

While the women remained in England the theater required that all proposed WAC housing be inspected by a representative of the staff director before a unit moved in. On the Continent such inspection was not always possible.⁴⁶

The locating of most WAC housing in civilian communities made extra protection for women's quarters unnecessary, and also eliminated the need for excessive restrictions upon the women's freedom except those required of the entire population. The theater found that Wacs resented even minor restrictions such as "march outs" to work during morning and evening dark hours, preferring to get about independently. Because of the uncertain nature of transportation facilities, enlisted women were not sent from station to station without a WAC officer escort, unless a woman's commanding officer certified that the travel concerned did not require an escort. Other than these, there were no restrictions for Wacs which did not apply to men.

Organizational supplies were also generally superior. Because of the precedent of the British women's services, the Wacs obtained bed linens and mattresses, plus a limited number of electric irons and some hairdressing equipment, although this last was never rated entirely adequate. Post exchanges were ordinarily as good as those in the United States. Mess equipment was also generally adequate. In spite of the absence of milk, fresh fruits, and other items, the WAC messes were well rated, with cooks showing ingenuity in preparing dehydrated foods and other standard Army rations, which were superior to those of the British. Wacs usually had a separate mess only if civilian employees could be obtained for all heavy labor; kitchen police and similar fatigue

duty became almost as unknown as it had been in Italy.⁴⁷

The only immediate problem presented by the area was that of suitable clothing. The standard winter uniforms that Wacs had brought from the United States were considered inadequate, especially in the Air Forces, where many women were assigned to night shifts in unheated buildings and underground operations centers. The situation was declared an emergency, and the issue of enlisted men's long-sleeved undershirts and long drawers was authorized. Since Wacs were found to be catching colds because of a certain reluctance to wear these ill-fitting garments, the theater immediately requested many extra items above the regular issue: wool underwear designed for women, wool shirts, a field jacket and wool liner, with matching trousers and trouser liner, combat boots, and long wool hose. Most of these were obtained from the United States after much delay. Because of the limited cleaning and repair facilities, all Wacs in the theater also received extra exercise dresses, wool skirts, and field shoes.

The Quartermaster-designed trousers and jacket, when finally received from the United States, were found to be bulky and unbecoming, could not be tailored to fit the figure, and shrank and faded when laundered in the field. A smart three-piece wool uniform was therefore designed by the European theater—slacks, skirt, and battle jacket—which was found to be durable, warm, lightweight, and becoming for wear either under field conditions or in the city. A request for this was for-

⁴⁶ ETO WAC Hist, pp. 10-11; also ETO Bd Rpt.

⁴⁷ (1) ETO Bd Rpt, incl Vol. III, App. 75. (2) Ltr, Asst Theater WAAC Stf Dir to Dir WAC, 5 Jun 43. SPWA 320.2 sec 4a.