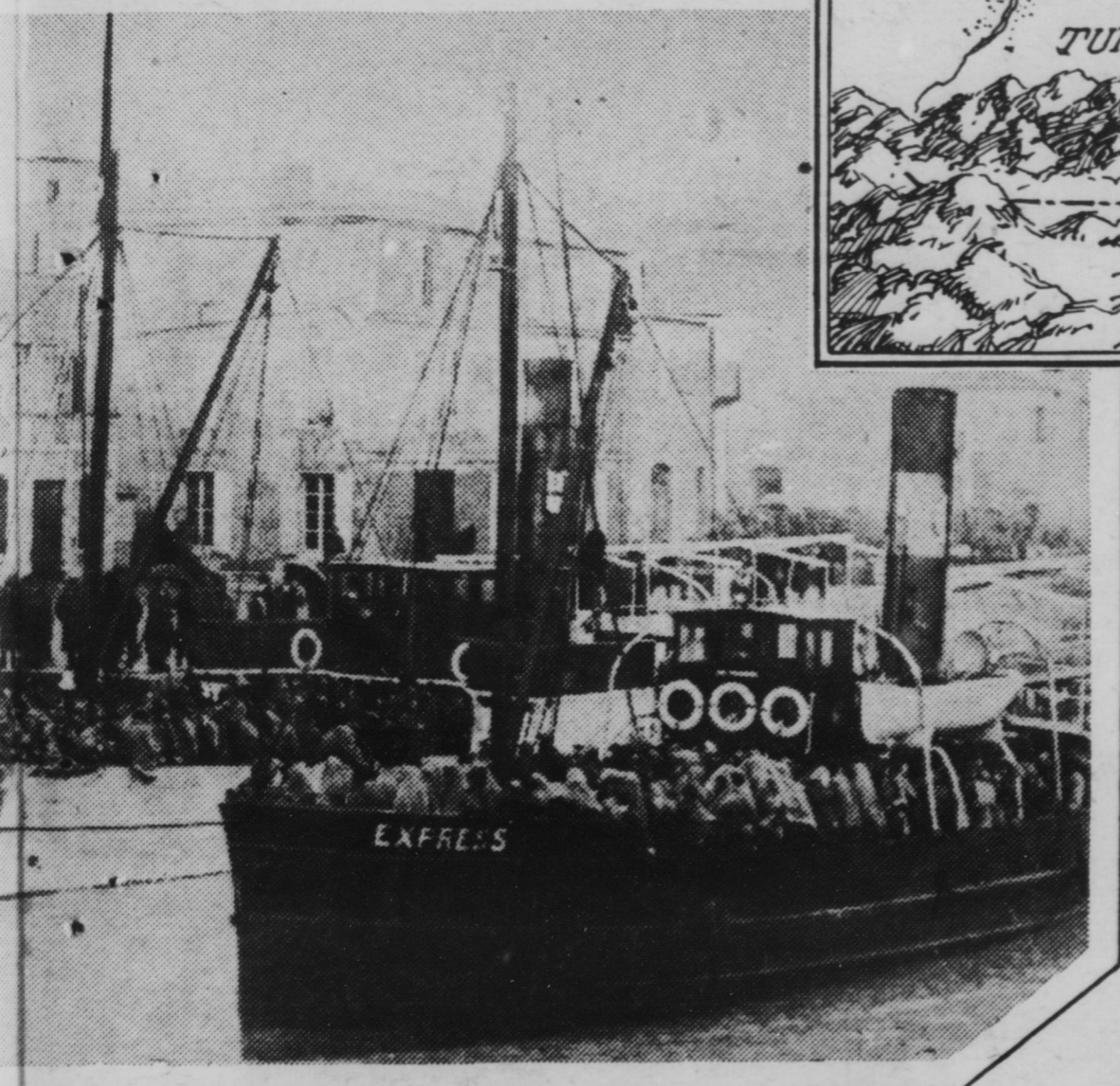


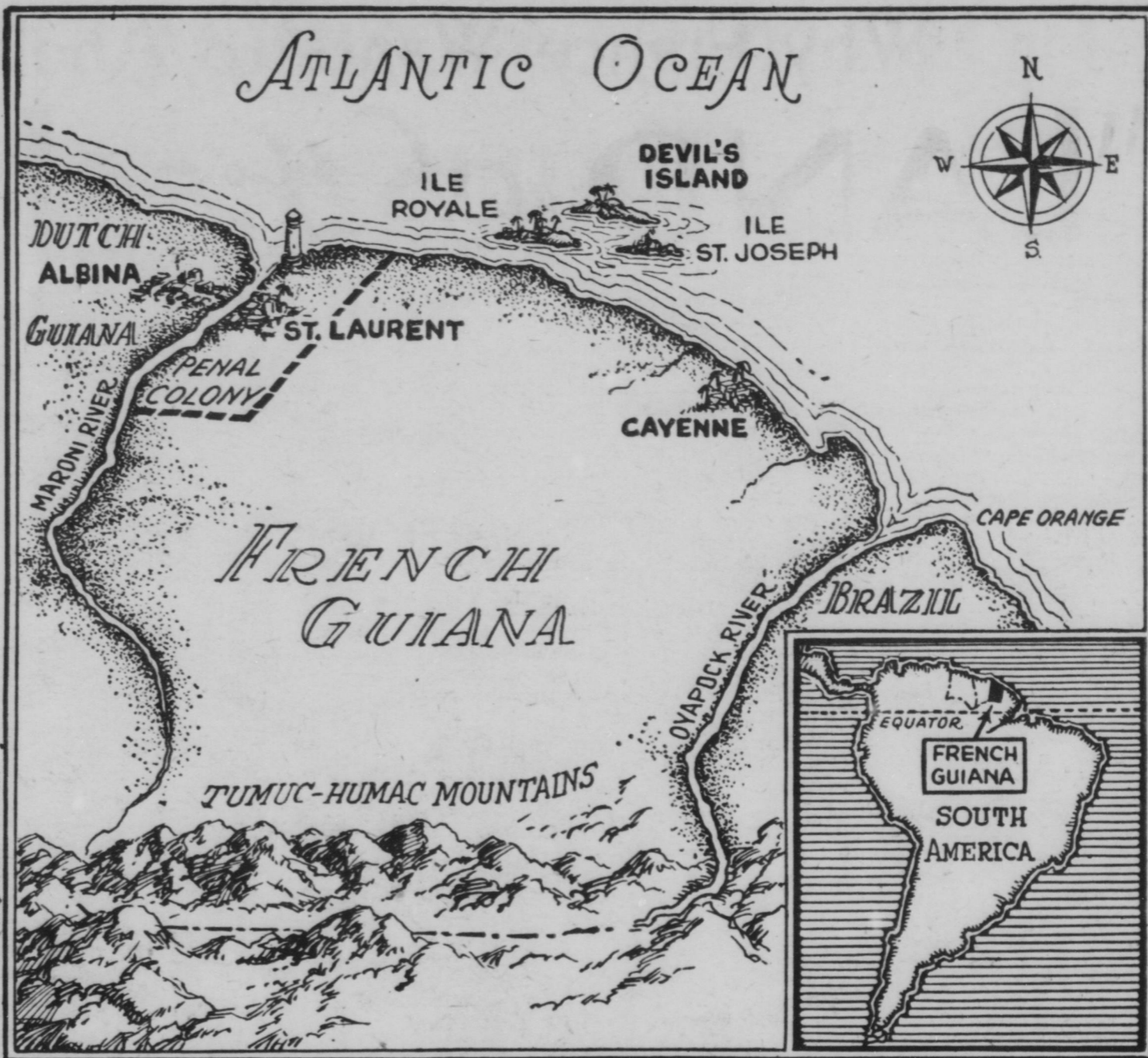
DEAD"

About Devil's Island

which has circled the world. It has become synonymous, in prison, penal servitude. Erroneously, it has come to mean the which holds forth on the mainland of South America (French three small islands known as the Iles de Salut' (Islands of off the mainland. It is but a small part of the French penal for traitors. But it was given deathless notoriety by the four- pt. Alfred Dreyfus on an unfounded charge of treason of After his departure, in 1899, the island was empty for years. Now it is languishing again.



Prisoners embarking in tenders at a French port for transfer to the notorious prison ship, La Martiniere.



This map shows the relation of Devil's Island to the penal colony as a whole. Inset, the colony's situation in South America

"spider" crabs, vultures, pumas, wild pig, scorpions, sloths, vermin. Rim it with a shark-infested sea.

Set down on that coast the human dregs of Europe—hardy, vicious, crafty criminals, murderers, rippers, violators. Add a mixture of madmen, crazed souls on the verge of screaming idiocy or worse. Add, too, a sprinkling of innocent men, wrongly convicted.

Douse all this with disease. The dis-



King Louis XV of France—the "well-beloved" king who originated the Guiana prison.

eases brought from the ghettos, the gutters, the leaping-houses of urbane Europe, these are bad enough. Include also the local diseases which take their ferocious toll and breed mightily. First, malaria. Then dysentery. Then tuberculosis. Ankylostomiasis, which preys like the hook-worm. Cachexy. Elephantiasis. And leprosy.

Cover all with an inadequacy of medical, spiritual, social aid, so that hospitals recently lacked the simplest necessities such as thermometers, iodine, quinine (which was for years considered a luxury, though it would have eradicated malaria there if taken preventively).

DIVIDE up this unholy mess into numerous compartments—the general prisons holding 50 prisoners in one barrack.

The camps where futile efforts are made to attack the pristine might of the great forest. The camps for the incorrigibles. The island prisons for special categories (including the world-famous "Devil's Island," reserved for traitors and given a deathless notoriety by the sojourn there, four decades ago, of Capt. Alfred Dreyfus in solitary confinement plus persecution).

The camps for the "pieds de biche"—the "repeaters," who by an accumulation of minor convictions have at last achieved the penalty of deportation. The punishment camps. The leper colony.

And the central ganglion of the system, the town of St. Laurent-de-Maroni, infested with indigent, thieving men who have been liberated from their sentences but can't go home and are very generally close to starving to death from lack of work.

Stir this all together and you have the Bagne—the French penal colony of Guiana, a celebrated and ghastly survival of medieval penology.

Out of 800 annual arrivals at Saint Laurent du Maroni, 200 should be dead in six months, writes Marius Larique. French investigator, in a series of articles published recently. In a year, they will all be victims of malaria. The new shipment replaces the old.

That is the saying on the coast. It means that the population of prisoners never rises. In fact, until very recent years when the devotion of medical men and the impact of the situation on the conscience of France have begun to take effect, the population of the Bagne has steadily diminished.

In 1901 there were 6290 inhabitants of the penal colony. In 1915 it was 6415. More than 10,000 prisoners had arrived there from France during those 14 years.

Today there are approximately 4500 prisoners in the Guiana penal colony. Yet shipments to Guiana have not noticeably lessened in quantity. The toll has been more exacting.

Of late the death rate has diminished, thanks mostly to the tenacious work of the medical unit. But it is still enormously high.

NEXT WEEK: The cruelty of prisoner to prisoner in the "Bagne." How a bicycle thief can suffer a worse fate than a murderer.

running it. The wealth is still there, and still untapped. It will never be tapped, observers declare, as long as the penal colony is the agency that is expected to produce this wealth.

Louis XV having once and for all proved that the scheme wouldn't work, France was still continuing it 170-odd years later. There has almost always been a "bagne." Why shouldn't there always be one? That is the idea which Premier Leon Blum is up against in trying to abolish it.

The next philanthropist to cast an eager eye on that Guiana region was a certain Baron Milius, in 1823. He improved on the earlier notion. He sent not only exiled convicts out there, but "degraded women" to marry them on the banks of the Maroni. This expedition, the historians declare, "resulted in the most ghastly horrors."

It remained for Napoleon III to revive the whole idea again. Between 1852 and 1854 he announced the resumption of the penal colony in a public statement filled with high-sounding phrases. Of the thousands who were then dispatched to Cayenne, "more than half were to find certain death." There was no profit in agricultural or mineral or other development. There was practically no development of any kind, which is almost the case today. "It was then acknowledged by officials that the attempt to establish a penal colony on the Equator was ut-

terly futile," says a historian. That didn't bother Napoleon III.

It was found that whites fared much worse in that climate than Arabs or blacks. So, in 1864, the white criminals sent out annually from France were diverted to the Pacific, to New Caledonia and other French possessions. The Arab and black criminals had Guiana to die in practically all to themselves.

But, it is recorded, about 1883 public officials in France discovered that white criminals sent to the Pacific were thriving and happy in the mild climate and the good natural conditions. Public officials then concluded that there wasn't any punishment in such deportation. So they began sending white criminals to Guiana again.

And that has been the practice in regard to French criminals ever since that unhappy discovery.

TAKE a country of 35,000 square miles, within five degrees of the Equator. Fill it with impenetrable forest, mountain, and swamp, so that only on the water-logged rim can white men get a foothold, and the whole interior is a dark and furtive and sinister region impassable save for a few primitive native tribes.

Set over all a wet heat that beats with fury, and, for seven months of the year, a rain that drenches. Cram the land with plagues of mosquitoes, snakes, venomous