

Decisive Battle for Reich May Follow Lull in Fight

London, Oct. 19 (AP)—Heavy rains the length of the western front from Holland to the Swiss border slowed Allied offensive operations today but everywhere there were indications of a build-up for what may become a decisive battle of the war.

A British Second army staff officer was quoted in a front dispatch last night as expressing the view there is a probable chance the major decision and final phase of the European war may be fought out in the next 10 weeks.

Preparations for a large-scale and sustained Allied jump-off toward the Rhine now are approaching an end, he said. The current jabbing operations at Aachen and elsewhere along the front, are necessary, he added, to prepare a springboard.

Wait for Good Weather.

How soon the starting gong will sound was said to depend upon two major factors—favorable weather and establishment of a shorter route of supply.

Antwerp, only 100 miles from the Rhine-Ruhr confluence, is the logical port of supply for the western front.

A dispatch from supreme head-

quarters in Paris said the battle to open up its docks now is moving into the final phase.

Antwerp fell into Allied hands virtually undamaged Sept. 4 in the swift British-Canadian northward thrust in Belgium, but German guns still commanded both sides of the 50-mile stretch of the Schelde river estuary down to the sea.

Hard Fight Ahead.

The Canadians have squeezed the enemy out of all but the last south bank box roughly 12 miles wide and 10 to 15 miles deep across from Flushing. A hard fight lies ahead, however, and the Germans can be expected to do everything in their power to block the channel.

Until the Antwerp docks are available Allied stores must be transported hundreds of miles from the main Normandy base.

Capt. Ludwig Sertorius, German radio commentator, took a gloomy view of the situation. In a broadcast last night he admitted that "the Americans have succeeded in encircling Aachen on the 16th day of battle, and these troops no doubt will attempt a breakthrough to either Cologne or Dusseldorf."