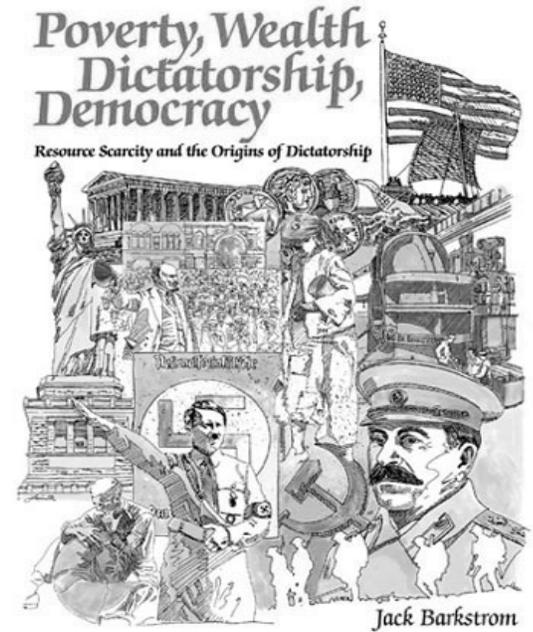


Repression...

In 121 B.C. the Roman senate conferred dictatorial power on the consul Opimius and ordered him to restore order to Rome. In the fighting which followed, his political opponent Gaius Gracchus was killed and 3,000 of his followers were massacred. Their bodies were thrown in the Tiber River. When Sulla returned from the East in 83 B.C., he is said to have butchered 6,000 people he had locked in the circus, then massacred another 12,000 captives in the city of Praeneste. In 71 B.C., when Pompey and Crassus put down Spartacus' revolt, they lined the road between Rome and Capua with crosses and crucified 6,000 slaves. During the nine months of the Reign of Terror, which began in October 1793, the French government would guillotine some 16,000 people. The pace of killing would increase under Joseph Stalin to as many as 1,000 deaths a day in Moscow during the Great Purges of 1936-38. By some estimates, over 600,000 were shot in 1937 and 1938 in Russia.



...violence...

Dictatorships are not unique to any historical period of time, are not confined to a particular geographical region, and are not the product of a particular ideology. They have existed in different places and at different times and have been motivated by different political philosophies. It is their savagery for which they are remembered. Their common identifying trait is a seemingly insatiable appetite for brutality - and violence. Yet that link is not limited to the violence perpetrated by dictatorships on their citizens. It extends to the societies they govern. Societies which produce dictatorships have themselves been very violent. If totalitarian governments act violently, their actions may be a reflection of the violence found in the societies which surround them. Rome did not suffer occasional bouts of stone throwing. It had to endure weeks and months of street battles between organized mobs armed with swords and bows and arrows. People died every day in the unending fighting. France, in the 1790s, was plagued by almost daily riots.

Poverty, Wealth

Dictatorship, Democracy:

Resource Scarcity and the Origins of Dictatorship

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...and scarcity.

For societies prone to violent outbursts the political landscape is bleak. The political problem is compounded by economic conditions offering little hope. On the economic side, dictatorships have long been associated with extreme poverty - and resource scarcity. That would ordinarily be considered primarily an economic problem. However, it becomes a political danger when it contributes to an increase in the level of violence.