

feared that fighting men would worry so much over the Wacs' safety that their efficiency would be impaired. Others questioned whether women could live in tents under field conditions. Officers on the other side of the argument declared that their offices required their Wacs and that conditions on the Continent would be no worse than those in London under the buzz bombs, which had not disrupted office work. The WAC staff director was of the opinion that Wacs should move with their headquarters, in view of the reported success of the Fifth Army's experiment in Italy. The Wacs themselves were, as always, inordinately eager to go.²⁹

The theater's decision was that the Wacs would go along, and that 50 percent of the personnel of Forward Echelon, Communications Zone, would be WAC. Necessary plans were made for clothing and maintenance, tentage, and well-trained cadre. An initial attempt was made to select personnel carefully on the basis of ability, physical stamina, and emotional stability; the group selected to follow invasion troops onto the beaches was also given a strenuous training program, plus field clothing and equipment. Unfortunately, it was soon clear that the whole WAC population of England would shortly be on the move, and that other units coming directly from the United States would have to go to France without special screening or acclimatization.

As the time approached for movement to the Continent, certain bookkeeping difficulties had to be solved. When the WAC's own Table of Organization units had been dissolved, the War Department had specified that overseas Wacs would be assigned only to large headquarters operating under bulk allotments. Assignment to vacancies in men's T/O units was prohib-

ited because of the notion that every T/O unit would sooner or later move out to do battle.

Actually, Air Forces and Signal Corps headquarters, although under T/O's, were able to operate from bases farther behind the lines than were some of the bulk-allotment Communications Zone headquarters. To avoid violating the T/O ban, the Air Forces for the first months employed Wacs on an impractical and confusing lend-lease basis from theater headquarters. Bookkeeping difficulties almost wrecked this program and shortly forced the War Department to relax its ban and permit Wacs to be assigned to men's T/O units, to "suitable noncombatant positions in fixed headquarters or installations."³⁰ With this, the stage was set for easy movement of Air Forces and Signal Corps Wacs to the Continent. As a matter of fact, the term "fixed installation" was shortly to be interpreted by the theater to mean a tent moved forward not more than once a day.

The first Wac to arrive on the Continent was a stenographer who, on 22 June, flew in and out of one of the beachheads to record a conference. The first regular WAC unit landed in Normandy on 14 July 1944, almost a year to the day after the first group had arrived in England, and thirty-eight days after D Day. These Wacs, assigned to Forward Echelon, Communications Zone, arrived on the Normandy beaches in LST's, and camped out in an apple orchard. They slept under shelter halves or in pyramidal tents on Army cots, received the usual field rations, and washed in cold water carried in hel-

²⁹ The entire account of the movement into France and Germany, unless otherwise stated, is from ETO Bd Rpt and ETO WAC Hist.

³⁰ Ltr, TAG to CG ETO, 10 Mar 44. AG 320.2 WAC (2-18-44) PO-M-A, in SPWA 320.2. Change was later written into WAC Regulations.