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**THE CHIEF OF STAFF OF
THE UNITED STATES ARMY**

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TO THE SECRETARY OF WAR

In major ground campaigns to destroy the enemy's forces and end his resistance, such as we fought in North Africa, Italy, France, and Germany, one of the basic factors in the final decision is the armament and equipment of the infantry divisions and the manner in which they are employed. A nation with the belligerent tradition of Germany, concentrating its resources on a powerful army and enjoying every initial advantage from years of preparation for war, should have the upper hand in many if not all the basic infantry weapons.

In two of these basic items the German Army held an advantage almost to the end of the war. The first was the triple-threat 88-mm. rifle which our troops first encountered in North Africa. Even at that time the U. S. Army had a similar weapon, the 90-mm. rifle, with greater penetrating power but the Germans had theirs on the battlefields and in quantity, with the "bugs" worked out in previous battle experience over a period of years. The United States forces did not have the 90-mm. in quantity at the time and were compelled to work out its shortcomings in opposition to a proven weapon.

As a result the 88 was a powerful German weapon, ahead of ours in quantity and technique almost to the end of the war. In the Spanish Civil War the Germans were careful to conceal the role of the 88 as an antitank and antipersonnel weapon, revealing it only as an antiaircraft piece. When we first encountered it, it was serving all three purposes with deadly effect. A single 88 could fire several rounds of armor-piercing shells at our tanks, then suddenly begin firing air-bursting fragmentation shells at our infantry following their tanks, and a few minutes later throw up an antiaircraft fire at planes supporting the ground operation. The 90-mm. had no such flexibility. It could not be depressed low enough for effective antitank fire. Our technique of handling the gun had not been sufficiently developed so that interchangeable ammunition was available to the gun when it was needed, and we did not have the numbers of the weapons the Germans had.