

Corps money is being used to train Wires we mean to keep same either as civil service employees or Wacks."¹⁰

Colonel King therefore returned to efforts to secure transfer of command from the Director to the Signal Corps, in the belief that the Signal Corps could then assign Waacs to replace civilians and to stations without WAAC companies. He wrote memoranda and made personal visits to most of the other technical and administrative services, urging their concerted action against the War Department policies involved. Securing the agreement of some, and noncommittal replies from others, he then attempted to call an ASF conference to force the issue.¹¹

The Army Service Forces did not comply with the request, since it was at the time awaiting General Staff decisions as to the Corps' future status and size, and was unable to give the Signal Corps much more satisfaction than had WAAC Headquarters. At this time the Signal Corps noted, "The situation became so complicated that it was not known how requisitions were to be submitted, or how to procure Waacs for any type of installation under the Chief Signal Officer."¹²

Such squabbles over maximum replacement proved doubly futile, in that the numbers of WAAC recruits were never to be such as to warrant extension of employment to questionable locations or to replace civilians. The immediate result was that the Signal Corps delayed in opening its schools to Waacs, the WIRES plan lagged for some six months without action, and the Signal Corps established only the schools already agreed upon—three radio schools at civilian institutions, to provide radio operators for the AAF.

Thus, the first WAAC communications specialists to reach the field went in post

headquarters units and—other than radio operators—without Army training in Signal skills, relying wholly upon their civilian background. Recruiters continued to accept volunteers in Signal skills, and training centers to send them out, without much knowledge of actual needs.¹³

Signal Duties in the Field

Among the first communications specialists to reach the field were the bilingual telephone operators in the first overseas unit, which reached North Africa in January of 1943. Two WAAC officers also went to the Eighth Air Force in England, even before arrival of the European theater staff director, to plan for Signal Corps Waacs in that command. A considerable percentage of the first WAAC unit to reach England consisted of telephone operators and other communications personnel, sent with the approval of the Chief Signal Officer but without Army technical training.

At about this time, the first units began to reach the Signal Corps' own installations in the United States. First to arrive,

¹⁰ (1) Comments to R&W Sheet, MPD OCSigO to Chief, 17 Nov 42; (2) R&W Sheet, Entry 1, Capt Kenneth E. BeLieu to Col King, 8 Dec 42. SigC 320.2 WAAC.

¹¹ Ltrs, Chief MPB OCSigO to Chiefs of Mil Br, CE, Ord Dept, 10 Nov 42, with incl; replies by 1st Inds. SigC 320.2 WAAC.

¹² SigC WAC Narrative; also R&W Slip, Capt BeLieu, MPB OCSigO for Chief, 9 Dec 42. SigC 320.2 WAAC.

¹³ (1) Story of further WIRES planning: Stf Study, Capt BeLieu, MPB OCSigO, 15 Dec 42, with covering memos. SigC 322 WAC 1943. Memo, 2d O M. McCull for Dir WAAC, 5 Jan 43. Unnumbered folder, Signal Corps, WAC files. R&W Slip, Entry 1, Maj John W. Ramsey, SigC, for Exec OCSigO, 6 Jan 43. SigC 322 WAC 1943. Memo, 2d Os Brainerd and McCull for Dir WAAC, 11 Feb 43, with Incl and Inds. Unnumbered folder, Signal Corps, WAC files. (2) Two WDBPR Press Releases, 10 Dec 42, and 14 Apr 43.