

VareseNews

Maroni: “I’m going to do many things in my old age, and (finally) I’m also going sailing”

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“I began my career in politics 28 years ago in Varese, as an opposition councillor, and I’ll finish it in the same role, at the same desks. Back then, in 1990, when I entered Palazzo Estense, the Mayor was Bronzi. Now, I’m saying farewell to institutional positions and I’m going to dedicate my old age to something else.”

We don’t know how much we can believe the words of **Roberto Maroni**, but he was relaxed and agreed to a chat that gradually turned into an interview.

“**After so many years of commitment**, what is most important is **reputation**. In these days, I’ve been gathering so many letters that were sent to me. Several are from council leaders from different parties. Such as the letter from the Mayor of San Pellegrino Terme, and one from the President of Pavia Province, who, after saying he was sorry about my decision not to run again, he wished me all the best.”

It’s hard to believe that you’re giving up politics...

“That’s not what I said. Politics is passion of mine, a love that I could never abandon. A bit like A.C. Milan. Whatever happens, it’ll always be a reference point. I said that I don’t intend to hold institutional positions anymore. If I can be useful, I’ll be available, but my life has new horizons now.”

Which ones?

“I have several proposals for some really interesting projects, but it’s too early to talk about them now. Meanwhile, I’ve joined the board of the Triennale Foundation. Last Friday, **we elected Stefano Boeri as chairman** and I’m happy to be able to be involved in this great, prestigious organisation for the next four years. The other certainty is an ocean crossing by sailing boat, from Tenerife to Martinique, from 25 November to 15 December. Then I’m going back to working as a lawyer. I’m already dealing with some criminal trials regarding a number of administrators who’ve been put in the hot seat by a judiciary that compares them to organised crime. There’s something wrong when a man like Giuseppe Orsi, the former CEO of Finmeccanica, is arrested and then acquitted after six years. Meanwhile his life has been ruined forever. And the **Mayor of Montichiari, who’s been sentenced to three years**, for taking decisions about a dump that was causing health problems, is in the same situation.”

In Your political career you’ve been a councillor, the chairman of a city council, an alderman, a minister on three occasions, the leader at the Chamber of Deputies, the secretary of the Lega and, finally, the President of Lombardy Region. What you’re missing is the President of a Province, the President of the Republic and Prime Minister. Do you want us to believe that, if they asked you to be Prime Minister, you would refuse?

“I don’t believe it’s an actual possibility. A lot was said about an agreement between me and Berlusconi, but it isn’t true. I rather think the real game starts on 5 March.”

What do you mean?

“Now, it’s as though the teams were in the dressing rooms, and I don’t think the political situation will remain the way it’s been in these days. There won’t be a stable majority after the election, but we won’t have another election soon. Instead, we’ll see the main centre right movements, because with the exit of Berlusconi, we can’t know what will happen to Forza Italia. Interesting political spaces will open up, and the real match will then begin.”

Well, the situation in your party isn’t exactly relaxed. The Lega Nord became the Lega Salvini, with the demands of the North and Padania satisfied ...

“The North only disappeared from the logo, not from our points of reference. I’m for the North First, and this has always been my political battle. But I can’t deny there’s a certain amount of discontent at this moment.”

Are you talking about Fava?

“Not just him. From Veneto to Piedmont, there are people who don’t see the turning point in a good light. I look with sadness even at the situation of Umberto Bossi, who is still my big brother, my reference, my Pantheon. Seeing him denied the chance to speak in Pontida wasn’t good, and if I’d been in his place, I’d have retired, but he still believes in the old Lega.”

How will 5 March end?

“1X2, like the old football pool forms. The result isn’t certain. 1, the centre right wins, X, nobody wins, 2, there’ll be a surprise with M5S, Lega and Fratelli d’Italia, who’ll have a majority to govern.”

Aren’t you worried about the latter possibility?

“No, also because there’s already been a precedent, in 1994, when a Lega Nord member entered the Palazzo del Viminale. At that time, this choice caused quite an uproar, and people were saying that I’d divide everything, that I wouldn’t continue the fight against the mafia, and only concern myself with the North. It was renamed Piminale, the Ministry of the Interior. Nicola Mancino resigned early, so that he wouldn’t have to hand over to a Lega Nord member.”

But the fear today is to see amateurs thrown in at the deep end ...

“Today, compared to twenty years ago, there are a lot of external checks, which make it impossible for national governments to create too many disasters. Of course, this isn’t what I am hoping for, but if we go back to 1994, the criticisms were the same. At the time, the people preferred Speroni to Miglio, who was certainly more qualified in constitutional matters. In short, Bossi chose a certain lack of expertise, but there were no problems.

So ... that experience doesn’t seem to be a good example, because it lasted a very short time.

“Yes, but for political reasons and not because of the lack of expertise. Bossi was worried because he was afraid that Berlusconi would destroy the Lega’s constituencies, and so he quit the government.”

However, there is a political problem, with a right wing that is increasingly LePenist ...

“LePenism is dead. Marine Le Pen herself said so, because that season is over. What would it mean, then? That there’s fascism? I’d say that in these days of violence we see it from a completely different perspective, given the clashes stoked by the community centres.”

Aren’t you worried about a shift to the extreme right?

“The return of fascism is a farce. What we experienced with Mussolini’s dictatorship is no longer

possible. We have democratic antibodies, and the North is immune to fascism. Here, the resistance was born, and here, there are the democratic forces that are active and alive. I'm part of that culture myself, and I'll never agree to seeing the Lega transform into an extreme right-wing party."

So if the opportunity, the kairos, or right time, should arise, you might resume political activity again?

"Now, kairos means thinking about my old age. I'm 63, and after years of education and work, then of institutional positions, now, I want to cultivate some hobbies and do things that I'm interested in."

But when did you begin to think about this, and decide not to run again?

"During the holidays, last summer. I talked about it with my family and only a few close friends. I wanted to take time to think about it. Then we had the referendum about independence, and so we got to the end of October. Straight after, I discussed the matter with Salvini and Berlusconi. They asked me to wait before talking about it publicly, because they wanted to see whether or not there'd be an election, to decide which candidate to choose. As soon as we were sure about the date and the method of the vote, I called a press conference in the regional building and announced that I wouldn't be running again. This is what happened and all you have to do is check the dates."

What do you think about Fontana's candidacy?

"He's an excellent choice and he'll win."

Are you giving him some advice?

"He doesn't need it. I'll still be the President of Lombardy Region until the middle of March. This is my role and he knows what to do afterwards. Many council members will not stay in Lombardy, because they're candidates for Parliament. We'll see how the new team will be made up, but it won't be my problem."

Regrets?

"No. My biggest satisfaction has been reading that 66% of the people in Lombardy think I've been a good president and that I did my job well. I couldn't ask for more, also because, over these years, I governed while keeping excellent relations with everybody, even with many mayors of towns led by the centre left, including Beppe Sala, who's even an Inter supporter."

di Translated by Ipri, Pranio & Sessa (Reviewed by Prof. Rolf Cook)