

DOCUMENTS OF THE WAR



COLLECTED BY W. E. BURGHARDT DUBOIS



THE following documents have come into the hands of the Editor. He has absolute proof of their authenticity. The first document was sent out last August at the request of the American Army by the French Committee which is the official means of communication between the American forces and the French. It represents American and not French opinion and we have been informed that when the French Ministry heard of the distribution of this document among the Prefects and Sous-Prefects of France, they ordered such copies to be collected and burned.

MISSION MILITAIRE FRANÇAISE
près l'Armée Américaine.

Le 7 août 1918.

CONFIDENTIEL

AU SUJET DES TROUPES NOIRES AMERICAINES

1°. *Il importe que les Officiers Français appelés à exercer un commandement sur les troupes noires américaines, ou à vivre à leur contact, aient une notion exacte de la situation des nègres aux ETATS-UNIS. Les considérations exposées dans la note suivante devraient donc leur être communiquées, et il y a un intérêt considérable, à ce qu'elles soient connues et largement diffusées. Il appartiendra même aux Autorités Militaires Françaises, de renseigner à ce sujet par l'intermédiaire des Autorités civiles, les populations françaises des cantonnements de troupes américaines de couleur.*

2°. *Le point de vue américain sur la "question nègre" peut paraître discutable à bien des esprits français. Mais il ne nous appartient pas, à nous Français, de discuter ce que certains appellent un "préjudice." L'opinion Américaine est unanime sur la "question noire," et n'admettrait pas la discussion.*

Le nombre élevé de nègres aux ETATS-UNIS (15 millions environ) créerait pour la race blanche de la République un danger de dégénérescence si une séparation inexorable n'était faite entre noirs et blancs.

Comme ce danger n'existe pas pour la race française, le public français s'est habitué à traiter familièrement le "noir" et à être très indulgent à son égard.

Cette indulgence et cette familiarité blessent profondément les Américains. Ils les considèrent comme une atteinte à leurs dogmes nationaux. Ils craignent que le contact des Français n'inspirent aux noirs américains des prétentions qu'ils considèrent comme intolérables. Il est indispensable que tous les efforts soient faits pour éviter

FRENCH MILITARY MISSION
Stationed with the American Army

August 7, 1918.

SECRET INFORMATION CONCERNING
BLACK AMERICAN TROOPS

1. *It is important for French officers who have been called upon to exercise command over black American troops, or to live in close contact with them, to have an exact idea of the position occupied by Negroes in the United States. The information set forth in the following communication ought to be given to these officers and it is to their interest to have these matters known and widely disseminated. It will devolve likewise on the French Military Authorities, through the medium of the Civil Authorities, to give information on this subject to the French population residing in the cantonnements occupied by American colored troops.*

2. *The American attitude upon the Negro question may seem a matter for discussion to many French minds. But we French are not in our province if we undertake to discuss what some call "prejudice." American opinion is unanimous on the "color question" and does not admit of any discussion.*

The increasing number of Negroes in the United States (about 15,000,000) would create for the white race in the Republic a menace of degeneracy were it not that an impassable gulf has been made between them.

As this danger does not exist for the French race, the French public has become accustomed to treating the Negro with familiarity and indulgence.

This indulgence and this familiarity are matters of grievous concern to the Americans. They consider them an affront to their national policy. They are afraid that contact with the French will inspire in black Americans aspirations which to them

d'indisposer profondément l'opinion américaine.

Bien que citoyen des ETATS UNIS, l'homme de couleur est considéré par l'Américain Blanc comme un être inférieur avec lequel on ne peut avoir que des relations d'affaires ou de service. On lui reproche une certaine inintelligence, son indiscretion, son manque de conscience civique ou professionnelle, sa familiarité.

Les vices du nègre sont un danger constant pour l'Américain, qui doit les réprimer sévèrement. Par exemple, les troupes noires Américaines en France ont donné lieu, à elles seules, à autant de plaintes pour tentatives de viol, que tout le reste de l'Armée, et cependant, on ne nous a envoyé comme soldats qu'une élite au point de vue physique et moral, car le déchet, à l'incorporation a été énorme.

CONCLUSION

1°. Il faut éviter toute intimité trop grande d'officiers français avec des officiers noirs, avec lesquels, on peut être correct et aimable, mais qu'on ne peut traiter sur le même pied que des officiers blancs Américains sans blesser profondément ces derniers. Il ne faut pas partager leur table et éviter le serrement de mains et les conversations ou fréquentations en dehors du service.

2°. Il ne faut pas vanter d'une manière exagérée les troupes noires américains, surtout devant des Américains. Reconnaitre leurs qualités et leurs services, mais en termes modérés conformes à la stricte réalité.

3°. Tâcher d'obtenir des populations des cantonnements qu'elle ne gâtent pas les nègres. Les Américains sont indignés de toute intimité PUBLIQUE de femme blanche avec des noirs. Ils ont élevé récemment des véhémentes protestations contre une gravure de la "Vie Parisienne" intitulée "l'Enfant du Dessert" représentant une femme en cabinet particulier avec un nègre. Les familiarités des blanches avec les noirs sont, du reste, profondément regrettées de nos coloniaux expérimentés qui y voient une perte considérable du prestige de la race blanche.

L'autorité militaire ne peut intervenir directement dans cette question, mais elle peut influencer sur les populations par les Autorités civiles.

(Signé) LINARD.

[the whites] appear intolerable. It is of the utmost importance that every effort be made to avoid profoundly estranging American opinion.

Although a citizen of the United States, the black man is regarded by the white American as an inferior being with whom relations of business or service only are possible. The black is constantly being censured for his want of intelligence and discretion, his lack of civic and professional conscience and for his tendency toward undue familiarity.

The vices of the Negro are a constant menace to the American who has to repress them sternly. For instance, the black American troops in France have, by themselves, given rise to as many complaints for attempted rape as all the rest of the army. And yet the [black American] soldiers sent us have been the choicest with respect to physique and morals, for the number disqualified at the time of mobilization was enormous.

CONCLUSION

1. We must prevent the rise of any pronounced degree of intimacy between French officers and black officers. We may be courteous and amiable with these last, but we cannot deal with them on the same plane as with the white American officers without deeply wounding the latter. We must not eat with them, must not shake hands or seek to talk or meet with them outside of the requirements of military service.

2. We must not commend too highly the black American troops, particularly in the presence of [white] Americans. It is all right to recognize their good qualities and their services, but only in moderate terms, strictly in keeping with the truth.

3. Make a point of keeping the native cantonment population from "spoiling" the Negroes. [White] Americans become greatly incensed at any public expression of intimacy between white women with black men. They have recently uttered violent protests against a picture in the "Vie Parisienne" entitled "The Child of the Desert" which shows a [white] woman in a "cabinet particulier" with a Negro. Familiarity on the part of white women with black men is furthermore a source of profound regret to our experienced colonials who see in it an over-weening menace to the prestige of the white race.

Military authority cannot intervene di-

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rectly in this question, but it can through the civil authorities exercise some influence on the population. (Signed) LINARD.

* * *

THE following document is a specimen of the numerous and continuous requests made by white commanders of colored regiments to get rid of colored officers. It will be noted that at the date this document was sent Colored officers had had very little chance to prove their efficiency.

G. H. G., A. E. F.

8/25/1918

11440-A124

Headquarters 372nd Infantry

S. P. 179, France

August 24, 1918.

From: The Commanding Officer, 372nd Infantry.

To: The Commanding General, American E. F.

Subject: Replacement of Colored Officers by White Officers.

1. Request that colored officers of this regiment be replaced by white officers for the following reasons:

First: The racial distinctions which are recognized in civilian life naturally continue to be recognized in the military life and present a formidable barrier to the existence of that feeling of comradeship which is essential to mutual confidence and *esprit de corp*.

Second: With a few exceptions there is a characteristic tendency among the colored officers to neglect the welfare of their men and to perform their duties in a perfunctory manner. They are lacking in initiative. These defects entail a constant supervision and attention to petty details by battalion commanders and other senior officers which distract their attention from their wider duties; with harmful results.

2. To facilitate the desired readjustment of officer personnel it is recommended,

A. That no colored officers be forwarded to this regiment as replacements, or otherwise.

B. That officers removed upon recommendation of efficiency boards be promptly replaced by white officers of like grade. But, if white officers are not available as replacements; white officers of lower grades be forwarded instead.

C. That the opportunity be afforded to transfer the remaining colored combat officer personnel to labor organizations or to replacement units for other colored combat organizations according to their suitability.

3. Reference letter No. 616-3s written by Commanding General, 157th D. I. on the subject August 21, 1918, and forwarded to your office through military channels.

(Signed) Herschel Tupes,
Colonel, 372nd Infantry.

Received A. G. O.

26th Aug., 1918,

G. H. Q., A. E. F.

1st Ind. [Endorsement.]

G. H. Q., A. E. F., France, August 28, 1918

—To Commanding Officer, 372nd Infantry, A. E. F.

1. Returned.

2. Paragraph two is approved.

3. You will submit by special courier requisition for white officers to replace officers relieved upon the recommendation of efficiency board.

4. You will submit list of names of officers that you recommend to be transferred to labor organization or to replacement units for other colored combat organizations; stating in each case the qualifications of the officers recommended.

By command of General Pershing:

(Signed) W. P. Bennett,
Adjutant General.

2nd Ind. [Endorsement.]

Hq. 372nd Infantry, S. P., 179, France, September 4, 1918—To Commanding General, A. E. F., France.

1. Requisition in compliance with par. 3, 1st. Ind. is enclosed herewith. Special attention is invited to the filling of two original vacancies by app.

* * *

THE following letter was sent contrary to military regulations to a U. S. Senator by the man who was Chief of Staff of the colored Ninety-second Division; in other words, by the man who more than any

other single person was responsible for the morale and efficiency of this Division. We shall prove later that every essential statement made in this letter against Negro troops is either false or misleading.

Headquarters VI Army Corps
American Expeditionary Forces

Dec. 6, 1918.

My Dear Senator:

Now that a reorganization of the army is in prospect, and as all officers of the temporary forces have been asked if they desire to remain in the regular army, I think I ought to bring a matter to your attention that is of vital importance not only from a military point of view but from that which all Southerners have. I refer to the question of Negro officers and Negro troops.

I have been Chief of Staff of the 92nd (Colored) Division since its organization, and shall remain on such duty until it starts its movement in a few days back to the United States, when I go to the 6th Corps as the Chief of the Operation Section of that unit. My position has been such that I can speak from intimate knowledge and what I have to say is based on facts which I know fully and not from secondhand information.

To start with: all company officers of infantry, machine guns and engineers were Negroes; as were also most of the artillery lieutenants and many of the doctors. Gradually as their incompetence became perfectly evident to all, the engineers and artillerymen, were replaced by white officers. They remained with the infantry until the end, and also with a few exceptions with the machine guns.

The record of the division is one which will probably never be given full publicity, but the bare facts are about as follows. We came to France in June, were given seven weeks in training area instead of the four weeks in training area usually allotted, then went to a quiet sector of the front. From there we went to the Argonne and in the offensive starting there on September 26, had one regiment in the line, attached to the 38th French Corps. They failed there in all their missions, laid down and sneaked to the rear, until they were withdrawn. Thirty of the officers of this regiment alone were reported either for cowardice or failure to prevent their men from retreating—and this against very little opposition. The

French and our white field officers did all that could possibly have been done; but the troops were impossible. One of our majors commanding a battalion said "The men are rank cowards there is no other word for it."

Next we were withdrawn to another defensive sector where we remained until the armistice; having some minor engagements against any enemy who had no offensive intentions.

During our career, counting the time in America, we have had about thirty cases of rape, among which was one where twenty-two men at Camp Grant raped one woman, and we have had eight (I believe) reported in France with about fifteen attempts besides. There have been any number of self-inflicted wounds, among others one captain.

There have been numerous accidental shootings, several murders, and also several cases of patrols or sentinels shooting at each other. And at the same time, so strict had been the supervision and training that many officers passing through our areas would remark that our men actually had the outer marks of better discipline than the other divisions. They were punctillious about saluting, their appearance was excellent. They kept their animals and equipment in good condition. General Bullard, commanding our Second Army, asked me my estimate and I said they could do anything but fight. They have in fact been dangerous to no one except themselves and women.

In these organizations where we have white company officers, namely the artillery and engineers, we have had only one case of rape. The undoubted truth is that the Colored officers neither control nor care to control the men. They themselves have been engaged very largely in the pursuit of French women, it being their first opportunity to meet white women who did not treat them as servants.

During the entire time we have been operating there has never been a single operation conducted by a colored officer, where his report did not have to be investigated by some field officer to find out what the real facts were. Accuracy and ability to describe facts is lacking in all and most of them are just plain liars in addition.

The foregoing is just to give you an insight into the facts. Should any effort be made to have Negro officers, or for that

matter Negro troops, the career of this division should be asked for; and every officer who has been a field officer of the 92nd Division should be summoned before the Committee to give his experience and opinions. Their statements, based on a year's experience should certainly carry a great deal of weight, and all of them state the same thing, only varying in extremes.

With best wishes, I am

Sincerely yours,

(Signed) Allen J. Greer,

Colonel, General Staff, U. S. A.

Hon. Kenneth D. McKellar,

United States Senate,

Washington, D. C.

* * *

THE following letter written by a Negro officer to an American friend illustrates the temper and difficulties of the situation in France.

19 Feb., 1919.

I have been hoping that you would be able to drop in on us here before our departure. We are slated to leave here at 4 A. M. on the 21st supposedly aboard the *Aquitania*. It was my desire to talk with you about the offer to officers and men in the A. E. F. to attend a school in France or England. I made application and was shown the endorsement by the Regt. Commander, that the offer did not apply to transient officers. The knowledge was obtained from a telegram received from Hdq. One of our officers went to the Commanding General of this Camp to obtain a copy of the telegram which could not be or was not produced. Capt. ——— went in person to the General and requested permission to attend stating that he volunteered for service, left his practise and family at a sacrifice and that he thought the Govt. owed it to him to give him a chance and attend school here. The General took his name and the Organization to which he belongs promising to let him hear from him, but as yet nothing has been done. This Camp is practically a penal institution and prejudice against us is very strong. Some day there is likely to be some grave disturbance here. The conditions are simply awful: mud everywhere, leaky tents and barracks and lack of sufficient and proper toilets. The men are worked quite hard, some at night and others in the day, rain or shine. As a consequence there are quite a number of sick men in our organization. Since our arrival

here, the roads have been improved quite a bit (due to the work of the 92nd div.) and you do not have to wade in ankle deep mud. Board walks here to nearly all the tents and barracks. There is so much talk about the rotten conditions that the Camp Officials are making feverish efforts to be ready for the proposed inquiry.

The work of each organization is graded by the Camp Officer in Charge of details and if not satisfactory, the organization may be placed at the bottom of the sailing list or removed temporarily. Commanding Officers of separate units or regiments are practically helpless and if they complain too much against the treatment accorded them, are kept here until the Commanding General sees fit to let them go.

I am beginning to wonder whether it will ever be possible for me to see an American (white) without wishing that he were in his Satanic Majesty's private domain. I must pray long and earnestly that hatred of my fellow man be removed from my heart and that I can truthfully lay claim to being a Christian.

NOTES

THE following instances of color discrimination are taken at random from among numbers of similar cases.

This memorandum was sent to the Commanding Officer, 367th Infantry:

1. Company "D" of your organization has been designated by the Central Embarkation Office as a coaling detail for U. S. S. *Virginia*.

2. This detail with all officers and men will report at Naval Surgeon's Office, foot of Rue de Siam, Brest, at 8:30 a. m., February 9, 1919. Detail will march from camp not later than 7 a. m.

3. All equipment and officers' hand baggage will be taken. You will arrange for truck with Camp Transportation Officer Building No. 2, Camp Headquarters. Truck will be furnished at 5 a. m.

4. All embarkation regulation will be followed. The detail will be checked aboard the vessel by an officer from the Central Embarkation Office. *The detail will not return to camp.*

By Command of Brig. General Butler,

L. S. SCHMIDT,

Major A. G., Adjutant.

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There was an order issued from the Central Embarkation Office to the effect that when troops were designated as a coaling detail, they would go on board with all regulations for embarkation completed and would not return to camp, but would proceed to the United States on board the ship that they had coaled. When the Executive Officer of the *Virginia* discovered that these troops were Colored, he requested Admiral Halstead to have these Colored troops taken off board, after having coaled the vessel, as it was a precedent in the navy that no Colored troops had ever traveled on board of a United States battleship. This request was then sent by Admiral Halstead to the Central Embarkation Office, and the Colored Troops were placed on board a tug and sent back to Brest. When they arrived in Brest, it was late at night, they had no orders as to where to proceed, were without a place to stay and anything to eat.

Before leaving the ship the Colored commanding officer of the troops received the following letter from the officer under whom the men worked:

U. S. S. *Virginia*,
Brest, France,
11 February, 1919.

1. I take pleasure in commending you and the officers and men under your command in connection with the coaling of this ship, and at the same time wish to express my appreciation of the good conduct and the high state of discipline of your command.

H. J. ZIEGMINE,
Captain U. S. Navy,
Commanding.

* * *

During November, 1918, Colored Artillery officers were in school at Vannes; a number of dances was given by the French ladies which were called the Franco-American dances. These dances were given for charity and a fee was charged for admission. The Colored Officers, who composed what was known as the 167th Brigade Detachment, attended several of these dances, and were entertained by and danced with the French ladies of the town. The matter was then brought to the attention of General Horn, who was in command of the school,

whereupon he issued an order that no officer of the 167th Brigade Detachment would be permitted to attend a dance where a fee was charged. The 167th Brigade Detachment was composed entirely of Colored officers, so that the order referred only to them, but had no effect upon the white officers who were in attendance at the school.

* * *

Headquarters, Area "D,"
January 25, 1919.

MEMORANDUM

To C. O. 367th Infantry:

White officers desiring meals in their quarters will have their orderlies report to Lieutenant Williams at the Tent adjoining Area Headquarters for cards to present at Officers' Mess.

All colored officers will mess at Officers' Mess in D-17.

F. M. CRAWFORD,
First Lieutenant Infantry,
Area "D."

* * *

HEADQUARTERS FORWARDING CAMP
AMERICAN EMBARKATION CENTER
A. P. O. 766, A. E. F.

January 21, 1919.

Memorandum: No. 229, E. O.

To All Organizations:

1. For your information and guidance.

Program Reference Visit of General Pershing, 9:30 A. M. Arrive Forwarding Camp. All troops possible, except *Colored*, to be under arms.

Formation to be as designated by General Longan. Only necessary supply work and police work to be performed up to time troops are dismissed in order that they may prepare for reception of General Pershing. As soon as dismissed men to get into working clothes and to go to their respective tasks in order that Commander-in-Chief may see construction going on. (Work of altering dry delousing plant not to be interrupted). Colored troops who are not at work to be in their quarters or at their tents.

By command of

BRIGADIER-GENERAL LONGAN.

RICHARD I. LEVY,
Major, C.A.C., U.S.A. Camp,
Adjutant.

WILL every Negro officer and soldier who reads these documents make himself a committee of one to see that the Editor of THE CRISIS receives documents, diaries and information such as will enable THE CRISIS history of the war to be complete, true and unanswerable?