

since most of its troops trained on stations administered by the Service Forces.³⁹

Problems of Negro Units

There was little indication that, with a few exceptions, the problems experienced by these Negro WAC units in the field were greatly different in nature from those of other WAC units, but in some cases the normal difficulties of women in the Army were apparently intensified. Unskilled women of any race had been found harder to assign and harder to discipline. Thus, the Negro company officer frequently faced a more difficult command situation than did the average WAC company commander, in proportion as her unit contained more than the average of such women. The post commander at Fort Huachuca noted that the enlisted women were prone to develop "jealousies and cliques" and "bickerings which seem to date back to school days at Des Moines . . . with various kinds of personal gossip about each other."⁴⁰

Unit members also showed a tendency to complain to inspectors about the education and ability of Negro company commanders, who were in fact as well educated and trained as the average WAC commander. To deal with such units frequently required a skill and a degree of leadership highly taxing to the company officer. Some Negro WAC company commanders were reported to have met the challenge with an ingenuity, energy, and sense of humor seldom equaled among other WAC commanders. On the other hand, some were found to share their women's deficiencies; an intelligence report from Fort Des Moines found that jealousy and rivalry had arisen among Negro WAC officers, resulting in a

"heated argument" and "emotional display" in the presence of the commandant.

Negro WAC officers also had an especial problem of loneliness on many stations; the WAC policy was to have Negro company officers for Negro troops, but many male Negro units had white officers, so that the WAC officers were apt to be the only Negro officers on a station.⁴¹

While all WAC units had at first encountered some degree of skepticism concerning their mission in life, this difficulty was apparently intensified for Negro Wacs. The first requisition from the European theater, rejected by Colonel Hobby at the time of the Corps' formation, had been so plainly for "morale purposes" that the Secretary of War's civilian aide, William H. Hastie, protested that "the assignment of units of the WAAC to afford companionship for soldiers would discredit that organization" and was "contrary to its whole plan and purpose."⁴²

The first units at Fort Huachuca encountered an exceptionally difficult situation in this respect during the early weeks.⁴³ While such impressions on stations of assignment could be remedied only by time and demonstrated military behavior, every effort was made to avoid exposing the women unnecessarily to situations that encouraged the misapprehension. Thus, when the inspector general at Sioux Falls suggested that large groups of Negro Wacs be brought by truck from Des Moines to make up for the recrea-

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ File, Fort Huachuca, SPWA 291.21.

⁴¹ (1) TIA Rpt, 1 Sep 43, Ft Dix, N. J. (2) Statement to author by Stf Dir 5th SvC. (3) Memo, CI Br ASF for Chief, Opns Div WAC Hq, 15 Sep 43. SPWA 291.2. (4) Min, Stf Dirs Conf, Chicago, 15-17 Jun 43. SPWA 337 (6-1-43).

⁴² Memo, SW's Civ Aide for USW, 17 Aug 42. AG 291.2 Race, Negroes.

⁴³ File cited n. 40.