

between Russian and American bases, made possible longer range missions. Meanwhile the Mediterranean Air Force under Major Ira C Eaker, softened up southern France for the invasion which finally took place on August 15.

As ground troops raced across France and into Germany, the AAF demonstrated its versatility by flying re-supply missions and air borne assaults. The fight to destroy the Luftwaffe continued without let-up until finally General Spaatz announced that the strategic air war had ended and the Luftwaffe was no longer a combat force. On May 7, 1945, the Germans capitulated and the war in Europe was over.

During the the war against Germany, the AAF had reached a peak of of more than 130,000 combat planes, operated by a force of 619,000 men assigned to combat commands. More than 750,000 bomber sorties, and almost 1,000,000 fighter sorties were flown by the AAF. The AAF dropped nearly 1,500,000 tons of bombs and destroyed over 35,000 enemy aircraft, while losing about 18,000 aircraft. But statistics can not measure the contribution of the AAF to the ultimate victory, the real contribution is in the extent that its air prowess furthered the destruction of the enemy's military strength and resources. There can be no doubt that air power played an important part in the defeat of Germany.



### Boeing B-29

With the war in Europe over, the AAF turned its attention to the Japanese. The mighty 20th Air Force, organized in April, 1944, had hammered incessantly at the Japanese mainland. Early attacks on Japan had been concentrated on five industrial cities, Tokyo, Yokohama, Nagoya and Kobe. But now, in the summer of 1945, the B-29 attacks spread all over the mainland. Sixty cities were smashed by air power, some as much as 80% destroyed. In June, following the European pattern, the raids were concentrated on aircraft production and oil supplies.

On August 1, the B-29s flew the heaviest raid of the war, more than 800 of the great bombers dropping 6,000 tons of fire and demolition bombs into industrial Japan. Meanwhile the Far East Air Force served as a tactical weapon, blasting Japanese shipping docks and warehouses.

Then, on August 6, 1945 with the Japanese on the verge of

capitulation from the fury of the air attacks, a B-29 the Enola Gay, piloted by Col Paul Tibbets, dropped an atomic bomb on the city of Hiroshima, destroying 60% of the city. Two days later, "Bock's Car," piloted by Charles W Sweeney dropped the second atomic bomb on the city of Nagasaki. The Japanese had felt the ultimate in air attack. On the 14th of August, Japan's unconditional surrender ended the world's greatest war.

In the air war against Japan, the AAF flew over 669,000 sorties of which the 20th Air Force flew almost 40,000. Over a half million tons of bombs were dropped on Japan and its Islands, the 20th accounting for about 170,000 of this total. More than 10,000 Japanese aircraft were destroyed, while AAF losses amounted to about 4,500.

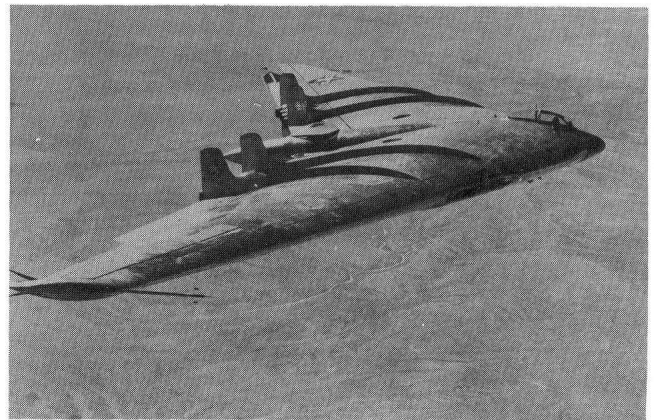
The remaining months of 1945 saw swift demobilization for the AAF. Personnel, which had reached a peak of 2,411,294 in 1944 fell off to 733,786 on January 1, 1946. At the same time aircraft fell from a war time peak of almost 80,000 to about 40,000. And the downward trend was by no means finished. The AAF continued to lose both men and aircraft for many months to come.

In 1946 the emphasis turned to aeronautical research. The speedy Lockheed P-80, the AAF's first production jet propelled fighter, had made its first flight in 1945.

On January 26, 1946, a P-80 spanned the continent in 4 hours and 13 minutes, a far cry from the 27 hour effort of Kelly and Macready in 1923.

In February 1946, on the 28th of the month, the Republic P-84, another jet, joined the P-80. And on May 17th the AAF's first jet propelled bomber, the Douglas XB-43 took to the air.

Meanwhile the AAF had a change of command. On March 1 General Arnold, who was retiring from active duty, turned over the leadership of the AAF to General Carl A Spaatz, a veteran of the early Aviation Section of the Signal Corps, and of both wars.



### Northrop YB-49 Flying Wing

Jetpropulsion was not the only field in which the AAF was doing experimental research. World War II had made evident that the longrange very heavy bomber has a definite plan in aerial attack. On July 25, the first of two AAF superbombers