

spectors, staff directors, and company commanders were forbidden to check on any job assignments, even routine. As a result, some installations took advantage of this immunity from supervision to assign women to unsuitable duties contrary to War Department regulations. At various stations the requirement for WAC company officers was ignored. At another, enlisted women were assigned to a post commander's home to cook and act as personal servants to his wife. In several cases, civilian jobs in post exchanges and commissaries were staffed with Wacs. If detected, none of these violations could be reported, since it was alleged that security would have been endangered. The ASF WAC Officer, upon repeatedly receiving complaints from irate relatives, several times attempted to visit such installations, but was always informed that they were officially exempt from ASF inspection. Even the CWS WAC staff director was not cleared for such inspection.

Another factor which, in the staff director's opinion, caused lowered morale was the fact that women could not go into combat-supporting CWS units and that the CWS refused to release women for any other overseas assignments, on the grounds that such action would violate security and deprive installations of irreplaceable personnel. CWS was therefore exempted by the War Department from the WAC shipment quotas allotted to most other commands. The staff director estimated that only about 20 percent of the Wacs were employed on work that was too secret to permit them to go overseas or even on leave. She said, "The women could never understand it. I fought to get just two of them over, to give the others hope of reward for good service, but I failed."

Another problem faced by CWS units was that of obtaining good company

officers. "We had a very high type of women on the average," the staff director stated later. "We found that WAC commanders had to treat them like intelligent adults. It was fatal to give unnecessary restrictions or to be too energetic in enforcing petty regulations." In general such restricted units, like those of other technical services, were found to require special attention to suitable recreation, rest, and living conditions.

In spite of various problems, as the war drew to a close ranking officers of the Chemical Warfare Service indicated satisfaction with the women's contribution. Army commanders in the field noted, "The men often consider themselves frustrated combat officers and thus lose interest in research and production work, but the Wacs eagerly plunge into their jobs with all their energy." General Porter, chief of the CWS, stated that Wacs had exhibited "all of the soldierly qualities of obedience, initiative, and devotion to duty. . . . The WAC has permeated our entire organization, and we owe them a great debt."⁵⁸

The Corps of Engineers

The fact that Wacs had been assigned to the Corps of Engineers since early 1943 was almost as unknown, until August of 1945, as was the project on which they were employed, the atomic bomb. Not until then was it revealed that 422 Wacs, approximately eight and a half percent of the enlisted personnel under the command of the Chief of Engineers, had been employed on the project. Maj. Gen. Leslie R. Groves, commander of the project, wrote to these women:

⁵⁸ Bull cited n. 49(4).