

CHAPTER XXXV

1945: The Closing Months of the War

The prospect of victory in Europe brought to the WAC, as to the Army as a whole, the last of its problems before demobilization: that of maintaining efficiency in a period of war weariness. Symptoms, as they appeared in the last winter of the war, were not in themselves any more alarming for the WAC than for the Army as a whole, except as trends which, if continued, would render the Corps ineffective at the moment the expected strain of redeployment to the Pacific would tax all administrative facilities. In January of 1945, the rate of medical discharge for Wacs was found to be more than double that of January of the preceding year. The rate of discharge other than honorable (blue) was many times greater than that of the year before.¹ WAC uniform violations became increasingly common, as well as mere untidiness. WAC officers, who should have set an example in this respect, instead were frequently the worst offenders. Director Hobby moved to secure publication of two separate admonitions, stating that "it is manifestly unfair to require and expect enlisted women to abide strictly by Uniform Regulations when the officers of their Corps are guilty of flagrant abuse thereof."²

Possibly more important was the intangible but unmistakable crumbling of that

high morale and idealism upon which the Corps had always depended in surmounting pioneering obstacles and public disapproval. Among company officers, visitors reported a definite feeling that they and their women had been forgotten by those in authority. Most of the reforms in the uniform supply, job assignment, medical care, and other policy matters, which had been fought over for two years in the War Department, had reached the field so late as to make little impression, or had not arrived at all at some isolated stations.

Even at best, the earlier crusading spirit, with its rosy expectation of capturing the citadel of full acceptance, had long since been replaced by a more realistic evaluation of the situation. The familiar gibes and gossip had ceased to be a challenge and had become merely wearisome, and the average woman now realized that, so long as women did not share in combat, they would never be full-fledged military citizens. As one dispirited Wac put it in a letter to Director Hobby, "We don't want

¹ See Tables 12 and 13, Appendix A.

² (1) Ltr, Dir WAC to CGs AAF, AGF, and ASF, 18 Sep 44. WDWAC 421. (2) Memo, Dir WAC for WAC Offs on Duty in Washington, 20 May 45. WDWAC 421. (3) Ltr, Hq MDW to all Stations, 12 Sep 44, SPWBG 420 WAC, in WDWAC 421. (4) *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, November 14, 1944. (5) Min, Stf Dirs Conf, 1-3 Dec 43. SPWA 337 (11-10-43).