
Greeks under Ottoman rule. Through the 19th century and until World War II, the driving ideology in Greek politics was the "Great Idea"—the goal, never completely realized, of bringing under one nation all the territories inhabited by Greeks. Through revolutions, Nazi occupation, civil war (1946–49), domestic repression, and clashes with Turkey over Cyprus, the Greeks have remained a stubborn people who refuse to settle for less than their ancient heritage of *demokratia* and freedom.

—Vlad Georgescu ('80)

VIABLE DEMOCRACY
by Michael Margolis
Penguin, 1979
211 pp. \$3.95 (paper only)

The Good Citizen is rational, public-spirited, and well informed, according to traditional democratic theory. Even if all citizens matched this image (and studies abound to show they do not), many scholars argue that the work of managing the economy and protecting the environment has now become so complex that only specialists are competent to make the right choices. Margolis, a University of Pittsburgh political scientist, disagrees. He believes that a democracy where leaders and citizens continuously consult is still possible if reforms are made. Among other things, he proposes a network of computers (placed in private homes and linked to cable television) to provide citizens with instant, detailed information—supplied by the government and large corporate bureaucracies—on all subjects relating to public policy. Users would pay the costs. Toll-free public access in libraries would allow the less affluent to participate. Citizens then could make inquiries, offer opinions, and exchange data. (Margolis does not suggest that the system be used for "daily plebiscites" or "instant democracy," but simply to "provide equal opportunity for every citizen to gather information and express himself.") Margolis does not envisage a utopian transformation of U.S. politics via technology. He does, however, introduce some provocative ideas for making government more accessible.

—Peter Singer ('79)