

SUMMARIES

Political Rationality, Civic Virtue and National Identity

by Gian Enrico Rusconi

From the perspective of the Italian and German national cases, the author argues that democratic institutions are well and alive when they fulfil the goals and criteria both of instrumental strategic rationality and of communicative, identity-oriented, rationality. The essay spells out the various dimensions of these two kinds of rationality in political behavior, focusing particularly on the integrative dimension of national identity.

According to the author, theoretical approaches which unilaterally privilege either kind of rationality and which contrast utility and identity oriented logic, strategic and communicative behavior, are lacking both at the analytic and at the normative level. They do not understand that political action is an interactive process in which instrumental strategies and «understanding acts» combine. The author, therefore, criticizes Jürgen Habermas's «communicative» political theory.

The Italian case indicates how a deficit of political rationality as well as of functional efficiency provokes forms of national dis-identification and de-solidarization (i.e. the Leagues' separatism). In this case, civic virtue may be successfully called for to motivate solidarity only if the reference to universalistic democratic values is supported both by the utilitarian expectation of a common good (obtained through cooperation) and by the willingness – based on trust – to sustain the additional costs of solidarity. This willingness in turn presupposes some degree of acknowledgement of a common national historic belonging. In this perspective, citizenship coincides with a reciprocity link among citizens who acknowledge that they are members of the same national historic community.

Legitimacy, Consolidation and Crisis in Southern Europe

by Leonardo Morlino and Josè Ramon Montero

The authors seek to establish the degree of legitimacy enjoyed in the mid-1980's by Southern European democracies – namely Portugal, Spain, Greece and Italy – and describe the characteristics of such legitimacy that relate to the problems these countries currently face. After a brief overview of the problems involved in defining legitimacy, especially in a Southern European context, the results of the mid-1980's *Four Nation Survey* on political culture are examined as regards attitudes toward democratic regimes in terms of legitimacy and perceived efficacy, past authoritarian regimes and politics in general. The findings are explained in terms of delegitimation of non-democratic alternatives, left-right self-placement, party preference, and conceptions of democracy, with a special attention to the peculiar features of the Italian context.

The Three Waves of German Right-Wing Extremism

by Ekkart Zimmermann and Thomas Saalfeld

This article gives an historical account of right-wing extremist activity in Germany since 1949. It concentrates on the developments in West Germany between 1949 and 1990, and summarizes the relevant developments that have occurred since German unification. Although various aspects of extremist right-wing activity (organizational structure of groups and parties, violence, intellectual developments, popular attitudes) are dealt with, the focus is on the electoral fortunes of the key parties on the extreme right, the SRP, DRP, DG, NPD, DVU and the Republikaner. The central question is: what are the macro-political and economic conditions under which the latent potential of 8-15 percent of the population holding authoritarian or racist attitudes can be mobilized by extremist right-wing parties? In order to answer this question the authors develop a first «supply-side» model of right-wing extremism emphasizing the importance of the composition of government coalitions, the position of conservative parties in the political issue space and macro-economic conditions. It is argued that the interplay of these variables can help to understand the rise and decline of extremist right-wing parties in Germany and in a comparative context.

Local Elections and Party Deconstruction. Testing the New Law

by Aldo Di Virgilio

The article focuses on Italian local elections held during the spring and fall 1993, aiming to detect the influence of the new electoral rules on electoral competition in the present period of party deconstruction and electoral volatility.

The first section deals with the new local electoral law, chiefly characterised by the mayor direct election through both majority system (communes with more than 15,000 inhabitants) and plurality system (communes with less than 15,000 inhabitants). The second section points out the «distributive skew» of the first applications of the new law, due to the over-representation of metropolitan areas. The other section provides an analysis of: (a) the electoral supply and the electoral alliances supporting candidates for mayorship; (b) the differences among patterns of electoral competition rising from the comparative examination of the «representative arena» (providing the local councils) and the «executive arena» (providing the new mayors); (c) the patterns and conditions of the second ballot contests, as far as the mayor's election is concerned.

The most relevant findings are: (a) the different political actors (electors, candidates, parties) offered different levels of learning capacity in front of the new electoral rules; (b) the influence of the new electoral law is strictly associated with the process of party deconstruction; (c) the defeat of the Centre, mostly in the second ballot contests, shows a process of radicalization rooted in new competitive cleavages (the more or less misunderstood continuum between «new» and «old»). These new cleavages often intersect the traditional ones (the right/left continuum).