

Ch 1 DEMOCRACY IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

1. Who was Salvador Allende?

Salvador Allende was the President of Chile, a country in South America. He was the founder and leader of the Socialist Party of Chile and led the Popular Unity coalition to victory in the presidential election in 1970.

2. What were the reforms introduced by Allende in Chile?

The President, Allende had taken several policy decisions to help the poor and the Workers. These included reform of the educational system, free milk for children and redistribution of land to the landless farmers. He was opposed to foreign companies taking away natural resources like copper from the country. The landlords, the rich and the Church opposed his policies. Some other political parties in Chile also opposed his government.

3. Why did the landlords and capitalists oppose the policies of Allende?

The Landlords and Capitalists did not like the socialist policies like the redistribution of land to the landless farmers. He was a supporter of socialism.

4. What setback did democracy face in Chile? Or How did General Pinochet come to power in Chile?

A popularly elected democratic government was overthrown in Chile on 11 September 1973 by a military coup. General Augusto Pinochet, an Army general, led the coup. The government of the United States of America was unhappy with Allende's rule and is known to have supported and funded activities that led to the coup. Pinochet became the President of the country and ruled it for the next 17 years.

5. Why was the U.S.A unhappy with Allende's rule in Chile?

USA supported capitalism and was against socialism. It did not like the spread of socialism in the world. But Allende followed socialist principles and opposed capitalism. Therefore the U.S.A was unhappy with Allende's rule in Chile.

6. Describe the reign of terror let lose by Pinochet, in Chile, soon after coming to power.

Pinochet's government tortured and killed several of those who supported Allende and those who wanted democracy to be restored. These included General Alberto Bachelet of the Chilean Air Force and many other officers who refused to join the coup. General Bachelet's wife and daughter were put in prison and tortured. More than 3,000 people were killed by the military. Many more were reported 'missing'. No one knows what happened to them.

7. How was democracy restored in Chile?

Pinochet's military dictatorship came to an end after he decided to hold a referendum in 1988. He felt confident that in this referendum, the people would say 'yes' to his continuing in power. But the people of Chile had not forgotten their democratic traditions. Their vote was a decisive 'no' to Pinochet. This led to Pinochet losing first his political and then his military powers. Political freedom was restored. Since then Chile has held four presidential elections in which different political parties have participated. Slowly, the army's role in the country's government has been eliminated. The elected governments came to power and democracy was restored.

8. How did the hope that Allende expressed in his last address come true?

When democracy was overthrown, the hope Allende expressed in his last address was realized when democracy was restored. Felony, cowardice and treason were finally punished. Political freedom was restored.

9. Who was Michelle Bachelet?

Michelle Bachelet was the daughter of General Alberto Bachelet of the Chilean Air Force who was tortured by General Pinochet. Michelle Bachelet (pronounced Mishel Bachelet), was elected President of Chile in January 2006. A medical doctor and a moderate socialist, Michelle became the first woman to be a Defence Minister in Latin America.

10. Describe the political conditions in Poland in the 1980s.

In 1980s Poland was ruled by the Polish United Workers' Party. This was one of the many communist parties that ruled in several countries of East Europe at that time. In these countries, no other political party was allowed to function. The people could not freely choose the leaders of the communist party or the government. Those who spoke against the leaders or the party or the government were put in prison. The government in Poland was supported and controlled by the government of the Soviet Union (USSR), a vast and powerful communist state.

11. Name the two political organizations in Poland.

The Polish United Workers' Party and a new trade union called Solidarity (Solidarnosc in Polish) were the two political organizations in Poland.

12. Why did the workers of Lenin Shipyard in the city of 'Gdansk' go on a strike in August 1940? Why was it illegal?

The workers of Lenin Shipyard in the city of Gdansk (Danzig in German) went on a strike in August 1940 to take back a crane operator, a woman worker, who was unjustly dismissed from service. This strike was illegal, because trade unions independent of the ruling party were not allowed in Poland.

13. Who was Lech Walesa ? How did he become the leader of workers on strike and later the President of Poland?

Lech Walesa (pronounced Lek Walesha), was dismissed from service in 1976 for demanding higher pay in Poland. Walesa joined the strikes and soon emerged as the leader of the striking workers.

14. What were the demands of the workers of Lenin Shipyard in the city of Gdansk?

They wanted to take back a crane operator, a woman worker, who was unjustly dismissed from service across the whole city. Later under Lech Walesa they demanded the right to form independent trade unions. They also demanded the release of political prisoners and an end to censorship on press.

15. Write any two conditions of the 21 point agreement signed between the workers led by Walesa and the Government led by General Jaruzelski.

The 21-point agreement with the government ended their strike. The government agreed to recognize the workers' right to form independent trade unions and their right to strike. After the Gdansk agreement was signed, a new trade union called Solidarity (Solidarnoscin Polish) was formed. It was the first time an independent trade union was formed in Poland.

16. Why did General Jaruzelski impose martial law on Poland in December 1981?

Within a year of its formation the trade union Solidarity swept across Poland and had about one crore members. Revelations of widespread corruption and mismanagement in the government made matters worse for the rulers. The government, led by General Jaruzelski, grew anxious and imposed martial law in December 1981. Thousands of Solidarity members were put in prison. Freedom to organise, protest and express opinions was once again taken away.

17. What were the favourable conditions in Poland during 1989 and 1990 for a change in Government? Or How did Poland become a democratic country?

Another wave of strikes after the Gdansk strike, again organised by Solidarity, began in 1988. This time the Polish government was weaker, the support from Soviet Union uncertain and the economy was in decline. Another round of negotiations with Walesa resulted in an agreement in April 1989 for free elections. Solidarity contested all the 100 seats of the Senate and won 99 of them. In October 1990, Poland had its first presidential elections in which more than one party could contest. Walesa was elected the President of Poland.

18. What are the two important features of democracy?

Democracy is a form of government that allows people to choose their rulers. In a democracy, only leaders elected by people should rule the country.

The people have the freedom to express views, freedom to organize and freedom to protest.

19. What were the differences between the two non-democratic rules in Chile and Poland?

There were many differences between Pinochet's rule in Chile and the communist rule in Poland. Chile was ruled by a military dictator, while Poland was ruled by a political party. The government of Poland claimed that it was ruling on behalf of the working classes. Pinochet made no such claim and openly favoured big capitalists.

20. What were the common features of the two non-democratic rules in Chile and Poland?

The people could not choose or change their rulers.

There was no real freedom to express one's opinions, form political associations and organize protests and political action.

21. What were the differences in the two democratic governments in Chile and the other in Poland with regard to their approach towards social and economic matters? What are their basic features?

Allende preferred government control on all big industries and the economy. Walesa wanted the market to be free of government interference. Michelle stands somewhere in the middle on this issue. Yet these three governments shared some basic features. Power was exercised by governments elected by the people and not by the army, unelected leaders or any external power. The people enjoyed some basic political freedoms.