

Not only rats; there is a lot of Italy in the election in Ticino

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The polling stations are opening today, at 5 pm, in Switzerland's Canton Ticino, for the election for the new Government and new Parliament of the foreign State that is nearest to us. **The last cantonal election** took place in **2007**, in which **62%** of the electorate participated.

Since that election, many things have changed, and today, more than ever, we realise that, what happens in Ticino politics, what is decided, and even what is thought, can influence our regions. In order to understand this federalist country (yes, they are truly federalist), we must strive to look beyond "**the dancing rats**", "**the purring cats**", beyond the shouting and provocations of some people, who are fed only by the natural, everyday contrasts typical of border regions. It is no accident that, what is mentioned above, has caused more comment in Italy, than in Ticino. Those who want to look into this election must do so, knowing full well that there is a bit of everything, maybe even a bit of Italy, a fact that the **214,000 people on the Canton Ticino's electoral register** do not like very much, but with which they must reckon. It is not easy for an Italian to understand the themes of Ticino politics, because, unfortunately, the border still divides, and very much so. We are not interested in understanding the ins and outs of government in Switzerland, in a way that would enable us to interpret fully the country that is closest to us, the one that **gives work to 48,000 Italians**, for example, in exchange for good salaries. Finally, we have come to the theme of work, of the people who cross the border to earn their livings, of the slow match between the European Union and Switzerland over **bilateral agreements**; these are themes that we should consider more carefully.

Often, the mass-media only report **the provocations of political parties like the UDC and the Ticino League**, provocations that, in Ticino, have suited all of the old parties somewhat, even in this election campaign, but today, with the torment of a possible second League representative entering the Ticino Government, replacing a representative of the radical liberal party of Ticino, some worries are beginning to appear. We must remember that, given the agreeing nature and collective character of Swiss, the post of State Councillor will soften positions and tones, leaving the job of yelling against the southerners, against the foreigners, against the "taglian magnaramina", and so on, to those left outside the government building in Bellinzona. The shouters should remember, maybe, however, that the many invectives (about safety and about foreigners, for example) should also be targeted against the Italian party with which the shouters identify most, and which, more than any other, they hold up as defenders of these causes.

So, also in this sense, there has been an **Italianising of Ticino politics**. But on the election table in Ticino, there are other wide-ranging subjects that concern us, too. We need only think of the relationships that Ticino has, and wants to have, with Lombardy, even after the messy situation created last year over the "**Regio Insubrica**" cycling competition, which is now only mentioned because it is an important event. There are relationships to be cultivated, a healthy **industry** with which we should cooperate, a future plan for transport and infrastructure, which links the two areas, saving time and money. There is tourism, which has been in a crisis both in

Canton Ticino and Lombardy, to be rethought. This is not a race to come first, we should remember the African adage, "There are only two of us, and you want to run in the middle". There are new relationships between **university systems** and important **vocational schools**, such as **SUPSI**, there is a **finance and banking system** with which we can communicate and operate, especially now that, as it would appear, Giulio Tremonti has removed the Swiss Confederation from the **black list**. So, there is no point in hiding from the fact that the political outcome next Sunday is very significant also for our border areas, and our focusing on this fact; irrespective of the domestic political divisions, of the slogans and of a renewed rightwing populism now present throughout Europe, we must try to invest in "knowledge of the other side", if we really want to create an area that can be above the politics. For its part, the Canton Ticino must find the right internal balance, in its society, in its institutions and in its economy, to be able to respond to the new external challenges that changed so much after the 2007 election, above all, that of talking to each other. Getting to know each other, and if we like one another, spending time together.

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