

As there were not enough Waacs in this first unit to supply every office's needs, the theater adjutant general reported an "inevitable scramble by chiefs of general and special staffs to obtain additional WAAC personnel."⁸ The largest part of the company went to the Signal Corps and to the newly organized Central Postal Directory. Others were assigned, by twos and threes, to various headquarters offices: three to the Office of Psychological Warfare; three to the adjutant general's office; one as General Eisenhower's secretary and one as his driver; more than a half dozen to drive other officers. Ten more were assigned as cooks and bakers to keep food ready for workers on three shifts.⁹

Reports on initial job success were consistently good. Among the first to receive commendation were telephone operators and other communications workers in theater headquarters. The Voice of Freedom—the entire telephone switchboard system of theater headquarters, large enough to service a good-sized city—was eventually manned entirely by WAAC supervisors and operators. Many telephone operators had from ten to fifteen years of civilian experience as operators and supervisors, and some were bilingual. A record for calls handled was set, and the theater chief signal officer, Brig. Gen. Terence J. Tully, stated, "It is highly desirable that the use of Wacs be extended," particularly to message center and cryptographic duties.¹⁰

The first postal directory workers were likewise successful. Officers in charge reported that "since the Waacs have taken over with an entirely different attitude toward the job than the men who had previously handled it, the percentage of errors has decreased materially."¹¹ Although the job was considered by some to be a

deadly routine, Waacs were somewhat romantically apt to visualize the pleasure of a soldier in getting long-delayed mail, or the anguish of a mother erroneously returned her letters, stamped "missing in action." The postal directory's Army supervisor stated:

The office was piled ceiling high. These girls came in and took over and worked from 8 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. seven days a week until it was cleaned up. . . . They never thought of asking for time off and I had to order them home nights.¹²

Administrative Difficulties

This early and continued job success was deemed remarkable in view of the administrative difficulties that the unit encountered during its first six months. Theater authorities attributed the confusion that developed to the absence of a WAAC adviser on the staff level, for the women had been sent without a WAAC staff director for the theater—the first and last time that such a mistake was made.¹³ In the meantime, certain policy questions had arisen which even General Hughes, with his long study of the problem, felt unable to answer. He sought Director Hobby's advice by mail, but she felt it undesirable to attempt long-distance pronouncements in ignorance of local conditions.¹⁴

⁸ Ltr, Brig Gen Thomas J. Davis, AG AFHQ, to Col Hobby, 29 Sep 43. SPWA 320.2 sec 7.

⁹ Inez Robb dispatch, WDBPR Env, Africa—Opinion, Gen Offs.

¹⁰ Memo, Gen Tully for CG NATOUSA, 27 Sep 44. Coleman file.

¹¹ Ltr, Gen Hughes, Dep Theater Comdr, to Dir WAAC, 29 Apr 43. SPWA 320.2 sec 5.

¹² AFHQ Press Release, "Postal," WDBPR, Env, Africa—Interesting Jobs.

¹³ Cbl 3093, 20 Jun 43. SPWA 320.2 sec 5.

¹⁴ Ltrs, Gen Hughes to Col Hobby, 17 Apr 43, and to Col Catron, 13 May 43, and reply 3 Jun 43. SPWA 320.2 sec 5.