

Forlenza

On the Edge of Democracy

Italy, 1943-1948

On the Edge of Democracy examines the emergence of democracy in Italy in the wake of World War Two. It examines the nature of the democracy forged in the liminal period after Benito Mussolini, the Duce of Fascism, was removed from government in the summer of 1943. Instead of pouring through institutional accounts, which root the origins of democracy in the establishment of parties and in electoral outcomes, Forlenza focuses on the lived experiences of ordinary people and elites in extraordinary times. Meanings of democracy are not variations of a universal model but emerge as contingent interpretative acts and a symbolization following political and existential crisis under condition of violence and war. On the Edge of Democracy captures a series of key events which saw people torn between going home or staying at the front, between clinging to a disrespected but habitual monarchy or engaging with a republican experiment. Becoming a democracy was also a kind of politically spiritual act: the power of the myth of America and the struggle for order as a function of the cosmic fight between communism and ant-communism in the incipient Cold War had a formative power on the origins, meanings, and characters of post-fascist democracy in Italy.



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