



ATTACK ON AMERICA



INSTALLMENT TWO
THE STORY SO FAR: Colonel Flagwill, acting assistant chief of staff G-2, in charge of military intelligence, estimated from secret information that there were 200,000 European troops in Mexico being prepared for an attack on the United States. Both he and the President were powerless to act because of public and congressional opinion which failed to realize the significance of the troops. In an effort to obtain more definite proof, Colonel Flagwill sent Captain Benning, daring American intelligence officer, to the U. S. ambassador in Paris. Here he was told to impersonate Lieutenant Bromlitz, a former American officer who had planned to work with the foreign agents in Mexico. Expelled from the U. S. army, he had desired to get revenge for the "insult." Fortunately, Bromlitz had been captured, so Benning prepared to visit him in his cell to study his mannerisms.

Now continue with the story.

CHAPTER II—Continued

Bromlitz, stretched out face downward on a cot, raised his face as the steel door opened on the little hole to which he was confined. His alert, beady black eyes searched the face of his visitor, and he sat up as recognition came to his face.

"Hello, Benning," he said, his face unaccountably brightening. "So it's you come after me, eh? Well, I'm glad, if I must be hanged, that it's to be an American job."

"Merely a little visit, Bromlitz," Benning answered. "I'm not to take you home, but you'll understand my confession of gratification that you've been run down at last. Corporal Hill, the man you killed, was a member of my company."

They engaged in a strained conversation. Benning prolonged his visit while he studied Bromlitz for his own purposes. He asked many questions of the Bromlitz stay in Luxembourg, which the prisoner answered freely. He was sharply puzzled by the evident good humor that his visit had brought to the fellow. But Bromlitz' parting words cleared up that enigma.

"May I ask you a special favor, Benning?" Bromlitz asked as Benning rose to go.

The prisoner was suddenly solemn, there was a pleading note in his voice, a beseeching look in his black eyes.

"I owe you no favors, Bromlitz," Benning said brusquely.

"A very little favor to a man who must die," the other implored. "Let me tell you, Benning, and you mustn't say no. Your coming here has greatly relieved my mind. I was—suspicious that I must have been betrayed to the French, but now I know it was the American secret service that caught up with me. A small distinction you say? But an important one to me. The one fine thing in my life has been, Benning, a girl, whom I hoped soon to marry. Please will you take a message to her at Luxembourg? Tell her I was killed by a train, drowned—tell her anything but the truth. She must think me dead. Out of her loyalty she might wait for me through empty years, and she's too fine for that ordeal. Please let her think I'm honorably dead and can't ever return. You'll do that for me, please, Benning!"

CHAPTER III

A tramcar took Benning from the Colonia Station in Mexico City to Plaza Mayor, whence he crossed the broad Mexican thoroughfare to the great stone hulk of the Palacio Nacional. He accosted a gendarme and asked directions to General Van Hassek's headquarters.

The policeman shook a puzzled head and answered, "I've heard of no such general in Mexico, señor."

"Perhaps," Benning suggested, "you can direct me to General Ruiz."

The Mexican's face lighted up, and he spoke almost in awe, "Si, señor, if your credentials are important enough you may find General Ruiz in the President's suite at the palace."

Benning smiled inwardly as he turned to the Porto Mariano and entered the palace. Many times since arriving at Vera Cruz he had inquired about Van Hassek to find the name unknown. It meant that Van Hassek, a real master of the Mexican forces, was entrenched behind a stout incognito, moving his pawns in the name of young Ruiz, the new dictator who had been placed in power by a swift, furious, and mysterious coup d'etat of European planning.

An elevator shot Benning to the fourth floor. He presented his credentials to a staff officer with easy assurance. So far, his carte d'identite had passed him without question. The staff officer directed him down a tiled corridor that rang with the clatter of military typewriters

and all the hum and buzz of a general headquarters.

He was escorted into a large reception room at the far end of the palace. The staff officer got to his feet grudgingly.

"I'll see if Excellency wishes you to report to him personally," he said in German. He left the room, but was back in a few moments to say, "General Van Hassek will see you at once, Major."

Benning found himself in an immense chamber whose rich furnishings ran a riot of vivid colors. His eyes centered in some perplexity upon the solitary figure in the room, a man sprawled in a deep crimson leather chair placed at one side of an immense blackwood desk.

Was this Van Hassek? The recumbent man's figure was lost in shapeless folds of fat. His wide, squarish head was as bald as a billiard ball, his face was a network of wrinkles, thick jowls cascaded from jaw and chin. Moreover, he appeared wholly inanimate, a listless gaze fixed in some strange detachment on the beautifully frescoed ceiling.

"Sir, Major Bromlitz, reporting from Luxembourg for duty with General Van Hassek," Benning said briskly.

"Sit down, Bromlitz," the other said without lowering his eyes. "I'm Van Hassek."

The Van Hassek uniform was the simple brownish-tinted cotton khaki



"Sit down, Bromlitz."

of this new Mexican army. At the collar was a silver crescent, insignia of a lieutenant general. The only other ornaments on his severely plain uniform were a glittering order of merit at his left breast and, under it, the iron cross.

Some moments passed in which the only sound was the heavy ticking of an immense German clock and the vague hum of traffic in the street below.

"The profession of arms is so vast and intricate, Bromlitz, I've given up all hopes of mastering it in detail," Van Hassek rejoined. "Besides, I find occasional diversion in other lines of thoughts. So many, many people must die of violence within the next year or two that I've been trying to satisfy myself whether that will be the end of them."

"You mean that many will die in war, I take it, sir," Benning suggested.

"Millions," Van Hassek answered, stifling a yawn.

His pudgy arms thrust into the air over his head, his heels stretched forward, and he squirmed erect in his huge chair.

"You were, I'm advised, an American army officer," Van Hassek said, now speaking briskly in German. "I'm told there are serious charges standing against you in the United States."

Benning said: "I hope you'll not judge me by that, General Van Hassek. Despite my past misfortunes I'm a soldier, sir, and hold the view that there is no other profession worthy of a man. That being so, when circumstances beyond my control placed a price on my head in one country, haven't I the right to find service in another?"

"Ja, a soldier is always a soldier, Bromlitz," Van Hassek answered with an approving nod. "I enjoyed my three years in China as much as my station in Vienna; and Mexico is even more to my liking because there are big events shaping up. Tell me in your own way, Bromlitz, what you think of the American army's fighting capacity."

Benning pondered briefly and decided upon the full and unequivocal truth which, after all, could only con-

firm what Van Hassek must already know.

"If you mean the American readiness for a sudden war, that is nothing short of pitiable, sir. The United States land forces are scattered in small garrisons, are not properly equipped, and have very little training in the team-play of the larger combat elements."

"What do you know of its strength?"

"There are four army infantry divisions and eighteen National Guard infantry divisions together with some four cavalry divisions. All are at peace strength and it would take months to put them on a war footing, fully equipped. In total manpower count on 300,000 men within the territorial limits."

"Ja, very good. What about their fighting equipment?"

"Pitiable, when you consider the whole picture. Their artillery is largely World War vintage stuff. They're short on ammunition, anti-aircraft, instruments of precision, modern rifles. Their anti-tank weapons aren't out of the factories yet. It would take them a year to make the weapons they'd need, if they couldn't purchase them in foreign markets as they did for the World War. But they have a high-class officer personnel, thoroughly trained and—"

"Ja, I know of that," Van Hassek interrupted with a dash of impatience. "But it takes modern equipment and plenty of training to fight a battle these days. Now, tell me another thing, Bromlitz, would the mass of Americans stick together in event of invasion?"

Benning pondered briefly and answered, "I'm sure you can count on it that they will, sir."

"But what if they were overrun suddenly? How long would they stand up under terrific military punishment when they had their chance offered them—to buy their way back to peace?"

"Excellency, is it probable that anyone would be audacious enough to attack the United States on her own soil?" Benning asked. "I mean when her potential resources in wealth and manpower are taken into consideration?"

Van Hassek snapped out, "That's precisely why she must be attacked on her own soil, because of her latent strength."

Benning pretended perplexity and countered, "I'm not sure I understand just what Excellency means."

"I mean it was America's stupid intervention that wrecked the world in the Great War."

"But didn't her strength turn the balance in the last war, Excellency?"

"Strength, bah!" Van Hassek scoffed. "Not for more than a year after the United States jumped into the war did her soldiers fire a shot in battle. Then only after the French supplied her with cannon, the British with rifles, helmets, and gas masks, and both sides conducted a military kindergarten to instruct her divisions in the art of war. Ja, that was her latent strength!"

Van Hassek got up abruptly and with an amazing agility. He went to his desk and touched a call button. The captain from the anteroom responded promptly.

"Captain Schreff," Van Hassek instructed, "I'm very well satisfied with Bromlitz. You may have him report for the time being to Colonel Bravot. Later I may have more important use for him."

CHAPTER IV

Benning found himself assigned to a stuffy little room that was piled high with American newspapers and magazines. Half a dozen other officers were engaged in reading these publications.

Each day this group was required to make a summary of American press opinion as affecting Mexican relations. Outwardly a peaceful enough job, but one that Benning knew to be a vital part of Van Hassek's war machinery.

During the next few days Benning kept pretty much to himself, though cautiously making friends with the Austrian, Captain Fincke, who sat at his elbow. A bit at a time he meant to gather the information he had come for. If long risks had to be taken in order to secure important secret informations, that would have to wait until he had the lay of things at headquarters.

Mexico City, Benning observed in his off-duty strolls, was serene and untroubled.

Mexican troops themselves had undergone a transition. They had shoes on their feet and discipline in their ranks and were used largely as labor troops.

Ruiz, holding the military rank of colonel-general, was an imposing figure, erect, lean, dashing. His uniform was always vivid and he was forever attended by flashily uniformed aides and orderlies. Benning thought Ruiz must have been picked for appearance as well as his susceptibility to control, in order to put on a show that would catch and hold the Mexican imagination.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

FARM TOPICS

PREPARE COWS IN DRY PERIOD

Special Care Assures Better Production.

By GEORGE E. TAYLOR
(Extension Dairyman, Rutgers University.)

Cows that are properly fitted and managed during the dry period may produce as much as 25 per cent more milk and butterfat during the following lactation period.

During the lactation period, especially during the first six months, the animal's body reserve of minerals, protein and fat becomes depleted. And the cow does not have an opportunity to build up this reserve again until the animal is given a six to eight weeks' rest period prior to the following calving.

Neglect on the part of the owner regarding proper feed, care and management of dry cows may cost the owner the value of one ton of milk. The loss in dollars and cents may be computed by using the market value of one ton of milk under any known market condition.

The amount of hay and grain which should be fed during the dry period depends upon the condition of the cow at the time she is turned dry. Animals that are in fair condition may be properly fitted on a liberal allowance of quality roughage, including pasture, hay and silage. Other cows may require some grain in addition to all the roughage they will eat. A daily grain allowance of six pounds is usually ample. Thus not more than 250 pounds to 350 pounds of grain in addition to one-quarter ton of hay, is needed to put a cow in proper condition.

Figure the cost of 250 to 350 pounds of grain and one-quarter ton of hay and compare it with the value of one ton of milk. The figure proves that a rest period of six to eight weeks along with proper feed and care during the dry period, really pays dividends.

Seed Treatment Proves Good Crop Insurance

Seed treatment is one of the most important phases of crop insurance. Not only can the crops be disease-free, but in most cases freedom from disease results in increased yield. Therefore, the use of high quality treated seed is a big step forward toward success.

Now is the time to make preparation for treating wheat, oats, and barley for smut. There are several materials on the market that, if properly used, will give good results. The first important step is to learn exactly the method recommended. If instructions as to the proper method of treatment are not followed, it is a waste of time and material.

Copper carbonate and mercurial dusts are suitable for the control of seed-borne diseases in a wide range of seeds, because they control a large number of seed-borne diseases besides smut. For this reason they can be used with crops of wheat, oats, barley, beans, and others.

Formaldehyde is still popular with many farmers but this material must be properly applied to give good results. The placing of a teaspoonful of formaldehyde in the top of a sack of grain and then turning the sack upside down for treatment is ineffectual. Formaldehyde when exposed to the air vaporizes as a gas; this gas is heavier than air. The above procedure prevents the formaldehyde from coming in contact with the seed.

Week-Old Calves Can Be Dehorned

Horns, at one time, were a necessary part of a cow's equipment. They were necessary for protection, but under present modern methods of management, cows do not need horns. Horns may be taken off when the calf is a week old without any loss and not too much discomfort to the calf. Do the job of dehorning as soon as the horn button can be found; clip the hair around this tiny bump and place a ring of vaseline on the lower side to prevent any drainage into the eye itself. Roughen the spot gently where the horn is starting with a corn cob or by scraping it. Moisten a stick of caustic potash and rub it on until the skin is a distinct pink. Caution: Use gloves on your hands and let no liquid from the caustic stick get into your eyes or the calf's eyes—it's dangerous.

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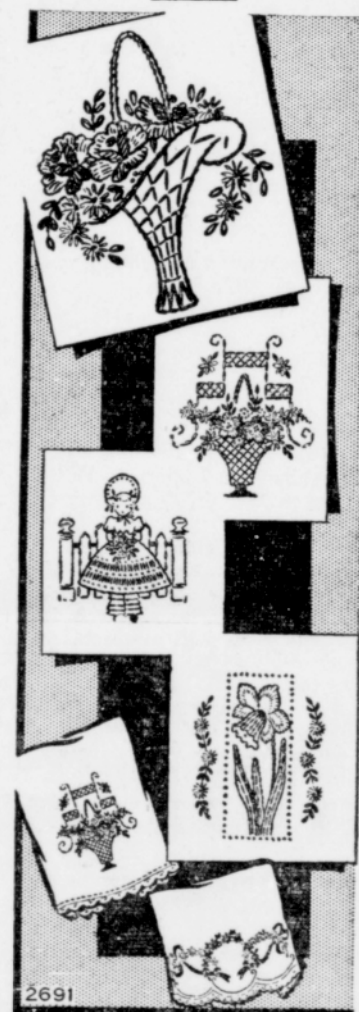
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