

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 TROOPS

Manpower Balance

It was estimated that the absolute ceiling on the number of American men physically fit for active war service lay between 15 and 16 million. The requirements of the naval and merchant shipping program had to be given a high order of priority. The Army decided to establish its ceiling strength at 7,700,000. Before we could bring the enemy to battle we had to secure our lines of communication and to build our training and service installations. Within this total strength of the Army the minimum requirements of the Service Forces were set at 1,751,000. It was decided at the outset that the first offensive blows we could deliver upon the enemy would be through the air, and anticipated that the heavier and more effective our air assault, the sooner the enemy's capacity to resist would be destroyed. So the Air Forces were authorized to bring their strength to 2,340,000 men and were given the highest priority for the best qualified both physically and by educational and technical ability of the military manpower pool.

Each theater of operations had requirements for men over and above those allocated for its armies, air forces, and service installations. The troop basis allowed 423,000 men for these troops which would be directly attached to theater headquarters and major command installations throughout the world.

This left the Ground Forces with a maximum of 3,186,000 men within the limitations of the 7,700,000 effective troop strength. Yet when we entered the war it was almost impossible to compute accurately how many ground troops we would need to win. The precise results to be attained by modern aerial warfare could only be an educated guess.

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On the face of it this appeared to be a critically small ground force for a nation as large as ours. Germany with a prewar population of 80,000,000 was mobilizing 313 divisions. Japan was putting 120 in the field; Italy 70; Hungary 23; Rumania 17; Bulgaria 18. Among the major Allies, the Soviets had a program for more than 550 divisions; the British for more than 50; the Chinese more than 300, though their divisional strength was often little more than regimental according to our method of computation. We were, however, second of the Allies in the mobilization of men and women for military service, third among all the belligerent nations. The Soviet war effort was putting 22,000,000 men and women into the fight. By the time of their defeat, the Germans had mobilized 17,000,000. Our peak mobilization for the military services was 14,000,000. The British Empire mobilized 12,000,000; China 6,000,000.

This war brought an estimated total of 93,000,000 men and women of the Axis and United Nations into the conflict. And fortunately for us the great weight of numbers was on the side of the United Nations. Total Allied mobilization ex-

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ceeded 62,000,000; total enemy mobilization, 30,000,000. The figures show how heavily the United States was concentrating on aerial warfare, on the production and movement of arms for its own troops and those of its Allies, and the meaning in terms of manpower of waging war from 3,000 to 9,000 miles from our shores.

Our ground strength was, for the size of our population, proportionately much smaller than that of the other belligerents. On the other hand it was, in effect, greater than a simple comparison of figures would indicate, for we had set up a system of training individual replacements that would maintain 89 divisions of ground troops and 273 combat air groups at full effective strength, enabling these units to continue in combat for protracted periods. In past wars it had been the accepted practice to organize as many divisions as manpower resources would permit, fight those divisions until casualties had reduced them to bare skeletons, then withdraw them from the line and rebuild them in a rear area. In 1918 the AEF was forced to reduce the strength of divisions and finally to disband newly arrived divisions in France in order to maintain the already limited strength of those engaged in battle. The system we adopted for this war involved a flow of individual replacements from training centers to the divisions so they would be constantly at full strength. The Air Forces established a similar flow to replace combat casualties and provide relief crews.

This system enabled us to pursue tremendous naval and shipping programs, the air bombardment programs and unprecedented, almost unbelievable, production and supply programs, and at the same time to gather the strength necessary to deliver the knock-out blows on the ground. There were other advantages. The more divisions an Army commander has under his control, the more supporting troops he must maintain and the greater are his traffic and supply problems. If his divisions are fewer in number but maintained at full strength, the power for attack continues while the logistical problems are greatly simplified.

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It is remarkable how exactly the mobilization plan fitted the requirements for victory. When Admiral Doenitz surrendered the German Government, every American division was in the operational theaters. All but two had seen action; one had the mission of securing the vital installations in the Hawaiian Islands; the other was an airborne division in SHAEF Reserve. To give General Eisenhower the impetus for final destruction of the German armies of the west, two divisions, already earmarked for future operations in the Pacific, the 86th and 97th, were halted on the West Coast in February, rushed across the United States and onto fast ships for Europe. When these troops left the New York Port of Embarkation there were no combat divisions remaining in the United States. The formed military forces of the nation were completely committed overseas to bring about our victory in Europe and keep sufficient pressure on Japan so that she could not dig in and stave off final defeat.

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The significance of these facts should be carefully considered. Even with two-thirds of the German Army engaged by Russia, it took every man the Nation saw fit to mobilize to do our part of the job in Europe and at the same time keep the Japanese enemy under control in the Pacific. What would have been the result had the Red Army been defeated and the British Islands invaded, we can only guess. The possibility is rather terrifying.