

## Controlling one's destiny -

Was the concept of democracy invented by the Athenians in the Fifth Century B.C., or did it have its origins much earlier in time? When did dictatorship originate? Whatever its origins, as a concept, as a form of government, it would survive into the Twentieth Century. Nazi Germany and Russia under Stalin would emerge as two of the most notoriously brutal governments ever known. Yet, they had their precursors in ancient Rome, and before that, Sparta, which ironically, existed as a dictatorship at the same time as Athens, the early model for democracy.

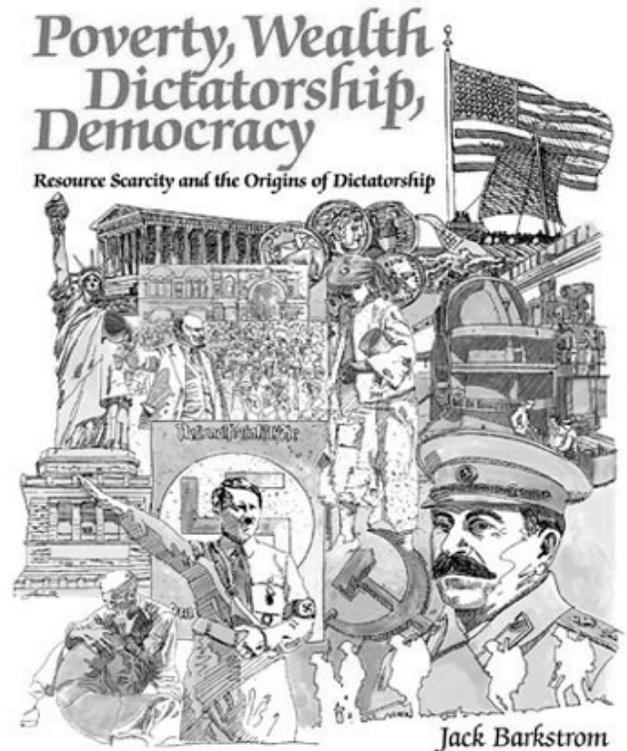
Both democracy and dictatorship represent deliberate choices, whether for good or for bad, made by political leaders. In the case of dictatorship, it may be asked whether the choice was voluntary, or something imposed by circumstances. In the case of democracy, which seems the obviously better course, it may be asked whether the decision was the result of more far-sighted leadership, or simply the availability of a wider range of options.

The ultimate question may be whether political leaders are free to shape their own destiny or find themselves at the mercy of forces beyond their control. Have societies been free to make choices about their governments based on models created in ancient Egypt, Babylon, Athens or Rome, or their modern counterparts?

## Before the dinosaurs -

Decisions about democracy and dictatorship may have been made, not when a Pericles, a Stalin, or a Hitler came to power, but far earlier.

Perhaps democratic or dictatorial governments have been determined, not by recent happenings or current circumstances, but by events which occurred millions of years ago - millions of years before dinosaurs even walked the earth. Perhaps the primordial forces which formed mountains out of geological upheavals, decided where mineral formations would be deposited, and created oceans, deserts, and plains, also determined the course of future political events.



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