

Tito

(Josip Broz; 1892--1980), Yugoslav leader and statesman. Born in Croatia, Tito joined the Soviet army in 1917 after being captured during World War I. He returned to Yugoslavia in 1920 and was imprisoned from 1928 to 1934 for Communist activities. An activist in Communist International, Tito was elected secretary-general of the Yugoslav Communist Party in 1937, despite its outlawed status.

In spring 1941 Germany invaded Yugoslavia. In July a revolt broke out against the Nazis in the Yugoslav region of Serbia. Soon, Tito and his Communist followers took the lead in fighting the Nazis, and the rebellion spread to the rest of the country. Despite very harsh conditions, Tito created an effective fighting force of almost 300,000 men. As part of the struggle with the Germans, Tito ordered his fighters to help Jews trying to escape the Nazis in any way they could. In fact, both during the war and after, Tito was always compassionate towards the Jews in Yugoslavia and was supportive of the fight to establish a Jewish state.

Following World War II, Tito became the premier of Yugoslavia, and in 1953, its president. One of the world's most prominent leaders, Tito ruled Yugoslavia until his death in 1980.