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Swan Sinks: SS Cygnet Sunk By Italian Submarine Enrico Tazzoli San Salvador Bahamas In World War II (U-Boats In The Bahamas Book 2)



Synopsis

The result of seven years' research in English, Italian, Greek documents and contacts. First-hand accounts including film by Italians of actual attack and sinking showing lifeboats, etc.. Greek and Italian perspectives as well as those of local Bahamians on San Salvador, the Greek community and officials in Nassau, as well as officials en-route to NY and beyond. The author recently traveled to Greece and is in touch with families of several survivors. In a little-known theater of war where 130 Allied ships were sunk by 112 German and Italian submarines, almost all of them in the spring of 1942, the loss of the Greek-owned steam ship *Cygnet* to the Italian submarine *Enrico Tazzoli* is remarkable on many levels. For one, no one was killed, or even seriously injured, and in fact the Italians and Greeks both saluted and joked with one another during and after the attack. Considering that 5,844 Allied sailors were attacked in the Bahamas area, and that 1,239 of them were killed, this is remarkable. Also *Cygnet* was the only ship in the Bahamas or Turks & Caicos whose sinking was so close to land – San Salvador was less than six miles away – that local Bahamians witnessed the daytime assault and the district commissioner sent out an SOS to government forces calling for a counter-attack. *Cygnet* was only the second Allied ship sunk in the Bahamas during the war, the only Greek-owned vessel (the owners still maintain close shipping ties to the Bahamas), and the first dispatched by an Italian submarine. The *O. A. Knudsen* of Norway was caught between Abaco and Eleuthera two days before, and the British steamers *Daytonian* and *Athelqueen* were sunk in that area by the *Tazzoli* several days later. All of the other ships sunk in the Bahamas left dead sailors behind, either trapped on the ships, buried at sea, lost on the reefs, or buried ashore. A fortunate 257 of them made it to the welcome safety of Nassau and into the waiting arms of the Duchess of Windsor Wallis Simpson and her Red Cross volunteers. The loss of the *Cygnet* gave the men on both sides of the steel vessels involved plenty to photograph and film, talk and write about, and remember. There is a certain irony in the *Cygnet* skipper's letter of protest, filed in Nassau, when men on both sides admit that interactions between Italians and Greek were jocular and relaxed. Interestingly, it was the Greek, and not the Italian sailors, who lived to tell the tale. Within a year the *Tazzoli*, too, was at the sea floor, her commander dead by his own hand, his legacy only resurrected, with an Italian submarine named after him, long after the war.

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