

CHAPTER XXVII

The Employment of Personnel: Enlisted Women

In all Army commands and overseas theaters, the experience of the war years produced very few Army-wide policies or restrictions on the job assignment of WAC personnel. The very considerable freedom that field commands had enjoyed in this respect seemed due in part to the small numbers of WAC personnel. Studies for the use of a million or more Wacs all indicated that hard and fast rules would have been required for this number, with explicit War Department directives to the field as to exactly what categories of jobs, or what entire organizations, would be staffed by Wacs.¹ In actual practice, with never more than 100,000 women to assign, a far more informal system remained possible, with women merely sent as casuals to field commands, and with little limitation on the types of jobs or organizations to which they might be assigned.

War Department regulations on the WAC allowed women to be assigned to "any suitable noncombatant overhead positions" or even to a combat unit organized under a Table of Organization, provided that the job itself was noncombatant and located in a "fixed administrative headquarters or installation." No limitation was placed upon a commander's discretion, except that men must be replaced one-for-one, that the duties must be within

the strength and endurance of "the average woman," and that the environment and working conditions must be suitable for women. Commanders were enjoined to remember that "procedures for the utilization of Women's Army Corps personnel both in their living and working conditions will vary from the procedure for utilization of male Army personnel," especially with respect to "hours of employment . . . number of women needed to perform heavy tasks . . . provision for safety and security . . . general standards of discipline . . . insurance of suitable recreation, education, and morale provisions." There was also, of course, never any wartime relaxation of the requirement that women be assigned in units of fifty or more, under the immediate command of a WAC officer.²

That such a lenient system was by no means inevitable was demonstrated by the Navy's dissimilar system. Here, the Bureau of Naval Personnel reported that it "kept full control of the detail of WAVES, enlisted as well as officer," primarily because it "did not have confidence that its

¹ Whole series of memos in WAAC and WAC Planning Serv files; for example, Memo, Sp Asst for Dir WAC, 13 Dec 43, sub: Pers Function of Dir WAC, draft 4.

² WD Cir 462, 1944; also earlier regulations.