

Meanwhile, the company had been successfully pulled together by one of the five officer secretaries, Capt. Martha Rogers, who had not been previously considered for company duty for lack of "voice and command" presence. Major Boyce secured some reassignment of women who were unsuitably assigned or not kept busy. She also succeeded in slowing up the promotion of Waacs, which she felt that a few section chiefs had been making too indiscriminately. After the reorganization, morale soon improved, and the number of Waacs lost at the conversion to Army status was less than had been anticipated. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower personally addressed the women in mid-August and informed them that they were necessary to the fighting ahead, and that "if a single one of you goes home, it's too many."¹⁸

Because of the general alarm at the results of lack of staff supervision, General Eisenhower and General Hughes personally drafted and put into effect a system that gave Major Boyce greater power than any ever held at any other place or time by any other WAC staff director. Under the title of Theater WAC Executive Officer, she was given virtually complete command jurisdiction over Wacs in the theater, bypassing normal military channels in all matters except supply and routine post administration. She was supreme on all matters of promotion, job suitability, discipline, discharge, and well-being. In fact, the system was a complete reversion to the old WAAC regulations, although few WAAC officers in the United States had ever exercised all of these powers as fully as Major Boyce now did.¹⁹

These powers did not last long, for a new commander, Lt. Gen. Jacob L. Devers, replaced General Eisenhower a few months later, and soon restored the

command prerogative of Army officers. He also placed the WAC staff director's office in G-1 Division; as a result, she could no longer consult directly with the deputy chief of staff. However, in the interim, the theater staff had become accustomed to consulting the WAC staff director on policy matters, and the habit persisted even after WAC command powers were revoked and after Lt. Col. Westray Boyce was succeeded, in less than a year, by Lt. Col. Dorothea A. Coleman. The headquarters eventually directed in writing that the WAC staff director be allowed to comment on all matters affecting Wacs before action was taken by any headquarters division.²⁰ With this precaution, it appeared to be a matter of little moment what command system was used, and the early administrative problems seldom if ever recurred in later units.

Further WAC Shipments

From the time of arrival of the first unit, theater requisitions for more Waacs had been repeatedly forwarded to the War Department, with the highest shipment priorities. As soon as approaching military status warranted, these began to be shipped, in accordance with General Marshall's policy of priority to combat theaters. The second shipment arrived in May, some four months after the first, and contained chiefly workers for the Central Postal Directory, although fewer than the chief of that agency had tried to obtain. In August of 1943, a platoon of about

¹⁸ (1) Cir 205, Hq NATO, 23 Oct 43. Coleman file. (2) Ltr cited n. 16. (3) Quotations from AFHQ Press Release, 17 Aug 43. WDBPR Env, Africa—Opinion, Gen Offs.

¹⁹ Cir cited n. 18(1).

²⁰ MTO Ltr, 7 Feb 45, sub: Responsibilities of WAC Stf Dirs. AG 322.01/234 A-O.