

Eccentric Dictators

In the chapter titled "Eccentric Dictators," various anecdotes about different world leaders are explored, showcasing their quirks, interests, and notorious actions. The chapter opens with an amusing story about Salvador Dali gifting a scepter to Nicolae Ceaușescu, hinting at the Romanian dictator's obliviousness to possibly being mocked. Adolf Hitler's unexpected vegetarianism in his final years, only consuming mashed potatoes and clear broth, is mentioned without clear explanation for such dietary choices. Joseph Stalin's extreme paranoia led him to bizarre extents, such as analyzing feces to gauge loyalty, even scrutinizing Mao Zedong's to assess his mood.

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's passion for civil engineering, particularly traffic planning, is highlighted along with his presidential role in Iran. South Sudan's Salva Kiir Mayardit's affection for a Stetson gifted by George W. Bush prompts him to amass a large collection. The dark humor of François "Papa Doc" Duvalier cursing John F. Kennedy using a Voodoo doll is shared, along with Pol Pot's devastating reign over Cambodia, which led to the deaths of up to 3 million people.

Other dictators like Alexander Lukashenko, Kim Jong-Un, and Mobutu Sese Seko are noted for their personal fetishes, such as a love for hockey, extravagant spending on alcohol, and enforcing a godlike media portrayal, respectively. Fidel Castro's pragmatic view on revolution, Saddam Hussein's republishing of hateful pamphlets, and Kim Jong-Il's luxurious indulgences contrast sharply with the mundane or ideological extremism that marked their rule. Stories of personal transformations, such as Joseph Stalin adopting a more Russian identity and Bashar al-Assad's shift from ophthalmology to presidency, reflect the complex personas behind their public images.

Mao Zedong's distrust in education, Idi Amin's whimsical claim to Scottish royalty, and the continuation of the Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti illustrate the surreal reality of their governance. The chapter also touches on the self-aggrandizement and accumulation of wealth by dictators such as Manuel Noriega and Muammar Gaddafi, underlining the intersection of eccentricity and brutality in their leadership styles. This eclectic mix of stories underscores the peculiar personal traits and extreme measures that have characterized the rule of some of the world's most infamous dictators.