

GRIM PAST CLINGS TO DEVIL'S ISLAND

French Removing Last Prisoners From Infamous Colony But Visitor Views Relics of a Century's Horror.

(Second of a Series)

By JOHN A. THALE
Times Foreign Correspondent

DEVILS ISLAND, French Guiana, April 2.—The prison the world has come shudderingly to know as Devil's island is down to its last 15 prisoners.

When they are gone, the hellish place probably will become a coconut plantation.

After 92 years as a horror spot, Devil's island is being abolished. The present French government has ordered it abandoned, along with the other French Guiana penal institutions.

I, for one, find it hard to believe—after having been given full run of the place by the colonial authorities—that anything ever said of this infamous place could have been exaggerated.

What the world knows as Devil's island actually is three islands—Royaume, St. Joseph's and Devil's. They lie close together in the Atlantic about eight miles off the French Guiana coast, roughly 30 miles west of Cayenne.

All three comprise probably less than 10 acres.

Royaume, center of the island penal colony, is a high-crowned island. A steep roadway—paved with smooth rounded stones, apparently taken from the seashore—lead to the top.

The prisoners' barracks and cell blocks, for guards, hospital buildings, chapel, houses for doctor and superintendent, and other buildings are there.

Commandant Vincent, present head of the island penal colony, showed me the cells. We visited the barracks and workshops where thousands of deported French criminals paid for their crimes in blood and agony.

There were the isolation cells on Royale, stone caverns measuring some six by 10 feet. Men spent as much as three months there at a time in almost total darkness. Double doors of solid wood kept out virtually all sound. Most of the time the inmates were shackled to his bare board bunk.

No Rays of Sunlight

We stepped inside and Commandant Vincent closed the doors. A small porthole—high up in the wall—admitted so little light that the outlines of the bunk two feet away were barely visible.

The porthole admitted no direct view of the sky, no rays of sunlight. When a prisoner emerged from the isolation cell after three months, Commandant Vincent explained, he was given "two or three days to get used to the light again."

All of the island buildings have walls from a foot to two feet thick. Heavy, old-fashioned iron keys click open solidly-barred doors.

The rooms in the general barracks were designed to accommodate upward of 50 closely-packed prisoners.

Bare boards comprised the bunks. Each was equipped with iron bars at the foot so the prisoner could be shackled to it—by heavy ankle irons—at night.

The commandant explained that it wasn't as bad as it sounded, however. Prisoners frequently were able to obtain little pieces of soap with which they were able to lather their ankles and surreptitiously slip off the shackles.

In a 40x100-foot courtyard between two of the long cell blocks five worn stones were set in the rough cobbled paving. They formed the base for "the widow," or guillotine.

Here the engine of execution was set up, and the victim brought out to have his head chopped off, all within full sight and sound of the rest of the prisoners.

From a closet, Commandant Vincent produced an array of medieval-looking appliances used in quelling unruly prisoners.

He showed how a pair of manacles could be slipped on and screwed down until agony forced the victim to his knees.

There was a strait-jacket which, Vincent explained, was slipped on the more unruly prisoners. Their legs then were drawn up tightly behind them and fastened to their trussed arms.

In the walls of most of the barracks were set iron rings to which

prisoners could be chained. The sound of the chains clinking was a constant reminder of the grim past.

As the sound grew fainter, the Flounder raised her periscope. Nothing could be seen but calm seas and blue skies. Discerning no vessel on the surface, the captain assumed he had run into a Japanese submarine, and hoped it had sunk.

When the collision occurred, the skipper of the Hoe sent his crew to battle stations and the submarine surfaced.

"It was not until late that night, when both ships reported their accidents, that anyone realized exactly what had happened," the navy said.

Neither Expected the Other

"Both skippers knew their vessels were operating in adjoining areas, but neither expected the other to be in the vicinity of the collision. Apparently they had not picked each other up on their sound equipment before the collision, due possibly to peculiar underwater conditions. Evidently, they did not see each other on the surface because their periscopes were not raised simultaneously."

The Flounder's hull was intact after the ramming, but her superstructure had a 25-foot gash. Her gun platforms were damaged considerably, and several of her air

and fuel lines were bent.

The Flounder had just reported "all clear on sound." Suddenly, the whole ship shuddered. About 30 seconds later, the ship trembled again and water began entering through an electrical cable. The soundman reported a tremendous

explosion. The Flounder's hull was intact after the ramming, but her superstructure had a 25-foot gash. Her gun platforms were damaged considerably, and several of her air

and fuel lines were bent.

The Flounder had just reported "all clear on sound." Suddenly, the whole ship shuddered. About 30 seconds later, the ship trembled again and water began entering through an electrical cable. The soundman reported a tremendous

explosion. The Flounder's hull was intact after the ramming, but her superstructure had a 25-foot gash. Her gun platforms were damaged considerably, and several of her air

and fuel lines were bent.

The Flounder had just reported "all clear on sound." Suddenly, the whole ship shuddered. About 30 seconds later, the ship trembled again and water began entering through an electrical cable. The soundman reported a tremendous

explosion. The Flounder's hull was intact after the ramming, but her superstructure had a 25-foot gash. Her gun platforms were damaged considerably, and several of her air

and fuel lines were bent.

COUNCIL MOVES TO AID CLEANUP

Orders Investigation of Junk Yard 'Unsanitary'

The city council today took steps to abate juvenile delinquency, combat "unsightly" filth in the city and approved a City hospital request for federal aid.

In other action last night, the council also:

ONE: Approved a \$300,000 bond issue for new equipment for the city police and fire department requested by the safety board last Thursday.

TWO: Introduced and held for study two taxicab ordinances, one calling for an increase of from 420 permits to 475 and the other for an increase of only 20 additional licenses.

THREE: Shelved approval of a parking meter purchase contract with the Magee-Hale Park-O-Meter Co. for 2000 meters pending further consideration.

Exposed to Weather

The St. Joseph cells were rock on four sides, with iron bars serving as roofs. Occupants were exposed to sun and rain, their food tossed down to them.

Devil's island itself is a long, narrow strip, covered by a copious growth of coconut palms.

Despite the reputation of its name, less than 50 of some 52,000 prisoners deported to French Guiana ever were imprisoned on Devil's island.

Devil's island was reserved for special prisoners, like the famed Capt. Alfred Dreyfus, who spent two years there in 1896 and 1899, before he was finally cleared of charges of treason.

A cable across a narrow channel connects Royale with Devil's island. Food was placed in the cable cart on Royale, and sent across to the unfortunate occupant of Devil's island.

He lived in a little house of his own, cooked his own food and took care of himself. He had no contact with anyone.

Gasped Moodyly at Sea

Dreyfus, it is reported, spent most of his time sitting on a rock looking moodily at the ocean.

There are no prisoners now on St. Joseph or Devil's island.

The three islands were established as a punishment camp for prisoners from the mainland camps of St. Laurent, Cayenne — and smaller camps back in the hot, tangled jungles.

Heavy seas beat against their rocky shores, and swift currents rip through the channels between them, making it virtually impossible to launch a small boat for an escape attempt. It a boat were swamped, there were the waiting sharks.

Copyright, 1946, by The Indianapolis Times and The Chicago Daily News, Inc.

REHEARING SOUGHT ON VFW APPROVAL

Property owners today filed a petition for a rehearing next Monday on the city zoning board's approval of a Veterans of Foreign Wars post to erect a clubhouse at 1941 Central ave.

In approving 28 of 37 zoning appeals yesterday, the board on a 5-to-3 vote authorized the Sgt. Ralph Barker V. F. W. post to construct a \$25,000 building despite a remonstrance by 12 property owners.

Led by Berg A. King, 1941 Central ave., the remonstrants protested against the erection of a club with a bar and no off-street parking facilities.

Answers Congestion Charge

Carl Elliott, the veterans' organization state publicity head, denied that the new post would increase traffic congestion on the street.

"Although we have more than 900 members, the club would only be open at night and attract not more than 20 cars," he said.

Mr. King revealed that if the rehearing failed, a circuit court injunction would be filed.

The board also approved five petitions for the conversion of existing residences into additional living quarters and the occupancy of trailers.

GUNBOAT DECLARED SURPLUS

WASHINGTON, April 2 (U. P.).—The gunboat Dauntless, wartime home of Adm. Ernest J. King and his staff, has been declared surplus. The navy disclosed today.

Subs Collide Under Sea—'It Couldn't Happen, but It Did'

PEARL HARBOR, April 2 (U. P.).—Navy officials disclosed today the "it-couldn't-happen" story of two submarines colliding in the Pacific during the war in a freak accident involving odds of 119,594,745,000 to one.

The collision occurred on Feb. 23, 1945, when the U. S. S. Flounder was rammed by the bow of the U. S. S. Hoe off French Indo-China in the South China sea. Both submarines were cruising at periscope depth.

Navy mathematicians, after extensive calculations, said it was "virtually impossible" for two submarines, each 300 by 27 feet, and each equipped with ultra-modern safety and detection devices, ramming in an ocean with 68,534,000 square miles of surface.

However, Cmdr. J. E. Stevens, Flushing, N. Y., and Lt. Cmdr. M. P. Refe III, Belmont, Mass., commanding officers of the Flounder and Hoe, respectively, said it did happen whether it could or not.

In describing the accident, navy officials said:

Whole Ship Shudders

"The Flounder had just reported 'all clear on sound.' Suddenly, the whole ship shuddered. About 30 seconds later, the ship trembled again and water began entering through an electrical cable. The soundman reported a tremendous

explosion. The Flounder's hull was intact after the ramming, but her superstructure had a 25-foot gash. Her gun platforms were damaged considerably, and several of her air

and fuel lines were bent.

The Flounder had just reported "all clear on sound." Suddenly, the whole ship shuddered. About 30 seconds later, the ship trembled again and water began entering through an electrical cable. The soundman reported a tremendous

explosion. The Flounder's hull was intact after the ramming, but her superstructure had a 25-foot gash. Her gun platforms were damaged considerably, and several of her air

and fuel lines were bent.

R. C. (Bud) Daus, Republican councilman, called for investigation of opening the city's public school yards as night playgrounds to alleviate the rising trend of juvenile delinquency.

"More than 72 per cent of the city's total crime is committed by children under 18 years of age," he asserted.

"We must do something to get these kids off the streets at night." His safety committee accepted responsibility of contacting the proper authorities for opening the school yards.

Referring to The Times recent campaign to clean-up the city and the approaching annual clean-up week April 15, Dr. Lucien B. Meriwether called for council action on the "unsightly" conditions that exist at many open junk yards throughout Indianapolis.

"Can't the council do something about fencing in the area in the 600-block on Senate ave?" he asked.

Aid for Hospital

Mr. Daus also sought action on other similar junk lots. John A. Schumacher, council president, referred the matter to Dr. Meriwether, who promised immediate investigation.

Suspending council rules, the

city "fathers" last night urged the City hospital to make formal application to the Federal Works Agency for aid in the preparation of plans for construction work on new hospital additions.

"We shall ask the agency to advance \$8565 to aid in engineering plans for remodeling on the present auditorium and additional wings at the hospital," Dr. Charles W. Myers, hospital superintendent said.

He revealed that the construction of each unit would cost approximately \$200,000.

Post-War Vehicles

In announcing that council approval of the safety board's \$300,000 bond issue would come at the April 15 meeting, Mr. Daus, council safety chairman, stated that 68 post-war vehicles would be bought to replenish the two department's depleted fleets.

Purchase of two aerial trucks, seven pumps, three service trucks and accessories will cost the fire department \$184,000. The police department will receive \$116,000 for purchase of 45 passenger automobiles, five trucks, one emergency car, one station wagon and new radio equipment.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

700,000 IDLE IN LABOR DISPUTES

Coal Tieup Continues; Two Cities Lack Transit.

By UNITED PRESS

Almost 700,000 workers were idle in the country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.

General Motors estimated that 105,000 men had returned to work in various G. M. plants as local issues were being settled.

In the coal dispute, negotiations between United Mine Workers (A. F. of L.) President John L. Lewis and management representatives ended without progress. Each side accused the other of "stalling" tactics.

The parties will meet again today, however, to continue their attempts to settle the dispute over safety regulations and health benefits which sent 400,000 miners out of the

country today because of strikes and shutdowns. Soft coal mines were closed because of a miners' strike and public transportation in two cities was at a standstill.