

Biennial Report of
THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF
THE UNITED STATES ARMY
July 1, 1943, to June 30, 1945

TO THE SECRETARY OF WAR

The Greatest American Advantages

The greatest advantage in equipment the United States has enjoyed on the ground in the fighting so far has been in our multiple-drive motor equipment, principally the jeep and the 2½-ton truck. These are the instruments which have moved and supplied United States troops in battle while the German Army, despite the fearful reputation of its "panzer armies" early in the war, still depended heavily on animal transport for its regular infantry divisions. The United States, profiting from the mass production achievements of its automotive industry, made all its forces truck-drawn and had enough trucks left over to supply the British armies with large numbers of motor vehicles and send tremendous quantities to the Red Army.

The advantage of motor vehicle transport did not become strikingly clear until we had reached the beaches of Normandy. The truck had difficulty in the mountains of Tunisia and Italy, but once ashore in France our divisions had mobility that completely outclassed the enemy.

The appearance of an unusually effective enemy weapon, or of a particularly attractive item of enemy equipment, usually provoked animated public discussion in this country, especially when stimulated by criticism of the Army's supposed failures to provide the best. Such incidents posed a very difficult problem for the War Department. In the first place, the morale of the fighting man is a matter of primary importance. To destroy his confidence in his weapons or in the high command is the constant and immense desire of the enemy. The American soldier has a very active imagination and usually, at least for the time being, covets anything new and is inclined to endow the death-dealing weapons of the enemy with extraordinary qualities since any weapon seems much more formidable to the man receiving its fire than to the man delivering it. If given slight encouragement, the reaction can be fatal to the success of our forces. Commanders must always make every effort to show their men how to make better, more effective use of what they have. The technique of handling a weapon can often be made more devastating than the power of the weapon itself.

Careful planning and husbandry of the Army's meager peacetime resources and the nature of this Nation's machine economy gave the American armies in Europe two good advantages over the German enemy. One of ours was the Garand semi-automatic rifle, which the Germans were never able to duplicate. It is interesting to trace the planning and decisions that gave us the Garand rifle and the tremendous small arms firepower that went with it, noting especially that the War Department program for the Garand was strenuously opposed.