

Editorial

In Search of Stability

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On 14 December 2010, the ruling centre-right government managed to win, for some miraculously, a vote of confidence in both chambers and thus to remain in office. The crisis started in the spring of 2010 when a part of the ruling majority, led by the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies Gianfranco Fini, had manifested doubts over the so-called '*leggi ad personam*', a number of measures meant to guarantee the Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, immunity. The relationship between politics and justice has certainly become a very contentious matter since the *mani pulite* investigations in the early 1990s – as shown in part by Daniela Piana, who however concentrates on the evolution of the Italian Judicial Council, the self-governing body for judges and prosecutors – but when Berlusconi assumed power in 1994 tensions escalated. The protracted frictions within the centre-right did not affect its performance in the March 2010 regional elections – where, as Marinella Belluati shows, the affairs of Berlusconi continued to dominate coverage, and where the centre-right parties registered a sound victory. At the same time, they had a serious impact on the effectiveness of the Government in Parliament. Francesco Marangoni, in fact, shows that its capacity to produce and secure the implementation of binding decisions was significantly reduced in 2010. Still, it maintained an 'aggressive' attitude towards Parliament and was able to force the passage of measures that it considered priorities and in line with its electoral platform.

Two of these reforms concern migration and higher-education, both inspired by the idea of stability. In particular the Security Package, criticised for being too repressive, was an attempt to 'stabilise' the number of immigrants. Interestingly, Franca Van Hooren notes that while immigration policies have become more stringent, an exception has been made in the case of domestic workers and care assistants (the so-called *badanti*) in relation to whom expansive policies have been adopted. This can be explained not so much by looking at the role of business organisations or political parties, but more by the fact that care is largely a family affair. Chris Hanretty and Costanza Hermanin look at the portrayal of immigration by the media. Their conclusion is that through the specific

linguistic device of nominalisation the Italian press has constructed a stigmatising view of immigrants.

The second major piece of legislation implemented by the ruling centre right, in this case with the collaboration of the breakaway Futuro and Liberta per l'Italia (Future and Freedom for Italy, FLI) group, is a reform of the higher-education system. The latest Gelmini measure, so-called after the minister of Education Mariastella Gelmini, was in theory meant to give prominence to the idea of meritocracy and efficiency. The expectations are meagre, and it is anticipated that the reform may end up being a missed opportunity for a sector that requires substantial overhaul. In fact, Mauro Degli Esposti and Marco Geraci, referring to Vico's idea of *corsi* and *ricorsi*, see a degree of stability over a period of thirty years during which a number of reforms have been adopted. A particular case is that of the *lettori*, documented by Brad Blitz, who have been discriminated against vis-à-vis their Italian colleagues, in spite of numerous rulings by the European Court of Justice against Italian state institutions.

The cuts in the higher-education system are in line with the election manifesto on which the Berlusconi government took office, inspired by the principles of austerity and financial stability. Roberto Di Quirico, however, notes that this search for 'financial stability' has penalised some groups, in that it has concentrated mainly on the public sector and the pay of public employees - with the regions and universities being particularly heavily hit. At the same time, it has supported the banks, with the view to avoiding the domino effect of their fall, and large firms, to allow them to retain employees. Even more seriously, the global economic crisis in Italy has not been used to initiate necessary structural reforms.

Finally, with the death, on 17 August 2010, of President Francesco Cossiga, one of the most controversial figures in post-war Italy, we are very pleased to include the partial transcripts of five interviews with the former President conducted by Alison Jamieson in 2009. Cossiga's name is probably most closely connected with Gladio, the secret stay-behind network, and with reaction to the Moro kidnap - and incidentally the *anni di Piombo* is also the topic of a reply Phil Edwards has written to John Foot's review in the first issue of 2010. In one passage of the interviews, commenting on the prospects for constitutional reform, Cossiga concludes that the way to carry on most congenial to Italians is simply to *tirare a campare* (make do somehow). As 2010 drew to a close, the overall 'state of play' of Italian politics seemed to reflect this preference with particular clarity.