

Alexander J. De Grand. *Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany: The 'Fascist' Style of Rule.*
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*Fascist Italy and
Nazi Germany*
The 'fascist' style of rule
Second edition
Alexander J. De Grand



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There are numerous studies comparing fascism and fascist regimes which tend to focus on identifying the fascist minimum (Ernst Nolte) or the lowest common denominators (Stanley Payne). However, you will not find De Grand concerned with these definitions. He assumes that both regimes were fascist and were linked "by the way they seized power, from the principles that inspired their ideology, and from the way they organized the state once power was achieved" (p. 86). Rather, De Grand provides an original approach by comparing and integrating the Italian Fascist and National Socialist movements thematically. These themes include the origins of each fascist movement and how they came to power, the relationship between party and state institutions, economic systems, and culture and society.

De Grand demonstrates that there were numerous similarities between Fascism and Nazism and that the differences which he points out can be attributed more to the execution of policies rather than intention. The greatest difference lies in the fact that the Fascists were not as thorough or extensive in their systems of control because

the "traditional order" was more entrenched in Italy than in Germany. De Grand maintains these differences were particularly apparent in the area of religious and cultural policies, where Mussolini had to recognize, for example, the continued influence of the Catholic Church or leading intellectuals. Because the differences which existed between Nazism and Fascism were a matter of degree, De Grand dismisses the notion that the Italian variant of Fascism was somehow less pernicious than Nazism. In fact, De Grand intentionally downplays the divergent approach to racial policies by suggesting that in Italy there were simply practical and political obstacles to the introduction of far-reaching racial policies on a scale comparable to the Germans. In other words, there was "nothing in Fascist ideology [that] precluded an evolution towards anti-Semitism" (p. 10). This is an intriguing proposition which challenges the conventional understanding of both fascist movements, but unfortunately, the idea is not sufficiently developed because the author failed to clarify the inter-relationship between racism, antisemitism, and euthanasia. For example, De Grand maintains that the Italians could never

have contemplated a "euthanasia program" which the Nazis introduced in 1938-1939. Not only does the author never explain the "program," but he never elaborates on why the Italians could never contemplate it. Is it not true that the Nazi euthanasia and antisemitic policies both fall under the rubric of racism?

For the most part, De Grand's study is a well-balanced analysis of the Fascist and Nazi regimes. However, German historians will find fault with the cursory treatment of church-state relations in Germany. De Grand suggests that the defining characteristics of these relations can be traced back to Bismark's *Kulturkampf* in the 1870s, when the German chancellor waged a campaign in collaboration with the National Liberals to suppress political Catholicism which threatened to place regional interests above the empire. De Grand implies that the Catholic Church in Germany, and presumably its political arm, the Center Party, were never able to recover from this assault. Hence, in comparison to the Catholic Church in Italy, Catholics never became a "traditional order" in Germany which in turn helps explain why the Nazis could extend their power and execute policies more effectively than the Fascists. Not only does De Grand's portrayal over-simplify the origins and consequences of the *Kulturkampf* and the political clout of the Center, but it also ignores Protestant churches in this equation. The absence of any notes on this subject will lead some readers to conclude, unfortunately, that De Grand was in unfamiliar territory.

There were other places where one suspects that editorial constraints compelled De Grand to cut back on narrative for the sake of brevity, and on this point, readers will find that the author's notes provide a useful starting point for further study. While there are places where De Grand assumes some knowledge on the part of readers, this brief monograph provides an excellent and original introduction to a comparison of Italian Fascism and National Socialism.

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