

- 7 Finally, Hitler's foreign policy was a brilliant success. With each successive triumph, more and more Germans began to think of him as infallible (see Section 5.3).

14.5 NAZISM AND FASCISM

There is sometimes confusion about the meaning of the terms 'Nazism' and 'fascism'. Mussolini started the first fascist party, in Italy; later the term was used, not entirely accurately, to describe other right-wing movements and governments. In fact, each brand of so-called 'fascism' had its own special features; in the case of the German Nazis, there were many similarities with Mussolini's fascist system, but also some important differences.

(a) Similarities

- Both were intensely anti-communist and, because of this, drew a solid basis of support from all classes.
- They were anti-democratic and attempted to organize a totalitarian state, controlling industry, agriculture and the way of life of the people, so that personal freedom was limited.
- They attempted to make the country self-sufficient.
- They emphasized the close unity of all classes working together to achieve these ends.
- Both emphasized the supremacy of the state, were intensely nationalistic, glorifying war, and the cult of the hero/leader who would guide the rebirth of the nation from its troubles.

(b) Differences

- Fascism never seemed to take root in Italy as deeply as the Nazi system did in Germany.
- The Italian system was not as efficient as that in Germany. The Italians never came anywhere near achieving self-sufficiency and never eliminated unemployment; in fact unemployment rose. The Nazis succeeded in eliminating unemployment, though they never achieved complete autarky.
- The Italian system was not as ruthless or as brutal as that in Germany and there were no mass atrocities, though there were unpleasant incidents like the murders of Matteotti and Amendola.
- Italian fascism was not particularly anti-Jewish or racist until 1938, when Mussolini adopted the policy to emulate Hitler.
- Mussolini was more successful than Hitler with his religious policy after his agreement with the pope in 1929.
- Finally, their constitutional positions were different: the monarchy still remained in Italy, and though Mussolini normally ignored Victor Emmanuel, the king played a vital role in 1943 when Mussolini's critics turned to him as head of state. He was able to announce Mussolini's dismissal and order his arrest. Unfortunately there was nobody in Germany who could dismiss Hitler.