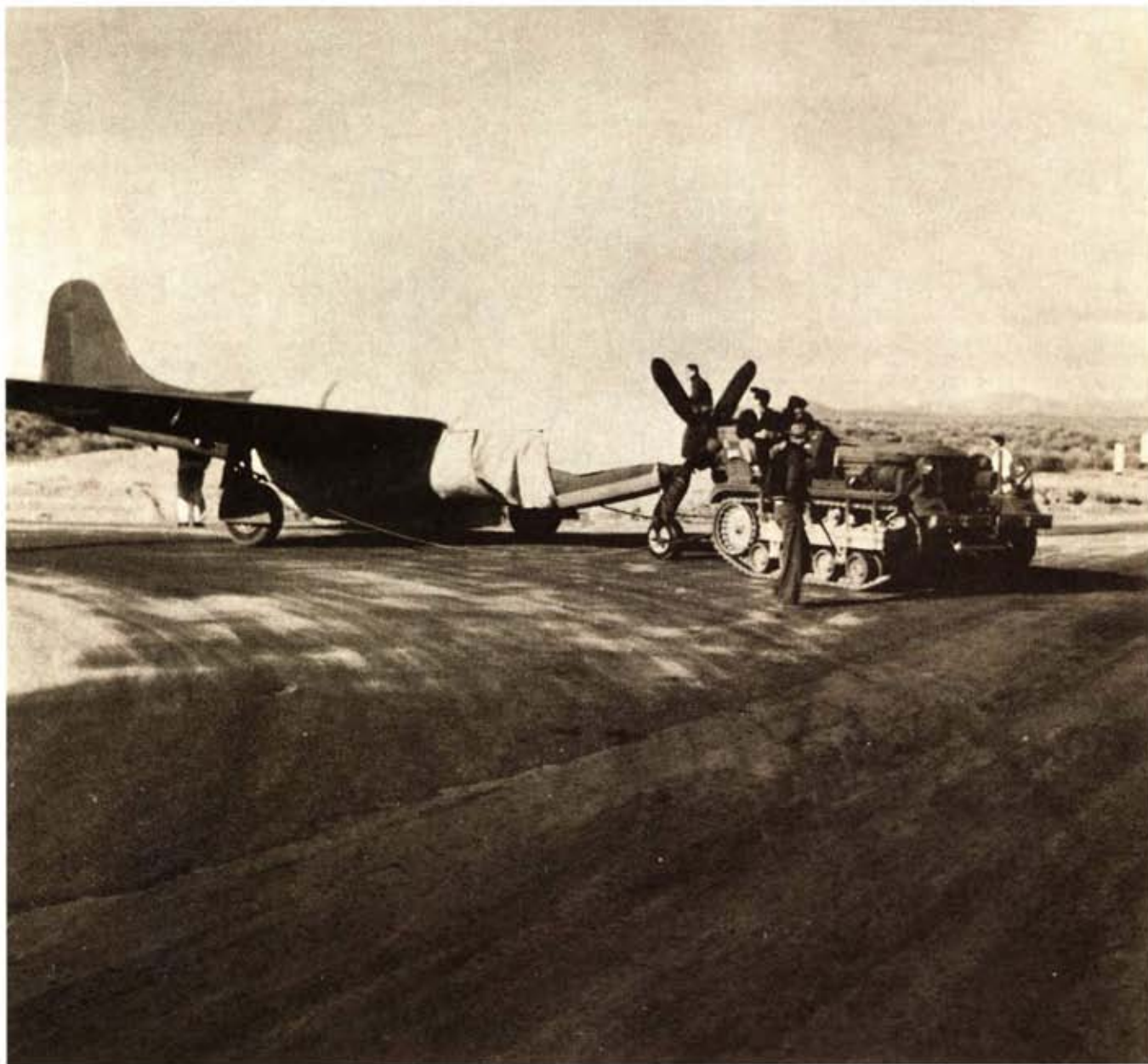


It's Only a Prop



Maj. Gen. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold saw the turbojet engine of British designer Frank Whittle in April 1941 and knew immediately that the US needed a jet aircraft. With no time for original research, General Electric copied and improved the Whittle engine, and Bell Aircraft designed and built the airframe. Because of wartime se-

crecy, the first US jet aircraft received the designation of a canceled Bell fighter XP-59 and became the Bell XP-59A. A dummy propeller and shrouded air intakes and fuselage also helped keep the secret as the plane was towed along desert roads to its first flight in October 1942 at Muroc AAB, Calif.