

A stateswoman in the making

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First, it was the dismissal of ministers involved in corruption; later, her firmness in reducing the interest rates, acting against many interests, including those of her small-saver constituents; a few days ago, it was the speech made during the installation of the Truth Commission, in which she made a strong defense of human rights and of their nonpartisan nature; now, it is her historical decision to publish the wages of public servants of the Executive power, thus enforcing the Access to Information Act. All of those acts show courage and determination, and indicate that the Brazilian president is a stateswoman in the making.

What led me to this conclusion was her decision last week of making public the civil servants' remuneration. To know how much is earned by elected and non-elected civil servants is a citizens' indisputable right. But Brazilians have always been denied this right. When I was Minister of Federal Administration, I decided to publish the remuneration of the civil servants in the Federal Official Gazette. I was heavily attacked. Angry public servants came to talk to me about their "right to privacy". In democracies, when it comes to public funds, there is no right to privacy; there is no "right" to earn absurd amounts that have nothing to do with the hierarchical level of one's position. As an old and high German bureaucrat during his visit to Brazil once said when I told him about the constitutional amendment establishing a ceiling for public servants' remuneration, "you don't need to do it in Germany; we have our wages inscribed on our lapels" – that is, on the position they occupy.

Some people may say that my enthusiasm regarding the president is hasty. In fact, it is too early to say that Dilma Rousseff fulfills the very rare conditions that define a statesman or a stateswoman. But I am saying that she is "growing into" a stateswoman. She is showing the necessary firmness and courage. But this is not enough. As Machiavelli classically said, besides *virtù*, the prince needs *fortuna*. *Virtù* does not simply mean virtue, but rather competence to

govern, discernment to take decisions, ability to compromise, and, finally, success in governing. Which also depends on fortune – *fortuna*.

A statesman is a leader who has a comprehensive view, who looks to the future and has the courage to pursue it, acting against the interests of many people, including the interests of his followers. It is someone who knows his country, who knows what its major problems are, and contributes effectively to solve them. Statesmen are usually identified in the wars in defense of their country, but they can be identified in decisive moments of its economic and social development. The Brazilian statesman of the twentieth century was Getúlio Vargas, because he led Brazilian national and industrial revolution. President Dilma Rousseff may be a new stateswoman, now in a democratic setting, if she manages to defeat the two major Brazilian problems: the corruption of its elites and the trap of the high interest rate and of the overvalued exchange rate.

In her speech at the installation of the Truth Commission, the president declared: “truth is something so surprisingly strong that it does not embrace neither resentment, nor hatred, nor even forgiveness... it is, above all, the opposite of oblivion”. I leave these beautiful words as the closure of this column. There will still be many challenges for Dilma Rousseff to face; we ignore how much *fortuna* she will have, but we already know that she will have *virtù*.