struggled to make a living as a painter in Vienna. This was where many of his extreme political and racial ideas originated.

In 1913, he moved to Munich and, on the outbreak of World War One, enlisted in the German army, where he was wounded and decorated. In 1919, he joined the fascist German Workers' Party (DAP). He played to the resentments of right-wingers, promising extremist 'remedies' to Germany's post-war problems which he and many others blamed on Jews and Bolsheviks. By 1921 he was the unquestioned leader of what was now the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP or Nazi Party).

In 1923, Hitler attempted an unsuccessful armed uprising in Munich and was imprisoned for nine months, during which time he dictated his book 'Mein Kampf' outlining his political ideology. On his release he began to rebuild the Nazi Party and used new techniques of mass communication, backed up with violence, to get his message across. Against a background of economic depression and political turmoil, the Nazis grew stronger and in the 1932 elections became the largest party in the German parliament. In January 1933, Hitler became chancellor of a coalition government. He quickly took dictatorial powers and began to institute anti-Jewish laws. He also began the process of German militarization and territorial expansion that would eventually lead to World War Two. He allied with Italy and later Japan to create the Axis.

Hitler's invasion of Poland in September 1939 began World War Two. After military successes in Denmark, Norway and Western Europe, but after failing to subdue Britain in 1941, Hitler ordered the invasion of the Soviet Union. The Jewish populations of the countries conquered by the Nazis were rounded up and killed. Millions of others whom the Nazis considered racially inferior were also killed or worked to death.

In December 1941, Hitler declared war on the United States. The war on the eastern front drained Germany's resources and in June 1944, the British and Americans landed in France. With Soviet troops poised to take the German capital, Hitler committed suicide in his bunker in Berlin on 30 April 1945.

Source:  
[www.bbc.co.uk/history/people/adolf\\_hitler](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/people/adolf_hitler)



## Hirohito

(born April 29, 1901, Tokyo—died Jan. 7, 1989, Tokyo) emperor of Japan from 1926 until his death in 1989. He was the longest-reigning monarch in Japan's history.

Hirohito was born at the Aoyama Palace and was educated at the Peers' School and at the Crown Prince's Institute. Early in life he developed an interest in marine biology, on which he later wrote several books. In 1921 he visited Europe, becoming the first Japanese crown prince to travel abroad. Upon his return he was named prince regent when his father, the emperor Taisho, retired because of mental illness. In 1924 he married the princess Nagako Kuni.

Hirohito became emperor of Japan on Dec. 25, 1926, following the death of his father. His reign was designated Shwa, or "Enlightened Peace." The Japanese constitution invested him with supreme

authority, but in practice he merely ratified the policies that were formulated by his ministers and advisers.

Many historians have asserted that Hirohito had grave misgivings about war with the United States and was opposed to Japan's alliance with Germany and Italy but that he was powerless to resist the militarists who dominated the armed forces and the government. Other historians assert that Hirohito might have been involved in the planning of Japan's expansionist policies from 1931 to World War II.

Whatever the truth may be, in 1945, when Japan was close to defeat and opinion among the country's leaders was divided between those favoring surrender and those insisting on a desperate defense of the home islands against an anticipated invasion by the Allies, Hirohito settled the dispute in favor of those urging peace. He broke the precedent of imperial silence on Aug. 15, 1945, when he made a national radio broadcast to announce Japan's acceptance of the Allies' terms of surrender. In a second historic broadcast, made on Jan. 1, 1946, Hirohito repudiated the traditional quasi-divine status of Japan's emperors.

Source:

<http://www.biography.com/people/hirohito-37173>



## Benito Mussolini

(born July 29, 1883, Predappio, Italy—died April 28, 1945, near Dongo) Italian dictator (1922-43). An unruly but intelligent youth, he became an ardent socialist and served as editor of the party newspaper, *Avanti!* (1912-14). When he reversed his opposition to World War I, he was ousted by the party.

He founded the pro-war *Il Popolo d'Italia*, served with the Italian army (1915-17), then returned to his editorship. Advocating government by dictatorship, he formed a political group in 1919 that marked the beginning of fascism. A dynamic and captivating orator at rallies, he organized the March on Rome (1922) to prevent a socialist-led general strike. After the government fell, he was appointed prime minister, the youngest in Italian history.

He obtained a law to establish the fascists as the majority party and became known as *Il Duce* ("The Leader"). He restored order to the

country and introduced social reforms and public works improvements that won widespread popular support.

His dreams of empire led to the invasion of Abyssinia (later Ethiopia) in 1935. Supported in his fascist schemes by Adolf Hitler but wary of German power, Mussolini agreed to the Rome-Berlin Axis and declared war on the Allies in 1940. Italian military defeats in Greece and North Africa led to growing disillusionment with Mussolini.

After the Allied invasion of Sicily (1943), the Fascist Grand Council dismissed him from office. He was arrested and imprisoned but rescued by German commandos, then became head of the Hitler-installed puppet government at Sal in northern Italy. As German defenses in Italy collapsed in 1945, Mussolini tried to escape to Austria but was captured and executed by Italian partisans.

Source:

<http://www.biography.com/people/benito-mussolini-9419443>