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Staff Training*

*Learned Colleagues
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen*

taking the floor after my Honorable Colleague, the Director General for Italian Probation, it's a nice duty express you, again, our welcome in Rome and the pleasure given by your partnership and presence today at the Rasmorad kick-off meeting.

Some historical considerations have been demanded to my person on our topic: this is a respectful way to suggest to be short and, mostly, to avoid a heavy technical contribution from a senior officer.

I hope you will be satisfied with my not so long a speech and will be able to recognize I fulfilled the blowed suggestion I said.

Italian Prison Administration knew, some decades ago, a similar phenomenon to our current problem with radicalization. None the content, but the structure was no very far from today's one. This is just a historical memory: officers, governors, judges concerned are dead or at least retired.

That kind of radicalization was, as you have perhaps understood, a political one, during the age of communist terrorism – mostly the so-called Red Brigades – in Seventies and first part of Eighties. Those offenders, usually more learned than the standard Italian inmates of the time, shown themselves as leader and teacher, pushing their ordinary colleagues to adopt ideology and violent action of their groups.

This old experience can not at all be transposed to the present problem, but it has to be kept in mind.

A second topic.

In the second part of last century, the sociological paradigm of "secularism" played a ruling role among the society and changes customs scholars.

This process was believed not only a modern product but also an anthropological element of social evolution: in fact, the loss of attendance to the traditional religion of different countries and civilization was generally remarked.

Less known is the other side of the analysis: historian of religions found and used the formula "secular religion" with the aim to classify the emotional and strong belief in totalitarian ideologies so successful in the XXI century among peoples in the world.

Their analysis went to my mind when considering the content of this speech and, especially, the challenge to skills of penitentiary, (I mean prison and probation) professionals.

To be changed, even transformed, with the charming strength of one ideal, is not in my opinion the singular character of violent extremists. A deeper insight in the current job of all prison officers let us acknowledge how recruitment and training of younger inmates is a matter of each labor day; on the other hand, appropriate tools to counter this criminal action of senior offenders (if we dare use these words) are well known and stressed among prison and probation services.

The usual case is the hope of a younger offender to become a criminal leader or a more estimated fellow in some organized groups.

What I see as the very new in this moment? In my opinion is the cause of the choice, and the following different aims.

No more the evolution of the working class, no more the leadership of criminal groups, but (true or false) the will of organizing the social life according a stronger religious belief not without the use of violent tools and actions if needed.

In the last two centuries, a religious reason for civil, compulsive changes was not more given, or any case, put in action.

The truth of that religious ideology is denied and opposed by the largest part of the co-believers: it does not seem very effective (younger are critical to the religious life of their parents) but it remains an evidence.

It can supply maybe a tool for starting a process of "disengagement" or "desistance".

We are also aware of different opinions arisen among scholars on the same concept of "radicalization", and between the single specialists on the topic: the recent, brilliant, commentary by Francesco Ragazzi to the Council of Europe Guidelines helps all us.

Historical experience of Italian administration, not only the Italian one, I think, provides us with successful cases sometimes of a strong change of mind of a terrorist. Until now, in this field, the same experience, maybe, happily has not been launched: tools of detections are known, elements to be considered in risk assessment also. How to treat the inner soul beliefs, keeping safe the freedom of the conscience, it is a different awkward issue.

In this first meeting, we could be satisfied by a well-motivated choice among different symptomatic changes or behaviors offering more delineate basis for the development.

Time to come will offer us, probably, chance for a larger consideration of the proceedings, locking to successful experience, and always keeping in mind that prison treatment is on individuals not on figure or statistical classes.