"The President of the United States is dead."

INSTALLMENT SEVEN

THE STORY SO FAR: In an effort to substantiate rumors that 200,000 foreign troops were in Mexico preparatory for an attack upon the United States, Intelligence Officer Benning went to Mexico City. Here he joined the staff of the unsuspecting Van Hassek, leader of the foreign forces, and gained the confidence of two other officers, Fincke and Bravot. Discovering that foreign troops were poised for an invasion of the U. S., Benning returned to Washington to report to Colonel Flagwill, acting chief of Military Intelligence. Flagwill stated that forces were also reported massing in the Mediterranean and the Far East. That night Fort Houston, Texas, was heavily bombed. Reports that an enemy bombing squadron was approaching Washington threw the city into panic.

Now continue with the story.

* * *

CHAPTER VII—Continued.

Hysteria was spreading. Thousands were fleeing the city in taxicabs and private cars. Cavalry was ordered into the city from Fort Myer to help police clear masses of people who flooded the parks despite frantic radio warnings that crowding up was dangerous.

Benning dismissed all thought of trying again tonight for the Van Hassek spies.

A finger of light leaped into the air across the Potomac. Benning went tense as he saw the restless movement into the skies of that ominous beam.

Another bolt of light shot up, the sky filled with those long pennants rising from the Sperry drums, driven upwards with the intensity of their thousand million candlepower. The bark of a cannon crept across the river. It told Benning that the lights had picked up an enemy craft within their six thousand yards' range of observation. Other cannon barked. The three-inch guns were driving at the skies.

Grimly he lifted his wrist close to his eyes and strained at the luminous dial of his wrist watch.

Thirty racking seconds ticked by. Forty. Benning braced himself, wet his lips, his hand was stricken by an ague. Through the crackle of artillery he caught the ominous roar of motors in the sky. At this instant bombs were plummeting downward, he reckoned, released three thousand yards or more to the southwest of Washington while the planes flashed toward the city.

A vivid yellowish sheet of light winked over the city, low against the earth. In the next instant came the clap of thunder as the mighty detonation smote the city. Benning felt the earth reel under his heels, his ears rang with the reverberation. Another crash, a third, fourth, fifth. The titanic wrath of the bombers smothered all sound of the anti-aircraft in a bedlam of volcanic fury that filled all existence. Two more crashes, separated by short intervals of time.

Silence came swiftly, a hush that yielded no sound for several seconds. Then, as his ears recovered, Benning caught the shrill roar of motors overhead, the sharp staccato of machine-gun fire. Near-by, the crews of the .50 caliber anti-aircraft machine guns were peppering away inanely. A few rounds of futile bursts and they ceased fire. Now came the sound of excited masses of people.

Benning headed into Fifteenth Street. People were running this way and that on the heels of hysterical, unbridled terror. Others were massed in stricken silence gaping into the skies. Taxicabs and automobiles sped crazily in all directions. Benning saw pedestrians bowled over by wheeled vehicles, left floundering on the pavement. Scattered policemen were trying to stem the tide of panic. Sirens screeched as ambulances and police cars raced into the targeted area.

It was a few minutes before midnight when Benning turned into Pennsylvania Avenue. There was no such thing as a taxicab in the present disorder. He walked rapidly on past the White House, intent on reaching Munitions by twelve. Bayoneted sentries paced placidly back and forth in front of the President's official mansion. The place loomed solemn and tomblike in the vague light of a quarter moon, the somber mass of its gray walls unbroken by a single lighted window.

But Benning, as he hurried on, knew that behind those screened windows grave conferences would carry through the night as the heads of government charted the desperate course of an unready nation plunged suddenly into war.

On reaching Colonel Flagwill's office, Benning found the G-2 chief engrossed in the verbal report of an air service staff colonel. As near as could be judged, the attack on Washington had been made by a single bomber squadron of seven planes. The bombers had been accompanied by a squadron of pursuit ships. The anti-aircraft reported no hits, and was setting up now to cover the ci-

as best it could against the return trip of the invaders.

"It'll not be very long now before they're back over the city for a second fling at us," the air officer predicted, speaking in a calm voice. "No report yet of damage to important buildings, but one bomb came pretty flush into a crowded street and we have a preliminary report of heavy casualties."

"No word of any other squadrons headed this way, Colonel?" Flagwill asked.

"None. We'd have picked them up if any more were coming tonight. But what puzzles us is how these bombers expect to get back into Mexico without refueling. Especially since the bombs dropped sounded like heavy ones, probably a thousand pounds or more."

"I'll want all details as rapidly as you get them," Flagwill instructed. "By the way, have our planes taken off for Texas yet?"

"Yes, sir. We've notified Operations. Our Third Wing will have one attack and two pursuit squadrons at San Antonio before daybreak, all ready for business. Other forces will report there as rapidly as possible."

The telephone buzzed, a summons for Flagwill to conference with the Chief of Staff. Flagwill gathered up his notes and turned to Benning.

"You'd better come along, Captain. There may be some questions on Mexico City for you to answer."

Briefly, as they marched down the long corridor to the staff chief's conference room, Benning sketched in his own observations of the bombing of Washington, emphasizing the panic in the streets, the chaos and disorder that followed.

The floor under them reeled with the impact of a sudden terrific explosion in the distance. Flagwill's expression did not change, there was no hesitation in his gait.

"Here the birds are back again," he muttered. He shook his head despairingly. "We've been pounding the public by radio all evening not to bunch up, but I'm afraid people will have to learn by costly experience. God, but I hope no persistent gas is dropped! I doubt if there are a dozen gas masks in all Washington."

Another savage detonation filled the night. As its vibrations waned, there came the uninterrupted click of typewriters and telegraph instruments as messages went hurtling across the country from the War Department mobilizing the country's armed forces.

General Hague's conference room was filling with generals and colonels, all self-possessed, but with the effects of fatigue and strain in their faces after long days without rest. They were promptly in the room where they stood until the four-starred head of the Army, now in uniform, came in. General Hague was grave and lined, but his shoulders were erect and his gray eyes burned with a level vitality.

"Gentlemen," he proceeded at once, "I've gone over the situation in detail with the President. First I'll give you a brief summary of available enemy information—"

"Three enemy columns are reliably reported at our Texas border and it is a reasonable assumption that they will bridgehead the Rio Grande tonight ready to attack at daybreak. Likely enough the main body will strike from Laredo with the objective of San Antonio. Two other columns are likely to strike from Brownsville and Eagle Pass.

"You are familiar with the bombing of San Antonio, Galveston, New Orleans, and Houston tonight. We hope to give those cities the protection of our air forces, beginning tomorrow, but we are at the mercy of night raiders for the time being. I needn't tell you that nothing can save San Antonio and the occupation of our great oil and sulphur belts. It looks pretty hopeless for our troops.

"The President has given us carte blanche. We are mobilizing our entire Regular Army and National Guard. This—"

An aide-de-camp, face bloodless and eyes starting from their sockets, burst into the room. General Hague glared sharply at the interruption, then stiffened as he caught the stark tragedy that was written in the officer's face.

"Please, sir, will the General take the telephone?" the aide stammered in a rasping whisper. "It's—important."

The Chief of Staff took the receiver of the portable telephone that was handed him by the aide.

"Yes, General Hague speaking," he said.

There followed a stifling silence. General Hague sat with the receiver glued to his ear. Into the leaden silence of the room came the faint metallic squeak of an excited voice. The assembled officers saw their chief stiffen as if an electric current had been driven through his body.

General Hague stared dazedly across the room for several moments. His hand that held the telephone instrument descended in a slow limp arc to the table. The aide took the telephone and removed it to an adjoining desk.

"Gentlemen," General Hague focused his eyes, looked about among them, waited for control of his voice, then spoke firmly, "Gentlemen, by the ill fortune of circumstance, the enemy targeted upon the White House with a heavy bomb. The President of the United States is dead."

From out in the night came the screeching of sirens. The shrill screeches rose above an indescribable rumble of sound, the frenzied cries, and excited shouts of a terrorized populace. The bombers had raced on back into the south. The fretful bark of the anti-aircraft guns was stilled.

"Gentlemen," General Hague's voice broke the stricken tension of the room, "we will proceed with our business."

The head of the Army resumed his chair and fumbled with trembling fingers among his notes to pick up the shattered thread of his observations. The others sat down to a funereal stolidity.

"Getting back to the enemy intentions," General Hague resumed, his voice dry and hoarse, "we must now consider only his immediate objectives. We cannot now deny him possession of the world's largest oil fields lying in that region generally north of Beaumont. At the same time he gains the vast sulphur belt north and east of Galveston. We may reasonably expect, therefore, that Van Hassek will drive on to establish his army on some such east-and-west line as Fort Worth—Dallas—Shreveport.

"Yes, gentlemen, we'll take an awful beating in Texas for the time being. Lack of ammunition for all weapons will be a serious problem. Our lack of anti-aircraft guns will bring us horrible losses. The country will be in an uproar for days to come—until the people get educated to this terrible new reality of their existence.

"But all of this merely increases our own responsibilities. We must do the insuperable, we must achieve the impossible, we must face this crisis with patience and keep before us the protection of our country against later serious attack which I fear is inevitable. Gentlemen, let us remember this—"

General Hague rose to his feet and the muscles of his jaw hardened. He looked about among them again and his voice crackled as he concluded.

"No matter what force may come against us, no matter what may be our initial reverses, our country has the basic character and the resources in manpower to make us invincible. In the bitter end of whatever storms may lie ahead, the forces, or coalition of forces, that dare attack the United States, will find the mighty vengeance of our massed valor. That's all for the present, gentlemen."

(TO BE CONTINUED)

NEXT WEEK
Another Absorbing Installment

WHO'S NEWS THIS WEEK

By LEMUEL F. PARTON
(Consolidated Features—WNU Service.)

NEW YORK.—In 1918, there was a tall, gangling young man in charge of a crew of men who were making lewisite gas, in a hide-out near Cleveland. A veteran officer advised him to give orders in a low tone of voice and speak slowly and cautiously. There were human and chemical tensions there, intermingling, and a sharp word might twitch a workman's nerve and cause trouble.

Chemical Expert Speaks Softly, So Nothing Blows Up

That might have been good training for a college president-to-be. At any rate, they made Dr. James Bryant Conant president of Harvard, in 1936. He has continued to speak softly and to get results without anything blowing up, and now President Roosevelt picks him to head a scientific mission to Britain.

He was a major in the newly organized chemical warfare service in the days when he was making lewisite gas. Within a few years of the day when he took his Harvard doctorate, in 1917, he was famed here and abroad as one of the world's leading research chemists. If our leasing and lending includes specialized brains, we could not have sent a scientist more competent to devise defenses against gas attack, or, perhaps to solve some new Nazi chemical ruthlessness, of which, it is reported, the British war office has evidence.

He is a pioneer and expert in gas warfare and defense, but he hates war and as an educator has worked diligently to outmode and banish forever his war gases. He hastened to enlist when we entered the World war. A friend persuaded him that he would be much more useful in gas research for the bureau of mines. From this bureau he later was transferred to the chemical warfare service.

He is an Alpinist, still climbing mountains at the age of 48. In 1937, he scaled North Palisade mountain in the California Sierra, a hazardous climb of 14,254 feet. During the previous winter, he had broken his collar-bone while skiing. He is blue-eyed, with rather severe pedagogical spectacles, which make him look scientific, and a warm, ready smile which makes him look human.

His father was a photo-engraver of Dorchester, Mass. There was some sniffing among the Brahmins when the professor of chemistry became president of Harvard. But Charles W. Eliot had been a professor of chemistry and had scored heavily in the humanities—as did Dr. Conant. So there was precedent for that appointment, but possibly not for his present appointment. The tradition of the absent-minded professor fades in an era of highly specialized knowledge.

British Far East Air Chief Took a Long View Ahead

PERHAPS more than any other one man, Sir Robert Brooke-Popham saw the need for wings over the British empire and worked hard and long to provide them. As commander-in-chief in the Far East today, with tension mounting hourly on land and sea, he may take credit for strengthening air defenses to the farthest outpost of Britain's dominions.

He attended Sandhurst and entered the army. He was at the front in France from the first to the last gunshot.

Twenty years ago he began campaigning and agitating for an empire matrix of commercial and military airlines, predicting an hour of peril when only such unity and co-operation of scattered air forces could hold the empire together. He was one of the originators of the British commonwealth air training plan; established the Royal Air Force college in London and became commandant of the Imperial Defense college. He built Canada's $600,000,000 empire air force which just now is greatly strengthening Britain's hopes with its 40,000 students and its daily yield of skilled fliers for the defense of Britain.

A lean, hard man of clipped, astringent speech, comparable only to a blow-torch in his powers of concentration, he is in his general make-up a planned personality. He is 63 years old, hard as nails and as whippy as a pole-vaulter. He was born Robert Moore, the son of a country clergyman. For reasons of his own, he was not satisfied to be Robert Moore. Characteristically, he did something about it. He procured royal dispensation to become Robert Brooke-Popham. Then, possibly in some pattern of numerology, came a career to fit the name.

Silk Prints for Spring Feature Polka Dots, Fruit Motifs, Color

By CHERIE NICHOLAS

IN THE springtime fancy turns eagerly to "what's new" in silk prints. This season the story is more fascinating than ever with tales of daring new colors and designs that are writing romance and drama in every chapter.

There's a mad rush for red, a play-up of fruit motifs in realistic colorings on white background, a new array of shantung silks, either monotone or printed; a repeat on polka dots with special emphasis on twin prints; and a predominance of patriotic colors. You'll see a record-breaking number of prints that key beige and brown to tangerine, bittersweet and kindred colors, a strong accent on bizarre South American colors, especially purples and reds and Peruvian pink, a hand-paint technique used for flowery party-dress prints—and here we "pause for identification" of some of the newest print fashions as shown in the illustration herewith.

A sure way of being fashion-right in selecting the new print frock for spring is to think in terms of silk shantung, which is exactly what the designer did in creating the neat and attractive dress to the right in the picture. Styled the South American way with its bolero silhouette and general detail, this printed plaid silk shantung dress is the very embodiment of style at a new high.

One of the delights of shantung is the lovely pastel monotones that are favorites for dresses and suits, tailored to a nicety for both sports and daytime wear. The dress to the left in the group is made of a pastel blue shantung with gay dotted shantung for the turban and bag. If you look close, you will see the tip edge of a matching polka dot parasol. The dress under a monotone wool coat makes a perfect greeting for spring. You'll be carrying the smart parasol ever so pridefully when summer comes.

Navy prints with navy wool topcoats or long dramatic capes are "tops" in fashion. Stylish accessories are a hat and bag of plaid silk in colors as mad and merry as you please. You can either make, (patterns are easily available) or buy ready made, these enlivening twosomes.

Two designers are sounding the patriotic note by introducing wide bands of red and white crepe silk in the lining. You can do the same thing with the vivid South American colors—introduce them in linings, or in the yoke of the dress.

Look about in the silk displays and you will be impressed with the number of prints that couple pink with black or with navy. These pretty ladylike prints invite gracious styling, such as has been given to the gown centered in the group pictured. This dainty frock is made on slim lines with novel petal pockets made of self-print. There is increasing interest shown in pockets throughout current costume design. They contribute great charm to simple print daytime dresses. The pink hat worn with the frock pictured complements the dress. It has a crochet bumper edge — crochet touches are ever so chic—and what is most apropos is that this hat sports a knitting needle trim. Wear pink or black suede gloves with this outfit for proper accent.

(Released by Western Newspaper Union.)

Smart Simplicity

Statistics show that there is an increase in yardage sales owing to the fact that a growing number of women are taking up home sewing. This, they say, may be largely attributed to the fact that almost every community nowadays has a sewing center where one can learn at little or no expense the short-cuts and tricks of the trade. The dress pictured can be made up easily and at minimum cost. The material need not be expensive. Why not learn to make your own clothes? Some of the rayon mixtures in pastel colors would be practical for a beginner to start with, and the new gabardines are lovely and wearable. The pattern for this dress calls for soft gathered detail and in a type that can be easily made at home.

Cape, Suit Ensembles In Spring Collections

Considerable emphasis is being placed on cape costumes in the advance spring showings. The cape formula is being worked out in ways most fascinating. For example, a charming costume turned out by a noted designer plays up bright and neutral colors in the latest approved manner. The suit of soft gray wool consists of an all-round box-pleated skirt with a dressmaker-styled jacket that is hiplength and has two huge patch pockets. Now comes the stunning cape that tops this neat suit! It is full length, made of red herringbone weave, lined with lime green silk.

A good rule to follow might be "a cape with every costume" so popular is the cape idea growing. One of the newest outcomes of the cape vogue is that many of the early spring print silk frocks are worn with long cloth capes lined with the identical silk of the dress.

Modern Handbags Gain Slick Smooth Efficiency

What handbags have lost in the absence of French models, (which formerly inspired 90 per cent of our handbag styles) they are gaining in improved construction, better materials, and interesting tricks which make them newly efficient. One trick is a slot which feeds a nickle outside the bag. Another is a key clip on a light for inside the handbag—so that keys may be located instantly. Another is the gluv-gard, which anchors one's gloves to one's handbag.

Handbag interiors are gaining a great deal of attention. More and better planned pockets are the rule. And one important new detail in interiors is a special pocket zipper. When you slide your hand into a pocket protected by this fastener, there are no rough teeth to get past—the zipper is kind to nail polish. It slides like a streak and adds ornamentation, as well as safety to American-made handbag interiors.

FARM TOPICS

FULL TRACTOR LOAD EFFICIENT

Use of the Rated Capacity Saves Time, Fuel.

By R. H. REED
(Associate in Agricultural Engineering, University of Illinois)

Up to one-half of all the time spent driving tractors in the field and 20 to 25 per cent of the fuel could be saved if tractors were loaded to their full rated capacity.

Pulling two or more light draft implements behind a tractor is one way of raising the load nearer to the rated capacity.

Among the machines which are particularly adaptable to being pulled in this manner are mowers, binders, rotary hoes, harrows, drills and culti-packers. All these implements have a low draft—pounds of pull—for each foot of width and thus are the units which contribute most to low average loading.

Mowers, for example, are wider than they used to be but still make a rather light load for most tractors. Some farmers have hitched one or two horse mowers behind the tractor to double, or even triple, the width of the cut and thus reduce the labor and fuel cost.

Two binders also may be pulled to advantage, especially in the northern half of Illinois. The combine has replaced most of the binders, but this fact frequently means that, where they are used, small horse binders are pulled behind a tractor operated at a very low per cent of its rated capacity.

The rotary hoe must be used in the wider widths if it is to load the tractor to capacity. Whenever possible, two, or even three, rotary hoes should be used to reduce labor, save fuel and enable the operator to obtain timeliness of operation.

Spike-tooth harrows must be very wide to develop a full tractor load. Fortunately, additional sections don't cost much, last a long time and are usable until worn out. They can be used regardless of their make or shape. Rollers and culti-packers have about the same characteristics.

Frequently the time and expense saved by using two implements will not justify the purchase of the second unit. Reed suggests that farmers may be able to exchange machines with their neighbors in order to use two units at the same time.

Losses From Crown Gall Reduced With Calomel

Losses from crown gall on seedling peach trees—a destructive nursery disease that has baffled control for half a century—may be greatly reduced by dipping peach pits in a strong solution of calomel before planting, report E. A. Siegler and J. J. Bowman of the Federal Bureau of Plant Industry. Nurserymen heretofore have had no effective means of controlling crown gall.

To test a method of protecting the injured peach seedlings from infection, Siegler and Bowman treated peach pits with calomel, using four ounces to a gallon of water. The treatment proved successful. In trials conducted at the U. S. Horticulture station, at Beltsville, Md., only 4 per cent of seedlings from calomel-treated pits became diseased, while 58 per cent of seedlings from untreated seed were infected. Similar tests last year showed about the same control of the disease.

Nurserymen can safely try the calomel treatment, as it apparently does not reduce the stand of the young seedlings. One pound of calomel is enough to treat about 10 bushels of pits.

Butter, Eggs Lead Food Stamp Sales

How participants in the Food Stamp plan have been spending their stamps was revealed recently by the U. S. department of agriculture.

Approximately 14 per cent of the blue stamps are being used for butter, 14 per cent for eggs, 17 per cent for flour, rice and other cereal products, 12 per cent for vegetables, 13 per cent for fruits and 30 per cent for lard and pork products.

The Food Stamp plan has been extended to 250 areas. About 2,500,000 persons are taking part in the plan, creating new buying power at the rate of more than $5,000,000 a month for officially listed surplus foods at local stores in these areas.

Rich in Protein

Contrary to common belief, rye contains more protein than corn. Feeding trials have revealed that rye is equal to, or even superior to oats, corn or barley when fed in a grain mixture.

Before feeding rye to cows, it should be ground, and because of its gummy nature, should not make up more than 40 per cent of the total grain mixture. For best results it should be mixed with other grains. This also increases its palatability.