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Crashing entrance in the Grand Harbour for Cunard's 'Queen Victoria'

EXCLUSIVE: Incident happened in the presence of Carnival Corp Chairman Mickey Arison
Kurt Farrugia



The cruise ship Queen Victoria, on its maiden call in Malta, was in the centre of attraction for all the wrong reasons when it entered the Grand Harbour on Wednesday morning. The luxury cruise ship in fact hit the quay of the Valletta Waterfront, denting the stern of the ship in one of the most bizarre incidents in the Grand Harbour.

The unofficial reason for the incident is that the throttles of the 90,000 tonnes luxury liner got stuck. In a statement later in the evening the Malta Maritime Authority officially attributed the incident to a mechanical failure in the ship.

Although the captain of the Queen Victoria is Paul Wright, **maltastar.com** is informed that the vessel was then being piloted by a Maltese captain since port regulations stipulate that ships exceeding 500 gross tonnage are to be piloted by a Maltese pilot provided by local Port Authorities.

Full investigations into the incident were launched immediately by the Malta Maritime Authority and a magisterial inquiry is also underway.



Chairman of Carnival Corporation on board

Meanwhile, **maltastar.com** is exclusively informed that the whole incident



happened in the presence of the chairman and chief executive officer of Carnival Corporation, the parent company of Cunard cruise lines, which company owns the ship.

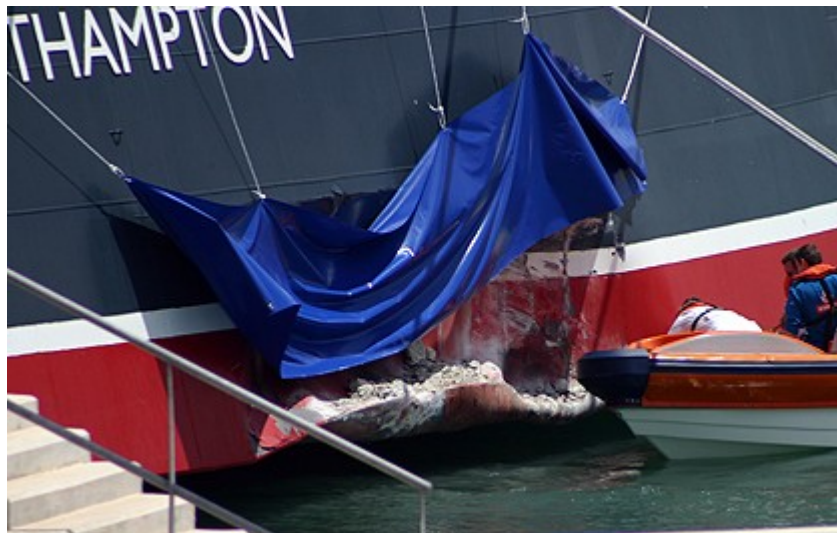
The chairman, Mickey Arison, was on board the Queen Victoria for the maiden call to Malta on Wednesday morning.

The accident can be a cause for embarrassment to the Maltese authorities. Yet, if the throttles got stuck, as is being stated unofficially, the blame could lay solely on the owners of the ship.

In reply to questions by **maltastar.com**, a spokesperson for Cunard said: “The ship will leave Malta tomorrow (Thursday) after repairs have been carried out – these are currently taking place and will continue overnight. As for the reason/cause – it is too early to answer the question while our investigation is taking place.”

Eye-witnesses told **maltastar.com** that as the Queen Victoria was being steered along the Waterfront quay, they heard a loud noise and panic ensued for a few moments.

In a statement later on Wednesday evening the Maritime Authority said that on “approaching the berth, the ship developed mechanical failure and made contact with the quay resulting in limited damage to the fender system and the quay coping. The vessel suffered damage to the stern which damage is being assessed. No injuries to passengers or crew were reported.”



Bad luck?

Interestingly, Queen Victoria was launched six months ago – December 2007 – by Her Royal Highness, the Duchess of Cornwall Camilla Parker Bowles. But the Champagne bottle used in the naming ceremony failed to break against the £300 million luxury liner – a sign which is regarded as bad luck in maritime circles.

A specialised cruise liner news website www.cruisecritic.com said that Queen Victoria “hasn’t had a huge amount of luck in its first six months of service. First, the Champagne bottle failed to smash at the glittering naming ceremony. A month later in January about 80 passengers were struck with Norovirus. And now this event in Malta.”
