



By General ARED WHITE
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"Kelly field in flames."

INSTALLMENT FIVE

THE STORY SO FAR: Colonel Flagwill, acting chief of G-2, U. S. military intelligence department, estimated there were 200,000 European troops in Mexico preparing for an attack on the United States. Posing as Bromlitz, an American traitor captured in Paris, intelligence officer Benning went to Mexico City where he was unsuspectingly accepted as an officer by Van Hassek, leader of the foreign armed forces in Mexico. Fincke, another enemy officer,

soon took him into his confidence. Benning was joined in Mexico City by Lucette Ducos, a French spy, who told him that Bromlitz had escaped. He returned to Washington after learning Van Hassek's plans for an invasion of the United States. Acting on the basis of this information the President sent an ultimatum to Mexico demanding an immediate explanation of the foreign troops on her soil.

Now continue with the story.

troop concentrations north of Shanghai together with concentration of transport fleets. Russia had drawn off to herself behind an unbreakable curtain of censorship. Diplomacy admittedly had broken down the world over, fretted capitals waited in the grip of fear for the next moves in a world gone mad.

Only in the United States was there tranquility left, a lack of fear and tension. G-2 reports gave the same story from over the country. There was lively interest but little tension. War was something on remote horizons, isolated by broad seas. America wanted nothing to do with it, wished only to be left alone with her peaceful intentions. Therefore no harm could come. The war scare was jingoistic poppycock promoted by militarists in their quest of heavier appropriations for armaments. Just as though recent millions pledged to them were insufficient. As for those mercenary troops in the Mexican army, our own army could gobble them up in a jiffy if they were senseless enough to start anything.

During the day Benning saw little of Flagwill. Endless staff conferences were being held, the whole War and Navy Departments a beehive of strained activity. A new plan was hot in the making, a tortured, impossible plan, out of which the best must be drawn.

It was a plan to meet the one emergency for which the United States was wholly and utterly unprepared, the emergency of sudden invasion.

At Fort Sam Houston, on the outskirts of San Antonio, Lieutenant Colonel Bart, Corps Area G-2 Chief, received a disturbing bit of information late in the day. Shortly after sunset a formation, identified as bombers, had passed over the Rio Grande at a point west of Brownsville, headed north.

Bart had telephoned the villages of Kingsville, Gregory, Skidmore, Beeville, and Kennedy to the north of the border, in Texas, without picking up any further report of the flight, from which he concluded that the bombers must have taken out across the Gulf of Mexico.

He had alerted Galveston and New Orleans, but as the evening passed no reports came from those cities. Neither Kelly Field nor Randolph Field had any planes out. A query to Washington brought the response that no American bombers were known to be in the lower Texas region or along the Gulf of Mexico.

The reported bomber expedition had followed a series of reports during the afternoon that had put General Brill and the whole corps area on the jagged edge. A Mexican had brought into Laredo the report that heavy motorized divisions were spending the day in screened bivouacs in Coahuila and Nueva Leon.

Half an hour later came news from Colonel Denn that was not to be ignored.

"Four flights have passed over Laredo within the past fifteen minutes," Denn said. "If my ears know an American plane these were not American. They were headed about due north, and traveling high and fast."

General Brill calmly made his own estimate of the situation. Parked in the grounds of Fort Sam Houston were the sixteen hundred shining new trucks of the Second Division, together with the division's material and supplies. The Second, alerted and with all leaves suspended, was in barracks and camp ready for emergency. At Kelly and Randolph Fields, near-by, were the planes and supplies used in training a small new army of pilots for an expanded air service.

"Have the Second Division get their trucks out of here as soon as possible," he directed his chief of staff. "They'll also disperse their artillery. Notify the mayor of San Antonio and suggest that he have

all lights out off. Notify the flying fields of our information. Notify Eagle Pass and Fort Bliss."

He paused to receive another report from Bart.

"Sir, Third Army Headquarters just called in from Atlanta. They've a report from Charleston of bombers flying high over that city at ten-seventeen o'clock, heading north by east."

Outside there was orderly commotion. Troops were pouring out of barracks and bivouac camps already, the first drivers were moving their trucks out of the fort.

Another report from Colonel Denn. The colonel's voice now cracked with intensity. One of his intelligence scouts, disguised as a Mexican peon, had the word from friendly Mexicans that a heavy motor column was moving north from the vicinity of Palo Blanco. Another column was reported moving by night through Tamaulipas toward Brownsville and a third was said to have passed Mesquite, in Coahuila, headed in the direction of Eagle Pass.

An hour later the Second Division's trucks, filled with men, were whirring out of the fort; rubber-tired artillery was shifting its light and medium cannon out of the zone of possible danger.

An aide, whom General Brill had sent out into the garrison to observe, burst into headquarters, breathless, his face stripped of color.

"Sir, airplanes!" he panted. "Flying high—but you can hear them coming!"

General Brill left his staff at their allotted jobs and went outside with his aide. The garrison was dark, headquarters worked behind drawn shades.

The roar of motors filled the air as trucks and artillery continued to roll out of the garrison. But above that he caught the sharp whine of higher-powered engines far overhead.

The 69th Anti-Aircraft Artillery had got its guns in position, but was withholding its searchlights pending development. Suddenly a small plane zoomed down over the garrison and dropped a flare that turned night into day.

Brill stood calmly observing. He knew that flare was the first violence of an invasion of the United States. He knew that in a few minutes the bombers would circle over their target of Fort Sam Houston and let drive. He knew, too, that there was nothing he could do to prevent what was to follow.

A hissing shriek caught his ears. Involuntarily he raised himself on his toes and placed his finger-tips at his ears. A savage flash of yellow flame leaped from the earth into the heavens. The ground under him shook with volcanic intensity from the savage wrath of a heavy bomb.

Long fingers of light leaped into the sky from the 69th's searchlights. A heavy demolition bomb detonated in the field from which the trucks were whirring. Brill caught, in the momentary flash of light, the grim tragedy of shattered men and material. Above the din he heard the cries of wounded men. Another bomb crashed and another. His anti-aircraft regiment began crackling, but his handful of guns were almost lost in the din of titanic thunder that crashed from the sky.

Incendiary bombs rained down, bringing an irresistible heat that ate its way into all combustible parts of barracks. General Brill turned back into his headquarters, sat down at his desk stricken by his utter helplessness, but maintaining his self-control.

His staff, their bloodless faces drawn and lined, worked coolly, outwardly oblivious to the danger. Information kept coming in, reports that had to be appraised until the whole picture of attack and disaster had been assembled and appraised as the basis for whatever later action was to be taken.

The wooden hangars at Kelly Field were in flames. Randolph Field was being hammered. San Antonio was in a mad panic which had got out of all police control. People were flooding the streets, rushing about in a mad frenzy in their efforts to escape the city. Roads were choked with passenger vehicles.

But the Van Hassek bombers were confining their major fury to Fort Sam Houston and the flying fields, which told General Brill that the attack presaged a crossing of the Rio Grande by mobile troops during the night or at daybreak.

From New Orleans and Galveston came reports of raids that were still in progress. Hundreds were killed in the streets. No other details.

Shortly after midnight the violence suddenly ceased, the bombers and their accompanying attack ships sailed off to the south. Colonel Denn called in again from Laredo. The head of a motorized column had halted at Nuevo Laredo just south of the Rio Grande. His intelligence patrols had verified this with their own eyes.

"All right, gentlemen," Brill told his staff. "Get the Second Division together as quickly as possible and start them moving south toward the Nueces River! Tell General Mole of the Second I'll meet him at Kirk in three hours with his orders for the defense of San Antonio. Get General Hague on the long-distance again while I report. We're going to do our best in a desperate situation, and I needn't tell you what we're up against! I'll be ready for your recommendations in an hour, gentlemen."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

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Waiter—Aren't you going to give me a tip? Why, the town's champion skinfint gives me a penny.
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Returned With Thanks
It was a very tense scene in the film. The audience sat enthralled. Suddenly the hero slapped the heroine in the face.

In the stunned silence which followed a little voice piped up.
"Mummy," it said, "why doesn't she slap him back like you do?"

Ask Me Another

A General Quiz

1. What capital letter is used most frequently in English words?
2. What is a Jolly Roger?
3. Of currants, grapes, cranberries, oranges, tomatoes and bananas, how many are classified by botanists as berries?
4. Without stopping to count, give the number of zeros in one billion.
5. In major league baseball, how often are games won by a no-hit, no-run pitching performance?
6. Are glow worms worms?
7. Where in the United States is the longest stretch of railroad track without a curve?

The Answers

1. The letter "S," according to Funk and Wagnalls New Standard dictionary.
2. A pirate flag.
3. All of them.
4. Nine—count them—1,000,000,000.
5. Only one in about 1,400 games.
6. No, glow worms are actually beetles. The males can fly, but the females cannot, so they light up to let their lovers know where they are.
7. North Carolina claims this record. Between Wilmington and Hamlet, a distance of 78.86 miles, there is a stretch of track without a single curve.

Density of Fogs

In 1921, the British weather bureau set up standards for describing fogs which fall into more or less definite categories. They range from "very dense," in which objects become invisible at 27 yards distance in the daytime, through "thick," "rather thick," "fog," "moderate," "mist or thick haze," and "slight mist or haze"—in which objects are visible at a distance of 7 1/2 miles.

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We know accurately only when we know little; with knowledge doubt increases.—Goethe.

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In all the wedding cake, hope is the sweetest of the plums.—Douglas Jerrold.

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Tide Will Turn

When you get into a tight place, and everything goes against you, and it seems as if you couldn't hold on a minute longer, never give up then, for that is just the place and time the tide will turn.—Harriet Beecher Stowe.

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Wishes
Anger wishes that all mankind had only one neck; love, that it had only one heart; grief, two tear-glands; and pride, two bent knees.—Richter.

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