

NATIONAL ARCHIVES MICROFILM PUBLICATIONS  
PAMPHLET DESCRIBING M1440

**Correspondence of the Military  
Intelligence Division Relating to  
“Negro Subversion”  
1917-1941**



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Records of the Ward Department

General and Special Staffs

Record Group 165

CORRESPONDENCE OF THE MILITARY  
INTELLIGENCE DIVISION RELATING TO  
1917-1941

On the six rolls of this microfilm publication are reproduced record cards and correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division (MID) that relate to activities of blacks in both civilian and military life, 1917-41. The documents reproduced are primarily from World War I and the immediate postwar years and consist of War Department memorandums, investigative reports, and correspondence with other agencies, particularly the Department of Justice and the Bureau of Investigation, predecessor of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The MID file label for these records was 10218, "Negro Subversion," although most of the records are considerably broader in coverage than that title would suggest. This file is part of Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Record Group 165.

Background

The Military Intelligence Division originated in 1885, when Adjutant General Richard C. Drum directed Maj. William J. Volkmar of the Military Reservation Division to organize a Division of Military Information. Drum's action was in response to an increasing need for the systematic collection and dissemination of information relating to foreign and U.S. military services. The Military Information Division, as it became known, functioned as an adjunct of the Military Reservation Division until 1889. The congressional Appropriation Act of September 22, 1888 (25 Stat. 481), provided for "the pay of a clerk attendant on the collection and classification of military information from abroad." In addition, the act laid the necessary financial groundwork for the Adjutant General's confidential order of April 12, 1889, which established the Military Information Division as "a separate division under the personal supervision of the Adjutant General."

An act of February 14, 1903 (32 Stat. 830), reorganized the War Department hierarchy by creating the War Department General Staff headed by the Chief of Staff. Six months later, Secretary of War Elihu Root's order of August 8 directed the transfer of the Military Information Division and its records to the Office of the Chief of Staff, effective August 15, 1903. Under the new organization, what had been the Military Information Division became the Second Division (of three divisions) of the General Staff. War Department General Order 128, dated August 12, 1908, provided for the reorganization of the General Staff into sections and thereunder into such committees as necessary for the

transaction of business. As a result of this order, the Second Division (military information) was merged with the Third Division (military planning and education) to form the Second Section. A reorganization of September 26, 1910, abolished the Second Section and transferred its responsibilities, including military information, to the new War College Division.

The entry of the United States into World War I on April 6, 1917, greatly increased the work of the War College Division. To deal with the growing intelligence workload the Chief of Staff, in a memorandum dated April 28, 1917, directed that a separate military intelligence section be established within the War College Division. Most records relating to foreign intelligence and some on domestic intelligence created or accumulated by the Military Intelligence Section were filed in the central correspondence of the War College Division. A reorganization of the General Staff, under authority of War Department General Order 14, dated February 9, 1918, abolished the War College Division. All intelligence functions passed to the Military Intelligence Branch of the newly created Executive Division. This branch began keeping its own records, separate from those of other branches or divisions of the General Staff. Subsequently, some files were withdrawn from the War College Division records (now inherited by the War Plans Division) and incorporated into the separate series of Military Intelligence Branch records. A second major wartime reorganization of the War Department General Staff occurred under authority of General Order 80, dated August 26, 1918, which established a separate Military Intelligence Division (MID). The order also provided that the MID was to be headed by an officer designated as director of military intelligence who would function as an assistant to the Chief of Staff. The MID continued keeping the separate series of records maintained by the former Military Intelligence Branch.

As a result of War Department General Order 41, dated August 16, 1921, the MID was given the additional designation of G-2 and was constituted as one of the five General Staff divisions, each under the immediate control of an Assistant Chief of Staff. This organizational structure remained largely unchanged through World War II.

The major function of the MID and its predecessors was the collection of military information. Initially, this related almost exclusively to foreign military information. Gradually, but particularly after the outbreak of World War I, counterintelligence, counterpropaganda, censorship, and military morale became MID responsibilities. In connection with these activities the MID monitored activities within the black community that were potentially disruptive to the American war effort, compiled information relating to discrimination against black soldiers and black civilian employees of the War Department,

collected intelligence on major civil disturbances, and kept abreast of the state of morale of black troops at camps in the United States and in the American Expeditionary Forces overseas.

### Records Description

The documents reproduced in this microfilm publication are a single file (10218) from the Military Intelligence Division correspondence files and date from 1917 to 1941; most are dated 1917-25. The file was begun in July 1917 by the Military Intelligence Section of the War College Division and was one of those transferred in 1918 to the records of the Military Intelligence Branch, which ultimately became the records of the MID.

The War College Division and the Military Intelligence Division filed correspondence in accordance with the "record card system," utilized widely in the late 19th- and early-20th-century by the War Department. On each incoming and outgoing communication and on each enclosure, a record clerk placed in the upper-right corner of the first page a file designation consisting of a master number representing the main subject of the communication. Following the master number, the record clerk sometimes entered an alphabetical or numerical suffix representing a subfile under the subject of the master number, and an additional number representing the transaction under the subfile (e.g., MID 10218-361/11). In other instances, when no subfile was involved, the clerk simply added a numerical suffix to the master number to indicate the next sequential transaction (e.g., 10218-5). Most of the documents filmed on this publication do consist of small subfiles, that is, several transactions or communications relating to a specific subject.

After the clerk had assigned a file designation to the communication, he summarized its contents on a record card and placed the same file designation on the record card. Record cards were subsequently annotated to show the routing and ultimate destination or disposition of a communication. The clerk then prepared name, subject, and geographic index cards as finding aids to the communication and the record card. The index cards were filed alphabetically. The communications and the record cards were filed numerically by their assigned file designations.

For communications related to "Negro Subversion," the MID assigned master number 10218. The subfile numbers extend from 1 to 471 with the higher numbers usually reflecting more recently dated material. Occasionally the MID transferred a document to a different master number and inserted cross-references to show this change. Some documents were either given no subnumbers initially or over time became alienated from their original file position; these documents have been placed at the end of file

series 10218 and filmed at the end of roll 6 of this publication. A few documents appear to have been given subnumbers and added to the file series well after they were created.

In some instances, for filming purposes, oversize records, such as newspapers, have been removed from their original file position, cross-reference sheets inserted, and the removed items filmed at the end of the roll on which they would normally have appeared sooner.

Most of the documents filed under "Negro Subversion," MID 10218, contain information on three subjects--radical organizations and activities in the black community that had a potential impact on the military; discrimination against blacks, military and civilian, including incidents leading to race riots; and treatment of and performance by blacks in the army. Records on the first subject cover both World War I and the entire interwar period; information on the second and third topics is limited to the war and immediate postwar years.

Radical Activities--Press accounts, investigative reports from the Bureau of Investigation and local authorities, and secondhand assessments of the mood in the black community by Maj. Joel Spingarn and Maj. William Loving, the MID's principal experts on black organizations. Correspondence of Emmett Scott, special assistant for Negro affairs to Secretary of War Newton Baker (1916-21) also appears. A few of the reports are based on full field investigations conducted by MID operatives.

Reports in the file from mid-1918 relate to the fear that German propagandists were stirring unrest in the Negro community (10218-442 and 10218-443). Similar reports dated from 1919 cover Bolshevik agitation among black groups (10218-296 and 10218-345). Quite a few of the reports on radical activities and organizations are from the departmental intelligence officer in New York City; for instance, the one on "general unrest" in the black community (10218-364). Not all of the groups on which the MID compiled information during World War I could be considered "radical"; several reports (10218-139) are on the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and its periodical, The Crisis. On August 6, 1919, Maj. William Loving submitted his "Final Report on Negro Subversion" (10218-361). Loving's report described the reasons for radical activity in the black community (especially among returning veterans) and characterized organizations and their objectives. Shortly after Loving submitted his report, the Director of Military Intelligence concluded that, with the end of the war and the demobilization of most of the wartime army, the MID

would no longer take an active part in investigating "Negro subversion" and conditions in the black community (10218-361/11). The MID did however, continue to compile information furnished by other investigative organizations, principally the Justice Department, until the numeric file was retired in 1941.

One subject covered from late in World War I and throughout most of the interwar period was Marcus Garvey and his Universal Negro Improvement Association and African Community League (10218-261). Information about Garvey's activities in the Caribbean after the war (10218-418, 10218-435, 10218-436, 10218-437); the alleged connection in the 1930's between Garveyites, the Pacific Movement, and Japanese agents, all trying to foster antiwhite sentiments among blacks; and attempts to recruit men for service in Ethiopia by Pacific Movement organizers constitute much of the file on Garvey (10218-261/81 to 137).

Except for information on Garvey, there are few documents in the file (10218) dating from the early 1920s to the mid-1930s. With the growing American defense buildup in the late 1930s, however, the MID again exhibited an interest in black affairs. Reports cover such subjects as Negro and union unrest in defense industries (10218-485), A. Philip Randolph and the 1941 March on Washington (10218-463), and U.S. Communist Party activity in the black community (10218-458).

Discrimination--MID and FBI reports. In one series of reports Emmett Scott and other War Department officials attempted to assess whether the movie "Birth of a Nation" promoted racial friction (10218-196). Other reports cover such topics as discrimination against black clerical personnel working for the MID during the war (10218-252). Of particular significance are the numerous reports on race riots and lynchings during 1918 and 1919, many involving black soldiers or veterans as victims; these include incidents at Charleston, SC (10218-272), Hickman, KY (10218-274), Washington, DC (10218-350), Chicago, IL (10218-353), Omaha, NE (10218-371), and Elaine, AR (10218-372).

Treatment of black personnel--MID Military Morale Section reports. A number of the reports relate to specific instances of disaffection among black troops, such as at the Port of Embarkation, Hoboken, NJ (10218-265), or to discrimination against blacks, as by white military policemen at Camp Sevier, SC (10218-271). In October 1918 the Military Morale Section of the MID conducted a general survey, "The Negro in the Army," entailing the compilation of information about conditions as they affected black troops at 11 training camps throughout the United States (10218-244, 10218-279, and 10218-280). There were often differences between the information obtained from the black troops and from the white camp commanders. Many of the reports in the file bear on the combat record of the 92d

Division and the relations in that division between black and white officers and between white officers and black soldiers (10218-279). The combat record of black officers in the American Expeditionary Forces and the furor created in the black community when several were relieved for cause are also covered in several reports (10218-331 and 10218-333). The performance of black troops in combat in France, especially that of the 92d Division, was of great interest to the Morale Section because it had both positive and negative effects on black/white military and civilian morale.

#### Security Classification

Many of the documents filmed in this microfilm publication were classified as secret, confidential, or restricted at the time of their creation and had those classification markings stamped, typed, or written on them. The National Archives and the Department of the Army have reviewed and declassified all of the records filmed in this publication.

#### Related Records

This microfilm publication reproduces only a single file, albeit the principal one, from the MID correspondence, 1917-41, relating to black activities. A considerable number of additional documents about individual blacks, black organizations, and black publications can be found in other files of the MID correspondence. Access to these records is by the name, subject, and geographic indexes to the correspondence. The name index has been filmed as Name Index to Correspondence of the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department General Staff, 1917-1941 (M1194).

Records relating to War Department policy concerning the utilization of black personnel during World War I are in the War College Division correspondence, 1903-19, which is part of Records of the War Department General and Special Staffs, Record Group (RG) 165. The office file of Emmett Scott, Secretary of War Newton Baker's special assistant for Negro affairs, is part of Records of the Office of the Secretary of War, RG 107. Operational and administrative records of black combat and support service units during the war are part of Records of the American Expeditionary Forces, 1917-1923, RG 120.

Other records relating to blacks during World War I can be found in General Records of the Department of State, RG 59, and General Records of the Department Justice, RG 60. Among the Department of Justice records is the Abraham Glasser file, which contains material collected for a report on the use of military force by the U.S. Government in strikes, race riots, and other internal disturbance. A large part of the material dates from

World War I. The Records of the Committee on Public Information, Record Group 63; the Federal Bureau of Investigation, RG 65, especially the microfilmed Investigative Case Files of the Bureau of Investigation, 1908-1922 (M1085); and the Secret Service, RG 87, also contain information gathered by federal investigative agencies on individual blacks, black organizations, and black publications.

David Paynter arranged the records for microfilming and prepared these introductory remarks.

APPENDIX A

List of copies of black newspapers contained in MID 10218:

New York Age  
The Voice (New York City)  
New York Independent  
Negro World (New York City)  
The New York Commoner  
The Freeman (Indianapolis)  
Cleveland Advocate  
The Afro-American (Baltimore)  
Chicago Defender  
The Broad Ax (Chicago)  
The Chicago Whip  
The Washington [D.C.] Eagle  
The Washington [D.C.] Bee  
St. Louis Argus  
The Sentinel (Pontotoc, MS)  
The Guardian (Boston)  
The Christian Recorder (Philadelphia)  
California Free Lane (San Francisco)

APPENDIX B

Dates of The Crisis magazines contained in MID 10218:

November 1916  
June 1917  
January 1918  
March 1918  
Easter 1918  
April 1918  
May 1918  
June 1918  
October 1918  
March 1919  
May 1919  
Easter 1919  
June 1919  
July 1919  
July 1919  
August 1919

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