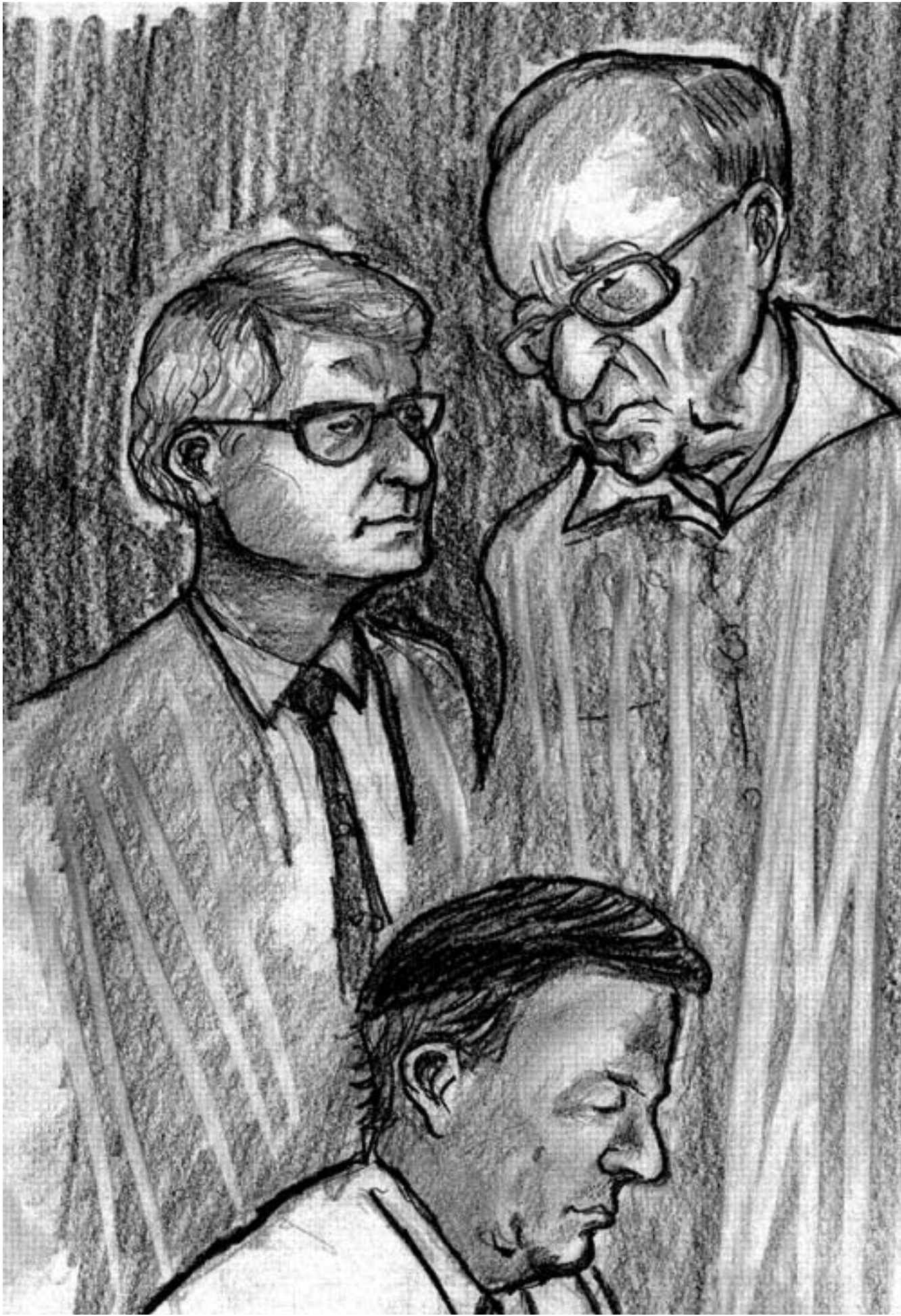


malta **today special report**  
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# A vote of 'confidence'

**In this fifth episode of the record that bears witness to the fall of the house of Labour, Mintoff momentarily bows out and the then Leader of the Opposition, Eddie Fenech Adami**

**and Prime Minister Alfred Sant, step into the spotlight and take up cudgels. Fenech Adami is keen to sound the alarm bell to democracy and the stable state. Alfred Sant cynically**

**acknowledges what is obvious and pins his authority and mandate on the Cottonera project. Increasing the tensions and pressure by declaring the vote on the Cottonera project a vote of con-**

**fidence in his government, Sant makes it very clear that it's going to be his way, or no way. Lino Spiteri makes a prediction which, with hindsight, proved not to be very accurate. . .**

# A motion of urgent national imp

## EDDIE FENECH ADAMI:

Madam speaker, I think this is the right time for me to present a motion according to Standing Order 13, so that there will be a discussion about something of great public importance and urgency.

Madam Speaker, as we had the opportunity to hear the intervention of Dom Mintoff, leader of the Opposition, last Tuesday ... (Interruptions) Excuse me, I meant to say the Prime Minister Alfred Sant (Shouting) I apologise. (Interruptions) Now I also will go to Birgu as I did three Saturdays ago with a group of youths and we had a guide explain to us all that there is on the quay, we entered the Maritime Museum and we toured around Birgu. Today I am in a position to talk about the motion that we have in front of us not only because I was there and can better appreciate the significance of Birgu, but also because my grandfather hails from Birgu and as a young child I spent many years going there to attend the feast of St Lawrence with him, but this is irrelevant.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Dr Fenech Adami, please come to the motion you proposed and defined as being of urgent national importance.

**FENECH ADAMI:** Madam Speaker, On the 9th of June, the Prime Minister went to Birgu where he was meant to hold a press conference but instead held a mass meeting. In the address he gave, part of which was repeated in Bormla yesterday, he made declarations which are of great importance to this nation. The Prime Minister declared in Birgu that:

"Parliament is always run according to who has the majority of votes in Parliament."

Naturally this is something that everybody knows, but then he went on to say that things happened the way they did since November to the present because they were planned, they were thought out and because they were calculated so that this majority would not remain whole. He continues:

"I am responsible to preserve that majority but I am not keeping it together."

This is the declaration where the Prime Minister of this country is stating that he is no longer supported by the majority of this Parliament, and this not with regards to the Cottonera question that we have in front of us. In fact he said that as Prime Minister he noticed that from November to the present, things happened the way they did – let me use the exact words he used – in a method that was planned,



thought out and calculated and which led to the situation where he no longer has a majority. From the debates that were held in this Parliament, from the writings and the declarations that were made in this Parliament and outside, it is known that the Prime Minister does not have the support of the majority of this Parliament with the regard to his foreign policy and in particular with his relation with Europe; the Prime Minister does not have the support of the majority of this Parliament when it comes to his fiscal policy; the Prime Minister does not have the support of this Parliament when it come to the measures he took with regards to the electricity and water bills. I was not at all surprised, therefore, when he finally recognised the facts for what they are. I would like to say, Madam Speaker, that he created this crisis because that is what he decided to create by making these declarations and I am saying that this is important and urgent because these matters have plunged the country into an intolerable situation. The country cannot live in this state of uncertainty where the Prime Minister says that he no longer has the support of a

majority; where the Prime Minister asks his colleagues to appoint another in his stead and where his colleagues tell him that there is nobody to replace him without coming to the logical and democratic consequences of this situation.

According to the Permanent Order Number 13 I am meant to make a written declaration that I prepared and which I am going to read:

"The House should adjourn to discuss the political crisis which the Prime Minister created with the public declarations that he made in Birgu on the 9th Of June, 1998.

The Prime Minister was right when he said "Parliament is run according to who has the greater majority of votes in Parliament" and he added "I am aware that things have happened the way they happened from November onwards in a way that was planned, in a way that was thought in a way that was calculated so that the majority would not remain whole." And he concluded by saying "It is my responsibility to keep that majori-

ty unified, but I am not keeping it whole."

The only logical consequence of the Prime Minister's declarations is that he immediately offers his resignation to the President of Malta."

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Prime Minister.

**ALFRED SANT:** Mrs President, this side of the house is suggesting that we don't follow the suggestion of the leader of the opposition. We acknowledge that there is a political crisis in the country but the reason for this crisis is not because of the words that the leader of the opposition quoted – which, after all, he himself said in the evening – but because of what happens in this parliament. This side of the house is proposing the next motion, meaning the resolution concerning the docks and the yacht marina in Birgu and the discussion about it is going to be presented as and taken as a vote of confidence in the Labour Government. So at once the political crisis can be discussed from that angle.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** Honourable Dr Eddie

**EDDIE FENECH ADAMI:**

Madam Speaker, the Prime Minister has said what I am saying and I am cussed as it is an matter. I am read again about the motion placed before us. In fact in the last 100 years of house business I have never just took place the motion from that standpoint there is no prolong matters or But this motion has to do with the state of a Prime Minister declaration that has existed and which has arisen since November 1998 in the position of the opposition known and we rely on say from now that going to vote in favour of this motion as we don't have the quays of Birgu – the buildings, not so much built upon, not so much turned into a car park to be given as private property 99 years, but we have them remaining there

# Importance



**MADAM SPEAKER:** The hon-  
ourable Fenech Adami.

**FENECH ADAMI:**

...what the Prime Minister confirms that should be discussed publicly to speak in Parliament. ...meeting of the committee which ...was no need to ...the motion. ...as nothing to do ...affairs that the ...scribed that ...which he recog- ...ted at least ...of last year. The ...position is ...terate it. I can ...t we are not ...avour of the ...'t agree that the ...not some other ...ne land to be ...me land to be ...park - should ...te property for ...want to see ...the property of

the Maltese public. (Interruptions) If the government decided that it wants to discuss the motion, we are hear to discuss it, but now the position is that the country is in a crisis that was called, wanted and opened by the Prime Minister. And it cannot be that we allow this country to move on in a haphazard manner without knowing the position taken by the Prime Minister.

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Prime Minister.

**ALFRED SANT:** This crisis that the leader of the opposition is mentioning is easily resolved by the proposal the Government side is making; that we discuss the next motion on the basis of a vote of confidence. Our suggestion is that we proceed with the suggestion to forward the motion at once. (members: Hear, Hear)

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The hon-ourable Fenech Adami.

**EDDIE FENECH ADAMI:** Madam Speaker, I have followed all the speeches the Prime Minister has made recently. These

speeches were all concerned with whether this project is a project that will prove to be the salvation of Kottonera. I declare that the opposition is in favour that the project at Cottonera goes ahead (Interruptions). We are not in favour that the quays are given away on lease because we don't agree to the conditions, because, as Dom Mintoff put it, it seems that the government was not able to discuss and secure the best conditions. However it is the choice of the Prime Minister to confuse one thing with another. If the Prime Minister chooses to tie his position that he himself is saying is no longer democratic with the Cottonera project, then the people will understand who really does not want the Cottonera project to go ahead. (members: Hear, Hear)

**MADAM SPEAKER:** The Honourable Lino Spiteri.

**LINO SPITERI:** A comment has just been made, Madam Speaker, that we should not mix one thing with another, and we should not mix one thing with another. The leader of the opposition based the motion that he is presenting on the situation that in this parliament there isn't a parliamentary majority and he mentioned three things. He mentioned the relationship with the European Union, he mentioned the fiscal policy and he mentioned a motion that has nothing to do with confidence. As you don't have to be very wise to understand that when he mentioned relationship with the European Union and fiscal policy, he was referring to the comments that I make, to the articles that I write and to the things that I say to offer alternatives in the discussions that are held within my own party, and because it is clear that he is doing this, I need to repeat that there is no doubt that my vote when it comes to these things is with the government because I am a deputy of the government and my vote is with the government. (members: Hear, hear)

With regards to the reference to the actual motion that we have in front of us, this motion is of a very particular and interesting nature. This is a motion that concerns Cottonera, this is a motions that concerns Malta. Several comments have been made in this regard and even I have commented and asked questions about it but this is not a question of confidence. On the other hand it has been repeatedly declared in this parliament that we should proceed with it and find where we stand, therefore one should proceed with it and find out where one stands. I have no doubt that with this motion as a test of confidence, the opposition is not going to get satisfaction.

## Of two leaders



In December last year **MaltaToday** interviewed Emy Bezzina. The following is an excerpt from that interview in which Dr Bezzina speaks about his relations with Alfred Sant and Dom Mintoff.

"Some Birzebbuga canvassers quoted something I'd said on a radio show out of context and Alfred Sant then declared that he didn't consider me a Labour candidate anymore. We did not meet or speak for quite a while then."

I take the opportunity of asking him what he thinks of Alfred Sant as Labour Leader. The two, it appears, have known each other since their days at University when the opposition leader used to write plays and Emy Bezzina would act in them. The lawyer insists that he never wanted this distance to grow between him and Dr Sant. But his voice then brightens as he tells me that not long ago he chanced upon him in Valletta and "Dr Sant did give me his very nice smile."

Did he ever expect Dr Sant to be leader? The lawyer does not hesitate to answer in the negative and to state that he himself had backed George Abela. Dr Bezzina was at the time chairman of the candidate's section of the Labour Party and he remembers Alfred Sant as the quietest candidate of the whole group. When he was elected successor to Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici there were a lot of surprised faces that "the man who came in from the cold", as the lawyer put it, should be given the helm.

"A leader needs charisma. Tony Blair has it, Hague

doesn't and so the Conservative Party in England is condemned to many years of opposition. Alfred Sant too has developed his own charisma. I think that today he is affirmed in his status as leader. And if he needs the help of friends, he shouldn't hesitate to come forward. After all, a leader cannot lead without a circle of trusted people."

At the same time, he doesn't hide the fact that he still admires Mintoff. He can never accept the violence that happened in the 70s, he quickly says. But besides the violence he also remembers how Mintoff carved an identity for Malta in Europe.

"Top statesmen remember him to this day. Only two years ago I was at a conference abroad and Edward Heath asked me how Mintoff was doing. This is a former English Prime Minister we're talking about, one who did not even see eye to eye with Mintoff. And yet he still asks after him. Mintoff gave us our Maltese identity: he gave us our own airline, our broadcasting, the wireless, Maltese banks the silos... This is what forges a country after all. Is it any wonder I still admire the man?" he asks.