

Francis Mackey: "I was shouting out to the men in the vicinity...I called out to everybody in sight that that ship was in danger and likely to explode...I yelled out to everybody that there was danger...I did not notice any men on pier 8 and 9...I think I was too far from pier 8 for them to hear me...I called out there and did everything I could possibly do to let everybody hear me, whether at piers 8, 9 or 10 or anywhere else."⁵⁴

Mackey described some of those he tried to warn as the lifeboats made their way across the harbour to Dartmouth.

"Yes, Captain Murray, he looks after the slow convoys coming out of Halifax. He used to be captain of the *Empress of Britain*. I asked him to tow us away but they didn't come near. I said that she is going to blow up. Get away! There was the captain of the little sugar boat around there too; the Acadia Sugar Refinery's boat, and I told him that ship is going to blow up, get away!...There was a motor boat. I waved my hand to it...He [Captain Le Médec] was doing the same thing. He was in the same boat with me."⁵⁵

Captain Le Médec said one of his lifeboats passed by *Imo* on the way to shore although it was not his. He insisted there was shouting and waving of arms to warn of the impending explosion.

"There were one or two tugs and the *Imo* and after we passed astern, the poop of the *Mont Blanc*, we cried, "Go away" in English."

Le Médec was asked if warning was given to the two tugs and the *Imo*,

"Yes," he replied, "and any in the neighbourhood."⁵⁶

Imo's Peter B'Jönna said he and Bjarne Birkland "saw them going in the life boats and go over to the Dartmouth side...right after [the collision]." He did not hear anyone call out words of warning from the lifeboats that the French ship had explosives on board.⁵⁷

Mate Brannen of *Stella Maris* said it was his father's idea to volunteer his vessel to help fight the fire⁵⁸ and managed to get within 50 yards of the French ship.⁵⁹

"We had to turn over towards the Dartmouth side, at least we did, we went over there near the shore and anchored the scows and then went back and got back and saw the *Mont Blanc* in at the end of Pier 6. And the fire was coming out of the end of the pier and we backed off."⁶⁰

Mate Nickerson: "We went down and tried to put the fire out with our hose."⁶¹ In relation to Pier 6 *Mont Blanc* was lying "almost in line when her bow struck bottom. The flood tide was running and struck her stern and swung it against the pier." Nickerson said the pier had not caught fire - "not that we could see while we were there." There was no room between the pier and the ship. At least one quarter of her was protruding "outside the end" [of the pier].⁶²

"Yes, got the hose started and went alongside to see if we could do any good and then we left⁶³...We didn't go in by the end of the pier. We just went to the steamer's side and backed right off again - to the starboard side...We could have gotten in between all right...[but] the fire had gained such headway we could do no good and we backed out."⁶⁴

After the collision, *Imo* lay almost across the channel facing west towards the Halifax shore. John Johansen testified to a plan of "trying to turn around and go back [to Bedford Basin]...I heard the captain and the pilot talking about it." In

order to accomplish this, *Imo* first had “to turn at right angles” - approximately 8 points to starboard. The vessel required a wide arc to turn but Captain From did not attempt to take her around in a curve. Instead, Pilot Hayes backed up and went ahead by giving different starboard and port orders for the helm. He tried to manoeuvre the vessel back and forth for almost fifteen minutes. Near the moment of the explosion, Hayes finally gave up on the idea of going towards the Basin and decided to head seaward. His idea was then “to turn around and go out to a place where he had more room.”

Johansen said the fire aboard *Mont Blanc* had him a bit concerned about the possibility of an explosion but did not hear the captain or the pilot mention anything about it.

“No sir, did not mention anything about an explosion. They said she might have some kind of explosive in her, but they thought it might be gasoline or kerosene or something like that. That is what he said.”⁶⁵

Francis Mackey: “There was a little jut of land, a ferry landing. That is where we went⁶⁶...I was looking out for the landing, trying to get the cars out and singing out to everybody that I saw to get away, that the ship was likely to explode there.”⁶⁷

Upon coming ashore, Mackey said he and the men tried to warn others while they looked for some measure of protection.

“We did considerable shouting before we took to the woods.”⁶⁸

Mackey warned the French foreman of the cable company⁶⁹ but never thought of going to the brewery wharf to telephone over to anybody in Halifax about the explosion.

“No,” Mackey said, “my idea was to look out for our lives. I had no time to run to the brewery to telephone, everybody could see...It occurred to me after the explosion when I tried to telephone and could not get anybody.”⁷⁰

Once the lifeboats landed, First Officer Glotin lined up the men for roll call.

“I didn’t take their names,” he recounted. “I put them in a line on the shore. I counted them there...At this moment, there was a man of the engine room missing but we found him afterwards⁷¹...We were on a road near the wood...We had already begun to call the roll and thrown a glance among the men when we had an idea to go further away.”⁷²

Counsel asked, “Do you think your time might have been better employed in spreading the news around Dartmouth there was to be an explosion?”

Glotin replied, “This didn’t prevent us to do it. This is a place where there were few people and those near at hand were warned by us...The men warned the people by sign and uses the word ‘explosion.’”⁷³

Captain Le Médec recalled the first few moments he and his men came ashore.

“Yes, some people were on the shore. I had said for them to go out because the ship was to explode⁷⁴...I don’t know if they spoke French but I say that in English...I didn’t speak French on shore, except to my crew.”⁷⁵...As soon as they were on land, I ordered them to climb higher up near the wood which was there and I gave orders to the first officer to call the roll to see if anybody was missing and they replied that one man was missing - but I found out later he had remained behind so I saved the lives of the forty men on my ship”⁷⁶