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Lloyd's Register of Shipping,

71, Fenchurch Street, E.C.3.

28th April, 1939.

Dear Sir,

S.S. "ITALIAN PRINCE"

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With reference to your letter of the 6th instant in which you ask for the Society's comments on the findings of the Court of Enquiry into the loss of the above vessel, I am directed to inform you that with regard to the position of the oil fuel pipe, the Society's Rule at the time the vessel was built was as follows:-

"Oil fuel pipes should, where practicable, be placed above the stokehold and engine-room plates and where they are always visible".

It will be seen at once that the Rule is not rigid. It meant that the best place for such pipes was above the stokehold and engine-room plates in places where they were always visible, but that they might be in other places.

The pipe was tested when the vessel was new to 300 lb hydraulic pressure, and was satisfactory at that pressure. This is evidence that the pipe and its

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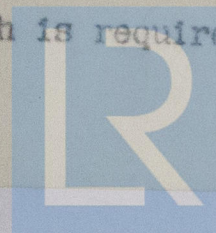
joining flanges were of substantial construction.

If the jointing material between the flanges of such a pipe is, as it should be, very thin and impervious to oil, the likelihood of any subsequent trouble from the pipe and its joints is remote in the extreme, and in view of this it is considered that the question of visibility at all times is one which could be easily overstressed.

It cannot be contended that the pipe was in the best possible position, but it is held that it was in a suitable position and fully in accordance with the spirit of the Rules^{in force} at the time the vessel was built.

It is considered that the loss of this vessel is not to be attributed to the position of the pipe, but to the fact that the oil fuel supply from the tank was not shut off until it was too late.

After a series of explosions had occurred (due to the escaping oil becoming gaseous), but not until then, the Chief Engineer took the step which he should have taken at first and shut down the valve on the oil tank, a valve which is required by the Rules



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for the express purpose of shutting off the oil supply in such an emergency as this.

The fact that after the order to abandon ship had been given there were still some men under the starboard boiler attending to hoses, indicates that the closing of the shut down valve had brought the fire in the stokehold under control, and adds weight to the opinion previously expressed that this valve should have been closed as a first step in fighting the fire.

The omission to take this precaution must be considered as contributing largely to the spreading of the fire to deck, a state of affairs which no doubt influenced the Master to abandon the ship.

It may be added that the statement that the vessel was built in accordance with plans approved by Lloyd's Register, while correct in the main, does not apply to plans of the oil fuel pipes. No plans of these pipes were submitted to this Office for approval, but that does not, of course, exonerate the Society's Surveyors from seeing that the Rules are complied with.

Yours faithfully,

The Secretary,
The Prince Line, Ltd.,
56, Leadenhall Street, E.C.3.

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