

Church and State – Italy and Germany

Mussolini and the Church

The initial situation:

- Long-lasting quarrels over the Church's loss of land in Italian unification.
 - Pope called on Catholics not to vote in Italian elections.
 - Governments pursued anti-clerical policies.
- Mussolini not religious, but realised the importance of the Church to people in Italy.
- Catholic Church deeply concerned by actions of Mussolini's government, but thought communism was worse than his fascism.
- Mussolini went as far as to baptise his children. He also opposed divorce and abortion.

Lateran Pacts, 1929

- Some terms of the pact:
 - Vatican created as an independent sovereign country.
 - Church was compensated for land lost.
 - Catholicism became the state religion – divorce banned, religion in all schools.
 - Church agreed not to be involved in politics.
- Agreement became known as the Conciliation.
- Ended a 60-year feud, brought Mussolini national and international prestige.

Tensions remained

- The Lateran Pacts extinguished any independent Church criticism of his actions, but he argued with the Pope about a Church organisation he thought was interfering in politics and tried to destroy it. Pope condemned his actions, eventually a compromise was reached.
- Church opposed the totalitarian state and the anti-Semitic laws.
 - It also saved many Italian Jews during the Holocaust, but didn't really do much.
 - It banned many Fascist books.

Nazis and the Church

The situation

- Church attendance in decline, but people still felt strong loyalty to their Church.
- Church hadn't liked Weimar Republic, and were willing to work with Nazism.
- Hitler not religious – wanted to get rid of the Church's power, but knew enough to avoid all-out conflict because of the loyalty people felt.

Controlling Protestant Churches

- 28 separate churches, Hitler wanted a unified one, to be easier to control – Reichskirche.
- German Christian Movement – supported by Hitler.
 - Racist, anti-Semitic – called for removal of the 'Jewish' Old Testament.
- Pastors of Jewish origin removed, Gestapo allowed to monitor sermons, Protestant youth groups had to join the Hitler Youth.
- Many groups worried about the German Christian Movement and exclusion of Jews.
 - Confessing Church set up, then banned.
 - 700 pastors arrested, leader sent to concentration camp.
- German Christian Movement wasn't able to replace traditional Christianity.

Catholic Church

- The Nazis were worried by the international nature of Catholicism – were they loyal to Germany, or to the Pope?
- Catholic Church agreed to work with the Nazis, and they negotiated this deal:
 - Freedom of worship and Catholic education.
 - Catholic organisations were to be protected.
 - The Church would withdraw from politics – Centre Party was disbanded.
- This agreement brought the new regime international recognition (like Mussolini).

Church and State – Italy and Germany

Anti-religious policies – the Nazis break the agreement

- The Gestapo monitored Catholic politicians and the content of sermons.
- Various Catholic organisations were persecuted and Church property was seized.
- The majority of Catholic youth groups (which competed with Hitler Youth) had been banned.
- Intimidation was used to stop parents sending children to Catholic schools. Priests and Protestant pastors were forbidden to teach.
- Propaganda campaign against the Church.
- Violent attacks.

With Burning Anxiety

- A letter condemning the Nazis from **Pope Pius XI**.
- It was smuggled into Germany and copies were secretly printed and distributed.

Acceptance and resistance

- The Nazi's policies did not affect Hitler's popularity with Catholics, and they blamed local Nazi officials rather than him.
- The religious leaders reached a compromise with the state rather than risk violence.
- They did not challenge the state's anti-Jewish legislation.
- There was resistance from some individuals.
 - They defeated attempts to remove crucifixes from schools.
 - Some senior bishops protested.
 - **Bishop von Galen** led a campaign against the Nazi euthanasia programmes – it was officially abandoned as a result, although it secretly continued.
 - Committed Catholics played a large role in the opposition to Hitler – many were arrested and executed.
- In Poland, the Nazis led a brutal anti-Catholic campaign – 3000 clergymen were executed.

Overall results

- Despite this persecution, loyalty to churches was not affected.
- There was no significant decline in church membership.
- The persecution led to a breakdown in hostilities between Catholics and Protestants and they began to work together.