

March between Lonrho and Lafico, Libya's foreign investment arm.

The insider is Mohammed Ali El-Obeidi, a middleman who helped to put together the Metropole deal.

He holds documents allegedly proving his claims and read

the Arabs' discussion about Lonrho. The bug, planted by an unknown infiltrator, allowed us to record the entire talks.

Mohammed Ali El-Obeidi has already issued a High Court writ against Lonrho demanding a 40% cut of the total commission of nearly £18 million on the

more than £5,000 to anyone other than a Metropole subsidiary.

El-Obeidi believes the release of this document, and of others proving that Lonrho may sell its African interests to the Libyans, will lead to its blacklisting by

TYCOON WITH AN AIR OF MYSTERY

LAST week's Sunday Times guide to Britain's top 300 richest people was heavily advertised as the most authoritative guide to wealth in this country.

Yet The Mail On Sunday is aware of many businessmen in Britain whose wealth would

easily put them in the top 300 but whose names have never appeared in the Sunday Times, either this year or in the past.

This week we start an occasional series about some of those secretly rich businessmen.



The casino king

By MODY KREITMAN
and PETE SAWYER

SAMI SHAMOON, alias Sami Abdunabi, is thought to be worth at least £70 million.

Negotiating to buy an Israeli company in 1990, he produced a certificate from his primary bank in Switzerland saying he had assets worth at least \$100 million (£55 million).

He owns shares in Israeli companies such as the US-quoted Teva Pharmaceutical (in which Robert Maxwell

High roller, but his firms show a loss

was a big shareholder) worth about £20 million.

His international businesses range from agricultural projects in Africa, shipping companies and antiques.

Many of his business meetings are held over the dining-room table in London's Ritz Casino or Les Ambassadeurs. Both casinos are owned by the profitable London Clubs International — in which he and his brother David own a

stake through nominees.

London Clubs owns six of London's most prestigious casinos. But it may lose all its gaming licences following a police raid in June 1991.

The investigation is focusing on allegations that David Shamoan breached regulations by helping gamblers to obtain credit.

Both brothers are known to be 'high rollers', winning and losing

thousands of pounds in one night. But the small group of companies Sami runs in London have apparently been loss-making for years.

Yet he was picked by the South African government as a middleman to sell 'steel' products to Middle Eastern countries which did not wish to deal with South Africa directly.

He has connections with Israeli government officials and its secret service, Mossad. His close friend Meir Amit was the head of Mossad from 1963 to 1969.

Six years ago Sha-

Continued on Page 74



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On to

Mystery millionaire

SECRET
RICH

From Page 73

Shamoon hopes to finance a monument near Tel Aviv dedicated to Israeli agents killed in action.

Another close friend is Uri Lubrani, Israel's ambassador to Iran until the fall of the Shah and recently its chief hostage negotiator. He also heads one of Israel's peace delegations.

Both Amit and Lubrani are directors of Shamoon's key Israeli investment company, Yakhim Hakal, which owns 10 square kilometres of agricultural land around Tel Aviv.

Shamoon hopes to build a £25 million



SECRETIVE: The Shamoons, right, with envoy Lubrani and the guarded antiques shop where goods gather dust

shopping centre on part of the land.

Shamoon regularly travels from his London home to Tel Aviv, where he has a luxury suite at the Sheraton Hotel.

But he is highly secretive — in his business and his personal life. Of the people close to Shamoon we contacted, most were reluctant to talk.

His mansion, in

London's Holland Park Road, where he lives with his much younger, English-born wife, is protected by a high wall, fences and surveillance cameras.

Security

He also owns a run-down antiques shop called John Pope & Hunts in South Kensington. But local traders say the shop never

opens and in 1989 it recorded a loss of £60,000.

Its antiques are covered in dust, with many marked as sold. Although a sticker proclaims that the shop is a member of the London & Provincial Antique Dealers Association, in fact, its membership expired four years ago.

Despite the apparent disrepair, the building is protected by a sophisticated security system. Callers are invited to 'ring the bell' — watched over by a surveillance camera. Above the shop is the well-furnished office for three of Shamoon's UK companies — all apparently loss-making.

Throughout the Arab world, including Iraq, Shamoon is today known by his Islamic alias, Sami Abdalnabi. In Israel he uses his Jewish alias, Sami Shamoon. In Britain he has used both names.

One of three brothers, Shamoon was born into a Jewish family in Baghdad in 1932. His precise date of birth varies from document to document.

In the early 1950s, his family was forced to leave Iraq and move to Israel, where he served in the army. At that time the family were desperately poor and a few years later they moved again, to Tehran.

Shamoon went into business with his uncle,

Ahmed Azaam Zangana, importing South African 'steel products'.

He set up companies in Tehran and London in partnership with the South African state steel corporation, Iscor, which has close links with Armscor, the country's arms manufacturer.

But the overthrow of the Shah in 1979 marked the turning point in Shamoon's career. He moved to England and, with the South Africans, started to seek out new markets for their products.

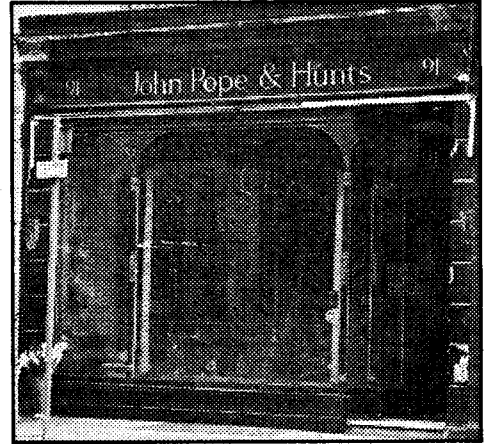
Safety

They decided to sell to other Middle Eastern countries such as Lebanon. But Shamoon's relationship with Iscor broke down over cargoes that got diverted from Iran to Lebanon in 1979.

In 1983 he sued Iscor in Pretoria and London for £60 million, claiming breach of contract. But Iscor retaliated by demanding a full set of accounts from him and a repayment of all the money owing to it since the start of the joint venture.

Shamoon refused to attend the hearing in Pretoria, because he said he feared for his safety. He lost the case and had to pay costs.

The South African judge said that Shamoon's claims that he had sold the steel appeared to be untrue.



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