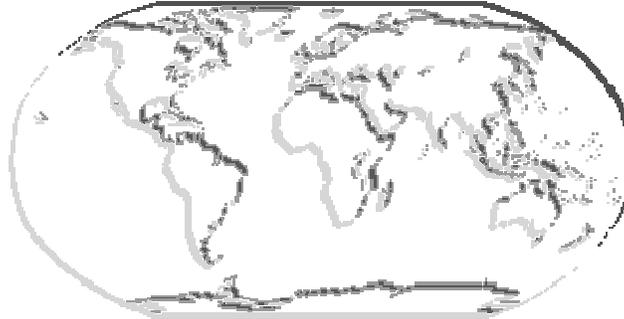


Historical Atlas of the Twentieth Century



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Question: Who was the Bloodiest Tyrant of the 20th Century?

Answer: We don't know.

That's probably the saddest fact of the Twentieth Century. There are so many candidates for the award of top monster that we can't decide between them. Whether it's Adolf Hitler, Mao Zedong or Iosif Stalin is, quite frankly, anybody's guess.

For now, let's just skip over the whole margin of error thing -- reasonable people have studied the evidence and come up with wildly differing numbers. You're free to check my [sources](#), but for now, trust me. I've studied the matter at great length and decided that the most likely death toll for these three are:

TYRANT	DEATHS
Mao	40Million
Hitler	34M
Stalin	20M

Well, that certainly looks like Mao is our man, but wait. Mao's largest crime is the Great Leap Forward, a bungled attempt to restructure the economy of China which created a famine that killed some 30M. If we confine our indictment to *deliberate* killings, we get this:

TYRANT	KILLINGS
Hitler	34M

Stalin	20M
Mao	10M

So it's Hitler, right? Except that most of the deaths on his head were caused by the Second World War. Sure, he started it, but our society does not blanketly condemn the starting of wars (after all, we reserve the right to do it ourselves in a just cause), and we certainly don't consider killing armed enemy soldiers in a fair fight to be a crime against humanity. If we therefore confine ourselves to the cold-blooded murder of unarmed non-combatants, our table rearranges itself again:

TYRANT	MURDERS
Stalin	20M
Hitler	15M
Mao	10M

This brings Stalin floating to the top. So it look like once you reduce their crimes to the unjustifiably lowest common denominator, then Stalin is worst; however, you might want to argue that dead is dead so it really doesn't matter if you give your victims a chance to fight back. Fighting an unjust or reckless war is certainly a crime against humanity, so our numbers should go back to:

TYRANT	KILLINGS
Hitler	34M
Stalin	20M
Mao	10M

... and these are just the problems we'll encounter if we accept my numbers without debate. If we want to use the estimates of other scholars, we can pin up to 50 million murders on Stalin, enough to push him to the top of the list regardless of definition. Or we can whittle him down to 10 million murders if we use the low end of the margin of error, and scrounge several more tens of millions for Mao, or away from him.

So, the answer to the question of "Who is roasting on the hottest fires in Hell?" is "Well, that depends..."

Secondary Level of Mass Murderers:

Obviously, we're going to run into the same vagueries and uncertainties when we try to rank numbers 4 through 10 on the list of the 20th Century's worst killers, but at least we can nominate the candidates. A pretty good case could be made that each of the following

rulers (listed alphabetically) were responsible for over a million unjust, unnecessary or unnatural deaths by initiating or intensifying war, famine, democide or resettlement, or by allowing people under their control to do so:

- Chiang Kai-shek (China: 1928-49)
- Enver Pasha (Turkey: 1913-18)
- Hirohito (Japan: 1926-89)
- Hirota Koki (Japan: 1936-37)
- Ho Chi Minh (North Vietnam: 1945-69)
- Kim Il Sung (North Korea: 1948-94)
- Lenin (USSR: 1917-24)
- Leopold II (Belgium: 1865-1909)
- Nicholas II (Russia: 1894-1917)
- Pol Pot (Cambodia: 1975-79)
- Saddam Hussein (Iraq: 1969-)
- Tojo Hideki (Japan: 1941-44)
- Wilhelm II (Germany: 1888-1918)
- Yahya Khan (Pakistan: 1969-71)

Here are a few of the century's rulers who could easily be indicted for causing hundreds of thousands of unnatural deaths. Although some might be acquitted due to inadequate evidence or mitigating circumstances, it might be a good idea to not build statues to them.

- Idi Amin (Uganda: 1971-80)
- Ion Antonescu (Romania: 1940-44)
- Ataturk (Turkey: 1920-38)
- Francisco Franco (Spain: 1939-75)
- Gheoghe Gheorghiu-Dej (Romania: 1945-65)
- Yakubu Gowon (Nigeria: 1966-76)
- Radovan Karadzic (Serbian Bosnia: 1991-96)
- Babrac Kemal (Afghanistan: 1979-87)
- Le Duan (Vietnam: 1976-86)
- Haile Mengistu (Ethiopia: 1974-91)
- Benito Mussolini (Italy: 1922-43)
- Ante Pavelic (Croatia: 1941-45)
- Antonio de Salazar (Portugal: 1932-68)
- Hadji Suharto (Indonesia: 1967-97)
- Tito (Yugoslavia: 1945-80)

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- [20th Century War: Homepage](#)
 - [Worst Atrocities](#)
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