

CHAPTER XVII

The Army Ground Forces

Although equal in echelon to the Army Air Forces, the Army Ground Forces offered a less favorable field for the employment of womanpower.¹ Ground Forces units were chiefly tactical in nature, depending upon the Army Service Forces for supply and other services. Except for its schools and replacement depots, the AGF had few permanent installations under its jurisdiction in the United States. There was some early debate within AGF headquarters as to whether Waacs could not be used to staff the rear echelons of separate corps, thus giving "a continuity of administration in the event a Corps is ordered overseas," but this idea was not approved. In general the WAAC was regarded as part of the Services of Supply, even when a few units were attached for duty at AGF installations.

It therefore came as an unexpected problem when, on 1 May 1943, the War Department formally assigned to AGF and other commands the units previously on loan from the ASF. The standard ASF Table of Organization units were not particularly suitable for the needs of the AGF, since most routine services were performed for it by the ASF, and only highly skilled typists and stenographers were wanted.

Upon her assignment as AGF WAC Officer during the period of conversion to Army status, Maj. Emily E. Davis visited all AGF WAC units and found that the only one with good morale was that at Fort

Riley, which had been sent out after the end of the T/O system and thus fitted the needs of the station. Others suffered from malassignment and underutilization, and also had not received full uniform issue or been able to get salvage or repair of clothing. Some units were found to lack adequate housing and dayroom space, and had no recreational or special services program. Two units were under the command of WAC officers whom Major Davis pronounced "very weak" and immediately replaced; in three months these commanders had not made the most elementary arrangements for the welfare of the units.

For the remainder of the war the employment of Wacs in the AGF increased slowly. Replacements for the 34 percent losses of the conversion period were not forthcoming until early 1944, and additional requisitions were at first few. AGF headquarters voluntarily limited the number of Wacs by refusing all requests from the District of Columbia or installations "which are near large cities where they can procure civilian personnel." Requests from installations such as the Desert Training Center were also disapproved as unsuitable. Negro Wacs were rejected, since it was believed that they could not

¹ This chapter draws heavily upon the AGF WAC Hist, by the AGF WAC Officer, Colonel Davis. All direct quotations in this chapter, unless otherwise indicated, are from this history.