

Renzi-Conte, between clashes and truces

If ever there was a need, the four “fundamental” points set out by Matteo Renzi in view of his face to face with Premier Giuseppe Conte make it clear that the clash started on the reform of the statute of limitations has become an all-out quarrel between Renzi’s Italia Viva (IV) and its ruling coalition partners. The proposals put forward by the former mayor of Florence have all the earmarks to shatter the current parliamentary majority and it is precisely for this trivial reason that they are born as a worthless piece of paper. Having them summoned, however, represents yet another gauntlet launched at the allies’ address, as well as the existence of a real counterprogram never agreed before which opposes the Conte agenda to relaunch Italy. For Renzi, in fact, it would be necessary to work on the “just justice” reform, to wipe out the contested Bonafede reform; on a 120 billion shock plan on infrastructure, to overcome the legacy of the “building sites unblock decree” of the previous M5S-League government; on the removal of the citizenship basic income, the controversial M5S flagship measure to fight poverty; and finally on the institutional reform to elect directly the head of government, a suggestion that Prime Minister Conte himself has already banded as “impromptu”. So don’t be surprised by the new wave of controversies that has caught the government and its followers this week, even more so in light of the behavior kept by IV in Parliament to mark the political distance between itself and the rest of the ruling coalition. Proof of this was Renzi’s absence in the confidence vote on the wiretapping reform in the Senate, while in

the Lower House his group voted then times with the opposition against the government on the ‘Milleproroghe’ omnibus decree. It is against this background that Renzi and Conte have agreed to meet next week, formally to try to get out of a now permanent row that blocks the executive’s activity and with it also the country. Much more realistically, however, the two will measure their real power relationship, among threats of departure from the ruling coalition or calls to gather centrist MPs to shore up the Conte II cabinet in Parliament. Not to mention the delicate match of public appointments, where the allies have already stumbled upon a stalemate on the RAI public broadcaster waiting to address sensitive issues such as the leadership of Enel, Eni, Terna, Poste and Leonardo. The fact is that the story of the tough political opposition between Renzi and Conte certainly does not arise in these weeks. The aversion originates when the two were officially rivals, one in the role of the head of the M5S-League government and the other as a PD senator. Conte was already Renzi’s favorite target a year ago, and things did not change even after the birth of the new M5S-PD executive – which was enabled by a shrewd tactical maneuver in Parliament conceived by Renzi himself. And in view of next week’s meeting, it is easy to associate Renzi’s current request for a truce with that “Enrico, take it easy” motto that anticipated the defenestration of then-PD Prime Minister Enrico Letta in 2014. Even at that time Renzi accused the head of government of immobility: a coincidence that for now leaves all assumptions open.