

ELECTION SPECIAL

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GONZI WINS WITH THE SLIMMEST OF MAJORITIES

PN 49.3% MLP 48.9%

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GENERAL ELECTIONS 2008
- minute for minute

SATURDAY - 8 March

17:51 - Party leaders from all four political parties cast their vote on a quiet voting day where no incidents were reported, and a sense of business as usual prevailed in most Maltese towns and villages. The tension was however perceptible for among political activists of all political parties. With over 5,000 voting documents uncollected, party officials were trying very hard to keep calm. The first unconfirmed news was the arrest of two officials from MTA and MEPA over the Misra saga, released on Maltastar.com but there was no independent confirmation.

18:26 - Rumours that hunters have deposited over 1,000 voting documents at the Nationalist HQ prove to be untrue after MaltaToday talks to PN officials.

20:09 - Voting time is extended to 2300hrs. It is believed at first that it's the Nationalists who have demanded an extension to the voting time.

21:58 - The International Herald Tribune quotes MT journalist and survey coordinator James Debono - "Some people say: 'Well, there is the problem of the same government, but is the opposition better?' Labour is more convincing on the count of corruption, while on issues like job creation, health care the Nationalist Party is more convincing."

22:08 - Unibet's Lennart Ehlinger tells MaltaToday: "This is the first time we're taking bets on an election in Malta. Of course, we've been offering bets on elections in other countries for a long time now - be it in the US or in different parts of Europe. So far, we're pleasantly surprised with the turnout. It was well received in Malta and this is probably due to the fact that the Maltese are well informed on political affairs. The way it works is not very different from sports."

SUNDAY - 9 March

02:00 - Exit polls carried out by MT in the 10th district reveal that Robert Arrigo is the PN's preferred candidate. But the poll also indicates a surprise showing for John Dalli, who turns out to be third most preferred PN candidate.

02:16 - Turnout was 3% down from 2003. In 2003 the turnout was 96%. In 2003 the EU accession issue was a prime reason for the high turnout. The lowest turnouts were in the first, 9th and 10th districts, and 13th (Gozo) districts. The districts are notably Nationalist strongholds. Local elections were also held yesterday and the turnout here was 86%.

02:25 - Political stations run a long night vigil of the arrival and reconciliation of voting documents, a tedious process which still attracts viewers who stay up the whole night long.

02:30 - If the sorting of votes commences by 10:30, the political parties will have a clear indication of the final result around midday.

03:15 - The PN removed most of its billboards during the night and early morning of 9 March.

03:20 - Economist Prof Edward Scicluna, who served as MSCED chairman during a Nationalist administration but later fell out of favour, tells One News that the fall in the voter turnout would mean thousands of lost votes for the PN.

Gonzi wins by narrowest of margins

RAPHAEL VASSALLO

THE Nationalist Party has won the 2008 general election with a slender majority of 1,200 votes, failing to achieve absolute majority with a total tally of 49.3%. This makes the PN the first political party ever to win three elections in a row.

The Malta Labour Party gained just over 1% from its last election result with 48.9%, while Alternattiva Demokratika obtained 1.5% - more than double its 2003 showing, but not enough to clinch a seat in parliament.

This places Lawrence Gonzi at the helm of a minority government: the first of its kind since the Borg Olivier administration

of 1966-1971. Although victorious, the PN has ironically also emerged as the biggest individual loser from the election, suffering a significant drop of 4%: around 10,800 votes.

Nonetheless, last October's Constitutional amendments guarantee Prime Minister Gonzi a parliamentary majority of a single seat. It is therefore a double-edged victory, which leaves Dr Gonzi in a considerably weakened position vis-à-vis his former five-seat majority.

Yesterday's results came after nine hours of counting and scenes of high tension at the Naxxar counting hall. Early into the proceedings, a smiling MLP secretary general Jason Micallef hinted at an absolute majority for Labour: a fact which sent the

party's supporters out into the streets in a celebration which proved to be premature. As the day wore on, samples began to show a trend in favour of a PN come-back. Despite many rumours to the contrary, it became evident by early evening that the Nationalist party was in fact ahead. At one point, the lowest difference between the parties indicated by a single sample was just 30 votes.

In the end it was only at 9.30pm that PN secretary general Joe Saliba told counting agents in Naxxar that "all indications point towards a PN victory by 1,200 votes." By that point, Jason Micallef had put on his invisibility cloak, and it was left to MLP deputy leader Michael Falzon to face the Labour hopefuls at

Naxxar. Acknowledging that the election was too close to call, Falzon stopped short of actually conceding defeat, even after Saliba had proclaimed victory. More significantly, he also said would not rule out the possibility of a recount.

The MLP-owned news portal Maltastar.com had already announced a PN victory; but soon afterwards, the story was changed under the headline: "PN claims victory, Labour says result still in the balance."

At the time of going to print, the MLP had still not officially commented on the election result, claiming that it preferred waiting for the official results to be announced by the electoral commission. Nor had it requested a recount.

'I was seriously considering whether I should contest' - Mugliett

JULIA FARRUGIA

OUTGOING minister Jesmond Mugliett revealed with MaltaToday yesterday that until a few weeks before the election he was seriously considering whether he should contest or not.

"Yes, I went through a very difficult time. There was a time when I was asking myself whether I should contest or not," claimed Mugliett.

"But then I said to myself that a minister needs to be accountable till the very end and I decided to contest the election. And

also I wanted to give my help so that my party will be re-elected in government. These were the two reasons that convinced me to go for it," Mugliett said.

Mugliett ruled out the option that he had discussed his candidature within the Nationalist Party. "I kept this between my-

self, my family and the closest people around me."

Mugliett also said that throughout the electoral campaign he noticed a positive turnout towards the PN, including Labourites whom he claimed had showed sympathy with him.



Claudio Grech, personal secretary to Austin Gatt, and PN president Victor Scerri after the announcement of the PN's victory

1971-2003 Vote difference between major parties

	Number of Votes	% diff	% Majority	Seat Majority	1971	Third Party Vote %	Votes
1971	4695	2.8	MLP	1 (MLP)	1976	0	0
1976	6303	3.1	MLP	3 (MLP)	1981	0	0
1981	4142	1.9	PN	3 (MLP)	1987	0.2	499
1987	4785	1.9	PN	1 (PN)	1992	1.7	4186
1992	13021	5.3	PN	3 (PN)	1996	1.5	3820
1996	7633	2.9	MLP	1 (MLP)	1998	1.2	3208
1998	12817	4.8	PN	5 (PN)	2003	0.7	1929
2003	12080	4.3	PN	5 (PN)			



Scenes of jubilation outside the PN headquarters, and below, Joe Saliba at the heart of celebrations at the counting hall



PHOTOGRAPHY BY THERESE DEBONO

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GENERAL ELECTIONS 2008
- minute for minute

14:30 - First records from 10th district confirm exit poll trend issued by MT on Sunday morning, which registered in order of preference, first place for Nationalist candidates Robert Arrigo (15.9%), George Pullicino (13.5), John Dalli (11.1), Francis Zammit Dimech (8.9), Michael Frenzo (8.2); MLP frontrunners: Michael Falzon (11.6), Evarist Bartolo (5.3); AD: Harry Vassallo (3.4)

14:31 - Parties start registering prudence in the comments of party officials. Buoyancy in the Labour camp dips. NET TV pundits sound more positive as they warn caution.

14:36 - Initial sampling for AD puts the Greens at a disappointing 1.5%, with Arnold Cassola on the 9th district at 3%, Victor Galea on the 13th district with 1.8%. No sampling exists for Harry Vassallo on the 10th district.

14:41 - In a terse statement to the press Labour deputy leader Michael Falzon says the result is still unclear and as far as voting goes, undecided.

14:50 - The mood in the streets has changed with Labour carcases coming to an abrupt end.

14:52 - AN officials tell MT they are disappointed with their first count votes. AN president Charles Attard says "many people promised their second preference vote. However the first counts do not reflect this." Paul Salomone: "We were not expecting to win and neither a 50-50 situation. We are being realistic. Our party was born five months ago."

15:03 - PN officials say they have a 4,000 majority; Labour refuse to concede and insist it is too close to call and PN speculation is still within margin of error.

15:13 - PN officials tell MT that it is more like a 1,500 majority. Tension runs high at Naxxar counting hall, PN tells activists to gather at Stamperija.

15:14 - Labour deputy leader Michael Falzon emerges into the counting hall to meet Labour counting agents, but gives no inkling of a clear result, urging "prudence on all sides", and that sampling results from the PN side are "what they are: sampling".

15:24 - PN information secretary Gordon Pisani urges prudence: samples from the 519 ballot boxes are still being analysed and extrapolated.

15:57 - PN pundits and sources exude confidence, with high sources confirming victory for the PN with MaltaToday, and the banter on NET TV typical of a victory yet to be announced.

15:40 - Labour officials tell MT they are waiting for the PN to declare victory for them to concede defeat.

16:14 - Lawrence Gonzi is expected to visit the counting hall at 17:00h.

17:16 - No sign of Lawrence Gonzi but celebrations begin inside the Naxxar counting hall, with PN counting agents banging on the perspex and shouting "Gonzi, Gonzi".

17:18 - PN wins, TVM declares, as jubilation reigns at Naxxar counting halls, minutes before Labour deputy leader Charles Mangion talks of a "photo-finish".

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GILBERT CALLEJA

As PN claims victory, Labour holds out till the end



Labour deputy leader Michael Falzon yesterday faced the press as he repeatedly stood his ground that the results were too close to call

MATTHEW VELLA

THE Nationalist Party yesterday claimed it had won the March 2008 elections with a very slim majority of 1,200 votes, but Labour secretary-general Jason Micallef said the party would wait until the official count by the Electoral Commission before conceding any defeat.

Earlier on in the evening, Labour internet organ maltastar.com had announced a Nationalist victory before changing its news item just minutes later to a non-political story, and then announcing Micallef was not conceding defeat.

The PN's relative majority was leading with a small 0.4 per cent margin over Labour.

Late in the evening, Labour Party deputy leader Michael Falzon and Jason Micallef both said Labour would be waiting for the end of the first count of votes before officially announcing a result.

Falzon said the result was still in the balance and that it was premature to announce a result. Micallef then appeared on One News to say that Labour was still calling for the official count before confirming the result.

Micallef said the parties were still neck and neck and that the MLP would wait for the official first-count votes before issuing a statement on the elections



results. Micallef said Labour's unofficial results were not the same as those announced by the PN, and would be waiting for the official result announced by the Electoral Commission.

On the other hand, earlier on at 9:30pm, Nationalist Party secretary general Joe Saliba announced that all indications were pointing to a victory for the Nationalist Party with a majority of 1,200 votes.

Soon enough, the streets were filled with PN supporters cel-

ebrating victory.

The day started off with a confident Jason Micallef signalling that the first indications pointed to an absolute majority for Labour. The mood soon changed when it was announced that the tide had changed in the PN's favour, although Joe Saliba was adamant not to give out any predictions.

At around 8:30pm, Michael Falzon told journalists that clear results would emerge by 9:30pm when sampling would

have ended, but the party later issued a late evening statement saying it had not conceded defeat until it gets the official count from the Electoral Commission.

The difference in votes between the two parties was so close that even after six samples of votes obtained by the two parties, the margin separating them was too small to confirm any clear victor - the situation was totally different to previous elections.

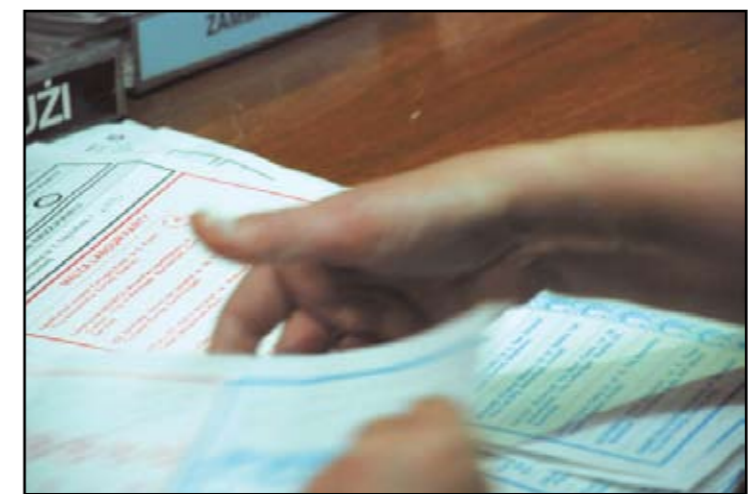
The longest day in Maltese politics

KARL SCHEMBRI

WHO said a week is a long time in politics? What about a day? What about 9 March, 2008?

From early morning, Labour was already preparing for its big victory, with officials from the higher echelons spreading the word unofficially about a landslide win for the party. The word spread quickly as party faithful were taking to the streets in unofficial car-cades from as early as 10am yesterday, while the PN was soberly resigned to what seemed like a sure defeat, in line with predictions.

Yet by 1.30pm, the smirks and smug looks of the Labour coterie in the counting hall quickly turned into deadpan faces as a wave of insecurity hit them all. It was an unexpected reversal of the tide, as



the PN counting agents and their officials were all of a sudden patting each other's backs and giving encouraging signs to each other. From a step away from jubilation, Labour ended up in a clear situation of distress. The body language said it all, the whispers in the air

were the only confirmation available along the corridors in the counting hall, but what was expected to be a matter of minutes turned into a waiting game spanning hours, long hours, in turn expanding into one whole day. The longest day in Maltese politics.

Mary Louise Coleiro-Preca first elected candidate

JULIA FARRUGIA

OBTAINING 5,490 in the first count on the sixth district, Mary Louise Coleiro-Preca was the first elected candidate in Sunday's election. A tired Coleiro-Preca expressed thanks to the electorate:

"I am satisfied, honesty won. Those who are suffering, even though they are not the 'trendiest' people in society, are capable of showing their appreciation. I will continue to show my full support to the workers, the families and young children and those who are socially excluded," said the former Labour secretary-general.

"I will keep on working in favour of these people. I really appreciated the trust shown by the families in the Sixth District, people from Qormi, Luqa and Siggiewi," said Coleiro-Preca. "When the Districts were amended I lost 1,000 possible votes. Last time I got 4,435, so this means that I increased my votes with 2,000."

GENERAL ELECTIONS 2008
- minute for minute

17:23 - Labour's other deputy leader Michael Falzon still cautions against any "irresponsible" declarations of victory.

17:46 - PN secretary-general Joe Saliba says the election is too close to call, saying it would be irresponsible to declare victory at this point. Saliba announces it's not right to say that any party had won the election and that the result would be clear within three hours, and asks party supporters not to celebrate in the streets. He said the parties would have to wait until all the first count votes were counted.

18:00 - AD votes for Cassola and Vassallo are estimated to be around 2.5% to 3%.

18:28 - The difference between the two parties stands at 1,000. The MLP has a majority of seats. The difference between the two parties is 0.5% and it appears that none of the parties have attained 50% plus one of the votes.

19:00 - Labour register a swing of 1,000 votes on the 13th district in Gozo, which sends waves of discontent among PN counting agents. The view is that the difference between the two parties stands at less than 800 votes.

19:41 - Labour sources from Naxxar say they are trailing by 750 to 1,000 votes. They say they cannot imagine a recovery with the number of first-count votes that have still not been counted.

19:45 - Vindicating MT exit polls on the 10th district, Robert Arrigo leads as the most preferred candidate and a surprise vote emerges for district newcomer John Dalli.

20:35 - Labour deputy leader Michael Falzon says clear results will become apparent by 21:30 but does not exclude calling for a recount.

20:54 - Speaking to journalists, PN deputy leader Tonio Borg urged caution. None of the parties will make an official declaration before the first count ends and the votes are counted. He said this urge for caution was also a sign of responsibility when the result is so close. In Italy, in Austria and in Germany there have been close results recently as well, the deputy PN leader said.

21:25 - PN win election 2008 by slimmest of margins. Joe Saliba announces that the PN won the election by 1,200 votes.

21:31 - The PN has won by a relative majority and will have one more seat than the MLP, which in fact won a majority of seats. It's the first party ever in Malta to win three elections in a row.

22:28 - Labour secretary-general Jason Micallef issues a statement saying the parties were still neck and neck and that the MLP would wait for the official first-count votes before issuing a statement on the elections results. Micallef says Labour's unofficial results are not the same as those announced by the PN, and will be waiting for the official result announced by the Electoral Commission.

Rising stars and fallen angels

JAMES DEBONO

JOHN Dalli who spent the past four years in the political wilderness managed to increase his first count vote on the sixth district from 3,059 to 3,370. The former Nationalist Minister and leadership contender has won even managed to stave off competition from Education Minister Louis Galea, who polled 1,810 first count votes and backbencher Clyde Puli

who polled 2,383. Puli lost nearly 500 votes on this district.

Dalli managed to increase his support despite the changes enacted to this district which retained Qormi but lost Kirkop and Santa Venera, gaining Siggiewi instead. Dalli had the advantage of previously contesting the seventh district which included Siggiewi.

Ninu Zammit, another incumbent minister, only managed to get 624 votes. Galea and Zammit, who previously contested

the seventh district, faced the Qormi electorate for the first time while Puli faced the Siggiewi electorate for the first time.

With 5,508 votes Lawrence Gonzi's lieutenant in the Ministry of Finance, Tonio Fenech, managed to surpass the vote tally of PN deputy leader Tonio Borg who got 3,771 votes.

Results from the 10th district confirmed MaltaToday's exit poll which put Robert Arrigo on top of the PN's list surpassing incumbent Ministers Francis

Zammit Dimech, George Pulicino and Michael Frendo.

On the fifth district, Labour newcomer and former PN candidate Marlene Pulicino snatched 2,062, getting more votes than former deputy leader George Vella.

Back in 2003, Vella was the top Labour candidate in this district with 3,050 votes.

Maverick labour MP Joe Sammut, known for his support of the hunting lobby and his tough stand on immigration, decreased his vote from 1,937 in

2003 to 1,539.

MLP deputy leader Michael Falzon emerged as the top Labour candidate in both districts he contested for the first time: 2,853 in the 10th and 3,046 in the second.

The other deputy leader Charles Mangion did not fare so well coming second to Marie Louise Coleiro Preca on the sixth district and surpassed by Karl Chircop and Silvio Parnis on the fourth.

debono@mediatoday.com.mt

Nationalist MP and outgoing environment minister George Pulicino and Labour MP Marie-Louise Coleiro monitoring the counting process. Below: PN deputy leader Tonio Borg



From left to right, clockwise: Tonio Fenech and Michael Gonzi (PN) after news spread of the Nationalist victory. Labour MPs Charles Buhagiar (right) and Noel Farrugia (left). Tenth district candidates Georg Sapiano and outgoing foreign minister Michael Frendo.



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ESPERO CIELO RACER STI NUBIRA

A lot of hanging around in a cliffhanger election



CHARLOT ZAHRA

IT was a day of changing emotions at the Naxxar Counting Hall as witnessed from the parties' quarters, which hosts the counting staff of the four political parties.

The quarters hosting the MLP and PN quarters, were hosted next to each other in two separate yards, covered with in

metal sheeting and resembling a huge chicken coop in which the huge armadas of the two main parties took their rests from the tense atmosphere inside the counting hall.

Party agents and candidates were seen chatting animatedly and smoking furiously as the hours passed by and the tête à tête between the MLP and the PN proceeded during the day.

In the morning, Labour

counting staff were buoyant as the first sample showed a Labour victory, forcing the hand of party secretary-general Jason Micallef to declare that there was a "clear majority" for Labour.

However, the mood among them grew despondent as the next samples showed a slight PN victory. On the other hand, the PN counting staff, who had been in a sombre mood until

then, grew bolder and livelier by the minute.

In a separate room adjacent to the MLP quarters, there are the AD quarters, which hosts the tiny armada of the Green Party counting staff, as well as AD candidates and officials. The atmosphere there was slightly calmer than in the adjacent quarters, with party chairperson Harry Vassallo and secretary general Victor Galea.

The newcomers to the political scene, AN, were isolated in separate quarters on the other side of the voting complex. Unlike the other three parties, AN had no counting staff and the AN candidates were rather relaxed, drinking whisky in a leisurely manner as they absorbed their dismal performance at the polls.

czahra@mediatoday.com. mt

Early disappointment for Azzjoni Nazzjonali

SABRINA AGIUS

EARLY afternoon results for Azzjoni Nazzjonali yesterday dealt the new party a blow as AN leader Josie Muscat declared his part had not fared as had been expected.

AN president Charles Attard said: "Many people promised their second preference vote. However the first counts do not reflect this."

AN candidates still tried to be serene about the situation. "We were not expecting to win and neither a 50-50 situation. We are being realistic. Our party was born five months ago," candidate Paul Salamone said.

Azzjoni Nazzjonali deputy leader Anglu Xuereb facing a disappointing outcome for his new party, yesterday



Harry Vassallo – 'Political legitimacy will be missing from government'

MATTHEW VELLA

ALTERNATTIVA Demokratika chairperson Harry Vassallo yesterday said the chances of electing a seat on the 10th district would be marginal, commenting on his party's showing which yesterday showed results close to 1.5%, a better performance than last election's 0.7%.

"We would have definitely appreciated getting more votes. However we have certainly increased and this satisfies our party. We shall know how AD candidates performed in this election only during the last counting," Vassallo said.

Vassallo said AD had "suffered a big campaign" against people voting for the Green party. Yesterday he said the party would be staying on to the last count to see what happens.

"The result announced by the PN secretary-general are

just indicative. I think it is important we remain prudent till the end. AD will keep doing its democratic duty to follow all the counts. Joe Saliba was very prudent during the sampling and in fact he didn't hint at anything. This electoral win was declared on indications and as a matter of fact it was not declared by Gonzi himself. As one could see, the Nationalist Party took control in the streets as the Labour Party did back in 2003 during the Referendum."

Vassallo also said the relative majority that the PN clinched yesterday would mean that "political legitimacy will be missing from the party that will form the government. The support that AD has won indeed shows that in a coalition this would have guaranteed an absolute majority. The significance of this result is that none of the parties reached the 50 per cent quota. This result was a strong message from the electorate."



Ever hopeful - Arnold Cassola, chairperson Harry Vassallo, and Mario Mallia at the counting hall

Edward Fenech – 'AD is here to stay'

CHARLOT ZAHRA

ALTHOUGH Alternattiva Demokratika (AD) trebled its first-count preference votes in the March 8 general election when compared to five years ago, it still fell short of electing an MP in Parliament.

However, speaking to MaltaToday, AD's spokesperson for Finance and the Economy, Edward Fenech, was upbeat about the Green Party's performance during the general elections.

He said: "The results speak out for themselves. What is certain is that AD has obtained the equivalent of a national quota. With a perfect proportional system, we would have obtained a seat."

"I think it is relevant to note that at this stage, none of the two main parties obtained 50% of votes. Therefore whoever wins will not have the legitimacy of representing half the electorate."

"It is a very significant political point that the next government, whoever it is, cannot behave in such an arrogant manner as it behaved in the past," Fenech added.

Asked by MaltaToday to comment about the political future



Edward Fenech

of AD after the polls, Fenech said: "I think we have to analyse this result slowly, not hastily. What will happen in the next few days is important. The fact that there are around 5,000 to 6,000 first-count votes is not an insignificant result. I think that these people need a clear message as to the future of AD."

After the general election, an extraordinary general meeting will be held to see what our future will be. I think AD is here to stay," Fenech concluded.

czahra@mediatoday.com. mt

Living to fight another day

JAMES DEBONO

FOR Alternattiva Demokratika, any result short of electing a member of parliament was a major defeat.

This was the declared aim of Dr Harry Vassallo who even expressed hopes of electing three or four MPs in all.

AD has not even managed to surpass its 1996 result when it got 1.7% of the vote, even if it managed to double its 2003 result and improve on that of 1998.

AD's result also shows a complete failure to communicate with the electorate in Labour oriented areas. AD's discourse could be too alien for these voters. This is a major shortcoming for a party claiming a nationwide appeal.

Yet the silver lining for AD comes from its results in the 9th, 10th and 11th districts – the middle class heartlands – where AD polled nearly 1,500 votes.

This is a further indication that the Greens have anchored their roots among the educated middle class. But this risks turning AD into a regional phenomenon, whose strength lies solely in the affluent parts of Malta.

One has to concede that AD is a progressive party trying to communicate with the masses in a country untouched by the great intellectual currents on

Despite the disproportion in funding reflected in the number of Azzjoni Nazzjonali billboards, AD has won the battle for third place

the continent: the protestant reformation, the Enlightenment, liberalism, socialism and the 1968 student revolution.

On the plus side, Harry Vassallo in the 10th district got the highest vote for any third party candidate in a general election since 1971.

The election also shows that AD has failed to convince the electorate that coalition poli-

tics are feasible for Malta. Surely the electoral system is partly to blame. Yet with no third party getting more than 2%, it is extremely unlikely for the other parties to change the rules of the game.

Surely AD faced an intense scaremongering campaign and its leader was even served with an arrest warrant two days before the election. Still this also gave AD a visibility disproportionate to its size. In fact AD's strength derives more from the threat it poses, rather than its vote count.

AD's greatest contribution to this election was making the environment a central issue, as evidenced by the green proposals in both Labour and PN manifestos. At election level, its only satisfaction is to have pushed the two parties below the 50%. No party can now claim the right to speak for the majority of the electorate. From now on, any government measure opposed by both Labour and AD will lack the support of a majority of people.

In reality, it is thanks to AD Malta has its first minority government since 1971. Surely, despite the disproportion in funding reflected in the number of Azzjoni Nazzjonali billboards, AD has won the battle for third place.

Perhaps this will give the Greens the strength to live and fight another day.

How peace of mind won the day



TAKE those travel brochures back: Lawrence Gonzi is not going on holiday. The Nationalist prime minister is here to stay, rising like a phoenix to victory against odds that had the 20-year-old Nationalist government in a quandary.

Lawrence Gonzi, 54, the man who ran one of the most personalised electoral campaigns ever, the man who exhorted mistrustful voters to trust him at the helm of a country he said would not be the same under Alfred Sant, has won the general elections.

They said the writing was on the wall for the Nationalist government. Since 1987, it had occupied all spheres of political life bar two unstable years of Sant's short-lived government. In 1998, buoyed by Sant's precarious rule and the backbench rebellion of former prime minister Dom Mintoff, Eddie Fenech Adami won the electorate's trust once again to take Malta into the European Union. But after 2003, it seemed that a sense of destiny for the PN had fizzled out: where would this party go with Lawrence Gonzi?

For four years, Lawrence Gonzi presided over repeated electoral losses at the local council level. Soon after winning the leadership race against John Dalli, the PN failed to obtain a majority in the European Parliament elections, electing two out of five MEPs. Then came the string of losses in the local council elections. His ministers were the authors of questionable political decisions and bureaucratic incompetence. Bribery at lower levels embarrassed ministers like Jesmond Mugliet and Censu Galea. Gonzi would be later much criticised for not accepting Mugliet's resignation. Austin Gatt, the bawdy investments minister, scoffed at layoffs in the manufacturing sector. Francis Zammit Dimech was under pressure as tourism floundered, being described as the least likely person to be fit for the role.



And then the turnaround: Gonzi and his parliamentary secretary Tonio Fenech manage to bring down a deficit to below the 3% threshold demanded by Maastricht criteria and launch a budget of tax cuts and increased social benefits in 2007, as the country wins its place in the club of eurozone members. Despite calls to set an election date as early as September 2007, Gonzi waits until late February 2008 to set his date.

Gonzi's victory places the PN leader squarely into the hall of fame of PN leaders. Against all odds, embarrassed by a Cabinet of ministers he himself declares will be changed, Gonzi won the Nationalists a historic

third term. He has won himself a seat in the pantheon of Nationalist gods, and escaped the fate of having been – like Karmenu Mifsud Bonnici – a prime minister who never won the election. To the PN, Gonzi is a superhero who clinched victory against the expectations of even Nationalist supporters, and proving the 1971 hypothesis wrong.

In the end, it confirms that the GonziPN brand has worked. It confirms MaltaToday's surveys: Gonzi is more popular than his own party, he is trusted by the people more than Alfred Sant, and it's a consistent show of trust which according to MaltaToday's sur-

veys has been ongoing for the past two years. Even against the expectations of his critics, Gonzi proved that he commands more "peace of mind", as his final billboard exhorted to the electorate. Sant just could not be trusted – and the PN's demonising scare campaign made sure that message was drummed right into people's heads. This was the contrast between Gonzi and Sant.

It is also clear that despite the accusations of corruption levelled against the PN, the electorate did not deem this to be the deal-breaker in giving Gonzi the mandate for another five years. And as for the onslaught of the third par-

ties, Gonzi's victory means that Alternattiva Demokratika and Azzjoni Nazzjonali were not speaking the language of the people. AD failed to strike the chord it hoped it would to clinch a parliamentary seat, and AN were just a ridiculous footnote in the entire election.

Gonzi's victory, albeit with a wafer-thin majority, signals the triumph of a man who turned an electoral race into a personal supplication for trust in the safe hands that moulded the country's economic turnaround. Did togetherness make this victory possible? Gonzi's one-seat majority will show us.

In the hot seat



RAPHAEL VASSALLO analyses the implication of the first relative majority government in 37 years, and asks whether a single-seat majority is in fact more stable than a coalition

STABILITY. Such an important consideration in Maltese politics. So coveted by a people which remembers its antithesis only too well. And so central to the successful GonziPN campaign, which banked mainly on the fear of instability to counter both Labour leader Alfred Sant, and the chance that a third party would win a seat at the PN's expense.

Looking back on past elections, it is not surprising that the vast majority would consider a relative majority as a setback to democracy. We are, after all, a quintessentially bipartisan country. Ever since 1971, every election has produced a single, clear majority winner in a closely-fought

contest between only two players. Even in the now-infamous 1981 election, which technically produced a minority government with a majority of seats, there was no questioning the PN's absolute majority of 51%.

All of which makes yesterday's something of a historic result. This is in fact the first time in nearly 40 years that no party has succeeded in garnering the all-important 50% +1, with implications that will certainly have to be taken on board once the celebrations are over.

But unlike previous years – when a similar result would have plunged the country into a Constitutional crisis – this time round the eventuality is well

catered-for by Maltese law. Last October the PN and MLP got together and agreed upon a Constitutional amendment which would guarantee the majority party enough seats to govern... even if the extra seats do not represent actual voters, and can conceivably expand the House of Representatives to an unwieldy 71 seats in all. Essentially it was an upgrade of a similar amendment made in 1986, specifically to avoid a repeat performance of the 1981 result; and again, the compromise failed to take into account the possibility of three or more parties electing representatives to parliament.

The status quo thereby guarantees single-party rule; but as we

A personal defeat for Sant



James Debono

ALFRED Sant has lost his gamble to repeat Dom Mintoff's feat of winning an election after losing power after a couple of years back and suffering two consecutive defeats. The MLP has lost because of Sant, and not despite Sant.

Had the PN lost, it would have done so despite Lawrence Gonzi's personality but the MLP's defeat will be squarely blamed on Alfred Sant. It is a major personal defeat for the Labour leader in a contest the PN managed to change into a presidential contest. While the PN invested heavily in GonziPN, the MLP was shackled by the past legacy and the baggage of its leader.

Survey after survey since October 2005 showed Alfred Sant as being less popular than Sant. Although elections are not beauty contests, personal charisma counts.

Sant's major problem was his baggage. This included his anti-EU stance, his declaration that the partnership had won, his performance as Prime Minister between 1996 and 1998 and his U-turns on VAT, party participation in local councils, and the European Union.

The PN managed to change a parliamentary contest into a presidential contest, and Labour did not have an affable and charismatic leader to stand up to Gonzi.

Labour failed to capitalise on the need for change. People were asking: "Well, there is the problem of having the same government for 20 years, but is the opposition better?"

The problem with Labour was that it promised change without changing its own leader at the right time, after the 2003 election. By staying on Sant gave the PN the opportunity to say that the MLP was still the same party that opposed EU membership.

Perversely enough, it was Labour which dictated the agenda of the pre-electoral campaign since the summer of 2007, los-



ing the agenda to the PN in the first three weeks of the campaign over its proposal for a reception class, and with the MLP returning with a vengeance in the last week.

Yet the thrust of Labour's final charge were corruption allegations directed against Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando and the lease of his land in Mistra for the construction of an open-air disco.

Labour was certainly more convincing on the count of corruption, but it did not manage to convince the people on issues like job creation where the Nationalist Party seemed more convincing. In the local context corruption does not seem to be the big issue which sways votes. The Nationalist Party had only won by 4,000 votes in 1987

when corruption and abuse of power was also an issue.

Labour's campaign was not as slick as that of the PN. The MLP also presented a number of boomerang proposals: like promising to re-open negotiations with the EU over the dockyards.

The PN was also effective in demonising Labour's proposals like misrepresenting the half-baked reception class idea as a repeater class. The PN still managed to form a wider coalition than the MLP. The PN's promised tax cuts kept middle class voters happy. The MLP's overtime and surcharge proposals merely pleased its working class constituency. To make matters worse, the party's working class constituency still remembers the dire 1996-1998

days. And the PN's coalition was still welded together by fear of Alfred Sant. This stopped a massive haemorrhage to AD. In this sense, Sant was the PN's greatest ally to keep the coalition united.

The aftermath

Sant goes down in history as the great moderniser who changed Old Labour into New Labour, ridding the party of many its violent and corrupt elements. Before 1996 he was definitely more palatable to the middle classes. He still remains the redeeming factor in Labour for a small, intellectual Labour elite.

But after 1998 he lost that part of the population. Now the MLP has to choose between a populist who throws Labour

back to its Mintoffian days, or to choose a more middle-class friendly face with the right EU credentials. Labour MEP Joseph Muscat perfectly fits the job description. His only problem is that he is too young.

Deputy leader Michael Falzon on the other hand starts at a disadvantage being part of the leadership team. His antics also make him unpopular with middle-class voters. His other co-deputy Charles Mangion, a more business friendly face and a political moderate, is also compromised by his present role as deputy leader.

Labour now faces the most difficult task: that of re-inventing itself after its third consecutive electoral defeat. It now faces the prospect of having been a quarter of a century in opposition.

saw yesterday, the resulting government is also condemned to leading by a single-seat majority.

One-seat governments

How stable is that? Judging by history, the answer depends largely on who occupies the hot seat in question.

Although relative majorities are a rarity in Maltese politics, single-seat majorities are not.

Between 1971 and 1976, Mintoff led by 33 seats to 32, without experiencing any noticeable backbencher revolts of the kind he himself engineered 22 years later. And while his administration was characterised by its fair share of instability – largely on account of his somewhat aggressive nationalisation policies, and his "do or die" way of doing politics – the resulting tension was in no way attributable to any

loosening of the government's hold over parliament.

Other, more recent examples proved less fortunate. After his surprise victory in 1996 Alfred Sant found himself in a similar scenario until 1998; only in his case, the single seat that guaranteed his tenure of office was occupied by none other than Mintoff himself.

In many respects it was a pitfall of Sant's own making. For in an unorthodox move, Sant had allowed Mintoff to contest the elections on his own private manifesto. Inevitably, then, Sant's economic policies raised the ire of the Old Labour workhorse, and soon after presenting the 1997 budget, he found himself facing a one-man revolt. What followed was the lost vote of confidence in the Cottonera project, and the subsequent col-

lapse of government in August 1998: the shortest-lived administration since 1958.

Ironically, then, the only post-independence case of an aborted legislature came about with only two parties in parliament, after an election in which the only other party registered a negligible result.

The GonziPN factor

Today, almost exactly a decade later, it is Lawrence Gonzi who finds himself in the single-seat majority scenario. At the time of writing it is not possible to make any reliable projections of how the next parliament will be composed. But if Gonzi's four years as Prime Minister have frustrated anything, it is arguably that the PN leader cannot rely on the absolute, unswerving loyalty enjoyed by his predecessor Eddie

Fenech Adami.

Since taking the helm in 2004, Lawrence Gonzi has occasionally struggled to assert his leadership over the party. His decision to appoint Eddie Fenech Adami to the Presidency was widely criticised as a token of cronyism; more recently still, Gonzi has also had to deal with disgruntlement from prominent Nationalists outside the inner sanctum... among them, Frank Portelli, Ray Bondin and AD's Carmel Cacopardo.

But by far the biggest challenge to his authority has come from John Dalli, the Qormi heavyweight and former Cabinet minister who resigned in 2004, after facing what he himself described as an orchestrated campaign against him from within the party. It is conceivable that after this

election, Prime Minister Gonzi could be more vulnerable to such internal dissidence with only one seat keeping him in power. But this time round there is a difference. Where before, Lawrence Gonzi was a replacement PM who had yet to prove his mettle in the real arena, today he is the PN leader who defeated Alfred Sant on the strength of a campaign based almost exclusively on his own persona. His stature within the party has grown accordingly, and despite the undeniable warning shot fired in his direction by the electorate – which reduced the PN's previous majority by 4% – Gonzi can now lead the party from a position of unparalleled strength.

Surely, then, his weakened hold over parliament should not pose too many difficulties over the next five years.

In the counting hall



Scenes of jubilation for Nationalist secretary-general Joe Saliba and MPs Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando and Jason Azzopardi (left to right), and Nationalist supporters are over the moon with joy (centre), while below, a counting agent patiently awaits the counting results.

PHOTOGRAPH BY GILBERT CALLEJA



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The winner takes all

Yes, my friends, the winner takes it all. But before I continue, I should say that it is completely unacceptable that the final result is not announced by the electoral commission but by Joe Saliba. Why does a political party have this privilege?



Saviour Balzan

sbalzan@mediatoday.com.mt

But even if Joe Saliba wants to take over the role of the electoral commission, was it wise for the Labour party to continue stating that one should wait for the last count vote?

So now back to the vitriol.

I am very pleased for myself that the Nationalist Party has won. It gives me good reason to justify all the things that I have written in the last four years and what's more, the reams of opinions and news stories that I will write in the next five years. If anyone thinks that I am going away, please note that the only reason I will go away is if the good Lord decides to pull me out to the other world.

And apologies for having lowered the tone in the last weeks, I promise to get back to my old nasty self in the near future.

There is one thing I will promise our readers: if I planned to be a thorn in Alfred Sant's backside if he had been elected, then I can assure you that I will be an Ethiopian red pepper for Gonzi.

For the role of the free press is not to be on the side of the establishment, but to question it.

If anyone expects the media that I edit to talk about the positive aspects of this government then all one need to do is to tune in to Bondiplus, Xarabank or dive into The Independent or The Sunday Times or better still, to In-Nazzjon. And then for some really exciting portal news, take a di-ve.com.

This newspaper is not for selling its soul. And if the advertising stops, no problem, we will put up the price and we will still sell copies to our thirsty readers.

We will continue saying it as it is.

Gonzi just made it, I am happy that he made it with such a small majority it gives him the opportunity to know what tightrope walking is all about. I will be there to see how he will implement his new government. Will he appoint Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando as minister? Will he dump Jesmond Mugliett and Tony Abela? If he does not I will be the first to parachute into his first press conference to ask why not.

And to prove how sophisticated our electorate turns out to be, JPO gets hundreds of votes instead of being dumped.

Gonzi had the campaign going for him. It was smooth... until, that is, some crap from Labour started hitting the fan. In the end, as I said before, the issue of corruption does not tantalise the Maltese. We are Catholics, but we are sort of flexible Catholics and corruption does not moves pyramids when it comes to the Maltese way of voting.

Gonzi has a tall order: he has come out with a grand gift cart that is so big that he will need a regiment of St Nicholases to deliver the goods. His tax cuts are so extensive that I wonder which accountant he asked for the fiscal advice.

I will be there to see that he delivers.

I will look at every promise he has made and I will be there to see that it happens. And when it does not happen I will not be content with a simple smile, or a smirk, or an inexcusable excuse. I will be there to ask the question again and again.

And why should I do this? Because, when a political party enters its fifth decade in government it must surely know that the free press will not greet it

with flowers.

The GonziPN gamble has worked wonders. It has proved beyond doubt that Lawrence Gonzi's charisma and personality can be a winner. But charisma and personality do not move mountains, nor do they trim political arrogance, intolerance and nepotism. It wins elections, yes but...

Gonzi was aided by an overwhelming friendly media, an accommodating TVM and a plethora of opinion writers who treated him with kid gloves. But it was an uphill battle with others, which he tackled rather effectively.

The next five years will be an interesting five years. They will see the transformation of the Labour Party - I hope. It will serve to stop the PN from referring to what happened before 1987 or in 1981. Because in 2013 it will be 25 years on. And 25 years ago there was the Berlin Wall, internet had not been created, the mobile was unknown, gays were called poufs and most people thought that Adam and Eve really existed.

In 2013, the game plan will be very different and I will be damned if anyone continues to argue that we need another five years of Gonzi.

It is hoped that the Labour Party will not go for any of the present deputy leaders. I for one, unlike the PN - who chose not to criticise - will be up in arms if Michael Falzon even attempts to put his name to the leadership candidature.

For the good of the country, for the future of democracy we need a strong and viable opposition. I only see three to four people who can fit the role of leader: it should be either Evarist Bartolo, Joseph Muscat or Gavin Gulia.

And for deputy leader they should go for a John Prescott: a Toni Abela, a fighter and grassroots man.

Alfred Sant should be allowed to step down with dignity. He lost but he was a participant in the electoral game and he should be respected for that.

The hollow and cruel remarks by Daphne Caruana Galizia until yesterday night are typical of a uptight woman who has made it her mission to write hate talk about a man she has terrorised for all these years.

There will be many people who will welcome Gonzi; the former chairman, the political appointees, the blue-eyed boys, the ambassadors, the firms who ate into direct orders, the candidates waiting for their piece of the cake, the companies that repeatedly get all the cake and the recipients of government sponsors and donations. They are not few but they are always around at every election fighting like cornered gladiators for their life.

Gonzi is being manifestly asked to open up his hands and embrace change and altruism and to value the 50% plus



Charisma and personality do not move mountains, nor do they trim political arrogance, intolerance and nepotism

one of the electorate that did not vote for the PN.

I have worked with Gonzi's boys, and I have found them to be overly partisan and as territorial as they come.

I have listened to them when they talked about those people who disagree with their politics or those people who cannot stand them. They sound like fervent Catholics talking about Huguenots before the massacre.

I will be humbled if I encounter a magnanimous Gonzi. But I see a party in government that will take solace from the fact that it has won again and a party that will push its political leader to return to his old ways. Ways which include refusing to accept the political responsibility of politicians when others under their captaincy err or are corrupt.

There are more pressing issues: the social reforms relating to co-habitation, divorce and gay rights or recognition will not be addressed in the next five years. Because these issues will irritate the core vote of the PN and serve to tilt the very delicate balance of power. And because they are not in the Gonzi gift cart.

If any opinion writer complains about these issues, please be so kind to refer them to their voting preference please.

In 2013, Malta will not have divorce or co-habitation, because Gonzi does not consider them to be on his agenda. England introduced divorce in 1530; in 1530 we were still burning witches.

The same thinking applies to electoral reform.

Even though the PN knows that it was AD that nearly lost their chance in this election, they will prefer to launch yet another frenzied attack on any small party before an election instead of reforming electoral law.

Take it from me, Gonzi will do nothing to bring about electoral reform or party financing. If he does, I will eat humble pie and cut my little finger. The future of the small parties is indeed in a precarious state.

In the end, the best policy is to form a lobby group, dress up and squeak like Astrid Vella and needless to say the impact on politicians and their antics will be far greater.

Well, well done Lawrence Gonzi, I wish you well.

I also hope you will take me for what I am... an Ethiopian red pepper!



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Toast of the election? Nationalist MP Jeffrey Pullicino Orlando is hugged by Remigio Bartolo



St Paul's Bay Mayor Paul Bugeja grabbing a counting assistant's attention

DISTRICT 1

Valletta; Floriana; Hamrun; Pieta'; part of Marsa; part of St Venera

Registered voters: 23,361
 Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alpha: Liberali Demokratiku
 Bezzina Emanuel (Emmy)
 Fenech Edward

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Fenech Edward

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Salamone Paul

Forza Malta
 Pace John

Malta Labour Party (MLP)
 Bencini Leon (Leo)
 Brincat Joseph
 Busuttill Luciano
 Buttigieg John
 Debono Grech Joseph (Joe)
 Herrera Jose'
 Micallef Stafrace Simon
 Sant Alfred

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)
 Borg Olivier Paul
 Cardona Gatt Josianne
 Demarco Mario
 Dingli Alexiei
 Farrugia Jean Pierre
 Gatt Agostino Pio (Austin)
 Mifsud Malcolm
 Mifsud Bonnici Paula
 Torpiano Edward

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:
Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____

DISTRICT 2

Birgu; Isla; Bormla; Zabbar; Kalkara; Xgħajra

Registered voters 23,933
 Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Mallia Mario _____ 172

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Cutajar Pierre (Gaspere Pierre) _____ 14
 Muscat Joseph (Josie) _____ 115
 Zammit Kenneth _____ 17

Malta Labour Party (MLP)
 Abela Carmelo _____ 544
 Agius Christopher (Chris) _____ 1500
 Bountempo Stefan Carlo (Stefan) _____ 2007
 Dalli Helena _____ 2332
 Falzon Michael
 Law Rita
 Mifsud Duncan
 Mizzi Joseph (Joe)
 Vella Bonnici Joseph (Joe)

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)
 Agius Francis (Frans)
 Gonzi Lawrence
 Mifsud Bonnici Carmelo
 Spiteri Stephen

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:
Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____

DISTRICT 3

Fgura; Zejtun; Marsaskala

Registered voters 24,574
 Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Cacopardo Carmel

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Cutajar Pierre (Gaspere Pierre)
 Muscat Joseph (Josie)
 Zammit Kenneth

Malta Labour Party (MLP)
 Abela Carmelo
 Abela Joseph
 Agius Christopher (Chris)
 Bonnici Owen
 Buontempo Stefano Carlo (Stefan)
 Buttigieg Ivan Vladimirov
 Dalli Helena
 Grech Etienne
 Law Rita
 Marmara Darren
 Mizzi Joseph (Joe)
 Vella George

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)
 Agius Francis (Frans)
 Bonello John
 Chetcuti Janice
 Debono Franco
 Galea Mario
 Mifsud Bonnici Carmelo

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:
Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____

DISTRICT 4

Gudja; Għaxaq; part of Marsa; Paola; Santa Luċija; Tarxien

Registered voters 23,548
 Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Mizzi Christian _____ 182

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Seychell Malcolm _____ 86

Malta Labour Party (MLP)
 Bonnici Owen _____ 544
 Brincat Joseph _____ 164
 Cauchi Gino _____ 560
 Chircop Karl Joseph _____ 4377
 Mangion Carmelo (Charles) _____ 2411
 Muscat Sebastian (Bastjan) _____ 49
 Parnis Saviour (Silvio) _____ 4889
 Sammut Joseph Mario (Joe) _____ 511

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)
 Azzopardi Jason _____ 3321
 Bonavia Lawrence _____ 253
 Galea Caroline _____ 411
 Mugliett Jesmond
 Scerri Victor George
 Schembri John (Ivan)

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:
Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____

DISTRICT 5

Birżebbuġa; Kirkop; Marsaxlokk; Mqabba; Qrendi; Safi; Zurrieg

Registered voters 24,204
 Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Attard Patrick _____ 224

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Mercieca Anthony (Tonio) _____ 96

Malta Labour Party (MLP)
 Farrugia Joseph _____ 821
 Farrugia Migneco Anceel _____ 264
 Izzi Savona Silvio _____ 551
 Micallef Edric _____ 389
 Pullicino Marlene _____ 2062
 Sammut Joseph Mario (Joe) _____ 1539
 Vella George _____ 1513
 Vella Karmenu _____ 4911
 Zammit Anthony _____ 1515

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)
 Chetcuti Janice _____ 422
 D'Amato Helen _____ 1433
 Debono Franco
 Galea Emanuel (Noel)
 Galea Louis
 Schembri John (Ivan)
 Zammit Anthony (Ninu)

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:
Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____

DISTRICT 6

Qormi; Luqa; Siġġiewi

Registered voters 24,253
 Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

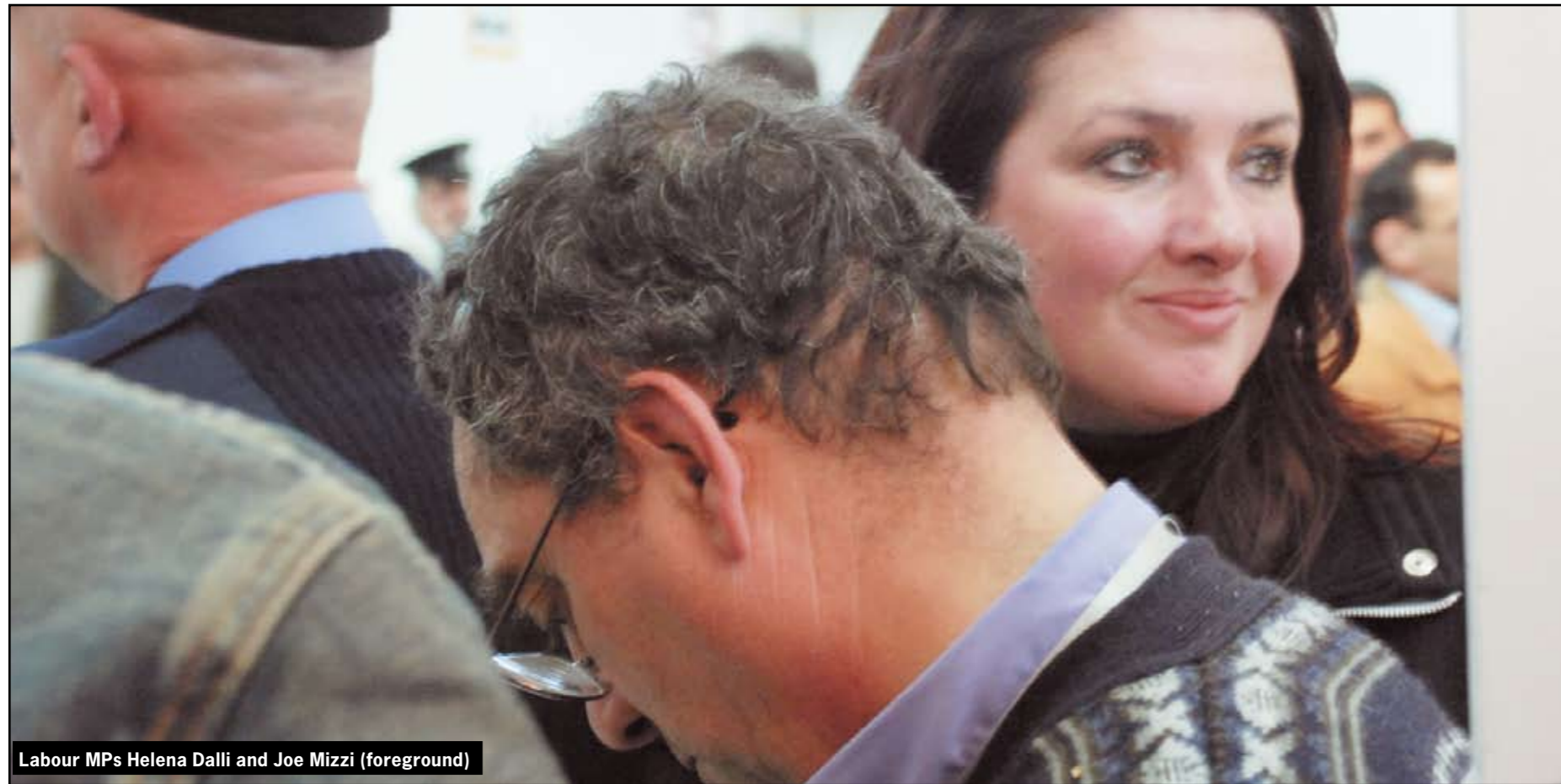
Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Fenech Edward _____ 143

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Attard Carmel (Charles) _____ 91

Malta Labour Party (MLP)
 Coleiro Preca Marie Louise _____ 5490
 Galdes Roderick _____ 1634
 Gulia Gavin _____ 290
 Mangion Carmelo (Charles) _____ 3845
 Muscat Sebastian (Bastjan) _____ 65
 Schembri Saviour (Silvio) _____ 766

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)
 Dalli John _____ 3370
 Galea Louis _____ 1810
 Micallef Peter _____ 1152
 Musumeci Robert _____ 875
 Puli Clyde Michael _____ 2383
 Zammit Anthony (Ninu) _____ 624

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:
Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____



Labour MPs Helena Dalli and Joe Mizzi (foreground)

DISTRICT 7

Zebbuġ (Malta); Dingli; Mgarr; Mtarfa; Rabat

Registered voters 24,607

Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Cassar Ralph _____ 244

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Attard Carmel (Charles) _____ 120

Malta Labour Party (MLP)
 Agius Decelis Anthony _____ 648
 Azzopardi Charles _____ 874
 Buhagiar Carmelo (Charles) _____ 2064
 Farrugia Emanuel (Noel) _____ 3060
 Gulia Gavin _____ 2203
 Pullicino Marlene _____ 355
 Vassallo Lorna _____ 85
 Zammit Anthony _____

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)

Abela Anthony (Tony) _____
 Agius David _____
 Agius Emanuel (Leli) _____
 Azzopardi Jacqueline _____
 Cassar Joseph (Joe) _____
 Farrugia Galea Joan Ann (Joanne) _____
 Mifsud Philip _____
 Musumeci Robert _____
 Pullicino Jeffrey _____
 Vassallo David _____
 Vassallo Edwin _____

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:

Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____

DISTRICT 8

Birkirkara; Lija; part of St Venera; Iklın

Registered voters 24,168

Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Mallia Mario _____ 75
 Vassallo Henry (Harry) _____ 313

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Seychell Malcolm _____ 85

Malta Labour Party (MLP)
 Bugeja Anthony (Twanny) _____ 114
 Buttigieg John _____ 22
 Cardona Christian (Chris) _____ 862
 Cassar Clyde Joe Paul _____ 25
 Debono Grech Joseph (Joe) _____ 984
 Sant Alfred _____ 7060
 Zammit-Lewis Edward _____ 191

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)

Asciak Michael E. _____ 564
 Borg Anthony (Tonio) _____ 3371
 Cardona Gatt Josianne _____ 160
 Castaldi Paris Ian _____ 317
 Fenech Antonio (Tonio) _____ 5508
 Fenech Martin _____
 Fenech Adami Joseph (Beppe) _____
 Schembri Giorgio Mario _____

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:

Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____

DISTRICT 9

Msida; Gharghur; San Gwann; Ta' Xbiex; Swieqi

Registered voters 23,831

Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alpha: Liberali Demokratiku
 Bezzina Emanuel (Emmy) _____ 12

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Cassola Arnold _____ 457

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Beattie Philip _____
 Mercieca Anthony (Tonio) _____

Malta Labour Party (MLP)

Abela Emanuel (Leli) _____
 Brincat Leo Maria (Leo) _____
 Calamatta Narcissus (Narcy) _____
 Cuschieri Joseph _____
 Debono Martin _____
 Saliba Simon _____
 Sciberras Alexander (Alex) _____
 Vassallo Adrian _____

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)

Arrigo Robert _____
 Cristina Dolores _____
 Falzon Joseph _____
 Felice Donald Carmel _____
 Frenndo Michael _____
 Galea Franco _____
 Gonzi Lawrence _____
 Gouder Karl _____
 Muscat Noel _____
 Psaila Philip (Pippo) _____
 Pullicino George _____
 Rizzo Naudi John Mary _____
 Sapiano Georg _____
 Selvaggi Charles _____
 Zammit Dimech Francis _____

Indipendenti
 Cauchi James Shaun _____

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:
 Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____

DISTRICT 10

Pembroke; San Giljan; Sliema; Gzira

Registered voters 24,006

Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Vassallo Henry (Harry) _____ 524

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Bartolo Anthony (Tonio) _____ 42
 Beattie Philip _____ 57

Malta Labour Party (MLP)

Bartolo Evarist _____ 1738
 Bonett Christian Paul _____ 252
 Brincat Leo Maria (Leo) _____ 461
 Cauchi Gino _____ 198
 Cuschieri Joseph _____ 921
 Debono Martin _____ 396
 Falzon Michael _____ 2853
 Vassallo Adrian _____

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)

Arrigo Robert _____
 Borg Olivier Paul _____
 Cristina Dolores _____
 Dalli John _____
 Falzon Joseph _____
 Felice Donald Carmel _____
 Frenndo Michael _____
 Galea Franco _____
 Gouder Karl _____
 Psaila Philip (Pippo) _____
 Pullicino George _____
 Zammit Dimech Francis _____

Indipendenti

Cauchi James Shaun _____

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:

Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____

DISTRICT 11

Mosta; Mdina; Attard; Balzan

Registered voters 24,705

Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Cacopardo Carmel _____ 315
 Cassar Ralph _____ 172

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Bartolo Anthony (Antonio) _____ 28
 Xuereb Angelo (Anglu) _____ 118

Imperium Europa

Lowell Norman _____ 48

Malta Labour Party (MLP)

Agius Decelis Anthony _____ 3004
 Buhagiar Carmelo (Charles) _____ 1708
 Farrugia Angelo (Anglu) _____ 2198
 Farrugia Michael _____ 790
 Sammut Joseph (Joe) _____ 508

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)

Agius David _____
 Asciak Michael E. _____
 Bonnici Charlo _____
 Borg Anthony (Tonio) _____
 Cassar Joseph (Joe) _____
 Castaldi Paris Ian _____
 Deguara Louis _____
 Farrugia Shirley _____
 Galea Vincent (Censu) _____
 Gonzi Michael _____
 Pullicino Jeffrey _____
 Scerri Victor George _____
 Vassallo Edwin _____
 Zammit Montebello John _____

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:

Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____

DISTRICT 12

Mellieħa; San Pawl il-Baħar; Naxxar

Registered voters 23,976

Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Attard Patrick _____ 59
 Cassola Arnold _____ 282

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Salomone Paul _____ 36
 Xuereb Angelo (Anglu) _____ 108

Imperium Europa

Lowell Norman _____ 36

Malta Labour Party (MLP)

Bartolo Evarist _____ 3066
 Farrugia Angelo (Anglu) _____ 1216
 Farrugia Emanuel (Noel) _____ 345
 Farrugia Michael _____ 2131
 Grima Alfred _____ 354
 Sammut Joseph (Joe) _____ 692
 Spiteri Kenneth _____ 237
 Vassallo Lorna _____ 355

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)

Abela Anthony (Tony) _____ 432
 Cutajar Robert _____ 1694
 Deguara Louis _____
 Fenech Antonio (Tonio) _____
 Fenech Martin _____
 Galea Vincent (Censu) _____
 Gonzi Michael _____

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:

Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____

DISTRICT 13

Gozo, Comino

Registered voters 26,191

Quota _____ Invalid votes _____
 Votes cast _____ Valid votes _____

COUNT

Alternattiva Demokratika (AD)
 Galea Victor _____ 262

Azzjoni Nazzjonali (AN)
 Gauci Mary _____ 112

Gozitan Party
 Zammit Victor _____ 37

Malta Labour Party (MLP)

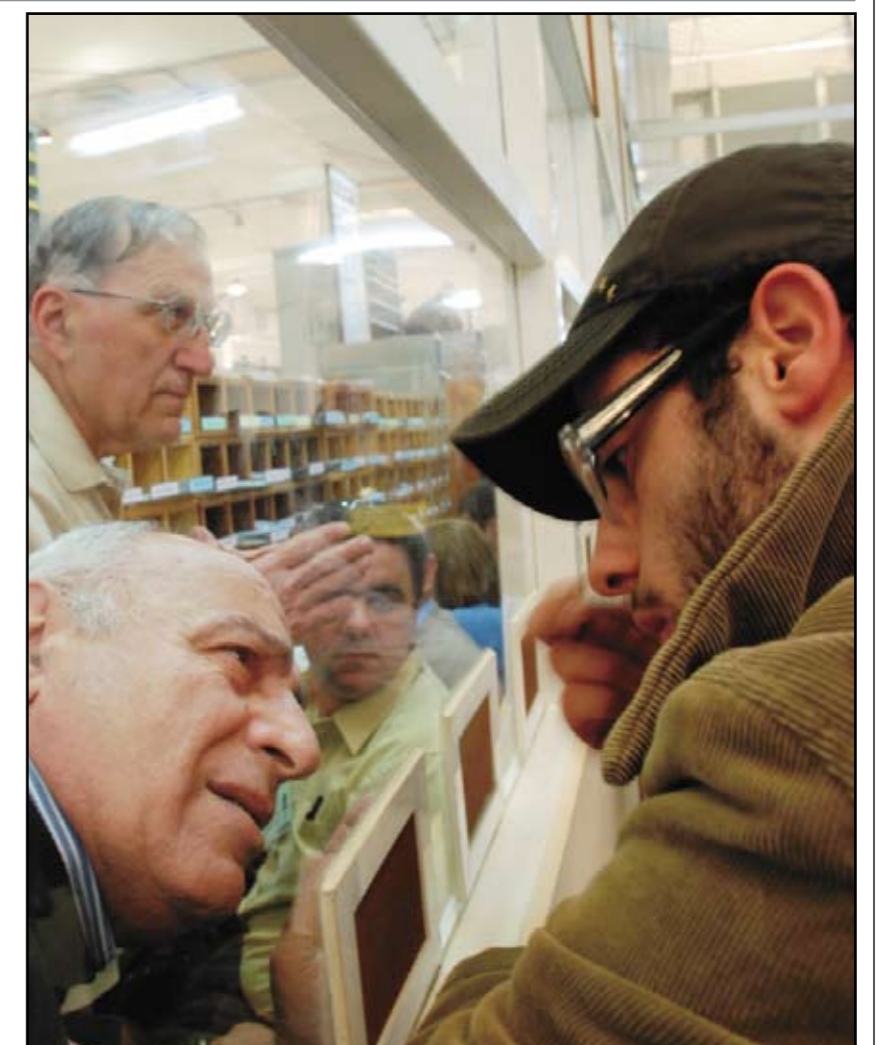
Attard Anthony _____ 208
 Caruana Justyne _____ 3218
 Cordina Joseph (Joe) _____ 1517
 Refalo Anthony (Anton) _____ 4599
 Vella Monica _____ 548
 Zammit George _____ 144

Partit Nazzjonalista (PN)

Azzopardi Frederick _____ 1568
 Buttigieg Paul _____ 734
 Debono Giovanna _____
 Portelli Marthese _____
 Said Christopher (Chris) _____
 Tabone Manuel _____
 Tabone Robert (Roberto) _____

Non Transferable Votes TOTAL:

Candidates Elected
 1 _____
 2 _____
 3 _____
 4 _____
 5 _____





maltatoday

Editorial

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After this photofinish: Rise to the occasion

THE Nationalist Party, after over 20 years in government (since 1987), has pulled off a narrow yet remarkable electoral victory winning by a relative majority of just 1,200 votes.

It is a first for Malta, reminiscent of the Florida result in the 2000 American national election. The result is also a personal endorsement for Lawrence Gonzi, who fought and won this election single-handedly in view of the strategic decision to fight a presidential-style campaign. Politically this was a dangerous gamble, which effectively saw the leader of the Nationalist party placing his job on the line. In the end, it paid off.

But this election result also leaves us with a fractured country, split directly down the middle, with an increasing number of disenfranchised citizens. The neck-and-neck scenario, fought down to the wire, was a photo finish if there ever was one. It also exposed a number of our national idiosyncrasies, and calls for political analysis of the implications of the closeness of the vote.

In a little way, the election result also vindicates our much-maligned surveys, which have always showed very clear electoral trends.

One thing is clear: the people have spoken. They have endorsed the policies of the ruling party; but the people also sent a message to the Nationalist Party by reducing its majority by just 1,200 votes.

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from that achieved by the Nationalist party in 2003; this result must not be allowed to degenerate into a situation whereby half the population feels disenfranchised and out of the political loop, as this can only have ripple effects on the national mood and future well being of the country. It is up to the PM to rise to the occasion and act like a statesman to unite the country after this narrowest of victories.

The result also has consequences on the Labour party and its leadership. Surely it marks the close of the chapter of Dr Sant as leader. The MLP, too, needs to undertake a soul-searching process and certainly to put into motion the process to change its leader, after his third consecutive electoral defeat.

It must also revisit its policies to see which needs to be fine-tuned, adjusted or indeed changed altogether. It has to ask itself why the electorate has opted to keep it in opposition for nearly a quarter of a century.

In the national interest, we expect that, while the winning party implements its electoral programme which has been endorsed by the people, it also considers taking a leaf out of the

electoral programmes of the other parties. It may wish to consider implementing a few of the other party proposals, especially in the social field and in that of the environment; as well as the fight against corruption and in norms of accountability and transparency.

These are all part and parcel of the European way of doing politics and in this – our first election since EU membership – government should consider acting boldly.

This unthinkable result is conclusive proof of the need to reform our electoral law with the full implication of covering all wasted votes with the insertion of a threshold clause, which gives a fighting chance to all small parties to gain representation in parliament.

This result also calls into question our method of counting votes. Surely the absurdity of waiting 10 hours to get the result should galvanise the parties to agree to have an electoral process that lends itself to a more open democracy and a faster more effective counting system.

Reforming the electoral system and process should be at the top of the agenda for Dr Gonzi.

How to celebrate, even if a loser



Early morning jubilation for Labour supporters was short-lived yesterday (left) with PN supporters soon gathering outside the Stamperija (right) and the atmosphere outside the Centru Nazzjonali Laburista turning quiet.

FRANICA PULIS

BY 11.30am yesterday, cars adorned with MLP handkerchiefs and horns were already seen on the roads from San Gwann to Marsa to Fgura. Fgura's Labourite club was jam-packed with people dressed in red flags and other typical party paraphernalia.

In Zabbar the celebrations were even louder. From Labour Road one could hear The Only Way is Up and one of Mary Spiteri's songs in the background. As one got nearer the MLP club, petards (murtali) and squibs (suffarrelli) could be heard accompanying the MLP song full blast, giving a feeling of the Zabbar feast's celebrations on the day of the bicycle pilgrimage.

"They already know. There are many discussions on TV going on. Even if you look at the faces you would know," said one Labourite, who was discussing the election with a group of men in the street.

Another, Carmelo Schembri, added: "I was watching Prof. Edward Scicluna on TV. They (the PN) lost 15,000 votes. So both parties are equal. Even though there were less votes, MLP got more votes. With the first 9,000 votes, we would know who the Government would be. At the moment they cannot give exact indications."

"It depends on the indications. Even I am not sure. Last time we were out here and we thought we had won but all of a sudden they told us to close the club and people started gathering near the PN club."

By way of contrast, the PN club, which is close to the parish church, was very sober with no flags, billboards or candidate photos. No celebrations were going on and only a few people were inside. One could see the worry on their faces. Even if when asked to comment on what they thought about the celebrations going on a few metres away, they answered coolly: "They always do it. In the refer-

endum they celebrated as well. They do it so they don't die."

Another Nationalist said, "You can't say. They haven't even started counting."

By 12.41pm Zejtun was celebrating on a larger scale in the square, where the MLP club is also near the church. The square was filled with four different large flags including a hand-made one with "Zejtun Fortizza Laburista" written on it.

One could hear some Labourite women discussing. "It's not official. In Sliema they are celebrating," shouted a woman holding the hand of a chubby girl dressed in an MLP T-shirt. Another woman replied, "In the last elections we did the same then the PN won."

By 12.45pm the Labourites were sure they won because of what Jason Micallef said on TV and from the gleaming faces they had.

The PN club of Zejtun is situated in a side street. By that time there were only six people inside with disconcerted looks on their faces. Their only reply was, "You have to wait."

By 2pm the tide had turned. Near the Msida Labour club people were starting looking worried. Carmelo Cuschieri, who was on the phone saying what he had just heard, commented, "At 10.30am they told us Labour was on top. Now they are phoning at the headquarters and they are saying that most probably the PN is winning."

Five minutes later at the PN club one could hear repetitively 'not to hurry and keep calm'. Stefan Grech, who was in the club, said: "The first sample was too close to call. Considering the districts, it was in our favour, much more than expected."

By 2.42pm in Zejtun everything had died. No more car-cades. No more horns. Two flags less. All that was left were people with worried looks. The PN club was still empty. In Zabbar, 15 minutes later, the Labour club had closed doors with hundreds of people still in the street. Eight police officers were in between both clubs and another four were near the PN

club which by now was crowded with Nationalists, still less than the Labourites.

In Pietà, near the PN headquarters, the story was completely different by 4pm. There were nine kiosks selling junk food and drinks. There were another two stalls selling PN shirts and key chains with Gonzi's and Fenech Adami's faces. Benny from the couple Benny & Sonia was trying to sell some of their Country CDs further up the road too.

By 5pm the Nationalists in the street felt sure they had won. They were jumping and shouting "Ghax ghandna 'l Gonzi maghna, ahna maghqudin..." and booing when seeing Michael Falzon on screen.

At 5.45pm when Joe Saliba appeared on screen, the crowd gathered in front of it and fell silent, including the horns. When he announced by 9pm they should have some concrete answers, the crowd cried 'Ehh' together with disappointment.

"Three hours of torture," sighed one Nationalist. By 6pm not a soul could be seen near Mile End.

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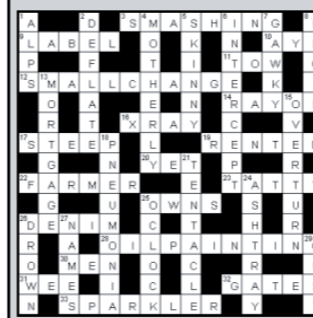
news

Solutions to last issue's puzzles

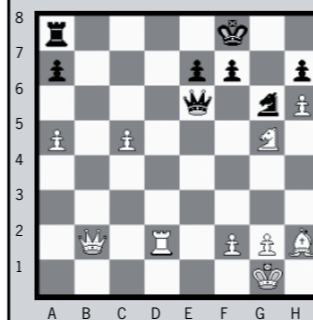
Sudoku

2	4	7	1	9	6	8	3	5
8	3	5	2	4	7	1	9	6
1	9	6	8	3	5	2	4	7
7	8	3	6	2	4	5	1	9
5	1	9	7	8	3	6	2	4
6	2	4	5	1	9	7	8	3
3	5	1	4	7	8	9	6	2
9	6	2	3	5	1	4	7	8
4	7	8	9	6	2	3	5	1

Crossword



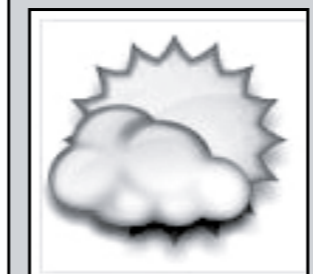
Chess



White had play and mate in three moves

1. Nxh7+ Ke8
 2. Qb5+ Qd7
 3. Qxd7#
2. ... Qc6
 3. Qxc6#

Today's Weather



MOSTLY CLOUDY
17°C / 10°C
UV INDEX: 4

WARNINGS: Nil

WEATHER: Partly to rather cloudy.

VISIBILITY: Moderate to good.

WIND: Light to moderate Southerly (force 3 to 4).

SEA: Low Northwest.

Election babies for Justyne Caruana and Owen Bonnici

LABOUR MP Justyne Caruana and MLP candidate Owen Bonnici both became proud parents of "election babies" as their electoral campaigns were marked by the birth of their two first-born.

Gozitan MP Justyne Caruana gave birth for the first time mid-campaign to a girl Josephine. Labour candidate Owen Bonnici, who became a father on

election day, was at the counting hall yesterday. In comments to MaltaToday Bonnici says his wife went to vote with the drip stuck to her hand.

"In one way it was good that my wife gave birth yesterday because it relieved the tension of the election," Bonnici says. The young candidate had a baby girl, which they named Emma Victoria.



Justyne Caruana

Owen Bonnici

Billboards out



ALL the Malta Labour Party and the Nationalist Party billboards were removed from the Maltese roads between Saturday and Sunday.

The billboards, an essential part of the parties electoral campaign, were removed not to risk any damages from rowdy supporters in the usu-

al aftermath of electoral results.

On Sunday morning, whoever drove around the Maltese roads might have noticed that there were no Gonzi or Sant faces on billboards. Azzjoni Nazzjonali and Alternattiva Demokratika billboards were the only ones left to be seen.

Traditional counting methods in election

TRADITIONAL counting methods were the norm yesterday for the two main political parties, which employ runners and vote counters to monitor the voting process behind the perspex barrier.

The party's counters are placed behind the electoral commission's vote counters to jot down each first preference vote for either the Nationalist Party, the Labour Party, and other parties on their counting tickets. Counters jot down the first 50 first-preference votes on tickets which they hand to runners, who in turn take the tickets back to the party's control room.

The tickets are used to extrapolate what is now considered to be a clear indication of who the winner of the election will be. The system is based on a sample of 50 ballot sheets from each ballot box from



across the country. During the 2003 referendum,

the PN employed hand-held PDAs for each counter, who

inputted the result straight into a central system.



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DAVID DARMANIN

ONLY minutes after PN secretary-general Joe Saliba's announcement of victory, thousands of Nationalist supporters flocked around the newly-built Nationalist headquarters block in Pietà, where fast-food kiosks and pumping music reminiscent of the 1998 and 2003 elections greeted them.

While the crowd cheered at updates shown on a big screen placed by the head quarter's imposing entrance, others gathered by the side entrance to discuss their analysis of the campaign, the wafer-thin majority by which PN won and other similar issues.

"He should take good care of people now," a man said, clearly referring to PM Lawrence Gonzi, "because the middle class was my greatest fear, and that sector is the helm of the country."

As the traffic in Pietà prompted a spontaneous carcade, all sorts of comical slogans were being sung to the amusement of celebrating parties of pedestrians. "We are the lions... Labour's lions fled", one of them cried.

In another car, a group of friends were humorously singing "Viva I-Labour", while another stuck his head out of a car, saying: "Fredu repeater."

In Balluta, the crowds were even more packed, and the music was louder. On the DJ decks set up on a makeshift stage, deejays cheekily said into the microphones "Where are the lions? Where are the lions? They've gone back to the jungle."

The ones less interested in music were happily walking by the front, most of them sporting blue clothes and Heineken bottles. "Of course I voted AD in the past, but as if I would vote for them in these elections," one was overheard telling another.

