

CHAPTER XXI

The European Theater of Operations

The European Theater of Operations, the first to requisition Waacs, was the second to receive them. By the end of the war it employed 8,316 women, the largest number in any overseas theater.¹

The first requisitions, made by the theater Services of Supply in the summer of the Corps' formation, were not pressed after Lt. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower's departure for North Africa. After some six months of waiting for shipping priorities, the first two units earmarked for the theater were disbanded and their members were sent either to North Africa or to stations in the United States. In the spring of 1943, the Services of Supply again sent a requisition, but again furnished no shipping priority and shortly thereafter canceled the request.² Impetus in the program passed to the theater's Air Forces, of which General Eaker noted later:

Shortly after I arrived in England the problem was presented to me. . . . The commanding officer counseled me against bringing Waacs over . . . he said that I would be held responsible.³

Accepting the responsibility, the Eighth Air Force requested an entire WAAC battalion and set a shipping priority for the summer.⁴

In mid-April of 1943 the theater WAAC staff director, Capt. Anna W. Wilson, ar-

rived in London to make preparations for the unit. Small advance parties from the Signal Corps and other groups were also present. Captain Wilson made plans for reception, housing, and assignment of the women, and for such feminine needs as laundry rooms, sanitary facilities, special post exchange items, and clothing main-

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all references and quotations are from the Report of the General Board, U.S. Forces, European Theater, Study of the Women's Army Corps in the European Theater of Operations. OCMH. (See Bibliographical Note.) Hereafter cited as ETO Bd Rpt. Other major references: (1) ETO WAC Hist. (2) WAAC classified files, SPWA (later WDWAC) 320.2 secs 1, 2, 4a, 4b, 6, and 8a, DRB AGO. (3) History of USSTAF, 516.01, Vol. III, Ch. II, pp. 150-58. USAF Hist Div. Cited as USSTAF Hist. (4) Historical Records Rpt 315c, Wacs in European Division, Air Transport Command. USAF Hist Div. Cited as ETO ATC WAC Hist. (See Bibliographical Note.) (5) Interv with Col Mary A. Hallaren, Dir WAC, and written comments, 14 Mar 50, (6) Comments on draft of MS by Dr. Hugh M. Cole, author of *The Lorraine Campaign*, UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II (Washington, 1950).

² (1) Ltr, ETO WAAC Stf Dir to Dir WAAC, 16 Jun 43. AG 322.3, SPWA 320.2 sec 4a. (2) Rad 8786, USFOR London to WAR, 15 Apr 43. (3) Ltr, WAC Hq to CG ETO, 20 Feb 43; Rad 7329, London to WAR, 17 Feb 43. SPWA 320.2 secs 2 and 4b. (4) Memo, WAAC Hq for CG ASF, 17 Mar 43. SPWA 320.2 sec 4a. (5) D/F, OPD WDGS for CG ASF, 22 Mar 43; 1st Ind to unidentified basic Ltr, Opns Div ASF to Dir WAAC, 12 Apr 43. SPOPU 320.3 (4-6-43).

³ Address to WAC OCS 60th Graduation Class, 17 Nov 45. WDWAC 352.

⁴ Rad 9130, London to WAR, 27 Apr 43. SPWA 320.2 sec 2.