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| Stalin, Joseph (December 1878—March 1953) |
| Iusif Vassarionovich Dzhugashvili |
| Joseph Stalin (Iusif Vassarionovich Dzhugashvili) was born in Gori, Russian Empire, which is part of present day Georgia. He adopted the name ‘Stalin’ from the Russian word for ‘steel’. Although he originally attended a Georgian Orthodox seminary, he read the works of Lenin and became a Bolshevik in 1903. In the prerevolutionary period, Stalin was a leading revolutionary in the Caucasus, raising funds through bank robberies. He was sent to Siberia several times as a prisoner, but frequently escaped, the last time to Petrograd during the revolution.    He worked as editor of *Pravda*, became a member of the Bolshevik Central Committee, and helped plan the October Revolution. During the Civil War, Stalin served as the Peoples’ Commissar for Nationalities’ Affairs and the director of the Southern Front, using brutal tactics such as public executions and burning villages, often against the orders of Lenin.    After the Bolsheviks took power, Lenin appointed Stalin General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. After Lenin’s stroke in 1922, Stalin acted as Lenin’s messenger, quarreling with other Politburo members over how best to run Soviet domestic and foreign policy. He formed political alliances to oust his opponents and expelled many ‘Old Bolsheviks’. |
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| Further reading:  (Brooks)  (Davies and Harris)  (Kun) (Roosevelt)  (Rossman) |