

store claimed that she was doing a good business in sale of these uniforms and "desired to know if she was doing wrong in selling them."³⁴

At the Hampton Roads Port of Embarkation, the camp followers, dressed in khaki skirts and shirts, were so bold as to wait outside the gate, claiming that they were Waacs and picking up soldiers as they left the port. Here, the commanding general ordered the enrolled women to pin their insignia on the collars of their cotton shirts, at that time contrary to uniform regulations, so that they could be distinguished from prostitutes in khaki shirts and skirts.³⁵

Gathering together all these examples, Director Hobby requested the Army Service Forces to amend Army regulations so as to forbid the civilian use of WAAC uniforms and insignia, or that of any insignia, buttons, and clothing which very closely resembled the WAAC items. She also asked that the Quartermaster Corps and Army Exchange Service co-operate in discouraging manufacturers of these uniforms. Since the Army controlled the manufacture and sale of all material used in commercial manufacture of Army officers' uniforms, it could, by withholding material, force most manufacturers to cease wasting it in the production of non-military uniforms.

However, the Army Service Forces rejected the Director's idea, saying that it would be too difficult to enforce and that the Quartermaster Corps and the Exchange Service already co-operated with manufacturers of male officers' uniforms, so that no new instructions to them were necessary. The ASF added "Due to the fact that the WAAC is a comparatively new corps, the casual and uninformed observer is apt to believe that every woman

in o. d. uniform is a Waac. It is believed that this situation will be overcome in due course."³⁶

The Quartermaster General soon afterward authorized the lend-leasing of 5,000 WAAC winter uniforms, left surplus by the collapse of recruiting, to the French "WAAC" in North Africa—at that time a part-native corps without military organization. The Director shortly received a flood of derogatory letters from soldiers, in parts of North Africa where there were no Waacs, who nevertheless alleged that Waacs were disreputable in both appearance and conduct, wore earrings and bobby sox with uniforms, also long hair down their backs, and obeyed no military commands.³⁷

The Organized Rumors

By late spring, even before the Cleveland Plan was launched, rumors were more widespread, more consistent, more vicious, and the tempo of their occurrence had quickened. Director Hobby and War Department officials now began to suspect that Axis agents had taken over the sporadic stories and were systematically spreading certain definite rumors in an attempt to discredit and wreck the WAAC and thus impede the Army's mobilization. This theory was supported by the fact that the onset of the more vicious rumors followed immediately after the Congressional hearings in March of 1943, in which Army

³⁴ Memo cited n. 31(3).

³⁵ Rpt, Stf Dir HRPOE. Min, Stf Dirs Conf, Chicago, 15-17 Jun 43. SPWA 337 (6-1-43).

³⁶ (1) 2d Ind, 19 Aug 43, to Memo cited n. 31(3). (2) D/F, MPD ASF for Dir WAAC, 1 Sep 43, atchd to same.

³⁷ 2d Ind, OQMG for Reqmts Div ASF, to Memo, Dir WAAC for Reqmts Div ASF, 16 Nov 43, sub: Redesigning of WAC Cap. SPWA 421.