

The sorrows of Minister Bonafede

If Italy were not struggling with the terrible health and economic implications of an unprecedented crisis, the row within the so-called “justicialism” that erupted on Sunday would dominate the national public debate. The story puts against each other an anti-mafia symbol such as Superior Council of Magistracy councillor Antonino Di Matteo with M5S Justice Minister Alfonso Bonafede. On the one hand, therefore, the brilliant prosecutor idolized by 5-Star electors, who has become a media icon also thanks to the press articles published in recent years by the left-leaning *Il Fatto Quotidiano* daily newspaper; on the other hand, the M5S minister who had served also during the first cabinet led by Premier Conte (2018-19) and who was raised at the same anti-Mafia militant school as Di Matteo's. The case arises with the public statements of Di Matteo (Bonafede would have proposed him to lead the Italian prisons in 2018, expect to reconsider his proposal within 48 hours for unspecified dissensions or even vetoes occurred) and joins the political controversy surrounding the recent release of some prisoners convicted of mafia crimes, due to the emergency of Covid-19. The impression is that in addition to having sent a shockwave through the party, the case has crushed minister Bonafede into the same political-mediatic trial built over the years by the guardians of the ‘justicialist’ culture. It is about an ideology that has nourished the consensus towards the 5Star, filling the sails of anti-politics and exciting popular calls for a showdown with the traditional party system. For Bonafede, it's yet another hassle after the numerous doubts about his work as a minister: according to some, he has not been able

to revamp Italy's judiciary, as he had promised; for others, however, he conceived only controversial reforms that changed the face of Italian justice for the worse. Not to mention the tragic events of the riots in prisons – with 13 deaths – quickly forgotten by all. Today Bonafede appears in serious difficulty because he is unable to tell the whole truth about the story. Some argue that the ‘no’ to Di Matteo came directly from the League, which ruled Italy with the M5S at the time of the events (to reveal it would in fact admit the minister's subordination to Salvini). Others instead propose an institutionally explosive thesis: the President of the Republic would have “advised” Bonafede against the appointment of the former Palermo prosecutor, not having forgotten his role in the interceptions of then-Head of State Napolitano back in 2012, at the time of the sensational conflict of powers in the State-Mafia investigation. Bonafede is also the head of the M5S delegation in the government, a position that makes the row truly heated given the political repercussions of his eventual resignation on the fractious M5S-PD ruling coalition. The opposition saw an opportunity, stating it wanted to file a no confidence motion in the Senate against Justice Minister Bonafede and betting on the internal tensions between M5S and allied MPs to trigger the minister's removal and provoke the fall of the government. The Democratic Party is trying to limit the damage, choosing to defend minister Bonafede and accusing prosecutor Di Maio instead, while Italia Viva leader Matteo Renzi aims to exploit the crisis in order to expand his bargaining power within the ruling coalition.