



# Histrionics

## Dictators

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Editor's Note

Welcome to Channing School's first edition of *Histrionics* magazine. Every issue has a theme, and Channing's new Year 9-11 History club voted to have the theme of dictators for the first issue. History is an incredibly important subject, because it allows us to look back and learn from our mistakes, and there are few times when it is more necessary to do so than with the topic of dictators.

The New Oxford Dictionary defines a dictator as a ruler with total power over a country, typically one who has obtained power by force. In this issue, we will take a close look at various dictators such as



Mussolini, Mao and Stalin as well as discussing the significance of dictatorships. I should say that our front cover marks an attempt to undermine the corrupting influence of dictators through the use of irony and ridicule. The photographs shown have in some cases been doctored!

We hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we did making it.

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## Can A Dictatorship Last?

The Oxford Dictionary's definition of a dictator is: a ruler who has complete power over a country, especially one who has gained it using military force. Considering this, it seems almost inevitable that a dictator will consequently become power-mad like Adolph Hitler or be prone to making some kind of catastrophic misjudgement like Mao Zedong, resulting in their overthrow from power by their people, another country or another leader. The overthrow of dictators has been strikingly common throughout history, like Julius Caesar in 44BC who was assassinated by his fellow consul. More recently in Iraq, Saddam Hussein was overthrown by multinational forces in 2003 because of his corrupt dictatorship. The Arab Spring in 2011 is an example of the masses demolishing their tyrannical rulers.



In George Orwell's book '1984', Big Brother's slogan was 'War is Peace.' Orwell suggests that in order to maintain totalitarian control of a country, it must be in a constant state of war, in order to 'preserve the special mental atmosphere that a hierarchical society needs.' This theory is similar to Mao's 'continuous struggle' theory, and in many ways this was effective. Mao used the Cultural Revolution so that the masses were either forced to hide their criticisms and hence conform to their dictator or become almost brainwashed, like the Red Guards, and zealously support Mao. By rallying the people to achieve their utmost loyalty, Mao secured his power. Yet, although Mao knew well how to keep the masses loyal, he could not control the maintenance of agriculture or industry; this was proved in the Great Leap Forward in 1958, case in point Mao's fatal miscalculation of the backyard steel campaign. Without exterior knowledge and assistance, it is impossible for one person to apprehend every aspect of a country's needs and it is



impossible for the welfare of the people to be secure. This is why it is common to use force in dictatorships to keep control but ultimately it leads to their subsequent collapse.

However, one could argue that a country can prosper and survive under a dictatorship, for example in Cuba where Raul Castro rules. Although the people of Cuba have no free speech, freedom of religion or freedom of the press, they thrive in other areas with a secure standard of living that provides for all and gives the country greater economic standing. Although this is debatable, Cuba has an annual growth rate of 2.1%. Moreover, Cuba attains a 99.8% literacy rate and an infant mortality rate lower than many developed countries. The Republic of Cuba was founded in 1959 and proceeded as a totalitarian Communist state from then on. China too has an expansive growth rate annually of 10.3% and its GDP is a massive \$5.88 trillion. The People's Republic of China was established in 1949, and the Communist party has held control since, confirming the argument that a dictatorship can survive. However, this control could be said to be quite unstable. Hu Jintao (China's paramount leader) imposes heavy censorship on the press and internet, to the extent that the Chinese were left ignorant of the occurrence of the Arab Spring because of its possible influence over the attitudes of the Chinese people. Furthermore, in March drastic security measures were taken in response to calls for protests in Beijing. Yet it is impossible to know the real depth of these issues as the gravity of the discrepancy is possibly scaled down by the government.



In conclusion, it is impossible to really know whether a dictatorship can truly maintain itself without knowing the outcomes of the present totalitarian ruled states, or for that matter, if any type of government can last. The everlasting dictatorship of the three superstates Orwell envisaged is a quite improbable outcome of the near future as the idea of a everlasting state of war is impossible. Moreover, it seems the present dictatorships are destined to destroy themselves in time, for it is human nature for people to mutiny when they are left without rights, as the Arab Spring proves. However, through suppressing the people and making them live in fear of speaking out against their governments sometimes none will speak out, and therefore no revolution can spread to overthrow their dictator. Therefore in this way dictatorships can succeed in having a firm grip over their nations.



**By Georgia Wells**

## Ivan the Terrible or Ivan the Great?

Over the years it has been argued among historians that Ivan does not live up to his name as 'terrible', but I beg to differ! At the young age of 3 his father died, and only 5 years later his mother was murdered. He was formally crowned Tsar of Russia on 16 January 1547 at the age of 16. He was known for his violent rages and short temper during his reign. He even beat his son Ivan's wife, causing her to have a miscarriage in 1581. Later, he struck one of his sons and killed him. Now, all these events live up to his nickname, but he did not only cause terror in Russia. During his reign he built St. Basil's Cathedral, defeated Turkish invaders and united Russia.



One of the most infamous actions of Ivan's reign was the mass murders and tortures he performed. He even handpicked a group of criminals called the 'Oprichniki' who dressed in black and rode black horses. Ivan sent them to murder anyone he disliked. There were also orgies of rape and torture where they even tore ribs out of men's chests as a ritual. All these events were for Ivan's personal satisfaction and entertainment. He would use peasant women as target practise, drown hundreds of beggars and impale his enemies' children. He had a torture chamber built under the castle and then killed the men who helped him build it to ensure it was kept as a secret. There, he would use an assortment of torture weapons, such as a human sized frying pan, a cauldron for boiling his victims and metal rods for impalement.

Despite all of these cruel and unnecessary murders, there are reasons why Ivan was so barbaric as a ruler. After his father died, he was left with his mother, who was Regent Queen for 6 years, until she was murdered in front of Ivan when he was only 8 years old. This clearly scarred him and was one of the causes for his murderous ways. After this, he was living in a terrifying environment with no parents and no protection for the violence of the people who believed they deserved to be the ruler of Russia instead of him. He would have been beaten often and had an extremely traumatic childhood. When he was 13 years old, his best friend was imprisoned and later killed, which would have reinforced his feeling of loneliness and bitterness. His only escape from the sad reality of his life was his sadistic tendencies. This included slaughtering animals and dissecting them. He enjoyed watching people's pain to make others suffer like he had throughout his childhood. At the age of 16, Ivan married his first and only love, Anastasia Romanovna, who died at the age of 29 in suspicious circumstances. They had a son together called Ivan, who he later killed. Even though Ivan endured such a traumatic childhood with the deaths of both his parents and constantly in fear for life, the kind of person he grew up to be was so sadistic and murderous that he certainly lives up to his title of 'Ivan the Terrible'.



**By Erin Walsh and Maia Collins**

# Gaddafi or Stalin?

**Which modern dictator is worse?**

Many actions by Gaddafi have been compared to those of the monstrous, Hitler-like Stalin, infamous for his Communist dictatorship during the mid-1900s. So should Gaddafi become renowned as one of the worst dictators of modern history?



Joseph Stalin ran the Soviet Union for 30 years and was the Chairman of ministers for 12 years from 1941 to 1953, It is a wonder how he stayed in power for so long. One reason is Communism, the second is fear. There is a reason why he is nicknamed Stalin; stal is Russian for 'steel'. And that is what he was, hard and cold. After Lenin died, Stalin promoted himself as the new heir to the position of dictator of the Soviet Union.

Stalin's new power cost millions of lives as he was insistent on the Soviet Union becoming a world power. One reason so many died is because of the secret police and intelligence agencies in Russia. Stalin set up networks in countries like Germany, Great Britain, France, Japan and United States to make sure the Communist parties stayed pro-Stalin; he was a very power-hungry man. He wasn't frightened of killing 'enemies', one example being him agreeing to execute 346 people who were 'counter-revolutionary' in Georgia. He aimed to expel 'opportunists', the most severe punishment being the Gulag labour camps for supposed 'opponents'. Stalin was obsessed with power, using terror houses to torture people who even knew a person against his ideology.

Gaddafi, on the other hand, was terrifying in a different way. Being power-hungry like Stalin, Gaddafi wanted to unite the North African Arab states into a 'Great Islamic State of Sahel' and caused the war with Egypt. Just as Stalin wanted to spread communism, Gaddafi wanted to spread Islam. Gaddafi showed he was definitely willing to fight while trying to buy WMD'S in 1972. It seems Stalin and Gaddafi were both uncompromising men.



However, unlike in Stalin's case, where people were either brainwashed or too scared to protest, people in Libya openly opposed Gaddafi's government. As a leader, Gaddafi didn't help his country; he blamed them and killed a lot of the protestors similarly to Stalin. It seems the only positive outcome of having horrific dictators in this day and age is that Gaddafi had to go into hiding as he feared for his life, whereas 80 years ago dictators like Stalin could rarely be hurt and everything was kept very quiet. The fact that Gaddafi insisted upon soldiers abusing women and killing his own people shows there are still horrific people in the world today.

It seems Stalin and Gaddafi were both terrible and great in their own right, but at least in the modern day, there is hope for a new Libya and to destroy Gaddafi's legacy.



**By Jenna Tudor**

# BAD Mao Zedong GOOD

## Good or Bad?

There are many reasons why Mao can be deemed as a cruel dictator.

One of them is the fact that millions were killed during his rule over China. His quest for control was almost mad when one takes into account the things he did when he was in power. The infamous riots during his attempt to overthrow the moderates were shocking, with him encouraging young people to beat teachers, kill 'counter-revolutionaries', trash all 'Western' shops like libraries, clothes shops, people's homes and burn down some parts of China.

His blunders also led to a famine in China; during the Great Leap Forward, famine claimed the lives of between 20 and 43 million Chinese citizens.

His ideology is almost questionable in the sense that he took Communism to the extreme when he was dictator. He abolished Chinese culture and individualism to such an extreme that anything cultural like a beautiful wedding was 'bourgeois'. Things like food, festivals and even university education disappeared during his rule so no one could overthrow him.

He was opposed to anything religious or educational as he felt they were a threat to him. He also was in control of the group of thugs known as Red Guards, who were ordered to burn books, blow up churches and libraries, destroy ancient Chinese artefacts, and publicly execute scholars, intellectuals, and religious figures. The Hundred Flowers campaign was famous for supporting criticism of officials in 1957 for a short period of time;



however, Mao quickly abolished it and ordered the imprisonment and sometimes execution of intellectuals. Many people wonder why his censorship went on for so long, but to the masses ignorance was bliss and many were prepared to believe the copiousness of propaganda that was pushed on them daily.

A large reason why Mao is still revered today in some parts of China is because Mao transformed an uncivilised, powerless and primitive society into what China is today; a superpower. He transformed China into an industrial world power where now it is commonplace for objects to have tags on their back saying 'Made in China'. By making China an almost robotic and efficient unity it gave them a new level of power, without the threat of Japan and anti-Communist countries like America even daring to turn against them because of their power. They are now a household name as one of the few countries surviving through the current economic crisis and a lot of credit should be towards Mao. Through using countless propaganda posters, music and speeches and keeping outside news restricted, Mao caused people in China to believe in him and work as hard as they could to achieve his goal of China becoming a superpower. Even though many parts are still in poverty and overcrowded, China is not nearly corrupt and dangerous as it used to be. There is now a relatively stable government that people can rely on.

Mao made the Chinese Army 'Red Army' feared by their unexpected success against Japan in WW2 and the capitalist 'Kuomintang'. Even though Mao was power-hungry and his techniques to gain power were atrocious, he promised China to have power and give peasants a better life. Seeing how China is today, Mao seems to have succeeded.

**By Georgia Reynolds, Molly Townshend and Jenna Tudor**



## Hitler wiped 'Sub-Humans'



Drawn by Tara Skok

Adolf Hitler was an Austrian-born politician. He was the leader of the National Socialist German Workers' Party. Once he was appointed Chancellor of Germany in 1933 he began to use his power in ways that were not expected. Hitler hated the Jews, disabled people and many others; he believed they did not deserve to live and treated them unfairly.

Once in power, Hitler used his position to launch a campaign against the Jews as he believed the Jews were the cause of all Germany's problems.

After January 1933, Hitler labeled the Jews as the 'sub-humans' and he began to stop them from visiting public places. Jews had their own shops which were marked with a yellow star. This system was created to try and bankrupt the Jews, to destroy any life savings they had collected.

The Jews had to wear clothes marked with the star as well as sit on certain benches that had been marked with the yellow Star of David and bullying towards Jews at school went unpunished. This caused Jewish children to rebel against going to school meaning Hitler could use the excuse that Jews were lazy and stupid. In 1935 Jews lost the right to be German citizens and marriage between a Jew and a non-Jew was forbidden. During this time they were allowed to pay a fine to enable them to leave the country; those who could not afford the fine had to stay and some shopkeepers refused to sell any food to these people; medicines were also hard to get hold of.

In November 1938, a Nazi diplomat was shot dead by a Jew. As a result of this, Hitler ordered a terror campaign against the Jews. Ten thousand shops were destroyed and the contents were stolen. Houses and synagogues were set on fire, the fire brigades ignored the calls for help and left the buildings to burn. After the end of the campaign the Jews were ordered to pay a £1 billion mark fine to cover damages and clear up; they were forced to scrub the streets clean themselves.

Hitler tried to think of ways to get rid of the Jews for good. He came up with an idea of sending them to a work camp where eventually they would die of hunger and disease. It



was not only the Jews who had to be sent to the camps. The German police had the right to arrest anyone they wanted to and those who were arrested were sent to the concentration camps. They hardly had three minutes to pack their belongings and say their goodbyes, after being arrested. Some people managed to escape the camps and they would tell stories of the horrors they experienced.

Inside the camps, if anyone protested at the treatment they were being given they would receive lashes. Any Jews would get over double the amount of lashes anyone else would receive. Soap, toothpaste and toothbrushes were scarce and food and drink was minimal. Jews would receive half the rations that the other prisoners received.

Anybody who was considered a political threat to the Nazi party was arrested. People who did not try hard at work were arrested. This helped with lowering the unemployment figures. Along with Jews, 'Bibelforschers' (people who only believed in the Bible and not the Nazi ideas), homosexuals, criminals and people who made jokes about the Nazi party were arrested. People who made jokes about Hitler were sometimes even punished with death.

By 1936 the Gestapo law meant that the Gestapo could do whatever they liked, and because of this they became nearly as feared as the SS were.



**By Juliette Margolis and Tara Skok**

# Joseph Stalin - What did he do?

Stalin was born in December 18th 1879 in Gori, Georgia as Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili. Only later he developed the name 'Stalin' meaning steel in Russian, after he had escaped capture in Siberia seven times as one of the Bolsheviks' chief operatives; inciting strikes, committing bank robberies and kidnappings to raise money and organizing paramilitaries. Although he has been credited for his part played during the second World War in the defeat of Nazism, he is primarily known as one of the most barbarous dictators in history; more civilians were killed under his rule than under Hitler, and his ruthless regime caused tens of millions of deaths across the Soviet Union, during his 31-year reign of terror.



After the death of Vladimir Lenin in 1924, Stalin outmanouevered his rivals and promoted himself as Lenin's political heir. By the late 1920s Stalin was effectively the dictator of the Soviet Union, gaining himself much valuable power. After winning the war against Hitler's Nazis, Stalin went on to achieve the domination of eastern Europe that he had been seeking. By 1946 Poland, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Albania all had Communist governments, who owed their loyalty to Stalin. Churchill accused Stalin of hiding the USSR's activities from the rest of the world, describing the border between Soviet-controlled countries and the West as an 'iron curtain', suggesting that the USSR and their satellite states had something to hide. Although Stalin led an undeniably harsh and dictatorial regime, he was arguably a great tactical leader and managed to turn the Soviet Union into one of the largest competing economic and industrial countries in the world. Stalin placed stable governments in many countries in Eastern Europe and helped to rebuild their economies and by expanding his empire he was spreading the Communist ideologies and creating a security network, a buffer zone, between Russia and the West (so if ever the West were to invade he had huge amounts of protection).



On the other hand, Stalin's control brought censorship, huge amounts of propaganda and no free speech for people living in the USSR. Boundaries were created regarding travelling to the West, as he did not want any bourgeois or non-Communist ideas being brought into the country. Clothes became expensive as Stalin concentrated on heavy industry, such as coal and steel. Luxuries became very uncommon and there were food shortages, in milk and meat for example. Stalin certainly changed life for the people of the satellite states, but whether it was to their benefit, his benefit or both, is arguable.



Stalin played a big role in assisting the growth of Communism in China. He supported Mao financially and sent over many of his most highly qualified officers, including Abram Joffe, to assist training Mao's Red Army. The Korean War in 1950 strengthened the bond between them and they signed a peace treaty.

Stalin's tyrannical, 31-year reign over the Soviet Union ended with his death on 5th March 1953, at the age of 73. There are still speculations and suspicions regarding his death to this day although the initial thought was that he suffered a cerebral haemorrhage.



**By Rachel O'Donohoe**

# Mao's Legacy

Mao is still admired as the "Founding Father of modern China" and commended for giving the Chinese people "dignity and self-respect." For their part, the Chinese government officially continues to regard Mao as a national hero. In 2008, China opened the Mao Zedong Square to visitors, in his hometown of central Hunan Province to mark the 115th anniversary of his birth.

Mao did many good things which he is remembered for, such as simplifying the Chinese characters, making them easier to read and write so more people would be able to understand them. China also became richer than they ever had been, under Chairman Mao, which people respect him for.

Some Chinese people still believe that Mao Zedong was a great leader, but they are also aware that he did many bad and unwise things to China. Most historians look back on the tens of millions of people that died of natural disasters or were killed in purges because of Mao's bad ideas and neglect. Some people think that Mao was responsible for the loss of China's important ally, the Soviet

Union in the Sino - Soviet Split (1960-89). Some people disliked Mao because he did not support family planning, and this caused too many babies to be born. Leaders of China after Mao had to make the rule that is still in play today, China's One Child policy.

Many people felt that they were repressed by Mao and repression may, in the end, be what remains of Mao's legacy.

**By Kate Lucas**



## Mussolini's Rise to Power

Mussolini made the first Fascist speech founding the idea of Fascism in Milan on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 1919. Then, Fascism was not intended to be another party, but as a movement to appeal to all Italians. Mussolini had no solid political ideology, merely the idea of himself as a powerful leader, or *Duce*. His prime aim was to gain power, but the Fascist movement didn't grow much in 1919, and had just over 1000 members. The cause appeared to have failed.

Mussolini's early Fascism was merely a blurry picture, with a little local support and mainly using violence as a political weapon, nothing that seemed as if it would lead to success. Mussolini changed tactics, and moved Fascism from a left-wing movement to a right-wing political party from 1919 to 1920. The change lost some supporters, but they were replaced with university graduates and the civil service. As the Fascist party grew, the movement was fuelled by some locally formed Fascists. Mussolini was only important as a nationally recognisable figure in Italy.

By 1920 Mussolini let go of some of his more unrealistic radical policies. The party mainly aspired to be able to restore Italy to a power that could have challenged the Roman Empire. In 1921 Mussolini was elected to parliament, and the fascists gained 125,000 votes, a massive increase compare to the 4,800 in 1919. The party had increased massively from 1919. There were 500,000 party members, as well as 250,000 Blackshirts, The Blackshirts being the soldiers of the party, much like the SS in Hitler's Nazi party. Altogether, the Fascists essentially controlled several regions of Italy.

In 1922, the Fascists finalised their plans for the *March to Rome*, where Benito Mussolini was called by the King of Italy, Victor Emmanuel III, to become the Prime Minister of Italy. During the *March on Rome*, on the night of 27<sup>th</sup> October, local Fascists attempted to seize control of government buildings in towns in the richer north and central Italy. Frightened prefects sent reports of the Fascist advance to Rome. In Rome, Prime Minister Luigi Facta's government resigned. Facta requested that the King declare Martial Law, and allow the army to quell the Fascist revolt. However, King Emmanuel III was a weak man, and his mother and cousin sympathised with the movement. He did not receive clear reports from his generals, and he was very aware that his actions could spark a civil war. At 2 AM



he agreed to Facta's request, but eight hours later he changed his mind and instead tried to compromise with Mussolini. The Prime Minister resigned and the King attempted to have the ex-Prime Minister Salandra lead a government with Mussolini, but Salandra didn't gain enough support, and Mussolini insisted on either joining the government as Prime Minister or not at all.

Mussolini arrived in Rome at 10 AM on 30<sup>th</sup> October and was taken, wearing his blackshirt, to meet the King. He was formally asked to form a government, and the next day was sworn in as Prime Minister, as well as Foreign and Interior Minister. Later that day, 50,000 blackshirts, mixed with army troops, paraded in front of the King and their leader.

### **Mussolini's Childhood and Young Adulthood**

Mussolini was born in July 1883, in Predappio, Emilia Romagna. He was the son of a blacksmith and a schoolteacher. According to his parents, he didn't speak a word until he was three years old, and then spoke with excellent eloquence, he told his mother, 'One day, I will astonish the world'. His teachers found him a difficult child, and at the age of 9 he was sent away to a boarding school run by Catholic priests. He was no better behaved there; he was often involved in fights, and allegedly stabbed an older boy with a penknife. He was suspended four times and subsequently expelled. Mussolini did, however achieve the highest grade in History and Literature and decided to be a teacher.



He was an elementary school teacher for six months, and he experienced the humiliating struggle of the lower-class. Mussolini fled to Switzerland from 1902-1904 to escape his debts, and when he returned to Italy in 1904, he was conscripted in the army for compulsory military service.

## Mussolini and Hitler's relationship

In 1922, when Mussolini came into power, he was not seen as a threat. This was due to Italy still recovering from the effect of World War I (they had lost many men in World War I and were also dealing with high inflation and unemployment). However, when Hitler came to power in 1933, this changed.

When Hitler first came to power, Mussolini viewed him as a potential ally, but also viewed him as a potential rival as well particularly due to Hitler's desire for Germany to become unified with Austria.

Austria has a common border with Italy so if Hitler obtained Austria and Mussolini and Hitler happened to strike a rivalry then this would prove to be a major problem.

Mussolini, also wanted to be on good terms with Europe's main powers; Britain and France. So in June 1933, he invited the main powers and Germany to come to Rome, the capital. Together, they formed the 'Four Power Pact.' (The point of the Four Power Pact was to make sure smaller nations had less of a voice in the main power politics.) This made Mussolini think that because the main powers were coming over to Italy, rather than holding it in one of their countries, Italy had gained more power.

In 1934, Hitler came to Venice, which did not go according to plan. Mussolini would not use a translator to converse with Hitler even though he could not speak German fluently and Hitler would continuously quote his book "Mein Kampf", which Mussolini did not fully understand due to not using his translator and when he did understand he found it boring. Their relationship hit an all time low when German Nazis invaded Austria and killed the Austrian king.



However, Germany and Italy were brought closer together when a crisis in Abyssinia, a country in Africa, led to alienation of Mussolini from the main powers. Mussolini turned to Hitler as an ally as he had nowhere else to go.

In September 1937, Mussolini visited Germany; Hitler put on a show of his military power which made Mussolini think that Germany would be a beneficial country to be allied with. But in September 1938, Germany took Austria and did not tell Mussolini that he was invading, which upset



Mussolini, as he believed they were equal partners. Mussolini could do nothing about this occupation so therefore realised that Hitler did not think they were equal partners, and in fact he thought Mussolini was a small part of the relationship.

Mussolini started to see Hitler as competition, so when Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia in 1939, Mussolini invaded Albania. This, however was not a negligible military success as Albania had been under Italian influence for years.

In 1939, their relationship was cemented by the ‘Pact of Steel.’ The Pact of Steel was a pact that ensured that if there was a war they would help by fighting for one another.

Despite the Pact of Steel, Italy did not help capture Poland, as Hitler had expected him to do. Mussolini had realised that the Italian army would not be able to fight in this war, so kept out of it. Italy did enter the war later, in 1940 due to the fact he believed that Germany would get all the spoils of war and Mussolini wanted as large a piece as he could get.

### **Hitler’s power compared to Mussolini’s power**

Hitler had more of a hold on the people of Germany due to the respect he had got from them; Hitler was thought of as a saviour in his country. Mussolini was respected at first but was sometimes thought of negatively by the people of Italy due to the decisions he made not suiting the people, for example modelling himself on Hitler and introducing a Racist Policy. The people also did not like the alliance of Italy with Germany.



Hitler had one of the biggest armed forces in Europe (Hitler had an army of 180,000). This meant that he was feared by everyone; from everyday civilians to even the main powers.

Mussolini did not have the same kind of hold on people as Hitler did. He was not respected, nor feared as much as Hitler and comparatively, he was weak.

**By Colette Russell and Aisha Hoque**

# Did you know?

Josef Stalin wasn't originally Josef Stalin's real name? With his real name being hard to pronounce (Iosif Vissarionovich Dzhugashvili,) he took to using this pseudonym back in the days when he was a political activist, possibly in an attempt to hide his Georgian roots. The name "Stalin" (derived from combining Russian stal, "steel" with "Lenin") originally was a nickname; however, it stuck to him and he continued to call himself Stalin after the Russian Revolution. Stalin is also reported to have used at least a dozen other names for the purpose of secret communications, but for obvious reasons most of them remain unknown. After his rise to power, popular nicknames for Stalin in the Soviet Union included 'Papa Stalin' and 'Little Father of the Peoples', owing to the fact that he was only 5 foot 4 inches tall. President Truman once described the despot as a 'little squirt'. Stalin was notoriously sensitive about his height, having several portrait painters shot for failing to capture his godliness. A carriage accident in his youth had also left his left arm shortened and stiffened at the elbow, while his right hand was thinner than his left and frequently hidden.



As well as being a grumpy little man, Stalin was also the man behind the most wicked practical joke ever played. Being a very paranoid person, he gave the order that no-one should enter his bedchamber on pain of death. Later, while in his bedchamber, he decided to test whether his guards had listened to this instruction. Pretending to scream in pain he called for the guards stationed outside the door. Fearing that their leader was in trouble, the guards burst into the room. Stalin had them executed for failing to follow his standing orders. This little prank soon backfired, however, when Stalin suffered a seizure while alone in his bedroom. The guards were too afraid to enter, finding him hours later laid in a puddle of stale urine. He died three days later.

## Quote of the Issue

"Death is the solution to all problems. No man - no problem."

**Joseph Stalin**

