

Meanwhile, numerous letters and telegrams began to be received from women's organizations and from individuals offering their services. G-1 Division now expressed mild anxiety lest any of these women arrive in a theater of operations before they could be organized in some civilian corps under military control. With the collapse of France in May and June of 1940 and the subsequent Battle of Britain, the offers of help redoubled. When in September of 1940 the first peacetime Selective Service Act became law, women's groups increased their demands that they be allowed to contribute to the nation's defense. By March of 1941 a change in tone could be noted in official statements. In a letter to an inquirer General Marshall stated:

While the United States is not faced with an acute shortage of manpower such as has forced England to make such an extensive use of its women, it is realized that we must plan for every possible contingency, and certainly must provide some outlet for the patriotic desires of our women.⁴⁸

The pressure of these patriotic desires was soon considerable. In Chicago, the Women's League of Defense, 17,000 strong, set itself up as an agency for the enrollment and classification of "women who can do anything helpful to replace a man in the event of war." In Los Angeles, the Women's Ambulance and Defense Corps trained women in military skills and persistently sought recognition as an Army-sponsored agency for training women officers. In Pittsburgh, the Memorial Gold Cross First Aid and Ambulance Corps enrolled 2,000 members. In Washington, D. C., the Green Guards stated that they had "contended, urged, and pleaded with the powers that be to include women in the national defense plan in some ca-

capacity." In Ohio, the Toledo Unit of the Willys-Overland Women's Motor Defense Corps proposed to train women for duties with the Army.

Many other such private organizations arose, most of them genuine, but a few spurious. G-2 Division was obliged to discontinue replies from the Chief of Staff to organizations that had previously tried to convince the public that they had Army sponsorship. During these months, private citizens without number also wrote to the Army and to Congress offering their services.⁴⁹

More significant than this sporadic activity was evidence that Congress or national groups might act to set up women's units outside Army control, or with full military status. Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers reported herself ready to introduce a bill for full military status. The Air Corps requested a woman's volunteer defense corps for duty with its Aircraft Warning Service; as the War Department delayed, the Air Corps decided that a separate women's corps under its own control might be preferable. U.S. Army representatives in England also advised that a women's auxiliary would be necessary in the event that larger forces were sent overseas, since members of the British Women's Auxiliary Air Force and Auxiliary Territorial Services could not be borrowed by the U.S. forces in sufficient numbers because of the British manpower shortage.

From the White House came two infor-

⁴⁸ See entire file G-1/15839 (5-11-42), especially Memo, G-1 for CofS, 13 Aug 40; and Ltr, CofS to Dr. John W. Colbert, 19 Mar 41.

⁴⁹ Examples are from: (1) Collection of ltrs and documents in G-1/15839-1 (5-11-42); and (2) Rupert Hughes, "Shall We Have a Women's National Guard?" *Liberty*, March 8, 1941.