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A dialogue with two leading figures in the staff of Obama and Renzi

GRAZIANO DELRIO AND ALAN B. KRUEGER: SOME ADVICE FOR ADVISORS

The advisors to the "Prince", or rather those responsible for making decisions – Presidents, heads of state and others – are fundamental elements in contemporary politics. So how do these strategic figures, themselves an integral part of the ruling class that governs us, operate from their positions on the second line? The subject was discussed at the Santa Chiara auditorium with the Undersecretary to the Italian Prime Minister's office, Graziano Delrio, also a university lecturer and former Mayor of Reggio Emilia, and the renowned economist Alan B. Krueger, formerly Chairman of the American President Obama's Council of Economic Advisers. Certainly the public was curious about one thing in particular: how does a Prime Minister like Matteo Renzi operate? "Renzi represents what quantum physics represented for traditional physics" said Delrio. "It is exact but a little unpredictable, untidy". As regards bureaucracy, Delrio related his problems first of all to poor guidance from politicians, who often do not know what to choose and do not provide clear objectives. "Italian bureaucracy", said the undersecretary " encounters two types of resistance, one as a result of inertia and the other intentional. The latter is more serious: it depends on the fact that in this country there are privileged enclaves that do not wish to be touched. I am greatly in favour of autonomy, as the President of this province Rossi knows well. I believe that things work when it is society as a whole that supervises and controls the work of administrators and the bureaucracy".-

Krueger spoke first of all about the impressions he had when working with Obama and about the personal charisma emanating from the man, a President who combines a sharp intelligence with a strong dose of practicality. The council of experts chaired by Krueger has existed since 1946 and satisfies the need of the American presidency to gather and process an enormous mass of information. In his turn, Delrio described the mechanisms of the apparatus at Palazzo Chigi. "Renzi collects a lot of information from the outside", he said "which he then transmits to me and the other advisors. The reforms that we are developing in the field of employment, fiscal reform, payments by the public administration and so on, come from extensive prior collection of ideas and requests, as expressed by civil society. The idea of the 80 euro indeed developed from this. However we are also considering a council of advisors for the Prime Minister on the same lines as the American model which Krueger has talked about, and this will shortly be set up ".
Krueger also talked about the fight against unemployment, which has achieved satisfactory results in the last few years as compared to the beginning of the crisis, results obtained with a careful mix of financial and fiscal policy. However, the differences with Italy are evident: in our country, Krueger underlined, the influence of unemployment generated in the manufacturing and construction sector is much greater. The other two categories most vulnerable in Italy are young people and unemployed people in the South.
The Renzi government's bill on employment should arrive in the autumn. In the field of construction and homes there has in fact already been a recovery, with a growth of 20% in requests for mortgages in the last period, also leading to positive consequences on employment. As far as the South is concerned, 180 million euro of European funding is available up to 2020. "An enormous amount", underlined Delrio "but we are

very behind in making use of it. This is the fault first of all of the ruling class, and those who have not done what they should need to apologise to citizens. There is no environmental, genetic or anthropological factor". For the undersecretary Delrio it is necessary to abandon the culture of postponement, introduce rigid evaluation criteria, transparent mechanisms and effective social controls. "However, take note: the South is not a black hole. There are also positive experiences, which should be exploited".
Again as regards employment, Delrio talked about the "Youth Guarantee" European project, which has had immediate success, with 70,000 registrations in a few days. "We have also begun to change the rules for temporary contracts and apprenticeship, as entrepreneurs have requested. We have tried to change things. This is what it is necessary to do, to attempt to reform what needs to be reformed in practical terms".
Finally, coming to the European elections, Delrio stated that he is in favour of a "strong" Europe, that develops common strategies in fields going from defence to energy policy. "Europe is a major power, capable of promoting culture, quality of life and innovation. We are pro-European dreamers. What can Italy do? An initiative like the Eurobonds is possible. It is possible to think about horizons for growth in a more decisive manner. In the next semester in Italy these things can be done".
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