

## **Season Two at Explore Lifelong Learning**

**David Saunders**

### **‘Stalin’**

Born in Georgia in 1878, Stalin became a revolutionary in his early twenties, took office under Lenin in 1917, sought undivided authority after Lenin’s death in 1924, secured it by 1929, and ruled the Soviet Union from then until 1953. These talks say a little about his rise and his legacy whilst concentrating on three crucial aspects of his years at the top.

#### **05-Mar - Stalin and Ukraine**

This session is about economics. Marx expected communism to arrive in industrial societies. Because the tsarist empire was not a heavily industrialized society, the Marxists who took it over thought it was their duty to make it one as quickly as possible. After some dithering (which gave Stalin a chance to rise to the top), they embarked on forced industrialization in 1929. Because Ukraine was largely agricultural, it was one of the most hard-hit parts of the country. Ukrainians resisted the abolition of private farming. They killed their animals and gave up planting their fields. Famine broke out and several million people died. The regime got its way and industrialization prevailed, but the cost was immense.

#### **12-Mar - Stalin and the Purges**

This session is about politics. Why, in the later 1930s, did Stalin kill hundreds of thousands of people and send many more to labour camps? Possible explanations include punishment for resistance to forced industrialization, consolidating one-person rule, paranoid fear of foreign subversion, and opening doors for enthusiastic Soviet-educated loyalists. The talk canvasses at least eleven answers before reflecting on the long-term consequences of the violence.

#### **19-Mar - Stalin and the Great Patriotic War**

This session is about international affairs. After trying to cooperate with western capitalist countries in the light of the threat posed by Hitler, Stalin concluded in 1938-9 that the West was not going to deal with him and decided instead to sign a pact with Nazi Germany. Two years later, Hitler turned on him. At the cost of 27 million Soviet lives, Stalin came out on top in the ensuing war and created a myth of Soviet might which framed his legacy and still plays a significant part in the outlook of the modern Russian Republic.