

CHAPTER XXIX

The Employment of Personnel: Overseas Shipment

For both officers and enlisted women, a special group of personnel regulations centered around selection and assignment to overseas duty. The Auxiliary system of overseas assignment had not in many ways borne any resemblance to the Army's wartime system for men. Fearing that women overseas would be in an extremely conspicuous and demanding position, the Director's Office had issued orders:

... that WAAC officers selected for all overseas units be especially chosen for experience, strength of character, firmness of discipline; that auxiliaries be of a mature age and emotional stability and well-suited to perform the duties assigned.¹

Candidates for shipment were habitually rejected for such causes as "fully qualified but emotionally unstable and too immature for overseas service"; "fully qualified but evinces very poor attitude."²

Since WAAC units for overseas shipment were made up at training centers from new recruits, and were completely trained and processed on the spot, it was easy to achieve a thorough screening, with physical and mental examinations as well as job classification tests. Final movement orders were arranged by WAAC Headquarters only after personal examination of the records of each officer and auxiliary chosen.³

This system proved deficient in only one

respect: while the women thus selected were on the whole highly qualified, they were only a few weeks removed from civilian life and had only a theoretical knowledge of Army terminology and procedures. Valuable time had to be spent in active theaters in giving this experience. Also, field experience often revealed unsuspected physical or emotional difficulties. Company officers just out of officer candidate school were under an especial handicap in taking a company into field conditions. While WAC personnel possibly did not require the year or eighteen months ordinarily required for men before shipment, some on-the-job training was obviously needed.⁴

The problem of lack of experience was intensified when the system of shipping Waacs in Table of Organization units was abandoned in favor of shipment as casuals. Shipment as casuals meant that unit training was omitted and that women could be sent overseas after only four weeks of basic training, or even less if a shipment was waiting.

¹ Ltr, Exec WAAC to Comdt 5th WAAC Tng Cen, 2 Apr 43. SPWA 320.2 sec 4a.

² Ltr, WAAC Hq to Comdt, 1st WAAC Tng Cen, 7 Jun 43, and 1st Ind, 14 Jun 43. SPWA 320.2 sec 4a.

³ Office Memo, Opn Div WAAC for Exec WAC, 14 Apr 43. SPWAO, in SPWA 320.2 sec 4a.

⁴ AAF WAC Hist.