# ATTACK ON AMERICA

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W. N. U. Release

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.**

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**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, senor."

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

The Mexican's face lighted up, and he spoke almost in awe, "Si, senor, 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 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.

"Perhaps you can tell me, Bromlitz," Van Hassek mused without change of voice or posture. "Yes, perhaps you can tell me."

A faint smile passed his thick lips as he went on: "I've just come up from the Salon de Espera on a lower floor of the palace where I've installed a hospital. Perhaps I should refer to it as my laboratory. In any event, no one ever leaves it alive,

"Sit down, Bromlitz."

but they are only spies and traitors who must die by one means or another. For some months I've been watching them at the moment they leave the world, yet I'm more mystified now than ever. So you tell me, Bromlitz, if you can, is death the end of us?"

"Your pardon, Excellency," Benning answered. "I'm not a chaplain."

The other chuckled, and with a vitality in his mirth that was not that of an ailing man.

"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 confirm 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—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 Schroff," 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. Except for patrols and a daily guard-mounting there was no daily martial display in the city.

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)*

**NEXT WEEK**

*Another Absorbing Installment*

## Ask Me Another

*A General Quiz*

1. Are alligators the slow, creeping creatures they appear to be?
2. Are all national flags alike on both sides?
3. What lake, 12,500 feet above sea level, is the highest large body of navigable water in the world?
4. Are marriages in England restricted as to the time performed?
5. What is a tympanist?
6. What is the principal language of Brazil?

***The Answers***

1. No. They are real sprinters when they care to run. Their legs stretch out to 18 inches in length when in top speed.
2. The national flags of Paraguay, Lithuania and Yemen, Arabia, are not alike on both sides.
3. Lake Titicaca (in Bolivia).
4. Marriages in England are legal only when performed between 8 a. m. and 6 p. m. on week days.
5. A drummer.
6. Portuguese. Italian and German are widely spoken in the southern states.

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By RUTH WYETH SPEARS

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The lower sketch shows how to make a substantial removable top for the stool. The 2-inch boards which are screwed to all four sides of the top fit down over the stool. Flowered chintz is used for the top of the cover and a plain 3-inch glazed chintz frill is added repeating one of the tones in the flower pattern. The seam allowance around the cover may be tacked to the removable top of the table and the whole thing may then be folded away in a small space when not in use.

* * *

NOTE: You will find directions for remodeling and slip-covering many types of chairs, as well as an out-moded couch in Book 5 of the series of home-making booklets offered with these articles. The new Book 7 contains a number of ways to use slip covers. In it boxes become ottomans; and an old wicker chair is padded and tufted. Each book contains more than thirty useful home-making projects with complete directions for making. Send order to:

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