

or had been filled from other sources. Colonel Wilson later commented:

The fluctuating supply of WAC personnel, engendered by the voluntary recruitment policy, prohibited firm planning . . . and resulted in an immeasurable expenditure of money, time, and effort, all of which would have been avoided by the application of selective service to women.³⁸

Officer Assignments

As was generally true overseas, ETO WAC officers were frequently less fortunate than enlisted women in the variety of their assignments and the degree of responsibility delegated to them. Several WAC officers attended the British Staff College in a class with British women officers, but an assignment adequate to justify this high-level training could not be found. Wacs who had graduated from the Army's own Command and General Staff School were assigned to jobs such as photointerpreter. A generous portion of 32 percent of the WAC officer strength was made available for WAC administration. A high percentage of the others was used in routine jobs which were similar to those of enlisted personnel except that an officer was required for security reasons—code and cipher officers, watch officers, signal officers, photointerpreters, censors, and military secretaries.³⁹ In spite of a War Department letter prohibiting the employment of WAC officers as stenographers, aides, and chauffeurs,⁴⁰ by the end of the war, no less than forty-five WAC officers—14 percent of the total—were serving as personal assistants to ranking officers in the European theater.

Such employment of WAC officers caused other ranking officers in the theater to ask that their enlisted WAC secretaries be directly commissioned and con-

tinue on the same job. Director Hobby steadily opposed all of these proposals, maintaining that if the women were more worthy of commissions than other Wacs in the theater, they should be selected by an officer candidate board, and that to open the door to such a policy would mean yielding to the political pressure of hundreds of other prominent sponsors who still sought WAC commissions for friends and constituents. The War Department therefore never wholly sanctioned the European theater's request, but a concession was made which permitted deserving cases to be forwarded for review in Washington. Under this authority several direct commissions were eventually granted—none to secretaries, but several to technicians such as the WAC sergeant who, as an expert on bridge demolition, was already filling the job of a major in the Corps of Engineers.

Because of a peculiar loophole in the WAC legislation, there was no legal barrier to the direct commissioning of British civilian women in the WAC; however, in the European theater only one civilian, General Eisenhower's chauffeur-secretary, was commissioned in this way, over Director Hobby's protest.⁴¹

³⁸ ETO Bd Rpt, Vol. I, p. 27.

³⁹ ETO Bd Rpt statistics as of 1 Nov 44.

⁴⁰ Ltr, DCofS USA to AAF, ASF, AGF, and overseas theaters, 11 Aug 44. CofS 324.5 WAC.

⁴¹ For details see Chs. XXII and, below. Colonel Hobby had repeatedly discouraged ETO inquiries in this matter, and General White had written General Eisenhower a long personal letter citing obstacles, but after three Allied citizens were commissioned in Australia without her consent, the Director received a note from Colonel McCarthy, Secretary to the General Staff: "After a talk with Gen Eisenhower, Gen Marshall decided that Miss Summersby should be commissioned directly. I understand that the WAC will have objections but I believe that the decision is final." Memo, Secy WDGS for Dir WAC, 31 Oct 44. WDWAC 320.2 ETO.