



The silver teapot that enraged Lorry Sant

Lorry Sant's reaction was instantaneous: " A teapot. This is not what I expected. Get me Lm25,000, if you do not wish me to kick you off your site. You have a week."

Lorry Sant told Joe Pace that he wanted Lm130,000 for the plots at Fgura. Strangely, Mid Med bank accepted the 23 plots as a guarantee for the loan.

Over a period of 20 years, he was robbed of Lm600,000



Lorry Sant bullied Joe Pace constantly

When Joe Pace's name surfaced in the press in the late eighties and nineties it was not in his capacity as an entrepreneur in the catering industry. Many would have imagined him to be an acolyte of Lorry Sant and a business associate of Piju Camilleri.

The truth is that Joe Pace was a man who lived in constant fear and who was used for the vile interests of a number of heartless individuals who sucked his finances to the staggering tune of Lm600,000. With inflation that figure is far more shocking.

Joe Pace is a garrulous man, smallish in build with a kind smile.

His family had always been in the catering business.

The Britannia, Australia and Premier formed a fami-

ly business that coloured the social fabric of Valletta and Sliema.

Joe Pace was rather well off. In 1974 he showed an interest in the area that today is known as the Magic Kiosk. He tendered Lm1,500 pounds for the site. The Lands Department accepted that the site could be utilised for catering purposes on condition that Joe Pace employ 22 full-timers and four part-timers.

Mr Pace's tender was accepted and weeks later after investing Lm180,000 and having already employed all the staff, he was stopped from operating the premises.

Concerned, he visited Patrick Holland, then the minister responsible for the Lands Department. Mr Holland told him he had nothing to do with the order to stop

works at the Magic Kiosk, and directed him to Works Minister Lorry Sant.

"Do not even dare open your premises," he told Joe Pace.

Mr Pace replied that he intended to raise the matter with the Premier Dom Mintoff. But he never took the matter that far.

Some time later, Lorry Sant informed him that he could open his premises.

The Magic Kiosk was inaugurated in August 1974.

Out of courtesy, Mr Pace purchased a silver teapot set as a present for Lorry Sant.

He will never forget what happened when he presented him with the gift, never realising it would kickstart a series of events that would him for the next 20 years.

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instantaneous: "A teapot. This is not what I expected. Get me Lm25,000, if you do not wish me to kick you off your site. You have a week."

Joe Pace recalls that he was short on cash at the time. He remembers visiting the Bank of Valletta executive chairman, Danny Cremona.

When Danny Cremona got wind of what the money was for, he blew his top.

But he got his Lm25,000 against security of his catering establishments.

"From that day, a noose was placed around my neck," he says.

Lorry Sant referred Joe Pace to Piju Camilleri.

Mr Pace describes how he was forced to form companies with Piju Camilleri, Lorry Sant's henchman.

And because he had catering establishments on

government property he felt constantly threatened.

He had never been in property construction, but before the 1981 election he was forced to form the company Los Reyes with Piju Camilleri and others.

Mr Pace details how Piju Camilleri would sell property under the company's name without his authorisation.

One incident concerns 16 plots involving Terry Ltd, which had originally belonged to the late Toni Pellegrini, the former Christian Workers' Party chief and the head of Xandir during the eighties.

He describes how Charles Mizzi, a journalist with the Union Press, had purchased four plots with building permits from Terry Ltd.

Although Charles Mizzi had done the contract with

Joe Pace estimates that 600

Joe Pace, Piju Camilleri had collected the money.

Mr Mizzi had passed some negative comments about Piju Camilleri and in retaliation, two permits for Charles Mizzi's plots were withheld.

Over a period of 20 years, Joe Pace estimates that he was robbed of Lm600,000. When inflation is applied to this amount the figure is far higher.

Joe Pace's troubles were not limited to the plots at M'Scala. He recalls how 23 plots in Fgura were forcibly taken from Joe Borg.

In 1992, under a Nationalist government, Lorry Sant told Joe Pace that he wanted Lm130,000 for the plots at Fgura. Joe Pace told him that the plots were under a prohibitory injunction issued by the courts in relation to a court case instituted by Joe Borg in 1989.

Lorry Sant suggested that Joe Pace should secure a bank loan.

And so it was, Joe Pace says, that he found everything smooth at Mid Med bank and despite the prohibitory injunction, he was

able to acquire an overdraft of Lm130,000, of which Lm10,000 went to a lawyer and the rest to Lorry Sant.

Strangely, Mid Med bank accepted the 23 plots as a guarantee for the loan.

It did not stop there. In 1994, when a Nationalist government was in power, Joe Pace was approached by a Naxxar middle-man who told him to sell the plots at Fgura. He was told to sell them to Vica Limited, a company owned by the Camilleri brothers of the Park Hotel in Sliema.

After this episode, a telephone call from Lorry Sant to Joe Pace confirmed that was what must happen.

When he talked to Vince Camilleri of Vica Ltd, he discovered that the price for the plots had already been established at Lm184,000. Joe Pace was forced to sign although he indicated that he was prohibited to do so by a court injunction.

On signing a convenium, Camilleri gave him a deposit of Lm100,000, which was way above the usual 10%, and said that the plots could

not be negotiated because they faced a prohibitory injunction.

The Lm100,000 was intended for Lorry Sant. After depositing the cheque, Joe Pace passed the Lm100,000, in small amounts, over to Sant.

Some months later, after the convenium had expired, Piju Camilleri pressurised Joe Pace to accompany him on a visit to Vince Camilleri.

Piju Camilleri insisted that he, too, wanted his cut which he decided should be Lm200,000. He directed Joe Pace to sign another convenium with Vince Camilleri.

Piju Camilleri agreed with Vince Camilleri that the new price replacing the previous convenium should read Lm253,000. They forced Joe Pace to sign another convenium.

Joe Pace paid the sum Piju Camilleri requested in front of Piju Camilleri's lawyer Joe Buttigieg (a former Mid Med Bank chairman and Labour MP) by means of two cheques amounting to the sum of



Joe Pace suffered 20 years of threats

Lm170,000 (a BOV cheque dated 24 January 95) and another of Lm30,000 (a Mid Med cheque dated 28 February 95).

Joe Pace's 20-year nightmare was still not over, but the death of Lorry Sant encouraged him to start taking a stand. In 1995 Joe Pace discovered that Piju Camilleri on his own and without authorisation disposed of property located at Attard and Salina, which they held jointly in Los Reyes and Tor Limited. Unfortunately for these plot owners, they could be faced with a situation whereby they would have to revert the property because of fraudulent and false declarations during the drawing

up of the contracts. Piju Camilleri got wind of what Joe Pace had discovered. Soon after two bombs were placed at Joe Pace's family residence on the 6 March, 1995 and another went off at the Magic Kiosk on 31 March, 1996.

Since 1995, the man who started off in the catering business and spent 20 year of his life at the centre of 'illicit' construction deals has co-operated with the authorities.

Unfortunately for him and others who found themselves caught in the web of corruption, the authorities continue to turn a blind eye to the stack of evidence in this case.

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Explosion rips through Sliema restaurant

Security guard injured as he warns a newspaper delivery-man about the bomb seconds before it went off

James Calvert

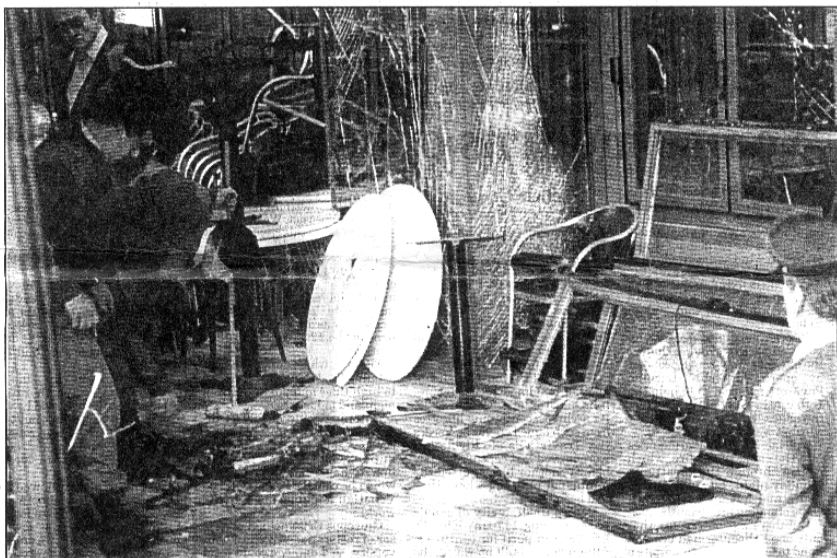
An explosion ripped through the Magic Kiosk restaurant in Sliema early yesterday morning, causing thousands of liri worth of damage and injuring a security guard.

Windows in the glass-walled restaurant were blown out and nearby shops, businesses and houses damaged when the bomb went off just after 4 a.m.

The Group 4 security guard was injured as he warned a newspaper delivery-man about the bomb seconds before it went off.

In March last year a small bomb exploded outside the apartment block where Magic Kiosk owner Joe Pace lived. It is not known if the two incidents are related.

The guard was on duty outside the restaurant when he saw a man get out of an "old-looking car" and plant the bomb before



The AFM bomb disposal squad sift through the debris following yesterday's bomb blast in Sliema.

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