

Sections 2 and 3 Review:

How successful was Mussolini in creating a nation of Fascists?

Now that you have studied how Mussolini secured his position and tried to create a nation of Fascists, you need to pull all this material together to assess the overall domestic impact of the regime. This review looks at how Italians responded to the Fascist regime, its impact on the class structure, the question of how far Fascism modernised Italy, and how **TOTALITARIAN** the regime was. You conclude your study with an essay on overall achievement.

SOURCE 1 A joke told in the early 1940s

Mussolini asked a friend, 'Tell me sincerely, what do the Milanese think? Don't hide anything.'

The friend answered: 'I'll be sincere: three-quarters are still SOCIALIST . . . of the other quarter, a good part are COMMUNISTS. The rest are Catholic.'

Mussolini slammed his hand on the table: 'By God, and the Fascists?' 'Oh, they are all Fascists.'

A How did Italians respond to the Fascist regime?

In many ways this joke (Source 1) provides some important clues about the extent to which Mussolini had managed to create a nation of Fascists. However, it is impossible to answer the question conclusively. There are always major problems when assessing popular reactions, and this is even more so in Fascist Italy. It was a **DICTATORSHIP**, so expression of opinion, certainly in public, was limited. The over 40 million Italians were divided by regional, class and gender differences, and experienced the regime in different ways. The experience of a schoolteacher in Milan would be very different to that of a peasant in Sicily. People also had different experiences at different times.

However, the historian's task (and yours!) is to try to put together a general picture, so to conclude this section we have reproduced some assessments from contemporaries.

Activity

1 Make and complete a chart like the one below about Italians' reactions to the regime.

a) Row A lists their possible reactions. Row B requires you to fill in possible reasons for these reactions from the list below.

- Not concerned with politics
- Believed in the **DUCE** and Fascism
- Wanted to keep their jobs and other benefits
- Prepared to take risks to work for an alternative, better society
- Critical of regime but realised it was difficult to do much.

b) Then read the sources about Italians' reactions, and write the source number in the appropriate section of row C. (A single source may provide evidence of more than one reaction.)

A Reaction	Active commitment	Passive consent	Apathy	Passive opposition	Active opposition
B Reason					
C Source					

2 List the various reasons which emerge as to why the Fascist regime gained support.

3 How much active opposition do the sources suggest there was? Does this prove little existed?

SOURCE 2 Statistical evidence

- a) **Results of PLEBISCITE on government list of candidates**
1929 90% yes
1934 97% yes
The turn-out was 90%. Voters had to ask for a different-coloured ballot paper, depending on whether they were going to vote yes or no.
- b) **Membership of PNF**
1933 1.4 million
1939 2.6 million
1943 4.8 million
- c) **Estimated number of political prisoners**
About 5000 at any one time
- d) **Government expenditure on the police, including OVRA**
1924-26 7.5% of state expenditure
1926-36 6.1%
1936-40 4.6%

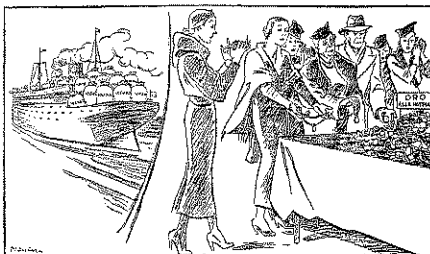
■ **Talking point**

In a regime that claims to be totalitarian, should non-involvement be acceptable?

SOURCE 5 A 1931 account from the British commentator B. King, *Fascism in Italy*

The crowds which cheered Mussolini's speeches in Tuscany and Lombardy last summer are quoted as evidence of his popularity among the masses; the reports did not mention that fifteen trainloads of Blackshirts followed him to swell and overawe the crowd, that workshops were closed and the men driven to meetings under pain of dismissal, that his arrival at each town was precluded by the arrests of suspects by the hundred.

SOURCE 7 A 1935 cartoon showing the French ELITE moving their gold (presumably to avoid taxation), while Italian women donate theirs to their country



SOURCE 3 Ordinary Italians recount their experiences

- a) *Notwithstanding all the big talk about 'faith' in Fascist Italy, in the IMPERIAL destiny of the nation and in the 'Duce', what I saw every day was the wretched spectacle of a bunch of humble people who liked the quiet life adapting themselves to living from day to day without 'making waves'. They did this by donning the Fascist boots and uniform with no other preoccupation than keeping their position or acquiring some privilege that would allow them to live in a less sordid way and to be able to 'lord it' over people worse off than they were.*
- b) *With the coming of Fascism my village was split in two. Fascism divided people; it ruined friendships. On one side there were the real Fascists and on the other there were those who were forced to be Fascists, the 'meal ticket' ones. Here in Barolo we were no longer free to say what we wanted. At the local [inn] we were always on our guard, we always looked round before we said anything; after all, it only needed a word out of place and you were in trouble.*
- c) *Until my last year in high school . . . I cannot say that Fascism was for me much more than a word. I lacked any sense of its opposite, the experience of a different reality.*
- d) *We had to make Italy a great country. Get rid of the rich, do away . . . with the cowards . . . go to the people . . . What youth with blood in his veins does not love to see justice where there is injustice, who does not feel love for his country, who does not feel himself shiver with pride if he is called to make history? These great, immense words - history, fatherland, justice - they filled us with enthusiasm.*
- e) *Socialist mother of son joining the Balilla*
What can you do? His teacher is sold on Fascism. There's no way out. Better than having him fail a whole year.
- f) *My wife's family were never really Fascist, but they accepted material help like coal, food and clothing from the Fascist social services.*
- g) *What the Duce did wrong was the war - apart from that the government was all right, it was him that brought in the pension.*

SOURCE 4 Police reports

- a) *Everyone belongs. Few, however, are really enthusiastic.*
- b) *Until now Fascist penetration has been relatively ineffectual. On the other hand, we have only thirteen subversives on file, and they are constantly under surveillance.*

SOURCE 6 Mussolini saluting the crowds in Novara, Piedmont in May 1939



Activity

Read the following historians' interpretations (Sources 8–12). What does each of them show about:

- the degree of support for the regime and the reasons for it
- the degree of criticism/discontent and the reasons for it
- trends in support and reasons for this?

B How have historians judged Mussolini's success?

Responses to Mussolini's regime varied between Italians, and between different periods of the regime. Many historians, led by de Felice (see page 255), have argued that for the first half of the 1930s the Fascist regime was supported by a broad consensus, helped by the Concordat and success in Abyssinia. From 1936, closer links with Nazi Germany and more RADICAL domestic policies alienated not just many in the elite, but ordinary Italians. There is also considerable evidence that Fascism failed to win the commitment of the young, and failed to train a new elite to replace the ageing leadership. Many Italians, even PNF members, complained about corruption and the lack of a bold spirit in Fascist leaders.

One must also try to distinguish between Mussolini's popularity, broad support for the regime and commitment to Fascism. There is plenty of evidence that for much of the time Mussolini enjoyed great popularity, and that most Italians who had a view on politics supported the regime. Many took pride in Italy's foreign policy and sporting successes, and welcomed some of the services the state provided. However, as the poor response to the radical domestic and foreign measures of the late 1930s showed, they had not been transformed into the new Fascists that Mussolini had tried to create. For a time Mussolini had turned many Italians into a nation, but not a nation of Fascists.

SOURCE 8 C. Leeds, *Italy under Mussolini*, 1972, p. 95

During the late 1920s Fascism was widely accepted by the people who were pleased that it provided ordered rule and an end to class conflict. Many joined the party realising it offered special advantages . . . The numerous colourful street parades and anniversaries gave many people opportunities to enter national self-admiration.

Industrialists enjoyed preferential treatment . . . many workers and peasants were never reconciled to Fascism but because they were ill-prepared for a life in exile, they bided their time.

During the late 1930s open criticism of the Fascist regime became evident. People resented the increased interference in private life. They also resented the ANTI-SEMITIC laws and the close ties which Mussolini insisted on having with Hitler. The wealthy and industrial classes became irritated by the extravagance and bureaucracy of Fascism. Formerly it had been welcomed for its efficiency and ability to deal with strikes, but now it seemed corrupt and inefficient.

By 1939 most Italians were fed up with Mussolini and Fascism, although unable to find any way of overthrowing the government.

SOURCE 10 Clark, p. 247

Did all this Fascist effort at 'social control' work? The judicious historian gives a prosaic [dull] answer: yes and no. Yes, in the sense that until 1936 most people swallowed most of the propaganda most of the time, at a fairly superficial level. Italy was stable, the Duce was popular, open dissenters were rare. It made sense to go along with the regime, and patriotism is a natural feeling even in Italy. But there was little enthusiasm for Fascism – as opposed to patriotism or to Mussolinism – and the regime's claims to 'totalitarianism' were laughable. Religion, family sentiment, individual ambition and cunning, the parish pump [local concerns], the art of arrangiarsi [local fiddles or arrangements], all these traditional institutions and values survived and flourished. The Fascists totally failed to arouse warlike zeal among the general population, a failure which became very evident by the late 1930s. In short, there was acceptance but not devotion, consensus but not commitment, let alone 'hegemony'. Still, even the Fascist consensus was a great deal more than most Italian regimes had achieved. On balance the IDEOLOGICAL efforts paid off. It took years for most people to see through Fascism.

SOURCE 9 Tannenbaum, pp. 152, 167

Society [was] dominated by Fascist slogans if not by Fascist ideals . . .

A large proportion of Italians of all ages were simply unable to grasp such abstract notions as the nation, the state, Fascism and the EMPIRE.

SOURCE 11 Payne, p. 243

[By the late 1930s] public opinion and political support no longer had the same importance in Mussolini's thinking as they did during the first decade of the regime. He seems to have failed to notice the lack of response to more militant Fascist propaganda . . . Younger Fascists grew more restive with anti-semitism and pseudo-Nazification. The increasing military activism was disconcerting and indeed frightening to millions of Italians, while conservatives had become increasingly sceptical . . . There was no particular increase in political opposition . . . What was developing was a growing uneasiness and a kind of internal psychological distancing from the radicalisation of Fascism. If the regime were to enjoy continued success in foreign and military affairs, and in economic growth, this psychological malaise might well be overcome; if not, it would continue to grow.

SOURCE 12 C. Ipsen, *Dictating Demography*, 1996, pp. 9–10, 12

Fascism did at times enjoy broad support among the Italian population, particularly at the moment of its greatest successes in foreign policy . . . This consensus was pursued by propaganda, policy and new and old institutions intended to organise Italian society under Fascist authority . . . When it came to test the depth of this consensus in opposing both the internal enemy, by means of racial policy, and the external one, the Italian population showed itself insufficiently committed to the Fascist vision and the fragility of the Fascist consensus became all too apparent . . .

Ultimately the Italian Fascist revolution failed. Mussolini neither achieved a profound consensus, nor created a new civilisation, nor erected a totalitarian regime, [which shows] his failure to fascistise Italian society.

Perhaps we should leave the last words to Mussolini himself, by quoting comments he made during the Second World War.

SOURCE 13 Mussolini

- a) *This war is not for the Italian people. They do not have the maturity or consistency for a test so grave and decisive. This war is for the Germans and the Japanese, not for us.*
- b) *A people who for sixteen centuries have been an anvil cannot become a hammer within years.*
- c) *A tenacious therapy of twenty years has succeeded in modifying only superficially the Italian character.*
- d) *I must . . . recognise that the Italians of 1914 were better than these. It is not flattering for the regime, but that's the way it is.*

FOCUS ROUTE

- 1 Make notes on the range of reactions to the Fascist regime.
- 2 What do they reveal about the extent to which Italians committed themselves to Fascism?
- 3 Essay: 'How successful was Mussolini in creating a nation of Fascists?'

FOCUS ROUTE

Using the text on this page, explain why there was no major change in the class structure of Italy during the Fascist regime.

C What impact did Fascism have on the class structure?

For all its radical rhetoric, Fascism tended to reinforce the existing class structure rather than change it. There were two main reasons for this. Firstly, Mussolini realised his power rested on the support of the traditional elites, so he did not wish to threaten their position.

However, this needs to be modified for the later 1930s where a strong case can be argued that Mussolini then shifted his emphasis away from securing the interests of the elites, to trying to win the support of the masses. In many ways Mussolini was more naturally a man of the people than of the elites – so when he felt secure, by the 1930s, he became less influenced by the needs of the elites. Thus in the 1930s Mussolini embarked on policies which worried some powerful groups. However, such policies, whilst disturbing his former supporters, did not succeed in inspiring commitment from the masses.

The second reason for Fascism's limited impact on the class structure was Mussolini's priorities. As with his fellow dictator Hitler, Mussolini was more concerned with people's attitudes and behaviour than their social position. Fascism claimed to transcend class interests; it reconciled all Italians in one united nation. Class divisions were unimportant, so the existing class structure, now linked together in the Corporative State, would not be an obstacle to creating a united nation of Fascists.

D How far did Mussolini modernise Italy?

There has developed a lively debate amongst historians about the extent to which Fascism had a modernising impact on Italy. The American historian A. J. Gregor (in *Italian Fascism and Developmental Dictatorship*, 1979) argued that Fascism played a major role in modernising Italy. He cites the development of a mixed economy with the intervention of the IRI alongside private companies, land reclamation, the overall rate of economic growth, particularly in the electrical and chemical industries, and improvements in both agricultural and industrial productivity. Further evidence of modernisation is the 'nationalisation of the masses', helped by improved communications and new propaganda techniques, and the development of a system of state welfare and mass leisure. The advance of literacy and the growth of female employment have also been cited.

There were, however, clearly many features that were more conservative than modernising, such as the increased role of the Church, Fascist policies towards women, and the regime's pro-ruralism. Mussolini's initial compromise with the conservative elite who had helped him into power restricted the extent of institutional and social change. The limited impact of indoctrination, especially the failure of Fascism to penetrate the still numerically dominant peasantry, suggests limited modernisation. Gregor's optimistic assessment of the economy has also been challenged by evidence from a series of specialised studies. Fascist policies were essentially improvised, in a similar way to those of Liberal Italy, and not part of a clear modernisation programme. It has also been argued that many of the modernising trends had little to do with Fascism per se, and would have occurred anyway during such a long period.

FOCUS ROUTE

- 1 Draw up and complete a chart like the one below. Try to make some generalisations about which areas underwent most change, and which least.
- 2 The chart is necessarily a simplification, and highlights the contrast between pre-Fascist and late Fascist Italy. Were there periods of greater and lesser change between 1922 and 1940?
- 3 Use your change/continuity chart and other material to debate the proposition that 'Fascism had a major modernising effect on Italy'.

Change and continuity within Italy 1919-40

Area	Position in c1920	Position in c1940	Degree of change 1920-40
MONARCHY			
Parliament/elections			
Government			
Administrative structures			
Individual and group liberties			
Industry			
Agriculture			
Communications			
The South			
Position of women			
Living standards			
Education			
Church			
Sense of NATIONALISM/Fascism			
Others			

You might want to complete this comparative assessment by including military might, international prestige, extent of territory, etc. These are not particularly relevant for assessing domestic impact, but you might later like to round off your assessment of the degree of change during the period. This will require you to look at Chapters 14 and 15.

What was the totalitarian temptation?

Most of us nowadays react in horror against so-called totalitarian regimes, and assume that they must have been imposed on a frightened population. But Mussolini was proud of his totalitarian regime. Many people in the interwar period, suffering economic hardship and general disillusionment, were attracted to what has been called the 'totalitarian temptation'. This attractiveness but ultimate horror of totalitarianism has been well described by the Czech writer Milan Kundera (Source 14).

Talking point

To what extent does Fascist Italy illustrate the wisdom of Kundera's comment (Source 14)?

E How totalitarian was Fascist Italy?

Mussolini made great claims for the dramatic changes that had taken place. He claimed to have replaced a failed system with a new, vigorous Italy, organised in a totalitarian state. This implies that Fascism had a great impact. Your examination of Fascist Italy might suggest this was not the case.

So let us now examine how totalitarian Fascist Italy was. First we need to be clear about what this term means. Mussolini was the first major politician to use the term. In 1925 he spoke of Italy as 'everything within the state, nothing outside the state; everything for the state'. And in 1941 he defined it thus: 'The Fascist conception of the state is all-embracing; outside it no human or spiritual values may exist, much less have any value. Thus understood Fascism is totalitarian.'

Total state control of all aspects of a country is perhaps impossible to achieve. But historians have drawn up various criteria to help assess the extent to which a state is totalitarian (see Chart A).

This has become a very politicised issue. The term became widely used in the 1950s as a term of criticism of DICTATORIAL governments of both Right (Fascist Italy, Nazi Germany) and Left (the Soviet Union). In its classic 1950s formulation it was used to reinforce the view that the Soviet Union was as evil a regime as the recently defeated Nazi one. The use of the term in the context of the Cold War does not, however, invalidate it. It certainly can be of use in helping assess the nature of the Italian regime.

SOURCE 14 The writer Milan Kundera

Totalitarianism is not only hell, but also the dream of paradise – the age-old dream of a world where everybody would live in harmony, united by a single common will and faith . . .

If totalitarianism did not exploit these archetypes [standard feelings] which are deep inside us all . . . it could never attract so many people, especially during the early phases of its existence. Once the dream of paradise starts to turn into reality, however, here and there people begin to crop up who stand in its way, and so rulers of paradise must build a little gulag [prison camp] on the side of Eden [paradise]. In the course of time this gulag grows ever bigger and more perfect, while the adjoining paradise gets ever smaller and poorer.

Activity

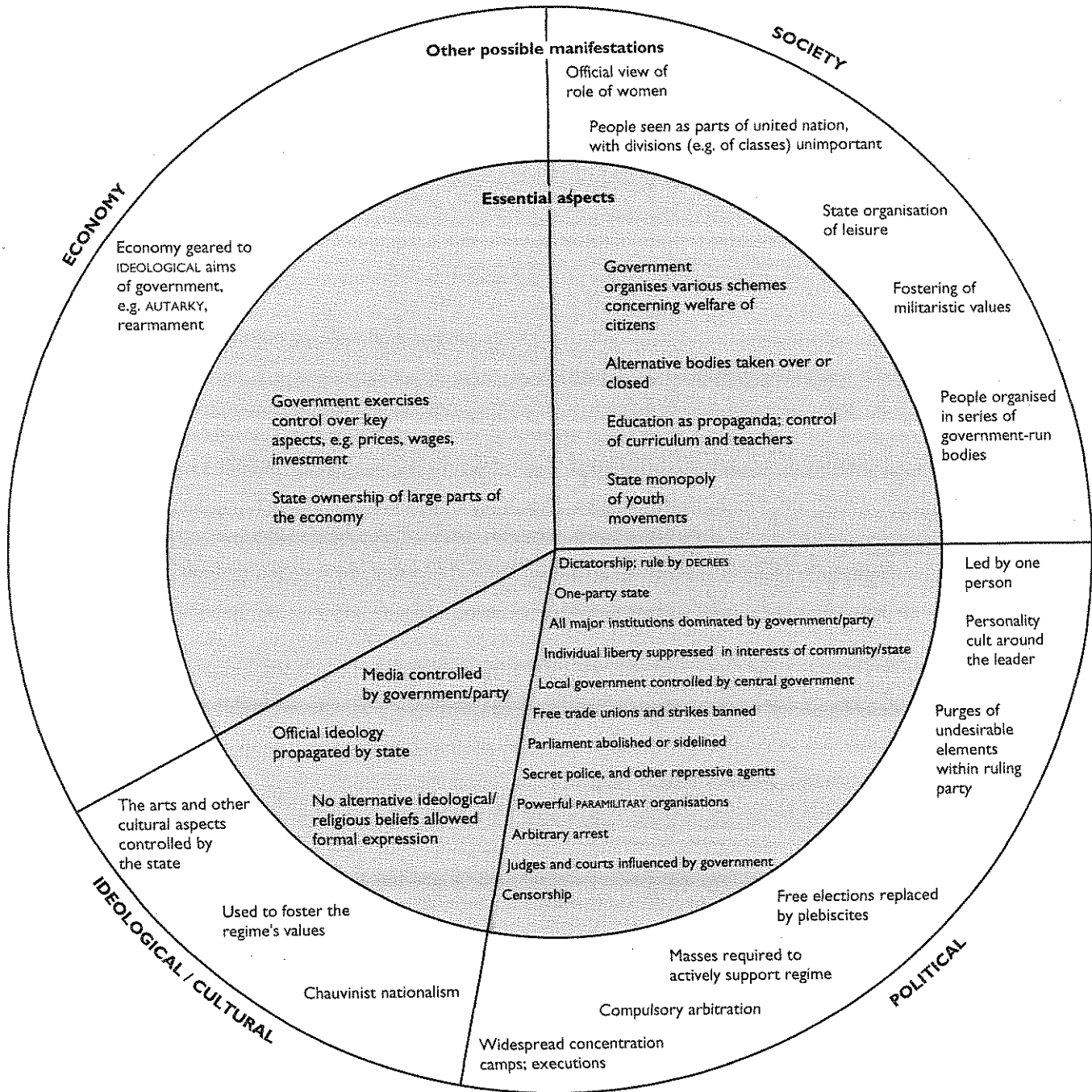
Complete an assessment grid like the one below. In column 1, fill in the areas of totalitarianism as shown in Chart A. In the final column, give each aspect a mark out of five, five meaning strong evidence of totalitarianism, and 0 meaning strong evidence to the contrary.

Of course when considering this issue, you will need to take account of changes in the role of the state during the long Fascist era 1922–43. Did Fascist Italy become more or less totalitarian as it developed?

Refer back to material earlier in the book. You may also wish to complete the exercise on historians' views on totalitarianism (see below) before completing this exercise.

How totalitarian was Fascist Italy?

Area	Evidence that it was totalitarian	Evidence that it was not totalitarian	Overall assessment 5–0



Some points to consider in relation to Fascist Italy:

- Is a fully totalitarian regime possible?
- Is Mussolini's claim that Fascist Italy was a totalitarian state important in assessing the regime?
- Were there trends over time? Did the regime become more totalitarian?
- What happened to the position of the Church, monarchy, and the military and economic elites?
- Did the regime exercise the same degree of control over all groups/classes?
- Did the regime try to obliterate class differences, or just class consciousness?
- Was the old elite replaced by the Fascist regime or did it just adapt to it?
- Was Italy an AUTHORITARIAN rather than a totalitarian state?
- Was foreign policy used to enhance the power of the state?

■ Talking point

The historians Griffin and Mack Smith have suggested that Fascist Italy was less totalitarian than Nazi Germany, partly due to character differences between Italians and Germans. Would you accept this view? Explain your answer.

How have historians judged the extent to which Fascist Italy was a totalitarian regime? Read the following historians' assessments of how totalitarian Fascist Italy was. In Source 17 the paragraphs are numbered for reference.

SOURCE 15 Leeds, p. 93

Fascism never did penetrate to the roots of Italian society. It was tolerable because it tended to be more satisfied by appearances than reality. Although the state was proclaimed 'totalitarian' it did not, in fact, achieve its aim of controlling all aspects of public and private life, and most people still kept considerable independence. It had to compromise with traditional forces. Various groups were neutralised, never destroyed or absorbed. They included the monarchy ... the military, the landowners, the industrialists and the Vatican.

SOURCE 16 Blinkhorn, p. 45

Fascism obtained power not through revolution but as the result of Mussolini's compromise with conservative and ostensibly [apparently] LIBERAL interests. Many of Fascism's activists achieved office, status and a measure of power within the regime which subsequently emerged, but the total revolution of which some dreamed never materialised. Instead, the regime evolved into one strongly Fascist in external appearances, limited in its supposed totalitarianism by the survival of AUTONOMOUS, mainly conservative forces, and distinguished by the personal power of its Duce. If Mussolini's regime may be said to have served the interests of his conservative allies in certain respects, this was neither deliberately and consistently intended nor necessarily bound to prove permanent. By the 1930s the decisions most liable to affect Italy's future lay in the realm of foreign policy and rested not in the hands of CAPITALISTS or militant Fascists but in those of Mussolini himself. It was those decisions, taken independently and increasingly against the wishes of his conservative fellow-travellers, that led to Mussolini's downfall and the collapse of Fascism.

SOURCE 17 Cassels, pp. 73–76

[1] *Mussolini often used the word totalitarian, but it should be borne in mind that he normally did so in a limited sense. Thereby he meant no more than the supremacy of Fascist party organs in all walks of national life, especially economics. Up to a point, this goal was attained in Mussolini's one-party state. But to the social scientists who, in the aftermath of the Second World War, forged the theoretical construct of totalitarianism, mere ubiquitous party influence [reaching everywhere] was not enough. They postulated [put forward] other and more exacting criteria. By these standards it is generally conceded that the Italian Fascist state in several regards fell short of totalitarianism – certainly as it was conceived and practised contemporaneously in Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia.*

[2] *The Enciclopedia Italiana itself, again under the heading of Fascism, offers a further test of totalitarianism: 'No individuals or groups (political parties, cultural associations, economic unions, social classes) outside the state.' But in fact, groups, classes, and institutions did maintain their identity in Fascist Italy. The most obvious were the Church and the monarchy. The most authoritative work on Italian Fascist totalitarianism, Alberto Aquarone's L'organizzazione dello stato totalitario (1965), states flatly: 'The Fascist state proclaimed itself constantly and with great vocal exuberance a totalitarian state; but it remained until the end a dynastic [monarchical] and Catholic state, and therefore not totalitarian.' In addition, behind the corporative facade the CONFINDUSTRIA and the LATIFONDISTI perpetuated their OLIGARCHY. The armed forces, too, especially the navy, kept a good measure of autonomy under Mussolini. (The civilian bureaucracy, on the contrary, fell pretty heavily under Fascist control.) The phenomenon of independent subgroups was illustrated in microcosm [on a small scale] in Sicily where the Fascists launched a drive against the local power structure, the Mafia. During the Fascist era, the Mafia was almost completely quiescent, and many Mafiosi enlisted in the Fascist Party. None the less, in July 1943 when the Allies landed in Sicily, the Mafia reemerged*

■ End of Section test

(Marks are given in brackets.)

How totalitarian was Fascist Italy?

Read Source 15.

- 1 What important contrast in Fascist Italy does Leeds identify? [2]
- 2 Identify three words (two nouns, one verb) which illustrate the limited degree of control the state had. [3]
- 3 Which institutions illustrate this? [3]

Read Source 16.

- 4 Choose the one sentence which makes Blinkhorn's key point on the nature of the regime. [2]
- 5 How does he explain why this occurred? [2]
- 6 What is his explanation for the collapse of the regime? [3]

Read Source 17.

- 7 Paragraph 1. In what different ways has the word totalitarianism been used? [3]
- 8 Paragraph 2. Which groups/institutions does Cassels identify that illustrate limited totalitarianism? [3]
- 9 Paragraph 4. What else, besides control of groups/institutions, does Cassels argue totalitarianism requires? [3]
- 10 Did Mussolini succeed in this respect? [4]
- 11 Paragraph 5. What else, required for totalitarianism, was lacking in Fascist Italy? [3]
- 12 Paragraph 7. Why did Mussolini seek a totalitarian regime? [3]

Summary

- 13 Write down three key points arguing Fascist Italy was not fully totalitarian, and three that could be used as evidence of a considerable degree of totalitarianism. [6]

[Total: 40 marks]

into the open. In the western part of the island, it was influential enough to persuade most of the Italian troops to defy orders from Rome, and to lay down their arms to save the local villages from destruction.

[3] *Mussolini came to terms with these groups from the monarchy to the Mafia. But at most he neutralised them; he neither annihilated nor absorbed them. They outlived his regime, and their existence undercut the Fascist claim to totalitarianism.*

[4] *A totalitarian state cannot be content with outward conformity. If it were, it would be no more than a traditional caesarian dictatorship [like that of strong Roman rulers]. A totalitarian state requires the mental, not merely the physical, allegiance of its subjects. The dearth [lack] of popular enthusiasm behind Fascism's rise to power could be explained away; it was the function of an elite to appreciate the general will sooner than the multitude. But a totalitarian elite, once in power, had to convert the masses to its view of the general will. This was the purpose of all the indoctrination. Yet the Fascists failed to overcome the national trait of scepticism which had frustrated their LIBERAL forerunners; Mussolini himself sorrowfully admitted that a whole generation would have to pass before the 'new man' of Fascism could be manufactured in quantity. At the close of the Second World War, Germany endured the trauma [shock] of the Nuremberg Trials and denazification while Italy underwent only a mild dose of defascistizzazione. Many factors contributed to this distinction, but among them certainly was a tacit [silent] recognition that social conditioning in Fascist Italy, compared to that in Nazi Germany, had been a shallow and deficient process.*

[5] *The nature of the Fascist Italian consensus precluded [ruled out] totalitarianism in another respect. Dependence on a series of compromises with interest groups and fiancheggiatori (flankers), rather than on mass MOBILISATION and grass-roots enthusiasm, bred what one writer has called 'hyphenated Fascism,' a hybrid [cross-bred] phenomenon necessarily devoid of [lacking] a clear-cut ideology. A genuine totalitarian movement requires some quintessential [central] set of ideas to guide and justify all its actions, and it is difficult to isolate any such driving faith at the core of Italian Fascism . . .*

[6] *It may be appropriate to quote Hannah Arendt's verdict on Fascist Italy (1951): 'Not totalitarian, but just an ordinary nationalist dictatorship.'*

[7] *Indeed, since 1915, by far the most consistent thread running through Mussolini's career had been his attachment to the nationalist cause. One wonders, therefore, whether, for the Duce, totalitarianism was not so much an end in itself as an instrument in the service of Italian nationalism. Totalitarian unity at home was required because it was anticipated that the pursuit of a nationalist foreign policy would sooner or later involve Italy in war. Ironically, when that happened in 1940, the Second World War brutally exposed the shortcomings of Italian Fascist totalitarianism.*

Activity

1 'Just 30 Seconds'

Do you know the popular radio game 'Just a Minute'? You're going to play that with Fascist Italy's domestic policy as your subject. We'll be kind and reduce your time to 30 seconds. You have to speak without hesitation, repetition or deviation on one of the following:

- The Concordat
- The PNF
- The Matteotti crisis
- Mussolini's domestic battles
- Autarky
- The Corporative State
- The Balilla
- The DOPOLAVORO
- Italian ANTI-SEMITISM.

2 Look at Chart B. Identify which features of Fascist Italy are shown.

FOCUS ROUTE

Concluding essay: 'The domestic achievements of Fascism in Italy were remarkably limited.' Discuss.

F What was the overall impact of the Fascist regime?

In Section 2 you examined the impact the regime made on the political and economic structure.

In Chapters 4–6 you looked at the development of the political structure in Fascist Italy. Key points with which you should by now be familiar are:

- The important role of Mussolini himself
- The limited role of the Fascist Party
- The continuation of much of the traditional administrative structure
- The role of propaganda in sustaining the regime.

In Chapter 7 you looked at economic and social policy. Key points there were:

- General economic growth during the Fascist period, interrupted by the Great Depression
- The move towards autarky
- Increased government intervention in the economy
- The great claims but limited impact of the Corporative State
- The lack of major improvements in Italians' living standards.

In Section 3 (Chapters 8–15) you assessed the extent to which Mussolini succeeded in creating a nation of Fascists:

- How he used schools and youth movements to try, with limited effect, to create a new generation of Fascists
- The limited impact of Fascism's traditionalist policies on women
- The compromise the regime made with the Catholic Church
- How the state tried, with limited success, to change the behaviour of Italians
- The limited extent of opposition.

The Focus Route asks you to write an essay on domestic achievements. Before you can write your essay you must understand the title. In this particular example, there should be no words that cause problems. However, it is useful to try and paraphrase the question, to put it in your own words. It is clearly about what Mussolini did at home, and says his policies were not very successful. Obvious key words are domestic achievements and Fascism, but certain other words, which you might well skim over, are also important, e.g. 'remarkably' and 'limited'.

Thus the essay requires you to consider the following:

- What did Mussolini (and the Fascists; note the distinction) want to achieve?
- How did they try to achieve it? (The means employed often influence the result.)
- What did they achieve in the key areas (see above)? This should lead to consideration of how limited these achievements were.
- Were the limitations of their achievements remarkable? In other words, why might one have expected them to have achieved more (e.g. the length of their time in power)? Why, though, might one not be so surprised (e.g. size of inherited problems, the heterogeneous nature of Fascism, the degree to which the regime was a compromise with existing powers, etc.)?



HOW SUCCESSFUL WAS MUSSOLINI IN CREATING A NATION OF FASCISTS?