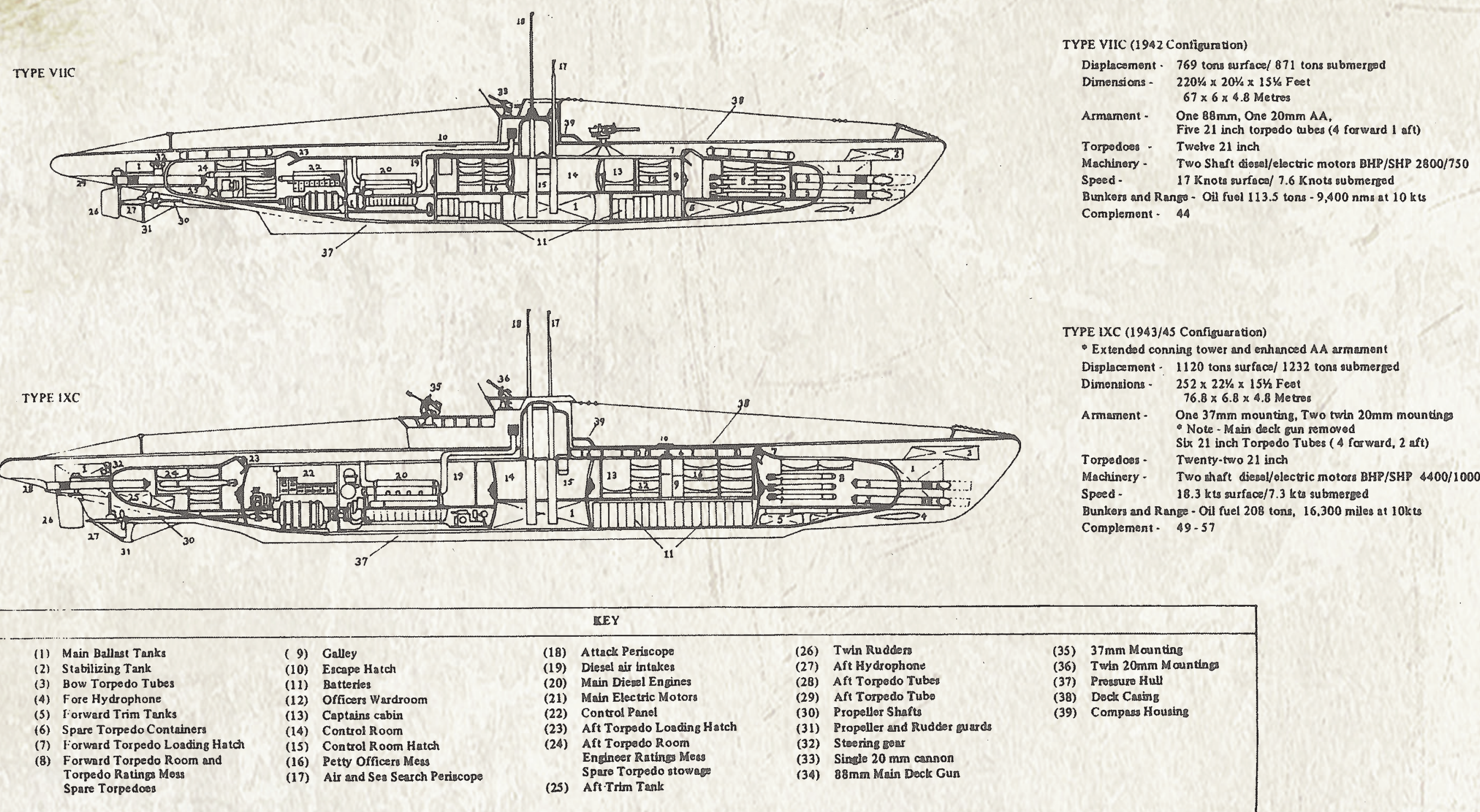


WORLD WAR II

THE TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO EXPERIENCE

THE BATTLE OF THE CARRIBEAN AND THE U-BOAT MENACE



Cross-section of a U-boat. (Gaylord Kelshall, *The U-Boat War in the Caribbean* [Shrewsbury, UK: Airlife, 1994].)

The Battle of the Caribbean (1941-1945) was a naval campaign during World War II. In this battle the German navy used U-Boats. The term U-Boat is derived from the German "Unterseeboot" which means 'undersea boat' which refers to all German navy submarines. The German naval operation in the Caribbean was codenamed "Operation Neuland". The period 1942 to 1943 was the most successful period for Caribbean German U-Boat operations in which a 150 mile strip around Trinidad suffered the greatest concentration of shipping losses experienced anywhere during World War II. The Growling Tiger in his 1939 calypso 'The Best Place is the United States' lamented the poor defensibility of Trinidad by saying,

*I'll show you how we are targets for Germany
 They can attack us from the north by the Caribbean Sea,
 Aply supported by the Italians
 With her ships and planes on the Atlantic Ocean
 When it comes to the south, without any doubt
 It's an easy thing to peep in the Dragon's Mouth
 And then find our defence is rather slick
 They can attack us on the West by the Pacific*

The Growling Tiger's prediction came to fruition when in 1942, U-161, captained by Albrecht Achilles sailed into the Port of Spain Harbour and sank the 7400 ton American freighter, Mohikana and the British tanker, British Consul. On the 26th February 1942, U-156, captained by Werner Hartenstein sunk the oil tanker La Carriere south of the Monos Passage resulting in the loss of 16 Trinidadian lives. The German U-Boats had a successful Caribbean campaign, sinking 400 merchant ships, damaging 56 whilst only 17 U-Boats were sunk. The U-Boat menace was integral to Trinidad and Tobago's experience during the war.

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 Steele, Beverley A. *Grenada in Wartime: The Tragic Loss of the Island Queen and Other Memories of World War II*. Port of Spain: Paria Publishing Limited, 2011. Print.

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THE INTERNMENT OF THE ASHKENAZI JEWS OF TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO



The Ashkenazi Jews of Eastern Europe sought refuge from Nazi Germany in the Americas and eventually made their way to Trinidad and Tobago. These Jews who made Trinidad and Tobago their home were referred to as 'Calypso Jews'. In 1939, the calypsonian Gorilla sang "Jews in Trinidad", which chronicled the immigration of the Jews to the West Indies. He noted:

*Tell me what you think of a dictator
 Trampling the Jews like Adolph Hitler
 Tumbling them out of Germany
 Some running for refuge in the West Indies*

However, by 1939 the British Government considered the approximately 600 Jews who made Trinidad their home, enemy aliens. The Jews therefore were to be placed in internment camps. An internment camp was a prison camp for enemy aliens or prisoners of war. The internment of the Jews took place in two phases. Phase One required all men and women 16 - 60 years in age to report to Police Headquarters where they were then transported to Nelson and Caledonia Island respectively. Phase Two was the internment of both men and women at Camp Rented in Trinidad. At Camp Rented the Jews, Germans (inclusive of captured crew from submarines), Austrians, Nazi Sympathizers and Japanese were interred. All those who were interred at Camp Rented were subject to the same regulations and comparatively their treatment was quite humane. Camp Rented was a prison camp which meant that its prisoners were subject to regular inspections and little access to individuals outside the camp. Privacy was non-existent since they were continuously monitored. Many suffered from depression and intense boredom. In 1943, some of the Jews were released from the camp but had to adhere to wartime constrictions such as being banned from driving cars or riding bicycles, they had to report to the nearest police station daily and they were under curfew from 8:00 PM to 6:00 AM. The period of Jewish internment in Trinidad and Tobago came to an end in January 1944 when Camp Rented closed its doors marking the end of an era in the history of the colony.

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