

01 March 2013

The Triumph Of The Pissed Off



Beppe Grillo says Europe's political establishment should thank his movement for providing a valve for Italian frustrations

From Brussels to Rome, his political opponents dismiss him — at their peril — as a clown, but Beppe Grillo, the Italian comedian-turned-activist movement, is nothing if not a man of his word.

When The Global Mail talked to him for a few hours last May, he told us his grassroots Five Star Movement (M5S), had just had its 'Stalingrad' moment, and that 'Berlin' was next.

At that stage M5S had just triumphed in Parma, where voters, disgusted by a huge scandal that had almost driven the region into bankruptcy, handed Grillo's group 60 per cent of their ballots in the run-off for the mayoralty.

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As the world is witnessing this week, Grillo's war analogy was well-chosen; Stalingrad was World War II's decisive battle, which saw tyranny pushed back all the way to Berlin.

By Berlin, Grillo meant Rome. But now that he's all but taken the Italian capital — pulling 25 per cent of the vote in this week's election — could Berlin, which today runs pretty much all matters European via Brussels, be the next to blink?

In Berlin they see the euro rising and falling to the turmoil that Grillo and his political vigilantes have unleashed in the Eurozone's third-largest economy. And titillated Europeans — anxious and marooned by austerity — would like to know what the nerve he's touched in Italy means beyond.

The Grillo/5SM victory in last weekend's Italian elections sends warnings about how politics is transacted everywhere. And it's not just politicians he's after, but the whole matey, conflicted, rotten construct that has accumulated around them; which includes the established media, the bureaucracy, the legal system, big business and, because this is Italy, the clerics, too.

Grillo believes the aims of M5S have application beyond Italy's borders. As he told us, “We have a shared agenda in this project for the world,” he says. “We are like a laboratory for this type of movement.”



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