



UNIT 25: SUPPORT MATERIAL

DICTATORSHIP VERSUS DEMOCRACY

Dictatorships often arise when normal governments fail to deliver the environment and services that the population desires, or when one powerful group (usually with the support of the military) impose themselves on the whole country.

Benito Mussolini -dictator of Italy 1922-1943

Originally a socialist he formed the Italian anti-socialist, anti-liberal, Fascist party in 1919.

Italian society was perceived by many Italians after the First World War not to be working very well. In 1922 he was invited by the Italian King to form a government. He was very popular with some people who felt that although autocratic he did make public services work well ("The trains ran on time").

Initially he worked through the constitution but he progressively took complete power eventually banning all opposition groups.

He became very popular by conquering Ethiopia against a background of international condemnation abroad.

He eventually allied Italy with Hitler's Fascist Germany and was eventually killed by his own countrymen in 1943

Adolf Hitler dictator of Germany 1933-1945

Germany was in a very weakened state after its defeat in the First World War. It had to make very expensive reparations to the allies (mostly the French). Its economy was destroyed and there was in 1922 terrible inflation which made many previously wealthy people very poor.

Hitler seemed to many of the German population to offer a route by which Germany could once again restore its fortunes.

They accepted his authoritarian leadership and extreme policies in order to restore Germany. Eventually he once again brought Germany to destruction at the end of the Second World War.

He crushed any opposition to him and kept the population in line with his Gestapo police.

Saddam Hussein dictator Iraq 1968-?

He is an example of a present day dictator. When he came to power he immediately and ruthlessly crushed all opposition to him. He then launched the country into war with Iran and latter attacked Kuwait and briefly occupied it before the West Alliance removed him. He keeps his population in line ruthlessly, using poison gas against the rebel Kurdish population and draining the southern marshes to deprive the marsh Arabs, who do not support him, of their homeland. He keeps his population in line with fear and the police force.

Robert Mugabe president of Zimbabwe 1979-?

President Mugabe was elected after Zimbabwe gained independence from the U.K. He is also leader of the ZANU-PF party which is the only political party to have won power in the Zimbabwe parliament. The leader of the ZANU-Ndonga party, the only opposition party to have seats in parliament, was arrested on charges of conspiracy to assassinate the president in 1995, and Mugabe was elected yet again but on only 40% of the potential vote.

In 2000 Mugabe lost a referendum to change the constitution, giving the president more power and the right to take away farms from white Zimbabweans and give them in theory to poor black Zimbabweans without compensation. Despite this Mugabe has encouraged his followers to seize farms despite the courts ordering his followers to leave.

Mugabe is an elected leader of his country but there is little authority within the country to balance his power, even ignoring the judiciary.

Discussion

- **What do these, and other dictators, have in common?**
- **Is everything that they do bad?**
- **Do you think that most countries with dictators are better or worse off?**
- **Is it sufficient to have a “democratic” electoral system to ensure against dictatorship?**
- **If a dictator comes to power who is to blame?**
- **Are there circumstances when a dictator is a good idea?**
- **On balance would you prefer to live in a country with a dictator or not and why?**

The need for a constitution

When the constitution of the USA was being written the founding fathers of the US were determined that although their country was to have an elected president they should not be allowed to become all powerful. They therefore gave the President only limited powers and shared power between the Senate (an elected body representing the States of the Union) and Congress (representative of the people of the U.S.) and the judiciary.