

# SPECIAL STUDIES

## Blacks in the Army Air Forces During World War II: The Problems of Race Relations

Alan M. Osur

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## FOREWORD

This book is based upon a PH.D dissertation written by an Air Force officer who studied at the University of Denver. Currently an Associate Professor of History at the Air Force Academy, Major Osur's account relates how the leadership in the War Department and the U.S. Army Air Forces (USAAF) tried to deal with the problem of race and the prejudices which were reflected in the bulk of American society. It tells a story of black racial protests and riots which such attitudes and discrimination provoked. The author describes many of the discriminatory actions taken against black airmen, whose goal was equality of treatment and opportunities as American citizens. He also describes the role of black pilots as they fought in the Mediterranean theater of operations against the Axis powers. In his final chapters, he examines the continuing racial frictions within the Army Air Forces which led to black servicemen protests and riots in 1945 at several installations. Despite these problems, the author concludes that the Army Air Forces made substantial progress in race relations and in opening up additional career opportunities for black airmen in the post-1945 period.

JOHN W. HUSTON, Maj. Gen., USAF  
Chief, Office of Air Force History

Washington, D.C.  
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## PREFACE

Race relations in the Army Air Forces (AAF) during World War II ran the gamut from harmonious to hostile, depending upon the unique circumstances existing within each unit, command, and theater. But in spite of the availability of vast source material on the subject, historians have attempted little evaluation.\* The abundance of data, now located in the depositories at Maxwell Air Force Base (AFB), AL, and the National Archives, † is a product of the military administrative system which distributes as a matter of course numerous memoranda, directives, and letters. The War Department and AAF were particularly active in seeking a solution to the problem of employing blacks in the war effort.

In order to understand the question of race relations in the AAF, it is helpful to examine the structure of the War Department, which was the focal point for much of that activity during the war. The AAF in 1942 constituted, along with the Army Ground and Service Forces, one of three major commands within the War Department. With the Army reorganization of the same year, the official name changed from the Air Corps (AC) to the AAF.\*\* Although the AAF was semiautonomous in its operational role, it nevertheless adhered to the policy, guidance, directives, and regulations of the War Department. Therefore, its racial policy had to be consistent with that of the department, and the AAF had to modify its regulations in accordance with departmental changes. At the headquarters level in Washington DC, the two organizational staffs were somewhat parallel; the various offices of the AAF's Air Staff had functions similar to those of the War Department's General Staff. The AAF chain of command began with the President, then ran through Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, Under Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, Assistant Secretary of

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\* Four studies which look into different aspects of this topic are: Ulysses Lee, *The Employment of Negro Troops*, in the Army historical series, THE UNITED STATES ARMY IN WORLD WAR II; Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939-1953* (Columbia, 1969); Lawrence J. Paszek, "Negroes and the Air Force, 1939-1949," *Military Affairs* 31 (Spring 1967), pp 1-9; and Charles E. Francis, *The Tuskegee Airmen: The Story of the Negro in the U.S. Air Force* (Boston, 1955).

† The Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center (hereafter cited as AFSHRC), Maxwell AFB, AL; and the Modern Military Branch, Military Archives Division, National Archives and Records Service (hereafter cited as NARG), Washington DC. The Simpson Center contains AAF material while the National Archives contains material from various agencies of the War Department. The files in both locations are voluminous.

\*\* Throughout 1942 and into 1943, official documents show that "AC" and "AAF" were used interchangeably.

War John J. McCloy, Assistant Secretary of War for Air Robert A. Lovett, the Chief of Staff Gen George C. Marshall, and down to the Chief of the AAF, Gen Henry H. Arnold. Each of the secretaries and General Marshall had a significant influence on AAF racial matters.

In analyzing racial policy as it was formulated within the War Department and implemented throughout the chain of command, there are a number of themes relevant for an understanding of the utilization of blacks during the war. First, the AAF never willingly accepted black soldiers. This service had totally excluded them for over two decades before they were permitted to enter, and then used them only reluctantly. The fact that the AAF even opened its doors to blacks and proceeded to make additional opportunities available to them was due to pressures aimed at the War Department and the AAF. Individuals and organizations within the black community and white liberals in and out of Congress were quite vocal and were able to exert sufficient pressure to force the War Department and AAF to examine and modify their policies and practices throughout the war.

Another recurring theme was that leadership within the War Department and AAF assumed that segregation was the most efficient system of race relations and accepted the "separate-but-equal" doctrine. In retrospect 30 years later, it is easy to judge that policy through the wisdom of hindsight, but this does no justice to history. Instead, that policy must be viewed in the context of the war years and examined in terms of AAF standards. While defending its policy of "separate-but-equal," did the AAF, in fact, maintain equal facilities for black soldiers? The answer to that question has to be "no," as blacks were not afforded equal treatment. Thus, the policy of segregation was unsatisfactory for blacks, and the duplicated facilities that were necessary to maintain the system were far too expensive in terms of the results obtained. And because of deeply ingrained racist beliefs, the American public and the Army were willing to accept the additional financial burden, social unrest, and inefficiency of segregation in an attempt to keep blacks "in their place."

Furthermore, the Army inherited from American society and from its own traditions a difficult problem in attempting to absorb large numbers of blacks into a war apparatus, and racial issues plagued the service throughout the war years. Although the AAF fervently defended segregation, its leaders failed to understand that this implied second-class citizenship. Additionally, blacks were no longer willing to accept the demeaning status to which they had been relegated, and using the military as a vehicle for their protests, voiced their objection to discriminatory treatment and segregation. Their protests were for military leaders a constant source of frustration and annoyance.

Finally, the War Department made a decided shift in its approach in 1943. Until then, officials in the War Department and the AAF reflected society's traditional racist attitude toward the utilization of blacks. The military did not consider black soldiers as part of the American military tradition and used them only when absolutely necessary for the defense of the country or when political pressure forced their use. However, with mounting pressures upon War Department

officials, there was a change in outlook from 1943 through the end of the war to recognize and alleviate the race problem. Washington sought to utilize black soldiers fairly rather than to view them merely as embarrassments and problems. Unfortunately, this change in attitude did not filter down through the AAF chain of command. Throughout the war, AAF commanders demonstrated a reluctance to treat blacks with full equality and to show a sincere commitment to abide by War Department racial directives.

This study will first examine the racial attitudes of members of the War Department and the black community during the pre-World War II and early war periods. Chapters II and III will show how, after reluctantly opening up its service to blacks, the Army Air Forces only hesitatingly utilized them. Also, the performance of the 332d and 477th Groups demonstrates the importance of examining the attitudes of AAF leaders. Chapter IV documents a major shift in War Department thinking; however, a lack of commitment from many within the AAF stymied the impetus this new direction gave to a more sympathetic racial policy. Chapter V stresses specific problems that blacks encountered as they served in the war and the nature of their protest against segregation and discrimination. With all black units, the exercise of leadership played an important role in influencing race relations. It was a vital factor in one of the most important racial disturbances in the AAF during the war at Freeman Field, Indiana, and Chapter VI examines this racial conflict and its underlying causes. In Chapter VII we can gain some insight from the conclusions which the AAF drew about its wartime experience with blacks. It conducted a series of surveys at the end of the war to evaluate their performance and utilization.

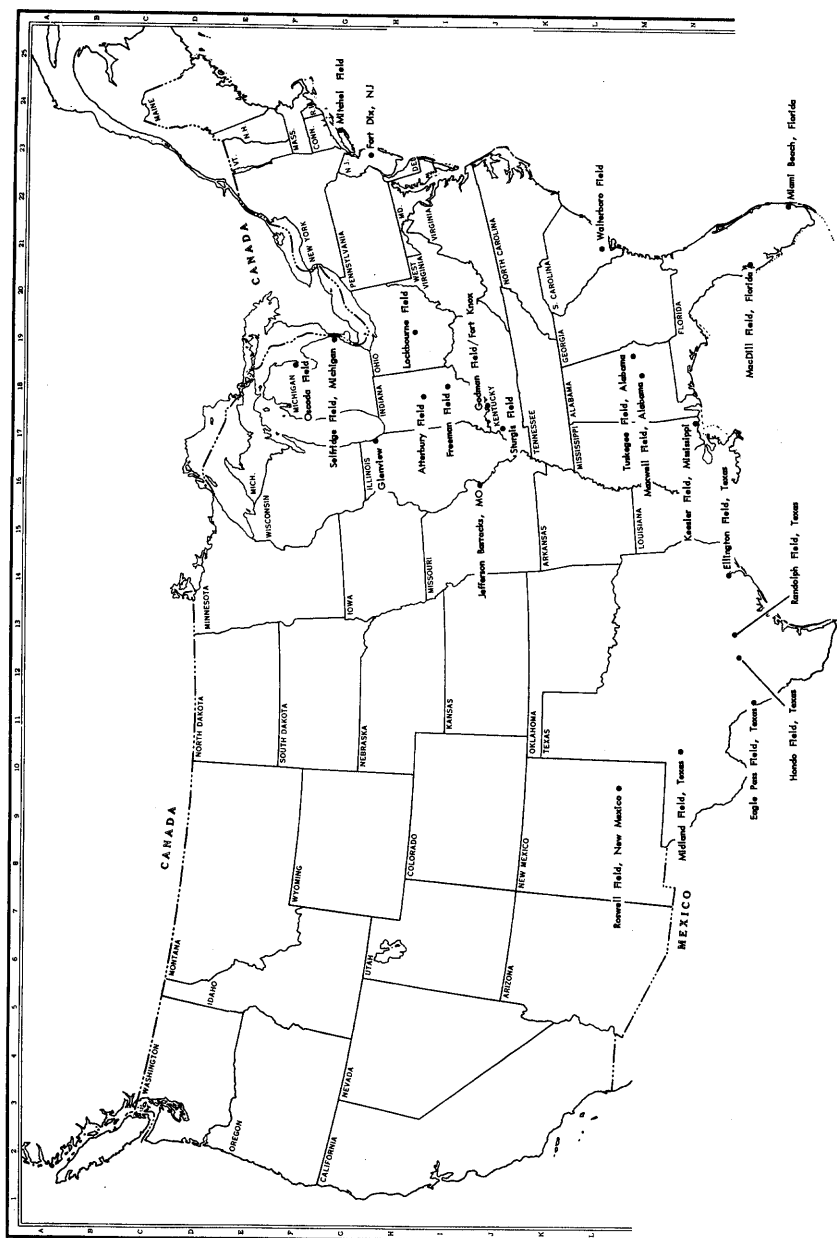
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## AAF Bases

## Chapter I

# THE WAR DEPARTMENT AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY

### I

Black Americans, in spite of the fact that the government and the military maintained an exclusion policy, took part in all of their country's wars, although they have not always received due recognition for their efforts. For example, blacks participated in large numbers in the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, and World War I. Black troops were used extensively during the frontier wars of the second half of the 19th century after Congress had enacted legislation providing for the permanent establishment of four regular black units. While these units saw no combat in World War I, two other black divisions did. Yet, because of racial conditions which will be examined below, the War Department was dissatisfied with the performance of black soldiers and weighed their usefulness and efficiency in planning their future service.<sup>1</sup>

From the end of the First World War and into the early years of the Second World War, two contrasting attitudes affected War Department policy concerning the utilization of blacks. On one side was the black community which pressured the President, as Commander in Chief, as well as the War Department. Because the blacks were determined to persevere in achieving the promise of American life, their impact during World War II differed from previous wars. They were aided by organizations within the black community and by the propaganda war which emphasized the racist and undemocratic character of the Axis powers. Their ability to organize and the political self-consciousness and awareness that had developed in the black community gave them the capability to exert pressure. What they worked for was recognition of their rights commensurate with their sacrifice to the national effort, and they expected that the federal government would protect them as all soldiers in uniform.<sup>2</sup>

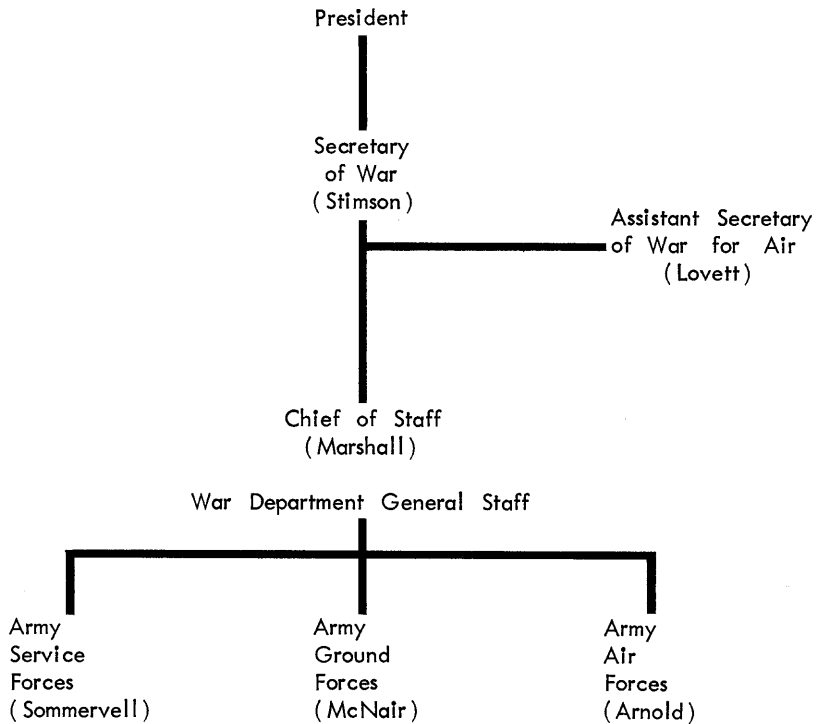
While blacks at the outset of World War II became vocal about their rights within the military structure, others in the interwar era continued to defend the needs of that structure, such as the right of whites to be segregated from blacks and the Army's requirement for military efficiency. Army leaders weighed these views as they at-

tempted to formulate black troop policy. In an early but key study, the Army War College (AWC) evaluated the black in World War I. Completed in 1925 after several years of work by the faculty and student body of the school, this memorandum reflected both the racist views of American society and the attitude of military personnel toward black soldiers.<sup>3</sup> This study became a decisive factor in influencing War Department policy during the interwar years and led to the revision of the War Department General Mobilization Plan. The motivation behind the analysis was to attain "military efficiency"—how to utilize the black in the most efficient manner. An evaluation of this study clearly reveals the racial attitudes of Army officers and the social and military factors which influenced their thinking.

The study consists of five References (A-E) analyzing "the physical, mental, moral and psychological qualities and characteristics of the negro as a subspecies of the human family," the performance of blacks in all wars in which they had fought, the black officer, black political activity during the war, and, finally, the overall mobilization plan. The first section of the study is important because it reflects in the officers' conclusions the preponderant American view that blacks were mentally inferior to whites. Recently, I. A. Newby had concluded in his study of racism during the early part of the 20th century that the overwhelming majority of Americans held or voiced anti-black attitudes, believed in the innate inequality of the races, or objected to social equality. He characterized the period through the 1920's as a time when racist thought reached its zenith and blacks were established "in their place." Scientists, social scientists, historians, and religious leaders expounded these racist ideas, and journalists, politicians, and publicists popularized them. For example, Madison Grant's *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) and Lothrop Stoddard's *The Rising Tide of Color Against White World Supremacy* (1920) had a significant influence on the thinking of the period and were widely read. Historians who reflected racist attitudes in their writings were James Ford Rhodes, William Archibald Dunning, and Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, whose *American Negro Slavery* (1918) had an influence on future history texts.<sup>4</sup> The views in the above works closely parallel those expressed in the AWC study, although in the latter it was held that the black man was physically unqualified for combat duty; was by nature subservient, mentally inferior, and believed himself to be inferior to the white man; was susceptible to the influence of crowd psychology; could not control himself in the face of danger; and did not have the initiative and resourcefulness of the white man.<sup>5</sup>

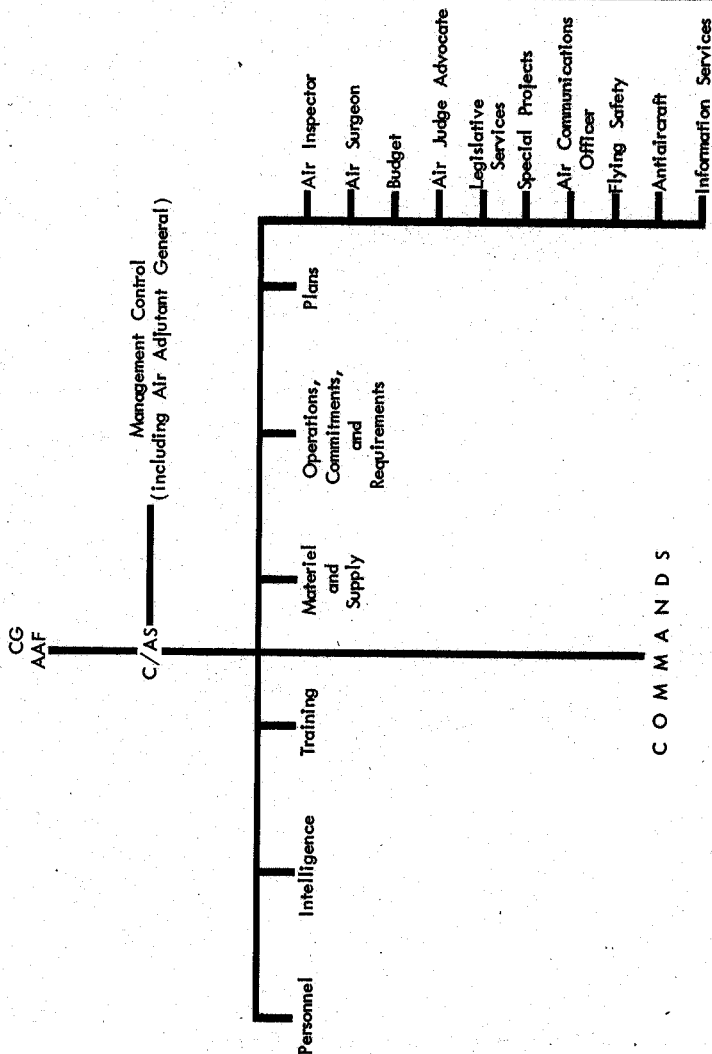
The authors of the War College study also relied upon the results of intelligence tests administered during the war. Civilian psychologists had prepared these tests, the objective of which was to aid the War Department in segregating the mentally incompetent, to classify men according to their mental ability, and to assist in the selection of qualified men for responsible positions.<sup>6</sup> The proper utilization of manpower was of utmost concern to the Army and it could only accept

## The War Department



Source: Craven and Cate, *AAF in WWII*, 6:31.

# THE ARMY AIR FORCES (1943-1945 ORGANIZATION)



Source: Craven and Cate, *AAF in WWII*, 6:46.

those who met the minimum standards. These standards were rigid and no adjustment was made for factors that could influence test scores, such as educational opportunities, and environmental and economic background. The AWC study did include some data demonstrating environmental effects, for example, the fact that blacks from the North had higher scores than those from the South.<sup>7</sup> However, the officers did not take that into consideration. The report includes other observations about blacks' mental ability. It points out that those who were recognized as showing "marked mental attainments" had a "heavy strain of white blood." But, for the average individual "the cranial cavity of the negro is smaller than the white; his brain weighing 35 ounces contrasted with 45 for the white." Based on these factors, the AWC memorandum concluded that the black did not have the mental equipment to compete with the white.<sup>8</sup>

Another viewpoint prevalent in the memorandum is the belief that the black was immoral: "his ideas with relation to honor and sex relations are not on the same plane as those of our white population." The study adds that "petty thieving, lying, and promiscuity are much more common among negroes than among whites." Next, it points out that blacks evolved from "mediocre African ancestors," and that this background, coupled with the slavery experience, did not develop leadership material. Also, the study characterized blacks as possessing a "profoundly superstitious nature," a natural subservience, an instinctive regard for the white man as superior, and a jolly, docile, secretive, and unruly nature.

In addition, the authors of the study misinterpreted the performance records of black combat units—the 92d and 93d—during World War I by basing their conclusions on results without analyzing causes. The 93d did satisfactory work because four of its regiments were attached to the French and were treated with respect and dignity, but the 92d performed poorly. Many military observers concluded as a result that the black man did not have the ability to function as a member of an efficient fighting machine. The 92d, as many black units in both world wars, was at a disadvantage, having to cope with inferior equipment, poor training, a mix of both white and black officers, and was expected to perform well despite such serious problems. A comparison of the two divisions demonstrates that racial considerations were key factors in black troop performance, and the Army might well have learned that lesson from its World War I experience.<sup>9</sup>

What then is the significance of noting that the military authors of the AWC study were willing to accept inherent mental inferiority over environmental factors as a causal explanation for black behavior? It establishes the impact of racism upon the minds of these field grade officers of the 1920's who, generally speaking, would become the commanders in World War II. The importance of their early learning cannot be overstated in understanding their subsequent behavior.

Despite their racial criticisms and because of manpower require-

ments, the authors of the memorandum later were willing to give blacks another opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities. However, they did stress the importance of better quality control in their training and utilization. Specifically, they suggested that 20,000 blacks be assigned to combat battalions, enough to fill an infantry division, and another 150,000 enter other units as Engineers, Quartermaster Corps, Artillery, Air Service, and Cavalry. While the War College study recommended that black soldiers should be utilized in many different capacities, it still maintained that they be organized in segregated units commanded primarily by carefully selected white officers.<sup>10</sup> The War College evaluation did suggest, however, that black officer candidates attend the same training camps as white candidates, although grouped separately. The officers believed that by giving black soldiers the same opportunities as whites to qualify for commissioned grades, they would be forced to measure up to the same standards as whites. This suggestion was adopted in World War II.<sup>11</sup>

There were later AWC studies completed during the interwar period that also had considerable impact upon subsequent War Department policy. The War Department Personnel Division examined one completed in mid-1937 and forwarded it to the Chief of Staff. This study became the basis for the Army's Protective Mobilization Plan. According to the plan, black soldiers would comprise 9 percent of the total mobilized strength, but would serve in segregated combat and noncombat units. Included was a list of organizations into which blacks could be mobilized; yet the Air Corps was not among them.<sup>12</sup>

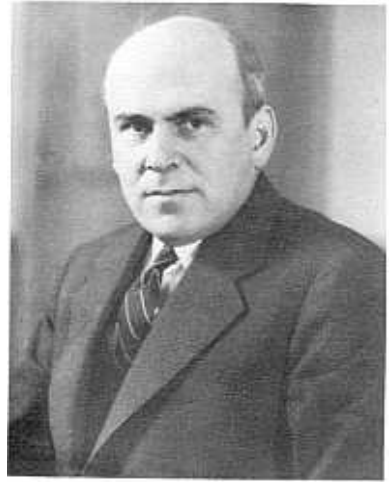
The importance the War Department attributed to these studies is illustrated by a response in a letter from Secretary of War Henry Stimson to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) which called for the integration of blacks into the armed forces:

The success of the National Defense Program can best be established by united support of the War Department plans, which have been worked out after years of study by those who have devoted their lives to these questions. Unity can be destroyed by attempting to establish a program which is contrary to the War Department's plans, by those who are not familiar either with the principles involved or the requirements of such plans.<sup>13</sup>

In addition to the AWC studies, there were other factors that influenced World War II racial policy. The War Department viewed the racial situation as a product of American society and believed that the military should avoid becoming entangled in the country's social problems. The military should uphold the status quo without offering blacks any concessions beyond those they had in civilian life. In September 1940, Gen. George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, answered an inquiry from Senator Henry C. Lodge, Jr. in which he reiterated this viewpoint. It was society that had created the conditions which made it



Secretary of War Stimson



Assistant Secretary of War McCloy

necessary for the War Department to follow a policy of segregation, and Marshall felt that it was important not to ignore those conditions. An extensive campaign to force a change could have a destructive effect on military efficiency and the military was not the proper vehicle for critical social experiments.<sup>14</sup> Segregation had been successful for a long time, and this success was interpreted from the perspective of white soldiers, who, he believed, performed better under this system. He continued this line of reasoning in a response a year later to a report from the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, Judge William Hastie.<sup>15</sup> Hastie had advocated an end to segregation which Marshall saw as "tantamount to solving a social problem which has perplexed the American people throughout the history of this nation." He maintained that "experiments within the Army in the solution of social problems are fraught with danger to efficiency, discipline, or morale."<sup>16</sup>

Although Secretary of War Stimson realized that segregation was repellent to a large number of blacks, he believed it was necessary because it was the tradition of the Army and because most whites preferred not to mix the races in the military. Later in the war, Assistant Secretary of War John McCloy and Jonathan Daniels of the White House Staff discussed segregation. They mentioned that very early in the war the President and Secretary Stimson had "decided against mixed units, that they would adhere to the traditional policy of the Army in this respect." McCloy agreed with the policy and maintained it was "an excellent idea although 'We will undoubtedly have blood on our heads for it.'" <sup>17</sup>

The General Staff echoed Marshall's sentiments when Judge Hastie again questioned segregation.<sup>18</sup> Their position is best summarized in an address given by an officer of the War Department Adjutant



General's Office late in 1941, and the speech characterizes the views of many within the department:

Charges have been made that the War Department and the Army pursue a policy of discrimination. The ramifications of this subject are manifold and must be treated with candor or not at all. The Army did not create the problem. The Army is made up of individual citizens of the United States who have pronounced ideas with respect to the Negro just as they have individual ideas with respect to other matters in their daily walk of life. Military order, fiat or dicta, will not change these viewpoints. The Army then cannot be made the means of engendering conflict among the mass of the people because of a stand with respect to Negroes which is not compatible with the position attained by the Negro in civilian life. This principle must necessarily govern the Army not only with this subject of contention, but with respect to other dogma be it religious, political or economic. The Army is not a sociological laboratory; to be effective it must be organized and trained according to principles which will insure success. Experiments to meet the wishes and demands of the champions of every race and creed for the solution of their problems are a danger to efficiency, discipline and morale and would result in ultimate defeat. Out of these fundamental thoughts have been evolved broad principles relating to the employment of all persons in the military service.<sup>19</sup>

Another attitude prevalent among military leaders as General Marshall and Gen. Henry H. Arnold, Chief of the Air Corps, was pragmatism, i.e., adopting the most expeditious plan to get the job done. Once the United States declared war on the Axis powers, the generals concerned themselves with victory and were interested only in strategic military considerations and not in ideology or social problems. In terms of individuals, the most economic utilization of manpower and military necessity were critical to the exclusion of less pressing issues. In the fulfillment of their mission, military leaders tended at the start of the war to curtail those activities for the advancement of the black race that interfered with the systematic administration of the Army or that jeopardized the war effort. Thus Secretary of War Stimson was disinterested in the 1941 March on Washington Movement. He called it "one of those rather harassing interruptions with the main business with which the Secretary of War ought to be engaged—namely, in preparing the Army for defense."<sup>20</sup>

The plans and studies of the interwar period, the attitude of the nation, and the attitude of military leaders all accepted segregation as the most efficient approach for the utilization of blacks. Under the "separate-but-equal" doctrine sanctioned by the Supreme Court in *Plessy vs. Ferguson* (1896), segregation was legal and would not be discriminatory if segregated facilities and training were equal. Throughout the war, then, the War Department emphatically maintained that segregation was not discriminatory, and was indeed the most efficient way to

run the Army. This key argument for maintaining segregation appears in a memorandum which states that the AAF "can do a better job with less trouble by segregation than they can by intermingling the races with the problems which such intermingling are bound to cause." Two letters in 1944 evidence the War Department's argument that segregation was not discriminatory. First, Secretary Henry Stimson wrote to Congressman Louis Ludlow that "all our military personnel is distributed and employed solely in conference with military considerations which, of course, are entirely unrelated to racial derivation." Secondly, Assistant Secretary John McCloy wrote to Roy Wilkins of the NAACP that "the Army has labored most diligently in an effort to avoid discrimination against any individual or group, and all its personnel policies have been set for the past many years without regard to race or creed." Both remarks seemed to ignore the basic question of racial inequity in a segregated military. Brig. Gen. Noel Parrish, who had been commander of the all-black flying training base at Tuskegee, notes that top military leaders, such as General Arnold, simply did not wish to get involved in the race controversy because of the potential difficulties and violence that might result, hindering the war effort.<sup>21</sup>

We have seen thus far in assessing War Department policy before and during World War II, that the racial beliefs of American society and of the AWC studies had a great impact. The War Department saw itself as a product of American society, therefore, Army racial policy should reflect civilian practice and black soldiers should receive no more than they had received in civilian life. Since the majority of the American populace approved segregation, the War Department could not accept integration within the Army. The black was perceived by most white Americans as inferior; thus, the Army should not depart radically from that which the majority accepted. The Army saw itself as a servant of the state, not as an instrument of social change. It should operate in terms of military needs and efficiency, and its leaders strongly believed that military effectiveness and morale dictated segregation.

## II

After the Civil War, Congress authorized blacks to join only four black Army regiments: the 9th and 10th Cavalry and the 24th and 25th Infantry. These units were normally at full strength, and the re-enlistment rate among its men was very high.<sup>22</sup> By the end of the 1930's, however, the black community began to devote greater attention to the lack of opportunity in the military services. The military was a source of employment for many who continued to feel the effects of the great depression. The pay, food, and clothing provided by the military offered them an exceptional opportunity. To be denied the right to serve was interpreted by blacks as an example of economic discrimination.<sup>23</sup>

Another issue was taxation without representation, a favorite theme played up by the *Pittsburgh Courier*, a weekly black newspaper. Blacks paid taxes that supported the Armed Forces; yet, the military

denied them an equal opportunity to serve. As tax-paying citizens, then, they were not given their due within the American system.<sup>24</sup> Also blacks became skeptical over the issue of having to "prove themselves" by fighting for the right to serve. They believed that they had clearly demonstrated their ability in other American wars.<sup>25</sup>

Another sensitive issue among blacks was the belief that segregation implied inequality. Regardless of how honest or sincere the War Department might have been in insisting that segregation was the best course, the department failed to see what it really meant for the American black, i.e., second-class citizenship in a subservient role. Gunnar Myrdal, the Swedish sociologist who studied the American race problem, concluded that the basis of American segregation was the anti-amalgamation doctrine—the idea that crossbreeding was considered undesirable. As a result, a caste line was drawn between whites and blacks. The idea was intolerable, for it implied that blacks were inferior to whites and that miscegenation was a threat to white "racial purity."<sup>26</sup> Equally frustrating was the hypocrisy of the Army segregation policy maintained during a war fought for the preservation of democracy, as blacks viewed segregation as the very antithesis of the American democratic system.<sup>27</sup>

Especially irritating for blacks was the apparent contradiction between the American Creed and the reality of American racial practices. Myrdal focused on this paradox, which he called "an American Dilemma." The American Creed, he believed, was composed of the ideals of "the essential dignity of the individual human being, of the fundamental equality of all men, and of certain inalienable rights to freedom, justice, and a fair opportunity."<sup>28</sup> This Creed called for equal treatment for all, but in the military and in society blacks were to know "their place," and the reality of American life was a racial system working against them. White Americans told them that military service was the real test of patriotism, but blacks were denied the full opportunity to exercise that privilege.<sup>29</sup> Once the United States entered the war against fascism, this contradiction became more obvious, since World War II stood for the preservation of democracy against totalitarian and racist Axis powers. Blacks were unrelenting in pointing out that the Four Freedoms and Jim Crow ideology were contradictory, and that black Americans were fighting abroad for a democratic ideal that did not exist at home.<sup>30</sup>

Disrespect for blacks in uniform became another source of difficulty for black servicemen. When large numbers entered the Army, many soon encountered racial problems in and around their camps, obvious cases of discrimination and prejudice. But a further issue was herein implied—disrespect for the uniform of the United States military. All military men were regularly required to wear their uniforms and in American society the uniform normally commanded respect. However, numerous discriminatory acts were perpetrated against black soldiers and these were serious injustices because the military

institution was for them one of the few symbols of what America represented.<sup>31</sup>

There was concern that because of constant black agitation for equal treatment and pressure on the War Department, many whites and even some blacks would come to believe that the more militant were anxious for an Axis victory. As a result, some American war propaganda was directed at blacks and correspondence sent to black leaders emphasized that they had much to lose if the Axis won the war. While most remained vigorous in their support of the war effort, they were determined to take advantage of the situation to improve their own position.<sup>32</sup> Also, they believed that their full integration into the American military structure would be the most efficient way to defeat the Axis powers.<sup>33</sup>

To exploit black hostility toward some precepts of American society, several left-wing groups made definite appeals for black support, with little success. The Communist Party perhaps made the most serious effort to influence black malcontents, claiming some as important party officials, including James W. Ford, the Party's perennial candidate for the vice-presidency. There were two primary reasons for the Communists' failure to attract black recruits. First, blacks remained loyal to America and rejected those ideas which appeared to be un-American; and second, the Party's position was ambiguous, wavering according to the changing views of the Soviet Union. For example, the Party reversed its position against the United States entering the war after the June 1941 German attack on Russia.<sup>34</sup> Later in the war, Ben Davis, Jr., a black Communist leader, reiterated the prewar approach, proclaiming that those who called the war a "white man's war" were aiding fascism. The struggle for black rights was necessary, but he implied that victory against Germany was more important.<sup>35</sup>

An important theme which grew out of the early war period was the slogan: *Double V*. This rallying symbol, popularized in early 1942 by the *Courier*, stood for victory against fascism abroad and racism at home. The idea had been expressed earlier and at the 8 December 1941 NAACP Board of Directors meeting, a consensus had decided that:

Though thirteen million American Negroes have more often than not been denied democracy, they are American citizens and will as in every war give unqualified support to the protection of their country. At the same time we shall not abate one iota our struggle for full citizenship rights here in the United States. We will fight but we demand the right to fight as equals in every branch of military, naval and aviation service.<sup>36</sup>

Throughout the war, black people, applying the concept of the *Double V*, struggled to remove the contradiction between the claims of American democratic ideology and the racial inequalities evident in American life. The attitude of the black community toward the war

was based on two considerations: as loyal Americans, they were patriotic and loyal, and expressed their support for the military buildup and war effort; but, at the same time, they were embittered over their treatment by the military and their inferior social status within American society. For example, they interpreted their placement in service units as a denial of their right to serve and fight. Black support of the *Double V* idea was neither a rejection of the draft and of participation in the war nor an acceptance of Nazi ideology. Although some whites and blacks believed that agitation for rights and privileges might hinder rather than help the war effort, the majority of black leaders did not relax their protest activities for the duration of the war.<sup>37</sup>

In analyzing these issues it is obvious that by 1942 a black consciousness had evolved and was an important factor in pressuring for social change. Throughout the previous decade, black organizations pressed for a greater role in the national defense, directing their efforts primarily at restrictions in the Army and Navy and the exclusion policy of the Air Corps. The Pittsburgh *Courier* provided early leadership in that movement; in February 1938, it launched with much fanfare a crusade to open up all units within the United States military to blacks.<sup>38</sup> Almost every issue in the *Courier* during that year contained some comment on the campaign and the discriminatory practices of the military. Support was soon generated in other newspapers, by the NAACP, and by numerous individuals and organizations from around the nation. In April all participating organizations formed a steering committee to consolidate their efforts for equality in the military.<sup>39</sup>

Whenever Congress proposed legislation on the role of blacks in the military, the *Courier* took assertive action to influence the debate. It wrote to members of Congress, appealed to its readers to do the same, and published letters in its various issues from Congressmen demonstrating support. The *Courier* made the Air Corps its special target and demanded an all-black infantry division to give blacks an opportunity to prove their capabilities.<sup>40</sup>

In the meantime, *Crisis*, the NAACP publication, and *Opportunity*, the voice of the National Urban League, also took strong stands. *Crisis* noted that there was a similarity between the plight of Jews in Germany and blacks in America; another editorial pointed out that "Negro Americans are not very enthusiastic about going to war for the Stars and Stripes."<sup>41</sup> *Opportunity* supported the *Courier*'s 1938 campaign and called on the military to give them an opportunity to serve in every branch of the service and to obtain every rank they are capable of attaining.<sup>42</sup>

As the War Department announced that new openings would be made available to blacks, the *Courier*, in particular, interpreted each victory as a direct result of its long fight,<sup>43</sup> although it was not impressed with token successes. For example, the newspaper viewed the establishment of the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP), a train-

ing agency for civilian pilots who would eventually serve in the military, as a program for whites and not as a sign that the Air Corps would accept blacks into its ranks.

The naming of five Negro schools where students may receive training as air pilots and mechanics is a step in the right direction but only a short step. No Negroes have been admitted to the Army Air Corps and there is not the slightest indication at this time that any will be.<sup>44</sup>

During the early 1940's, the black community continued its appeal to the Federal Government and War Department to improve the plight of blacks in the military. In May 1940, the *Courier* launched the Committee on Participation of Negroes in the National Defense Program with Howard University Professor Rayford W. Logan and the noted lawyer Charles H. Houston as key leaders. Although the newspaper brought together several national organizations, it did not receive the support of the NAACP because the *Courier* was willing to accept the "practicality of separate divisions" while the NAACP was not. The Committee performed a variety of functions including representation before Congressional committees, appeals to Congress and the President, conferences with military men, and pressure on the Democratic and Republican national conventions to influence their campaign.<sup>45</sup>

In the fall of 1940, the black community and the War Department confronted each other, bringing about significant results. Because of a request by Walter White of the NAACP to Mrs. Roosevelt, on 27 September 1940 the President, his Assistant Secretary of War, Robert P. Patterson, and the Secretary of the Navy, Frank Knox, met with three representatives of the black community: Walter White, A. Philip Randolph, and T. Arnold Hill. One of the demands the black leaders presented to the President was:

Immediate designation of centers where Negroes may be trained for work in all branches of the aviation corps. It is not enough to train pilots alone, but in addition navigators, bombers [sic], gunners, radiomen, and mechanics must be trained in order to facilitate full Negro participation in the air service.<sup>46</sup>

Secretary Stimson, who did not attend, interpreted the meeting as satisfying black politicians "who are trying to get the Army committed to colored officers and various other things which they ought not to do." Having observed World War I, he did not believe that blacks could become good officers as "leadership is not imbedded in the negro race yet."<sup>47</sup> At the meeting, President Roosevelt made a few promises, but nothing concrete evolved. However, when the War Department issued a policy statement in October, Roosevelt's press secretary Stephen Early insinuated that the three black leaders had agreed to the department's statement, including the provision for segregation. This caused consternation within the black community and led subsequently to a letter from the President to the black leaders regretting the misinterpretation.<sup>48</sup>



Judge Hastie



General Davis

The October policy statement was particularly significant, for it was the first official War Department announcement regarding the question of black utilization. It stated that they would be utilized on a "fair and equitable basis," in proportion to the black population of the country, and in each major branch of the service. Blacks were being given training as pilots, mechanics, and technical specialists, and that training would be accelerated; and as soon as the necessary personnel had been trained, black aviation units would be formed. The official stand on segregation was reiterated: "the policy of the War Department



Walter White

is not to intermingle colored and white enlisted personnel in the same regimental organization.”<sup>49</sup> The letter became official policy for the duration of the war, particularly the statement which banned racial intermingling. However, it was misleading. Blacks were receiving aviation training, but the War Department implied that it was conducting the training when, in fact, civilian organizations were furnishing the education facilities.

Black pressure on the government, on the military, and on both major political parties increased as the November 1940 election approached. An extensive letter writing campaign followed, and the Office of the Adjutant General complained that the letters were “agitating the question.”<sup>50</sup> Secretary Stimson believed that blacks were “taking advantage of this period just before [the] election to try to get everything they can in the way of recognition from the Army.” He did not see that activity as being in the best interest of sound national defense.<sup>51</sup> The Democrats were sufficiently concerned about the black vote to appoint three blacks to important positions. Col. Benjamin O. Davis became the first of his race to achieve the rank of Brigadier General; Judge William Hastie was appointed Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War; and Major Campbell C. Johnson was appointed Executive Assistant to the Director of Selective Service.<sup>52</sup> All three appointments attracted much attention in the black press, making the headlines in the Saturday, November 2d editions preceding election day. Generally, there was enthusiastic praise from the black community.<sup>53</sup>

Following the election, black community pressure did not slacken, but intensified. The same month, the NAACP offered legal aid to anyone who had been refused entrance into the Army or Navy because of color, and it conducted a letter-writing campaign to get the Air Corps to accept blacks.<sup>54</sup> The *Courier* continued its campaign, asking its readers to put pressure on the corps. The Pittsburgh paper momentarily thought it had won the struggle when the President’s secretary announced that blacks would be trained for aviation service by the Civilian Aeronautics Authority (CAA) in cooperation with the Army, but a few weeks later, the *Courier* noted that “the promises of army air training are on paper, and rather vague at that.” At the end of the year, an editorial stressed the overall difficulty in recruiting pilots and succinctly pointed out that the Air Corps “would rather be short than democratic” as that service still excluded blacks.<sup>55</sup>

In November Dr. Malcolm S. McLean on the occasion of his inauguration as the Institute’s sixth president, convened a 2-day conference at Hampton Institute to discuss the participation of blacks in national defense. The meeting brought together nationally prominent black and white leaders, and Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt and Mrs. Edith Willkie were among the sponsors of the affair. This assembly concluded that the black had “not been accorded equitable participation in any branch of the arms and services.” Specifically, the AAF had not yet implemented





A. Philip Randolph



(l. to r.) President Roosevelt, Alabama Governor Chauncey Sparks,  
Maj. Gen. B. K. Yount and Maj. Gen. Ralph Royce tour Maxwell Field, April 1943.

Public Law 18 (3 April 1939) which authorized an air school to prepare blacks for military service, and that only a few had been appointed to West Point.<sup>56</sup>

But results were attained in January 1941, when the War Department announced the formation of an all-black Pursuit Squadron and the training of black pilots at Tuskegee. However, the NAACP disliked the idea of segregated training, although it was a step in the right direction, and noted that we "can be forced to accept it, but we can never agree to it."<sup>57</sup> The National Airmen's Association, a black organization, was more vocal in its opposition to segregated training. At its January meeting in Chicago, it passed a resolution condemning the establishment of the all-black squadron, stating that they would rather be "excluded than segregated."<sup>58</sup>

The NAACP continued its surveillance of the Air Corps. It offered legal assistance to anyone interested in pursuing the matter through the courts; its branches wrote to the War Department protesting conditions; and in early 1941, it encouraged blacks to enter the Air Corps and asked those who were interested to write to the NAACP office. By 3 April 1941, 264 replies were received and in May Walter White sent each candidate an application form. In attempting further to break down the segregated training at Tuskegee, White asked the applicants to request that training be given at the training school nearest their residence.<sup>59</sup>

In spite of the success in opening up the Air Corps to blacks, the NAACP and many black organizations were in a dilemma concerning



Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt during a 1943 Pacific area tour.

Tuskegee. Although they were strongly against any kind of segregation, especially in the Army, they had to admit that Tuskegee was, nonetheless, an opportunity to fly in the Air Corps. But their opposition to segregation remained primary, and Walter White and the NAACP Board of Directors were indignant over an article that appeared in the New York *Amsterdam Star-News* (31 January 1942) written by Mr. William Pickens, a member of the NAACP executive staff. Pickens portrayed Tuskegee as an opportunity for blacks to prove themselves, thus fighting segregation by achievement. The Board felt that Pickens "advocated segregation in the Army, taking a position directly opposite to that maintained by the Association." Pickens replied that it was imperative that they win the war because a fascist victory could impose a more oppressive form of segregation. He opposed segregation, but at the same time was realistic about the war mission.<sup>60</sup>

The conflict in 1941 between the black community and the Federal Government focused on the proposed March on Washington. Although the March on Washington Movement (MOWM) did not directly bring about improved racial conditions in the military, it was important for the pressure that was brought to bear on the government. NAACP and National Urban League officials participated in the movement, although the two organizations were reluctant to give it official support. A survey of their journals shows that between January and July no attention was given to the MOWM. In addition, the *Courier* did not lend support because it believed that mass action would be unsuccessful and would embarrass blacks.<sup>61</sup>

Organized by A. Philip Randolph, the purpose of the MOWM was to have 100,000 supporters march in Washington on 1 July 1941 to show their support for the campaign for equal rights in the defense effort. MOWM's first important meeting was held on June 13th in New York City. Mayor La Guardia and Mrs. Roosevelt, present at the gathering, opposed the march, while Randolph and White favored the idea. Mrs. Roosevelt urged the black leaders to halt their plans, promising to speak to the President, but Randolph was adamant in continuing preparations. White and Randolph then met with the President on June 18th when Roosevelt appealed for an end to their plans, but again the black leaders refused. In response to a meeting on the 24th, Roosevelt issued the following day Executive Order 8802 establishing the President's Committee on Fair Employment Practices (FEPC). With their goal achieved, the black leaders cancelled the July 1st march. Herbert Garfinkel, a sociologist writing on the MOWM, portrayed this meeting with Roosevelt as a poker game with the threat to have 100,000 supporters march a bluff. Other historians hold that the President emerged in a stronger position, implying the FEPC was a shrewd move to pacify some militant minorities, for during the course of the war the FEPC was never an effective organization. Whatever the results, the movement did demonstrate that blacks were willing to be assertive to insure

their full participation in the national defense effort and that they had the political power to reach the President with their demands. It is apparent that black leaders did have considerable political punch.<sup>62</sup>

A further example of black pressure, a month after the outbreak of the war, occurred when 70 representatives of 18 national black organizations met in New York to discuss the question: "How Negroes can contribute their efforts to winning the war and at the same time continue to fight for their rights as American citizens." By a 2 to 1 majority, they supported a resolution by Judge Hastie that the American black generally was not "whole-heartedly, unselfishly, all-out in support of the present war effort."<sup>63</sup>

That same month *Crisis* carried two news accounts of the attitude of the NAACP toward the war which were in marked contrast to the "Closed Ranks" editorial of W.E.B. DuBois, composed during World War I. DuBois had written in 1918 that during the war blacks should "forget our special grievances and close our ranks shoulder to shoulder with our own white fellow citizens and the allied nations." He added that they make "no ordinary sacrifice, but we make it gladly and willingly with our eyes lifted to the hills."<sup>64</sup> On the other hand, a January 1942 *Crisis* editorial was titled: "Now is the Time Not to Be Silent." The editors declared that they had to speak out in the truest patriotism, "single to the peace which must be won." But, they took a *Double V* approach in noting that although blacks were loyal and patriotic and would devote their fullest support to the war effort, the fight against Hitlerism began in Washington. Thus, the people of America had to gird and sacrifice "for freedom for everyone, everywhere, not merely for those under the Hitler heel. . . . A Jim Crow army cannot fight for a free world." Later in that same issue there were excerpts from an NAACP December press release, referring to World War I when blacks were taken to a mountain-top and given promises but after the war met the KKK and lynchings: "declarations of war do not lessen the obligation to preserve and extend civil liberties here while the fight is being made to restore freedom from dictatorship abroad."<sup>65</sup>

It is clear that the pervasiveness of traditional racial ideas held by the majority of the American public and solidified by time and practice made the black struggle for equal rights arduous and lengthy. Blacks expressed in different ways the idea that they would not simply accept things as they were and were willing to fight for their right to participate in the military establishment. The War Department gradually altered its policies, accepting black soldiers and improving their treatment, as will be shown in the following chapters. The black community organized to meet this challenge and to fight for its rights—and when participation was achieved, it continued to fight for fair treatment.<sup>66</sup>

## Chapter II

### THE ARMY AIR FORCES: EARLY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

During the period of the military buildup leading to World War II, leaders of the Army Air Forces (AAF) hesitated to utilize blacks. Air Corps officers believed that they were incapable of performing well in flying roles, and since military efficiency overshadowed all other considerations, the utilization of black men was deemed impractical. Primarily because the War Department received constant pressure from black organizations and individuals and in turn the department pressed the Air Corps, were AAF units opened up to blacks. This chapter will illustrate how coercion originating with civilian sources and from the War Department eroded the AAF exclusionist policy. Once the AAF accepted blacks into its ranks, local communities and military leaders protested having black soldiers stationed in their areas. But as a result of War Department pressure, the AAF was forced to deploy them to all of its stateside bases and to many overseas sites. Institutional and personal discrimination, however, persisted and blacks did not obtain fair and equitable treatment in the AAF. In addition, this chapter will examine the integrated AAF Officer Candidate School established at Miami Beach, Florida.

#### I

During the First World War, official Air Service policy toward blacks maintained that since "at present time no colored areo [sic] squadrons are being formed," and it was impossible to mix blacks with whites, no black recruits could be accepted into the Air Service. The service informed qualified blacks attempting to enlist that "applications from colored men for this branch of the service cannot be considered for that reason." And they were told that they could apply later if the Air Service decided to form black flying squadrons.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the 1920's and 1930's such reasoning prevailed. In 1922, the Chief of the Training and War Plans Division noted that although "there is no restriction placed by law or regulation on the race of applicants for appointment as flying cadet," it was impossible to form black or integrated units. There was therefore "no justification in training negro cadets." A further measure, similar to the post-Civil War "grandfather clause,"\*

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\* The "grandfather clause" was a Southern tactic to deny the vote to blacks. In effect it maintained that if a man did not vote in the election of 1860, neither he nor his offspring could vote thereafter.

complicated the application procedure. During the interwar period, the Air Service Reserve Corps only accepted those officers with previous Air Service training. Since the Air Service had not granted commissions to or trained blacks, the latter could not be accepted for the Reserve Corps. This requirement is understandable when one considers the reduced needs for a peacetime force, but it was a definite barrier to blacks.<sup>2</sup>

In the 1930's, rejection of blacks by the Air Corps remained an institutionalized practice as black applicants time after time received the standard reply that "there are no organizations in the Army A.C. made up of colored men and none are contemplated." Therefore, there are "no colored soldiers in the Army Air Corps."<sup>3</sup> One qualified young black applicant who had attempted to enter the Air Corps was Cadet B. O. Davis, Jr. of the United States Military Academy (USMA). The Acting Chief of the Air Corps furnished the response that since there were no black units within the Air Corps, were he to attend the Air Corps Training Center after graduation, "there would be no unit to which to assign this officer." He also added that the disapproval of Davis' application "might be considered a precedent in like cases until such time as the War Department sees fit to constitute colored flying units in the Army."<sup>4</sup> The War Department supported the Air Corps' position. Secretary of War Harry H. Woodring, in a memorandum to the President, stated that there were no black Air Corps Reserve officers and no black Air Corps units, and therefore "there has been no necessity to accept negro applicants at Air Corps schools."<sup>5</sup>

Until 1939 the Air Corps had succeeded in excluding blacks.<sup>6</sup> However, black and white leaders and organizations were no longer willing to accept such racist practices and challenged this exclusion policy. Intensive political pressure was applied upon Congress, the President, Secretary of War, and War Department, and through them, upon the Air Corps. Gradually the Air Corps altered its policies, backed down and admitted blacks.

In 1939 and 1940, Congress enacted three laws which were to have a significant impact upon blacks and the AAF. On 27 June 1939 the Civilian Pilot Training Act established the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP), directed by the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA), with the purpose of creating a reserve of civilian pilots to be called in the event of a war emergency. Blacks participated in this program through units established at six black colleges: Tuskegee, Howard, Hampton, North Carolina A&T, Delaware State, and West Virginia State, at two noncollege institutions created in the Chicago area, and at other schools, primarily in the North, which accepted them. This program proved to be an effective source of white and black manpower for the AAF.<sup>7</sup>

Far more controversial was Public Law 18 (PL 18), approved on 3 April 1939. The law provided for the large-scale expansion of the Air Corps. One section stipulated that civilian schools would be contracted

to conduct primary flying training for the AAF, and at least one of these schools had to be designated for the training of blacks. Since these contract schools were to provide pilots for the military, blacks assumed that they would enter the AAF, although the law did not explicitly state this. However, the AAF continued to exclude them for the next 2 years, and military leaders resisted and even refused to acknowledge the full implications of the law. Although the AAF was enthusiastic about the expansion ordered by PL 18, it vehemently opposed black training. Air Corps leaders believed that the provision was "superfluous" and that it might result in political pressure being directed against the Secretary of War to admit blacks into the Air Corps. In openly ignoring this stipulation, AAF officials were certain that the War Department would not press the issue because the "War Department did everything possible to prevent the insertion of this proviso, prior to the enactment of this law, and were unsuccessful." The AAF treated the matter with levity and its Plans Division tried to circumvent the law by noting that while one school must be designated for blacks, no one actually had to be trained.<sup>8</sup>

Finally in 1940, responding to pressures from black and civil rights groups, Congress inserted in the Selective Training and Service Act of that year two provisions which specified that there would be no discrimination because of "race and color." These stipulations applied to the opportunity to volunteer for induction into the military and to selection and training. The effect was to require the War Department to accept blacks in numerical proportion to whites.<sup>9</sup>

However, the Air Corps continued to resist the pressure placed upon it to accept blacks. In mid-1940, the Operations Division of the War Department reevaluated current departmental policies regarding black mobilization planning and peacetime augmentation. The division notified the Air Corps in a memorandum that if the latter did not wish to utilize blacks, it had to provide valid reasons. In addition, the memorandum drew attention to a complaint made by Rayford Logan before a Congressional Committee on 14 May 1940. Logan represented the *Courier's* Committee on the Participation of Negroes in the National Defense Program, and the Operations Division stressed that he represented 5 million black people. Logan testified that "the amendment adopted authorizing training of Negro pilots had not been complied with by the War Department." Blacks had applied for admission to the Glenview, Illinois school established by PL 18, but were told "that no separate units had been set up to accommodate Negroes for training, and therefore, it would be impossible to accept people of that race."<sup>10</sup>

In reply to the Operations memorandum, Gen. Henry Arnold, Chief of the Air Corps, reiterated the argument that had been Air Corps policy for the preceding 20 years—that since there were no black units in the Air Corps, there was no way to utilize them. Furthermore, he demonstrated genuine racial bias by stating that "negro pilots cannot be used in our present Air Corps units since this would result in

having negro officers serving over white enlisted men," creating "an impossible social problem." As for technical training, Gen. Arnold adopted a stalling tactic by noting that it would take several years to train black enlisted men to become competent aircraft mechanics.<sup>11</sup>

The Operations Division supported the Air Corps' position and incorporated Arnold's reply into its own detailed six-page report to the Chief of Staff. The report pointed out that "the training of white and negro pilots in the same unit is out of the question," and retorted that the Glenview, Illinois School of Aeronautics did fulfill the requirement for black pilot training as stipulated in PL 18. The division also explained that the reason the Illinois unit was called the "Demonstration Unit" by the CAA was because its purpose was to "demonstrate the adaptability of the negro to flying instruction." The report echoed the Air Corps' concern that 35 of 125 black civilian pilots had allowed their licenses to expire and this evidenced a definite lack of enthusiasm. It continued with a point by point rebuttal of Logan's testimony before the Senate Appropriations Sub-Committee. It then discussed two possibilities for training blacks, were they to be accepted into the Air Corps. One suggestion was for the expansion of an existing facility, but with "the segregation of white and colored classes both in ground and air training;" and the second proposal called for "the creation of a special Air Corps school where such training could be given." Both proposals, however, had their shortcomings and could cause complications in social and recreational activities, since the schools would be located in the South. The second would be expensive, since the few applicants enrolled would make the cost per student ratio quite high. The alternate suggestion was also impractical because there was a shortage of training bases to meet current expansion needs. Ironically, if a black were trained as a pilot there were as yet no separate black units he could join and it was still contrary to War Department policy racially to mix units. Such circular logic had dominated military thinking ever since the question to use blacks in the Army had originated. Furthermore, the Operations Division expressed concern for Air Corps effectiveness in having white units work side by side with black units. There was fear that racial proximity might destroy morale, since a very close association between pilots and mechanics was necessary. Moreover, by including a page of negative comments about black officers serving in World War I, this memorandum implied that they would not make good officers. And, finally, Operations noted that "there are no negro pilots in the armed services of any of the world powers." <sup>12</sup>

The report contained no positive statements for the use of blacks in the AAF, and recommended that there be no change in existing War Department policies regarding black pilot training; other divisions—Personnel, and Intelligence—and the Secretary of War concurred. The report apparently reflected the thinking of top officials in the War Department and clearly established the attitude of the Air Corps.<sup>13</sup>

But, by the end of 1940, continued popular pressure and Army



officials forced the Air Corps to develop suitable plans for the utilization of blacks and to accept its share of the Selective Service quota. The Selective Service Act required that many blacks enter the military, and the Army Ground Forces and Services of Supply insisted that the only fair method of distribution was to spread blacks equitably throughout the Army; otherwise the nonflying units would carry an unfair burden.

Therefore, the AAF planned for the establishment of a black flying unit. Since there would be a limited number of enlisted blacks needing training, the Air Corps did not want to create a special school that would draw from its short supply of qualified instructors and supervisors. So, the Corps adopted the expedient to organize technical training at an established facility, and Chanute Field, Illinois was chosen.<sup>14</sup> Tuskegee was selected as the site for pilot training, and the Air Corps notified Training Command in early November to prepare for its formation and organization. However, this new training requirement became an added burden for the taxed Air Corps, even though there was a small number of men to be trained. Tuskegee would be "fully equivalent, with respect to the character of living conditions, facilities, equipment and training, to that provided for white personnel under similar conditions."<sup>15</sup>

Brig. Gen. W. R. Weaver, Commanding General of the Southeastern Air Corps Training Center at Maxwell Field, to which Tuskegee was attached, proceeded with the AAF plan. Black pilots were to be trained under the supervision of 11 white officers and 15 white noncommissioned officers until such time that a sufficient number of black airmen could be trained to replace them. However, in accordance with Army Regulation 95-60, the Commanding Officer at Tuskegee had to be white. And to profit from past experience, it was also believed that the commander of the black 99th Squadron should be a white officer for an indefinite period of time. The AAF plan provided for the training of only 45 black officers during the first year of operation. General Weaver wanted a "safe and satisfactory air field," and advised Mr. G. L. Washington, Director of Aviation Training at Tuskegee, that "the negro population deserved a successful experiment in flying training; the success of negro youth in the Air Corps hinged upon the fate of the Tuskegee project."<sup>16</sup>

On 16 January 1941, the War Department announced the formation of the 99th Pursuit Squadron, a black flying unit, and of the Tuskegee training program. This announcement came a day after Howard University student Yancey Williams filed suit against War Department officials to force them to consider his application for the Air Corps. The suit was apparently withdrawn following public notice on the 16th.<sup>17</sup>

Why did the Air Corps decide on a pursuit flying mission for blacks? The decision appears to have been based on racial factors. A

pilot sitting in a single-seat fighter aircraft necessitated a limited black training program. Had bombers been selected, there would have been the additional need for bombardiers, navigators, and gunners, placing a greater strain on the segregated facilities. Another possible explanation was that pursuit flying provided the most basic manner by which to introduce blacks to flying, for as they gained more experience, they could proceed to more complex aircraft.<sup>18</sup>

Judge William Hastie later offered two other explanations for the pursuit flying decision. He maintained that pursuit flying was the most difficult type of combat flying and perhaps some officers had selected it, hoping the black man would fail, while other officers may have felt that success in that type of flying would demonstrate that he was capable of any type of combat flying.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the admission of blacks into flying training, Air Corps leaders were reluctant throughout the war to expand their training program and combat role. Because of this resistance, the entire flying program for black pilots suffered, the result of which was a sluggish program that progressed slowly through each phase until pressure forced the AAF to take some action. This hesitation is evident from correspondence and memoranda. In mid-1942, Judge Hastie suggested including black colleges and universities in the new Enlisted Reserve Program to create a pool of aviation cadets. In a discussion with the Directorate of Individual Training, the Air Staff concluded that blacks did not do well in World War I under their own officers "due to the emotional characteristics of the race." And so it was up to the 99th and 100th Pursuit Squadrons to prove the black's ability in the Air Corps. "A test by fire," those responsible for training contended, "is the only one of recordable worth."<sup>20</sup>

## II

Although publicity surrounding the formation of Tuskegee and the pursuit squadron occupied much space in the press and the attention of many both in and out of the AAF, the vast majority of blacks were in support rather than in flying units. Most served in units such as Aviation Squadrons, Air Base Defense Units, Quartermaster Battalions, Ordnance Companies, Transportation Companies, and others.

Throughout 1941, as the War Department prepared to accept blacks, the AAF made plans to receive its full quota<sup>21</sup> and by mid-1941 it included 2,250 black men. To facilitate the task of absorbing these new recruits, the AAF organized them into 9 Aviation Squadrons of 250 men each to be stationed at various bases throughout the South—Langley Field, Virginia; Maxwell Field, Alabama; Daniels Field and Savannah, Georgia; Barksdale Field and Camp Livingston, Louisiana; Dale Mabry and MacDill Fields, Florida; and Jackson, Mississippi.<sup>22</sup> These squadrons would perform routine duties at the fields, including labor tasks requiring maintenance, truck driving, interior guard duty,

assistance around hangar areas, airdrome maintenance, and other housekeeping and labor chores.<sup>23</sup> Three considerations clearly affected the decision to utilize blacks in specially created units. First, they could not be mixed with white soldiers, as that would have been against War Department policy and counter to the racial attitudes of military leaders. Second, blacks had not proven themselves to be capable of performing technical jobs. Finally, the main reason emphasized throughout the war was that blacks did not do well on the Army General Classification Test (AGCT), which the Army utilized in determining the skill potential and educational background of incoming civilians. The test was not referred to as a measure of intelligence but was designed to measure learnability and trainability for military duties. The key factor was the "individual's fund of knowledge and his ability to use it."<sup>24</sup> Based on the test results, inductees were placed in one of five categories. The scores were arranged so that 100 represented the expected median for all those tested, and while the average score for whites accepted into the AAF was approximately 107, for blacks it was about 79.<sup>25</sup> Reflected in these scores were the social, educational, and economic handicaps under which blacks lived in America, the limited opportunities they had to gain experience in technical areas, and the disparity between educational opportunities offered to whites and blacks.<sup>26</sup> Although blacks had requested technical training, the AAF often refused their applications, since it did not believe that training those with low scores was the most prudent use of manpower. The AAF did not consider itself to be the proper agency to compensate blacks for their environmental handicaps and deficiencies, nor did it believe war to be the most opportune time for such a task.<sup>27</sup>

By late 1941, the Air Corps had programmed a force of 9 squadrons with 250 men each. But following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Selective Service quotas required all branches of the War Department to accept greater numbers of blacks. The Navy was not required to accept Selective Service recruits—neither white nor black, while the Army was obligated to accept even more than its proportional share. Secretary of War Henry Stimson believed that the Navy acted like a "spoiled child" in this matter, and he did not like the "misbehavior" of the President's "pet arm"; however, there was little the Secretary could do.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, the AAF had to plan for each base to accept black personnel from one Aviation Squadron and approximately 150 men from the Arms and Services (ASWAAF). The latter was a rather random official designation for a variety of units which operated with AAF units but were on loan from other arms and services. The ASWAAF averaged between 20 and 25 percent of the total strength of the AAF during most of the war and were generally trained by the Army Service Forces (ASF). The ASWAAF too had to maintain a proper ratio of blacks.<sup>29</sup> But in January 1942, the War Department notified the AAF that its quota of blacks would be 53,299 by the end of the year, rejecting the AAF proposal for a 44,207 maximum. With the addition of the 24,293 men from the ASWAAF, the AAF had a total then of 77,592 blacks, excluding proposed future increases. In an effort to facilitate

the incorporation of this influx of men, the War Department informed the AAF that black Air Base Defense Units could be formed where necessary. These units would be responsible "for the protection of the Air Bases against riots and the possibility of parachute troops and air raids." <sup>30</sup>

The AAF forwarded its utilization plan to the Chief of Staff in April. Generally, the AAF maintained that it should determine the number and utilization of blacks. It recommended that "allotments of colored personnel to the Army Air Forces be limited to that which may be efficiently employed in Army Air Force units." If the AAF disregarded local opposition and assorted objections to the assignment of blacks at various bases and assigned to each facility an Aviation Squadron and ASWAAF personnel, and if it added to this number those participating in the Little Joe Task Force in Liberia and those assigned to the Tuskegee school, the AAF reasoned it could effectively utilize only 57,403 men. The AAF was opposed to Air Base Defense Units, for the additional 400 blacks at one half of all AAF bases would increase the black percentage at those bases to 25 percent. If the additional 20,189 were organized into Pursuit Squadrons, 16 of the 31 authorized pursuit groups would be black. This was a commitment the AAF was not willing to make until it had tested black pilots in combat. There was a recommendation that black units be stationed at all 124 AAF bases as construction was completed. In addition, it was hoped that the War Department would relax limitations on shipments outside the continental United States so that the AAF could absorb some overseas. Finally, General Arnold suggested that the commanding officers of each station use them "in the maintenance and care of Air Force equipment as well as the Air Base grounds." The War Department rejected the AAF plan for a reduced allotment and was resolute in its decision that the AAF utilize its full share. <sup>31</sup>

In attempting to absorb this tremendous influx of black recruits, the AAF organized the majority of them into units assigned to jobs which did not require high skill levels. In fact, many of these units were really labor battalions and had been so designated in World War I. <sup>32</sup> The AAF argued that this type of unit would be the most advantageous in utilizing a pool of unskilled men, and the jobs, although routine and perhaps menial, were essential for a modern military fighting machine to operate efficiently. The AAF pointed out that whites with low AGCT scores did perform similar functions. <sup>33</sup> The overall plan called for approximately 700 black service troops at each base to be assigned to a Truck Company, a Medical Detachment, a Quartermaster Detachment, and an Air Base Defense unit. However, the majority were assigned to Aviation Squadrons, and these units attracted great attention because of the sheer numbers of men involved in undefined tasks. <sup>34</sup> Judge William Hastie, the Civilian Aide, was quick to investigate and complain, and he considered objectionable three aspects of the proposed Aviation Squadrons: first, they were segregated units; second, they seemed to have no mission except to absorb black recruits; and third, on many

bases they were assigned to "pick and shovel" jobs which were considered common and menial. He particularly objected to the lack of mission, and in a memorandum to General Henry Arnold he supplied examples of two squadrons that received no specialized training and were employed exclusively to pick up rubbish and to do janitorial work. When there were no menial jobs for them to perform, they drilled to pass the time.<sup>35</sup>

Nonetheless, the AAF, supported by the War Department, did not alter its policy that lower intelligence, educational background, and leadership levels dictated the utilization of blacks.<sup>36</sup> As a result, morale and performance were definitely affected in those units where they functioned without any real purpose or were interrupted in their training to do housekeeping chores. Members of the 857th Engineer Aviation unit at Eglin Field, Florida were frequently called from their training to work on menial, unrelated jobs for the post.<sup>37</sup> The 8th Aviation Squadron at MacDill Field in Tampa reported that during the first two months of 1942 its duties consisted of policing the squadron area and maintaining base runways and lawns.<sup>38</sup> Blacks in these units objected to their assignment to labor tasks, and "unit after unit" disclosed that they resented the fact that they were exclusively black. Also, some complained that the "high-fallutin" name of Aviation Squadron was offensive, for it was simply window-dressing to deceive the public. "If they're going to put us in labor battalions," asked a black serviceman, "why don't they at least call them labor battalions?" The situation inevitably resulted in poor morale which led to AWOL (Absence Without Leave), drunk and disorderly conduct, failure to obey orders, insulting language, and breaches of discipline.<sup>39</sup>

The Women's Army Corps (WAC) reported similar problems. Many of the unskilled black women who entered the service were still unassignable by the middle of the war. A large number were sent to bases as unskilled personnel and local commanders were hard pressed to assign them tasks.<sup>40</sup>

In addition to morale problems caused by the haphazard assignment procedures, black pilots and those in technical jobs also experienced numerous frustrations. Entering into these AAF programs was as difficult for blacks as it was for whites. Blacks with an acceptable educational background usually preferred the technical areas, especially flying. But the restricted facilities at Tuskegee coupled with short-sighted AAF plans created numerous problems, including a sizeable backlog of qualified applicants waiting to enlist. Since the War Department and AAF upheld segregated training, blacks were not permitted to attend a number of other AAF technical training and flying centers because of a lack of segregated facilities. White candidates entering flying training had at times to wait a few weeks before beginning training, while a much longer wait was usually in store for black candidates. In the fall of 1941, the AAF planned to assign 10 to 12 blacks every 5 weeks to Tuskegee. With the number of candidates avail-

able at that time, Judge Hastie estimated that some would have to anticipate a delay of up to 3 years. The Army did permit Air Corps applicants a 1- to 2-month deferment from the draft while they waited acceptance or processing. This procedure well satisfied white candidates, but black candidates had a long wait and this deferment was insufficient. If the complaints of Judge Hastie are accurate, some qualified black men were drafted before the AAF could accept them for segregated training. There was the added concern that they might pass the maximum eligible age requirement of 26 years.<sup>41</sup>

Jesse Williams of New York City was accepted as a future army aviation cadet in 1941. The AAF advised him that if he were called up by his draft board, he would be placed into a deferred classification pending enlistment as an air cadet; but in January 1942, his local Board denied his deferment. Mr. Williams charged that his Selective Service appeal agent made remarks indicative of racial prejudice, and when he did not report for his physical examination, he was taken into custody by the FBI. The NAACP then took up his defense with the New York Director of Selective Service and the US Attorney for the Southern District of New York. This pressure was effective, because on February 18th Williams received a telegram from the War Department notifying him to report the following morning for induction into the Air Corps.<sup>42</sup>

Progress in expanding AAF assignments for blacks remained sluggish and delays were commonplace. The AAF vigorously maintained that the number of men called coincided with existing vacancies, and any other policy would be wasteful and serve no useful purpose. In response to a War Department memorandum that AAF policy appeared to be discriminatory against blacks, Maj. Gen. Millard F. Harmon, Chief of the Air Staff, defended the force's position. He suggested that the backlog of black applicants for pilot training could be alleviated by opening up the Enlisted Reserves to blacks, but the General was concerned at the same time that this might create a haven to avoid the draft and to enjoy extended civilian status while awaiting pilot training. Harmon's memorandum did stipulate that if a vacancy occurred within 12 months, the AAF was willing to permit blacks to enter the Enlisted Reserves.<sup>43</sup>

In some instances strict adherence to policies affecting black pilots became detrimental to their morale. Many qualified pilots were thwarted in their attempts to advance because the AAF unconditionally had refused to permit them to engage in anything but pursuit flying. Because of this restriction, when a black pilot candidate washed out of pursuit flying, he had no alternative training program to enter, while there were numerous alternatives open to whites. Hastie reported that two black transport pilots had no choice but to go to Canada in order to get war service.<sup>44</sup> Also, Robert Terry, who had qualified as a service pilot, was turned down by the AAF in 1942. The AAF argued that since there were so few black service pilots, it would be impractical



General Weaver



General Harmon

to organize them into a black unit. He was given two alternative courses: he could apply to Tuskegee as an instructor or he could enter the Army Ground Forces as a liaison pilot.<sup>45</sup>

Ironically, these early acceptance restrictions imposed on black pilot training candidates resulted by the middle of the war in a shortage rather than a backlog of qualified applicants. A large number of blacks in the meantime had been drafted or had reached the maximum age limit, had joined other services, or had obtained work deferments. Further, because of the limited educational and technical opportunities available to blacks in American society, there were fewer entering the service with technical experience. The AAF attempted in 1943 to supplement this dwindling reserve by lowering the minimum qualification standards below those required for whites. In the spring of 1944, Truman Gibson reported that while the average Stanine score required for whites was six, for blacks it was lowered to four.<sup>46</sup>

There were additional problems for blacks attempting to enter technical training. An example of the illogic that plagued black progress throughout the war was a report by Air Staff Personnel that "the race of an individual is immaterial to eligibility for admission to aviation cadet courses of training." But, Personnel continued, "the number of Negro candidates assigned to any particular course of aviation cadet training will not exceed the number of graduates that can be utilized in Negro units of the AAF."<sup>47</sup> It is apparent that the second statement contradicts the first, yet the AAF and War Department continued to maintain that segregation did not restrict opportunities for blacks in the military. Clearly it did, and in the case of technical training it

operated in a discriminatory fashion against young blacks of good education and training.

The areas of flying and technical training became most vulnerable issues for the AAF, and were constantly under attack by black leaders. Judge Hastie, Truman Gibson, and Roy Wilkins were most persistent in exploiting the weaknesses in the AAF's argument over segregation. In 1942, Hastie wrote to Assistant Secretary Robert Lovett, submitting the names of four black men with scientific and other educational prerequisites for aviation cadet appointments in the field of meteorology. At that time the AAF needed 10,000 meteorologists within a 12- to 18-month period, and since there were only seven vacancies for blacks, many with the proper qualifications were refused entry into the program.<sup>48</sup> In mid-1943 Roy Wilkins wrote to Assistant Secretary McCloy citing examples of how the AAF had failed to make full use of black technicians and specialists. He noted the rejection of black civilian pilots who had applied for service pilot appointments and of black mathematicians who had applied as aviation cadets in meteorology. He mentioned that the AAF did not admit blacks who had excelled in the Photography School at Lowry Field, Colorado to advanced training at Yale University as it did whites. He recalled another case, where the AAF assigned a black Phi Beta Kappa graduate with special advanced study in biology and biochemistry as a laborer in a Signal Construction Battalion at Biggs Field, Texas. Wilkins requested that the War Department assign, train, and advance skilled blacks based on their merit and potential usefulness.<sup>49</sup>

### III

Once blacks had been accepted into the AAF, other problems continued to hamper their advancement. After the plans for expansion were developed, there was the persistent obstacle of where to station them. As early as 1941, reacting to announcements that blacks were scheduled for assignment to specific bases, commanders and spokesmen for local communities registered a barrage of complaints with the War Department. In early 1942, the AAF issued a memorandum to its stations and surveyed possible locations for the stationing of blacks. The replies must have been disheartening. Most bases reported that either the military commanders or the local communities did not desire them at their locations. Some would accept only a limited number, and others would only accept southerners. Negative replies were submitted by bases throughout the country, though mainly from southern communities with large black population centers or from those without a significant black population, as the following table indicates. The table is based on a random selection of the bases and illustrates their varied responses.<sup>50</sup>

One of the first protests over the assignment issue occurred in April 1941 when some blacks were stationed at Eglin Field, Florida. The Commander of the field's Flying School did not want any sent to



## AIR BASES AND STATIONS REPORT ON BLACK TROOPS-DATA AS OF 1 FEBRUARY 1942

Station	Present Strength	Suitable for Black Troops	Population — 1940 Census			Remarks
			White	Black	Percent Black To White	
Albany, Ga.	185	yes	9300	9700	104	Not too favorable Would resent Some resentment
Macon, Ga.	60	no	31000	25600	80	
Selma, Ala.	93	yes	8900	11000	124	
Mitchel Fld., Hempstead, N.Y.	124	yes	18800	2000	11	Would resent large numbers Would resent Some criticism Definite criticism Southern Negroes only
Charlotte, N.C.	23	yes	69500	31400	45	
Dow Fld., Bangor, Me.	none	no	29600	200	1	
Sherman, Texas	55	yes	85000	23300	27	Would resent large numbers Would resent Some criticism Definite criticism Southern Negroes only
Ellington Fld., Houston, Texas	70	no	15100	2100	14	
Bakersfield, Ca.	14	no	298000	86300	29	
Albuquerque, N.M.	none	no	27700	1000	4	Would resent large numbers Would resent Some criticism Definite criticism Southern Negroes only
Keesler Fld., Biloxi, Miss.	155	yes	34600	500	1	
Lowry Fld., Denver, Col.	181	yes	14900	2600	17	
			313800	7800	2	

Source: "Air Bases and Stations, Report on Colored Troops, Data as of 1 Feb 1942," AFSHRC 145.81-90.

his site, arguing that the nearest recreational facilities were in Pensacola, 50 miles away. Second, he stressed that they were very unpopular in the immediate vicinity of the field, especially with the "lower caste white population," and he thought this could lead to serious conflicts. Finally, the Commander noted that additional funds were needed to provide a separate mess, barracks, day rooms, and other facilities for the 32 blacks scheduled to arrive. However, 3 months later, the authorities at Eglin appear to have changed their position. The AAF planned to assign approximately 1,000 black enlisted men from Engineer Aviation and Quartermaster units to do large-scale clearing operations at its satellite fields, and the soldiers were made welcome. Pragmatism was a decisive factor in overriding prejudicial attitudes.<sup>51</sup>

In November the Central Flying Training Command (CFTC) was informed that five Texas fields would each be required to accept a company of blacks from the 34th Quartermaster Regiment, although the CFTC had urgently requested that they not be assigned to its command. Officials pointed out that one of the fields, San Angelo, had very limited facilities for blacks both on and off base, and that at Ellington Field, near Houston, feelings were still taut from the 1917 race riot between the 24th Infantry and the local white population. In spite of these objections, blacks were sent to Texas.<sup>52</sup>

Complaints concerning stationing black troops were not restricted to the South. The West Coast Training Center requested a prohibition on their assignment to Taft and Bakersfield, California due to the lack of a black population in the area and the possible hostility of the local people. The AAF replied that since each base had to accept its quota, it was necessary to station black Truck Companies at Taft and Bakersfield.<sup>53</sup> During 1941 and 1942, the AAF responded essentially in the same manner to all protesting stations.<sup>54</sup>

Local citizens were also vocal in their opposition to bringing black soldiers into their communities. During the early part of the war and most noticeably in the South, civilians wrote or had their Congressmen write to the War Department and the AAF. Generally, their letters reflected racial fears about the disproportionate number of blacks in the area. Local citizens expressed concern that since there was a shortage of recreational opportunities for them, the latter might use white facilities as a result. The volume of correspondence was considerable, but the AAF response was standard, stressing that it was aware of the concerns of local citizens, that the AAF had its quota and must assign blacks to all bases, that the Army was doing everything possible to provide adequate recreational facilities, that the AAF hoped civilians would cooperate, and that blacks were members of the Armed Forces and deserved to be treated as such. For example, the AAF responded to a Senator that since it was War Department policy to use "colored troops in all branches of the Army," it was "necessary to assign colored troops in practically all Air Corps Stations in the continental United States."<sup>55</sup>

In 1942 the citizens of Eagle Pass, Texas, through Congressman Milton West, raised objections to the assignment of 800 black soldiers nearby. General Arnold sent the standard reply that there would be at least one squadron at every AAF station in the United States. One month later Congressman West, not to be deterred, issued another protest and now introduced as a factor the fear of trouble with the Mexicans in the area. West added, "everybody knows what a negro can do with a razor—the Mexicans are pretty handy with a knife." General Arnold, in his Digest of correspondence, comments that West "didn't care to do business with Judge Hastie—couldn't even call him 'Mister'—let alone 'Judge.'" General Arnold did advise Hastie of the situation—"with modification."<sup>56</sup>

Later that year, when word leaked out that Jefferson Barracks, Missouri might be used as a black training base, numerous letters were sent to the War Department in protest. One objection came from the Secretary of the Lemay, Missouri Public Library Board stating that the townspeople did not "believe that a wholesale influx of northern negroes in uniform would breed pleasant relationships for either the whites or the blacks."<sup>57</sup>

Not all civilian protests originated in the South. The Spokane, Washington Chamber of Commerce did extensive research to back up its point, that based on a 1940 census, while only 90 black families resided in Spokane, Geiger Field had 250 black troops and the Spokane Air Depot had another 400. There were no recreational facilities for them in the city and only 96 black females between the ages of 15 and 34. Also, most taxicabs were driven by white women and the local population was concerned about unpleasant incidents. The AAF recommended to Assistant Secretary McCloy that the standard response be sent to Spokane and the issue was closed.<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, local opposition prevented the use of qualified blacks as civilian instructors at some AAF bases in the South. Protests arose if such instructors were assigned indiscriminately to southern bases. In September 1941, when D. B. Delaney of Salisbury, North Carolina, was appointed as a Junior Instructor at Keesler Field, Biloxi, Mississippi, the Commandant of the school complained to his higher command noting the problems which would arise if Mr. Delaney were permitted to teach white students. No action was immediately taken because of Civil Service rules, but the Technical Training Command indicated that if Delaney could not maintain discipline in the classroom, his appointment would be terminated for inefficiency.<sup>59</sup> In February 1943, there were similar complaints from Mississippi, such as a Gulfport attorney writing his Congressman and protesting the use of blacks to train whites at some of the local bases. He complained that authorities required white soldiers "to address these Negro instructors Mr. and Mrs. and to pay all deference to them as they would white women and gentlemen occupying the same position." He believed that white men could not learn well under these conditions. In voicing his concern about

potential race conflict, the attorney added that unless military leaders "are mentally defective after these matters are properly called to their attention they will right these wrongs here and all over the country."<sup>60</sup> The same month, the governor of Mississippi sent a telegram to the President on that subject, and later that month the AAF undertook to transfer those instructors to schools in the North.<sup>61</sup>

These difficulties in the assignment of blacks concerned the War Department and Secretary of War Stimson. The Assistant Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower, sent a memorandum to the Chief of Staff listing areas of the world where the United States would send troops, noting that in most cases either the local politicians or the Army commanders did not want black troops stationed there. Handwritten on the margin of this document were comments by the Secretary of War, who realized that blacks would have to go wherever the Army went. He notes next to the statement that the President of Panama wanted a black signal construction unit removed: "it is ridiculous to raise such objections when the Panama Canal itself was built with black labor." Elsewhere he comments to the State Department's negative reaction to black troops being stationed in Liberia: "Nonsense." To the Southern Defense Command's fear to place black troops along the coasts of Louisiana, Alabama, and Texas due to the high probability of race riots he states: "No." And in response to British authorities in Trinidad who wanted white units instead of black units he comments: "No: don't yield." The commander of US forces in Australia recommended the withdrawal of black troops and again the reply was "No." Finally, the commanding general of the Second Army recommended that maneuvers in his area exclude black troops because of disorders in Arkansas; the Secretary remarks: "No, get the Southerners used to them!" The War Department, under the prodding of Secretary Stimson, took a strong stand in notifying local and overseas commanders that they would have to accept their quota of blacks, and it is significant that he played a leading role in that decision.<sup>62</sup>

#### IV

With the acceptance of hundreds of thousands of men into the AAF during the early part of the war, there was a noticeable deficiency in the expansion program—no provision for the training of nonflying officer personnel. Prior to World War II, pilots had performed all administrative duties, but with the increased sophistication of flying this was no longer practical. The AAF finally realized the need for a ground school to train 12,000 officers, including blacks. Late in 1941, the AAF pressed the War Department for its own administrative school, and on 17 February 1942 the AAF designated Miami Beach, Florida as its Officer Candidate School (OCS). Six days later the first class entered and utilized existing civilian facilities. The Adjutant General directed in April that a proportionate share of each OCS quota be allotted to blacks. As a result, most OCS classes included blacks, and the official histories report that "few difficulties were encountered."

With the exception of sleeping quarters, black candidates were completely integrated into the program, but outside the school area they had to abide by local customs.<sup>63</sup>

The relative ease with which the program accepted blacks contrasts sharply with the opposition which resulted when the AAF first announced that they would go to Miami Beach. First, the local commander opposed their stationing in the area. In a detailed letter to his commanding general he spelled out the zoning regulations of the Beach area and the absence of a black civilian population. He added that if blacks used the AAF facilities located in tourist hotels, it "would probably ruin their value as tourist hotels in the future."<sup>64</sup> Representative Pat Cannon from Miami also opposed the plan, and in a letter to Assistant Secretary McCloy indicated why blacks should not be sent to the Beach. First, none were permitted to live on the Beach, and the AAF should respect local ordinances and customs. Second, any hotel used would be "doomed for all time as far as future white occupancy is concerned." And, civilian morale would be greatly affected if they trained there. However, if the AAF were to proceed with the plan, he suggested that they take advantage of housing accommodations in one of the black sections of Miami.<sup>65</sup>

Congressional pressure forced the Air Staff to reexamine its decision to include blacks in the Miami Beach program and to reconsider the prospect of a separate black school, but military efficiency was an overriding factor.<sup>66</sup> A separate school would be costly in terms of the small number of blacks trained and could lead as well to protests and difficulties in locating a suitable site. If there were further doubts about Miami Beach, Maj. Gen. George E. Stratemeyer, Chief of the Air Staff, was clear when in reaction to Judge Hastie's resignation he stated in January 1943 that "I don't want any colored school any place to be conducted as a segregated school." He stressed that he wanted black officer candidates treated like whites and "they will go to the same classes, to the same drills, and eat in mess halls the same as the whites."<sup>67</sup>

In addition to money and efficiency, there is another explanation for the AAF integration of OCS. Judge Hastie, in reflecting upon World War II, notes:

I remember the War Department and War College studies which followed the first World War were hostile to any future use of Negro officers, but at the same time took the position that, if they must be used, they should be trained along with officer candidates. I think this background was important in influencing the decision to say nothing about race in the World War II officer candidate school directives. Of course, this did not meet the problem created by the widespread refusal of local commanders to approve or transmit applications of Negroes, or even give them access to appropriate forms until Secretary Stimson and [War Department

Operations] indicated plainly that they expected substantial numbers of Negroes to be sent to these schools.<sup>68</sup>

Black men attended OCS throughout the war period, but in small numbers because of their low AGCT scores. On 15 September 1942 there were 11 at the school and a year later there were only 18. When the largest class (3,694) graduated in the fall of 1942, there were but 13 blacks among the conferees.<sup>69</sup>

The official history of the OCS program at Miami Beach reports good race relations as does an AAF inspection report. Air Staff Training dispatched an inspection team there in early 1944, and it observed that there had been no confrontations between blacks and whites. The Miami Beach Director of Training reported that some of the blacks were very popular and there was no resentment by the white candidates.<sup>70</sup>

A black candidate who graduated in January 1944 maintained that personnel treated him very fairly, although the school generally did not promote blacks as regularly as whites. All recreational facilities at the OCS were available, including the night clubs. Everyone wore uniforms so club managers knew that those entering their clubs attended the school and were, therefore, welcome. But the main problem was the absence of black women on the Beach. When there was free time, the blacks went to Miami for recreation. At the school there were only two restrictions—rooms were segregated and they had to go to Miami for haircuts. As for the attitude of whites toward this almost total integration, they really had no choice; if they behaved in a discriminatory fashion they could be reported and washed out. And the instructors were fair because they were well screened and very capable.<sup>71</sup> Later, when the school was moved to San Antonio and Maxwell Field, it was reported that blacks were well treated and received a minimum of discriminatory treatment.<sup>72</sup>

The treatment of blacks at Miami Beach demonstrates a trend that the AAF might have applied to its entire training program. Instructors and white students were briefed on how to treat blacks and were encouraged to deal with them fairly. Because the AAF took a strong stand, the Miami Beach program was a success. Had military leaders demonstrated a similar strength of purpose at other locations, perhaps there might have been fewer racial problems. Yet, the AAF was unwilling to make that commitment and viewed the integrated OCS as an exception.

Throughout the Second World War the Army Air Forces became progressively more flexible in its acceptance of blacks. At the end of 1942, there were thousands of black soldiers in the AAF, whereas there were none the previous year. By June 1944, the AAF had 145,242 blacks in its total force of over 2 million men. Though there were noticeable breakthroughs for blacks entering the Army Air Forces, the AAF re-

mained reluctant to accept them and had made repeated attempts to restrict their progress. By April 1945 only 1 of 90 was an officer while 1/6th of the white force was commissioned. The AAF organized a vast majority into segregated service units performing more or less routine tasks about the bases, while most black officers were flying personnel or worked in related jobs.<sup>73</sup> Any progress that was made resulted from political pressure directed against the War Department, which then exhorted the AAF to revise its policies. Despite the fact that War Department officials often agreed with AAF attitudes, the War Department did appear on occasion to be impatient with AAF intransigence. In spite of the success of the OCS program to integrate blacks, almost all black soldiers in the AAF served in segregated units and lived in segregated facilities. The general reluctance of the AAF to utilize them created tensions that erupted throughout the war. These conflicts will be described in later chapters.

## **Chapter III**

### **THE ARMY AIR FORCES: BLACK OFFICERS AND FLYING UNITS**

A large percentage of black manpower in the Army Air Forces (AAF) was utilized in service units, yet most of the publicity, credit, and glory went to the pursuit pilots. Though much money and effort was expended on the flying program, the history of black flying units reveals only partial success. The 99th Squadron and the 332d Group, made up of the 100th, 301st, and 302d Squadrons, performed in a creditable manner in the Mediterranean Theater. On the other hand, the 477th Group never completed its training for overseas deployment and by the end of the war in Europe, had practically collapsed as a unit. Although each unit was segregated, its success or failure depended mainly on the attitude of those in the command structures. The 99th and 332d were unique in the history of black units in the Army in that all of their officers were black. Inspired by an opportunity to "prove themselves" and led by a strict military disciplinarian, they performed as well as any comparable white unit. However, the 477th represented segregation at its worst. The key officers in this unit were white and frequently used their positions as a stepping-stone for promotion and reassignment to more important jobs. In addition, they were often indifferent to the needs of the unit and were condescending toward the blacks under their command. Thus, the 477th never performed its mission.

The AAF conducted all basic training for black pilots at Tuskegee Field, Alabama. At first, the 99th Pursuit Squadron, flying single-engine fighter planes, absorbed all graduates. Later, the AAF organized the 332d Fighter Group, which incorporated three other squadrons. The 99th completed its training and arrived in the Mediterranean Theater in 1943. In the same year, the 332d moved to Selfridge Field, Michigan where it completed its preparation for overseas deployment, arriving in the Mediterranean in early 1944. Meanwhile, the AAF initiated plans in late 1943 to form the 477th Bombardment Group to fly twin-engine bombers. Tuskegee lacked facilities for conducting this new training and it became necessary to send blacks to other fields. Hondo Field, Texas received Navigation cadets, Midland, Texas trained Bombardiers, and Mather Field, California accomplished some twin-engine transition training. The 477th began its training at Selfridge, but in mid-1944



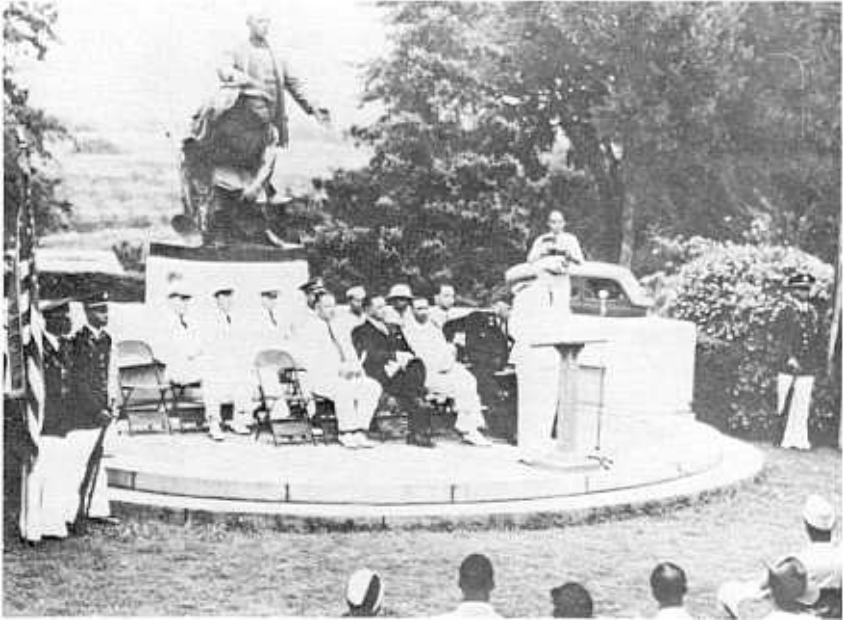
moved to Godman Field, Kentucky where it remained until March 1945. The unit then moved to Freeman Field, Indiana, where it remained a month before returning to Godman. Units of the 477th now joined with returning personnel from the 332d to form the 477th Composite Group under the command of Col. B. O. Davis, Jr. At the same time, replacement pilots for the 332d trained first at a satellite field of Selfridge—Oscoda—and then at Walterboro, South Carolina.<sup>1</sup>

Black flying units were confronted with a veritable maze of racial problems, most of them created by the AAF. The AAF dogmatically pursued a system of segregation that was almost impossible to maintain. It even went so far as to violate War Department regulations in order to prevent the mixing of whites and blacks in officers' clubs. Understandably, many problems developed as a result of this uncompromising position. Primary was the psychological degradation implicit in the idea of segregation. Then there was the problem caused by the absence of black cadres to supplement black units. While a mixture of new and experienced personnel comprised white units going into combat, when the 99th began flying the Mediterranean in 1943, it consisted *entirely* of personnel new to combat operations. Third was the friction caused when commanders did not want black flying units in their operational areas. For example, in June 1945 there were discussions concerning the possibility of sending a black flying unit to the Pacific; Generals George Marshall and Douglas MacArthur approved, but the AAF commander there opposed the idea. Gen. Henry Arnold wrote that "it is O. K. from the W. D. viewpoint to send them but when [General] Kenney uses them down in Mindanao or Borneo don't be surprised of the criticisms that are received."<sup>2</sup> Finally, there were restrictions on the types of training open to blacks. Since the AAF considered their use in flying as an "experiment," it first employed them in single-engine planes exclusively and only gradually permitted black pilots to train in more sophisticated aircraft. Officials rejected some flying programs solely because of the fear that racial problems could arise. This was true of the Transport Command, since providing adequate food and lodging facilities created too great a problem for pilots flying around the country, especially in the South.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter will examine then, the overall black flying program with emphasis on Tuskegee, the combat performance in the Mediterranean, the general treatment of black officers, and the early history of the 477th.

## I

Tuskegee Army Air Field was located near the town of Tuskegee and Tuskegee Institute in southeastern Alabama. The AAF did everything possible to build the complex into a first-rate training center and to keep racial problems at a minimum. To a large extent, it was successful in both objectives. The training blacks received was comparable to that received by whites, and Judge Hastie noted that "the best of



Maj. Gen. Walter R. Weaver delivers the inaugural address opening the new Air Corps School for training black aviators at Tuskegee.

facilities and thoroughly competent instructors were provided for.”<sup>4</sup> It is probable that political factors were responsible for the high caliber of training and equipment at Tuskegee. One official history notes “that the Tuskegee undertaking was considered by the War Department as No. 1 priority” because of the “political pressure that had been brought to bear upon the White House and the War Department to provide pilot training for negroes.” Any delay could “seriously embarrass the War Department.”<sup>5</sup>

The AAF attempted to establish a “separate-but-equal” situation at Tuskegee. But existing living and other conditions aggravated racial problems and the segregated system compounded its own deficiencies. For one, there was serious overcrowding. Overused facilities hindered flying training and generally obstructed operations. An explanation for this poor planning was the AAF’s attempt to solve the black training program by placing all of its basic flight training at Tuskegee, but unfortunately, the facilities were not adequate to meet this demand. Once the pilots were trained, the AAF did not immediately transfer them into operational units. Overcrowding at Tuskegee became more acute in 1942 and 1943, as the 99th remained on the station until April 1943. Two other organizations also strained its facilities. The 96th Service Group, organized to support black flying units, received a minimal amount of tactical training during 1942 because no training facilities had been arranged. Only a year later did it finally receive training and

then move to Selfridge. The 332d Group with its three squadrons and support organizations also created problems until it made its move to Selfridge in March 1943. While at Tuskegee, the Training Command History reports that the 332d "had difficulties with its training in that no adequate facilities existed on the station for its training and during the time it was at Tuskegee practically no tactical training was accomplished." Then in July 1943, the War Department further overtaxed the base and assigned 50 liaison pilots to train for the Army Ground Forces. Fifty aircraft of three different types and speeds already used the main field, so liaison training was conducted at an auxiliary field.<sup>6</sup>

Another factor which contributed to the cramped facilities at Tuskegee was, as the unit history designates them, the "unwieldy surplus," i.e., mainly nonflying personnel. Early in 1942, the AAF stopped the practice of discharging those eliminated from the flying school, made them privates, and retained them at Tuskegee. Unlike eliminated white candidates who could be reassigned to other flying programs, there simply was no other place for blacks. Consequently, by September 1943, the majority of the 286 eliminated cadets who were still at Tuskegee had low morale. Besides having no real function, they were embittered over racial conditions which they believed worked against them, and the black press further fanned their discontent. By late 1943, some did enter navigator and bombardier schools, but their departure had no great impact upon the excessive numbers which continued to increase.

In July 1943, Tuskegee received 25 Signal Corps officers from Selfridge. The Eastern Flying Training Command (EFTC) was well aware that although these officers were not being assigned commensurate with their training and background, retraining them was detrimental to morale and not in the best interests of the service. Again, there simply was no other place to send them. By the end of October 1943, Tuskegee reported that there was an excess of 90 officers on the field and that most of them were second lieutenants who were well trained and anxious for proper duty. Then in December 1943, the Air Service Command unexpectedly transferred to Tuskegee 30 Quartermaster officers from Daniel Field, Georgia. By this time blacks were attending the Miami Beach OCS regularly and an average of seven of its graduates per month arrived for nonflying assignments. At a 21 August 1944 conference between key officers from Tuskegee and the EFTC, officers revealed that there was then a wasted manpower surplus of 105 non-rated black officers, including 75 AAF and 30 ASWAAF. In addition, the OCS at San Antonio began sending eight more graduates each month.<sup>7</sup>

The situation at Tuskegee was most frustrating for blacks, but it also presented a serious problem to dedicated white officers who attempted to bring order out of chaos. The histories of the EFTC for 1943 and 1944 were quite frank and critical in assessing this predicament and noted that there was little that could be done. Col. Noel Parrish, the

Tuskegee commander, made a concerted effort to function under the circumstances; and his frustration is evident in a handwritten note appended to a heavy file which discussed overcrowding. The note asked plaintively: "Why do they all come to Tuskegee?"<sup>8</sup>

In addition to the problem of overcrowding, the Tuskegee commander faced others that were "difficult and voluminous." Because of the structure of the black flying program, one of the greatest difficulties encountered was that there were several commands with overlapping operational control over black units. There was a continuous stream of phone calls and exchanges with the Training Command, Eastern Training Command, First Air Force, AAF Headquarters, and others, and little or no coordination among them, since most communications were made outside the normal chain of command. This lack of coordination particularly affected Tuskegee's immediate headquarters at Maxwell.<sup>9</sup>

Colonel Parrish had to make numerous trips to the Pentagon to secure decisions on matters so involved that normal channels of command had failed to produce results.<sup>10</sup> "Every promotion, every assignment, nearly every decision," he later stated, "had a black and white side to it that we had to consider, as well as the purely military side and the side of efficiency."<sup>11</sup>

There were also difficulties with the local community. Tuskegee was a typical southern town with its white control and Jim Crow system of treating blacks. Black soldiers from the station reported harassment from whites and tended to avoid the town and instead used the social facilities either on base or at Tuskegee Institute. Also, the AAF wanted to keep them on the base to prevent problems with local whites. Base facilities, however, were quite good.<sup>12</sup> But problems arose, nonetheless, and in early 1942, a black Military Policeman (MP) demanded custody of a black soldier arrested by a civilian policeman. Although the AAF believed that the MP had acted improperly, it indicated in a report that there was a verbal understanding between the commanding officer at the base and civil authorities for handling these situations.<sup>13</sup>

Concern over maintaining proper relations with the town convinced the AAF that only a white provost marshal with the rank of captain could effectively represent the base. In 1942, EFTC recommended two lieutenants, one black and one white, for promotion to captain. In its letter of recommendation, the command requested that the white receive a date of rank 1 day in advance of the black, thus insuring that the white would become the provost marshal.<sup>14</sup>

Relations on base and with the local community often depended on the attitude of the commander. Colonels Frederick Kimble and Noel Parrish were the two commanders at Tuskegee during the period it was a full training facility, and there was a marked contrast between them. Kimble was paternalistic and somewhat skeptical of the black's ability



Colonel Kimble



Colonel Parrish

to fly an aircraft. He appeared to be blind to the racial problems inherent in the training of blacks in the South. In the spring of 1942, two black airmen entered the white section of the PX, remaining there until ordered to leave by an officer. This prompted Colonel Kimble to write to his higher headquarters, complaining that not all bases were following War Department policy as prescribed in the October 1940 policy letter. Many of his black personnel had been reassigned from Chanute Field, Illinois which was partially integrated. Kimble complained that he wanted all bases to practice segregation, which was War Department policy, so that when AAF personnel travelled from one station to another, there would be no misunderstanding over the question of segregated facilities. Rejecting Kimble's recommendation, Headquarters AAF emphasized the importance of local custom in determining the policy at each station, and suggested that blacks arriving at southern bases from the North be briefed on the local racial situation.<sup>15</sup> Colonel Parrish noted that Kimble "continued the original policy of fairly complete segregation. He continued it in the dining facilities and *established* it in the toilet facilities."<sup>16</sup> However, Colonel Kimble was able to approach his old contacts on the Air Staff to obtain additional buildings for the base.<sup>17</sup>

The job of commander at Tuskegee required close coordination with both whites and blacks, and while Col. Kimble was successful with the former, he never was able to gain the respect and confidence of the latter. His attempts to maintain a strict segregated system undermined morale and this was played up by the black press. However, Parrish's long tenure as commander, from December 1942 until 1946, made him especially cognizant of Tuskegee's particular problems, and he was able to work well with blacks and whites and to improve relations with the town.

Colonel Parrish brought to his command at Tuskegee previous experience with black units. While supervisor of the black unit of the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP) at Glenview, Illinois, he had consulted with University of Chicago anthropologists and had become familiar with Myrdal's study.<sup>18</sup> He was a student of practical psychology and, in order to avoid misunderstandings, would occasionally address local groups to explain a particular policy or incident. In August 1944, he addressed the Rotary Clubs in Tallahassee and Tuskegee to explain a recent order concerning recreational facilities. He maintained that his upbringing in Kentucky—a border state—had been of great advantage in dealing with white southerners.<sup>19</sup> At Tuskegee, his background proved indispensable, and the additional fact that he was a professional AAF officer aided him in working with higher headquarters.

Basically, Col. Parrish was successful as the commander of Tuskegee. Morale, which had been low during the latter part of 1942 and early 1943, improved considerably, helped no doubt by the reduced overcrowded conditions when tactical units were moved to Selfridge and overseas in the spring. Under Parrish, segregation was reduced and he enforced War Department directives about equality of treatment. He earned the respect of the blacks, for as one black pilot remarked: "The only thing that struck me was why have a white in charge of the base when there were qualified blacks. But, if there had to be a white, he was the best one."<sup>20</sup> There was less official segregation, yet in other respects, there was more as blacks started to take over the base. Parrish did not force integration by making white officers live on base or join the Officers' Club, and he was the only white to join. Parrish commented that, "I had a few white instructors who were volunteers and who were damn good instructors, and to force them to live out there on the black base would have made life intolerable for them, socially and otherwise."<sup>21</sup>

The black press was generally favorable to Parrish. *Crisis* printed excerpts from his farewell address to the 99th in the editorial section of the March 1943 issue and said it was "worthy of note." Parrish stated that these pilots had a double responsibility to the nation and to the black population of America. He remarked that the nation was not perfect, but improving and hoped that the pilots would "fight and die for a cause that is greater than any one life, or any one man, or any one group of men." *Crisis* commented that the speech contained honest words spoken with sincerity. Parrish did not minimize or disregard the problems, but called attention to the task at hand, "a task made especially difficult for this squadron by a situation which they did not create."<sup>22</sup>

## II

The 99th Squadron and 332d Group were the only black flying units to enter combat, and they flew missions solely in the Mediterra-

nean Theater. The 99th went to North Africa in April 1943, and flew its first combat mission against the island of Pantelleria on 2 June. Later, the squadron participated in the air battle against Sicily, operating from its base in North Africa, and supported the invasion of Italy. It moved to an advanced base in Sicily after the island's occupation and in September 1943 moved to a base on mainland Italy. Although the 99th was successful in its primary mission of strafing, the pilots did not gain the glory of shooting down more than a handful of enemy aircraft until early 1944. From then until the end of the war, the squadron regularly engaged German pilots in aerial combat. It received its share of successes, and gained recognition from high-ranking AAF officials that it was an experienced combat unit.

In the meantime, three squadrons of the 332d Group—100th, 301st, and 302d—completed their training at Selfridge Field, Michigan and in January 1944 deployed to Italy under the command of Col. B. O. Davis, Jr. The Group at once entered combat, and successfully accomplished dive-bombing and strafing missions. In July, the 99th was added to the 332d, and the Group participated in campaigns in Italy, Roumania, France, Germany, and the Balkans, and earned the Distinguished Unit Citation. After the war, the senior AAF commander in the Mediterranean, Gen. Ira C. Eaker, commented that the 332d “did a very good job.”<sup>23</sup>



Lt. Gen. Ira C. Eaker and group commander Lt. Col. B. O. Davis, Jr. (right) inspect an all-black fighter group of the Mediterranean Allied Air Forces.

More important than the record of their combat performance is to study the way in which black units were treated overseas and the impact their performance had on decisions concerning the future utilization of black pilots. Three sources are available for evaluating the general acceptance of these pilots in the Mediterranean Theater: statements made by senior AAF officers, the attitude of the pilots themselves, and reports stemming from a visit by Walter White. In general, it can be said that within the framework of segregation, they were treated well in terms of facilities, recreational provisions, combat responsibilities, and general attitude. Both Generals Eaker and Barney Giles of the Air Staff, in discussing the role of the 332d in 1945, commented that the group should "be given a thoroughly square deal." At the same time, Eaker wrote to a British officer that "there is absolutely no discrimination against our colored fighter pilots." Eaker added that the pilots "are rendering excellent service and are receiving the support, encouragement, and consideration in exactly the same measure as our white pilots in this command."<sup>24</sup>

Two black pilots reported that although they did not like the segregated framework, they felt that their accommodations were acceptable and comparable to white units. White crews appreciated the work the pilots of the 332d did to protect the bombers and often personally thanked them. But the segregated system was "a slap in the face" and did not make them feel that they were treated with the respect and courtesy due members of the armed forces.<sup>25</sup>

Finally, Walter White, while travelling through the Mediterranean Theater in early 1944, noted that the closer whites and blacks were to the fighting, the better they appeared to cooperate. When the 99th was a part of the 79th Fighter Group, composed of four squadrons—one black and three white—they worked well together and there were no problems. "Whatever prejudice, created by race and environment, existed on either side when the group was activated," White reported, "began to seem a bit superfluous and even silly in the face of death and danger." Although southerners comprised over 40 percent of the three white squadrons, the fliers and ground crews at Capodichino Air Field at Naples functioned well, and they joined together at a dinner party held at the luxurious Allied Officers' Club to celebrate the first anniversary of the 79th. This was done in spite of an order prohibiting whites and blacks "from associating in any place where there was dancing." Because of their success, White proposed that the 99th remain with the 79th instead of being transferred to the all-black 332d, as had been suggested, and that instead the AAF send a white squadron to join the 332d.<sup>26</sup>

The military's appraisal of the 99th during 1943 was critical of its effectiveness and this influenced the War Department and AAF regarding the question of the expanded utilization of blacks. However, an objective evaluation of the 99th's performance was as difficult then as it is now. There was no consensus, although in 1943 top AAF command-





General House



Colonel Momyer

ers generally reported unfavorable results. Unfortunately, these combat reports were not a valid measure of unit performance as they simply compared the statistics of sorties, combat skills, and enemy aircraft and did not take into consideration the unique elements of each battle.<sup>27</sup>

The first evaluation of the 99th, conducted in September 1943, was inauspicious. Maj. Gen. Edwin J. House, Commander of the XII Air Support Command, sent a report to Maj. Gen. J. K. Cannon, Deputy Commander, Northwest African Tactical Air Force, in which he quoted at length from one of his group commanders, Col. William Momyer. Colonel Momyer reported:

The ground discipline and ability to accomplish and execute orders promptly are excellent. Air discipline has not been completely satisfactory. The ability to work and fight as a team has not yet been acquired. Their formation flying has been very satisfactory until jumped by enemy aircraft, when the squadron seems to disintegrate. This has repeatedly been brought to the attention of the Squadron, but attempts to correct this deficiency so far have been unfruitful. . . . The unit has shown a lack of aggressive spirit that is necessary for a well-organized fighter squadron. . . . Up to the present moment, the 99th Squadron averages approximately 28 sorties per man. Their operations since being placed on combat duty have been considerably easier than past operations due to the nature of the tactical situation. However, the Squadron Commander of the 99th requested during the battle of Sicily to be removed from operations for a period of 3 days, and longer if possible. The reason given was that his pilots were suffering from pilot's fatigue. . . . Based on the performance of the 99th Fighter Squad-

ron to date, it is my opinion that they are not of the fighting caliber of any squadron in this Group. They have failed to display the aggressiveness and desire for combat that are necessary to a first-class fighting organization. It may be expected that we will get less work and less operational time out of the 99th Fighter Squadron than any squadron in this Group.

General House then added:

On many discussions held with officers of all professions, including medical, the consensus of opinion seems to be that the negro type has not the proper reflexes to make a first-class fighter pilot. Also, on rapid moves that must be a part of this Command, housing and messing difficulties arise because the time has not yet arrived when the white and colored soldiers will mess at the same table and sleep in the same barracks. No details in this connection have been brought out because it is desired that administrative features not be a part of this report. I believe it would be much better to assign the 99th to the Northwest African Coastal Air Force, equip it with P-39's and make the present P-40's available to this Command as replacements for the active operations still to come in this theater. It is recommended that if and when a colored group is formed in the United States, it be retained for either the eastern or western defense zone and a white fighter group be released for movement overseas.

General Cannon basically agreed with House, noting that the pilots of the 99th fell well below the standards of other fighter squadrons, because they were not eager to engage in combat, lacked aggressiveness, did not possess and seemed unable to acquire the will to win or reach an objective, did not have the necessary stamina, and were unable to fight as a team under pressure. Finally, the Commander of the Northwest African Air Force, Lt. Gen. Carl Spaatz, added his approval to the



General Spaatz



General Cannon

report and forwarded it to Gen. Arnold. Spaatz was confident of the fairness of the analyses of Generals Cannon and House and maintained that no squadron had been introduced more carefully into the theater "with a better background of training."<sup>28</sup>

The issue of the combat effectiveness of the 99th was submitted to the McCloy Committee, a special committee established in the War Department for handling black troop policies. On 13 October 1943 the Committee considered General House's letter, based in large part on Col. Momyer's observations. In analyzing the significance of the letter, Truman Gibson and Gen. B. O. Davis, Sr., of the Inspector General's office, acknowledged that Col. Momyer was a conscientious and dynamic leader. But, they could not overlook Col. Noel Parrish's observation that the 99th was not a highly selected squadron, as many believed, and that it was inexperienced in combat. When it arrived in the Mediterranean, the squadron was teamed with the 79th Fighter Group, a veteran white organization, and immediately was at a disadvantage. Because segregation had to be maintained, it was not possible for the 99th to profit from the experience of the white flight leaders. So Maj. Gen. Ray Porter, the Operations Division representative on the committee, recommended that black leaders be replaced by whites, but Gen. Davis advised against it. After further discussion, they agreed that judgment should be reserved until Lt. Col. B. O. Davis, Jr., former commander of the 99th and the General's son, appeared before the committee to state his case.<sup>29</sup>

Colonel Davis had returned to the United States to assume command of the 332d Group, then training at Selfridge, and attended the 16 October committee meeting. After praising Momyer as a fighter pilot, Davis proceeded to give his impressions of the report:

The squadron was handicapped in that no one in the squadron had had combat experience. There was a lack of confidence due to this lack. There is no question as to the quality of training. In the first missions there were mistakes. . . . After that confidence picked up and became part of the squadron. . . . If there was a lack of aggressive spirit, it was at first; later we had it. . . . The report is a surprise to me—that the squadron disintegrates when jumped was brought to my attention only one time; the incident I mention. The reason for that failure was inexperience; I have no excuse. . . . As to my request that the squadron be removed from operations for 3 days, attention is invited to the following: The squadron operated at a disadvantage due to having only 26 pilots as compared to from 30 to 35 in other Squadrons. The reason for this was that the standards set up for replacements—four per month—didn't come through. We were in combat two months before we received replacements.

Davis concluded that he had no doubts about the success of the squadron.<sup>30</sup>

The analysis of the 99th by high-ranking AAF officers is typical of the approach used in evaluating black performance during both World Wars. The officers who evaluated black units failed to take into consideration the impact racial factors had had upon the personnel of the unit before and during the period it was in combat. The men of the 99th were capable, trained, and qualified, and they could have become members of any squadron and functioned well in combat. They gradually acquired experience and confidence, and achieved an expertise comparable to other squadron members. The only official statistical analysis conducted on the 99th concludes that there was "no significant general difference between this squadron and the balance of the P-40 squadrons in the MTO."<sup>31</sup>

Further assessments were made after the war. The War Department appointed the Gillem Board to study the role of blacks in the post-war Army, and in October 1945 it heard testimony from three white AAF officers concerning the 99th and 332d. Lt. Col. Louis Nippert of AAF Personnel noted that the black fliers "had a fairly good record," but their main problem was that while most white units were commanded by officers with 10 years of flight experience," black leaders were relatively new to flying. Brig. Gen. Y. H. Taylor, the Group's former Wing Commander, commented that "the 332d was made into a good outfit in 3 years with a commander who had himself flown only 4 years." Bomber groups "welcomed the 332d as escort because they stayed close and did not expose the bombers to attack by seeking out combat. They would attend crippled bombers which had to turn back." But another wing commander was more critical. Brig. Gen. Dean C. Strother rated the 332d as merely "satisfactory," feeling that "it improved with experience but was never up to the standard performance of five white [fighter groups] with which it was associated." In addition, he thought the pilots were "substandard in leadership, initiative, aggressiveness, and dependability," and added that Col. Davis was



General Strother



General Taylor

responsible for 90 percent of its success and in his absence "the unit's efficiency deteriorated rapidly." <sup>32</sup>

The War Department and AAF devoted considerable attention to the 99th in 1943, because there were discussions to expand the flying role of blacks. Hastie's sudden resignation in January brought some changes, but the AAF was still reluctant to plan for more black pilots. Yet, by the end of the year, final plans had been made for the formation of a black medium bombardment group—the 477th—and personnel for that unit would begin training at Tuskegee, Mather, Hondo, Roswell, and Midland Fields. Their home station would be Selfridge Field, Michigan. <sup>33</sup>

Political pressures played a major part in the creation of the 477th. General Barney Giles, an Air Staff officer, referred to the problem of the use of blacks as "political dynamite" and believed that War Department leaders would "be forced by public opinion into the decision which thus far they have been unwilling to make." <sup>34</sup> The Operations Division of the Air Staff studied "the problem" and submitted a report which called for a black medium bombardment group and associated service units. Operations noted that there was "political pressure to use Negro troops in more than one type of aviation," and the 477th would satisfy such a demand. <sup>35</sup>

Although in 1943 the War Department and AAF generally believed that the 99th "experiment" was not successful, they nevertheless went ahead with the planning for and the implementation of a bombardment group and prepared to send the 332d overseas to join the 99th in combat. <sup>36</sup> While the 99th and 332d hereafter performed in a creditable manner in combat, conditions in the meantime within the flying units stationed in the United States took a turn for the worse.

### III

In the last 2 years of the war, race relations affecting black flying units at most stateside bases were poor. A key issue within the 477th Group and other units that frequently precipitated racial conflict was the base officers' club. The treatment of black officers on the club issue reveals the attitude of their white superiors and other AAF leaders.

There should have been no difficulty over the question of the utilization of officers' clubs as Army Regulation (AR) 210-10 was specific. Officers' clubs, messes, and similar social organizations had to extend "to all officers on duty at the post the right to full membership, either permanent or temporary." If a club limited membership to a particular military organization, it still had to "extend the right of temporary membership to all officers on duty at the post." <sup>37</sup> In practice, however, blacks were not afforded the right to membership. Base commanders often found it difficult to accept them within the same social surroundings as whites at an officers' club. The army expressed its traditional

attitude about the importance of this social institution in a memorandum to Judge Hastie:

The Army has always regarded the officers' quarters and the officers' mess as the home and the private dining room of the officers who reside and eat there. They are an entity within a military reservation which has always enjoyed a minimum of regulation and the largest possible measure of self-government. . . . For a variety of reasons, problems arising in the officers' home cannot be solved by government fiat.<sup>38</sup>

Thus, the concept of the "officers' home" and the racial attitude of many military personnel toward social equality ran counter to AR 210-10 and the desire of black officers to be members of an integrated social organization. Where blacks were few in number or concentrated at all-black bases such as Tuskegee and Godman, little could be done to correct the abuse. But at Selfridge and Freeman, a large group of black officers encountered segregation at the officers' clubs and the outcome was quite different.

Small groups of black cadets and officers attending AAF technical, flying, and flying-related schools were treated fairly because they attracted a good deal of public attention. Truman Gibson reports that at Randolph Field all officers attending the School of Aviation Medicine, including blacks, "were encouraged to use the Officers' Club."<sup>39</sup> The report on the first class trained at Hondo, Texas notes that they "were above-average material and have conducted themselves in an admirable manner during the entire course of training."<sup>40</sup> A year later another report observes that in spite of some difficulties, morale was excellent among black cadets, and they received the same treatment as other navigation cadets. Except for contact during normal duty hours, however, there was little or no social intercourse between white and black cadets, and the unit history relates that both groups appeared to desire it that way—an attitude of "distant but peaceful cooperation." Separate clubs were maintained for the black and white cadets, and since there were no black officers on the station, the officers' club issue did not emerge.<sup>41</sup>

There was a wholesome rapport at the bombardier school in Midland, Texas. Black cadets and officers followed the same training schedule as the rest of the detachment, flew with white cadets on missions, and "all cadets ate in the same mess hall at the same time." Black cadets did have their own cadet club, but the unit history points out that the facilities were equal to those of the white cadet club.<sup>42</sup> However, black officers utilized the officers' club, and one reported that he was treated well.<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, conditions at those bases isolated from public scrutiny were not so amiable. One report from Keesler Field, Mississippi notes that the base excluded black officers from the main officers' club although for a short time it billed them for membership

without permitting its use. They used instead the NCO club on the black side of the base. In another example, a black officer related that when the AAF sent him and 19 others from Tuskegee to Orlando, Florida to attend Intelligence School, they were not permitted to use the white officers' club; their club consisted of a converted barracks.<sup>44</sup>

At Selfridge Field, the operational training base for the the 332d and 477th, race relations gradually deteriorated. The most significant racial incident of 1943 occurred when the white base commander shot and wounded a black soldier. The commander had been drunk and supposedly had stated: "I repeatedly gave instructions that I did not want a colored chauffeur." This incident was only one of several in a base-wide scandal that implicated many in crimes such as misappropriation of property and salaries. The AAF later court-martialed the colonel and retired him from the service.<sup>45</sup>

The Air Surgeon asked a consultant, Dr. Lawrence A. Kubie, who had been conducting a psychiatric study of black pilots at Selfridge and Oscoda, to examine the colonel. Kubie concluded that the episode was attributable more to drinking than to racial feelings and that the commander had simply panicked. As a result of his research, Kubie found some interesting correlations about black pilots at the two fields. He noted that morale suffered most when race relations deteriorated, and segregation beyond basic training generated poor race relations, thus hampering military efficiency. More crucial was the fact that the existence of separate black units fostered an emotional build-up that grew deeper and more charged as the war progressed; it followed that minor incidents appeared to provoke major racial disturbances. Unpleasant contacts with whites further compounded the problem. For example, Kubie found rapport to be better at Oscoda than Selfridge because at Selfridge the whites tended "to wear the airs of white superiority," while the small number at Oscoda felt "pride in the Negroes they were training." One result of discriminatory treatment was conversion hysteria—the development of physical symptoms caused by an emotional problem. In this case, the hope of attaining freedom and equality of opportunity contrasted with the harsh reality of segregation, created a frustration often causing a retreat into illness. Moreover, black physicians lacked the psychiatric background to handle these cases involving "neuroses and neurotic character and behavior disorders."

Most significant, Kubie recommended that the AAF break up and integrate all black units beyond basic training. He also wanted a special committee to enforce orders against segregation and discrimination and to compile codes of interracial conduct to disseminate to all personnel. However, recommendations of this nature were unacceptable to the AAF, and some officials hastily classified the report, and filed it so thoroughly that it was lost for almost 30 years. But the work remains an important study for understanding some psychological repercussions of segregation affecting black soldiers.<sup>46</sup>

Another report on conditions at Selfridge completed later in 1943 was based on a visit by Gen. B. O. Davis, Sr. and Truman Gibson. They found that the 332d was in an active state of training, that the racial attitudes of blacks and whites on the post and in the local towns were "superior," and that the morale of the blacks was "excellent." The two attended interracial social functions and reported no problems.<sup>47</sup>

Yet, in the first 6 months of 1944, race relations at Selfridge rapidly worsened and the AAF was forced to remove all black flying personnel from the field. The precipitating factor was a dispute over the use of the officers' club. Added to this was the summer 1943 riot in Detroit which created great anxiety for the War Department and AAF.

The new bombardment organization—the 477th—arrived at Selfridge in early 1944. Although the men of the 477th were not responsible for the officers' club incident, its consequences definitely affected their training. The initial confrontation took place on 1 January 1944 when three black officers visited the club and were told by the base commander, Col. William L. Boyd, and another officer that they were not welcome. According to the War Department Inspector's report completed later by Gen. Davis and Col. Harvey Shoemaker, Col. Boyd "forbade Negro officers to use the Officers' Club and employed insulting language in conveying his views on this subject to a Negro officer." Then, Lt. Col. Charles Gayle, Commanding Officer of the 553d Fighter Squadron, told the black officers in his command "that he would court-martial for inciting a riot, the first man who stepped into the Officers' Club."<sup>48</sup> The AAF also investigated and its report defended the actions of its commanders at Selfridge, noting that it had

established as a cardinal policy, explicit and definite directions that recreational and social activities on each base, whereon colored and white troops are stationed jointly, should be so provided and handled as to avoid charges of discrimination or prejudice towards members of either race.

The report mentioned that construction of a gym, service club, and officers' club was in progress. In addition, Col. Boyd was well supported, as he had been "especially selected for that duty." The AAF concluded by stating that "every effort is being made by this Headquarters to implement the expressed War Department policy concerning the equality of treatment of all military personnel." The AAF took this stand with total disregard of AR 210-10 which stated that all officers' clubs would be open to all officers on the base. By refusing to enforce the regulation, the AAF skirted the issue completely and emphasized "equality of treatment."<sup>49</sup>

The following month because of pressure from the War Department, the Air Inspector submitted another appraisal of the situation. After the January incident, the base closed the officers' club; since this undoubtedly had been the cause of the confrontation, the inspector concluded that the problem had been resolved, although he admitted



that Col. Gayle had mishandled the matter. On the other hand, the Air Inspector maintained that Col. Boyd had been impartial and restrained and had rendered himself accessible to black personnel. Most significant, the report reveals what the AAF believed to have been the main source of this racial problem—the city of Detroit. The inspector noted that Detroit “has always been a center of racial activities,” and “that communistic elements are particularly active among Negroes at present.” Furthermore, the AAF believed that the black press was attempting to precipitate a racial incident and was playing up events at the base. For this reason, then, the Air Inspector recommended that blacks be moved from the area and from exploitation by the press. He thought the best relocation would be one so remote that mail could be censored to prevent adverse criticism from reaching the United States.<sup>50</sup> General Arnold agreed with the recommendation to remove the blacks from Selfridge and was inclined to place them on Antigua or Saint Lucia in the Caribbean. Since the Secretary of War would have to approve the move, Arnold recommended a detailed study illustrating the problems at Selfridge; and he especially requested that the “tie-in with the local agitators in the City” be emphasized, noting their adverse effect on training and discipline. Any location selected must have a minimum of interference so that blacks could be properly trained for combat. And so the Air Staff proceeded with plans to relocate the 477th, although Antigua and Saint Lucia were deemed impractical.<sup>51</sup>

While the Air Staff made preparations for the move, the situation at Selfridge had not improved with time as the AAF had hoped. Tensions remained because the basic racial issues had not been resolved, and the black press gave continuous coverage to them. Truman Gibson wrote to Assistant Secretary John McCloy reminding him that Michigan did have a civil rights law; that black officers had used the club without incident in the past; that they had been stationed at Selfridge for more than a year and, until recently, no effort had been made to provide them with club facilities; and that their living quarters were inferior and unsatisfactory. Gibson correctly observed that while certain conditions were taken for granted in the South, “it is quite another matter to transplant those same conditions on a Northern post in a state where there is a civil rights law and despite plain and explicit Army regulation.” However, the War Department had not always enforced its policies and was often vague and ambiguous about what its policies actually were. As a result, the AAF was able to get by with a minimum of initiative on the whole issue of equal treatment.<sup>52</sup>

Black pilots encountered further humiliation over the restrictions placed on Wacs stationed at Selfridge. The base informed the women that they could not walk around the base without an MP escort, and female control tower operators were escorted to and from work. In addition, the women were told that they could not socialize with blacks. Once the black pilots left, the Wacs were given the freedom of the base.<sup>53</sup>

Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Miller G. White of the War Department Personnel Division had been studying the Davis/Shoemaker report and basically agreed with it, concluding that the War Department had been lax in enforcing its policies:

It is obvious that the commanding officer at Selfridge Field, Col. William L. Boyd, the commanding officer of the 553d Fighter Squadron, and other officers at Selfridge Field deliberately and intentionally violated explicit War Department instructions on this subject. Either the War Department must enforce its orders and regulations and demand complete compliance by commanders of all echelons, or we must revise the instructions and permit racial segregation and discrimination. The subject is a difficult one and this division believes that the War Department must adhere to its position and enforce its policy.<sup>54</sup>

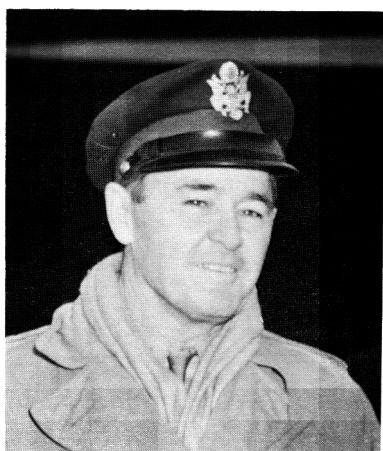
The War Department accepted Gen. White's evaluation that its directives had been violated by authorities at Selfridge; it authorized a change of station, halted construction on the black officers' club, and relieved and reprimanded Col. Boyd.<sup>55</sup>

There were several AAF officers who made vital decisions on racial questions involving Selfridge and later Godman and Freeman Fields. Maj. Gen. Frank O'D. Hunter, First Air Force Commander, had the greatest influence on race relations affecting the 477th during 1944 and 1945. In the spring of 1944, he visited Selfridge where he told a black newspaperman that "Negroes can't expect to obtain equality in 200 years and probably won't, except in some distant future."<sup>56</sup> Four telephone conversations made in April and July 1944, between Hunter and various Air Staff officers, reveal the attitude of these men. Some criticism which Col. Boyd received concerned Gen. Hunter, because the latter was particularly involved. Hunter and Boyd realized that the real question was not comparable officers' clubs but the issue of segregation. Hunter admitted to Gen. Robert W. Harper, head of AAF Training, that "I don't think, in line with [what] they found out about Boyd, I don't think I'm qualified to command colored troops either." Hunter had told Boyd to stand firm and was embarrassed when the Secretary of War reprimanded him. Hunter even tried to avoid mention of the reprimand on Boyd's Efficiency Report and conferred on this matter with the Office of the Air Adjutant General. His conversation with Gen. Giles, Chief of the Air Staff, indicates that the Air Staff also supported Boyd:

Giles: I told Gen. Arnold how you felt about it, that you didn't want anybody in your command taking the rap for something that you condoned.

Hunter: I didn't condone it, I ordered it.

Giles: And that later on when they were excluded from the Club you went up there and talked to the Commanding Officer and told him to carry it on and that I concurred in that deci-



General Giles



Colonel Boyd



General Hunter



Colonel Selway

sion with you . . . I told General Arnold that we wouldn't let them join the Club and he approved.<sup>57</sup>

In a further conversation with Gen. William E. Hall, also an Air Staff officer, Hunter complained that Hall and Gen. Harper were calling direct to Selfridge "about all kinds of things." He preferred that the Air Staff go through him, and did not want to be responsible for conversations direct with his subordinates. Hall replied, "I'll tell you, Monk, we had to get the answer the fastest way we could to keep Mr. Stimson from slitting Barney's [Giles] throat." Hunter wanted to know if the War Department had spies at Selfridge, since they seemed to learn about the closing of the officers' club almost immediately. General Hall responded: "It will surprise you that word came from Selfridge, probably through some clearinghouse in Detroit, to the White House, to Stimson." Hunter claimed that the club had been closed to sand the floors. Hall added, "when you can't polish the floors of your officers' club without explaining it to the Secretary of War, it does make you wonder, doesn't it."<sup>58</sup>

The above conversations demonstrate that Boyd was not the only officer who should have been reprimanded, and that decisions involving Selfridge implicated a major field commander and the highest levels of the AAF. Boyd, however, was in a most vulnerable position and became the "sacrificial lamb." The AAF clearly succumbed to War Department pressure, but avoided the segregation issue by removing black units from Selfridge.

In May, the 477th was transferred from Selfridge to Godman Field, Kentucky, and the 553d to Walterboro, South Carolina. Official histories make no suggestion that racial factors were largely responsible for the move. The First Air Force history furnishes as reasons "hazards and interruptions," such as smoke from the industrial area and winter weather. The history of the 477th states that the "transfer was made to make use of better atmospheric conditions for flying."<sup>59</sup>

However, behind the scenes in the War Department and AAF, among the black fliers, and within the black community, the real reason for the move was no secret. Capt. Walter S. Brown, a medical doctor stationed both at Selfridge and Godman, reveals in his personal correspondence the growing tensions at the Michigan field and how the AAF merely transplanted the racial problem to Godman. Brown writes that in March morale among blacks was quite low as a result of a visit by Gen. Hunter during which he stated that there "will be no race problem here for he will not tolerate any mixing of the races and anyone who protests will be classed as an agitator, sought out and dealt with accordingly." Hunter added that he had gone out of his way to get a separate club because "colored officers weren't ready to be accepted as the equal of white officers."

In a renewed effort, blacks again attempted to integrate the club as a test case of AR 210-10, but an informer revealed their plan. So,

later in March, they filed applications to join the club, but Col. Boyd rejected them. Brown wrote that Col. Robert Selway, the 477th Commander, called a meeting announcing that "any officer under him who uttered one word in protest would be given unsatisfactory in the performance of his duties." In anger, Capt. Brown added, "it's really Alabama in Michigan." Two months later, Brown reported that the move to Godman certainly had not resolved basic grievances, that morale remained low, and that "pilots fly on psychological reactions within their minds and with so much confusion existing they can't possibly do their best." Reminiscent of Dr. Kubie's observations a year earlier, Brown noted that there were no AAF psychiatrists there, and "the psychological problems of these pilots are not understood." Therefore, flight surgeons did not ground pilots with flying fatigue to prevent serious neuroses, and Brown wrote Truman Gibson that "one thing I am most convinced—namely—these pilots can take it for if they couldn't the whole bunch would have cracked up mentally long ago." In July, a memorandum from Gibson indicates that Brown was in a military hospital and was "diagnosed as a psychoneurotic because of his inability to adjust to conditions in the South."<sup>60</sup>

While the 477th moved to Godman, the 553d deployed to Walterboro, South Carolina, where its primary mission was to provide replacement fighter pilots for the 332d, then in Italy. The Air Staff concerned itself about race relations at Walterboro because of its southern location and because the 553d had been a major problem at Selfridge. It contained a "troublesome element," as one report notes.<sup>61</sup>

In May, Gen. Giles visited Walterboro and reported that there were adequate quarters and messing facilities and an excellent officers' club for the 80 blacks, but he made no mention of the club for the 22 white officers. Two enlisted messes were established according to race and a new service club was furnished for the black enlisted. The PX and theater were available to both blacks and whites, but the gym was shared on alternate days. Discipline was quite lax and some personnel exhibited arrogance, insolence, and disrespect toward Giles. He felt that there was a need for stronger leadership and the following month a new commander arrived on station.<sup>62</sup>

Race relations were at a standoff while the 553d was at Walterboro. Gen. Hunter wanted some form of segregation maintained, because he believed "that's the way they run things down in South Carolina." He informed Gen. Giles that he would not change his thinking on the subject "unless I'm ordered to." When the War Department ordered during the summer of 1944 that facilities would be utilized by both whites and blacks, white officers refused to attend the club and rented facilities in the town.<sup>63</sup> The following year, the base furnished a club for the whites. And in an attempt to discourage publicity, Gen. Hunter told the commander at Walterboro, Col. Kirksey, that if the black officers attempted to enter the white club, the white officers should not commit any overt acts against the blacks.<sup>64</sup> The Pittsburgh

*Courier* throughout 1944 pointed out problems such as the presence of general unrest and discrimination, the white power structure which kept black officers working for whites, the existence of two officers' clubs, the lack of facilities in the town, and the segregated theater. The *Courier* reported that the local bus was segregated, but the men tore off the signs and sat where they wanted.<sup>65</sup>

Because the War Department seldom exhibited strong direction in the area of race relations, basic issues affecting black flying units in the United States remained unresolved at the end of 1944. The ambiguity of segregation policy and dominance by the white command structure, coupled with increased pressure by blacks, fostered a breakdown in communication that led the following year to a conflict at Freeman Field, Indiana. Overseas, the story was quite different as the 332d became an integral part of the Allied fighting machine. Other AAF officers there respected and accepted the blacks. Within the AAF, the treatment of small groups of black officers at various bases ranged from good to discriminatory. The degree of acceptance was relative to the amount of public attention focused on the base. But the treatment of the 477th exemplified the most harmful attitudes of many AAF officers. Next, it is necessary to examine changes that were taking place in the War Department, some of the other problems blacks encountered in the AAF, and the kinds of protests they presented to the AAF and War Department.

## Chapter IV

### 1943: ERA OF CHANGE

During the course of the war, the War Department and the AAF spent much time, money, and effort to assure employment of black troops with a minimum of racial difficulty. They conducted surveys and staff studies, wrote pamphlets and manuals, produced films and radio broadcasts, and passed down the chain of command a constant stream of letters, memoranda, and instructions. It is difficult to assess the effectiveness of this activity, but it is clear that racial tensions did not subside as the war progressed and the AAF's most explosive racial disturbance took place in April 1945. An obvious explanation for persistent racial unrest within the military was that society continued to compound the causal racial problems. Too, the fact that many military leaders were not convinced of the black's usefulness in the war effort did not abet racial harmony. It is apparent, however, that as the war progressed, attitudes at the highest levels within the War Department underwent a major and significant change. From 1940 to early 1943, officials generally believed in the inferiority of blacks, were afraid to incorporate them into the armed forces, and were certain that conspirators, inspired by Communists, Japanese spies, or other un-American groups, were responsible for racial strife. This theory rested on the assumption that the country had solved its racial problem through a separate-but-equal doctrine that blacks found acceptable and that any challenge to the status quo had to be explained on the basis of alien forces stimulating the dissatisfaction of racially inferior blacks. For many War Department officials, the black press was conspicuous as a transmitter of alien ideas. However, beginning in 1943, the War Department began to reflect a changed attitude. There was an increasing acceptance of the notion that the black was not racially inferior, but was a victim of environment, racism, prejudice, and segregation.

Unfortunately, because of a decided lack of commitment on the part of some AAF leaders, this attitudinal change did not filter down to lower command levels. Racial difficulties might have been minimized had AAF leaders rigidly enforced equality of treatment for all personnel and exhibited the moral leadership sought by War Department officials. Rather, throughout the chain of command, commanders found ways to circumvent War Department and AAF directives.

A change in opinion in Washington and the development of relative harmony between the War Department and the black community

were of crucial importance. In this chapter, we will see how the War Department failed during the early part of the war to face the racial problem and in lieu of a comprehensive program, it attempted in a random fashion to circumvent potential problems with sporadic directives and orders. Such haphazard tactics eventually evolved into a concerted effort to improve channels of communication within their own command and with the black community. Though these attempts were not initially successful, they were steps in the right direction.

## I

During the period of the pre-World War II military buildup, blacks became increasingly vocal, pressuring the War Department and the President to be more responsive to their problems and to be more assertive in assuring their fair employment in the military services. A result of this action was the formation of the all-black Office of the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War. Established on 1 November 1940 to "facilitate the equitable and orderly integration of Negroes into the Army," it proved to be an active agent for change within the War Department. Its responsibilities, at first vague, were later expanded, and the office was given an important role when the War Department announced that all policy matters pertaining to blacks were to be referred to the Civilian Aide "for comment or concurrence before final action."<sup>1</sup>

Judge William H. Hastie was appointed as the first Civilian Aide, and Truman Gibson, a Chicago lawyer, was designated his assistant; others later joined their staff, including Louis R. Lautier and James C. Evans. Prior to accepting this post, Hastie had been assistant solicitor for the Department of the Interior, Federal District Judge of the Virgin Islands, Dean of the Howard University Law School, and chairman of the National Legal Committee of the NAACP. He brought with him to the War Department a broad legal background, an outstanding reputation, and a dedication to crusade actively against discrimination. Hastie remained in this position until January 1943, when Truman Gibson assumed the post as Acting Civilian Aide and then was named the Civilian Aide. During the war years, each man stamped his own personality upon the office, although Hastie generally received much of the publicity.

Hastie was ineffective in working within the War Department, and evidence demonstrates that the War Department itself has to accept most of the responsibility. High-ranking officials displayed a steadfast reluctance to utilize blacks in the war effort and did not take Hastie seriously. They rarely consulted him on policy questions affecting blacks and misconstrued his suggestions as threats rather than as constructive criticism.<sup>2</sup> Hastie was encumbered by his identification with the NAACP. Since the NAACP crusaded against the policies of the War Department and AAF, and Hastie maintained ties with that organization, the War Department never fully accepted him.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, he believed that his ties with the NAACP increased his



effectiveness, for it meant that he represented "responsible views and opinions widely shared by the black community." Hastie maintained that "military leadership would have been no less reluctant to accept my recommendation if I had not had that association." He remained pessimistic during the early 1940's over the prospect of changing existing racial policy but hoped to minimize racial discrimination despite the segregated system.<sup>4</sup>

The Office of the Civilian Aide was delegated little actual power or authority. During the early years, it is unlikely that anyone could have effectively functioned in the office, given the inflexible attitude of many military officers. Hastie had to confront those who perpetuated racial stereotypes and accepted Jim Crow practices, and he experienced constant frustration.

Such attitudes were reflected in a series of reports which the War Department issued during 1942 following the investigation of racial conditions in the Army. Several themes permeate the reports. They assume, for example, that since War Department directives emphatically prohibited any kind of discrimination, it would follow then that there would be no racial problems. And since racial problems did exist, War Department officials became convinced that alien elements—Communists, Japanese, and other un-American groups—fomented them. Included among organizations on this conspiratory list were the black press which was viewed as dispensing un-American ideas and encouraging racial unrest, the independent northern blacks stationed in the South, and at times the NAACP.

A report by the Operations Division of the General Staff, submitted in April 1942, exemplifies the department's pattern of thinking and details some of the racial problems in the Army. The evaluation maintained that orders issued from above were complied with below. Thus, the Operations Division noted that the Army policy of segregation resulted in equal status for blacks, and that every effort was made to "eliminate discrimination, racial prejudice, and intentional or unintentional slighting" of the black soldier. The report was somewhat visionary in believing that instances of discrimination and injustice were isolated cases and that because of its policies the War Department had "practically eliminated the colored problem, as such, within the Army."

In addition, the operations report reflected an outmoded thought of interwar Army War College studies. It noted that although black soldiers had an inadequate educational background, they also suffered from "the apparent lack of inherent natural mechanical adaptability." Further, the report held they functioned best in nontechnical or labor units, and that they were not capable as leaders and created problems because of social mixing.<sup>5</sup>

An intelligence memorandum discussing conditions around Alexandria, Louisiana blamed northern blacks stationed in the South for racial tensions. The study recommended that they not be stationed in

the South because of the negative impact they had on southern blacks and whites.<sup>6</sup>

An inspection mission, conducted by Col. Elliot D. Cooke for the Chief of Staff, became the basis for another report. Cooke believed that there were numerous factors responsible for racial incidents, including the selection of inadequate officers and noncommissioned officers, unequal facilities provided for black and white soldiers, lack of cooperation by southern authorities, the provocations of so-called "poor white trash," mistreatment by local law enforcement officials, attacks by white soldiers on blacks, "the colored soldiers' desire for a woman," and associations with white women. Colonel Cooke also singled out "colored uplift societies" such as the NAACP and black newspapers, and recommended that there be some kind of censorship over the black press.<sup>7</sup>

The Military Intelligence Division also focused on the black press in its analysis of racial conditions. Its study asserted that certain articles "could not be considered as influencing their readers toward high allegiance to the Army." Although the black papers could not be labeled as subversive, they did "at times appear to achieve the same results as outright subversive publications." To counter their influence, the division urged that the War Department make a concerted effort "to reduce and control the publication of inflammatory and vituperative articles" in the black press.<sup>8</sup> This report also discussed agitation by Communists, Germans, and Japanese among black troops. One survey of nearly 500 black soldiers indicated that over 20 percent "admitted their sympathies were with other governments."<sup>9</sup> The military recognized the Communists as the predominant subversive influence, although the Japanese had made headway by stressing "this is a white man's war" among dissatisfied black soldiers. Because of their racial ideologies, the Germans won few converts, but the War Department was concerned nevertheless that German agents might create dissension.<sup>10</sup>

In this atmosphere, Judge Hastie's identification with the NAACP created a cleavage between his office and the military. His influence was not evident in fundamental policy decisions within the War Department, but rather in tackling discrimination "point by point." Hastie funneled his energies into processing individual complaints of discriminatory treatment, channeled them to the proper agency within the War Department, and followed up on action which had been taken. One of his primary goals was the elimination of discrimination of any form within the military, and Hastie and his assistants pursued that goal through countless cases. James Evans, a member of Hastie's staff, reflected after the war that they had proceeded from one step to the next with an attempt to "get over it without losing [the] whole works."<sup>11</sup>

A massive volume of correspondence inundated the Civilian Aide's



Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson (left), Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy, and Assistant Secretary of War for Air Robert A. Lovett.

Office. For example, Hastie wrote to a private indicating that he was making every effort to increase the number of aviation cadets in meteorology; and to a number of blacks he responded to their protests of AAF height restrictions for flying. Hastie wrote to a man from Philadelphia that the waiting period for black candidates to aviation cadets was much longer than for whites. His aides also came to grips with such problems. A private wrote Evans complaining that he hated his stay at Keesler Field, Mississippi and the entire South; Gibson corresponded with the St. Louis Branch of the NAACP that had complained about the inaction of the Civilian Aide's Office; and the office attempted to locate potential aircraft mechanics for the AAF.<sup>12</sup>

In an attempt to resolve as many of these grievances as possible, the aides flooded every level of the War Department with letters, including the offices of the Secretary of War (Stimson), his Under Secretary (Patterson), Assistant Secretary (McCloy), and Assistant Secretary for Air (Lovett). Further down the chain of command, they sent memoranda to the Chief of Staff, the Chief of the AAF, the Inspector General, the Adjutant General, and others.

During the course of 1941 and 1942, Lovett had the responsibility to resolve questions concerning blacks in the AAF, but in the later stages of the war McCloy assumed the task as head of the Committee on Negro Troop Policies.<sup>13</sup> Hastie's and Gibson's correspondence to Lovett and McCloy was voluminous and challenging on many issues, as the aides were realistic about the basic conservatism inherent within the War Department. This caused some high-ranking officials to be

concerned about the pressure that the Civilian Aide could bring to bear. In early 1941, the Operations Officer of the General Staff notes that the Civilian Aide Office and organizations supporting them had gained numerous small concessions and were likely to secure more. Given his concern for the "increasing pressure" generated by these groups, the officer recommended that the War Department formulate a policy "which will both discourage their growth and prevent its function."<sup>14</sup> Lovett was also concerned about the pressure Hastie used to burden the AAF and was afraid that some people might expect a change in policy as a result. Therefore, Lovett informed the AAF that "there must be and will be segregation."<sup>15</sup>

It is true that one of Hastie's main goals was desegregation, and the AAF was particularly vulnerable on that point. His criticism focused on the negative aspects of the segregation system. For example, the AAF conducted all pilot training for blacks at one base, Tuskegee, while the same training for whites was scattered about the country. Because of the limited facilities at Tuskegee, cadets entering black aviation experienced long delays. Furthermore, Hastie was critical of the inequality of the training and facilities at Tuskegee in contrast to other bases. In addition, since blacks were segregated into separate flying and technical units, and these were limited in size and number, they had few opportunities to receive additional training. Discussions within the AAF to relocate all black training to Tuskegee also disturbed Hastie and his staff. Such a move would have taxed even further the already crowded base, and would have stressed all the more the separateness of the races.<sup>16</sup>

Aside from the Office of the Civilian Aide, numerous civilian organizations were successful in channeling their efforts toward accomplishing change within the War Department. The two most vocal and active black groups were the black press and the NAACP.<sup>17</sup>

The black press reached the pinnacle of its influence during World War II, and touched most blacks in one fashion or another.<sup>18</sup> The press engaged in an active struggle for the enhancement of the black race and was "extremely race-conscious . . . [in working] to foster race-consciousness . . . [among] Negroes."<sup>19</sup> The black press conducted for over a decade a relentless crusade to insure equal participation by blacks in the armed services,<sup>20</sup> and it zealously exposed and publicized any discrimination toward them.<sup>21</sup>

Regardless of whether or not the black press was actually "subversive," many within the War Department discussed the possibility of curtailing its influence. Some suggested summoning its representatives to "have a frank talk with them." When officials considered this in mid-1943, McCloy recommended instead the improvement of the Negro Section of the Bureau of Public Relations. The section had been created a year earlier in response to pressure by the black press for



Col. B. O. Davis, Jr., Frank Stanley, President of the National Negro Publishing Association, and Truman K. Gibson, Jr., Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War, during a visit to Godman Field.

more news coverage of black units. If after a trial period inflammatory articles still persisted, McCloy then suggested they summon representatives of the black press to "dress them down."<sup>22</sup>

The NAACP was also active in fighting discrimination in the Army. Although there were significant numbers of whites in leadership positions, those who provided the main thrust, such as Walter White and Roy Wilkins, and its rank and file, were black. Its legal activities came under the direction of men such as Thurgood Marshall and Judge Hastie. During the war years, because the NAACP took a stand on key issues and gained favorable publicity, it enjoyed a tremendous increase in branches and membership.<sup>23</sup>



General Stratemeyer



Assistant Secretary of War  
Robert P. Patterson.

White and Wilkins became involved with problems in the Army; White, in particular, travelled throughout the world visiting camps and making contacts with black soldiers and their officers. At the same time, both addressed letters to the President and War Department officials, citing examples of improper treatment of blacks.<sup>24</sup>

The NAACP forwarded to the Office of the Civilian Aide or to the NAACP Washington Bureau letters received from black soldiers complaining of discrimination and similar problems. NAACP leaders had limited power to act because they could not handle administrative grievances such as assignments and financial problems, or cases involving discrimination in civilian communities. For example, in 1944 a private from Robbins Field, Georgia accidentally brushed into a white woman shopper in a Perry, Georgia grocery store causing an altercation involving several white men. Although authorities did not charge the private with any serious crime, they placed him in solitary confinement in the Perry jail. The AAF refused to act, since it was a civilian matter, and the NAACP was powerless.<sup>25</sup>

However, the NAACP was successful in bringing change to other areas of discrimination. Wilkins once complained that the Geiger Field officials in Spokane, Washington had introduced a type of Jim Crow system in the seating arrangement at the base theater. As a result of his protest, officials rescinded the order and allowed soldiers to sit where they wished in the theater. Meanwhile, the Columbus, Ohio branch of the NAACP complained of segregated facilities in the PX at Lockbourne Field which led to an investigation.<sup>26</sup>

Through its efforts, the NAACP was admonished for being a nuisance to the War Department. When White sent a telegram to General Arnold requesting information he needed for an article, Arnold replied that classification prevented him from releasing the information. And Arnold warned a member of his staff that White's request looked like "a new blast of Negro propaganda."<sup>27</sup> In addition, the Army sometimes viewed NAACP pressure as a threat. Remarks by Walter White caused Gen. MacArthur to send a Top Secret message to Gen. Marshall complaining that "the violent opinions and unfounded statements of Mister White would seem to mark him as a troublemaker and a menace to the war effort."<sup>28</sup>

As we have seen above, many in the War Department and in American society saw the NAACP in much the same light as they viewed the black press—as militants and radicals stirring up the black soldier. At one time in 1942, Virginius Dabney, writing in the *Richmond Times Dispatch*, accused the NAACP of inciting to riot and of traitorous actions.<sup>29</sup> But the NAACP did not relent in its attempt to elicit change and to end discrimination and segregation. Win or lose, it was a pressure group with which the War Department had to deal. The NAACP maintained constant contact with black soldiers, and Walter

White's trips around the world demonstrated that it was a significant force. Its increase in membership also exemplified its wide appeal and strong stand on key issues.

A turn of events within the War Department came with Hastie's resignation on 5 January 1943. Although Judge Hastie was enthusiastic during the early part of his appointment, dissatisfaction soon overcame him. Following a meeting in March 1941, Stimson reports that they had gotten along well, that he had given Hastie some reassurances, and that he appeared to be appreciative. Yet, by the following January, Hastie had prepared a letter of resignation "because he felt that he was being frustrated in his efforts." Then, in October Hastie and Stimson met again; Stimson writes that he had heard Hastie was "discontented and felt that he was being neglected." Stimson attempted to reassure him, but was disappointed with his attitude, about which the Secretary notes: "it was not realistic and I am afraid his usefulness is limited."<sup>30</sup> Judge Hastie, however, was not disenchanted with the Secretary of War, but with the attitudes and policies of the AAF. He characterized the force's sentiments toward him and his office as "hostile" and attributed this largely to Gen. Henry Arnold "who was entirely out of sympathy with my efforts." Also the Assistant Secretary of War for Air, Robert Lovett, "always seemed politely disinterested in my efforts."<sup>31</sup>

In his letter of resignation to the Secretary of War, Hastie directed much of his resentment toward the AAF, because some of its recent actions were "so objectionable and inexcusable that I have no alternative but to resign in protest and to give public expression to my views." He characterized the AAF's efforts in the race relations field as reactionary and unsatisfactory, and its recent performance as a "further retrogression." Hastie included five pages of specific objections and in particular denounced the recent announcement of a segregated Officer Candidate School (OCS) at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri and the "humiliating and morale shattering mistreatment at Tuskegee."<sup>32</sup>

Hastie believed that the OCS proposal for Jefferson Barracks was a reversal of the earlier War Department practice of unsegregated schools. It disturbed him that he had not been consulted, that the AAF had been misleading in its policies, and that he had to learn about the school from rumors and a press release. Among other criticism directed at the AAF, Hastie remarked on its general reluctance to employ blacks and complained that it organized them into service units which often performed menial or common labor and "serve[d] no specific military need." He further protested that the AAF restricted blacks in their admittance to Tuskegee; that although the AAF needed weather officers, it turned down qualified blacks; that they had not been accepted as service pilots; that black medical officers did not receive equivalent training as they were not admitted to the School of Aviation Medicine at Randolph Field, Texas; and that Tuskegee maintained separate messes, toilet facilities, and officers' call as well as restrictions on black military police carrying sidearms. He remarked that where

valuable inroads had been made, the AAF had failed to pursue them with assertive action. He mentioned for instance that integrated training for technicians and mechanics had been successful at Chanute, but that it had not been implemented elsewhere; also, the AAF had trained two black officers as Aerial Observers but was discontinuing the program.<sup>33</sup>

Hastie's resignation had a notable impact upon the AAF and the black community.<sup>34</sup> The AAF girded itself for Hastie's resignation memorandum, preparing for the brunt of his criticism. The War Department instructed it "to explain to the satisfaction of the Secretary of War the criticism set forth" in Hastie's memorandum, and the Personnel Division of the Air Staff hastily compiled explanations for each of Hastie's charges. The AAF conceded that it had conducted a feasibility study of a segregated OCS at Jefferson Barracks to complement the one at Miami Beach, but the proposal was discarded. The AAF admitted that it was unfortunate that one of its divisions, Individual Training, had not been notified of the change in plans and had begun to implement the move to Jefferson Barracks. It was through this lack of coordination that Hastie learned of the plan and mistakenly believed that it had been approved. The AAF acknowledged that "there appears to be no good reason why Negro Service Pilots should not be effectively employed," and that the training of black surgeons through a correspondence course instead of at Randolph "constituted undesirable discrimination." Also, Personnel stressed that if Tuskegee had violated War Department policies, corrective action should be taken. It admitted that although the AAF had been skeptical of the blacks' ability to contribute to the national air effort, its policy was not to discriminate because of race.<sup>35</sup>

Perhaps the AAF's reaction to Hastie's resignation exhibited the first real signs of a constructive outlook toward the employment of blacks. Since the AAF was well aware of its vulnerability, it began to move with a speed and determination never previously observed in the area of race relations. The Chief of the Air Staff, Maj. Gen. George Stratemeyer, assumed personal control and acted with dispatch and decisiveness. He appointed Personnel as the central collection agency for material on blacks in the AAF and ordered that the Director of Individual Training insure that no AAF training school or facility conduct segregated training. Tuskegee, because of its particular nature, remained an exception.<sup>36</sup> To the Commanding General of the Technical Training Command, Stratemeyer wrote that he did not want "any colored school any place to be conducted as a segregated school." He ordered that at the Miami OCS blacks be afforded equal treatment, and that they "will go to the same classes, to the same drills, and eat in mess halls the same as the whites."<sup>37</sup> And he instructed the Director of Military Requirements to increase the training for black ground crew members.<sup>38</sup>

General Stratemeyer informed the Air Surgeon that he would pro-



vide a "proportionate share of vacancies for Negro resident students at the School of Aviation Medicine."<sup>39</sup> As Personnel had indicated, the policy regarding specialized training for medical doctors was discriminatory. While whites attended the Flight Surgeon School at Randolph Field, Texas, blacks received their training through a correspondence course. Earlier in 1942 Hastie had received some complaints concerning this and had pressed Lovett's office for an explanation but had not received satisfactory answers. Though the Randolph school excluded them, Col. Coiner wrote Hastie that "it is not the policy of the Air Corps to exclude Negro officers from training at the School of Aviation Medicine."<sup>40</sup> Coiner's reply was evasive, to say the least. Similarly, the official history of Medical Support for the AAF was misleading when it reported that a correspondence course would train black flight surgeons "with the least disruption." The quoted phrase could only be interpreted to mean that interracial mixing would be prohibited for the AAF and separate though unequal training would be retained for blacks.<sup>41</sup>

General Stratemeyer was particularly concerned about conditions at Tuskegee Field, since it was clearly the racial showplace of the AAF. In a letter to the Flying Training Command, he quoted relevant regulations about discrimination and the treatment of blacks after noting Hastie's comments about Tuskegee. He directed that there be no separation of the races in official assemblies, in toilet facilities, and messing facilities, and that hereafter black officers be placed in administrative posts. Lieutenant Colonel Noel Parrish, the new commander at Tuskegee, responded affirmatively for strict compliance with the spirit and letter of War Department policies. He added that every effort would be made to prevent "misunderstandings, difficulties, and demoralizing incidents." This final point caused some consternation within the AAF. A high-ranking general feared that enforcement of War Department policies at Tuskegee would threaten traditional black-white relationships with the surrounding community that had been seasoned with time and solidified with practice.<sup>42</sup>

That the AAF implemented these changes as a result of Hastie's resignation was confirmed by a letter which Under Secretary Patterson prepared in response to Mr. Wilbur LaRoe, Jr., Chairman of the Committee on Civic Affairs of the Washington Federation of Churches. The black press publicized Patterson's reply as the official War Department response to Hastie. LaRoe had based his original correspondence on material released by Hastie, and Patterson discussed each point. The latter responded that Tuskegee had the same modern facilities as those schools which trained white pilots, and blacks attended the same OCS and technical schools as whites; that black soldiers performed unskilled tasks in the AAF only because of their below average performance on the Army General Classification Test (AGCT); that they would be trained in other flying jobs after they had gained experience in pursuit flying; that Tuskegee was advancing blacks to command duties; that the officers mess at Tuskegee was open to all officers; that Aviation Squadrons performed necessary functions at every base and there were

comparable white squadrons, but under a different designation; that weather officers would be trained as they were needed for black units; that the use of blacks as service pilots was under study; that black doctors were being assigned to the resident study course at the School of Aviation Medicine; and, that the War Department was examining the feasibility of training a bomber group.<sup>43</sup>

However, Patterson's letter satisfied neither Hastie nor the black community. Following his resignation, Hastie conducted a publicity campaign in leading black newspapers, detailing racial problems in the AAF and reiterating his former criticisms.<sup>44</sup> Later that year, he climaxed his struggle with a pamphlet titled *On Clipped Wings*, published by the NAACP. He recapitulates in this work the points expressed in his resignation letter and other assorted articles, and clearly attempts to capitalize on the publicity surrounding his resignation.<sup>45</sup>

## II

After 1943 until the termination of the war, there appeared to be a decided attitudinal shift among War Department leadership. Policy makers became aware of the full scope of racial problems and attempted viable solutions. To a certain extent, the AAF reaction to Hastie's resignation exemplifies a fresh new approach, but unfortunately the impetus created by that event was short-lived, although increased demands from the black community and persistent pressure from the War Department caused the AAF to modify its position. Under the chairmanship of Assistant Secretary of War, John J. McCloy, the Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies, commonly referred to as the McCloy Committee, was instrumental in bringing about change. The committee was created in 1942 following an inspection tour by Col. Elliot D. Cooke who noted a lack of consistency in the practices and policies affecting black troops. The committee's purpose was to function as a central agency at the highest levels to coordinate policy for the utilization of black troops. Its duties were to assist in developing a cogent and consistent War Department policy with respect to social questions, personnel problems, training, and to issue information to aid officers.<sup>46</sup>

The communications gap surrounding the formation of the McCloy Committee was boundless. When first organized, the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War on Negro Affairs was to be included in all policy decisions concerning blacks. However, Judge Hastie was not notified of the existence of the McCloy Committee, perhaps illustrating the War Department's basic unwillingness to accept him. Judge Hastie and Under Secretary of War Patterson learned about the committee only indirectly a month after its formation. In a strongly worded memorandum to McCloy, Patterson expressed his indignation about not being informed of the committee, and related that not informing Hastie was "one of the factors that has led him to question his usefulness as Special

Aide to the Secretary of War on Negro Affairs." Patterson also stressed that Hastie had considered resigning at that time because he did not feel "he is accomplishing anything of useful nature."<sup>47</sup>

Although established in 1942, the McCloy Committee remained ineffective until the following year. It was beset by a number of problems. Having only advisory powers, its status was confusing; and since its members had other regular duties, they devoted limited time and energy to committee work. Then too, a lack of support by many within the War Department stifled the committee's momentum. One officer noted that "the field of race relations has never been a popular one" within the department and the presence of a committee "has tended to encourage buck-passing and avoidance of responsibility."<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, committee members themselves expressed a lack of commitment. McCloy's Executive and later Committee Secretary, Col. Harrison A. Gerhardt, believed that there was "a lack of initiative on the part of all the members" and that the general tendency was to "maintain a status quo and let a problem solve itself."<sup>49</sup>

But in spite of these difficulties, the McCloy Committee did make a major contribution in influencing War Department policy. As racial tensions escalated in 1943, the committee recommended the dispatch of a letter from General Marshall to his major commanders spelling out their responsibilities. Other discussions concerned the use of black troops in combat, the performance of the 99th Squadron, and equitable recreational facilities. The committee issued a pamphlet *Command of Negro Troops*, took action on the Freeman Field mutiny, and directly or indirectly introduced numerous other changes, several of which will be discussed in this chapter.<sup>50</sup>

This shift in War Department outlook was expressed, too, in its general acceptance of Truman Gibson, in marked contrast to its reluctance to recognize Judge Hastie. Truman Gibson had wanted to resign with Hastie, but the judge insisted that he remain on the job in order to provide continuity.<sup>51</sup> First as Acting Civilian Aide, and after his full appointment to that position, Gibson was able to take advantage of the uproar precipitated by Hastie's resignation. Shortly after Hastie's departure, Gibson addressed a letter to Assistant Secretary Lovett and sought to ease the tension created by the resignation and to lay the groundwork for future cooperation. The communication was well-balanced with constructive criticism tempered by praise and conciliation. He noted that although there had previously been a lack of mutual understanding between the War Department and his office, he anticipated a spirited exchange between the two in the future, although he would continue to be very critical of segregation. Gibson believed that segregation was slowly breaking down and he did not think that the War Department should attempt to polarize public opinion by advocating segregated approaches which many Americans denounced. On the other hand, he praised Col. Parrish and the AAF for their efforts to conduct fair and impartial training at Tuskegee, and he offered his

office "for any assistance that can be afforded the Army Air Forces in the development of necessary overall plans for Negroes." <sup>52</sup>

During the balance of his tenure, Gibson appeared to maintain good rapport with the War Department, particularly with McCloy and his committee. Whereas Hastie had not been invited to attend meetings of the Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policy, at its 22 March 1943 meeting the committee decided to invite Gibson to attend future meetings. This was important for Gibson, because he believed it was vital to correlate the functions of the committee and his office.<sup>53</sup>

Gibson's strategy was not to perceive each issue as a crusade to be won at all costs, but to strive for maximum benefit without alienating important officials. Metz T. P. Lochard of the Chicago *Defender* once wrote to Gibson that they shared the view that a practical strategy would yield the best results for blacks.<sup>54</sup> This approach proved successful for working with Army officials, and they accepted Gibson as a member of the War Department team. He returned their confidence through his loyalty, constructive criticism, and objectivity. He publicly praised certain Army actions on policies if they were deserving of praise and criticized segments of the black community if they were worthy of criticism.<sup>55</sup>

It was inevitable that the closer Gibson worked with the War Department, the more his motives would be questioned by some black leaders. After the war, Grant Reynolds of the Committee Against Jim Crow in Military Service and Training labeled Gibson as the War Department's "mouthpiece." Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. assailed Gibson, writing that he would be remembered "as the rubber stamp Uncle Tom who was used by the War Department." Powell condemned Gibson's aspersions on black troops in Italy, and criticized his evaluation of the performance of the 92nd Division.<sup>56</sup> Gibson had concluded that the division was not the success that they had anticipated and antagonized many black leaders with these remarks. He did not criticize black courage or capabilities, but rather he expressed disapproval of the system that had sent black men into battle with inadequate preparation. He reasoned that it was difficult to comprehend how anyone could argue "that segregation is wrong, and on the other hand, blindly defend the product of that segregation." <sup>57</sup>

Gibson, through his criticism, sought to rebut spokesmen for the black community who exaggerated the successes and capabilities of black units and had lost some of their objectivity. He thought that some black leaders and organizations, including the NAACP, further compounded the problem by believing that black deficiencies "whatever their cause, should not be discussed publicly." <sup>58</sup>

During a previous encounter in 1943 between Gibson and the NAACP, Roy Wilkins had expressed concern in a letter over Gibson's efforts to defend the War Department, "most of which is indefensible

by any standard." Wilkins conceded that Gibson had a difficult task, but he criticized him for attempts to blame black organizations and the black press and to

shift responsibility for friction and clashes to people and institutions in your own racial group whom you know, deep down in your heart, are morally correct 100 percent of the time and inaccurate and emotional only a small part of the time.<sup>59</sup>

In another letter to Gibson, Wilkins wrote that he wanted to be able to think of Gibson as the black representative in the War Department and not as a War Department employee who happened to be black.<sup>60</sup> Wilkins' criticisms noticeably disturbed Gibson, who wrote to many of his friends, editors and key figures in the black press, for their comments. The majority of the responses generally favored his approach within the War Department.<sup>61</sup>

In its appraisal of Gibson's services, the *Pittsburgh Courier* in a June 1944 editorial realistically noted that he could perform his job effectively only if he received the support of the black community. It stressed that while Gibson and Hastie had been of inestimable value to the black cause, the best way to rob Gibson of his strength would be to assume an attitude "smugly intolerate [sic] of him that was critical without cause."<sup>62</sup> With the support of most of the black press and the War Department, Gibson was very productive and was a key figure in 1944 and 1945 in the development of policies benefiting blacks in the military service.

### III

In addition to the efforts of the McCloy Committee and the work of Truman Gibson, other steps were taken within the War Department with regard to the employment of blacks. By mid-1943, it was clear to many high-ranking War Department officials that mounting racial problems were detrimental to Army efficiency. In an attempt to ease these tensions the War Department issued several important directives. In July 1943 Chief of Staff George Marshall circulated a strongly worded letter to his three major commanders. This letter emanated from a recommendation from two McCloy Committee meetings which had discussed the responsibilities of a commander to maintain a healthy racial environment.<sup>63</sup> Marshall's letter closely parallels McCloy's suggestions and at times he quotes McCloy verbatim. Marshall began by noting that "disaffection among negro soldiers continues to constitute an immediately serious problem" because of potential unrest and racial riots. All of the reported disturbances had begun "with real or fancied incidents of discrimination and segregation." They then expanded because of rumors and the absence of remedial action. In addition, there was a failure on the part of some commanders "to appreciate the seriousness of the problem and their inherent responsibility." General Marshall directed that

under no circumstances can there be a command attitude which makes allowances for the improper conduct of either white or negro soldiers. . . . Maintenance of discipline among soldiers and good order between soldiers and the civilian population is a definite command responsibility. . . . Failure on the part of any commander to concern himself personally and vigorously with this problem will be considered as evidence of lack of capacity and cause for reclassification and removal from assignment.<sup>64</sup>

Other major directives dealt with the use of base recreational facilities. Existing policy in accordance with the War Department's policy letter of October 1940 called for "no mixing" in these facilities. However, a minor change was made in 1942 at those posts that were predominantly black, including Tuskegee. There, "facilities will be provided *without* instructions either implicit or implied that certain ones are for exclusive use of either white or colored personnel."<sup>65</sup> Perhaps because this directive was vague, the War Department rescinded it and issued another. The new directive, issued on 10 March 1943, significantly increased black soldiers' access to on-base facilities. The lack of social outlets off-base had created numerous problems, and the War Department sought to reduce friction in the civilian community by encouraging black soldiers to use facilities on the base.<sup>66</sup> The letter stated that at camps where there were two or more races, "recreational facilities, including theaters and post exchanges, will not be designated for any particular race." However, the force of this directive was somewhat diluted because "where necessary, recreational facilities may be allocated to organizations in whole or in part, permanently or on a rotation basis," although "all units and personnel are afforded equal opportunity to enjoy such facilities."<sup>67</sup> The second part of the directive provided an escape clause for those commanders who wished to prevent the full integration of their recreational facilities. In effect, it implied that they could designate particular facilities for those units which happened to be black and the rest for white units. On most bases this was simple, since the military generally assigned blacks to all-black units and housed them in a defined area. Thus, if a commander so desired, segregation in recreational facilities could still be maintained, except that designations were made under the guise of unit rather than race. One command history reports that, in practice, the new directive meant that "theaters and post exchanges could be set aside for the Negro troops, and this was done at most stations."<sup>68</sup>

Complaints from black individuals and organizations about the deficiencies of the directive inundated the War Department with the result that the following year in July it issued a revision, titled "Recreational Facilities." The War Department paved the way for expanded opportunities for black soldiers by being more specific about commanders' responsibilities. Although facilities could be designated for particular units, they could not be denied to any group or individual because of race. The directive, for example, stated:

Transportation—Busses, trucks, or other transportation owned and operated by the Government or by a governmental instrumentality will be available to all military personnel regardless of race. Restricting personnel to certain sections of such transportation because of race will not be permitted either on or off a post, camp, or station, regardless of local civilian custom.<sup>69</sup>

But white southerners quickly voiced their opposition to these changes. Southern newspapers and political leaders believed that it was nothing less than revolutionary. The *Birmingham News* proclaimed that “social customs, rooted in ancient emotions, can never be changed by fiat.” As for the civilian community, the *News* noted that this order would arouse “them as few Army orders could do.” And the *Montgomery Advertiser* added that “even Army orders, even armies, even bayonets, cannot force impossible and unnatural social race relationships upon us.”<sup>70</sup> John Temple Graves of the *Birmingham Age-Herald* called the order a political ploy to win the black vote, and he personally felt that “segregation isn’t going to be abolished.”<sup>71</sup>

Congressman A. Leonard Allen of Louisiana wrote to Secretary Stimson voicing his protest: “this is a most unwise step. It is a blow at the Southland and it is a slap at every white man from Dixie wearing the uniform.” Stimson replied that the order was not an attempt to initiate social change, but Allen insisted that it was “breaking down the traditions, customs, and laws of the South.” In a scathing letter to General Marshall, a New Orleans man complained that the new order would break down segregation and force the black on the white:

Probably a small percent of the Negro Race has some idea what culture, innate refinement and good breeding mean. The great majority in the South seem to be unfamiliar with the laws of hygiene, personal cleanliness or a sense of refinement that would entitle them to be forced into the presence of refined and educated white people.

General James Ulio responded for Marshall that all soldiers regardless of race should “be afforded equal opportunity to enjoy the recreational facilities which are provided at posts, camps and stations.”<sup>72</sup>

Another device employed by the War Department in an attempt to alleviate racial problems was to produce various items for public release directed at both white and black audiences. Perhaps the most significant were the pamphlet, *The Negroes and the War*, and the film, “The Negro Soldier.”<sup>73</sup> The pamphlet, written by the black writer Chandler Owen and released by the Office of War Information, was clearly a propaganda attempt directed at blacks, and was not one of the office’s more successful efforts.<sup>74</sup> The tone of the pamphlet reflects the War Department’s anxiety. The work’s central theme stressed that blacks would lose the many gains they had achieved if the Nazis won the war. Since this idea was so pervasive throughout the pamphlet, the implication was that black people desired a Nazi victory. The War De-

partment misinterpreted the *Courier's Double V* campaign and represented it as unpatriotic. Owen emphasized that "our future like the future of all freedom lovers depends upon the triumph of democracy."<sup>75</sup>

Southern whites concluded that the publication advocated social equality and was a political move to influence black voters. Representative Rankin of Mississippi called it a "Communistic pamphlet."<sup>76</sup> On the other hand, Representative Hamilton Fish of New York considered the statement that "some Negro Americans say that it makes no difference who wins the war," a dastardly reflection on the loyalty of black Americans. In a speech before the House, he humorously conveyed his general opinion of *The Negroes and the War*:

Mr. Chairman, I was very much interested in hearing about the kind of food being furnished the Mexican laborers in California, consisting of tripe, frankfurters, and bologna. Some Member asked what bologna and tripe were. I hold in my hand a magazine I consider to be both tripe and baloney.<sup>77</sup>

Blacks, too, were critical of the pamphlet because it lacked any admission that discrimination did exist in the United States and in the military.

"The Negro Soldier," a film directed by Frank Capra and produced in 1943, was a more successful effort. Capra designed the film for both white and black audiences, and Carlton Moss, a young black radio writer, prepared the script. In emphasizing the accomplishments and participation of blacks in American history, the purpose of the film was to educate whites and to build pride among blacks. The reception of the film was much better than the War Department could have imagined. Capra reported that when 200 black publishers, editors, and writers accepted Stimson's invitation to preview the film, they were at first silent, skeptical, and expected another "snow job." Instead, when the preview was completed, they were genuinely surprised and pleased with what the War Department had accomplished.<sup>78</sup> Another preview was conducted before two groups of 439 blacks and 510 whites at Camp Pickett, Virginia. The majority of the audience was enthusiastic in its response and approved of the wide distribution of the film.<sup>79</sup> Also, response from black and liberal communities was very favorable. Letters in large numbers arrived at the War Department and the black press printed favorable comments about the production. The movie was then shown in more than 3,500 white commercial theaters, and the Chief of Staff required all soldiers to see it.<sup>80</sup>

With a similar purpose the War Department published guidelines to instruct those associated with black troops. The three most important were War Department Pamphlet Number 20-6: *Command of Negro Troops*; Army Service Forces Manual, M5: *Leadership and the Negro Soldier*; and Army Talk Number 70: *Prejudice!—Roadblock to Progress*.<sup>81</sup> These publications are significant because they represent a progressive and more sensitive approach for the Army.



*Command of Negro Troops* was issued by the McCloy Committee as a guide for white officers commanding black troops; the secretary of the committee, Col. Joseph Leonard, was instrumental in its compilation and issue.<sup>82</sup> A most significant point stressed in the pamphlet was the notion that genetic inferiority was not responsible for the low AGCT scores or minimum performance of black soldiers. Rather, the pamphlet emphasized deficiencies in the educational and social development of blacks in America. It noted that studies by psychologists and other scientists over the previous 20 to 30 years had not proved that "Negroes are, as a group, mentally or emotionally defective by heredity." The work's real value was its full discussion of problems a white officer might encounter when commanding black soldiers. It stressed differences in environmental background and the long history of disadvantage and discrimination, giving blacks "sound reason for complaint." The pamphlet observed pragmatically that officers who believed that little value could be derived from black labor would naturally get little from them. On the question of segregation, the War Department pamphlet correctly pointed out that black facilities were rarely equal to white, and noted that it was the commander's responsibility to make them more equitable. The work included a 15-point checklist, intended to be a sensible leadership guide in any situation.<sup>83</sup>

*Leadership and the Negro Soldier* discussed the black role in America and the particular problems black soldiers encountered in the Army. On the whole, the manual is quite sympathetic to the black position and Lee Nichols later writes that there had been numerous objections to its publication within the War Department and "efforts were made to suppress it after it was printed."<sup>84</sup> The publication pointed out that the Army did not endorse any theory of racial superiority or inferiority and recognized that environmental factors were reflected in the low test scores. The work placed emphasis upon the fact that the war effort needed black manpower and basic leadership principles were to be applied in commanding them. It also mentioned that blacks had problems in local communities and were not satisfied with their status in America, but that they did have a proud and loyal tradition of service in the United States military.<sup>85</sup>

Army Talk Number 70 was a third major effort to educate whites on the danger of prejudice. Commanders used these publications in weekly discussions with their troops. This particular work took a very strong stand against prejudice, labelling it as close-minded and linked to the propaganda of the Japanese and Germans. It called upon commanders to stress that prejudice was both un-Christian and un-American and posed a danger to the war effort.<sup>86</sup>

At the same time, the War Department made a significant attempt to be more constructive in its relationship with the black press. Because the department was often on the defensive within the black community, it sought a more compatible association, and the black press was the major vehicle for the achievement of that goal. As early as



General Surles

8 December 1941 the War Department, in an attempt to draw support, sponsored a meeting organized by Judge Hastie and addressed by General Marshall, between department officials and black newspaper editors. Although it was the day after Pearl Harbor, members of the black press did not suppress their criticism of War Department policy.<sup>87</sup> What could have been the basis for a close working arrangement instead produced some hostility, and the result was that it took a concerted effort on the part of both sides to come together.

However, three men in the War Department—Hastie, Gibson, and Maj. Gen. Alexander D. Surles, Director of the Bureau of Public Relations—were conspicuous in their efforts to improve relations. Hastie and Gibson worked to temper articles and editorials in the black press and Surles responded to black pressure for more news coverage of black units. War Department policy, heretofore, had permitted a limited number of war correspondents overseas, and generally it allotted these slots to representatives of the major daily papers, as the *New York Times*. A recurring complaint from the black press then was that these war correspondents tended to ignore service units to report on the more newsworthy battle activity. However, most blacks performed in service units. Another criticism was that the War Department's continuous flow of press releases made inadequate mention of black war activity. The War Department corrected these shortcomings and complied with their demands by making more news available to black reporters, by encouraging black papers to send war correspondents overseas, and by holding frequent informal talks with editors.<sup>88</sup>

Black war correspondents reported the efforts of black service troops on the supply routes in Iran, Burma, and Alaska. Far more

spectacular was their coverage of the 99th Squadron when it deployed overseas. General Surles suggested that they form a pool, and he cooperated fully in organizing it.<sup>89</sup> Thirteen black newspapers reached an agreement to pool the news gathered in two major theaters of operation. Gibson noted that this illustrated one of the few occasions where the "highly individualistic and exceedingly competitive Negro press has cooperated in a single venture." He pointed out that because of General Surles, the War Department had issued expanded and improved material on black soldiers. He also drew attention to a recent editorial in the *Afro-American* newspaper, with a circulation of approximately 200,000, which recognized that "relations have never been better between the War Department and the Negro press;" and Gibson himself reported to McCloy in late 1943 that relations between the two were good. It follows that this close working arrangement was crucial in creating a more favorable relationship between the black community and the War Department.<sup>90</sup>

#### IV

Regardless of the good intentions of the War Department and its directives, memoranda, publications, and other materials, a change in attitude toward the utilization of blacks could not be effective if AAF commanders lacked the moral leadership to enforce them. As we have noted in chapters II and III, the AAF had hesitated in the employment of blacks. And there is little evidence that the AAF took the initiative to insure equal treatment for them, but rather constantly remained on the defensive in responding to pressure from the War Department. Shortly after Hastie's resignation, Under Secretary Robert Patterson informed Assistant Secretary for Air Lovett that he was "not satisfied with the progress and number of Negro personnel" being trained by the AAF. Lovett discussed the matter with Maj. Gen. George Stratemeyer, Chief of the Air Staff, who promptly issued new orders and directives, especially for the flying program.<sup>91</sup> In another case, the War Department sent a memorandum to the AAF in May 1944 concerning a possible investigation of the 457th Aviation Squadron; it noted that if the allegations were true, the Army Air Forces were "making themselves needlessly vulnerable by not placing more emphasis on the handling and training of Negro AAF units." Major General Barney Giles, Chief of the Air Staff and AAF Deputy Commander, replied defensively that the AAF had immediately investigated and had "continually emphasized the necessity of the proper handling and thorough training of all Negro Army Air Force units" in its instructions to subordinate commanders.<sup>92</sup>

However, subordinate generals frequently acted independently of AAF directives and orders. The previous year Giles noted in a memorandum that the AAF had procured, trained, and then prepared to send overseas a correct proportion of black soldiers. But theater commanders objected and failed "to set up shipping priorities"; thus there was

an overflow of blacks in the interior and they clogged up the training system.<sup>93</sup>

With much energy expended by the War Department in an effort to propagate equality of treatment, it is not wholly clear why many commanders refused to cooperate fully and why they willingly resisted War Department and AAF directives. One explanation generally given is the military's intrinsic conservatism which solidifies attitudes, discourages criticism, and restricts change. Often, ideas become molded into customs and traditions which are defended as sacred and vital to an efficient operation of a military unit.<sup>94</sup> The traditional manner in which the military treated black soldiers was an established custom dating from before World War I and perpetuated during the Second World War. The AAF was therefore not innovative in its policy and did not acknowledge any contradiction between its treatment of blacks and the need to pursue a war. It is true that AAF policies reflected societal norms, but this service tended to represent the conservative branch of American society whose views it found were compatible with its own established thoughts. Further, a large proportion of generals and other officers were from the South and they generally upheld this conservative attitude in race relations.<sup>95</sup> Opinions to the contrary were not recognized.

Furthermore, directives, statements, and orders issued by the War Department were only as effective as the determination of local commanders to enforce them. Where local commanders were not positively committed, discrimination resulted.<sup>96</sup> The Army attempted to regulate the assignment of black military police and to encourage stationing northern blacks in the North. It directed improvements in the caliber of white and black officers assigned to black units and issued instructions for leaders to avoid the use of racial epithets. Also, it instructed local commanders about the necessity for proper recreational facilities for all black soldiers and appealed to southern state law enforcement officials and governors to respect them. Despite these efforts to contain racial problems, it was obvious that attitudes forged for centuries could not be changed overnight.<sup>97</sup>

Perhaps commanders did realize that men accountable for decision-making in the higher echelons of the War Department and AAF were not themselves totally committed to their racial policies. General Giles related to the War Department that the Army Air Forces was properly handling and training black units. He probably based this remark on a letter which Gen Arnold had just issued to all commanders in the AAF. Arnold was clear, concise, and to the point:

1. Recent racial difficulties within the Army Air Forces have brought to light the fact that some War Department agencies feel that the Army Air Forces are not complying with and do not desire to comply with War Department policy as affects handling of Negro troops.

2. I personally was not conscious of this fact, however, in the event that there is such a feeling in the Army Air Forces anywhere which is in opposition to War Department policy it must be immediately stamped out.

3. These instructions will be transmitted to the proper elements of your command and the necessary supervision established to insure that it will be understood that War Department policy on this subject *and any subject* is automatically Army Air Forces policy.<sup>98</sup>

On the surface at least, this letter clearly demonstrated to the War Department that the AAF supported current policy. Yet, 1 week later a telephone conversation recorded between Gen. Giles and Maj. Gen. Frank Hunter, First Air Force Commander, more clearly indicates the lack of commitment of high ranking officers:

Hunter: Well, Gen. Arnold wrote a letter down here the other day and said that we didn't carry out the War Dept. stuff and that we would. Did you read that?

Giles: Yes, we were forced to do that.

Hunter: I know, I didn't pay much attention to it.

Giles: That's right.

Such nonchalance might well have been prevalent throughout the chain of command.<sup>99</sup>

At lower command levels, there were noticeable contrasts in the instructions regarding the treatment of black enlisted men which some AAF commanders sent to their officers. A communication from the Commander of the Air Engineers emphasized building the "men's pride in themselves, their work, their officers, their organization." It pointed out that white officers should never touch their black men, nor "flaunt any advantage that you may enjoy because of your color before your men." Also, it reminded the officers that they should never "use the word 'nigger.' It hurts." Many of the points made were basic principles of leadership, valuable for the command of all military personnel, and the Air Engineers did well to reemphasize them.<sup>100</sup>

On the other hand, at an Area Commanders' Conference held in October 1943, the Air Service Command issued instructions on the same subject which, instead of emphasizing basic leadership principles, suggested taking advantage of the "Sambo" personality of the black:

Since the negro is by nature a showman who loves praise and who is generally immature in every respect except his physical being, the use of simple psychology will aid greatly in solving this problem. May I suggest briefly:

(1) Give the negro a chance to "show" what he can do and commend his work well done.

- (2) Have staff officers observe the negroes work since by nature he loves to show-off to his superiors.
- (3) Keep him from becoming scared or frightened as under this condition he reacts as a child and can do, or will do nothing.
- (4) Give him some sort of material reward for which he can strive—even a medal of some sort if necessary.
- (5) Use care in the selection of officers who will understand his simple nature and treat him accordingly.
- (6) Make use of the “good negro” in the group in helping to eliminate the “bad negro”—he will revel in your trust and confidence in him.

Instructions of this nature obviously contributed to perpetuating stereotypes and were detrimental to race relations.<sup>101</sup> There may have been other similar instructions, for Gibson complained to McCloy that some directions proceeded on the premise that white officers should be “Bible spouting, fatherly masters who recognized the primitive and child-like qualities of their Negro soldiers.” Gibson continued that this attitude was demeaning to black soldiers, assuming that if they were given “pretty uniforms, medals and pats on the back” they would perform to white expectations.<sup>102</sup>

The War Department may have thought that solutions to racial problems were as easily dispensed as the directives and supportive measures it generated within the chain of command. However, much to the dismay of the department, the AAF, and the black community, racial problems persisted and even escalated throughout the last years of the war. In spite of efforts to deal with officer selection, discrimination, recreational facilities, and the black press, and the distribution of movies, manuals, and pamphlets, attitudes of commanders and white soldiers did not change overnight. Realistically, a War Department directive was only as effective as its enforcement within a chain of command, and in spite of noticeable changes in attitude within the War Department, there was a question as to the commitment of some AAF commanders to improve race relations.

Although by the end of the war blacks in the AAF were still not being treated in the same manner as whites, some progress had been made. Much of the credit for these successes must go to those blacks both within and outside of the military who were unwilling to accept discrimination of any kind and made a concerted effort to be conspicuous in combating unequal treatment. The Office of the Civilian Aide, the black press, and organizations such as the NAACP did support black soldiers. At times these groups were effective, at other times they were an annoyance to the War Department, but always, because of their influence among black soldiers and politicians, they were forces with which the War Department had to reckon.

## Chapter V

### PROBLEMS, PROTESTS, AND LEADERSHIP

Racial protest intensified as the war progressed, and an increasingly larger number of people became involved in the fight for broader rights. In 1943, major race riots took place in the Army and in American cities. Critical disorders occurred at Camp Van Dorn, Mississippi, Lake Charles, Louisiana, Camp San Luis Obispo, California, and Fort Bliss, Texas; and civil disturbances took place in Los Angeles, Detroit, New York, and Beaumont, Texas.<sup>1</sup>

Because blacks in the Army Air Forces (AAF) were not as numerous nor as concentrated as in the Army, smaller numbers partook in the AAF riots. Protests in the Army Air Forces covered the full spectrum from individual confrontations to small groups desegregating recreational facilities to spontaneous larger protests. In May and June of 1943, two significant AAF riots involved black soldiers: one at Bamber Bridge, England, and another at MacDill Field, Florida. These disturbances are important because they were a microcosm of the spontaneous 20th century urban race riot which confronted American cities in the postwar decades. Studying these World War II outbursts provides an opportunity to examine the racial conditions that cause people to resort to rioting. In addition, an analysis of the Bamber Bridge riot shows how AAF leaders used the lessons learned from this confrontation to modify existing policies. However, later in the war, another type of racial protest took place at Freeman Field, Indiana; well-planned and executed, it drew attention to the general failure of the AAF segregation policy toward black flying units and revealed the lack of commitment of some AAF leaders to implement War Department directives on racial matters.

Unfortunately, the employment of black soldiers was not a success from a military point of view. Black units reported low morale and were unable to perform satisfactorily. Black soldiers were often insulted and humiliated by those who expressed the traditional American, and particularly southern, practice of keeping them "in their place." Not only were discriminatory acts frequent, but they were defended as the custom in the South and in the military. More frustrating to blacks was the failure of whites to comprehend the magnitude of the racial problem in American civil and military society. From a military perspective,

racial problems distracted soldiers' energies from the all-important war effort and efficiency suffered as a result.<sup>2</sup>

This chapter will focus then on the unique problems black soldiers faced simply because of their color. Their protests escalated throughout the war, and much can be learned by examining specific events as well as leadership's reaction to them. The responsive measures taken by some AAF leaders demonstrate what might have been done to alleviate racial tensions throughout the AAF.

## I

Black soldiers experienced many difficulties as victims of military and civil segregation. Four general problem areas are notable: trouble with the surrounding communities, mistreatment by military police, poor command leadership, and lack of adequate base and town recreational facilities.

In the local communities, the fact that blacks wore uniforms as members of the Armed Forces did not alter the traditional racial attitudes of whites. And to a large extent, the War Department and AAF did little to protect blacks. The vast majority of incidents that took place in local communities ranging from harassment to violence and killings occurred in the South; some incidents took place in the border states, while there were very few in the North and West. In a report compiled by an inspector of the Office of the Inspector General, he remarks that the governors of six southern states agreed to cooperate with the armed forces so long as the "customs of the South" remained unchallenged and Jim Crow laws prevailed.<sup>3</sup>

In practice, there existed what Gunnar Myrdal calls a pattern of intimidation and violence against black people upheld by the relative absence of legal reprisal. Such disrespect for law and order had become accepted as a way of keeping them in their place and reinforced the Jim Crow system. With local customs supported by a legal, social, economic, and political system loaded against them, and an absence of military protection, blacks were always on the defensive. Changes then were effected arduously.<sup>4</sup>

Transportation throughout the South suffered during the war period, and an array of problems, from inconvenience to overt acts of violence, appeared in local communities. More experienced conductors, bus drivers, and attendants entered the military and their replacements were poorly trained and were totally incapable of handling delicate racial situations. Altercations grew from a number of causes, but one recurring factor was the refusal by many northern blacks to sit in the back of the bus. There were also instances of black soldiers being beaten and shot by bus drivers who carried guns.<sup>5</sup>

The Joint Army and Navy Committee on Welfare and Recreation reported on conditions that aggravated taut emotions even further. It



noted that local authorities located ticket-selling facilities for the convenience of white patrons and frequently placed bus terminals and routings with little regard for the needs of blacks; that if a bus were full of whites, blacks might not get a chance to sit even in their segregated sections; that there were not enough buses to go around for their use; and that inferior transportation created a greater hardship for blacks than for whites.<sup>6</sup>

Rail service provided additional difficulties. One unit history from Texas reports that officials would not permit some blacks to use their meal tickets to obtain food in the dining car. Because they had little money, they in fact went without food on their trip through Texas. In another example, Jim Crow laws prevented a group of black soldiers traveling from Trenton, New Jersey to Keesler Field, Mississippi from securing a sleeping car which they had been authorized. When the leader of the group asked for their sleeper, they were put off the train as "smart niggers."<sup>7</sup>

Secretary of War Henry Stimson also reflected upon the frustration that blacks felt. He spoke with Lt. Gen. Brehon Somervell, Chief of the Army Service Forces, about discrimination against black soldiers on commercial bus lines and violence, including the murder of a military policeman.<sup>8</sup>

Mistreatment by local police and authorities further caused major problems. Disrespect for rights and the abuse it engendered were solidified by long practice and upheld by public opinion. Enforcing this mentality were the police, who Myrdal reports were low-paid, had little schooling or special police training, and were of low social prestige. They were given tremendous authority and a gun, and with the two were aggressive in keeping blacks "in their place."<sup>9</sup>

Throughout the war, there are recorded numerous instances of police brutality. Police in Montgomery beat an Army nurse from Tuskegee Field when she refused to get off a bus as ordered by the driver; and a local sheriff in Ripley, Mississippi shot a black soldier from Dyerburg Field. An investigative officer reported that the black soldier had been shot in cold blood. And local authorities in Walterboro, South Carolina arrested a corporal from the base after an altercation, presented him to the grand jury the next morning, and tried him that same afternoon. Local authorities did not permit him to retain a civilian or military attorney for his defense.<sup>10</sup>

Blacks experienced similar mistreatment in their encounters with the Military Police. There were numerous reports of friction between them and black troops, notably during the early part of the war before the War Department established quality control over MP selection and training.<sup>11</sup> Black soldiers feared and did not respect MPs, and provocations often led to violence. A survey conducted in March 1943 docu-

mented the tension, and black soldiers reported that they usually did not consider MPs fair in their treatment.<sup>12</sup>

A most exasperating problem confronting black units during the war was questionable leadership. Though blacks were segregated into their own units, the vast majority of their officers were white. The AAF did not utilize black officers on a large scale, and usually assigned most of them to flying bases. The War Department believed that they did not make good officers, that white officers did a better job of commanding black units, and that black soldiers actually preferred white officers over black. A corollary to this was the belief that black soldiers preferred southern whites because they understood blacks and their problems.<sup>13</sup>

Generally, white officers who were in command of blacks failed to understand or appreciate the particular problems they faced, and many of these officers were paternalistic, claiming that they liked and understood blacks and knew what was best for them. Such paternalism was repulsive to blacks because it was based on two premises: white superiority and black inferiority. There were even reports of southern white officers attempting to enforce a type of Jim Crow system among units stationed in the North.<sup>14</sup> Black soldiers were aware that at some bases the Army punished its white officers by assigning them to black units; maintaining good rapport was understandably difficult.<sup>15</sup> Some officers resented their assignments, became discouraged, and suffered from such severe psychological pressure that they became mentally depressed and in some cases emotionally unnerved by the experience. It was no wonder, then, that whites on the whole preferred not to be assigned to black units.<sup>16</sup>

The AAF and War Department were aware of the problem of leadership in black units and circulated a series of letters and corrective instructions. As early as August 1943, the War Department commented that the poor quality of officers was one of the main factors responsible for some of the racial difficulties and that it wanted strong, capable leadership with officers carefully selected for their ability to handle blacks.<sup>17</sup> The AAF also instructed its commanders to be more perceptive of the quality of officers in command of black units. It noted that officers of mediocre caliber who neither appreciated the problems unique to black units nor took steps to solve them created tension.<sup>18</sup>

Finally, it is necessary to examine the assumption prevalent in the War Department that blacks preferred to be commanded by white officers, especially southern white officers. This was untrue, and a Research Branch survey in 1943 clearly states that "Negro soldiers prefer Negro lieutenants," and few findings are "more decisive than this." The survey only inquired about lieutenants, but it can be assumed that a similar response would be made for other officer ranks.<sup>19</sup>

Another grievance was the shortage of adequate recreational facilities both off and on base. Bases were often located in areas where there

were insufficient civilian facilities for black soldiers. This was true not only in the South, but also in the North and West where smaller numbers of black civilians implied that there would be limited social opportunities for black soldiers. Even in communities where the local populace was receptive toward black troops, they felt uncomfortable frequenting clubs used predominantly by whites. An investigation of a Sioux Falls, South Dakota complaint indicated that although 99 percent of the town facilities were open to blacks, problems had developed because there were too few black civilians in the area. Liberal, Kansas also noted that there were limited facilities in the town.<sup>20</sup> Segregation in the South, on the other hand, imposed particularly cruel restrictions on blacks in their attempt to entertain themselves during off-duty hours. An enlisted man reported that when his unit arrived in Tampa for stationing at MacDill Field, their train was met by "this big red-necked sheriff" who told them that there was only one place in town they could socialize—along Central Avenue. The sheriff also introduced them to a local "good nigger" who instructed the soldiers on the proper way to act in Tampa.<sup>21</sup>

On-base facilities posed another problem. The AAF, while insisting on segregation, created a burden for its units. Not only were existing recreational facilities inadequate for all soldiers, but AAF commanders had to provide for two sets of each type of social activity. This practice became both burdensome and expensive, and strained the limited facilities to the detriment of both black and white morale. Accounts from official documents and histories as well as interviews with those who served during the war suggest that the AAF never truly solved the problem of providing adequate recreational facilities; on those bases where it did, it was at an additional cost in money, time, and equipment. Reports from commanders of stations around the country clearly disclose the tremendous cost of segregated facilities. The Gulf Coast Training Center stated that if black units were to be sent to its command, additional construction would be necessary for segregated housing, messing, latrines, and recreational facilities. Lincoln, Nebraska had the facilities to mix whites and blacks, but since that was inappropriate, the base requested additional funds. Pampa Field, Texas needed funds to construct a service club and post exchange for the 400–500 black troops it expected. And at Tuskegee, the 17th indorsement to the 1942 annual inspection report finally approved construction of a service club and guest house.<sup>22</sup>

But even when AAF stations constructed facilities, often they did not meet the requirements of the "separate-but-equal" doctrine. A pilot from Tuskegee reported that the white post at Eglin Field, Florida had green lawns and beautiful buildings, while the section for black troops was nothing but "mud, dirt, unpainted shacks, and gloom!" At the Bakersfield, California flying school, officials fed blacks at a table in the kitchen until they completed the separate mess hall. The Amarillo Field service club excluded them because white enlisted personnel contended that their female friends would refuse to use the club if black

personnel used it. Kelly Field, Texas housed black soldiers in tents until it completed their separate barracks and accommodations.<sup>23</sup>

Generally, the experiences blacks encountered in everyday service life strained their patience. During the war, the country asked them to risk their lives, while at the same time it imposed segregation as a constant reminder of their second-class citizenship. Black anger and frustration then were the inevitable consequence of this situation.

## II

Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., reflecting on post-World War II black militancy, made an observation which could help to explain protest during the war:

Given the complacency of the white community, I do not believe that black Americans would have gotten anywhere without militancy. If blacks had remained meek and submissive and invisible, white America would have done damned little about them. If violence becomes irrational and obsessive and excessive, white America has first itself to blame. When the blacks decided to organize and become militant, they forced white Americans to consider the problem. They awakened the white conscience, and they awakened white fears.<sup>24</sup>

Why did the war bring out black resentment? Several possible explanations are that blacks were better educated, there was a growing race awareness and better organization, and they could take advantage of the war emergency. Also as black soldiers asserted what they believed to be their rights as American citizens, violence erupted as a logical consequence of the brutality of war.<sup>25</sup> On the other hand, perhaps blacks were simply adopting the same methods that white Americans had used against them for centuries.<sup>26</sup>

A further explanation for their activity was that blacks were becoming increasingly frustrated by white America's lack of understanding. The majority of whites were either unaware of discrimination against black Americans or were unwilling to accept it. Public opinion surveys conducted in July and November 1943 reveal that whites generally believed that blacks were satisfied and were afforded the opportunities they deserved.<sup>27</sup>

For whites in the AAF, black assertiveness was totally out of character and difficult to comprehend. Besides the confusion wrought by their rupture with their traditional role, blacks were clearly undermining the established social order. So whites sought easy explanations, usually blaming outside factors unrelated to the segregation issue itself. For example, Southerners and those stationed in the South blamed northern blacks because the latter had more liberties in the North. When they came South, they upset the normal racial order and attempted to use the war to bring about social equality. On the other

hand, in the North, southern blacks were also held accountable for taking advantage of the increased freedoms available there. Northern whites believed Southern blacks exercised excessive independence. In both the North and the South, the whites regarded the Japanese, Communists, and the black press as the chief agitators. Of course, all societies viewed racial militants as odious characters, and white America's counterantagonism reacted to each instance of black belligerency. Governor Olin Johnston of South Carolina, addressing his State Guard at Fort Jackson, told the men that segregation was the way to handle the race question, and if outsiders came into his state to agitate for social equality, he would call upon the Guard to expel them.<sup>28</sup>

Black AAF personnel focused their protests. They rebelled through their disinterest in the war and assigned missions; they engaged in acts of violence against individual whites; they insisted upon entering segregated facilities on and off base—especially recreational facilities; they inundated everyone from the President to the *Pittsburgh Courier* with letters of protest; they undertook full-scale demonstrations; they spoke out against their officers and NCOs; and they exhibited an uncooperative and generally sullen attitude.

Racial unrest came more slowly to the AAF than to the Army, because the AAF utilized smaller numbers of blacks. While the Army experienced major problems as early as 1941, the AAF experienced only minor incidents. In all service branches disturbances escalated throughout 1942 and reached their zenith in the summer of 1943.<sup>29</sup> In the AAF there were major outbreaks in 1943 and these continued during the next 2 years. The most important racial incident of the war occurred in April 1945.

Although there were many overt racial incidents, there was another type of protest that is much harder to document: passive resistance by blacks manifested itself in uncompleted assignments and general lethargy. In analyzing this general behavior, two black psychiatrists, William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs, discussed in 1971 some of the psychological aspects of being black in America. Their explanations may help explain this lack of initiative. One of their key arguments is that black Americans have had to camouflage their real identity in the presence of white Americans. Because throughout most of their American experience blacks have lived within a threatening social environment, it became necessary for them to conceal their true identity behind a screen of passivity. While they assumed this shiftless personality as a function of survival, observers interpreting this behavior formed a stereotype of the Sambo personality of the "lazy nigger." During the era of slavery, such an image helped the black to get out of murderous field work. But with time, however, this became an important defensive mechanism in everyday survival. The white came to anticipate this "foot-shuffling, head-scratching, slow-moving mode," and the black played along with the stereotype in order to avoid dangerous confron-

tations and to get back at the white system. Grier and Cobbs note that "Sambo may well have been our first black militant."<sup>30</sup>

How does the analysis of Grier and Cobbs apply to black soldiers in the AAF during World War II? The conditions they describe are prevalent, as witnessed by Gen. B. O. Davis, Sr. and Truman Gibson during a tour of Army camps in late 1943; both men, known as rational and not likely to exaggerate, observed in most black soldiers a growing "implacable hatred for the Army." Much of that was due to the fact that blacks believed that they had nothing to fight for.<sup>31</sup> This lack of identity with the goals of the war definitely affected the black soldier's enthusiasm. Since most were in service units rather than in combat, the war for them seemed all the more remote. Also, Samuel A. Stouffer observes that differences in levels of performance between whites and blacks could be attributed partly to variations in the value systems of the two groups. He notes that individual failure among blacks was less stigmatized than among whites because it was more a function of racial disadvantages. Since whites assumed that blacks were inferior and expected less from them, the black soldier had "no status to lose in the white society for failure to conduct himself by the whites' standards." At the same time, his group position and self-regard were not as "crucially bound up with his war performance," as it was with whites. These factors were responsible for a vicious cycle of events that continued to compound the original problem. Blacks performed their job in a mediocre fashion for the reasons discussed, causing whites to become all the more convinced of black inferiority and the merits of segregation and white superiority.<sup>32</sup> To summarize, these factors, in addition to a generally poor environmental background, coupled with discrimination and the humiliation inherent in segregation, might help to explain the below average performance of many black units in the AAF. Complaints about that performance were common, as the Air Service Command used words such as "poor morale" and "disgust" to describe black troops in that command. The Corps of Engineers noted a sullen attitude, and Gunnar Myrdal observed that constantly feeling unwanted made blacks "sullen and resentful." A question to ask is whether this attitude was simply a reflection of problems or did it represent, as in the case of Sambo, an active protest against the system?<sup>33</sup>

Another avenue for protest was an act directed against individual whites or "the system" by individual or small groups of blacks. They displayed a spirit of restlessness, refused to obey local segregation practices, and attacked discrimination. Most of the incidents took place on southern bases and the majority of blacks involved in these disturbances appear to have been northern. Very early in the war, the AAF and War Department realized that placing northern blacks in the South was a potential source of difficulty and despite efforts to avoid this, it simply was not feasible to keep northern blacks out of the South because most AAF bases were located in that region.<sup>34</sup>

This aversion to northern blacks at southern bases was widespread. After a visit to Maxwell Field, a general reported to the Air Staff about the growing concern over the placement of northern blacks. Southern whites believed they could cope with southern blacks, but the intruder from the North simply "fails to conform to Southern customs." The Air Staff failed to arrive at a workable solution and discarded as impractical the suggestion for a duplicate Tuskegee in the North. However, the Air Staff did require the northerners to be briefed on local mores and AAF policies at southern bases.<sup>35</sup>

Northern blacks arriving in the South had preconceived notions about local customs and were not surprised that commanders tended to condone discriminatory practices. Generally, they were aggressive in countering segregational and discriminatory practices, and often they antagonized southern whites. However, the northern blacks' aggressiveness gave southern blacks a new direction, with the consequence that the history of the black in the AAF is a history of attacks on discrimination and segregation. Many outbursts were not premeditated, but rather were spontaneous, sparked by an isolated event that aroused black resentment. Thus, the image of blissful and dull blacks content with their status and of happy-go-lucky indifference find little support in the evidence.<sup>36</sup>

The following incidents are typical of their protest. Sixteen black officers enroute from Walterboro, South Carolina to a new station entered a "for-whites-only" cafe in Fairfax, South Carolina and demanded service. When they were refused, they shouted "go to Hell" and "Heil Hitler," generally creating a disturbance. At the railroad station a group of 150 angry whites surrounded them before they left.<sup>37</sup> In another, a white and black were sitting together on a bus from Daniel Field to Augusta, Georgia and the driver stopped the bus but could not force the black to move. The soldier and some other blacks threatened the driver who held them off with his gun until the police arrived, arresting two of them.<sup>38</sup> And at March Field, California, four black soldiers damaged a restaurant where they had been refused service.<sup>39</sup>

Frequently on AAF stations, recreational facilities became targets for integration. During the summer of 1944, the War Department issued a directive stating that recreational facilities could not be segregated by race, although they could be assigned by unit. During the following year, blacks took advantage of every opportunity to integrate these facilities when many local commanders attempted to avoid the directive. When a black soldier sat in the white section of the post theater at Cochran Field, Georgia, officials asked him to leave and refunded his money. Another one, while in the PX at Robbins Field, Georgia, attempted to use the men's rest room, "heretofore used only by white men." Authorities escorted him out, probably for his protection since several white soldiers were waiting for him outside.<sup>40</sup> And on 3 August 1944 at Tuskegee, approximately 12 black officers decided to integrate the Post Exchange restaurant which had been divided into separate

white and black dining rooms. They entered the white dining room at the noon meal and requested service. They were served, and although some tension was evident, there was no violence. Thereafter, blacks used both dining rooms while whites brought their lunches or ate in the town of Tuskegee rather than use the PX restaurant. One important result of the incident, according to the official history, was that black morale improved.<sup>41</sup> Between 15 and 31 August 1944, the Eastern Flying Training Command reported 17 incidents in response to the War Department recreational facilities directive. One occurred at Gunter Field, Alabama when a black enlisted man presented a copy of the directive to his section commander. Most incidents involved blacks entering post exchanges and asking to be served, or entering the theater and seating themselves in the white section. At Maxwell Field, Alabama, approximately 20 white civilians left a cafeteria when two black employees of the laundry ate there. What particularly disturbed the command was that the War Department directive had been publicized in the black press in advance of its receipt by station commanders.<sup>42</sup> Quarters were not a target, since they were assigned by units which were segregated.

A weekly summary of the racial situation in the United States, compiled by the Army Service Forces, fully documents the scope of the problem. Each report contained a listing of racial disturbances for the previous 2-week period. The summaries for the first 3 months of 1945 demonstrated a wide range of protest. Black soldiers at George Field, Illinois were insubordinate to their noncommissioned and commissioned officers, and one at Laurinburg-Maxton Field, North Carolina said "my name isn't boy" when a white sergeant addressed him as such; a black at Hill Field, Utah beat up a white man who had been singing Old Black Joe on a bus; blacks from Turner Field, Georgia got into arguments about bus seating; at Langley Field, Virginia, they protested that their beer canteen did not have the same hours as the white one; and at other bases, as Gulfport, Mississippi, some black soldiers were unruly and picked fights.<sup>43</sup>

### III

There were a number of major race riots during the war, and the most notable in terms of its impact upon command policy occurred at Bamber Bridge, England. The official report terms the riot an "alleged mutiny." It was a reaction by a number of black soldiers to two white Military Policemen who accosted them for not wearing the proper uniform in a Bamber Bridge pub. Many of the black participants were tried and convicted for their involvement. What is significant about the incident is the manner in which high AAF leaders in Britain reacted to the riot and other racial incidents in 1943.

Racial problems in Great Britain were similar to those in the United States. Generally, friction developed over the use of recreational facilities, interracial dating, and the resistant attitude of some leaders



which affected military justice and training. American blacks and whites brought to Britain attitude forged from 300 years of racial experience in the United States. But in Britain there was more tolerance and opportunity for blacks. This was possible for two reasons: their general acceptance by the British people and the more tolerant attitudes of top Army and AAF generals. The absence of traditional restrictions and legal barriers for nonwhites in Britain meant that the local populace afforded blacks relatively fair treatment. This civil situation forced the American military to take a more progressive approach in handling the race question so as not to offend the British. In addition, there were a number of American generals who believed that all soldiers should be treated equally and translated that conviction into command policy.

Black soldiers in the AAF first arrived in June 1942 and were assigned exclusively to service units. They numbered 394 that month and gradually increased over the next 3 years until they were 1,086 by the end of 1942, 9,288 by the end of 1943, 11,285 by the end of 1944, and 12,196 in April 1945. The vast majority of blacks were enlisted men, and the number of black officers never exceeded 82.<sup>44</sup>

A number of Americans reported the generally tolerant attitude of the British toward black soldiers. Commander Harry Butcher, Aide to General Eisenhower, writes in a letter to General Surles:

To most English people, including the village girls—even those of perfectly fine character—the negro soldier is just another man, rather fascinating because he is unique to their experience, a jolly good fellow and with money to spend. Our own white soldiers, seeing a girl walk down the street with a negro, frequently see themselves as protectors of the weaker sex and believe it necessary to intervene even to the extent of using force, to let her know what she's doing.

The British were basically “devoid of racial consciousness so interracial dating was accepted by the women.”<sup>45</sup> Similar comments made by two Britons appeared in American periodicals. A naval officer reported that “the most popular, well-mannered, well-behaved, respectful, and soldierly warriors ever to land on English soil are your American Negro troops.” He thought it was unfortunate that “the American authorities over here have requested that Negro soldiers be barred from certain clubs, pubs, and the like.” In a short article, an English woman notes that although she had heard only unfavorable comments about black soldiers before they were stationed in her town, “I have never heard of any unpleasant incidents.” She observed that “they seem to get quite a lot of fun out of life without annoyance to anyone. They're very well-behaved, polite and quiet, in fact, good Americans.”<sup>46</sup>

Along with the attitude of the British public, several practical commanders—Generals Dwight Eisenhower and John Lee of the Army and Generals Ira Eaker and Carl Spaatz of the AAF—realized that



General Dwight D. Eisenhower chats with a black airman during a troop inspection.

blacks were an integral part of the war effort and peaceful relations between the races were essential.<sup>47</sup> Eisenhower, European Theater of Operations (ETO) Commander, established a command policy that there would be no discrimination toward black soldiers. At a July 1942 press conference he enunciated the view that "I won't stand for it." Although he personally believed that segregation would keep problems at a minimum, he would not tolerate discrimination.<sup>48</sup> A few days later the ETO issued a letter to the Eighth Air Force reinforcing the points made at the press conference: "It is the desire of this Headquarters that discrimination against the Negro troops be sedulously avoided." It also issued special instructions to the Red Cross. Since that organization operated many recreational facilities in areas where soldiers spent much of their leisure time, it was important that it exercise fair treatment. Soldiers received leave privileges for these facilities, so the command instructed the Red Cross to accord blacks equal treatment during their leaves and furloughs. However, instructions to local commanders regarding areas bordering the camps were not as explicit and permitted their judgment in avoiding discrimination and minimizing friction between white and black troops.<sup>49</sup>

Accordingly, the Eighth Air Force issued its own instructions. In July 1942, its commander, General Eaker, informed the commander of the 1st Provisional Wing to prepare for the arrival of blacks and to maintain close supervision over the situation in order to insure that all regulations and military laws were followed. If there were any disturbances, Eaker wanted appropriate and prompt punishment.<sup>50</sup>

Despite this strong command policy and commitment, racial problems still developed. Just as in the United States, deep-seated feelings could not be eliminated by edicts. General Davis reported on many of these difficulties during a trip to Great Britain in the fall of 1942

sponsored by the Office of the Inspector General. After visiting several stations and holding numerous conferences with commanding officers, Davis concluded that friction between white and black soldiers resulted from the "resentment of certain white soldiers against the association of the British people, particularly the British women, with colored soldiers," and the absence of segregation. Blacks were "profuse in their praise of the treatment accorded them by the British people and British soldiers"; and the trouble between soldiers arose when small unit commanders failed to control their men. General Davis recommended an orientation course to disseminate information and to strive for better race relations. He suggested that commanders provide assertive leadership for their troops, as "the development of team work, cooperation, comradeship and harmony within our own forces is a function of command"; that the services better train Military Police; that officials encourage a more natural social association so that "no white or colored soldier should be required to violate any of his personal views as to social relationship by being compelled to associate with anyone undesirable to him"; and that authorities make whites more aware of the contribution blacks have made throughout American history, and especially to the military.<sup>51</sup>

Problems were apparent as soon as black troops arrived in Britain, many of them attributable to misjudgment by the military. The military did not adequately train black units for overseas duty and the Eighth Air Force had to conduct extensive supplemental training and reorganization in order to bring them to a satisfactory level. But even more serious was the shortage of qualified officers to work with black units; many were either the misfits from combat detachments or raw second lieutenants. To compound the problem, white officers often considered themselves penalized for serving with black units, so rapport with their men suffered.<sup>52</sup>

Many white soldiers did not understand nor did they appreciate the attitude of the British public. There were a number of incidents as a result of interracial dating. A base postal censor in England extracted some comments by white AAF soldiers. Two of the more revealing statements were written by a white corporal and a lieutenant:

They just brought in a nigger and put him in the bed adjoining mine! He's one of those dirty looking kind too! Damn yankee that ever did this anyway—you would think they could at least respect a Southerner's feelings. They, however, are the opposite seeming to get a kick out of it all . . . I, alone, have seen 5 instances of niggers with white women.

One thing I noticed here and which I don't like is the fact that the English don't draw any color line. . . . The English must be pretty ignorant. I can't see how a white girl could associate with a negro.<sup>53</sup>

Mrs. Roosevelt even reported with delight to the Secretary of War that "the young Southerners were very indignant to find that the Negro

soldiers were not looked upon with terror by the girls in England, Ireland, and Scotland.”<sup>54</sup>

An early example of the problems prevalent in Britain was the Thurston incident. It began at a dance in December 1942 when several whites intimidated a group of blacks. As a result of rumor and exaggeration, a black lieutenant armed his men in self-defense. Calm was restored after a nonviolent confrontation involving approximately 25 men. The investigative report concluded that competition between whites and blacks for English women helped spark the incident; and that officers from three Quartermaster Companies involved in the disturbance were unqualified.<sup>55</sup>

By mid-1943 it appeared that the problem of race relations constituted a dilemma far out of proportion to the actual number of black troops stationed in Great Britain. But the event that clearly brought the issue to the attention of all levels of command and forced a reevaluation of the role of the black in the Eighth Air Force was the Bamber Bridge incident in June 1943. This confrontation made it apparent that an unhealthy racial situation was not restricted to Bamber Bridge but existed throughout Great Britain. At Bamber Bridge, a conflict between Military Policemen (MPs) and black soldiers led to rock and bottle throwing and gun fire that wounded two blacks. Word of the confrontation spread to the camp and rumors bred other rumors. Many black soldiers reacted by disobeying their officers and noncommissioned officers, arming themselves, riding into Bamber Bridge, and discharging their weapons at military personnel and vehicles. The official report notes that the men “were seen to be crying, shrieking, and giving vent to their emotions.”<sup>56</sup>

The official report on Bamber Bridge, compiled by Maj. Gen. Henry J. F. Miller, enumerated the conditions responsible for this unhealthy racial climate and resultant friction: the experience level of the officers was low; the ratio of whites to blacks was greater in the United Kingdom than in the United States; the British granted relative social equality to blacks which emphasized the condescending attitude of the white American soldiers; the use of uncomplimentary names such as “jigaboo” and “nigger” instilled resentment; there was a great emotional conflict over interracial dating; and the treatment of blacks by MPs was by no means justified. However, there were additional factors mentioned in the report which helped to create the tension at Bamber Bridge: black soldiers had deliberately picked fights and committed numerous violent offenses; they were particularly susceptible to rumors; and provocative black periodicals nurtured black resentment. Further, because many of the blacks had low scores on the Army General Classification Test (AGCT), the General implied that those in less-skilled jobs might be more easily swayed by mob psychology.<sup>57</sup> General Miller proposed several measures that affected every black AAF unit in Britain. He recommended reorganizing all black units

within Eighth Air Force, conducting a thorough investigation of race problems in the theater and instructing newly arrived white units about racial problems.

Coming on top of Bamber Bridge was an incident at Ipswich where a number of white enlisted men displayed "a pugnacious attitude toward all colored soldiers, especially those seen in the company of white girls." The MPs picked up two of the whites for "openly threatening to arrange to beat up all colored soldiers seen with white women." This incident, which occurred 2 days after Bamber Bridge, demonstrated to the VIII Bomber Command that perhaps whites were responsible in large part for the racial problems in that command. Experienced officers delivered lectures to all new personnel on "the relationship between white and colored individuals in the United Kingdom." The fact that the British had a different attitude toward blacks was something that whites would have to accept. The Bomber Command later reported that after white troops had been in the theater for some time, "they readily accept the existing relationship and little or no trouble ensues therefrom." But whites who were "trouble-makers" or interfered with efforts to achieve racial harmony were disciplined severely.<sup>58</sup> From the record it appears that most whites did accept the social structure in Britain. In the United States it was unusual for commanders to blame whites for racial disturbances as military leaders normally focused on the black reaction to discrimination; however, the commanders in Britain often noted that blacks were on the receiving end. This awareness was by no means universal but is readily noticeable in the official documents.<sup>59</sup>

The primary effort to solve racial problems originated at Eighth Air Force level with General Eaker who took the initiative to rectify the unhealthy situation. He reported at a staff meeting that there were then 3,000 blacks stationed with the AAF in Britain and the number would soon increase. Eaker said that this posed a major problem and his staff "should stop arguing as to the reasons why they were sent here and do our best to cooperate with the War Department in making their employment here satisfactory to all concerned." Furthermore, he realized that "90 percent of the trouble with Negro troops was the fault of the whites" and directed his staff officers "to give serious thought to handling this important problem."<sup>60</sup> This statement was almost without equal among AAF generals. In it there was no hedging, no avoidance, no complaining, but simply the commitment to stop wavering and get the job done. General Eaker also believed that sound organization and constant supervision minimized problems.<sup>61</sup>

As a result of his recommendation, there took place in August 1943 a comprehensive reorganization of black units under the Eighth Air Force into the Combat Support Wing. Most blacks were in either Quartermaster Truck and Ordnance Ammunition units and their sparse distribution throughout Britain created for them problems of morale, discipline, relations with the civil populace, and the administration of

justice. And more important, since they came under an assortment of commanders, there was a definite need for a strong commander working with a good organization, dedicated officers, and an efficient supervisory headquarters. The wing commander should be sensitive to problems arising from the relationships of blacks with white civilians and military personnel and to the circumstances unique to black units. The name, "Combat Support Wing," was selected with care to foster among the black soldiers "a definite feeling that they are contributing to the combat effort."<sup>62</sup>

Eighth Air Force appointed Col. George C. Grubb commander of the wing, and one of his first accomplishments was to remove a group of 75 predominantly white officers, including all of the field grade, and to replace them with young, vigorous line officers. Recognizing that frequently officers of inferior caliber had been dumped on black units, he selected the pick of the Officer Candidate School (OCS) graduates available within the theater. Strongly supported by Gen. Eaker and convinced that whites provoked the majority of racial incidents, Col. Grubb encouraged his officers to retaliate against discrimination by taking assertive action. The colonel respected and praised the men in his unit for their ability and performance, and in some cases he believed that they did a better job than whites performing similar functions. Though blacks continued to be dispersed around Britain, their reorganization into a combat support wing noticeably improved discipline, morale, and performance.<sup>63</sup>

The following year, in response to a War Department request for a summary of the accomplishments of the Combat Support Wing, its new commander, Col. Robert M. Goodall, submitted a detailed report. In it he noted success in the employment of black troops and the accomplishment of a "tremendous amount of work." Maintaining discipline had been a key factor because of the tense racial situation, coupled with the fact that blacks were so widely scattered throughout Britain. The strained racial climate developed from

towns overcrowded with soldiers, racial sensitiveness to slightest remarks, the resentfulness of white soldiers over the association of white women with colored soldiers, the encountering of racial and economic equality for the first time, free access to liquor in overcrowded pubs, and the tendency on the part of whites to stigmatize the whole colored group for individual delinquency.

To minimize disturbances, a number of measures were implemented: close liaison with district provost marshals, joint white and black MP patrols, airing of justifiable grievances (if an unbiased sounding board heard the case, it inspired confidence and outbursts resulting from frustration were kept to a minimum), careful selection of officers, and a well-rounded special services program. The majority of racial disturbances occurred off the post, and the colonel observed that "the white women concerned in these quarrels have almost invariably sided with the colored soldiers," and concluded that the British women "have

taken an active part in precipitating the trouble." The low vehicle accident rate was particularly impressive as it was accomplished in spite of the tremendous difficulty in driving under stress, during all kinds of weather, during blackout conditions, and on unfamiliar roads. Also, Colonel Goodall concluded that black soldiers had made a major contribution to the war effort; constant appeals had been directed to the soldier's pride, like being above street disturbances and riots; blacks conducted themselves in a manner which won them favor in the eyes of British civilians; the accident, crime, and venereal disease rates had declined steadily; and, the qualifications of the officers were more important than their color or background. Basically, the report demonstrated that a continuous preventive effort was needed in order to keep the lid on the racial situation.<sup>64</sup>

Besides establishing the Combat Support Wing, the ETO and Eighth Air Force issued additional guidelines and policies to subordinates. They called for close and persistent supervision by commanders, the removal of inefficient leaders, a reaffirmation that there would be no discrimination, extra military police in towns where white and black soldiers were on passes at the same time, and instructions to all incoming personnel that they would avoid derogatory remarks and altercations. Finally, there was a warning about the proper safeguarding of arms and ammunition.<sup>65</sup>

Walter White visited the European and Mediterranean Theaters in late 1943 and early 1944 and was "greatly impressed and pleased with the vigorous position which is taken by the American High Command," and with the abolition of the off-limits rule. This permitted local commanders to rotate the use of off-base facilities between white and black units, which was, in effect, a form of segregation. Though the Red Cross segregated some of its clubs, many of them permitted racial mixing. And officials took measures to combat prejudice by educating soldiers before they arrived in the theater. For example, lectures on prejudice and the attitude of British subjects were presented aboard ship. In addition, he viewed the movie "A Welcome to Britain," starring Burgess Meredith. In this film, English women are portrayed as being courteous to both whites and blacks. Thus American soldiers arrived in Great Britain with a knowledge of what to expect and of what was expected of them. On the other hand, White noted that "subordinate commanders in the ETO found methods of circumventing directives affecting Negroes." He further wrote that black soldiers received harsher courtmartial sentences than whites, that white officers exhibited a paternalistic attitude, that there were no black combat troops in England, and that anti-black rumors were prevalent.<sup>66</sup>

What then can be concluded about the employment of blacks in Great Britain during the war? They performed exclusively in a service capacity, and in addition to the normal strains of wartime, they had to endure a number of racial difficulties which affected their performance and morale. However, because of two factors, problems caused by race

were not as pronounced as in the United States. First, the British civilian population was more tolerant of blacks and did not object to socializing with them. Second, the military took a strong stand to keep discrimination at a minimum. The AAF made a determined effort and faced issues squarely, helping to minimize racial tension. For the most part, the main impetus was the desire of AAF leaders to create the most efficient fighting machine possible. In Great Britain, blacks performed efficiently because military leaders took their human needs into consideration.

Since black units in the United States were not under a single command as in Great Britain, there were wide differences in their treatment. Generally, the degree of racial harmony achieved was proportionate to leadership's sensitivity to racial problems, and to the way in which it pursued War Department racial policies. As Bamber Bridge, the MacDill race riot, also labeled a mutiny, took place because of leadership's failure to react decisively to escalating racial tensions. MacDill erupted over a small incident: a verbal clash between a drunk black soldier and a "tired, irritable white saleswoman" in the PX. A white soldier interfered and the two fought as a crowd gathered. Because the PX was in the black section of the base, a facility housing 3,300, the throng was predominately black. Activated by rumors and motivated by fears of what the MPs would do to the black soldiers, the crowd refused to disperse and became quite unruly. Excited and emotional, the group refused to obey any military orders. Some obtained rifles from their barracks, and various groups of men then wandered about uncontrolled for 4 or 5 hours before authorities restored order. The MacDill historian believed that the black soldiers "were unduly sensitive on the question of racial discrimination."<sup>67</sup>

Several underlying factors were responsible for the unrest at MacDill. A large percentage of blacks were from the North and they were mentally unprepared for Southern racial discrimination. Also, they objected to the employment of white personnel in their PX, and their previous requests to rectify this matter had been ignored. Further, a "gate pass system" for venereal disease control monitored the soldiers as they returned from the town; this proved doubly offensive, as the practice was applied to blacks only. The transportation system to Tampa was inadequate for blacks and had been reported to General Davis in March of 1942, but local authorities took no action to improve service. Furthermore, the officers assigned to black units were of low quality and ability. These same complaints were present at most bases where blacks were stationed, but at MacDill little attempt had been made to restrain the growing tensions. Some responsibility for this failure could be passed to the Army Air Forces, because of the low caliber of its OCS graduates and because of the failure of local commanders to work out grievances. Many officers preferred to wait rather than act and it took a small incident to spark a major outbreak.<sup>68</sup>

Another incident occurred at Herbert Smart Airport, Macon, Geor-



gia, in November 1944. The entire 457th Aviation Squadron mutinied when the squadron commander relieved the first sergeant, and the squadron refused to proceed with the day's training. The squadron commander and adjutant were unable to handle the situation, and the base commander lost control of a meeting he had called with the squadron in the base theater. An AAF investigative report revealed that racial factors behind the mutiny were significant, although there was some feeling that the squadron was merely trying to keep from going overseas. The report pointed to junior, inexperienced, and inefficient officers assigned to black units, "resulting generally in low morale and a lack of discipline through poor leadership." As a result of the investigation, the AAF transferred the squadron officers and base commander and took no disciplinary action against the mutinous squadron.<sup>69</sup>

#### IV

It should not be inferred that race relations were uniformly unpleasant throughout the AAF. Such an assumption would ignore those air bases where a responsive command attitude to racial problems did ease tensions considerably. At many bases race relations were at least good, and here black units performed in a satisfactory manner. Perhaps the single most important overriding factor was the attitude of the local commander and his staff. If he were positive toward black units and did everything within his power to prevent discrimination, the results were rewarding. Had this occurred more frequently, race relations within the entire AAF could have been much smoother, and black units could have been employed with better results. Inspection reports, unit histories, command histories, and other official documents attest to the presence of this positive racial climate at various bases.

The Second Air Force appears to have had fewer racial problems than other commands. This may be attributed to the attitude of its commanding general. During the early years of the war, its commander took a very hard line toward segregation and insisted that recreation and living facilities be "absolutely segregated camps." The commander seemed particularly perplexed about the random stationing of black officers, because it would have been expensive to build separate officers' messes and barracks. At Pueblo, Colorado the black officers ate in the officers' mess "which is not in accordance with War Department policies at all."<sup>70</sup> However, after Gen. St. Clair Streett assumed Second Air Force command in 1943, a totally different attitude existed. The general maintained that the Second Air Force had a task to perform and would employ everyone to accomplish the mission. Every base would receive its fair share of blacks, regardless of local conditions. He held base commanders personally "responsible for promoting cordial relationship [sic] with the civilian population." At a staff conference Gen. Streett added that he saw no reason why "a negro who has the education and the qualifications to do the job ought to be discriminated against because of his color." The command completed staff studies to determine how best to utilize blacks and recommended their utilization

General Streett



within their military occupational specialties (MOS).<sup>71</sup> The solution was expedient because of a shortage of personnel and "because of the political repercussions that might be expected to follow malassignment of colored personnel." As a result of this action, approximately 90 percent of the blacks were properly assigned while the remainder suffered due to weaknesses in the system. Also, the command prohibited arbitrary assignment to menial jobs and instituted a vigorous on-the-job training program.<sup>72</sup>

On the local level, individual unit commanders could establish the pattern for improved communication between the races. A number of commanders displayed a good attitude, and the results were satisfying. Both Judge Hastie and Truman Gibson singled out the commanding officer at Patterson Field, Ohio for his determination to deal fairly with all personnel and to prevent any kind of discrimination.<sup>73</sup> Sheppard Field, Texas took special care to utilize each black soldier in the best manner. The commander was receptive to the arrival of 700 blacks there, and officials carefully checked each individual to determine the job for which he was best qualified. The commander was confident that black and white troops could be stationed at the same post "provided those in authority exercise a sufficient amount of supervision, sympathy and understanding."<sup>74</sup> The excellent manner in which Eagle Pass Field, Texas handled the aviation squadron indicated to Truman Gibson and General Davis what could be done "by competent intelligent military personnel who treat all of the men in their command as soldiers."<sup>75</sup> The same was true at Barksdale Field, Louisiana, where the 2d Aviation Squadron was awarded the "finest unit at Barksdale" award for November 1943. The field's unit history reports that the officers were always concerned for their men and were perceptive in dealing with their discipline, work, training, and recreation.<sup>76</sup>

In addition, some commanders made a special effort to insure that black Wacs would be well accepted with a minimum of difficulty. When a group arrived at Douglas Field, Arizona, officials were sensitive to their recreational needs such as the PX, beauty shop and social activities, and to their working conditions, including correct classification and assignment. The commanding officer issued a proclamation that the Wacs would be accorded full military courtesy and respect, and as a result the 100 Wacs gained recognition as one of the most efficient units at the station.<sup>77</sup> In June 1944, 86 black enlisted Wacs and their 2 black officers arrived at Midland, Texas. The majority were from the North and were above average in education and skills. However, the black men in the aviation squadron were primarily from the South and their educational level was below average. Midland resolved the social situation with the arrival of approximately 90 black bombardier cadets the following month. Military policy did not permit socialization between cadets and enlisted, but the base commander received approval to make an exception in this case.<sup>78</sup> And when the European Theater received black Wacs it made every effort to procure for them adequate housing and other facilities prior to their arrival in February 1945.<sup>79</sup>

At the same time, adequate recreational facilities were necessary in order to provide a satisfactory environment in which blacks could live and work. At Jefferson Barracks, Missouri, in spite of strict segregation on the base, the black area had its own Service Club, theaters, post exchange, dances, parties, and shows. The command did not feel that there was any discrimination and believed that it was significant that it had no major racial problems.<sup>80</sup> Other bases made similar efforts. Chanute Field bussed women in from Champaign, Urbana, and Danville, Illinois for dances, while the commanding officer at Harvard Field, Nebraska ran weekly convoys to Lincoln and Omaha to provide social functions for blacks.<sup>81</sup> Bases throughout the Eastern Technical Training Command introduced a number of measures that favorably affected morale and could have been emulated by other bases and commands. Boca Raton, Florida purchased musical instruments through Special Service funds to form a voluntary black band and orchestra. In addition, officials eliminated bed check, hired black hostesses for the recreation hall, and assigned enlisted men to jobs commensurate with their MOS. Sioux Falls, South Dakota boosted morale with the assignment of a black chaplain and the transfer of one black to the AAF OCS. Langley, Virginia made blacks welcome through its recreational facilities. Also, officers put a great deal of emphasis upon athletic programs, and social, musical, and cultural events.<sup>82</sup> Service units at Grenier, New Hampshire and Dow, Maine exhibited high morale, and an important contributing factor was that authorities made a special effort to provide recreational facilities. At Dow Field, blacks could use all facilities, including the PX, theater, gym, and chapel.<sup>83</sup>

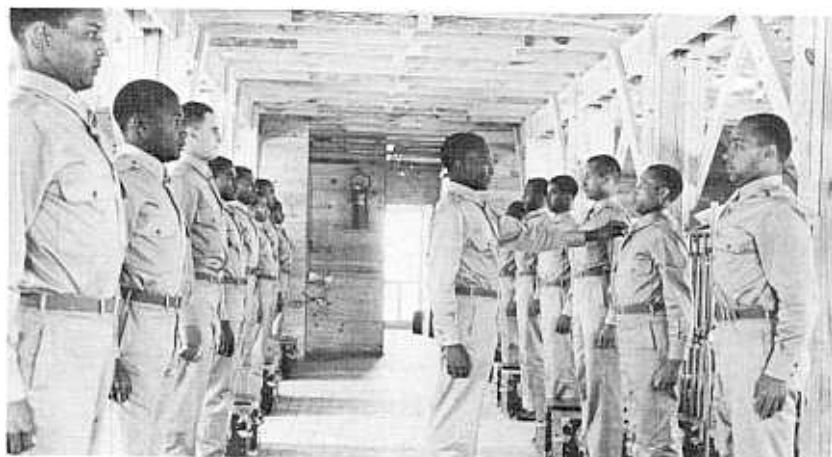
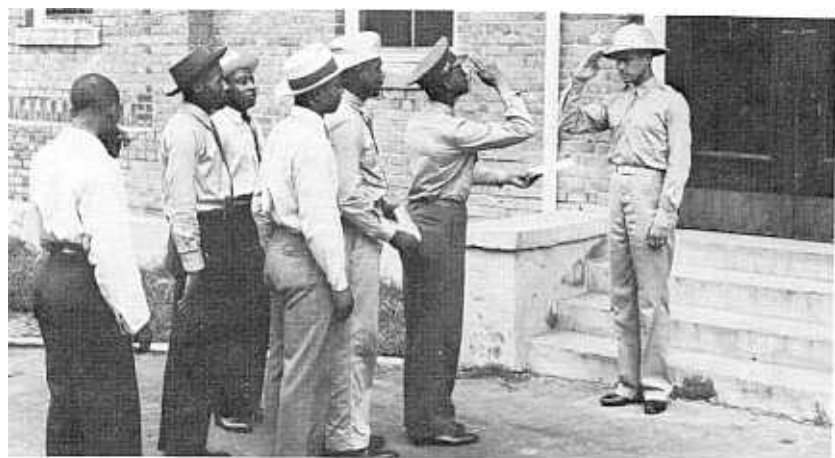
Elsewhere, local commanders took direct action to solve particular racial problems. Following the MacDill Field, Florida riot in

May 1943, the base provided better training for NCOs and the commander assured his soldiers that the investigating board would be given full support in its study of the riot. Unfortunately, the investigative report did not seek to uncover the causes of the riot, but rather it sought to disguise them. Thus, the commander wrote to the board a scathing letter forcing it to reconvene.<sup>84</sup> At Strother Field, Kansas several incidents between white and black troops on post buses compelled the commander to segregate buses to prevent further difficulties. An important cause for the problem was that the majority of the white soldiers were from the South and most of the black soldiers were from the North. Through an extensive educational program for all enlisted personnel, the commander was soon able to discontinue segregated facilities.<sup>85</sup>

The AAF Personnel Distribution Command demonstrated insight in its handling of troops returning from overseas. Its policy was to send blacks to "redistribution stations in the North so that they would be better assured of getting all the privileges to which they were entitled." The command took over convalescent hospitals and issued an order prohibiting the segregation of blacks in buses, post exchanges, or theaters. However, the command left the question of segregation of patients in wards to the discretion of the hospital commander based upon local customs and permitted segregation, providing the separate wards had identical facilities and services. In one notable example a Redistribution Center processed 78 black enlisted men. There were no disagreeable incidents, and "colored personnel and their wives intermingled in the same social activities and [ate] in the same mess." A letter from a black returnee confirmed this point when he wrote that he had been treated fairly and humanely with thoughtful consideration.<sup>86</sup>

The pattern of race relations adopted in a particular unit or within a command often related to the quality of leadership and command attitude. The War Department and Army Air Forces exerted considerable effort in seeking a solution to racial problems and the most expedient course repeatedly proved to be the application of basic principles of constructive military leadership and a commitment to their departmental policies. Successful commanders were able to maintain discipline, while looking out for the welfare of their men and investigating complaints. Unsuccessful leaders often saw blacks as problems rather than soldiers who could perform their mission given the proper training and support. But where blacks were not treated fairly, they often resorted to some kind of protest. Thus, the degree to which officers at all levels of command were committed to the successful employment of blacks marked the difference between the success or failure of a black unit.

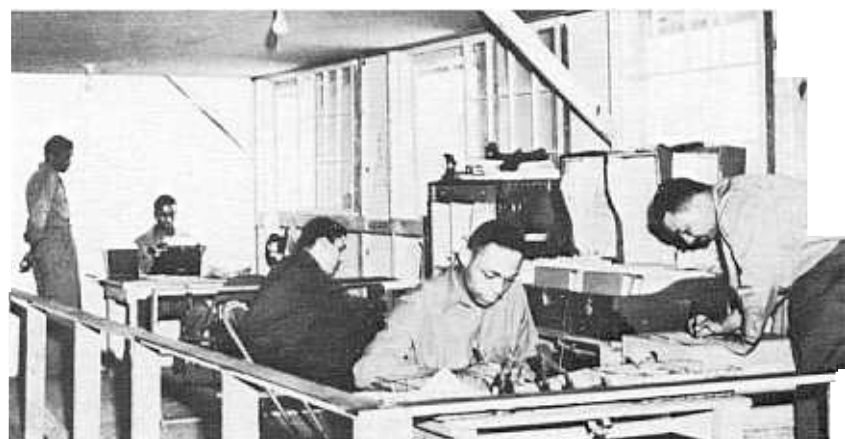
## Pilot Training





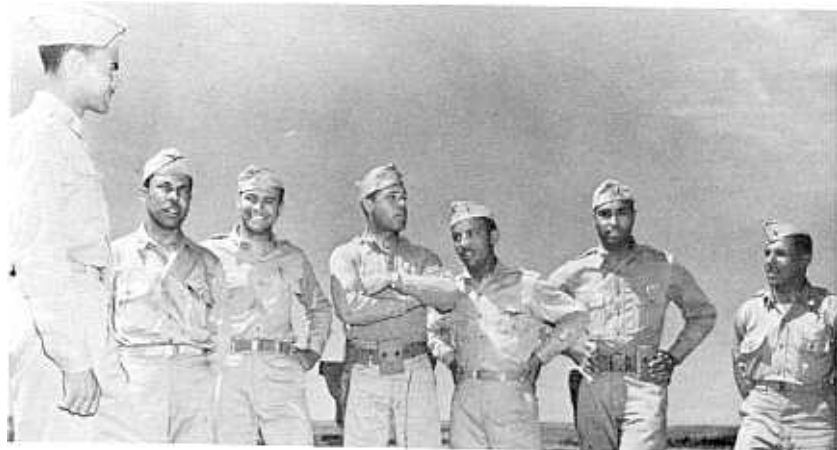
## Technical Training







## Black Pilots In The Mediterranean





## Chapter VI

### CONFRONTATION AT FREEMAN FIELD

In contrast to the successful utilization of black units in Great Britain, the history of the 477th Bombardment Group (Medium) was a story of failure. High-level commanders achieved success in Britain because they assumed an assertive role, were creative in working out problems, and were in a social environment that fostered relatively peaceful racial coexistence. The failure of the 477th can be attributed to haphazard leadership that had a cursory regard for problems and often ignored official War Department policies. Also, because of attitudes prevalent within the American civil community, racial tensions were not always resolved as effectively as they were in Britain. As a result, the 477th practically collapsed as a unit in the spring of 1945.

The 477th began its calamitous training at Selfridge Field, Michigan, but the unhealthy racial atmosphere created by the officers' club incident and the general friction that existed there soon stymied its growth. The unit moved to Godman Field, Kentucky and then to Freeman Field, Indiana in attempts to isolate itself from racial problems rather than to seek a solution to them. The unit's performance was thus poor and the training it received to qualify for combat duty was not commensurate with the expenditure in personnel, money, and materiel. The main reason for its failure was the negligence of Army Air Forces (AAF) leaders to attend to racial problems; a detailed study will follow to show how this came about. An AAF captain, Earl D. Lyon, stationed at First Air Force headquarters, realized the importance of the 477th and made special efforts to document its history.<sup>1</sup>

The 477th Group at once encountered a number of major difficulties which contributed to its ineffectiveness. First, although it was activated as a unit in January 1944, its manning was not completed until 1 March 1945. Second, the training was inefficiently scheduled, deadeningly repetitious, and frequently postponed. Third, because blacks were relatively new to flying, there was no established cadre to break in new pilots, and without this training the 477th could not become effective. Fourth, because racial antagonisms aggravated the blacks' struggle for equality, 477th leadership continuously deceived their men in an effort to evade their responsibilities. Col. Robert Selway, the 477th Commander, advised Capt. Lyon that "the Secretary of

War says there is no racial problem and there is no racial problem." Fifth, the segregation issue tore the unit apart, the most conspicuous cause of racial tension being the segregation of officers' clubs.

The results intensified hostility between blacks and whites, deepening the cleavage between black units and their command. The vertical relationship that exists between officers and enlisted men broke down into a horizontal relationship among all blacks. In addition, there was "the determination of negro officers to achieve social equality, the determination of the AAF to deny it, and the need of the War Department to tell both they were right."<sup>2</sup> Next, the officers' club incident at Freeman Field totally disrupted the 477th, shattered its chain of command, created a complete breakdown in credibility, and resulted in 104 black officers risking arrest. Finally, there were frequent changes in station, which not only aroused hostility but inconvenienced the unit.

The AAF failed to profit from its previous black experiences and consequently manning and training problems plagued the 477th. Surpluses and shortages were common. Enlisted men arrived with little formal or on-the-job training. The group commander, Col. Selway, tried to make the best of the situation by initiating an intensive training program, but the system became so complicated that simply maintaining records was an impossible task. Men arrived without training and others simply never arrived, and there were shortages in every area except administration. When the AAF activated the 477th in mid-January, the group was confronted with the immediate handicap of 60 pilots and copilots with *no* bombardier-navigators. While the pilots awaited the latter, they, with monotonous regularity, acted out their training exercises. A year later, and 3 months after their projected deployment date, the group was short 26 pilots, 43 copilots, 2 bombardier-navigators, and all 288 gunners. However, once the 477th was fully manned, the supply of men was endless and Godman became so crowded, Capt. Lyon noted, that "life in the 477th was like life in the dust belt, either drought or flood."<sup>3</sup> Because of these difficulties, the training of the unit took 15 months, 5 times the normally allotted time, and there was still total disorganization. Rather than focusing on combat readiness, the primary mission of the group deteriorated to satisfying training requirements. Blacks in the 477th knew that the AAF and First Air Force would sacrifice training to maintain segregation, and this knowledge undermined morale.

Another difficulty was that the AAF was overly cautious, since it conducted a training program not with combat in mind, but with an overwhelming preoccupation with public reaction. There had been charges at the beginning of the war that the AAF had been reckless with black lives. To counter this charge, First Air Force came up with an accident rate that was a matter for commendation and congratulation. However, the command accomplished this with a caution so excessive as "to amount to babying," since the 477th conducted its training only under optimum conditions. The air inspector noted that although

pilots held instrument cards, they could not fly under instrument conditions. First Air Force recognized that it was dealing with a volatile political issue and had to tread carefully. As an example, on 30 November 1943 the First Air Force training office wrote that "this program was instituted as a result of political pressure and will be watched by those pressure groups." Another indication of the command's attention to political pressure was a jocular comment found on a buckslip from the First Air Force Operations and Training Division. When the question arose of replacing white officers with black ones in early 1945, one officer noted that "maybe we should coordinate this with Eleanor [Roosevelt]." <sup>4</sup>

Between May 1944 and June 1945, the 477th endured 38 squadron or base unit moves, 23 of them called Permanent Change of Station (PCS). The three major moves were from Selfridge to Godman to Freeman and back to Godman. Some of its units were assigned to subbases, i.e., Sturgis, Kentucky and Atterbury, Indiana for various phases of unit training and Walterboro, South Carolina for use of the gunnery range. It is true that other groups in the AAF had endured similar inconveniences, but for the 477th the AAF precipitated each move not for military advantage, but racial reasons. To illustrate, the 477th originally went to Selfridge because Tuskegee was overcrowded and nearby Detroit could provide suitable recreational facilities for blacks. But when urban tensions began to intensify and the AAF saw Detroit as a liability because of its "outside influence" and "racial agitators," the group was relocated. However, official military reports record that the reasons for the move were adverse weather conditions and the hazards of industrial smoke. The transfer to the isolation of Godman may have resolved the racial problem, or at least postponed it, but from a military standpoint it was a poor place to train the group. The unit historian conducted a survey of the facilities at Selfridge, Godman, and Freeman, and in terms of weather, terrain, housing, hangar space, runways, ramps, and training aids Godman was the most unfavorable. Only in oil capacity did it rank second.<sup>5</sup> Daily inconveniences at Godman were that the terrain was unsuitable for night flying, the ramp was too small for parking, the runway was too weak for bombers, the bomb target was unsatisfactory, there was no air-to-ground gunnery range, and smoke and tank dust restricted visibility. Clearly, the group needed a subbase and it selected nearby Sturgis for night flying. As Col. Selway notes, this precipitated questions about eating and sleeping accommodations since "it always goes back to the same old racial thing. How can you do night flying," he adds, "without housing people, and if they are colored, commissioned and enlisted, what happens—they've got to eat and sleep." <sup>6</sup> The same difficulties were encountered on cross-country flights. By October 1944, the military permitted Godman pilots to land only at Fort Dix, New Jersey, Walterboro, and Tuskegee. Then it selected Atterbury to replace Sturgis for night flying. The inconvenience caused by its inclement weather obscured the advantage gained from its better facilities, and it was too far from Godman to run an efficient coordinated training program. In addition, the

group still needed a gunnery range since Godman and Atterbury were too crowded, so the command chose Walterboro. Given the distance to Walterboro, the squadrons were sent on a rotational basis. By early 1945, the training schedule had become so bogged down, it was obvious that the 477th needed one base that could provide all of its training needs in order to salvage the program. In March then, the group moved to Freeman Field in Indiana, but the following month a racial incident (which will be described later in this chapter) shortened its stay there.

In retrospect, Selfridge offered the best advantages because of its superior facilities and its proximity to Detroit. Less desirable was Godman, where the adjacent towns—Louisville and Elizabethtown—had few facilities for blacks and the transportation system between them was poor. The base itself had even less to offer, and the recreation hall served as the theater, gym, dancehall, and schoolroom. Atterbury and Freeman were both inferior for various reasons, although the town residents of Seymour, near Freeman, “were less openly antagonistic” than those of other small communities situated near bases.<sup>7</sup>

Added to the muddled training routine of the 477th was the entrenched racism of the AAF. The AAF selected Godman because racially it professed to be an ideal base. Blacks had full use of the installation, including the officers’ club and recreational facilities, while whites, who generally were the supervisors, used the segregated facilities at nearby Fort Knox. Black officers endured this situation because they could not legally protest the segregated club at Fort Knox. AR 210-10 stated that everyone assigned to a base could use the facilities, but they were not assigned to Fort Knox and the regulation did not apply to them.

The enlisted men, on the other hand, were more inclined to act on impulse. Shortly after the unit arrived at Godman, the War Department published a directive stating that everyone could use all recreational facilities, yet Fort Knox skirted the requirement by writing a regulation for the base theater which required, in order to avoid confusion, that “everyone entering the theater will be properly seated by ushers provided for this purpose.” They were therefore seated according to race. Some of the black enlisted men from Godman went to Fort Knox on August 21st to test the post regulation and ignored the usher’s directions. Their actions caused a commotion at Knox and a near riot at Godman when they returned. When the NAACP learned of the incident and wrote to the AAF, the latter replied that it could do nothing about the usher policy because Fort Knox was under the jurisdiction of the Army.<sup>8</sup> Col N. Butler Briscoe of Fort Knox defended his segregation policy to Mr. Harry McAlpin of the Negro Newspaper Publishers Association:

Well, listen, I have known colored people all my life—grew up with them. And frankly, they haven’t any desire to sit scattered around in the audience any more than any other people have. . . . What is creating the problem is a lot of goddam agitators. This

thing crops up every now and then here . . . . We got along all right at Fort Knox until this air corps came in here.<sup>9</sup>

The policy of segregation at Fort Knox was based more on fear than logic. Later, when Colonel Davis, Jr. became the group commander, he inquired whether black officers could use quarters at the Army post. Colonel Throckmorton of Fort Knox succinctly told First Air Force: "We have four General Officers living here on the post, and, by God, they just don't want a bunch of coons moving in next door to them." Lieutenant General Ira Eaker of Headquarters AAF diplomatically retreated: "Well actually, Throckmorton, I don't see why we are entitled to any quarters on your post."<sup>10</sup>

But the racial issue went beyond the incident or the attitude of some officers at Fort Knox. It was complicated and challenged the racial and power structure established for the 477th and supported by First Air Force and the AAF. Major General Frank O'D. Hunter, First Air Force Commander, and his staff preferred to maintain the 477th rather than integrate blacks into white units. In December 1944, Hunter wrote:

it is considered more consistent with the war aims to procure maximum efficiency in white combat crew training and handle the Negro problem to the best of our ability, on as few bases as it may be concentrated, than to lower the quality of combat training on all bases in an effort to appease certain agitators. I am convinced that mixing of young colored and white pilots in training cannot be successfully accomplished. The doctrine of social equality cannot be forced on a spirited young pilot preparing for combat.<sup>11</sup>

The AAF and First Air Force maintained a white power structure which permitted blacks to advance in rank only to a certain grade. The higher grades were reserved for white officers. Thus, the 477th did not promote black officers to positions of leadership within their own units. Although white officers commanding blacks were chosen with care and were often capable, they remained detached from the men they commanded, and mutual confidence never developed. Even blacks who had experienced overseas combat duty with the 332d were assigned as trainees under white supervisors by the AAF.<sup>12</sup> One black pilot in the 477th believed that this was the real issue underlying all racial problems and that the officers' club dispute was simply a means to bring the question into focus. He recognized that whites held the important positions, received the promotions, and advanced to other units.<sup>13</sup> Black officers at Godman refused to accept such degradation calmly. They were older (26-27 years) than the average officer, were college graduates, were generally from the North, and a good percentage had professional, managerial, and administrative experience. The white leadership structure also applied to the enlisted men. Colonel Selway stated that the unit could not have black crew chiefs on airplanes; blacks could be mechanics, but all the crew chiefs had to be white.<sup>14</sup>

Coupled with the denigrating conditions within the unit was the demeaning treatment black soldiers received in the civilian community. Captain Lyon notes that most black troops lived in a civil climate "which ignored them at best, or tolerated, or resented, or discriminated openly, or, under conditions they had to be watchful of, thickened to destroy them."<sup>15</sup> White communities treated them as blacks first, then as soldiers; and they had to face prejudice within the confines of entrenched segregation.

It is not surprising then that morale among the blacks at Godman quickly began to deteriorate, which visibly affected the morale of the whites. But, the AAF continued to delude itself by pretending that the blacks were happy. A report in late June 1944 on the status of the black flying program notes that the 477th had moved to Godman where "excellent progress is indicated."<sup>16</sup> Yet only one month earlier, Lt. Gen. Barney Giles, Chief of the Air Staff, had reported that morale in the unit was low and offered a number of reasons, many of them racial: transfer below the Mason-Dixon Line, "the preponderance of top T/O [manning] vacancies allotted to the white officers," the lack of a common mess, the absence of respect for Col. Selway because he seemed oblivious to the men, and some hostilities between white and black officers. Yet, Giles praised and supported Selway and commented that "there is nothing in the immediate situation to cause alarm."<sup>17</sup> At the same time, Truman Gibson submitted an evaluation agreeing that morale was exceedingly low, due partly to the fact that all supervisory personnel were white, and that there was little contact between the command and the black officers. He added that racial lines were sharply drawn and that supervisors held their positions merely because they were white and not because of any superior ability or training. In commenting on Gen. Giles' visit, Gibson noted that the general had called a meeting with the black officers and asked them if they had any problems, but there were no responses because Selway was present. Gibson wrote that the problem was "Colonel Selway's attitude and apparently nothing on the subject developed in the conference."<sup>18</sup> The *Courier*, which was in close contact with the situation through some blacks at Godman, formed similar conclusions about Selway. The paper reported that he had veered drastically from his earlier stand which was far more progressive and attributed this change in his approach to his overwhelming caution following the Selfridge officers' club incident and his desire to tread softly in order to make general.<sup>19</sup>

As the white command structure of the 477th became more rigid in enforcing segregation, it became increasingly difficult to maintain standards of discipline. The climate became explosive, ready to be ignited, and the fuse was lit at Freeman Field following a series of incidents at the officers' club. The War Department intervened, assumed direct control of the situation, and forced First Air Force and the AAF to back down on the segregation issue.

After the 477th moved to Freeman Field, black officers were no



longer allowed free reign of the base as they had enjoyed at Godman. There were two separate officers' clubs, and in order to skirt the August 1944 War Department directive prohibiting segregation in recreation facilities, the base designated one club for key supervisory officers and the other for trainees. This distinction took advantage of the loophole in the directive, i.e., facilities could be designated by unit or organization. But in essence, this resulted in *de facto* segregation. Meanwhile, Freeman Field completely disregarded AR 210-10 which held that all officers at a post had the right to membership in all clubs. From recordings of telephone conversations, it is clear that Col. Selway, in separating the races, acted with the full support and often with the encouragement of General Hunter who had the indorsement of the Air Staff. Although everyone knew the basis for the determination, AAF leaders maintained the masquerade under the pretense that it did not involve racial distinctions. On 10 March 1945 Selway and Hunter discussed the club issue acknowledging that one club "belongs to the white officers." Yet, later in the conversation they agreed that color should not be mentioned in connection with their action on the club; Hunter stated, "my orders to you are nothing to do with color." Such subterfuge continued throughout the month and a half that the 477th was at Freeman.<sup>20</sup>

First Air Force assumed command of Freeman Field on 1 March 1945. During the first week of its operations, approximately 2,500 men of the bombardment and service groups and 300 supervisors began unit training. Soon after the group arrived, one officer and four enlisted men decided to test segregation in one of Seymour's local cafes. There was some name calling, but the Provost Marshal stepped in and quieted things down. Another black attempted to use the laundry and was told to leave. Black soldiers shifted their attention from Seymour to events on the base. Some skirmishes took place later that month when small groups of black officers time and again entered the white club. One particular evening, the white club officer found 15 to 20 using the facilities of his club. During the same troubled weeks, black officers elected their white squadron commander to the board of their club in defiance of the rule of segregated clubs. These actions alarmed Selway and he called Hunter to suggest the possibility of closing the white club until he could check the legality of his club designations. But Hunter encouraged him, insisted that the designation was legal, and advised Selway to remain firm. Hunter was anxious for events to take their course, and he would be "delighted for them to commit enough actions that that way [sic] so I can court-martial some of them."<sup>21</sup>

On 1 April Selway published a specific regulation restating the field's policy on club assignments. This quieted things for a few days. But on the 5th, a new group of fliers arrived from Godman, and within a few hours rumors began to circulate that they would enter the white club. In anticipation of trouble that evening, the club stationed the Assistant Provost Marshal at the only unlocked door. About 10:30 p.m., 19 of the new arrivals crowded past him and disregarded his order to



General Glenn



General Kuter

leave the club. Shortly thereafter, they were followed by two groups, totaling 17 black officers. The marshal arrested all 36, and the next morning Col. Selway reported the confrontation to Gen. Hunter and his Chief of Staff, Brig. Gen. Edgar E. Glenn. Both Hunter and Glenn were supportive, and Hunter received additional encouragement from the Deputy Chief of the Air Staff whose comment on the two clubs was: "I think it's a good idea and they can't claim discrimination on that, one officers club is student and the other is permanent." But that afternoon, 21 more blacks paraded to the white club and were arrested when they entered. Selway retaliated by closing the club and waited while legal experts from First Air Force Headquarters at Mitchel Field, New York, flew in to assist him with the charges.<sup>22</sup>

Gradually, Selway's case began to crumble. The legal officers decided that the order of 1 April was "inexact and ambiguous as to its meaning or purpose." The Air Inspector, Col. Torgils Wold, realized that the intent of the order was "quite obviously to separate colored from white officers in regard to certain base facilities." However, he did recommend that another order, more clear and concise, be issued in the form of a base regulation "to effect the desired degree of separation necessary." So officials released all the blacks except Lts. Shirley Clinton, Roger Terry, and Marsden Thompson who were being held for pushing an officer as they entered the white club. At the same time, Hunter helped Selway prepare a new base regulation, 85-2, that would spell out what personnel could use which facility on the base. Attached to the regulation was an indorsement required of all personnel to indicate that they did "read and fully understand the above order." The following day, the 10th, Maj. Gen. Laurence Kuter, Chief of AAF Plans, informed Hunter that General Giles and others on the Air Staff "are thoroughly satisfied with the way this disturbance has been handled and you are supported in every action you're taking."<sup>23</sup>

A technical difficulty complicated the preparation of the new base regulation and clouded the issue. Officials responsible for writing the regulation so phrased it that all the trainees (assumedly blacks) would use one club and all the supervisory personnel (again assumedly white) would use the other. But there were some blacks assigned to the base who by definition were not trainees and they could, if they wished, use the white club. This oversight applied to the black chaplain and the flight surgeon.<sup>24</sup>

The black officers refused to concede to the authorities. They claimed that they did not understand the regulation and the word "understand" was then deleted from the indorsement. But when they were simply asked to signify that they had read the regulation, this they also refused to do, even in the presence of witnesses and a stenographer. One hundred and one black officers refused to sign. On the 13th the AAF flew them to Godman Field and held them under arrest. At the same time, the field closed both clubs as other black officers showed their defiance by marching in groups past the closed white club.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile, recorded conversations between various AAF officers give some insight into the issues and help to explain some decisions that were reached and affected Freeman Field. In one discussion between Hunter and Selway, it is difficult to determine who was supporting whom:

Selway: And we've got to go through with this, General, we can't pull any punches.

Hunter: I don't want to pull any punches, that's just what I'm trying not to do. . . .

Selway: If we're going to have any discipline in this Army—

Hunter: I'm the one that wants the discipline.

Selway: If we run on this, we might as well quit, General.

Hunter: I know that. I don't run on anything. I have no idea of running.

In another conversation, Selway used the wrong word while offering suggestions concerning the clubs:

Selway: Recommendation #2, sir. To prevent the negro officers from causing additional incidents to test the segregation—

Hunter: Don't say test segregation, what segregation?

Hunter continued to circumvent the race issue and mentioned to Selway that "as far as I'm concerned I don't recognize any race problem, I recognize a conspiracy to revolt, not to comply to military orders."<sup>26</sup> In conversations with the Air Staff, Gen. Kuter supported Hunter: "For your further information, Monk, Ray Owens and I talked to Barney

[Giles] and Mr. Lovett on the current upset last night." Kuter added that "none of us can suggest any better procedure than that which you are following."<sup>27</sup> However, several days later, on the 14th, Brig. Gen. Ray Owens, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff, had the unpleasant task of informing Hunter that a meeting between Assistant Secretary Robert Lovett and Generals Giles, Kuter, and Robert Timberlake led to the decision to return the 477th back to Godman within a few days. This upset Hunter, because he felt that the move would accomplish nothing. They also discussed the replacement of Selway; Hunter informed Selway of the forthcoming relocation, but not of his impending dismissal. Meanwhile, Selway reported to Hunter that one of the black officers had mentioned that the solution to the problem was education and assimilation. Selway added that "there will be no assimilation except over my dead body."<sup>28</sup>

At the same time, white officers at Freeman became increasingly apprehensive as a result of the recent events. When he visited the base, Captain Lyon overheard the following comments:

I'll do everything possible to get transferred out of here.

If one of them makes a crack at my wife . . . I'll kill him.

I killed two of them in my home town, and it wouldn't bother me to do it again.

Their club is better than ours. Why don't they stay in their place.

The colored troops are the most insolent and insubordinate individuals that I have ever run into in my five years of Army life.<sup>29</sup>

The blacks remained abreast of all events and played their hand carefully. Rather than congregate in large groups, they discussed their plans inconspicuously among themselves, and made certain that their protest was orderly and effective without violence. When they were placed under arrest and detained in the barracks, some of their wives drove by in convertibles and the men tossed out to them news releases to be mailed to black papers.<sup>30</sup> In a peaceful expression of their beliefs, a number of officers offered these revealing and poignant comments:

For the record, the undersigned wishes to indicate over his signature his unshakeable belief that racial bias is Fascistic, un-American, and directly contrary to the ideals for which he is willing to fight and die. There is no officer in the Army who is willing to fight harder, or more honorable [sic] for his country and the command than the undersigned. Nor is there an officer with a deeper respect for the lawful orders of superior authority. The undersigned does not expect or request any preferential treatment for the tenure of his service, but asks only protection of his substantial rights as a soldier and as an individual, the same identical opportunities for service and advancement offered all other mili-

tary personnel, and the extension of the identical courtesies extended all other officers of the Army.<sup>31</sup>

Meanwhile, First Air Force prepared charges against the arrested officers and things quieted down somewhat at Freeman. General Hunter attempted to get an indorsement in writing from the AAF, supporting him on his interpretation of the club issue. But, in reviewing the documentation, it appears that the AAF tried to play the middle ground between the War Department and First Air Force. The AAF received considerable pressure from the War Department to settle the racial issue and therefore did not wish to antagonize high-ranking officials. At the same time, the AAF continued to support Hunter although no one on the Air Staff was willing to furnish a written indorsement. On 16 April Hunter asked Gen. L. H. Hedrick, the Air Judge Advocate, for a statement, but to no avail. Hunter plaintively noted that "it leaves me out on the limb. I carry out instructions from the AAF, then I try to get it in writing, and I can't." <sup>32</sup> Yet, in a May conversation between Gen. Owens, Air Staff, and Glenn, First Air Force, the former voiced support for Hunter:

he [Arnold] said to tell General Hunter that we are perfectly pleased and happy and satisfied with the actions he took in the last case [Freeman Field] . . . . The Chief [Arnold] here feels that his [Hunter's] action in the past was perfectly alright, legitimate, satisfied with it, and if another event were to come up, he hopes he will handle it in the same manner.<sup>33</sup>

The telephone conversation of 18 April between Gen. William W. Welsh, Air Staff-Training, and Col. Malcolm N. Stewart, First Air Force, is important for an understanding of the positions of several high-ranking officers in the handling of the Freeman incident. Welsh commented that he felt it was necessary to protect the whites assigned to the 477th who were in the minority. He added: "I have maintained all along that it's the whites that are being discriminated against in the Army and not the colored." Welsh revealed a genuine fear in exclaiming that "if this thing gets out of hand you may have some of the 'jig-a-boos' up there dropping in on you at Mitchel Field." In fact, he wanted to delay a solution of the issue to avoid an adverse decision by the War Department. "If we can stave it in some way for a period of time and present a staff study based on the requirements for additional training," Welsh said, "maybe we can eliminate the program gradually and accomplish our end." <sup>34</sup>

Hunter's conversation with Gen. Owens 2 days later was most disappointing, and for Hunter it was the biggest bombshell he encountered in association with the race problem. First, Hunter complained that the War Department issued news releases about Freeman to the press that should have been cleared through him. Then Owens recalled that Giles had recommended and Marshall had approved that the 101 black officers be released from arrest in quarters, that charges against

them be dropped, and that they receive an administrative reprimand. This action by the AAF and War Department in effect removed Hunter's authority from the matter, since he had jurisdiction over the 477th. Hunter complained: "Are those orders to me? They'd better get the Judge Advocate General, they can't issue orders like that, they haven't got authority." He maintained that he had "court-martial jurisdiction, and they cannot tell me whom I can try and whom I can't." Owens also informed Hunter that the three under arrest for forcing their way into the club would be brought to trial and the 477th would be moved to Godman. Since the War Department was "backing water," according to Hunter, he asked that Selway remain in command of the 477th to avoid giving the blacks the idea that they had "got another one." Giles did agree to keep Selway at Freeman.<sup>35</sup>

The official reason for the release of the black officers was provided by the Office of the Secretary of War to Senator Edwin Johnson:

There is reasonable doubt that these officers fully understood the implications of their action nor is it certain, because of their recent arrival at Freeman Field, that they had been adequately apprized of existing regulations. For these reasons, it was determined that they should be released from arrest and suitable orders were accordingly issued for their restoration to duty following the administration of an appropriate reprimand.

Though the gesture appeared magnanimous, the War Department clearly retreated. Military officials knew full well that the black officers were aware of the ramifications of their actions and were willing to accept the consequences.<sup>36</sup>

Within the War Department, the McCloy Committee followed the Freeman events and assumed almost complete control of the matter. Although this committee had been in existence for several years to formulate black troop policy, it was not well known. The absurdity of its position is illustrated in a dialogue between Generals Owens and Glenn:

Glenn: The what?

Owens: The McCloy Board. He is the Assistant Under Secretary of War. He has a board that is supposed to handle all colored affairs.

Glenn: Is he colored?

Owens: No he's not, though he has one on his staff.<sup>37</sup>

The committee was aware of the widespread publicity given to this issue and of the political pressures on the War Department. Numerous Senators and Representatives wrote indicating their concern for the situation. Among those who addressed the War Department were Senators Harold H. Burton (Ohio), C. Wayland Brooks (Ill.), Albert W. Hawkes (N.J.), Scott W. Lucas (Ill.), Homer Ferguson (Mich.), Arthur

H. Vandenberg (Mich.), and Congressmen Louis Ludlow (Ind.), Herbert J. McGlinchey (Pa.), Adam C. Powell, Jr. (N.Y.), and Emanuel Celler (N.Y.).<sup>38</sup>

The committee met on 19 May 1945 to consider recommendations made by the Inspector General in his investigation of the incident and to consider the issue of segregation in recreational facilities. The committee agreed that the arrest of the black officers by the commanding officer at Freeman had been accomplished "within his administrative police powers," but the committee argued that the separation of the officers' club facilities was not in accord with existing regulations. On the other hand, the AAF defended its actions in a report. Previously it had recommended "separate but similar, but not reciprocal club facilities," but in this report it went into more detail. The AAF did not believe that War Department segregation policy had been sufficiently explicit to support the censure of Selway for "placing a reasonable interpretation" on War Department Pamphlet 20-6. Published in early 1944, the pamphlet stated that "the burden of deciding whether or not there shall be some separation in the use of camp facilities is placed on the local command." The publication stated that local conditions would be taken into account; in essence, this gave the local commander sweeping authority to use his own discretion in determining policy. Theoretically then, all prior directives could be by-passed. The AAF maintained that providing clubs open to officers of all races would not be in the best interests of the service, and the provision of separate, comparable, but not the same facilities offered the only reasonable solution. The AAF emphasized that officers' clubs were social centers supplementing the homes of its members:

Officer's entire families participate in club activities. Thus far in the history of this country, it has not been the custom for white and negroes to intermingle socially either in homes or clubs. It is believed the Army should *follow* the usages and customs of the country as a whole rather than attempt to depart from accepted practices and establish social customs which are at variance with those obtaining in the country as a whole.

The AAF believed that the desires and interests of white personnel were just as deserving of consideration as those of blacks. Its report recommended that WDP 20-6 not be changed, but that AR 210-10 be modified to correspond with it.<sup>39</sup>

Assistant Secretary of War McCloy did not agree with the AAF argument and wrote to the Secretary of War on 4 June that

the issue presented by the Freeman Field incident is whether or not a post commander had the authority to exclude individuals from recreational facilities on any Army post on racial grounds. The report submitted by the AAF suggests, in substance, that the Army return to a policy of separate and equal facilities for white and Negro personnel. Such a policy, in my opinion, would

be a step backward and would reverse the position taken by the War Department in the Selfridge Field case in which the same issues were involved. At that time it was clearly determined that designation of recreational facilities for the use of a particular race or color group would not be permitted. A reversal of this position at the present time would have grave repercussions and would make the position taken in the Selfridge Field case untenable. The right of a post commander to designate recreational facilities for the use of particular military units is not questioned. This is within his administrative power and good management should certainly place within the discretion of the post commander the right to allocate facilities in accordance with their capacity. However, such administrative discretion should not carry the authority to exclude individuals from the right to enjoy recreational facilities provided by the United States Government or maintained with its funds.

Secretary of War Stimson altered the pamphlet to reflect the view that there could be separation in the use of facilities, including officers' clubs, but that separation should not be based on race.<sup>40</sup> In the end, the War Department did clarify its policy, though 5 years after the regulation had been written. The AAF was partially correct when it asserted that War Department policy had not been specific, but the AAF must accept much of the blame for the resulting confusion, because at every turn it attempted to evade the intent of regulations.

Although the bulk of the officers were released, there remained the question of the three black officers under arrest for shoving the Assistant Provost Marshal during the first officers' club incident. Much to the dismay of Gen. Hunter, the court martial found Second Lieutenants Thompson and Clinton not guilty of all charges, and convicted Lieutenant Terry for "offering violence against a superior officer" and fined him \$150, the payment being prorated over a period of 3 months. In essence, while the AAF charged 104 black officers with a capital offense in time of war, it succeeded in convicting only one. The blacks tested the segregation system and disobeyed orders, but because their demonstration was well planned and executed and because outside pressure had mounted in their favor, they were able to force the AAF and War Department to abide by their own directives.

On the other hand, others believed that the AAF had won the battle because it transferred the 477th to an inferior base—Godman—where segregation could be enforced. Colonel Davis, Jr. and his black officers and enlisted men replaced the entire white command structure on the base. The AAF thus created an all-black base. But blacks did achieve certain gains—an opportunity to advance up the command ladder and perform tasks for which they were qualified. Present at the change of command ceremony were General Davis, Sr., Truman Gibson, and General Eaker. Upon introducing Colonel Davis as the new commander, Eaker praised the outstanding record of the 99th and 332d,



Lt. Gen. Ira Eaker addresses the 332d Fighter Group at Godman Field. Brig. Gen. B. O. Davis, Sr. and Civilian Aide Truman Gibson look on.



and told the men of the 477th that they would have their chance soon in the Pacific. However, the war ended before they were given that opportunity and with the cessation of hostilities ended this story of the black flying units.<sup>41</sup>

This detailed study of the 477th Bombardment Group illustrates how command attitudes and leadership influenced or undermined racial harmony. Some commanders did take an active role in assuring the acceptance of blacks; others simply paid lip-service to War Department directives and principles of leadership. A comparison of the 477th with black units in Great Britain demonstrates the correlation between command direction and the resulting racial climate. In Britain, attempts were made to anticipate and resolve racial problems as leaders regarded the role of the black as essential to the war effort. In the case of the 477th, on the other hand, blacks were seen primarily as problems, and AAF leadership utilized the unit to satisfy political pressure rather than to focus on its potential with regard to the war.

## Chapter VII

### THE POSTWAR SURVEYS

During the summer of 1945, the War Department requested that the Army Air Forces (AAF) prepare an evaluation of the performance of its black troops during the course of the war, and include recommendations for their employment during the postwar era. To accomplish this, the Army Air Forces consolidated the studies it had received from each of its major commands into a report to the War Department. An analysis of these studies is relevant for understanding the range of attitudes that directed AAF racial policy during the war. For example, most evident in the report from First Air Force is a clear reflection of the widely held racist beliefs of white Americans. However, other studies reveal a sensitive understanding of the environmental factors that affected the performance of blacks.

A number of general ideas pervade these surveys. First, they demonstrate that the military acted out the racial attitudes and reflected the racial problems of American society at large. These attitudes and problems were so deeply ingrained that it was impossible for the AAF to avoid them. Next, sustained pressure from individuals and organizations outside the military and the attitude of many blacks toward the war effort clearly influenced the authors of the studies. Blacks entering the AAF demanded a price for their participation. Essentially, they wanted the United States Government and the military to abide by the American Creed. Finally, the surveys represent an attempt by a white institution to discuss, evaluate, and make recommendations about blacks without consulting them. For black people, this was a further example of paternalism. Decisions affecting them were made on the white assumption that "we know what is best for you."

The idea for the postwar AAF surveys originated in a memorandum that Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy sent to the Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policy on 1 September 1944 calling for a study that would insure a definite, workable postwar policy. In particular, he stressed that the Army's inadequate preparation for dealing with the large number of blacks entering the service during the war had been one of the main sources of racial irritation. The Secretary of War approved McCloy's plan and in May 1945 submitted it to the AAF.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the AAF had expressed a similar interest, and in December 1944 Personnel requested that its project officers make an

evaluation. The AAF proceeded on the assumption that universal military training would be retained after the war and make it necessary that the service plan to incorporate into its force 10.6 percent blacks. The military was concerned that pressures from the black community would promote their status "regardless of whether it is in the best interest of National Defense or not." In January 1945, as Personnel undertook its study, the project suddenly stopped. A possible explanation is that the AAF had learned of McCloy's idea and decided to wait until the War Department revealed its plan.<sup>2</sup>

In examining these postwar surveys, they indicate that the commands preferred to isolate and stress those specific problem areas wherein blacks had not performed as efficiently as whites, but disagreed in the evaluation of the causes. As a result, recommendations on black utilization in the postwar military era tended to be unfavorable and suggested exclusion at one extreme to restrictions based on stringent standards at the other.

By far the most reoccurring criticism in the surveys was the inability of blacks to adjust to training, particularly training requiring sophistication. First Air Force concluded that it took twice as long to train blacks as whites in a technical base unit, while Second Air Force related that they were most successful in jobs that required unskilled or semiskilled labor. The Deming Army Air Field, New Mexico study notes that blacks were best qualified in jobs "requiring expenditure of energy rather than thought." Another survey reported that although blacks could handle jobs "requiring manual dexterity," they required longer training periods and were slower to learn than whites.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the surveys stressed that black soldiers were less adaptable than whites because they lacked initiative; needed continual supervision; demonstrated poor discipline, high absent without leave (AWOL), and venereal disease rates; and showed little pride in their organization. When compared with whites, blacks were not as dependable, were less stable under pressure, were not as attentive, and were willful malingerers or chronic neurotics. It must be understood that these evaluations are not isolated remarks but represent the interpretations expressed in the majority of the studies. Too, there is strong evidence in the reports of the command disgust, frustration, and even hostility toward blacks. And finally, a number of the surveys concluded that the black really was not capable of adequate performance.<sup>4</sup>

The First Air Force survey was particularly harsh in its conclusions and negative in its recommendations. It noted that although the men chosen for the 332d and 477th were "carefully selected, screened, and sent to service schools" and apparently had the required education and intelligence, they did not adapt to the training, and "the performance of the 332d Fighter Group during the period of its organization and training was approximately equal to the poorest of a comparable White unit." The survey continues that this poor performance resulted

"in spite of the long training period and the excessive amount of flying training given," and it rebuked the 477th for its leisurely pace in meeting minimum standards of proficiency.<sup>5</sup>

Commanders did not limit their comments to blacks within the service. In particular, these leaders criticized outside agitators—black organizations and the black press. The First Air Force Commander asserted that these groups fostered an unhealthy situation by forcing black soldiers "to gain [a] social position in the Army which they do not have in civilian life and which is contrary to the customs and social usages of the country as a whole."<sup>6</sup> The report from Peterson Field, Colorado, observed that nonmilitary pressure groups "offer solutions to problems which are contrary to good military conduct and procedures" and undermine military efficiency.<sup>7</sup>

Perhaps the War Department and the AAF feared that if these outside organizations learned of the survey, they might use it to put greater pressure upon the military. Consequently, the War Department ordered that all communications relating to the surveys be classified "Secret," and the departmental cover letter emphasized that the Secretary of War did not want questionnaires to be submitted to troop units. In addition to limiting publicity, the War Department totally excluded blacks from participating in the survey. The I Troop Carrier Command was more pointed in its instructions. It required that the project remain "Secret" and "therefore, colored personnel [are] not to know this survey is being made."<sup>8</sup> The consequence was that the War Department ignored its main source—the feedback that was available from the black soldiers themselves—for reaching decisions concerning their future use.

In conjunction with the criticism of black performance, all surveys, with the exception of the First Air Force study, attempted to find an explanation for the differential discrepancy in the achievement level attained by black and white soldiers. The surveys argued that the inferior education blacks received before entering the service, in addition to mediocre off-duty recreational facilities while they were in the service, accounted for the difference. Also, the studies held that it was necessary for base facilities to be at least adequate if morale was to be maintained. A racial riot at March Field, California was attributed to the concentration of blacks on the base without proper facilities.<sup>9</sup> In addition, poor transportation services and general discrimination in the surrounding communities had an adverse effect on the efficiency of black troops and required the constant attention of their commanders, sometimes to the detriment of training.<sup>10</sup> Too, severe treatment at the hands of white military men resulted in strained tensions and minimal performance. Fourth Air Force concluded that the black's status in American society would have to be improved if they were to be more effective in the military.<sup>11</sup> At the same time, Ninth Air Force Service Command reported that blacks generally received better treatment

from civilians in Europe and Africa than they did from white American servicemen.<sup>12</sup>

The command in Great Britain assigned the bulk of its black troops to either the Combat Support Wing or to the IX Air Force Service Command (AFSC). A comparison of the observations of these two units is noteworthy, for it demonstrates how different command attitudes influenced the level of performance blacks achieved within their units. As we saw above in Chapter V, the wing assigned special priority to racial problems and received a positive return. Blacks in that organization performed in a service capacity in either Quartermaster Truck or Ordnance Ammunition Companies, and the wing concluded that "both types of units bear favorable comparison with similar types of white personnel in the performance of their primary mission." The wing, however, observed that although blacks with higher Army General Classification Test (AGCT) scores performed well with a minimum of supervision, they tended to be more sensitive and race conscious and therefore created disciplinary problems. The troops in the lower AGCT categories, with painstaking training and constant supervision, did prove to be good soldiers, especially uneducated southerners. Under very hazardous working conditions, they worked "tirelessly and with enthusiasm and efficiency." However, the wing reported that the black soldier needed constant supervision and recognition to do well; his "strongest motivating impulse is 'showmanship.' Medals, ribbons, insignia, awards and decorations play an important part in his life." As for black leadership, the wing was critical and did not believe that their noncommissioned officers (NCOs) exhibited a high degree of responsibility or dependability. Similarly, they rated the black officers as average to below average. The wing further argued that the NCOs had become too close and familiar with their men, and the officers asserted poor control and accepted low standards of performance. The wing report noted that blacks had a congenial relationship with the British civilian populace, but the association of whites and blacks during off-duty hours created tension. The wing's overall conclusion stated that "with more careful selection of personnel, organization and training it is believed Negro units can be effectively utilized in a future emergency."<sup>13</sup>

On the other hand, the AFSC evaluation of blacks in its Truck and Ordnance Companies arrived at an opposite conclusion, i.e., that the performance of its black soldiers was below average. Enlisted men, it found, did not respond to crises as well as whites; NCOs did not manage responsibility properly; and officers were not as resourceful or aggressive as whites. Within the confines of the military, the command maintained segregation as essential, but stressed that it provided equal facilities for its black troops. There were instances of serious confrontation between black and white troops, and the majority of these encounters were the direct result of blacks being seen in public with white women. The report concluded that the "utilization of Negro soldiers in future emergencies in assignments calling for great skill is not generally

recommended." But, they "can best be used in static service and labor battalions." <sup>14</sup>

There is an obvious difference in black performance and that distinction might be explained by the attitude of the two commands. The Combat Support Wing stressed good morale and performance, and treated blacks fairly. It gave them recognition, provided them with good recreational facilities, afforded them impartial military justice and treatment by military police, and assigned to their units qualified officers. Because the wing made a vigorous attempt to work with its black troops, it received favorable results. On the other hand, a similar effort was absent in the IX AFSC. Although the command generally recognized that blacks in its units scored in the lower AGCT categories, it made no attempt to alleviate the society-created handicaps of its black men. The mediocre test results were attributed by the AFSC leaders to the blacks' negative attitude.

In the postwar surveys, each command made recommendations for the use of blacks in the peacetime era, based upon their evaluations of the findings. First Air Force made the most negative recommendation and suggested that there be "no negro flying units in the Postwar Army Air Forces." It cited as causal factors the low proficiency, the necessity for additional training, and the general lack of leadership and reliability. General Hunter, First Air Force Commander, feared that black pilots flying around the country might force a racial intermingling that would be both a source of irritation and friction. However, the command did recommend that small detachments of black enlisted men be stationed at each base to perform specific duties—i.e., menial house-keeping chores.<sup>15</sup> Other commands were less critical, recommending that the AAF utilize blacks, but in varying capacities. No command was enthusiastic about the performance of black flying units, believing that the training was too difficult for them and that the time and money expended were out of proportion to the returns. Command recommendations for enlisted men ranged from completely barring them from their units on the one hand, to using them in static service and labor battalions on the other. Most commands believed that blacks should be assigned to segregated units led by white officers and stationed at bases near black population centers. Second Air Force further suggested that they be employed exclusively in unskilled or semiskilled tasks. However, some commands did foresee the possibility that with the proper training, they could handle numerous skilled jobs. The I Troop Carrier Command was particularly optimistic about training blacks in air cargo resupply.<sup>16</sup>

Although the majority of the reports contained, as we have seen, negative comments, most commands did attempt to offer some constructive remarks. However, one command study is conspicuous because of its hypercritical attitude toward blacks. First Air Force, the training command for the 332d, 477th, and 553d, saw no practical use for them except in a service capacity. Perhaps an explanation for this

rigid position is to be noted in the fact that the board appointed by General Hunter to make recommendations was composed entirely of white officers who had been relieved from their command positions with the 477th. Sitting on the board were Col. Robert R. Selway, its former commander; Lt. Col. Thomas C. Keach, the executive officer and historian; and Capt. William M. Swanzy, whose previous 477th assignment is not identified.<sup>17</sup> The board sat for 3 weeks, soon after the command's harrowing experience with black troops at Freeman Field. Its lack of full objectivity may have therefore suffered, and it is possible that in writing the report, Selway, Keach, and Swanzy sought to win a victory that they could not win at Freeman Field.

The board of officers placed full blame for the 477th's failure squarely upon the unit itself. The board maintained that, unlike whites, black soldiers required longer periods of training, achieved a lower proficiency, were less motivated, lacked pride and discipline, were afraid and did not desire to go into combat, were tools of outside black organizations, and generally lacked the qualities of leadership, initiative, and a sense of responsibility. Capt. Lyon described the First Air Force report as "prepared by white officers who had commanded and supervised the 477th, [and this record] is important evidence not of what happened but of the basic conflict that underlay the failure in the Army."<sup>18</sup>

The Army Air Forces compiled the studies and submitted a summary of its conclusions and recommendations to the War Department.<sup>19</sup> The AAF report was most detailed and thorough, and summarized nearly every aspect of black participation during the war. Generally, in its conclusions and recommendations the AAF accurately reiterated the command surveys, showing that blacks received the same kind of training as whites, although it was often necessary to select men with lower aptitude scores in order to meet quota requirements; that in many cases blacks required longer training periods; and that they did not perform on a level equal to whites. The report notes that there were disorders and conflicts incited by the black's unwillingness to accept segregation both on- and off-base and upon their insistence for an equal opportunity. The AAF recommended equality of training and opportunity in the postwar era, but with segregated facilities. It suggested that commanders assign blacks to separate units, not to exceed the size of a group, and that their recreational and social activities be separate in accordance with the customs of the surrounding communities. Finally, blacks in the AAF should not number more than 10 percent of the total force.<sup>20</sup>

The AAF report also concerned itself with the questions of racial disorders and the black attitude toward the war effort. The AAF's views are important for understanding race relations during the war. The force never fully comprehended why disturbances took place, why blacks suffered a "persecution complex," why there was a "complete disregard of prescribed military correspondence channels," nor why

they did not fully support the war effort. Basically, black soldiers did react to the malassignment of white officers to black units; they did not perform well or performed a minimum amount of labor when placed in semiskilled or unskilled jobs; they were race conscious and extremely sensitive toward discrimination; and they showed a disregard for basic military channels because often these channels were dead ends for grievances. If the AAF failed to understand why blacks appeared to behave and to respond unlike whites, perhaps it was because the service never made an attempt to discover the underlying factors. The Air Force had a propensity to underestimate or to disregard totally the complaints of black soldiers. The AAF reported, for example, that there were few complaints against the military police, yet earlier a War Department study had indicated to the contrary. On the other hand, the postwar AAF study contains a considerable analysis of the black opinion regarding segregation, but the AAF seems to have learned little from its report. Other observations included in the survey were that professional agitators and civilian organizations dedicated to keeping the racial issue alive instigated numerous complaints; that northern blacks did not understand that the military had no authority to interfere with southern civil statutes and segregational practices; that blacks did not understand that segregation of recreational facilities was by unit and not by race; that they complained that they had "not been afforded ample opportunity for promotion and for the exercise of command functions"; and that disturbances occurring overseas flared up from minor incidents.<sup>21</sup>

In emphasizing environmental deficiencies, the AAF report isolated what it believed were several key factors that directly affected military performance. For example, because of a restricted educational background and limited opportunities for technical work in civilian life, there was a shortage of blacks entering the military—as was reflected by a lack of leadership ability, mechanical aptitude and technical skills, and lower Army General Classification Test (AGCT) and stanine scores. Their substandard health and sanitary conditions, it was argued, also limited their potential for productive work. However, the AAF did notice that black administrative personnel with the same background as whites were equally as capable in the performance of their jobs.<sup>22</sup>

Finally, the AAF lacked objectivity in analyzing the records of the 332d and 477th. It criticized both units because their training periods took longer than comparable white units. Although this was accurate, it cannot be attributed to any difficulties on the part of the men in meeting the training standards. Rather, AAF racial policies and practices are responsible. The AAF report did concede one negative consequence of this racial situation—that promotional opportunities for blacks within the 477th were inferior to those available for whites.<sup>23</sup>

Colonel Noel Parrish, the Tuskegee commander and a man very familiar with the AAF black flying program, provided a different per-



spective on the AAF surveys. The AAF asked him to examine the data as it was being collated. Parrish concluded that the voluminous material would enable "an unscrupulous researcher to disprove almost anything except that considerable confusion in attitude, policies and understanding existed." <sup>24</sup>

In his own summary of the surveys, Parrish noted that in spite of the official segregation policy it was not always possible to assign individuals to separate classes. Thus, in actual practice the AAF trained blacks in situations ranging from total integration to complete segregation. Although the greatest opportunities for recreational and social contacts were in the South, they preferred not to be assigned there. He felt that pilot training for blacks and whites was identical, and that every attempt had been made to produce black pilots with the same proficiency as whites. Parrish believed that the Air Cargo Resupply Squadron of the Troop Carrier Command had the best record for utilizing blacks. Finally, he maintained that the number of black officers was totally insufficient. On 30 June 1945 the ratio was 15 black enlisted men to each black officer, while for whites the ratio was 5 to 1. The ratios are misleading because flying units absorbed the majority of these black officers. One-third were at Tuskegee, another third at Godman, and one-half of the remainder were assigned to the Mediterranean Theater. Other commands absorbed the few remaining black officers. Within the 2AF, 3AF, 4AF, and ITCC, there were as few as 17 black officers for 22,938 black enlisted men.

Parrish's summary was never adopted because, as he noted, "there was some difference in my interpretation of the statistics here and what other people were making." While some attempted to use the results of the surveys to demonstrate the racial inferiority of blacks, to Parrish,

it proved none of that at all. The fact that they could operate with the background they had, the conditions they were under, the suspicions as well as the real fears that they would not be given equal opportunity or recognition or treatment, and the question of precisely what they were fighting for, which was bound to arise—considering all these things I thought they did better than anyone had a right to expect. But I don't want to pretend that this was the greatest and most effective unit ever produced. It was amazing that it performed at all. <sup>25</sup>

Perhaps his brief observation accurately portrayed the role of the black as clouded by confusion and contradiction, while the AAF postwar surveys clearly exemplified that confusion.

Truman Gibson presented another important and critical contribution in his analysis of McCloy's initial proposal for the survey. First, Gibson analyzed the proposal and noted its weaknesses. He feared that the surveys would not "scientifically determine and weigh prejudices and preexisting opinions," since objectivity was difficult in the racial

field. Considering the end results, Gibson was perceptive in his observation. Second, he suggested an examination of how public opinion had affected Army policy toward the utilization of blacks because "many things that were said to be impossible have been done as a result of public opinion." Finally, Gibson recommended that an outside person, preferably a member of the judiciary, be called in to evaluate the War Department's performance during the war years.<sup>26</sup>

In many ways, the postwar surveys were similar to the 1925 Army War College study; both evaluated a black performance in war and tried to determine how they could be employed in the future. Although often the attitudes were identical to those expressed 20 years earlier, there were some signs of change and hope. In the 1925 study, much of the emphasis had been placed on the fact that blacks were inherently inferior and could not do the work of whites. Their lower level of proficiency in 1945, however, was attributed to environmental deficiencies. In a way this was a valid explanation for substantial differences in the amount of training given and the level of performance achieved by blacks but the AAF also used it as an excuse to keep them out of certain areas because they did not have the necessary prerequisites. As a result, there was a slow transition for black pilots from single to twin-engine aircraft, and the AAF never permitted them to train in four-engine bombers. Furthermore, it placed most black enlisted men in semiskilled and unskilled jobs where they remained for the duration of the war.

While the 1945 surveys were understanding of some of the problems that black soldiers faced, they contained some racist comments attributing differences between blacks and whites to inherent characteristics. In describing individual instruction, a survey blamed low intelligence for their failure to respond readily to training. In this case it was unclear whether low intelligence was the result of environmental or genetic factors, yet other comments indicate that AAF leaders attributed low intelligence to genetic factors:

On the whole they are not competent to command troops, in that they lack the desirable traits of initiative, responsibility and impartiality.

Poor quality of negro noncommissioned officer, partially the result of lack of education, previous supervisory experience, and inherent racial characteristics.

Because of racial characteristics, colored troops require much closer supervision than whites.<sup>27</sup>

Armed with these confusing conclusions, the AAF entered the postwar period and attempted to formulate a cohesive policy for the utilization of blacks. From their World War II experience, AAF leaders gained both positive and negative perspectives, but the immediate result of the postwar surveys was, as Parrish had indicated, confusion.

This confusion might have reflected the bewilderment of Americans in 1945 or perhaps the ambiguous racial policy that had permeated the AAF since the early prewar buildup. In any event, following the war as during it, a degree of uncertainty characterized AAF policy toward the employment of blacks. This was due in large part to the fact that during the war problems had not been anticipated and decisions tended to be remedial rather than creative, with the result that AAF policy had been generally indecisive. Therefore, at the conclusion of the war, there were lessons that could have been learned about utilizing blacks effectively, although the postwar surveys failed to comprehend this.

## Chapter VIII

### CONCLUSION

There is no question that during World War II the Army Air Forces (AAF) made some headway toward improved race relations. However, that partial success does not alter the fact that the AAF failed to develop a comprehensive policy for dealing with all the problems that arose following the introduction of large numbers of black soldiers. By 1942, the AAF was required to accept and utilize blacks at the rate of 10.6 percent of its total force, and, unfortunately, it did not anticipate many of the resultant problems. The AAF and War Department operated under the official policy of segregation in terms of housing, messing, and recreation; since they considered these facilities "separate-but-equal," they did not find their policy discriminatory. Unfortunately, the system reflected the racist tradition of American society, and despite sincere and whole-hearted efforts by some commanders, in actual practice the military did not grant blacks equal treatment. As a result, from the perspective of the black soldier, segregation was unacceptable, and from the perspective of the AAF, it was not efficient.

Significantly, as the war progressed, blacks saw the value of protest in order to effect change. Had the black community not been as alert, organized, and vigorous in its demands, they would not have participated in the AAF to the extent they did. They persistently objected to their status, beginning with a campaign to reverse the exclusion policy of the Air Corps. Throughout the war, the black community actively fought segregation and discrimination and demanded maximum participation within the military. This constant pressure forced the War Department to expand opportunities for blacks and, in turn, to influence the AAF to reevaluate and modify its policies to accommodate black demands. This process of demand, pressure, and protest leading to reevaluation and change dominated the war years. To illustrate, in the late 1930's and during 1940 the War Department retreated from an earlier policy limiting the utilization of blacks and compelled the AAF to accept these men. From the small nucleus involved during the early training stages at Tuskegee and the initial nine Aviation Squadrons, the AAF expanded its black units until they were stationed worldwide. But pressure from the black community did not subside with these early victories. As a result, the AAF made available new technical areas, permitted them to fly twin-engine aircraft, sent black

soldiers overseas in increasing numbers, and provided better base facilities for black units. Furthermore, persistent political pressure provided an opportunity to participate in combat operations even though many AAF leaders questioned the ability of blacks.

Since many AAF commanders were not totally committed to the utilization of black personnel, they may have become indifferent toward carrying out War Department directives. It follows that the degree of racial harmony attained was relative to the quality of leadership which fluctuated from command to command. For instance, progressive leadership in Great Britain used the lessons it learned from the Bamber Bridge riot in effecting a more equitable policy, while the lethargy of other leaders was responsible for the near collapse of the 477th as a unit. The disaster at Freeman Field demonstrated the failure of the AAF and its policies and its insensitivity to the grievances that precipitated the incident. As a further obstacle to vital leadership, AAF commanders continued to resist the full implementation of War Department racial policies even after 1943 when they evolved into a more directed approach.

Finally, out of the war the AAF emerged with ambiguous ideas on the future employment of blacks, reflecting the confused policies and practices that had existed during the war. Some leaders attempted to retreat to a policy of total segregation, while others realized that some aspects of segregation were no longer applicable. Ultimately, to be successful in achieving racial harmony, the AAF had to develop a policy that would provide for the equal treatment of all personnel within the service and had actively to enforce that policy.

In the postwar era, the AAF, as a member of the War Department, and later the United States Air Force (USAF) under the Department of Defense (DOD), underwent dramatic changes in their treatment of blacks. Indeed, all the services changed and became more equitable, although the full integration of the armed forces has yet to be achieved. The War Department recognized that its wartime policies toward blacks had been ambiguous and haphazard, and realized that something more concrete than the postwar surveys was necessary. Therefore, the Gillem Board, composed of four general officers, was created to establish an acceptable policy for the postwar era. Basically, the board proposed more opportunities for blacks, but within the confines of a segregated system. This standstill infuriated many within the black community, and they continued to pressure the War Department and the Congress. However, it was President Harry S. Truman, as Commander in Chief, who took the major step toward desegregation. For political and humanitarian reasons, the President issued Executive Order 9981 on 26 July 1948, calling for equality of treatment within the armed forces—in other words desegregation.

Still, desegregation might not have been fully implemented by 1954 had it not been for the Fahy Committee and the Korean War. The

Fahy Committee was an action group that for more than a year monitored the progress of the three services and generally held them accountable for their policy and action. Meanwhile, the USAF recognized that segregated units were militarily inefficient and in 1949, with the support of the committee, started to disband all its black units, especially the black flying group at Lockbourne Air Force Base, Ohio, and to integrate them into previously all-white units. Despite far-reaching changes in the USAF, the nation's eyes were on the Army, and here progress was sluggish. It took the Korean War and the rapid build-up at training bases in the United States and on Korean battlefields ultimately to prove the inefficiency of segregation and bring about necessary changes. With the Navy already desegregating and the Army in Europe realizing that Executive Order 9981 was final, the Department of Defense in 1954 announced that segregation was at an end.

In summary, the struggle to improve race relations in the AAF during World War II challenged the military establishment to face its own ineffectiveness. Through confrontation with black and white liberal groups, the AAF learned that active commitment, vital leadership, and equal opportunity produced a more viable military organization than did segregation and unequal treatment. A lesson to be learned is that it is necessary to change behavioral patterns, because attitudes entrenched for 300 years cannot be easily recast. If the United States Air Force and the Department of Defense continually apply the notions of efficiency and social justice implicit in the World War II experience, the military will be able to move ahead of society in solving America's race relations problems.

## APPENDIX

**Table 1. AAF Military Personnel—Number and Percentage of US Army Strength: 1932–1946 (includes ASWAAF)**

Year	Number	Percent of US Army Strength
1932	15,028	11.2
1933	15,099	11.1
1934	15,861	11.5
1935	16,247	11.7
1936	17,233	10.3
1937	19,147	10.7
1938	21,089	11.5
1939	23,455	12.4
1940	51,165	19.1
1941	152,125	10.4
1942	764,415	24.9
1943	2,197,114	31.4
1944	2,372,292	29.7
1945	2,282,259	27.6
1946	455,515	24.1

Source: Army Air Forces Statistical Digest, 1946, p 13, AFSHRC 134. 11–6.

**Table 2. AAF Black Military Personnel—September 1942–March 1946 (does not include ASWAAF)**

Month/Year	Total	Officers	Enlisted
September, 1942	37,223	142	37,081
December, 1942	71,824	129	71,695
March, 1943	106,409	255	106,154
June, 1943	114,075	359	113,716
September, 1943	130,372	605	129,767
December, 1943	145,025	636	144,389
March, 1944	140,857	904	139,953
June, 1944	145,242	1,107	144,135
September, 1944	140,728	1,243	139,485
December, 1944	137,806	1,303	136,503
March, 1945	136,827	1,464	135,363
June, 1945	140,462	1,559	138,903
September, 1945	133,447	1,511	131,936
December, 1945	69,016	1,050	67,966
March, 1946	42,564	778	41,786

Source: Army Air Forces Statistical Digest, 1946, p 23, AFSHRC134.11-6.

**Table 3. AAF Black Flying Training Graduates**

Course	Total	Prior to October 1944	4th Qtr 1944	1945	1946
Advanced Pilot					
Training	926	520	105	263	38
Single Engine	673	429	61	161	22
Two Engine	253	91	44	102	16
Liaison Field					
Artillery	58	57	—	1	—
Navigation	132	54	25	53	—
Bombardier- Navigation	261	—	123	136	2

Source: Army Air Forces Statistical Digest, 1946, p 75, AFSHRC 134.11-6.



## BLACK FLYING UNITS



### 332d FIGHTER GROUP

*Constituted* as 332d Fighter Group on 4 Jul 1942. *Activated* on 13 Oct 1942. Trained with P-39 and P-40 aircraft. Moved to Italy, arriving early in Feb 1944. Began operations with Twelfth AF on 5 Feb. Used P-39's to escort convoys, protect harbors, and fly armed reconnaissance missions. Converted to P-47's during Apr-May and changed to P-51's in Jun. Operated with Fifteenth AF from May 1944 to Apr 1945, being engaged primarily in protecting bombers that struck such objectives as oil refineries, factories, airfields, and marshalling yards in Italy, France, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Austria,

Hungary, Yugoslavia, Rumania, Bulgaria, and Greece. Also made strafing attacks on airdromes, railroads, highways, bridges, river traffic, troop concentrations, radar facilities, power stations, and other targets. Received a DUC for a mission on 24 Mar 1945 when the group escorted B-17's during a raid on a tank factory at Berlin, fought the interceptors that attacked the formation, and strafed transportation facilities while flying back to the base in Italy. Returned to the US in Oct 1945. *Inactivated* on 19 Oct 1945. ...

*Activated* on 1 Jul 1947. Equipped with P-47's. *Inactivated* on 1 Jul 1949.

SQUADRONS. 99th: 1944-1945; 1947-1949. 100th: 1942-1945;

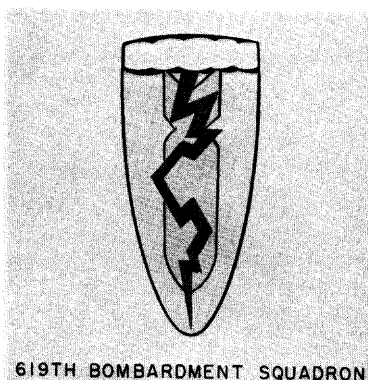
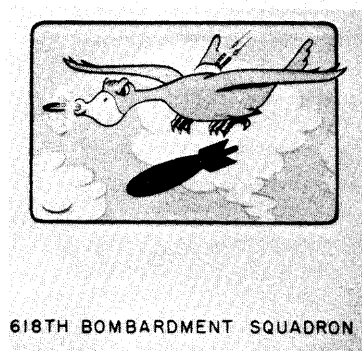
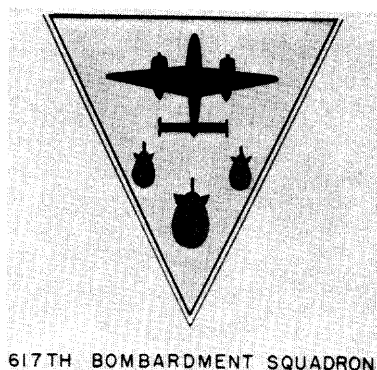


1947-1949. *301st*: 1942-1945; 1947-1949. *302d*: 1942-1945.

**STATIONS.** Tuskegee, Ala, 13 Oct 1942; Selfridge Field, Mich, 29 Mar 1943; Oscoda, Mich, 12 Apr 1943; Selfridge Field, Mich, 9 July-22 Dec 1943; Montecorvine, Italy, 3 Feb 1944; Capodichino, Italy, 15 Apr 1944; Ramitelli Airfield, Italy, 28 May 1944; Cattolica, Italy, c. 4 May 1945; Lucera, Italy, c. 18 Jul-Sep 1945; Camp Kilmer, NJ, 17-19 Oct 1945. Lockbourne AAB, Ohio, 1 Jul 1947-1 Jul 1949.

**COMMANDERS.** Lt Col Sam W Westbrook Jr, 19 Oct 1942; Col Robert R Selway Jr, 16 May 1943; Col Benjamin O Davis Jr, 8 Oct 1943; Maj George S Roberts, 3 Nov 1944; Col Benjamin O Davis Jr, 24 Dec 1944; Maj George S Roberts, 9 Jun 1945-unkn. Unkn, 1 Jul-28 Aug 1947; Maj William A Campbell, 28 Aug 1947-1 Jul 1949.

**CAMPAIGNS.** American Theater; Air Combat, EAME Theater; Rome-Arno; Normandy; Northern France; Southern



France; North Apennines; Rhineland; Central Europe; Po Valley.

**DECORATIONS.** Distinguished Unit Citation: Germany, 24 Mar 1945.

**INSIGNE.** *Shield:* Azure on a fess nebule or, a panther passant sable armed and incensed gules. *Motto:* SPIT FIRE. (Approved 15 Jan 1943.)

#### 477th COMPOSITE GROUP

*Constituted* as 477th Bombardment Group (Medium) on 13 May 1943. *Activated* on 1 Jun 1943. Assigned to Third AF. Trained with B-26 aircraft. *Inactivated* on 25 Aug 1943.

*Activated* on 15 Jan 1944. Assigned to First AF. Trained with B-25's. *Redesignated* 477th Composite Group in Jun 1945. Equipped with B-25's and P-47's. *Inactivated* on 1 Jul 1947.

**SQUADRONS.** *99th Fighter:* 1945-1947. *616th Bombardment:* 1943; 1944-1945. *617th Bombardment:* 1943; 1944-1947. *618th Bombardment:* 1943; 1944-1945. *619th Bombardment:* 1943; 1944-1945.

**STATIONS.** MacDill Field, Fla, 1 Jun-25 Aug 1943. Selfridge Field, Mich, 15 Jan 1944; Godman Field, Ky, 6 May 1944; Lockbourne AAB, Ohio, 13 Mar 1946-1 Jul 1947.

COMMANDERS. Lt Col Andrew O Lerche, 1943. Col Robert R Selway Jr, 21 Jan 1944; Col Benjamin O Davis Jr, 21 Jun 1945-1 July 1947.

CAMPAIGNS. American Theater.

DECORATIONS. None.

INSIGNE. None.

## 99th FIGHTER SQUADRON

LINEAGE. *Constituted* 99th Pursuit Squadron on 19 Mar 1941. *Activated* on 22 Mar 1941. *Redesignated* 99th Fighter Squadron on 15 May 1942. *Inactivated* on 1 Jul 1949.

ASSIGNMENTS. Army Air Corps, 22 Mar 1941; Technical Training Command, 26 Mar 1941; Southeast Air Corps (later Southeast Army Air Forces) Training Center, 5 Nov 1941 (attached to III Fighter Command, 19 Aug 1942); Twelfth Air Force, 24 Apr 1943; XII Air Support (later Tactical Air) Command, 18 May 1943 (attached to 33d Fighter Group, 29 May 1943; 324th Fighter Group, c. 29 Jun 1943; 33d Fighter Group, 19 July 1943; 79th Fighter Group, 16 Oct 1943; 324th Fighter Group, 1 Apr-6 Jun 1944); 332d Fighter Group, 1 May 1944 (attached to 86th Fighter Group, 11-30 Jun 1944); 477th Composite Group, 22 Jun 1945; 332d Fighter Group, 1 Jul 1947-1 Jul 1949.

STATIONS. Chanute Field, Ill, 22 Mar 1941; Maxwell Field, Ala, 5 Nov 1941; Tuskegee, Ala, 10 Nov 1941-2 Apr 1943; Casablanca, French Morocco, 24 Apr 1943; Oued N'ja, French Morocco, 29 Apr 1943; Fardjouna, Tunisia, 7 Jun 1943; Licata, Sicily, 28 Jul 1943; Termini, Sicily,

4 Sep 1943; Barcellona, Sicily, 17 Sep 1943; Foggia, Italy, 17 Oct 1943; Madna, Italy, 22 Nov 1943; Capodichino, Italy, 16 Jan 1944; Cercola, Italy, 2 Apr 1944; Pignatataro, Italy, 10 May 1944; Ciampino, Italy, 11 Jun 1944; Orbetello, Italy, 17 Jun 1944; Ramitelli, Italy, 6 Jul 1944; Catolica, Italy, c. 5 May 1945; Godman Field, Ky, 22 Jun 1945; Lockbourne AAB, Ohio, 13 Mar 1946-1 Jul 1949.

AIRCRAFT. P-40, 1943-1944; P-39, 1944; P-51, 1944-1945; P-47, 1944, 1945-1949.

OPERATIONS. Combat in MTO and ETO, 2 Jun 1943-30 Apr 1945.

SERVICE STREAMERS. American Theater.

CAMPAIGNS. Sicily; Naples-Foggia; Anzio; Rome-Arno; Normandy; Northern France; Southern France; North Apennines; Rhineland; Central Europe; Po Valley; Air Combat, EAME Theater.

DECORATIONS. Distinguished Unit Citations: [Sicily, Jun-Jul] 1943; Cassino, 12-14 May 1944; Germany, 24 Mar 1945.

EMBLEM. Over and through a medium blue disc, border of nine golden orange segments fimbriated of the field, issuing out of sinister chief toward dexter base a golden orange winged panther in striking position, proper, between four yellow stars in dexter chief and five like stars in sinister base. (Approved 24 Jun 1944.)

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SOURCE: Maurer Maurer, ed., *Air Force Combat Units of World War II* (New York, 1963), pp 212-213, 349-350.

SOURCE: Maurer Maurer, ed., *Combat Squadrons of the Air Force, World War II* (Washington, D.C., 1969), pp 329-330.

## NOTES

### Chapter I

#### THE WAR DEPARTMENT AND THE BLACK COMMUNITY

1. Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U.S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939-1953* (Columbia, Mo., 1969), pp 5-20, gives a short, concise description of black participation in the US military. For a more detailed analysis, see Jack D. Foner, *Blacks and the Military in American History: A New Perspective* (New York, 1974).
2. Two excellent articles which discuss the attitudes and actions of black Americans during this period are: Richard Dalfiume, "The 'Forgotten Years' of the Negro Revolution," *Journal of American History*, LV (June 1968), pp 90-106; and Harvard Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy and Interracial Violence in the Second World War," *Journal of American History*, LVIII (December 1971), pp 661-681.
3. Memo and attachment from AWC to C/S, "The Use of Negro Man Power in War," 30 October 1925, AFSHRC.
4. I.A. Newby, *Jim Crow's Defense: Anti-Negro Thought in America, 1900-1930* (Baton Rouge, 1965), pp x-xi, 16, 55, and 66. The racial views of society were reflected in the service schools; they were attended by practically all military leaders. One lecturer was Brig Gen LeRoy Eltinge, who attributed racial differences to inherent characteristics and noted that "the superior degree of will power, indomitable energy, great initiative, absolute self-control and strong sentiment of independence of the pure Anglo-Saxon distinguishes him from the other human beings just as fins and gills distinguish the fish from other vertebrates." See further, Richard Carl Brown, "Social Attitudes of American Generals, 1898-1940" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1951), pp 212-213.
5. "Use of Negro Man Power," basic memo.
6. Clarence S. Yoakum, and Robert M. Yerkes, eds., *Army Mental Tests* (New York, 1920), pp x-xi.
7. "Use of Negro Man Power," Reference A. Also, approximately 80 percent of the black enlisted men were from the South and 97 percent of them had attended only grade school; 86 percent of those from the

North had attended only grade school. Samuel A. Stouffer, *et al.*, *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II*, vol I: *The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life* (Princeton, 1959), p 490. A later study was completed using the same data. Generally, the scores of blacks were below those attained by whites, but, a further breakdown by states and races shows that northern blacks scored higher than southern whites in the 1918 test results:

Whites		Blacks	
State	Median score	State	Median Score
Mississippi	41.25	Pennsylvania	42.00
Kentucky	41.50	New York	45.00
Arkansas	41.55	Illinois	47.35
Georgia	42.12	Ohio	49.50

Otto Klineberg, ed., *Characteristics of the American Negro* (New York, 1944), p 36.

8. "Use of Negro Man Power," Reference A.

9. Emmett J. Scott, *The American Negro in the World War* (Chicago, 1919); Dalfiume, *Desegregation*, pp 18-20; Lee, *Negro Troops*, pp 3-20; Arthur E. Barbeau and Florette Henri, *The Unknown Soldiers: Black American Troops in World War I* (Philadelphia, 1974). "Use of Negro Man Power," Reference E. The officers of the AWC study believed the reason there were unqualified blacks serving in the Army was that black politicians, leaders, and newsmen "put racial interests above the interests of the United States." Other explanations given for the failure of the 92d were the low intellectual capacity, inefficient education, and "natural" racial characteristics of its black members, and unqualified black officers.

10. "Use of Negro Man Power," Reference E.

11. "Use of Negro Man Power," Reference C.

12. Memo from WD, G-1, to G-2, G-3, G-4, AWC, and Executive for Reserve Affairs, "Use of Negro Manpower in Time of Emergency," 23 February 1938. This was the cover memo for the AWC plan dated 26 April 1937. US Army Military History Research Collection, Carlisle Barracks, #127-26 (hereafter USAMHRC).

13. Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors, NAACP, 9 September 1940, Box #37, Arthur B. Spingarn Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress (hereafter L/C).

14. Ltr from Marshall to Lodge, 27 September 1940, AFSHRC 145.

81-90; ltr from Secretary, General Staff, to AG, 30 September 1940, AFSHRC 145.81-90; memo from Secretary, General Staff to C/AC, 30 September 1940, AFSHRC 145.93-85; ltr from AG to all CGs, "War Department Policy in regard to negroes," 16 October 1940, AFSHRC 145.81-90. The letter to Lodge became the basis for all replies from the War Department stating its official policy. The policy (16 October 1940 letter) provided for segregation and had the approval of the President; see memo from Marshall to S/W, "Report of Judge William H. Hastie," 1 December 1941, AFSHRC 145.81-90. This policy letter was released to the public; memo from T&O to Information, 30 October 1940, AFSHRC 220.765-2.

15. William Hastie, a black Judge, had been appointed as the Civilian Aide to the Secretary of War in late 1940. The purpose of the office was to coordinate matters concerning black troops in the Army. He and his important office will be discussed in Chapter IV.

16. Memo from Marshall to S/W, "Report of Judge William H. Hastie," 1 December 1941, AFSHRC 145.81-90.

17. Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War* (New York, 1947), pp 461-464; Record of telephone conversation between Daniels and McCloy, 22 September 1944, Box #17, OF 4245G, Franklin D. Roosevelt Library (hereafter FDRL).

18. Memo from Hastie to Secretary, General Staff, 1 July 1942; and memo from Secretary, General Staff to Hastie, 14 July 1942; AFSHRC 145.81-90. The General Staff believed that racial problems had to be handled in accordance "with accepted social customs," and the intermingling of the races was not in "accord with the existing customs of the country as a whole." Also, the War Department should not be placed in a position to "attempt the solution by regulation or fiat of a complicated social problem."

19. Remarks of the OIC, Miscellaneous Division, WD, AG, at the Conference of Negro Newspaper Representatives, 8 December 1941, Office, Chief of Military History (hereafter OCMH).

20. Henry L. Stimson Diary, 18 June 1941, Yale University Library, New Haven, Connecticut (hereafter Stimson Diary).

21. Memo from AFDAS to AFDPD, 12 November 1942, Box #85, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C. Ltr from Stimson to Ludlow, 8 April 1944; and ltr from McCloy to Wilkins, 5 April 1944; Box #40, NARG 107 (S/W). Interview with Brig Gen Noel Parrish (Retired), USAF Academy Oral History Program (hereafter USAFAOHP), 30 March 1973. Tuskegee will be discussed in Chapters II and III.

22. Lee, *Negro Troops*, pp. 23-29.

23. Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York, 1944), p 419.

24. Pittsburgh *Courier*, 16 January 1937; 23 October 1937; 22 January 1938; 19 February 1938; and 25 May 1940.

25. Norfolk *Journal and Guide*, "We Will Fight to Defend Our Country," 16 September 1939; and Walter White, "It's Our Country, Too," *Saturday Evening Post*, 14 December 1940.

26. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, pp 54-55. Implicit in this idea was the concern over sexual and social intercourse, and Howard W. Odum showed in his work that most of the rumors which often arose during the war were based on the sex issue. *Race and Rumor of Race: Challenge to American Crisis* (Chapel Hill, 1943).

27. Charles S. Johnson suggested a related idea—the right not to die. He noted that "to be commanded to die in time of war for the preservation of American institutions that denied the means of earning a living in time of peace has been an unforgivable irony to the Negro." *To Stem This Tide: A Survey of Racial Tension Areas in the United States* (Boston, 1943), p 1. In a sense this meant that they lived as second-class citizens but had a first-class privilege to die. Some blacks might ask if they should risk their lives for a freedom and opportunity they had never known. Also, if blacks and whites could fight and die together, why could they not live and train together and enjoy the same privileges.

28. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, p 4.

29. An editorial in *Crisis* (February 1939) asked: "How can a country expect a class of citizens to rally to its defense wholeheartedly when those citizens receive the dirty end of all deals even at the very moment they are being asked to offer their lives for the nation?"

30. For example, see Earl Brown, "American Negroes and the War," *Harper's Magazine*, April 1942; and Horace R. Cayton, "Fighting for White Folks?," *Nation*, 26 September 1942. The Four Freedoms, made famous by President Roosevelt, were freedom from fear and want and freedom of speech and worship. Thomas A. Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People* (New York, 1964), p 729.

31. This issue was brought up by most of the black press. For example, see *Crisis*, July 1941; Baltimore *Afro-American*, 10 October 1942.

32. AS/W McCloy wrote to Judge Hastie noting that the real issue was not whether or not blacks fought in mixed or segregated units, but winning the war. If the United States lost, "the lot of the Negro is going to be far, far worse than it is today." McCloy felt that the black press, such as the *Courier*, played up the racial issue to take people's minds



off the winning of the war. Memo from McCloy to Hastie, 2 July 1942, Box #123, NARG 107(S/W). Also, see the OWI pamphlet, "Negroes and the War," 1942.

33. For example, see ltr from Wilkins to S/W, 13 August 1942, Box #177, NARG 107 (S/W). The *Journal and Guide* also discussed black patriotism in an editorial, 5 March 1938.

34. Claudia Jones, *Jim-Crow in Uniform* (New York, July 1940).

35. James W. Ford, *The Negro People and the World Situation* (New York, August 1941); and Ben Davis, Jr., *The Negro People and the Communist Party* (New York, March 1943). George S. Schuyler, writing in the *Courier*, was suspicious of left-wing organizations and particularly of the strong "win the war" attitude of the Communists. He felt that the Communists would let black rights go by the board if it were necessary to save Russia; Wilson Record, *The Negro and the Communist Party* (Chapel Hill, 1951), p 223. Also, see Editorial in *Opportunity*, April 1939, for a comment about the loyalty of blacks to America and their eagerness to serve in the military. The Socialist Workers Party also made an appeal to blacks in J. R. Johnson, *Why Negroes Should Oppose the War* (New York, n.d. (ca. 1939)).

36. *Courier*, 7 February 1942; 14 February 1942. Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Directors, NAACP, 8 December 1941; the NAACP endorsed the *Courier's* Double V campaign at their May meeting; Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Directors, NAACP, 11 May 1942; Box #38, Arthur B. Spingarn Papers, L/C.

37. AS/W McCloy made the point about agitation hurting the war effort in a memo to Judge Hastie, 30 June 1942, Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W).

38. *Courier*, 19 February 1938. The *Courier* had the largest circulation of the black papers: *Courier*, 147,847; *Baltimore Afro-American*, 78,120; *Chicago Defender*, 46,000 (estimated); and *Journal and Guide*, 26,087; *Courier*, 1 January 1938. The Navy's story will not be told in this study; see Dennis D. Nelson, *The Integration of the Negro in the U.S. Navy* (New York, 1951).

39. *Courier*, 16 April 1938. This edition also showed support from the National Negro Youth Congress and many governors and mayors.

40. *Courier*, 30 April 1938, and 14 May 1938, have articles about the proposed division. See further, *New York Times*, 3 February 1938, and 4 March 1938.

41. *Crisis*, April and May 1938.

42. *Opportunity*, May 1938.

43. For example, see articles in *Courier*, 18 March 1939, and 25 March 1939.

44. *Courier*, 21 October 1939. In later issues, the paper called for blacks to organize and write letters to break down the color bar in the Army and Navy. See editorial, 25 November 1939. The CPTP is discussed in Chapter II.

45. *Courier*, "Courier Renews Army Drive," 27 April 1940. The *Courier* was particularly against the runaround in the Air Corps in which blacks could attend the civilian Chicago school but could not enter the Air Corps. Relevant articles and editorials also appear in its issues of 4 May 1940, 11 May 1940, 18 May 1940, 1 June 1940, 8 June 1940, 22 June 1940, 29 June 1940, and 6 July 1940. See also, Florence Murray, ed., *The Negro Handbook* (New York, 1942), p 60. In the presidential election of 1940, the *Courier* and *Afro-American* supported the candidacy of Wendell L. Willkie. *Courier*, 24 August 1940; *Afro-American*, 19 October 1940. Vishnu V. Oak wrote that Republican dollars helped dictate the editorial policies of many black newspapers during the 1940 and 1944 presidential elections. *The Negro Newspaper* (Yellow Spring, Ohio, 1948), p 30.

46. Murray, *The Negro Handbook*, 1942, p 63. White represented the NAACP, Randolph was head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and Hill was advisor on black affairs in the National Youth Administration and represented the National Urban League.

47. Stimson Diary, 27 September 1940. Stimson also believed that blacks in the aviation service will "produce disaster there."

48. The conference and aftermath are covered in Dalfiume, *Desegregation*, pp 36-43. Also, see *Crisis*, November 1940, "White House Blesses Jim Crow"; and December 1940.

49. Ltr from AG to all CGs, "War Department Policy in regard to negroes," 16 October 1940, AFSHRC 145.93-85.

50. Memo from AG to G-1, 17 August 1940, Box #1086, NARG 407 (Army-AG). The NARG 407 (Army-AG) files document the black pressure on the WD.

51. Stimson Diary, 22 October 1940, 23 October 1940. Stimson also believed that blacks would not do well in the Air Corps and had doubts about their efficiency and initiative.

52. General Davis worked in the Office of the Inspector General and was involved in the investigation of many racial problems during the war; his son, B.O. Davis, Jr., was a West Point graduate and became the senior ranking black AAF officer. Judge Hastie, assisted by Truman Gibson, was instrumental in transmitting black protest to the

War Department. The Civilian Aides, in effect, worked at the Assistant Secretary level and influenced AAF policy and practices. Hastie and Gibson will be discussed in Chapter IV.

53. *Courier*, *Afro-American*, and *Journal and Guide*, 2 November 1940. In its editorial, the *Afro-American* called the moves appeasement, while the *Journal and Guide*, generally pro-Roosevelt, took the position that "the intellectually honest, the truly realistic, the sensibly militant cannot expect revolution and should applaud progress, and pretty revolutionary progress at that."

54. *Crisis*, November 1940; folder 291.2, Box #325, NARG 18 (AAF). On the cover of two issues of the *Crisis*, there were photos of military aircraft with the caption: "For Whites Only"; July 1940 and December 1940. To many, the Air Corps occupied an elite position in the American military—a dramatic and colorful branch. The black community was bitter over the fact that it was excluded, and thus the campaign to open it up was long, widespread, publicized, and persistent. "Negroes in the AAF: Procurement and Assignment," Draft prepared by Dr. Victor Cohen, pp 1-2, AFSHRC K239.046-2. The Air Corps' aura continued into the war; see survey conducted by the ASF in 1943. Robert R. Palmer, Bell I. Wiley, and William R. Keast, *The Army Ground Forces: The Procurement and Training of Ground Combat Troops* (Washington, D.C., 1948), p 49.

55. *Courier*, 21 September 1940; 28 September 1940; 5 October 1940; and 21 December 1940. Walter White published an article late in the year which showed some of the frustration in the black community; "It's Our Country, Too." He noted that the buildup was turning into an example of blacks having to fight for the right to fight. One who did well in the CAA program at the University of Minnesota had to join the RAF to fly; and Lt Davis, having graduated 35th of 276 in his class at West Point, commanded the ROTC detachment at Tuskegee. However, according to White, blacks were hanging on with faith in democracy and were determined to carry their fair share. It seems that Lt Davis had been making the rounds of the "Negro assignments." When he was sent to Tuskegee in 1938, the *Courier* pointed out that black officers generally were not given an active command but were sent from Tuskegee to Wilberforce to Liberia, and back again. *Courier*, 27 August 1938.

56. Murray, *The Negro Handbook*, 1942, p 60; "Report of the Committee on Findings for Military and Naval Defense," Meeting at Hampton Institute, 25-26 November 1940, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W). Public Law 18 will be discussed in Chapter II.

57. *Crisis*, February 1941. The 99th and Tuskegee will be discussed in Chapters II and III.

58. Murray, *The Negro Handbook*, 1942, p 1. *Opportunity* also was hos-

tile to the segregation at Tuskegee and called the formation of the pursuit squadron a "half-hearted gesture," and a weak one at that. April 1941.

59. Ltr from White, 9 May 1941, Box #216 II, #3, NAACP Papers, L/C. *Crisis* noted that although the Army wanted 30,000 pilots a year, only 33 would be black. April 1941.

60. Ltr from White to Pickens, 10 February 1942; ltr from Pickens to White and the Board, 17 February 1942; and article by Pickens, "Fort Huachuca and 99th Pursuit Squadron"; OF 2538 (NAACP), FDRL. The *Courier* reported that there was a long-standing feud between Pickens and White, and White was looking for an opportunity to strike. 28 February 1942.

61. *Courier*, 7 June 1941.

62. Herbert Garfinkel, *When Negroes March: The March on Washington Movement in the Organizational Politics for FEPC* (Glencoe, 1959), pp 34-39, 54, and 60-61; Dalfiume, *Desegregation*, pp 117-118; Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy," p 666. Sitkoff noted that some of the other action committees formed at this time were: Adam C. Powell, Jr.'s Temporary National Protest Committee on Segregation; John A. Davis' Citizens Non-Partisan Committee for Equal Rights in National Defense; Committee on Negro Americans in War Industries, established by the Phelps-Stokes Fund; and the Committee on Discrimination in Employment. Sitkoff, "Racial Militancy," p 665.

63. *New York Times*, 10 January 1942, and 11 January 1942. The meeting was held on 10 January.

64. *Crisis*, July 1918.

65. *Crisis*, January 1942. Also, see articles, Roi Ottley, "A White Folks' War," *Common Ground*, Spring 1942; and Adam C. Powell, Jr., "Is This a 'White Man's War'?", *Common Sense*, April 1942.

66. One observer notes that a black leader in the North who did not take a strong militant position could be labeled Uncle Tom; "no Negro could survive that label if his accusers could make it stick." Garfinkel, *When Negroes March*, p 77.

## Chapter II

### THE ARMY AIR FORCES: EARLY POLICIES AND PRACTICES

1. Ltr from WD to Mr. Darden, "Colored Units," 17 August 1917, Box #383, NARG 18 (AAF). This letter was in response to Mr. Darden's 10 August 1917 letter to the S/W noting that there were numerous complaints from qualified blacks throughout the country attempting to enlist in the Aviation Department.

2. Memo from Training and War Plans Division to Personnel Division, 20 December 1922, Box #383, NARG 18 (AAF).

3. File 291.2, Box #383, NARG 18 (AAF).

4. Memo from General Westover, Acting Chief of the AC, 30 October 1935, Box #383, NARG 18 (AAF). See also, Janie Taylor, producer, "Tuskegee Airmen," National Public Radio (NPR), p 1.

5. Memo from S/W to the President, 5 August 1937, Box #5, OF25, FDRL. There is evidence, however, that at least one black did get into the AC during the interwar years. It was reported to Judge Hastie in 1941 that Reginald Thair enlisted in the AC on 31 January 1928 and was sent to the Panama Zone where he served an enlistment of 3 years. Ltr from Amos T. Hall to Hastie, 28 July 1941, Box #177, NARG 107 (S/W).

6. See, for example, folder 291.2; also, ltr from Arnold to Advisor on Negro Affairs, Department of the Interior, 23 January 1939; Box #325, NARG 18 (AAF).

7. Patricia Strickland, *The Putt-Putt Air Force: The Story of the Civilian Pilot Training Program and the War Training Service (1939-1944)* (Washington, DC, n.d. (ca. 1971)), pp 39-47. For example, the University of Minnesota and the Joliet, Illinois units accepted blacks.

8. Merton England and Chauncey Sanders, "Legislation Relating to the AAF Training Program, 1939-1945," AAFHS-7, pp 19-20, AFSHRC; memos between T&O, Plans, and Legal Divisions, "Act Approved 3 April 1939," 31 March 1941-12 April 1941, AFSHRC 220.1645-6; Paszek, "Negroes and the Air Force," pp 1-2; Lee, *Negro Troops*, pp 55-65. Lee analyzed in detail the implications of the law and the Congressional debate.

9. *Selective Service in Peacetime, First Report of the Director of Selective Service, 1940-1941* (Washington, D.C., 1942), pp 323-335; Paszek, "Negroes and the Air Force," p 2; and Lee, *Negro Troops*, pp 71-74. Another provision of the law did cause some concern. A compromise measure stipulated that those inducted for training had to be "acceptable." Simply by omission, the responsibility for defining acceptability was delegated to the Army, since the law did not elaborate. As a result, there was a fear that the Army would use this clause to exclude blacks, but this was not so. Later in the war, the question came up of whether the nondiscriminatory clause of the 1940 law was contrary to the policy of segregation. The Office of the Judge Advocate General, ASF, ruled that the law did not prohibit the Army from placing separate quotas for white and black troops and that when Congress passed the act, it knew that segregation of "white and colored troops was the established policy of the Government, both legislative and executive." Memo from JA, ASF, to AS/W, "Summary of congressional action on segregation of Negro troops," 3 August 1944, Box #125, NARG 107 (S/W).

10. Memo from Acting C/S to C/AS, "Employment of Negro Personnel in Air Corps Units," 24 May 1940, AFSHRC 145.93-85.

11. Memo from Arnold to WD, G-3, "Employment of Negro Personnel in Air Corps Units," 31 May 1940, Box #325, NARG 18 (AAF). A few days earlier Arnold had presented similar views to the C/S in commenting on the requirements of Congressional legislation concerning the CAA unit at Chicago—there were no separate units for blacks and there would be no black pilots in white units; memo from Arnold to C/S, "Testimony Before the Senate Sub-Committee on Appropriations Concerning Negroes in the Air Corps," 25 May 1940, Box #149, NARG 407 (Army-AG).

12. Memo from WD, G-3 (Andrews) to C/S, "Training of Negroes," 5 June 1940, Box #149, NARG 407 (Army-AG).

13. *Ibid.* General Andrews, the G-3, was an Air Corps officer; also, it can be assumed that General Marshall concurred in the report. In 1939, a total of 125 blacks held either a student, private, or commercial license; in 1940, because of the CPTP, this figure increased to 269. Murray, *The Negro Handbook, 1942*, p 82. A few months later, the AC continued to delay the inevitable. In response to numerous inquiries, the WD announced that the CAA was beginning the preliminary development of black pilot training, and the National Youth Administration and some civilian educational institutions were training mechanics and technical specialists. This meant that whites were being trained in the military at military schools, while blacks were to be trained by civilians at civilian schools. This would delay the military training of black enlisted specialists and would, at the same time, delay the formation of black units. Press Release, WD, 16 September 1940, OCMH. Memo from Secretary, General Staff, to C/AC, 30 September 1940; and ltr

from Yount to Rayford Logan, 8 October 1940; AFSHRC 141.93-85. Ltr from Watson to White, 2 October 1940, Box #4, OF93, FDRL.

14. Memo from Plans Division to T&O Division, "Training of Colored Aviation Mechanics," 5 October 1940, AFSHRC 145.93-85; memo from AC/AS to the Executive, "Training of Colored Aviation Mechanics," 15 October 1940, AFSHRC 220.164.

15. Ltr from T&O to SE ACTC, "Establishment of Pursuit Squadron (Colored) at Tuskegee, Alabama," 8 November 1940, AFSHRC 220.164. This was the AAF authorization letter for the Tuskegee project. The Air Corps submitted its plan to the WD on December 16th, and it was approved by the AG on 9 January 1941. Memo from Arnold to Gen Brett, with plan, "Training and Establishment of Pursuit Squadron (Colored) Single-Engine," 16 December 1940, AFSHRC 220.765-2. The plan also called for 429 enlisted men and 14 nonpilot cadets to be trained at Chanute. Arnold thought that the plan was admirable with the exception that the time factor for training of ground support personnel was not realistic. Normally, 3 to 5 years were required to become competent as crew chiefs, line chiefs, and hangar chiefs, while pilots could be trained in a year and a half. This showed that segregation could be inefficient because it was necessary to delay the start of pilot training until after the initiation of technical training. The AAF also received some pressure at this time. Hastie and Under Secretary of War Patterson both wrote asking probing questions. Patterson noted that a few months had passed since it was decided to make use of blacks in the AC, and the AC had to make every effort to expedite their training. Memo from Hastie to AG and 4 Inds, "Acceptance and Consideration of Applications of Negroes for Appointment as Flying Cadets," 4 December 1940; memo from Patterson to C/AC, 26 December 1940, and reply from Brett to Patterson, 28 December 1940; AFSHRC 220.765-2. The AAF was continually aware of political pressure and this is noticeable in its correspondence. The Plans Division requested additional recruits for training at Chanute because, "in the meantime considerable pressure has been brought to bear on this office." Memo from Plans Division to the Executive, "Training of Pursuit Squadron (Colored)," 1 February 1941, AFSHRC 145.93-85. Later, when the 100th Pursuit Squadron was formed, the AAF looked at both units as "priority units." "Due to the political aspect of this project, it is believed there will be repercussions unless colored trainees are afforded the same opportunities as white soldiers." Memo from AC FTC to C/AC, "Additional Colored Training," 26 February 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3.

16. 1st Ind from Weaver to C/AC, 6 December 1940, AFSHRC 220.765-2. AAF EFTC, History: 1 January 1939-7 December 1941, 1:546, AFSHRC 222.01. The Air Corps was planning for 15,000 cadets; see memo from Miscellaneous Branch to Mobilization Branch, 12 November 1940, AFSHRC 220.765-2.

17. Murray, *The Negro Handbook*, 1942, p 1. The 100th Pursuit Squad-

ron was constituted in December 1941. Memo from Secretary/AS to the C/S, "Constitution and Activation of the 100th Pursuit Squadron (Colored)," 8 December 1941, and ltr, same subject, from AG to SE ACTC, 27 December 1941; planning for the 100th was in memo from C/AS to C/AC, "Plans for Organization and Activation of Pursuit Squadron (Colored)," 1 November 1941, and reply 21 November 1941; AFSHRC 220.765-2. AAF FTC viewed the 99th and 100th as "priority units" and put pressure on the AAF to aid them in the preparation of these units. FTC needed nonflying officers and enlisted technicians and viewed the matter as urgent. Ltr from AAF FTC to AAF, "99th and 100th Pursuit Squadrons," 12 March 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3.

18. Memo from AFACT to AFRIT, 22 July 1942, Box #85, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C; ltr from Patterson to Mr. LaRoe, Jr., 26 March 1943, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

19. William H. Hastie, *On Clipped Wings: The Story of Jim Crow in the Army Air Corps*, published by the NAACP, 1 July 1943. It was issued as a justification for Hastie's resignation and as an attack on AAF policies. Hastie's resignation will be discussed below in Chapter IV. One can speculate that Judge Hastie realized that pursuit flying was selected in order to keep racial problems at a minimum and to provide a safe, easy start in a single-seat, single-engine plane.

20. Memo from Hastie to AS/W for Air and Atch (2 May 1942), 7 May 1942; memo from AFRIT-2 to AFAAP, "Civilian Pilot Training. Negro Aviation Cadet Candidates," 30 May 1942; AFSHRC 145.81-90. In referring to "emotional characteristics," AFRIT could be reflecting the influence of the AWC studies. Another memo at the same time stated: "When the two pursuit squadrons now activated have been adequately tested and if they prove to be satisfactory, when suitable combat aircraft becomes available, consideration will be given to the formation of additional units of that type." 2d Ind from Director, War Organization and Movement to AC FTC, 1 May 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3. A further memo stated that the black fighter group would be trained and equipped so that blacks would have every opportunity to demonstrate their capabilities. Memo from AFAAP to AFMAG, 14 July 1942, AFSHRC 145.81-90. Since blacks had to prove themselves, early black combat units were looked upon as "experiments." See reaction to statement by Maj Gen J. A. Ulio, in *Chicago Defender*, 26 December 1942. The *New York Times* (16 August 1942) reported that Gen Arnold said that the 99th Squadron was in the nature of an experiment and the establishment of other squadrons would depend on its success. Gen Lewis, the Acting AG, wrote that "the War Department policy precluded the training of Negroes as navigators, bombardiers, et cetera, until such time as the feasibility of organizing medium and heavy bombardment squadrons of all Negro personnel is proved. At present the Army Air Forces are engaged in training a fighter group because it is believed that in fighter aviation lies the most favorable opportunity for the Negro to prove his worth as a combat aviator. The Army Air Forces are



intensely interested in giving the loyal Negroes of the country the best possible opportunity to prove themselves in military aviation at the earliest possible date. For this reason, training is concentrated upon a fighter group." Ltr from Wilkins to WD, 11 September 1942, and ltr from Acting AG to Wilkins, 4 November 1942, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W). In another memo, the C/AS (Harmon) wrote that "the Army Air Forces does not propose to commit negro units to combat until every reasonable step to insure their success has been taken. Thenceforth the burden of proof rests squarely on the negro. Until that proof is at hand, the urgency of current demands and commitments prohibits any further expansion of negro pilot training." Memo from C/AS to G-1, 9 June 1942, Box #85, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.

21. At first the WD and AAF quota was 9 percent of the total manpower registered under Selective Service, then it was raised to 10 percent, and finally, for most of the war, 10.6 percent. Ltr from AG to all CGs, "War Department Policy in regard to Negroes," 11 December 1940, AFSHRC 145.93-85; 1st Ind, from AAF to C/AC, 25 February 1942, to basic ltr from GC ACTC to AC FTC, 10 February 1942, quoted in AAF CFTC, History: 1 January-30 June 1944, 4:649, AFSHRC 223.01. Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II, 6: Men and Planes* (Chicago, 1955), pp 523-524.

22. Lee, *Negro Troops*, pp 113-114. Murray, *The Negro Handbook, 1942*, pp 66-71. Besides the 2,250 in Aviation Squadrons, blacks were stationed at Tuskegee, Chanute, and a few thousand were attached to the AAF from the ground forces; memo from WD (T&O) to Hastie, 6 February 1941, Box #253, NARG 107 (S/W).

23. Victor H. Cohen, "Classification and Assignment of Enlisted Men in the Army Air Arm, 1917-1945," USAFHS-76, pp 123-124.

24. Cohen, "Classification and Assignment," p 125.

25. WD Pamphlet No. 20-6, "Command of Negro Troops," 29 February 1944, pp 2-4, AFSHRC; Lee, *Negro Troops*, p 242. Lee discusses in great detail the AGCT and how it relates to the use of blacks in the Army, especially pp 241-260. Paszek, "Negroes in the Air Force," p4. Palmer, Wiley, and Keast, *Procurement and Training*, p 6. The scores were grouped as follows: Grade I, 130 and above; Grade II, 110-129; Grade III, 90-109; Grade IV, 60-89; Grade V, 59 and below; before July 1942, Grade V began at 69. Roy K. Davenport, "Implications of Military Selection and Classification in Relation to Universal Military Training," *Journal of Negro Education*, XV (Fall 1946), p 591. From June 1941 to February 1942, 77.8 percent of the black inductees and 29.1 percent of the white inductees were in grades IV and V. Cohen, "Classification and Assignment," p 123. A survey conducted in the second half of 1943 placed 79.4 percent of blacks and 24.7 percent of whites in grades IV and V. Of 6,044 black enlisted men in the AAF CFTC late in 1942, only 917 had a score of eighty or more. AAF CFTC, History: 1

January-30 June 1944, 4:667-668, AFSHRC 223.01. The WAC had a similar problem. One set of AGCT scores showed that in May 1943, 66 percent of black and 15 percent of white recruits were in IV and V. Of those sent to the ETO between 19 February 1943 and 2 February 1944, 40 percent of the blacks and 10 percent of the whites were in IV and V. Mattie E. Treadwell, *The Women's Army Corps* (Washington, D.C., 1954), p 593; Study of the Women's Army Corps in the European Theater of Operations, 1943-1945, 1:129, AFSHRC 502.101-11.

26. There have been a number of studies on the educational difficulties which blacks have had to face in America. For example, see US Selective Service System, *Special Groups*, Special Monograph No. 10 (Washington, D.C., 1953), 1:103, 1:146, 1:156-157, 1:159-162; Stouffer, *Studies in Social Psychology*, 1:490-493; Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, pp 946-950; and Murray, *Negro Handbook, 1942*, pp 111-112.

27. Cohen, "Classification and Assignment," p 126. The WD, Operations Division, wrote: "Training speed is essential and only those who are fitted for specialist or officer training, be they white or colored, can be permitted to utilize training facilities if efficiency is to result." Memo from Operations to General Eisenhower, "The Colored Troop Problem," 2 April 1942, Box #124, NARG 107 (S/W).

28. Stimson Diary, 17 January 1942.

29. Craven and Cate, *AAF in WWII*, 6:61, 6:375, 6:524. The ASWAAF reached a peak of 600,000 men in the fall of 1943. Late in 1943, there was an attempt to integrate them into the AAF, but this process was not completed before the end of the war.

30. Memo from General Arnold to A-1, "Colored Personnel for the Army Air Forces," 4 June 1942, and attachments thereto, AFSHRC 145.81-90.

31. Memo from General Arnold to A-1, "Colored Personnel for the Army Air Forces," 4 June 1942, and attachments thereto, including: memo from CG, AAF to C/S, 14 April 1942; memo from AC/S to C/S, 6 January 1942; memo from AC/AS to AC/S, 30 January 1942; memo from DC/S to AC/S, 12 February 1942; and memo from AC/S to AAF, 17 February 1942; AFSHRC 145.81-90. Ltr from AAF to C/AC, "Colored Personnel for Air Defense Units," 25 February 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3.

32. Blanche D. Coll, Jean E. Keith, and Herbert H. Rosenthal, *The Technical Services: The Corps of Engineers: Troops and Equipment* (Washington, D.C., 1958), p 118.

33. Cohen, "Classification and Assignment," p 124.

34. Ltr from Hq AAF to AAF TTC, "Colored Personnel for Air Corps,"

6 March 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3. As of 1 July 1943, there were 218 black and 32 white Aviation Squadrons; the black ones were given the designation of "separate."

35. Testimony of Judge Hastie before the Gillem Board, 23 October 1945, Brief of Testimony, by Captain Pease, Gillem Papers, USAMHRC. Memo from Hastie to Arnold, 3 July 1942, AFSHRC 145.96-207. Within 2 weeks of Hastie's memo, an inspection was conducted of six Aviation Squadrons; the Air Inspector concluded that they were generally above average in morale and performance and that base and squadron commanders had "leaned over backwards" to keep their units happy. However, the inspector did recommend that the AAF issue a directive defining the duties and scope of training of these units. Memo from Air Inspector to CG, AAF, "Special Inspection of Colored Army Air Forces Units (Aviation Squadrons, Separate)," 17 July 1942, AFSHRC 145.96-207.

36. Memo from WD, G-3, to AS/W, "Utilization of Colored Personnel," with Atch, 4 March 1944, Box #40, NARG 107 (S/W).

37. Coll, Keith, and Rosenthal, *Engineers: Troops and Equipment*, p 322.

38. 8th Aviation Squadron (Sep), MacDill Field, History: Activation to Inactivation, June 1941-December 1943, p 2, AFSHRC SQ-AVN-8-HI.

39. The Organization and Training of Tactical Service Units for Oversea Air Forces, 1942-1945, 1:264-267, AFSHRC 201-35.

40. Treadwell, *WAC*, pp 593-594.

41. Memo from Hastie to Lovett, 4 October 1941, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W); ltr from Lt Gen Daniel James, Jr. to the author, 27 September 1972. General James, qualified for Air Corps training, was delayed for that training because of the "ridiculous selection procedure."

42. Report of the Secretary for the March Meeting of the Board, NAACP, March 1942, Box #43, Arthur B. Spingarn Papers, L/C.

43. Memo from AG to Hastie, 31 December 1941, Box #235, NARG 107 (S/W); memo from C/AS to Colonel Street, 31 October 1941, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W). "A-1 Daily Report," 2 June 1942; memo from AC/S to AAF, 4 June 1942; memo from C/AS to WD, G-1, 9 June 1942; and memo from AC/S to C/S, 10 June 1942 (approved by S/W on 15 June 1942); Box #85, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C. Also, see memo from Hastie to Lovett, 10 September 1942; and memo from Coiner to Hastie, 15 September 1942; Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W). Black candidates were occasionally mis-sent to regular AAF flying schools, causing the AAF some embarrassment. One reported to Ryan Field, Texas and two reported to Maxwell Field after travelling at their own expense from

Cleveland and Washington; all were told "they could not be accepted because they were negroes." Memo from Hastie to AS/W for Air, 19 August 1941, and memo from Secretary/AS to Hastie, 5 September 1941, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W); ltr from AAF to AAF FTC, "Negro Applicants for Commission as Service Pilots," n.d. (typed 25 January 1943), Box #103, NARG 18 (AAF); 1st Ind from AAF FTC to AAF, 12 March 1943, reported that there was another case in early 1943; strong efforts were made to find them flying jobs at Tuskegee or with the CPTP, Box #529, NARG 18 (AAF).

44. Testimony of Judge Hastie before the Gillem Board, 23 October 1945, Brief of Testimony, by Capt Pease, Gillem Papers, USAMHRC.

45. Memo from Coiner to Hastie, "Alleged Racial Discrimination in Case of Robert Terry, Negro Pilot," 1 August 1942, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

46. All aircrew candidates were given a standard test—called the Stanine Test—and rated on the scale of one to nine. Gibson also reports that he had "urged that every effort be made to have one standard for both whites and Negroes even though a fractionally smaller percentage of Negroes will be trained." Ltr from Gibson to Murphy, 1 April 1944, Box #238, NARG 107 (S/W). "The Medical Department of the Army Air Forces Training Command in World War II," 2:539-540, AFSHRC 220.740. Also, F. D. Patterson, President of Tuskegee, wrote to Gibson: "This is the tabulation on the statement I attempted to give you over the telephone showing the standing of the first group of trainees which we have received. I understand that very few of them have made over 71 percent regarded as an acceptable passing minimum for the Air Corps. Combine this with the probable scarcity of available men to make up our quota in terms of the future and you can see some reasons why we may push the Air Corps situation to our own embarrassment." Ltr from Patterson to Gibson, 31 March 1943, Box #252, NARG 107 (S/W).

47. Memo from Coiner to Hastie, "Eligibility for Admission to Cadet Courses of Training," 1 December 1942, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

48. Memo from Hastie to Lovett, 25 November 1942, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W); Testimony of Judge William Hastie before the Gillem Committee, 23 October 1945, Brief of Testimony, by Capt Pease, Gillem Papers, USAMHRC.

49. Ltr from Wilkins to McCloy, 26 July 1943, Box #59, #4, NAACP Papers, L/C.

50. Memo from A-1 to AAG, "Station for Colored Troops," 20 January 1942, Box #325, NARG 18 (AAF); Chart, "Air Bases and Stations, Report on Colored Troops, Data as of 1 February 1942"; and ltr from AAF to C/S, "Colored Personnel for Army Air Forces," 14 April 1942; AFSHRC 145.81-90.

51. Ltr from Eglin Field to SE ACTC, "Assignment of Colored Troops to Eglin Field," 7 April 1941; and memo from AAF to WD, G-3, "Assignment of Colored Personnel to Suitable Stations," 18 July 1941; AFSHRC 145.93-86.

52. AAF CFTC, History: 1 January-30 June 1944, 4:645-647, AFSHRC 223.01.

53. 1st thru 4th Ind, 13 May 1941-29 May 1941, WC ACTC, Ninth Corps Area, and C/AC, AFSHRC 145.93-86.

54. 1st Ind from AAF to AAF FTC, "Assignment of Colored Troops," 30 April 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3. AAF Personnel was tired of replies that a particular station did not have adequate housing and messing facilities, and, therefore, it suggested a message to the effect that the AAF had its quota and each station would receive theirs. If a local base could not handle them, then the command would absorb the blacks at another station within the command. But, individual stations could not reject the shipment of blacks nor communicate with HQ AAF about the lack of facilities or that the blacks could not be utilized. It cannot be ascertained if the message was issued, but it is important for indicating some of the frustrations that must have existed in Personnel. In effect, the AAF was attempting to cut off the complaints and force commands to handle the problem. Memo from AFPMP (Enlisted Section) to AFPMP, "Colored Personnel for Air Corps," 20 May 1942, Box #325, NARG 18 (AAF).

55. Memo from AFAAP to AFCAS, "Stationing of Negro Troops at Moore Field [Texas]," 8 August 1942, Box #325, NARG 18 (AAF); and ltr from Plans Division to Senator Pat Harrison, 13 March 1941, AF SHRC 145.93-85. In another case, in April 1941, some whites from Tuskegee wrote to their Senators about the location of the aviation facilities on the east side of the town. Their concern was that the area "offers the only outlet of expansion for white citizens of Tuskegee." The War Department informed them that the proposed field would be north and west of Tuskegee and not to the east. Petition, from Citizens of Tuskegee to Senators Bankhead and Hill, 21 April 1941, and the ltr from General Brett to Senators Bankhead and Hill, n.d. (ca. May 1941) AFSHRC 145.93-86.

56. Correspondence from 4 July 1942 to 15 August 1942, "Digest of Files," p 73, Box #267, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C. Besides Eagle Pass, West also showed concern about the stationing of blacks at Moore Field. He called Gen Arnold and told him that there were no recreational or other facilities for them and "there is bound to be trouble between the Negroes and Mexicans." Memo from Arnold to Hastie, "Complaint of Texas citizens re stationing of negro troops at Moore Field," 15 August 1942, Box #177, NARG 107 (S/W). Hastie was receptive to some flexibility at Moore because there could be serious problems both for the soldiers and the civilian community. Therefore, he

recommended "an interchange of stationing" so that if a choice of stations were possible, the preference would be for that station in the area of a substantial black civilian population. Memo from Hastie to Arnold, 15 August 1942, Box #177, NARG 107 (S/W).

57. Ltr from Secretary, Lemay Public Library Board to CO, 6th Corps Area, 17 November 1942, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

58. Ltr from Spokane Chamber of Commerce to Mrs. Roosevelt, 16 January 1943; and memo from A-1 to AS/W, 30 January 1943; OCMH. A similar complaint had been sent to Congressman Francis Case from the City Manager of Rapid City about the lack of a black population and black facilities. Ltr Case to Lovett, 17 December 1942; ltr from Rapid City City Manager to Case, 9 December 1942; and ltr from Coirer to Case, 29 December 1942; Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W). For another example involving training at Oklahoma A&M, see ltr from AAF, Director of Individual Training, to AAF TTC, "Assignment of Colored Personnel to Oklahoma A&M College," 7 January 1943; and 1st Ind from AAF TTC, 30 January 1943; memo from Poletti to Colonel Brownell, 22 February 1943; Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

59. Ltr from Keesler to AC TTC, "Employment of Negro Instructor," 28 November 1941, AFSHRC 220.765-1. It cannot be ascertained from the files how long Delaney was permitted to teach at Keesler.

60. Ltr to Senator James O. Eastland and Representative W.M. Colmer, 3 February 1943, Box #8, OF93, FDRL.

61. Memo from Chief, Technical Training Division, to C/AS, 6 February 1943; memo from DC/AS to A-1, 26 February 1943; Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C. Senator Ellender wrote that the son of one of his constituents was put under "a bunch of bull-headed Negro instructors"; the father commented: "How does the War Department or anyone else think the Southern people can wholeheartedly support the war effort with something like that crammed down their throats?" Memo from A-1 to AAF TTC, "Transfer of Colored Instructors," 8 March 1943; ltr from Senator Ellender to AAF, A-1 and reply, 30 March 1943 and 12 April 1943; Box #103, NARG 18 (AAF). Black instructors at schools at Wichita Falls and Amarillo, Texas were removed; those at Sheppard (Wichita Falls) were transferred to Chanute. Hastie reported that the AAF TTC employed 100 black instructors for the projected black training center. When plans for the center were abandoned, these instructors were assigned to various AAF installations: for example, Illinois, Texas, Mississippi, and Nebraska. It is possible that some of these included those mentioned in the above protests. Testimony of Judge Hastie before the Gillem Board, 23 October 1945, Brief of Testimony, by Capt Pease, Gillem Papers, USAMHRC.

62. Memo from Eisenhower to C/S, "The Colored Troop Problem," 25

March 1942; an AAF memo from AFDAS to AFAAP, 4 April 1942, indicated that this memo "will be the basis for the annunciation of Army Air Forces policies on the subject"; Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C. Eisenhower reported in a 1965 interview that he personally intervened to force the Australians to take blacks. Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., ed., *The Papers of Dwight David Eisenhower, The War Years: I* (Baltimore, 1970), pp 208-221. Stimson Diary, 17 January 1942. Stimson was unhappy about the southern attitude toward the stationing of black troops there.

63. C. L. Grant, "The Development and Function of AAF OCS and OTS, 1942-1951," USAFHS-99, 1953, AFSHRC, pp 1-9.

64. Ltr from Commander, Miami Area, to CG, 1st District, AAF TTC, "Assignment of Colored Troops," 15 May 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3.

65. Ltr from Cannon to McCloy, 16 June 1942, Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W). That same month Mr. John Duff, Jr., President of the Miami Beach Hotel Association, wrote to General Weaver, AAF TTC, noting that although the people of the Beach area wanted the Army to use their facilities, rumors of blacks being sent there disturbed them. Blacks had never been permitted to live on the Beach. Ltr from Duff to Weaver, 10 June 1942, in the collection of Murray Green, Office of Air Force History (hereafter AFCHO/Green).

66. Series of memoranda, "Negro Officer Candidates," from and to AFRIT, AFPMP, AFAAP, AFCAS, AFDMR, from 28 June 1942 to 17 August 1942, Box #325, NARG 18 (AAF). Along with the discussions within the Air Staff, a number of surveys were conducted of black colleges to find a suitable location for a black AAF OCS. Besides Tuskegee, Hampton Institute and Virginia State College for Negroes were examined. Ltr from Goldboro Field to 1st District AAF TTC, "Report of Inspection," 8 August 1942; and ltr from Goldboro Field to 1st District AAF TTC, "Inspection Report," 19 August 1942, and 1st Ind thereto, 24 August 1942; AFSHRC 220.765-3.

67. Quoted in Grant, "AAF OCS and OTS," p 9.

68. Ltr from Hastie to Lee Nichols, 15 July 1953, OCMH. Only the Army Infantry School remained segregated, and it was practiced there because the large number of black candidates permitted the organization of an all-black student company. Memo from A-1 to C/AS, 15 January 1943, Box #85, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.

69. Memo from WD, Officers Branch, to Hastie, 2 October 1942, Box #226, NARG 107 (S/W); Grant, "AAF OCS and OTS," p 16; memo from A-3 to General Giles, 14 August 1943, Box #529, NARG 18 (AAF).

70. Ltr from A-3 to CG, AAF TC, "Investigation of Curriculum and Conditions Existing as Reported by the Air Inspector of the Officers

Candidate School, Miami Beach, Florida,” and Report, 20 March 1944, AFSHRC 220.7171-12.

71. Correspondence between Mr. Ira J. O’Neal and the author, 1 November 1973.

72. Grant, “AAF OCS and OTS,” p 20.

73. *Army Air Forces Statistical Digest*, 1946, pp 14 and 23, AFSHRC 134.11-6. The number of black officers reached its high mark in May and June of 1945—1,559.



### Chapter III

#### THE ARMY AIR FORCES: BLACK OFFICERS AND FLYING UNITS

1. At the end of the war, the AAF conducted a comparative study at Keesler Field of 1,200 blacks and a like number of white aircrew applicants. The study showed that black applicants compared very well with whites in terms of background, and concluded that blacks joining the flying units were better trained and educated than their white counterparts. Statistics for those who passed the AC qualifying examination demonstrate that 54 percent of blacks and 35 percent of whites came from cities of more than 100,000 population; 43 percent of blacks and 20 percent of whites had some college education; 22 percent of black fathers and 14 percent white fathers had some college education; and 24 percent of black mothers and 14 percent white mothers had some college education. Blacks reported excellence in athletics more often than whites; showed less indication of mechanical experience; had few relatives and friends with flying experience; reported "more frequent participation in academic, scientific, instructional and social service work on the one hand, and more frequent participation in unskilled labor and personal service on the other"; and were older than whites: 31 percent were under age 20, while 58 percent of whites were under age 20. Memo from Col John Flanagan to the Air Surgeon, "Biographical Data on Colored Aircrew Candidates," 11 September 1945, AFSHRC 141.281-22. Also, the AAF conducted a test of 815 West Point cadets and 356 black cadets to construct tests for the selection and placement of AAF personnel. For a highly technical discussion of those tests see, William Burton Michael, "Factor Analyses of Tests and Criteria: A Comparative Study of Two AAF Pilot Populations," *Psychological Monographs: General and Applied*, 63 (1949), 55 pp.

2. Memo from Arnold to Eaker, "Negro Air Combat Units," 19 June 1945, Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.

3. Memo from Giles to C/AS, "Negro Training," 26 April 1943, Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C. When the AAF discussed an increase in the utilization of blacks, AAF-Training suggested that the new group be equipped with fighter aircraft especially suited for low-altitude bombing. In other words, keep blacks in the one-engine, one-pilot concept. Memo from Training to Gibson, "Tuskegee Institute," 12 May 1943, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

4. Hastie, *On Clipped Wings*, p 5. A total of 992 blacks had graduated from Tuskegee when its last class ended on 29 June 1946. Florence Murray, ed., *The Negro Handbook, 1949* (New York, 1949), pp 263-264. However, General Parrish estimates that the separate training system cost several times what it would have if blacks had been integrated into the AAF training program. Interview with Brig Gen Noel F. Parrish (Retired), by Dr. James C. Hasdorff, 14 June 1974, AFSHRC.

5. AAF EFTC, History: 1 January 1939-7 December 1941, 1:551-552, AFSHRC 222.01. This quote referred to the work of the engineers building the facilities; the AAF told them that "training must be initiated on schedule regardless of cost." In 1941, when Capt Parrish helped establish the flying training facilities at Tuskegee, he encountered a problem with a contractor and took it to Gen Weaver, CG, SE ACTC; Weaver told him: "Parrish, don't worry about meeting standards. Just keep 'em happy. Your job is just to keep 'em happy." Interview with Brig Gen Parrish (Retired), USAFAOHP, 30 March 1973.

6. AAF EFTC, History: 1943, 2:1042-1043, 2:1053-1056, AFSHRC 222.01. A total of 51 liaison pilots graduated in three classes. Also, see 1st Ind from AGF to Hastie, 26 September 1942, Box #178, NARG 107 (S/W); AAF CFTC, History: 1 January-30 June 1944, 4:690, AFSHRC 223.01; and series of memos, ltrs, and Inds, "Training of Colored Liaison Pilots," from 13 July 1943 to 25 July 1943, mainly from and to AAF SETC and AAF TC, AFSHRC 220.765-2. A father of an Army officer who first went to Pittsburg Field, Kansas and then to Tuskegee for liaison training reported that at Pittsburg, "he was known to be Colored but was treated as an officer," but at Tuskegee, "he will be treated as a Colored officer." The father went on to protest the segregation system as "obnoxiously dehumanizing." Ltr from Mr. Frederick Parker, Sr. to Gibson, 9 May 1943, Box #176, NARG 107 (S/W).

7. AAF EFTC, History: 1943, 2:1056-1059, AFSHRC 222.01; AAF EFTC, History: 1 July-31 August 1944, 1:324-328, AFSHRC 222.01. An internal A-3 memo, 10 March 1944, reported that the Miami Beach OCS had 40 blacks, and the graduation rate averaged 10 per class, most of these going to Tuskegee. One Air Staff general stated in 1944 that Tuskegee was overrun with five or six officers to each job. Memo from AAF TC, A-3 to A-1, "Colored Officers," 17 March 1944, AFSHRC 220.765-2.

8. Undated memo in AAF TC file, written by Parrish (ca. March 1944), AFSHRC 220.765-2.

9. AAF EFTC, History: 1 July-31 August 1944, 1:322-323, AFSHRC 222.01.

10. "The Segregation of Negroes in the Army Air Forces," Thesis for the Air Command and Staff School, May 1947, pp 49-50, AFSHRC (hereafter Parrish Thesis).

11. Interview with Gen Parrish (Retired) by Dr. Hasdorff.
12. Interview with Lt Col Robert Ashby (Retired), 1 November 1973; interview with Maj George Martin (Retired), 17 November 1973.
13. Memo from Gibson to Provost Marshal, 4 April 1942, and from Hastie to Provost Marshal, 7 May 1942; ltr SOS to SE ACTC, "Clashes between Civil and Military Police in Tuskegee, Alabama," and Inds thereto; AFSHRC 220.765-3. Basically, military personnel arrested for a misdemeanor would be turned over to military authorities upon their request.
14. Ltr from EFTC to AAF, 19 May 1942, AAF EFTC, History: 1 July-31 August 1944, vol 2, Appendix to Chapter XVI, AFSHRC 222.01.
15. Ltr, Kimble to SETC, 13 May 1942, and ltr from AAF FTC to SETC, 6 June 1942, AAF EFTC, History: 1 July-31 August 1944, vol 2, Appendix to Chapter III, AFSHRC 222.01. Kimble expressed some of his views at a meeting with Colonels Norstad and Cabell; memo, 29 July 1942, AFSHRC 145.81-91. Parrish gave some candid comments about Kimble in an interview, USAFAOHP, 30 March 1973.
16. Interview with Parrish by Lee Nichols, n.d. (ca. 1953), OCMH. Parrish reports that Kimble had told him that there were some senior generals in Washington who wanted the Tuskegee program to fail. Parrish thought that Kimble was sort of an elitist and had a paternalistic attitude. USAFAOHP, 30 March 1973.
17. AAF EFTC, History: 1943, 2:1039-1041, AFSHRC 222.01.
18. AAF EFTC, History: 1 January-31 December 1943, 2:1039-1041, AFSHRC 222.01; Lee Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front* (New York, 1954), p 47.
19. AAF EFTC, History: 1 July-31 August 1944, 1:331, AFSHRC 222.01; interview with Gen Parrish (Retired), USAFAOHP, 30 March 1973.
20. AAF EFTC, History: 1943, 2:1066-1067, AFSHRC 222.01; interview with Parrish by Lee Nichols, OCMH; interview with Lt Col Robert Ashby (Retired), 1 November 1973. Truman Gibson visited Tuskegee in April 1943 and was very favorably impressed. He noticed a "decided upswing in the morale," and felt that "the training program had been conducted in a fair and impartial manner." Memo from Gibson to Lovett, 1 May 1943, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).
21. Interview with Gen Parrish (Retired), USAFAOHP, 30 March 1973.
22. *Crisis*, March 1943, p 72. Not all comments about Tuskegee were favorable. On 20 February 1943, the *Courier* started a series of articles

by one of its correspondents stressing racial problems at Tuskegee and showing where blacks were not treated fairly. Parrish felt that some of the comments were true and "some of it was purely fabrication, and the writer must have known it was so." Interview with Gen Parrish (Retired), USAFAOHP, 30 March 1973. Generally, the *Courier* gave favorable publicity to Tuskegee, once Kimble had left.

23. Lee, *Negro Troops*, pp 452, and 517-523; Francis, *Tuskegee Airmen*, pp 30-144. Thirty years later, Gen Eaker wrote that he "was not only satisfied, but delighted with the performance" of the group under Col Davis. He added that he believed "the 332's performance was on a par with the average of all pursuit squadrons under my jurisdiction. Col Davis was a capable and efficient leader." Letter from Gen Ira C. Eaker (Retired) to the author, 5 December 1974. Also, see series in the *Journal of the American Aviation Historical Society*, by Robert A. Rose: "Art and the Airman," 19 (Fall 1974); "Lonely Eagles, Part I," 20 (Summer 1975); "Lonely Eagles, Part II," 20 (Winter 1975).

24. Ltr from Giles to Eaker, 15 March 1945, and ltr from Eaker to Giles, 24 March 1945, Box #24, Ira C. Eaker Papers, L/C; ltr from Eaker to SqLd D.J.A. Griffiths, 9 March 1945, Box #26, Ira C. Eaker Papers, L/C.

25. Correspondence with Col Campbell (Retired), 29 October 1973, and Mr. Curtis, 12 December 1973. Also, see series of memos and ltrs from and to HQ AAF Rest Camps, MTO, 17 March 1944 to 31 May 1944, AFSHRC 632.217.

26. Walter White, *A Rising Wind* (Garden City, 1945), pp 87-89; memo from White to WD, "Observations in the North African and Middle Eastern Theatres of Operations," 22 April 1944, Box #9, OF93, FDRL; *Journal and Guide*, 15 April 1944. General Eaker believed that the black flying units performed better under their own black officers than they would have under whites because they developed pride in their race and tried to prove themselves; "I believe that all black fighter squadrons were happier, more confident and, therefore rendered better service under their own black officers and as a homogeneous unit." Letter from Gen Eaker (Retired) to the author, 5 December 1974.

27. General Parrish commented that "you can't get figures in lining up units as best to worse and you probably shouldn't. There are too many factors and nobody would be at the bottom on everything or the top on everything." Interview with Gen Parrish (Retired) by Dr. Hasdorff.

28. Ltr from House to Cannon, "Combat Efficiency of the 99th Fighter Squadron," 16 September 1943, with 2 Inds, Cannon to Spaatz, 18 September 1943, and Spaatz to Arnold, 19 September 1943, AFSHRC 141.281-22. This report was written at the same time that *Time* magazine published an article stating that "unofficial reports" from the Mediterranean suggested that "the top air command was not alto-

gether satisfied with the 99th performance." It was reported that they were thinking of sending it to the Coastal Air Command to cover convoys. *Time*, 20 September 1943, pp 66, 68. Gibson was upset and wrote to Col Davis about the "lousy *Time* story." He added: "If there is any consolation to be gotten out of the whole affair it is that the Army Air Forces did not back up and for once is not responsible for the lie that was published in the *Time* article." Col William Westlake of the AAF had written to Gibson stating that he knew of no plans to attach the 99th to the Coastal Command. Ltr from *Afro-American* to Gibson, 20 September 1943; ltr from Gibson to BPR, 20 September 1943; ltr from Westlake to Gibson, 20 September 1943; ltr from Gibson to Davis, 24 September 1943. Interestingly, the *Time* article made a German propaganda broadcast which was transmitted in Danish on 22 January 1944. The broadcast also mentioned that the US was going to use blacks basically as cannon fodder in a struggle from which they would derive slight benefit. FBIS Daily Report, 24 January 1944, Official German Broadcasts. Box #259, NARG 107 (S/W).

29. Minutes of Meeting of Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies, 13 October 1943, Box #40, NARG 107 (S/W). The McCloy Committee will be discussed in Chapter IV.

30. Minutes of Meeting of Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies, 16 October 1943, Box #40, NARG 107 (S/W).

31. "Operations of the 99th Fighter Squadron Compared with Other P-40 Squadrons in MTO, 3 July 1943-31 January 1944," Statistical Control Division, 30 March 1944, AFSHRC 134.65-496. Black pilots were aware of the racial factors which affected their unit. For example, black replacement pilots did not arrive with the same regularity as whites. Thus, one pilot noted that they had to fly 70 missions before rotation as compared to 50 for white pilots; he wondered "how many blacks lost their lives, were injured or captured on our Jim Crow extension." Another felt that his organization suffered by not having access to the experience of pilots who had participated in wartime operations. Correspondence with Col C.D. Lester (Retired), 4 December 1973, and Col William Campbell (Retired), 29 October 1973.

32. Brief of Testimony, Nippert, 5 October 1945; Taylor, 13 October 1945; and Strother, 8 October 1945; before Gillem Board, by Capt Pease, Gillem Papers, USAMHRC. Roi Ottley, in *Black Odyssey: The Story of the Negro in America* (New York, 1948), pp 299-300, wrote that Col Davis deserved most of the credit for holding together both the 99th and 332d: "he had poise, dignity and intelligence. His manner was coldly aloof, but he nevertheless won the admiration and loyalty of his men. . . . If he took little leadership in racial controversies raging about him, he did go beyond the demands of his rank to lead his group in action." Gibson's 1944 letter to Davis provides another glimpse: "a number of reports have been trickling back which seem to indicate some dissatisfaction on the part of your officers. I have, however, seen

enough of the fellows in the last 3 years to sense the cause of the difficulty, if it could be called such. For a number of understandable reasons, they do not like discipline, and you have to be a disciplinarian. I am doing all I can continuously with the newspapers in explaining the situation to them, and I think they have a pretty good understanding at the present. Ollie Harrington has been writing some interesting and sympathetic letters about the situation back to the states which have helped a great deal. I do not tell you this to disturb you, but I would not be your friend if I did not write you frankly about a situation that is being rather widely discussed." Ltr from Gibson to Davis, 31 August 1944, Box #260, NARG 107 (S/W). Later, as a general, Davis commented that "I think we, without question, insisted on a higher degree of discipline, better appearance, conservativeness in operations, primarily because it was highly desirable not to take risks that might produce something that could be interpreted as being a failure and take a chance on losing the whole ball game in a single operation." Dudley Stevenson, the former Communications Officer for the 99th, recalled that "Gen Davis was probably the toughest task master that I ran into." Taylor, "Tuskegee Airmen," NPR, pp 3, 5. Also see interview with Gen Parrish (Retired) by Dr. Hasdorff.

33. Memo from Gen Harper to Gibson, 4 December 1943, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

34. Memo from Giles to C/AS, "The Negro Problem," 27 April 1943, Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.

35. Memo from AAF-Operations to CG, AAF, 10 June 1943, approved 15 June 1943, Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C. After the announcement of the formation of the 477th, Judge Patterson was asked at a press conference how the bombardiers and navigators would be used; he responded that "everyone who goes to bombardier and navigator schools will be bombardiers and navigators, they are not going to be used to cut paper dolls and play marbles." Ltr from Louis Lautier to Mr. William Kelley, *People's Voice*, 17 July 1943, Box #177, NARG 107 (S/W). The pervasive concern for political repercussions may have been responsible for dispelling a move by a number of officers to cancel the planned bombardment group. One staff officer wrote that "the loss in combat efficiency through their utilization is all out of proportion to the productive effort at home," i.e., the resultant riots and cries of discrimination, and the matter was dropped. Memo from Col E. O'Donnell to Gen Hall, 2 October 1943, Box #85, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.

36. General Giles wrote as C/AS in 1943 that "experience with this unit can lead only to the conclusion that the negro is incapable of profitable employment as pilot in a forward combat area." Memo from Giles to WD, G-3, 4 October 1943, Box #85, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.

37. AR 210-10, 20 December 1940, AFSHRC 170.2111-1.

38. Memo from AC/S to Hastie, "Report of discrimination against negro officers at Carlisle Barracks, Pa.," 15 September 1941, AFSHRC 145.81-90.

39. Memo from Gibson to McCloy, 31 March 1944, Box #126, NARG 107 (S/W).

40. Memo from Maj William A. Hoy, Jr., to Gen K. P. McNaughton, "Colored Training (nonpilots)," 5 January 1944, AFSHRC 220.765-2. In an earlier report, the only difficulty noted was the "general tendency to absorb theory with more than average difficulty," and this problem was compounded by students slow to admit that they did not understand some fact or theory. This group of thirty did well, was superior in effort and application, and had received willing cooperation from every department on the field. Ltr from 1Lt George F. McInerney to Director of Navigation Training, Hondo, "Report on Progress of Flight 44-3-10 (Colored)," 1 December 1943, AFSHRC 220.765-4.

41. Hondo AAF, History: January-February, 1945, 1:44-47, AFSHRC 284.46-8. The historian felt that in spite of the slowness in learning, "those graduated are competent navigators."

42. AAF Bombardier School, Midland AAF, Texas, History: November-December, 1944, p 40, AFSHRC 286.39-7.

43. Interview with Maj George Martin (Retired), 17 November 1973.

44. Interview with Brig Gen Lucius Theus, USAFAOHP, 27 December 1973; interview with Mr. David A. Smith, 6 February 1974.

45. Florence Murray, ed., *The Negro Handbook, 1944* (New York, 1944), pp 100-101.

46. A draft and final copy (14 pp) of the report and some cover letters are at AFSHRC 141.281-23. In addition, this author has a copy of Kubie's file of letters to and from the AAF and some friends about the report. Interview with Doctor Kubie, 5 July 1972. Col John Milne Murray, "Accomplishments of Psychiatry in the Army Air Forces," *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 103 (March 1947), pp 596-599. Actually, the report was squashed before it even reached the Office of the Army Air Surgeon. A number of psychiatrists, both in and out of the service, attempted to effect a broader application of psychiatry in areas such as the flying program, the technical training command, and with emotionally distressed fliers in the combat theaters. The Army Air Surgeon was not a psychiatrist and the status of psychiatry was on shaky grounds. Thus, some psychiatrists felt that their attempt to get their profession accepted and utilized by the AAF would be enhanced if it were not identified with an even more controversial subject—race relations.

47. Ltr from Davis to IG, "Survey relative conditions affecting racial attitudes at Selfridge Field, Michigan," 13 October 1943, Box #181, NARG 107 (S/W).

48. 1st Ind from Deputy IG to DC/S, "Selfridge Field," 18 March 1944, Box #104, NARG 18 (AAF).

49. 1st Ind from AI, to WD, AG, "Alleged discrimination against Negroes in Officers' Club at Selfridge Field, Michigan," 17 February 1944, Box #1065, NARG 407 (Army-AG).

50. Memo from Deputy, AI, to Gen Arnold, "Negro Situation at Selfridge Field," 29 March 1944, Box #104, NARG 18 (AAF). General Hunter, 1AF Commander, believed that racial friction resulted from blacks being prodded by the Communists, and he had received FBI reports on the matter. Letter from Gen Hunter (Retired) to the author, 30 November 1974.

51. Memo from Arnold to Giles, "Negro Situation at Selfridge Field," 31 March 1944, Box #104, NARG 18 (AAF). Several reports to 1AF at the time present contradictory indications of the racial climate on the field. In late March, one stresses that the race question was on everyone's mind, and that the newspapers in Detroit were thoroughly familiar with all matters on the base. The inspector noted a laxity in discipline, saluting, and dress and that there was a reluctance to criticize blacks because of fears of charges of discrimination. Yet, a month later, another inspector reported to Gen Hunter that "Col Selway also asked me to report that, in general, morale is high at Selfridge Field and discipline good." Memo from 1AF Asst JA to Gen Hunter, 28 March 1944; and memo from 1AF Asst JA to Gen Hunter, 27 April 1944; The Training of Negro Combat Units by the First Air Force, May 1946, vol 2, AFSHRC 420.04C.

52. Memo from Gibson to McCloy, 31 March 1944, Box #126, NARG 107 (S/W).

53. Interview with a former member of the WAC's, Sergeant (name deleted by request), Control Tower Operator, 9 December 1973. Her evaluation of the black pilots was that they were excellent pilots but reckless and daredevils; the reason they were so good was that they took chances.

54. Memo from WD, G-1 (White), to C/S, "Discrimination against Negro Officers at Selfridge Field," 14 April 1944, Box #1510, NARG 407 (Army-AG). It is interesting that White seemed to equate racial segregation and discrimination. Traditionally, the WD and AAF had refuted this point, since they defended segregation and argued that it was not discriminatory.

55. Ltr from McCloy to Mrs. Roosevelt, 29 April 1944, Box #126, NARG



107 (S/W). Mrs. Roosevelt had written to McCloy asking about the outcome at Selfridge. The S/W directed that Colonel Boyd "not be given command of colored troops." 5th Ind from AAF, A-1, to WD, AG, 17 May 1944, Box #104, NARG 18 (AAF). General Arnold, concerned about the accessibility of the 477th to influences in Detroit and its black press, attempted to hasten the move of the black flying units from Selfridge. He wrote to the Air Staff in April that he was not satisfied with the speed with which it was being done and requested that every effort be made to implement the move immediately. Memo from Arnold to Kuter, "Movement of Negro Units from Selfridge Field," 29 April 1944, Box #104, NARG 18 (AAF).

56. "Racial Situation in the United States," Director of Intelligence, ASF, 24 April 1944, Box #103, NARG 18 (AAF). It was also reported that the General had said that "I am not interested in advancing or retarding the Negro race. I have a job to do and I don't want anything to interfere with my doing it." General Hunter believed that blacks would further their social status best by fighting for their country. He also felt that his most unpleasant and difficult job during the war was training the black flying units. Letter from Gen Hunter (Retired) to the author, 30 November 1974.

57. Telephone conversations, 12 April 1944, 1 July 1944, 10 July 1944, Training First Air Force, vol 2, AFSHRC 420.04C.

58. Telephone conversation, 27 April 1944, Training First Air Force, vol 2, AFSHRC 420.04C.

59. First Air Force, History: 1944, pp 76-79, AFSHRC 420.01-7; 477th Bombardment Group (Medium), History: 15 January-15 July 1944, p 14, AFSHRC GP-477-HI. The historical officer for the 477th was Maj Thomas C. Keach who was later in the command structure at Freeman Field but was relieved to make way for the black takeover of the unit.

60. Series of ltrs from Brown to Gibson, 24 March 1944 to 23 May 1944; memo from Gibson to Office of the Surgeon General, 13 July 1944; Box #246, NARG 107 (S/W). It was also pointed out that Brown was generally accepted as white, was the personal physician for one of the senators from Washington, and was personally acquainted with the Boettinger family; Mrs. Boettinger was the daughter of the President. Brown had written to Mrs. Roosevelt. Unfortunately, the files do not indicate what became of Capt Brown. In a memo from Harper to Giles, "Colored Program," 20 June 1944, it was pointed out that potential racial unrest was one of the primary reasons for the move from Selfridge. The other reasons given were that better training, better weather, and ranges were available elsewhere. Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C. An accurate first-hand account of the problem is found in "The Story of the 477th Bombardment Group," *Politics*, 1, #5 (June 1944), pp 141-142. Gibson reports that the move from Selfridge "bordered on the ludicrous." The men were told that many lives de-

pended on the secrecy of the move and were not told where they were going. Their train went north to Port Huron, Michigan, then to Gary, Indiana, and finally to Louisville. Memo from Gibson to Gerhardt, 7 June 1944, Box #126, NARG 107 (S/W).

61. Memo from Gen Harper, AC/AS-Training, to Giles, "Colored Program," 20 June 1944, Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.

62. Report from Col John Harris to the AI, "Negro Units at Godman Field and Walterboro Army Air Base," 29 May 1944, Box #104, NARG 18 (AAF). Memo from Harper to Giles, "Colored Program," 20 June 1944, Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C. The WD released WD Pamphlet 20-6 in February 1944 to aid commanders in working with blacks, yet an inspection at Walterboro showed that the base did not learn of its existence until January 1945. Training First Air Force, 1:205, AFSHRC 420.04C.

63. Telephone conversation between Hunter and Giles, 12 June 1944, Training First Air Force, vol 2, AFSHRC 420.04C; correspondence with Col Campbell (Retired), 29 October 1973.

64. Telephone conversation between Hunter and Kirksey, 29 June 1945, Training First Air Force, vol 2, AFSHRC 420.04C. There was one incident which indicated the type of response that a black officer might find in the South. A pilot, just returned from overseas, had taken in an automobile tire to be repaired; he did not know that the owner of the garage was the mayor of the town. When he returned in 3 days and the tire was not ready, he attempted to take the tire and the mayor slapped him. The pilot punched the mayor on the chin and soon a large and hostile crowd gathered. The pilot instructed two MPs to protect him and made it back to the base. Two white officers there further protected him and got him an immediate transfer to the 477th. Interview with Lt Col Spann Watson (Retired), USAFAOHP, 3 April 1973; Manuscript #15, 15 June 1945, Box #312, #6, NAACP Papers, L/C.

65. *Courier*, 29 July 1944, 5 August 1944, and 12 August 1944.

## Chapter IV

### 1943: ERA OF CHANGE

1. Memo from Gibson to AS/W, 3 February 1943, Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W); ltr from AG to all Chiefs and Divisions, "Policies Pertaining to Negroes," 18 December 1940, AFSHRC 145.93-85. During WWI, Emmett J. Scott had been appointed by Secretary of War Newton D. Baker as a special assistant to deal with the employment of blacks, and during the pre-WWII buildup the black community appealed for a similar office. Scott, *The American Negro in the World War*; Dalfiume, *Desegregation*, p 35; *Courier*, 28 September 1940.

2. The black press publicized the WD's reaction to Hastie. The *Courier*, 31 January 1942, noted that there were reports that Hastie was unhappy and discouraged a year after he assumed this post. Judge Hastie wrote that Under Secretary Patterson dissuaded him from resigning 6 months before his departure. Letter from Judge Hastie to the author, 13 November 1974.

3. Hastie attended many of the 1941, 1942, and 1943 meetings of the NAACP Board of Directors. Minutes of Meeting of the Board of Directors, NAACP, Box #38, Arthur B. Spingarn Papers, L/C. He also sponsored a resolution in January 1942 at a meeting of black organizations which stated that blacks were not completely behind the war effort; *New York Times*, 10 January 1942 and 11 January 1942. A prominent black leader believed that the NAACP looked at Hastie as "their man," and the managing editor of a black newspaper felt that Hastie had followed the NAACP "line"; interview with Mr. J. C. Evans, by Lee Nichols, n.d. (ca. 1953), OCMH; ltr from Dan Burley to Gibson, 7 July 1943, Box #236, NARG 107 (S/W). For a discussion of Judge Hastie and the NAACP during the 1930's, see August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, "Attorney's Black and White: A Case Study of Race Relations Within the NAACP," *Journal of American History*, 62 (March 1976).

4. Letter from Judge Hastie to the author, 13 November 1974. Hastie felt that Gen Marshall was open-minded and would have done more if the nation had not been at war. Judge Patterson and Mr. McCloy "were in accord with my concerns and objectives and exercised a measure of constructive influence upon military leadership." On the other hand, most of the senior military personnel in the War Department treated Hastie as an outsider, though courteously.

5. Memo from WD, Operations Division to Gen Eisenhower, "The Colored Troop Problem," 2 April 1942, Box #124, NARG 107 (S/W).

6. Memo from Military Intelligence Service, to WD, Plans Division, "Negro Civilians & Military Personnel, Alexandria, Louisiana, and Vicinity," 8 May 1942, AFSHRC 145.81-90. This report was sent to the AAF for its information and guidance, but the AC/AS had to reject the recommendation because "stations north of the Mason-Dixon Line will not be of sufficient capacity to absorb all of the northern Negro troops." Memo from AC/AS to C/AS, "Assignment of Negro Troops," 23 June 1942, AFSHRC 145.81-90.

7. Report from Col Cooke to IG, "Special Mission performed for the Chief of Staff in connection with colored troops," 25 June 1942, and 1st Ind by IG, 29 June 1942; and memo from AC/AS for C/S, 17 July 1942; AFSHRC 145.81-90. One important development resulting from Cooke's recommendation for a permanent War Department council was the McCloy Committee.

8. Memo from Military Intelligence Division to AC/S, G-3, "The Negro Problem in the Army," 17 June 1942, AFSHRC 145.81-90.

9. *Ibid.* Secretary Stimson writes that the WD had direct evidence "that the Japanese and Germans are conducting a systematic campaign among the American Negroes stirring up their demands for equal representation." This "outside agitation" caused blacks to object to their white officers and insist on black ones. Stimson Diary, 12 May 1942.

10. Memo from Gibson to McCloy, 17 December 1943, Box #125, NARG 107 (S/W). The Communists did encourage their followers to support the war effort. James W. Ford, a prominent black Communist leader, stated in 1942 that no one "must stand in the way of Negro unity behind the war effort." It was the responsibility of every black leader to "lay aside all differences and answer the call of the nation to win the war." James W. Ford, *The War and the Negro People* (New York, 1942), pp 9-10. Wilson Record, author of *The Negro and the Communist Party*, p 215, relates that in early 1944, he was working in the base personnel section at a small Army air field in South Georgia when he was "approached one day by a [black] corporal, a truck driver, who wanted to know if it would be possible to secure a transfer to an infantry unit scheduled for overseas shipment. This was an unusual request, for if an Air Corpsman feared anything it was transfer to the infantry, especially a 'hot outfit.' Anyone voluntarily asking for such a change would have been regarded as a 'section eight,' a candidate for the 'psycho ward.' I asked the corporal his reason for requesting the transfer. At first he was reluctant to talk. However, it eventually developed that, 'the agreement at Teheran makes it incumbent that I, as a Communist, do everything possible to hasten victory over the Axis.' The transfer was made."

Military Intelligence conducted a second analysis investigating conditions around Little Rock, Arkansas. It discussed the various Japanese organizations that were attempting to exploit the racial situation. However, an indorsement by the Eighth Service Command saw the black press as the main concern: "a national program designed to modulate the inflammatory articles of the colored press and the radical agitation of the NAACP would contribute materially to the reduction of racial disturbances, as well as improve the morale of the colored population of the country as a whole." Memo from Military Intelligence Service to AG, "Japanese Exploitation of Negroes, Little Rock, Arkansas," 27 May 1942; and Ind from Eighth Service Command to AG, 9 September 1942; Box #147, NARG 407 (Army-AG). The Evaluation Section prepared a detailed study of Japanese racial agitation and noted that the Japanese actively sought to create dissatisfaction and foster race riots and organized revolts. To win black support, the Japanese stressed three themes: religion (particularly the Moslem), race (nonwhite versus white), and economics (the have-nots versus the haves). Report prepared by the Evaluation Section, "Japanese Racial Agitation Among American Negroes," n.d. (ca. mid-1942), AFSHRC 145.81-90.

11. Interview with Mr. J.C. Evans, by Lee Nichols, n.d. (ca. 1953), OCMH.

12. Box #176, NARG 107 (S/W). The files of the Office of the Civilian Aide fill 90 boxes at the National Archives and are indispensable for anyone doing research on the black and the Army in World War II. See Boxes #176-265, NARG 107 (S/W).

13. Lieutenant Colonel Coiner handled Hastie's limitless memoranda for Lovett. On the back of one buck slip he scrawled, "what were you saying about no more memos?" Buck slip from Coiner to Col Brill, 16 September 1942, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W); Lee, *Negro Troops*, p 176. Hastie and Gibson operated in other ways to put pressure on the WD. In early 1941, Gibson wrote to his friend Claude Barnett that they were particularly "anxious that the Air Corps be swamped with applications from young men who would like to be Flying Cadets." Ltr from Gibson to Barnett, 25 March 1941, Box #177, NARG 107 (S/W).

14. Memo from G-3, "Memorandum on Report of Civilian Aide to Secretary of War," 21 March 1941, Box #149, NARG 407 (Army-AG).

15. Ltr from T&O to SE ACTC, "Segregation of Colored Troops," 8 May 1941, AFSHRC 220.765-2.

16. Memo from Hastie to Lovett, 23 April 1941, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W); memo from Hastie to McCloy, 30 June 1942, Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W); memo from Hastie to Gen Staff, 1 July 1942, AFSHRC 145.81-90; memos from Hastie to Lovett, 20 June 1942, and 10 September 1942, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

17. Two works discuss the role of both during World War II: Lee Finkle, *Forum for Protest: The Black Press During World War II* (Rutherford, 1975); and Charles Radford Lawrence, "Negro Organizations in Crisis: Depression, New Deal, and World War II" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1953).

18. The Office of War Information conducted a survey which showed that the readership of black papers was four times their actual circulation. Memo from Gibson to Petersen, 28 February 1946, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W). The circulation figures may not be accurate, since the papers were passed from hand to hand and were read by numerous people. Also, they were read by the more articulate and community leaders. Two good studies of the black press are: Vishnu V. Oak, *The Negro Newspaper* (Yellow Spring, 1948) and Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, pp 908-924.

19. Roi Ottley, 'New World A-Coming,' *Inside Black America* (Boston, 1943), p 286; see further his discussion of the black press, pp 268-288. Also, see Lester M. Jones, "The Editorial Policy of Negro Newspapers of 1917-18 as Compared with that of 1941-42," *Journal of Negro History*, XXIX (January 1944), pp 24-31.

20. The role of the *Courier* in opening up the Air Corps to blacks and in popularizing the *Double V* campaign was discussed in Chapter I.

21. One WD report noted that 56 percent of black soldiers read the *Courier* and 76 percent read a paper in the *Afro-American* chain. Memo from Military Intelligence Division to G-3, "The Negro Problem in the Army," 17 June 1942, AFSHRC 145.81-90. Gibson wrote to his friend Carl Murphy of the *Afro-American* that the black press deserved much of the credit for effecting change in WD policies. Gibson felt that because of the persistence of the black press in directing the attention of the Army to the problems of black soldiers, it had "forced a serious reconsideration of the entire issue." Ltr from Gibson to Murphy, 26 November 1945, Box #238, NARG 107 (S/W).

22. Memo from McCloy to Marshall, 21 July 1943, Box #1508, NARG 407 (Army-AG).

23. In 1940 there were 355 branches and 50,556 members, while in 1946 there were 1,073 branches with 394,909 members. Lawrence, "Negro Organizations in Crisis," pp 103 and 105.

24. For example, ltr from Wilkins to Stimson, 13 August 1942, Box #177, NARG 107 (S/W); NAACP Press Release, 29 May 1942, Box #264, #2, NAACP Papers, L/C; and ltr from White to FDR, 15 September 1939, quoted in ltr from S/W to General Watson, 6 October 1939, OF 2538, NAACP, FDRL. Stimson, during the prewar buildup, saw White as an agitator, "asking for a good deal more, but the bulk of the negroes we think will be very well satisfied with what we are doing for them."

Stimson Diary, 22 October 1940. On the other hand, he saw Dr. Frederick Patterson, President of Tuskegee, as not one of those who made the war "a fulcrum for the acquisition of certain political reforms." Stimson Diary, 29 January 1943.

25. Box #59, #2, NAACP Papers, L/C. In cases of complaints that the NAACP could not handle, Thurgood Marshall replied to the soldier that he was "very sorry that under our rules this Association is only permitted to enter those cases which involved a question of discrimination because of race or color. From the content of your letter it does not appear that your case would come within the scope of the Association's work." Box #283, #1, #2, NAACP Papers, L/C.

26. Murray, *Negro Handbook*, 1944, p 12; AAF EFTC, History: 1 January-31 December 1943, 2:1070, AFSHRC 222.01.

27. Message from White to Arnold, 19 August 1942, and reply, 22 August 1942; and memo from Arnold to Col Ennis, 21 August 1942; Box #325, NARG 18 (AAF). In another example, the NAACP had been pressuring the War Department to make better use of black Wacs, particularly in overseas assignments. The official history states, however, that the pressure from the black organization did not reflect the sentiments of the women. When the WACs attempted to find volunteers for a black unit in the ETO, one black Wac "suggested to an inspector that they ship the NAACP instead." Treadwell, *WAC*, pp 599-600.

28. Message from MacArthur to Marshall, 5 March 1945, Box #40, NARG 107 (S/W). President Roosevelt became involved in this conflict between White and MacArthur.

29. *Crisis*, June 1942. NAACP opposition to the Red Cross segregation of blood plasma received the attention of Representative John E. Rankin of Mississippi who, in a House speech, called its attempt to "brow-beat" the Red Cross "one of the most vicious movements that has yet been instituted by crackpots, the Communists, and parlor pinks of this country." US Congress, House, 77th Cong., 2d sess., 28 May 1942, *Congressional Record*, LXXXVIII, A2141.

30. Stimson Diary, 5 March 1941, 13 January 1942, 19 October 1942.

31. Letter from Judge Hastie to the author, 13 November 1974.

32. Memo from Hastie to S/W, 5 January 1943, Box #103, NARG 18 (AAF).

33. *Ibid.*

34. See articles, *Courier*, 23 January 1943; *Afro-American*, 23 January 1943; *New York Times*, 19 January 1943; and *Crisis*, February 1943.

35. Memo from A-1 to C/AS, "Resignation of Judge William H. Hastie," 9 January 1943, Box #103, NARG 18 (AAF).

36. Memo from C/AS to A-1, 9 January 1943, Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.

37. Grant, "AAF OCS and OTS."

38. Memo from C/AS to Director of Military Requirements, "Negro Policy," 11 January 1943, Box #103, NARG 18 (AAF).

39. Memo from C/AS to Air Surgeon, "Negro Policy," 11 January 1943, Box #103, NARG 18 (AAF).

40. Series of memoranda between Hastie and Coiner, 29 October 1942 to 10 November 1942; the *Cornish Post* wrote to the NAACP on 26 September 1942, and the NAACP wrote to Hastie on 27 October 1942; Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

41. Mae Mills Link and Hubert A. Coleman, *Medical Support of the Army Air Forces in World War II* (Washington, D.C., 1955), p 186.

42. Ltr from C/AS to AAF FTC, "Racial Discrimination," 5 February 1943, and 3d Ind from Parrish, 10 February 1943, Box #103, NARG 18 (AAF). Memo from Davenport Johnson to Stratemeyer, 21 January 1943; McCloy cleared the letter to Tuskegee on 4 February 1943; the CG at Maxwell wrote in the 4th Ind that he personally knew that Tuskegee followed WD policies and there was no dissatisfaction there; Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.

43. Ltr from Patterson to LaRoe, 26 March 1943, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W). Also, see ltr from Wilkins to S/W, 5 February 1943, and ltr from AG to Wilkins, 27 February 1943; Box #1071, NARG 407 (Army AG).

44. For example, see *Courier*, 6 February 1943, 10 April 1943; *Afro-American*, 6 February 1943, 13 February 1943, 27 February 1943, 10 April 1943; *Defender*, 6 February 1943.

45. William H. Hastie, *On Clipped Wings: The Story of Jim Crow in the Army Air Corps* (NAACP, 1 July 1943). Hastie's approach, however, was not entirely negative; and he did offer suggestions for a more effective utilization of blacks and for a more efficient fighting force. He never advocated mutiny or resistance by blacks in the military, but rather took a *Double V* approach by urging servicemen and women to defend their country and to leave the fight against racial barriers to others outside the armed services. Hastie concluded with a very interesting comment about white Americans: "We Negroes are often forced to the conclusion that white men are very peculiar, so peculiar that amusement provoked by the ludicrous enables us to bear with



some of our neighbors' whimsical ways." Hastie was portrayed as a dynamic leader, champion of his race and pillar in the face of adversity. His resignation in 1943 was heralded as one of the most important events of the year, and in recognition of his service he was presented with the 28th Spingarn Medal by the NAACP. Hastie was acclaimed for his dedication, since most men "would have closed their eyes to prejudice in order to maintain themselves in a remunerative position." Text of the Award of the Twenty-eight Spingarn Medal, Box #274, #4, NAACP Papers, L/C.

46. Ltr, "Advisory Committee on Negro Troop Policies," 27 August 1942, Box #40, NARG 107 (S/W); Lee, *Negro Troops*, p 158; memo from Col Leonard to Advisory Committee, 6 January 1944, Box #40, NARG 107 (S/W).

47. Memo from Patterson to McCloy, 23 September 1942, Box #40, NARG 107 (S/W). What particularly irritated Patterson was that he had been charged with the responsibility for discussing matters relating to blacks with Judge Hastie. Within a few days both Patterson and Hastie were informed that "the committee had been set up to consider strictly military problems in the use of Negro troops and that the broader social problems were only incidentally involved." Special Assistant to the US/W Petersen believed that Patterson "was more upset than seemed necessary." Memo from Office of the Assistant Secretary to McCloy, 28 September 1942, Box #40, NARG 107 (S/W).

48. Memo from Lt Col Davidson Sommers to S/W, 30 November 1945, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W). Only the Secretary could devote all his efforts to the committee's work. Memo from General Davis to McCloy, 10 November 1943, OCMH.

49. Memo for Record, written by Gerhardt, 4 January 1944, Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W). Members of the committee consisted of representatives of the General Staff and major commands. The only two blacks were Gen Davis and, after Hastie's resignation, Truman Gibson. E. W. Kenworthy, Executive Secretary of the Fahy Committee in 1949, spent a weekend looking over the files of the McCloy Committee and wrote: "It is a history of unrelieved headaches." Ltr from Kenworthy to Fahy, 8 August 1949, Box #13, Records of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, Harry S. Truman Library (hereafter HSTL).

50. For example, Colonel Leonard in early 1944 brought up the concern of black people over the failure to use blacks in combat. Therefore, he suggested that the Advisory Committee consider the situation and recommend to the Secretary of War "that a definite program be worked out to commit some Negro combat troops to action against the enemy during the current year." Memo from Leonard to McCloy, "The non-use of Negro Combat Troops against the enemy," 26 February 1944, Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W).

51. Ltr from White to Mr. LaFourche, 25 February 1943, Box #216II, #5, NAACP Papers, L/C.

52. Memo from Gibson to Lovett, 1 May 1943, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

53. Memo from Gibson to Poletti (Special Assistant to S/W), 9 February 1943; Minutes of Meeting, 22 March 1943; Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W).

54. Ltr from Lochard to Gibson, 28 May 1942, Box #237, NARG 107 (S/W); for an example of the good working relationship between McCloy and Gibson, see memo from Gibson to McCloy, 28 January 1944, Box #126, NARG 107 (S/W).

55. See ltr from Gibson to Mrs. Mary Davis, 15 July 1943; Gibson wrote that "every specific case of alleged mistreatment of Negro soldiers which comes to the attention of the War Department, however, will be investigated. . . . Meantime, be assured that the War Department is seeking a fair and just solution to the problems confronting it." Box #176, NARG 107 (S/W). To Stimson, Gibson was a "trusted associate and a distinguished public servant." Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, pp 461-464. In the section on "The Army and the Negro," there is no mention of Hastie.

56. L.D. Reddick, "The Negro Policy of the American Army Since World War II," *Journal of Negro History*, XXXVIII (April 1953), pp 201-202.

57. Lee, *Negro Troops*, p 579. Lee discusses the controversy further on pp 560-562 and 575-579. Also, see *New York Times*, 15 March 1945. In reference to Gibson's comment that some blacks in the 92d had "melted away," the *Journal and Guide* noted that "the term may prick us painfully, but Mr. Gibson might not have been as wrong as some would like to believe that he was." 14 April 1945; also see 30 June 1945.

58. Memo from Gibson to Petersen, 28 February 1946, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W). The NAACP pressed Gibson for a "categorical answer" to its inquiries, and when it did not receive an adequate response, it passed a resolution "expressing a lack of confidence in" his leadership as Civilian Aide. *Crisis*, July 1945. Walter White in *How Far the Promised Land?* (New York, 1956) praises Hastie, but does not mention Gibson.

59. Ltr from Wilkins to Gibson, 24 June 1943, Box #236, NARG 107 (S/W).

60. Ltr from Wilkins to Gibson, 7 July 1943, Box #236, NARG 107 (S/W). Gibson and Wilkins were friends, and Wilkins wrote as one friend trying to help another.

61. Gibson's contacts with the black press were excellent and that was an important dimension he added to the office. Metz T. P. Lochard, editor of the *Defender*, believed that Gibson should not take the blame for discriminatory actions of the WD and recognized his infinitely difficult role. However, Lochard also warned him not to leave himself open to criticism by defending some of the policies and attitudes of the WD. Louis Martin of the *Michigan Chronicle* was even more sympathetic and praised Gibson for his handling of a job in such a "hot spot." But Martin did not like blacks sniping at each other when unity was so important. Gibson replied to Martin that he was tired of the attitude that "if you don't agree with me on what to do then you are all wrong on ultimate issues." Gibson added that the implication in Wilkins' letter was that he had been selling out blacks. Finally, Dan Burley of the Amsterdam *Star-News* praised Gibson for doing an admirable job in handling his position in the WD; Burley disagreed with Wilkins' comment that blacks had to maintain their racial identity when they moved into a governmental bureau. Also, Gibson was on the spot because the things some blacks felt he should, ought to, and was able to do, could not be done. Ltr from Lochard to Gibson, 30 June 1943; ltr from Martin to Gibson, 7 July 1943; Box 236, NARG 107 (S/W).

62. *Courier*, 24 June 1944. Prattis of the *Courier* also defended Gibson in a letter to the Managing Editor of *Time* magazine; *Time* had written that "a not-too-insistent Negro, Truman K. Gibson, Jr., ex-attorney, took Hastie's place." Prattis responded that "that sentence does Mr. Gibson a grave injustice. I have spent a quarter of my time in the last 3 years in the War Department. I have carried the complaints there, to Judge Hastie and to Mr. Gibson. Mr. Gibson has never, to my knowledge, truckled or compromised. He has had the good sense not to move in when he had nothing. But where he thought he had a case, he has insisted that something should be done. I write this about Mr. Gibson because there are many Negroes who feel that a Negro leader who is not ready to fight at the drop of the hat on every issue, good or bad, is 'not-too-insistent.' These people will welcome *Time's* description of him and use it to lessen the provocative influence he now enjoys in the War Department." Ltr from Prattis to Mr. T. S. Matthews, 7 July 1944, Box #126, NARG 107 (S/W).

63. Minutes of Meeting, Advisory Committee, 28 June 1943 and 2 July 1943, Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W). On 30 June 1943, Gibson sent a memo to Gen Davis with a detailed report on the racial problem. He listed the causes and then gave suggestions. His memo was similar to the final version drafted by the committee. Box #243, NARG 107 (S/W).

64. Memo from McCloy to C/S, "Negro Troops," 3 July 1943, Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W); in the memo, McCloy did not direct as the AS/W, but "recommends" as the Chairman of the Committee. Memo from C/S to CG, AAF, AGF, ASF, "Negro Troops", 31 July 1943, OCMH. This same theme had been emphasized by McCloy in a letter to Mr. Will Alex-

ander of the Julius Rosenwald Fund in which McCloy discussed friction between local police and civilians with soldiers: "The officers who have to meet these situations are the post commanders and organization commanders. Officers are selected for these positions who have demonstrated the qualities of judgment and initiative. They have been warned to become acquainted with the problems which may arise in their particular communities and to take action that will prevent unfortunate situations from arising. The War Department will take further action, if commanding officers fail to get satisfactory results." Ltr from McCloy to Alexander, 2 June 1943, OCMH.

65. Memo from SOS Operations to SOS, AG, "Recreational Facilities at certain posts, camps, and stations," 14 August 1942, OCMH.

66. Lee, *Negro Troops*, p 308.

67. Ltr from WD, AG, to all Commands, "Recreational facilities," 10 March 1943, OCMH.

68. AAF CFTC, History: 1 January-30 June 1944, 4:698, AFSHRC 223.01. Parrish wrote that he believed that this WD directive "was generally ignored throughout the Army." Parrish Thesis, p 47.

69. Ltr from WD, AG, to all Commands, "Recreational Facilities," 8 July 1944, OCMH.

70. Quoted in EFTC, History: 1 July-31 August 1944, 1:35-44, AFSHRC 222.01.

71. Quoted in *Courier*, 16 September 1944.

72. Ltrs from Allen to Stimson, 1 September 1944; Stimson to Allen, 7 September 1944; Allen to Stimson, 13 September 1944; Mr. T.C. Holmes to Marshall, 9 September 1944; and Ulio to Holmes, 12 September 1944; Box #1064, NARG 407 (Army-AG). Many other letters were received from southern Congressmen, including George Andrews, George Grant, John Newsome, William M. Whittington, and John H. Bankhead. Box #1064, NARG 407 (Army-AG). There were also negative reactions on AAF bases. One report from Macon, Georgia indicated that there were tensions at Robbins Field: "Threats are reported to have been made by white people on Negroes who might attempt to use the cafeteria, for instance." S.I.C. Field Reports from Macon, Georgia, "Racial Situation," 26 August 1944 and 2 September 1944, Box #16, OF 4245-G, FDRL.

73. Another film produced in 1945 as the war was closing was "Wings for this Man." It portrayed the role of the black in the AAF with emphasis on Tuskegee and the MTO. It was released too late to have any real effect on morale during the war. Both Gibson and Parrish believed it to be a good film. Memo from Gibson to Chief, Motion Pic-

ture Service Division, AAF, 3 May 1945; and ltr from Parrish to Gibson, 3 May 1945; Box #257, NARG 107 (S/W).

74. Chandler Owen, *The Negroes and the War*, prepared by OWI (Washington, D.C., 1942).

75. *Ibid.* Owen also stated that "we are now fighting shoulder to shoulder with our fellow Americans in the present world conflict." Ironically, the photos in this section did not show blacks fighting shoulder to shoulder with whites because the photos were of segregated military units.

76. Murray, *Negro Handbook*, 1944, p 216; *New York Times*, 13 March 1943.

77. U.S. Congress, House, 78th Cong., 1st sess., 16 February 1943, *Congressional Record*, LXXXIX, pp 1040-1041. Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of War Petersen wrote to Gibson that Gibson should see Fish and give him the "facts." Memo from Petersen to Gibson, 19 February 1943, Box #250, NARG 107 (S/W).

78. Frank Capra, *The Name Above the Title: An Autobiography* (New York, 1971), pp 358-362.

79. Report No. B-102, Morale Services Division, ASF, "Reaction of Negro and White Soldiers to the Film 'The Negro Soldier,'" 17 April 1944, Box #56, Papers of Philleo Nash, HSTL.

80. Pittsburgh *Courier*, 26 February 1944; memo from Gibson to McCloy, 7 March 1944, Box #224, NARG 107 (S/W); letters sent to the WD can be found in Box #224, NARG 107 (S/W); memo from Petersen to WD, Director of Information, 24 January 1946, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

81. War Department Pamphlet No. 20-6, "Command of Negro Troops," 29 February 1944; Army Service Forces Manual, M5, "Leadership and the Negro Soldier," October 1944; Army Talk Number 70, "Prejudice!—Roadblock to Progress," 5 May 1945; AFSHRC and OCMH.

82. Memo for Record, Lt Col Gerhardt, 12 January 1944, Box #123; and memo from Gibson to McCloy, 17 December 1943, Box #125; NARG 107 (S/W).

83. WDP 20-6.

84. Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front*, pp 43-44.

85. ASF Manual, M5.

86. Army Talk Number 70. One publication which was not used in

Army Orientation Courses as originally intended was *The Races of Mankind*, by Ruth Benedict and Gene Weltfish (New York, 1943). This pamphlet took a very progressive approach to the study of races and attempted to demonstrate that environmental factors influenced racial differences. The official reason given by the Army for deciding against its use after ordering 55,000 copies was that "in some respects its contents are incomplete; in others, inadequate." Ltr from Acting AG to Mrs. Lucy R. Milburn, 12 April 1944, Box #1065, NARG 407 (Army-AG). However, the House Military Affairs subcommittee assailed the pamphlet and the New York *Times* reported that Army distribution was stopped after the Army received the complaints. Representative Durham of North Carolina said that "wartime is no time to engage in the publication and distribution of pamphlets presenting controversial issues." New York *Times*, 28 April 1944, 29 April 1944. However, it remains significant that the WD did consider use of *The Races of Mankind*.

87. "The Day After Pearl Harbor: An Address at the Conference of Negro Newspaper Editors, Washington, DC, 8 December 1941," Maj H. A. DeWeerd, ed., *Selected Speeches of Marshall* (Washington, D.C., 1945), pp 193-194; *Journal and Guide*, 13 December 1941. Roy Wilkins particularly attacked the Army's view that it was not a sociological laboratory. He complained that the WD accepted southern views and imposed them on those entering the Army.

88. Memo from Gibson to Petersen, 28 February 1946, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W); memo from Gibson to BPR, 22 November 1943, Box #236, NARG 107 (S/W). The WD hoped to shift the bias of the black papers by providing them with increased information. Memo from Colonel Leonard to C/S, "Inflammatory Publications," 16 March 1943, Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W). In another move, McCloy recommended that in order to pacify those agitating for black rights and because of the subversive character of much of the black press, "Negroes be permitted to participate more in the war effort." This was exactly what they had been demanding, although their activities had been branded as subversive. Had larger numbers of blacks been used earlier in the war, much of the turbulence could have been avoided. Memo from McCloy to Lovett, 6 March 1942, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W). McCloy recommended that some black air squadrons be sent to Australia, in spite of the Australian attitude: "Maybe if you sent them to Australia and pulled the boat out quickly, the Australians would learn to like them." A criticism of the black press came from *Time* magazine which in an article on "Morale" wrote that "the thin-skinned and irritable Negro press, which has seldom missed a report of injustice to Negro troops and has played it for all it would stand, continued to print most of the sensational and baseless yarns which flew around, from the standard soldier's gripes on up." This prompted Prattis of the *Courier* to write to *Time* and object to the characterization. He noted that as a rule soldier's gripes were not reported but instead were turned over to the

Office of the Civilian Aide, or the War Department, or to the Congress, or kept in their files. He sent along some of the letters which had been kept in their files and commented that "I think you will be convinced that we have been guilty of restraint than of irritability." Ltr from Prattis to Matthews, 7 July 1944, Box #126, NARG 107 (S/W).

89. John D. Stevens, "Black Correspondents of World War II Cover the Supply Routes," *Journal of Negro History*, LVII (October 1972), pp 395-406. Stevens reported that 27 correspondents covered WWII for the black press: *Courier*-7, *Afro-American*-7, *Defender*-4, *Journal and Guide*-3, and 6 pool correspondents. Oak, *Negro Newspaper*, pp 102-103.

90. Memo from Gibson to McCloy, 23 October 1943, Box #126, NARG 107 (S/W). Art Carter, a war correspondent for the *Afro-American* newspaper, noted that the black war correspondents were looked at as experiments. Also, because the black pilots were the first, the war correspondents wrote "with a little more enthusiasm than the normal reporter." Taylor, "Tuskegee Airmen," NPR, p 3.

91. Memo from Stratemeyer to A-3, "Negro Training," 11 March 1943, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

92. Memo from ADC/S to CG, AAF, "Negro Army Air Force Units," 12 May 1944; and memo from Giles to DC/S, same subject, 18 May 1944; Box #1065, NARG 407 (Army-AG).

93. Memo from AC/AS, Operations, to C/AS, "The Negro Problem," 17 April 1943, Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.

94. For two excellent examples, see Philip M. Flammer, "The Military Critic," *Proceedings* (March 1973), pp 28-36—Flammer discussed the difficulty of criticizing the military from within—and Thomas H. Hall, "Comment on Custom in the Army," *American Journal of Sociology*, LI (March 1946), p 364. Hall mentioned his early encounter with Army custom during World War II. He quoted from the *Soldiers Handbook*: "Customs have come into existence which are recognized as our unwritten law of conduct"; and from an Army colonel: "Army regulations on discipline remain unchanged, in all essential respects, from those of 1821, and those were copied from the regulations of the noble and peasant army of royal France of 1788." *Opportunity* commented in an editorial that the military bureaucrats had "the same conception of race relations as was commonly held about 1890." This may have been partly true, but only because society had not moved much beyond the attitudes of 1890. However, *Opportunity* may be overly critical in stating that the military "cannot be changed by persuasion and logic. They will not be moved by considerations of fairness and justice." January 1941.

95. Richard Carl Brown, "Social Attitudes of American Generals, 1898-

1940" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1951), p 3. He studied the records of 465 generals and found that of those commissioned after 1920, 33 percent were born in the South.

96. A sociologist notes that the reason rules and orders were not followed in the Army was because officers believed in a medieval concept where there was no accountability for the upper caste. Thus, they disobeyed direct orders when they thought the orders went against the tradition of caste. Arnold Rose, "The Social Structure of the Army," *American Journal of Sociology*, LI (March 1946), pp 361-364.

97. WD Circular #224, 22 October 1941, OCMH; ltr from WD, AG to all CGs, "Treatment of Negro Soldiers," 14 February 1942, Box #103, NARG 18 (AAF); ltr from WD, AG to all CGs, "Movement of Negro Personnel," 7 July 1942, Box #124, NARG 107 (S/W); ltr from WD, AG to all CGs, "Officer Candidate Schools," 30 January 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3; ltr from WD, AG to all CGs, "Officer Candidate Schools," 19 April 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3; ltr from DC/S to all CGs, "Professional Qualities of Officers Assigned to Negro Units," 10 August 1942, OCMH; ltr from WD, AG to all CGs, "Policy on Assignment of Negro Officer Personnel," 10 January 1943, and Amendment No. 1, 17 March 1943, Box #103, NARG 18 (AAF); and 5th Ind, from Fourth Corps Area to WD, AG, 13 April 1942, Box #149, NARG 407 (Army-AG).

98. Ltr from Arnold to all CGs, "Racial Difficulties within the Army Air Forces," 2 May 1944, AFSHRC 145.81-90.

99. Telephone conversation between Hunter and Giles, 9 May 1944. The Training of Negro Combat Units by the First Air Force, vol 2, AFSHRC 420.04C.

100. Ltr from Executive to the Air Engineers, to COs of Aviation Engineer Negro Troop Units, "Training Notes for Officers Assigned to Duty with Negro Troops," 5 August 1943, Box #312, #6, NAACP Papers, L/C.

101. The Organization and Training of Tactical Service Units for Overseas Air Forces, Part II, 1942-1945, 1:255, AFSHRC 201-35.

102. Memo from Gibson to McCloy, 17 December 1943, Box #125, NARG 107 (S/W).



## Chapter V

### PROBLEMS, PROTESTS, AND LEADERSHIP

1. Lee, *Negro Troops*, pp 366-379.

2. Two surveys conducted by the Information and Education Division of the WD in March 1943, indicate black frustration about the lack of white awareness of the full scope of the racial problem. The first asked the question, "do you think that most Negroes are being given a fair chance to do as much as they want to do to help win the war?"

	Black Soldiers	White Soldiers
Yes	35%	76%
No	54%	12%
Undecided	11%	12%
Total	100%	100%
Number of cases	3,000	4,800

In another survey, soldiers were asked, "do you think that most Negroes in this country are pretty well satisfied or do you think most of them are dissatisfied?" Two-thirds of the southern white soldiers and over one-half of the northern white soldiers felt that blacks were satisfied. Stouffer, *Studies in Social Psychology*, 1:506, 1:511. For more information on morale and the war effort, see USAF Historical Study #78, "Morale in the A.A.F. in World War II"; "What is Morale?", *What the Soldier Thinks*, 1, #1 (December 1943), quoted in AAF TTC, History: 1 January 1939-7 July 1943, 2:404, AFSHRC 225.01. "Morale in the A.A.F." indicated that morale was generally good; another study indicated that morale hovered on a rough average between fair and good. Wesley F. Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, 7, *Services Around the World* (Chicago, 1958), p 433.

3. Report from Col Elliot D. Cooke to the IG, "Special Mission performed for the Chief of Staff in connection with colored troops," 25 June 1942, AFSHRC 145.81-90. Also see 1st Ind from WD, AG to CG, 8th Corps Area, 10 February 1942, Box #149, NARG 407 (Army-AG); and 3d Ind from AAG to AAF FTC, 3 June 1942, Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.

4. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, pp 451 and 558-559. The military directed commanders to abide by local customs which meant going along

with Jim Crow laws. The Air Base Bus Line which provided service from MacDill to Tampa upheld the appropriate Florida statute which required "separate accommodations for white and colored passengers." 1st Ind from MacDill Field to 3AF, 27 February 1945, Box #1063, NARG 407 (Army-AG). The SE AAF TC in August 1942 sent out instructions to all its commands referring to two Alabama and four Montgomery laws concerning segregation. Violators, besides arrest and fining by local authorities, could be liable to trial by court-martial for being against "good order and military discipline" and bringing "discredit to the military service." AAF EFTC, History: 1 July-31 August 1944, vol 2, AFSHRC 222.01.

5. Charles S. Johnson and Associates, *To Stem This Tide* (Boston, 1943), p 31. The Julius Rosenwald Fund accomplished an intensive study of transportation problems around army camps and found that "transportation facilities in camp communities are usually inadequate and over-loaded." Ltr from Mr. Will Alexander to McCloy, 26 May 1943, OCMH. Also, see Chester Wardlow, *The Technical Services: The Transportation Corps: Movements, Training, and Supply* (Washington, D.C., 1956), p 33. Incidents involving black soldiers and bus drivers with guns were reported by Maxwell Field and the AAF Personnel Distribution Center. "Report of Investigation of Shooting of Colored Soldier," 5 May 1943; and ltr from Attorney General to S/W, 6 September 1943; Box #1512, NARG 407 (Army-AG). History of the AAF Personnel Distribution Center, "Special Problems," 3:1026, AFSHRC 254.1. In another situation, a black lieutenant from Walterboro was waiting in a bus station in Atlanta, Georgia and was told by MPs that he could not wait in front of a white waiting room. It was the law of the city and the MPs were enforcing it to prevent "any conflict or ill feeling between the colored and white civilian or military personnel." HQ Fourth Service Command, MP report, 19 August 1944 (incident was on 15 August 1944), Box #16, OF4245-G, FDRL.

6. Memo from Mr. Donald Young, consultant, to the Committee, "Transportation facilities for colored troops between posts, camps, and stations and nearby communities," 9 June 1943, Box #125, NARG 107 (S/W). Truman Gibson also wrote a lengthy memo to McCloy detailing the problems blacks had to face in the southern transportation system; memo from Gibson to McCloy, 2 June 1943, Box #252, NARG 107 (S/W).

7. AAF CFTC, History: 1 January-30 June 1944, 4:681, AFSHRC 223.01; interview with Lt Col Robert Ashby (Retired), 1 November 1973.

8. Stimson Diary, 5 July 1943.

9. Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, p 540.

10. Murray, *Negro Handbook*, 1944, p 10; memo from Hastie to Lt Col Boyer, 19 February 1942, Box #149, NARG 407 (Army-AG). The Ripley incident material is found in Box #104, NARG 18 (AAF); also see memo

from Hastie to S/W, 17 November 1942, OCMH; ltr from Director of Intelligence to Jonathan Daniels, 2 February 1944, Box #17, OF4245-G, FDRL; and 2AF, History: 1943, 1:275-287, AFSHRC 432.01. Jake Sullivan folder, Box #337, #1, NAACP Papers, L/C. A series of surveys conducted by the War Department documents the attitude of black soldiers toward stationing in the South, the town police, and local bus service; see Stouffer, *Studies in Social Psychology*, 1:554-563.

11. Memo from Hastie to Lt Col Boyer, 19 February 1942, Box #149, NARG 407 (Army-AG). The black press played up the friction; see *Journal and Guide*, 13 September 1941, "Soldiers Flogged by Military Police." This article discussed an incident at MacDill Field. Some accounts about the action of white MPs were exaggerated and it is possible that this was true of this incident. However, the story was significant because it reflected the attitude of the black community and the black soldier.

12. Stouffer, *Studies in Social Psychology*, 1:558, 1:560-561.

13. *Ibid.*, 1:580.

14. Murray, *Negro Handbook*, 1944, p 9. The NAACP investigated one report that white officers from the South stationed at Walla Walla, Washington had ordered about 20 amusement and eating places off limits to blacks. Maj Bell I. Wiley wrote that white officers had to have an understanding of the "peculiarities, the weaknesses, and the virtues of his men," because "Negroes were quick to detect a difference between artificiality and the real thing." "The Training of Negro Troops," 1946, Ref. Col. #4057, National Archives.

15. Interview with Sgt William Jackson (Retired), 15 June 1972.

16. Coll, Keath, and Rosenthal, *Engineers: Troops and Equipment*, p 311; and E. T. Hall, Jr., "Race Prejudice and Negro-White Relations in the Army," *American Journal of Sociology*, LII (March 1947), pp 401-409.

17. Ltr from DC/S to all CGs, "Professional Qualities of Officers Assigned to Negro Units," 10 August 1942, OCMH.

18. Ltr from AAF to AAF TTC, "Professional Qualities of Officers Assigned to Negro Units," 21 August 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3. As an example of a specific command problem, the Air Service Command (ASC) reported in its history that leadership was a problem in its black service units. The command had many black troops but few black officers. At the end of January 1944, the ratio of officer to enlisted for white ASC personnel was 1 to 6, for blacks it was 1 to 1,000. At that time there were 12,288 black enlisted and 14 black officers in the command; this compared with 50,000 white enlisted and 10,000 white officers. The Organization and Training of Tactical Service Units for

Overseas Air Forces, 1942-1945, 1:266, 1:270-271, AFSHRC 201-35. As of 31 December 1944, 1 black out of 79 in the AAF was an officer; this compared with 1 in 49 in the Field Artillery, 1 in 47 in the Infantry, and 1 in 324 in the Quartermaster Corps. Erna Risch and Chester L. Kieffer, *The Technical Services: The Quartermaster Corps: Organization, Supply, and Services* (Washington, D.C., 1955), 2:203.

19. Stouffer, *Studies in Social Psychology*, 1:580-581, 1:585; draft report, "Attitudes of the Negro Soldier," 31 July 1943, Research Branch, ASF, Box #124, NARG 107 (S/W). In this survey, blacks overwhelmingly demonstrated a preference for black officers and for northern white officers as compared to southern. Another more limited study was conducted in 1945 among 200 black servicemen in the Atlanta area with similar results. James Stiles Hadley, "The Social Attitudes of Negro Servicemen" (unpublished M.A. Thesis, Atlanta University, 1945), p 30.

20. July 1943 file, Box #1511, NARG 407 (Army-AG); AAF CFTC, History: 1 January-30 June 1944, 4:686-687, AFSHRC 223.01.

21. Interview with Sgt William Jackson (Retired), 15 June 1972.

22. Ltrs from Gulf Coast ACTC to C/AC, "Colored Troops," 18 and 19 November 1940 and memo from Plans Division to Chief of Buildings and Grounds, 9 December 1940, AFSHRC 145.93-85; ltr from AAF to AAF TTC, "Colored Personnel for Army Air Field," 13 June 1942, and 5th Ind from AAFTS Lincoln to 4th District AAF TTC, 27 June 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3; AAF CFTC, History, 1 January-30 June 1944, 4:654, AFSHRC 223.01; ltr from IG, SE ACTC to the IG, and 17 Inds thereto, "Service Club and Guest House at Tuskegee Army Flying School," 16 April 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3.

23. Correspondence with Lt Col Samuel Curtis (Retired), 12 December 1973; 2d Ind, "Alleged Discrimination," from Bakersfield AAF to West Coast ACTC, 22 October 1941, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W); 1st Ind from AI to WD, AG, "Alleged discrimination against Negro soldiers attending recreational facilities at certain Army Air Fields," 4 May 1945, Box #1063, NARG 407 (Army-AG); AAF CFTC, History: 1 January-30 June 1944, 4:655, AFSHRC 223.01.

24. Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "Political and Social Change: 1941-1968," in John A. Garraty, *Interpreting American History: Conversations with Historians* (New York, 1970), 2:278.

25. Robert K. Murray observed that "wars breed a willingness of the human spirit to condone whatever brutality is necessary to resolve violently what men had hoped to resolve rationally by pacific means." Robert K. Murray, "The Twenties," in Garraty, *American History*, 2:148.

26. Howard Odum reported that this generation of black youth had a "vigorous, lusty, enthusiasm and aggressive attitude and action." Odum, *Race*, p 32.
27. Special Memorandum No. 6, "Public Sentiment Toward Negroes," 25 November 1942, Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W).
28. *Race Relations: A Monthly Summary of Events and Trends*, 1 (August 1943), p 23.
29. See Lee, *Negro Troops*, pp 348-379. Having served as a major in the ASF during the war, Lee's study did not cover the racial problems in the AAF as well as those in the ASF and AGF. For example, he did not discuss the two major incidents at Bamber Bridge and Freeman Field.
30. William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs, *The Jesus Bag* (New York, 1971), pp 1-2 and 24-25. They add: "but the overriding purpose of this shuffle and drawl was to save his life. Secondarily, by denying the economy of his labor, he struck at the heart of the system."
31. Memo from Gibson to BPR, 22 November 1943, Box #236, NARG 107 (S/W). A similar type of attitude was expressed by a black stationed in the Pacific who wrote that "at times I wonder what am I fighting for. . . . we are considered second class citizens and when and if I return I will have to take a back seat to those I fought along side of over here." Censorship Survey of Morale, Rumors, Propaganda, United States Army Forces in the Far East, July 1944, AFSHRC 704.7011.
32. Stouffer, *Studies in Social Psychology*, 1:526.
33. Craven and Cate, *AAF in WWII*, 7:473-474; Coll, Keith, and Rosenthal, *Engineers: Troops and Equipment*, p 311; and Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, p 422.
34. Official WD policy stated: "generally, unless the exigencies of the service otherwise require Negroes from southern states should be assigned to units in the South and Negroes from northern states assigned to units in the North." Ltr from WD, AG to all CGs, "Assignment of Negroes," 22 May 1942, AFSHRC 220.765-3. Some local commanders attempted to select only southern blacks for their units. Ltr from Gulf Coast ACTC to ACFTC, "Stations for Colored Troops," 28 February 1942, AFSHRC 145.81-90. This commander wrote that his recommendation not to assign northern blacks "is believed to be most important." Another reported that racial troubles on his base were due to the sprinkling of northern blacks. MacDill Field, History: 1 January 1943 to 30 September 1944, 1:73, AFSHRC 286.01-3. Representatives Ed Gossett of the Wichita Falls area complained that Sheppard Field was overloaded with blacks, especially northerners. Ltr from Gossett to Stimson, 24 November 1943, Box #1066, NARG 407 (Army-AG). General Marshall, in an interview after the war, said he regretted his deci-

sion to acquiesce to the plan to train northern black units in the South. Lee Nichols, *Breakthrough on the Color Front* (New York, 1954), p 43.

35. Series of memoranda, "Negroes," from and to AFRIT, AFAAP, AFCAS, AFACT, from 5 August 1942 to 21 August 1942, Box #325, NARG 18 (AAF).

36. Stouffer, *Studies in Social Psychology*, 1:595.

37. *Intelligencer*, ITCC, September 1944, AFSHRC 250.608.

38. Fourth Service Command, Agent Report, 7 September 1944, Box #16 OF4245-G, FDRL. The incident took place on September 5th.

39. *Race Relations: A Monthly Summary of Events and Trends*, 1 (August 1943), pp 8-9.

40. Field Reports from Macon, Georgia, "Racial Situation," 26 August 1944 and 2 September 1944, Box #16, OF4245, FDRL.

41. EFTC, History: 1 July-31 August 1944, 1:329-332, AFSHRC 222.01. The examples continue indefinitely. The NCOs of the 456th Aviation Squadron at Daniel Field, Georgia turned in their stripes in protest when officials restricted their unit; they were then reduced to privates and transferred out. The Organization and Training of Tactical Service Units for Overseas Air Forces, Part II, 1942-1945, pp 265-266, AFSHRC 201-35. Another study shows that black officers had a chip-on-the-shoulder attitude to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with discrimination. Wiley, "Training of Negro Troops," p 29.

42. EFTC, History: 1 July-31 August 1944, 1:35-44, AFSHRC 222.01.

43. Racial Situation in the United States, ASF, weekly summaries; Box #1507, NARG 407 (Army-AG); and Box #16, OF4245-G, FDRL. Not all problems involving blacks should be considered as racial, although the WD and AAF sometimes seemed to make that assumption. One "uprising" in Lake Charles was investigated by the AG because of fears by the local population that a major race riot had broken out. The 925th Air Base Security Battalion was to begin their overseas movement on 13 May 1943, and on the eve of their departure they were somewhat disorderly in the town. The incident is rather an example of an undisciplined unit living it up and not an uprising or race riot. Ltr from Acting AG to a Lake Charles businessman, 5 July 1943, Box # 1512, NARG 407 (Army-AG).

44. USSTAF, History: 1942-1945, 2:99, AFSHRC 519.01. Of 154,000 black servicemen and women in the ETO in August 1944, 11,020 were in the AAF; Lee, *Negro Troops*, p 623.

45. Ltr from Butcher to Surles, 10 September 1942, Butcher Papers, Box #1, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library (hereafter DDEL).

46. *Nation*, 31 October 1942; "Report on the G.I.," *Time*, 30 October 1944. For an appraisal of the official British Government attitude, see Thomas E. Hachey, "Jim Crow with a British Accent: Attitudes of London Government Officials Toward American Negro Soldiers in England During World War II," *Journal of Negro History*, LIX (January 1974), pp 65-77.

47. The WD had directed that blacks would be sent to the British Isles, that they would be limited to the service category, and that they would have to be in a ratio to the troops within the entire command. Ltr, "Assignment of colored troops to Theaters of Operation and Overseas Stations," 13 May 1942, AFSHRC 141.24-3.

48. Ltr from Butcher to Mr. Raymond Daniell, The Association of American Correspondents in London, 17 August 1942, Butcher Papers, Box #1, DDEL.

49. Ltr from ETO to 8AF, "Policy on Negroes," 16 July 1942. AFSHRC 527.765. For more on the Red Cross, see memo from Wilkins to White, 20 August 1943, and ltr from a private to White, 2 August 1944, Box #314, #1, NAACP Papers, L/C; ltr from H.D. Gibson to Eaker, 19 November 1943, and ltr from Eaker to H.D. Gibson, 20 November 1943, Box #19, Ira C. Eaker Papers, L/C. The British Home Office sent out letters to Constables informing them of the policy of the British Government not to practice discrimination. Ltr from F. A. Newsom to Constables, "American Coloured Troops," AFSHRC 527.765; ltr from Newsom, "United States Negro Troops," 30 October 1942, AFSHRC 527.765.

50. Ltr from Eaker to CO, 1st Provisional Wing, 18 July 1942, Box #17, Ira C. Eaker Papers, L/C. Also, in August, 8AF suggested that subordinate commands establish "Good Conduct Committees" of white and black NCOs to discuss the racial situation and provide guidelines. Ltr from 8AF to subordinate commands, "Colored Troops," 28 August 1942, AFSHRC 527.765. Other instructions were sent to the 8AF and its units; these can be found in AFSHRC 527.765.

51. Memo from Davis to IG, 24 December 1942, Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W). Davis' report of conditions was publicized in the press. Another man who had visited England found conditions there for blacks to be worse than General Davis had indicated. He particularly commented about the injection of the American Jim Crow attitude toward race. Joseph Julian, "Jim Crow Abroad," *Nation*, 5 December 1942. This last point was a common theme played up by a number of observers of racial conditions in Britain. Walter White declared in a CBS radio broadcast that some soldiers sought "to poison the minds of British, Italians, North African and other peoples against Negro Americans." Washing-

ton *Post*, 1 May 1944, in Box #40, NARG 107(S/W). A British writer noted that Americans had sought to transfer their attitudes to the British and to some extent they were successful. The black troops "have felt the mood of the community turn gradually cooler until an icy wall has barred them entirely from community life." Message from ETO to WD, BPR, "Text of London News Chronicle article," 12 May 1944, Box #40, NARG 107 (S/W).

52. USSTAF, History: 1942-1945, 2:105-106, AFSHRC 519:01. Ltr from Gen Ira C. Eaker (Retired) to the author, 5 December 1974.

53. Base Postal Censor, ETO, "Special Report, Colored Troops, 16-31 August 1943," 1 September 1943, Box #124, NARG 107 (S/W). A former member of 8AF reported that whites in his unit resented interracial dating. Letter from W. J. Grenier to the author, 13 November 1974.

54. Ltr from Mrs. Roosevelt to S/W, 22 September 1942, OCMH. On the other hand, blacks relished this open-mindedness by the British people as a survey conducted in November 1943 by the ASF indicated. Blacks and whites were asked their opinion of the English people and 80 percent of the blacks and 68 percent of the whites checked "favorable." Stouffer, *Studies in Social Psychology*, 1:544; the sample compared 422 blacks and 2,262 whites. One black soldier did report, however, that "I like it here OK and would like it better if other girls were here besides whites." Base Postal Censor, ETO, 1 September 1943, Box #124, NARG 107 (S/W).

55. Investigation of Colored Troops at Thurston, conducted by Col Harold A. McGinnis, I.G., 6-7 January 1943, report dated 9 January 1943, AFCHO/Green. Various outbursts such as the Thurston incident prompted the commander of the VIII AFSC to write to 8AF to recommend that no additional black units be sent to the theater. The commander felt that the racial problem was complicated by the presence of white women. Memo from General Miller to Eaker, "Major Problems of the VIII Air Force Service Command," 21 April 1943, Eighth Air Force, 1942-1945, AFSHRC 519.01. 8AF did not accept that recommendation; see memo from 8AF to ETO, 24 April 1943, Eighth Air Force, 1942-1945, AFSHRC 519.01.

56. Preliminary report on Alleged Mutiny at Bamber Bridge, 26 June 1943, AFSHRC 510.01; Alleged Mutiny at Bamber Bridge, 13 July 1943, AFSHRC 519.771-1. The conditions described by the Bamber Bridge reports were similar to those brought out by the *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Kerner Commission Report) which analyzed the circumstances leading to the 1967 riots in American cities. Frustrated hopes, legitimization of violence, and powerlessness catalyzed racism. *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders* (Washington, D.C., 1968), pp 91-93. Also see Myrdal, *American Dilemma*, pp 67-73; and Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1963). For a detailed account of the riot and court martial,



see Kenneth P. Werrell, "Mutiny at Army Air Force Station 569: Bamber Bridge, England, June 1943," *Aerospace Historian*, 22 (December 1975).

57. Preliminary reports, AFSHRC 519.01; and Alleged Mutiny, AFSHRC 519.771-1. Rumors were significant in starting and spreading more than one riot in the civilian and military world, and they had a direct impact on events at both Bamber Bridge and MacDill. In one study of rumors during the war, Howard Odum concluded that most of the rumors that whites reacted to had to do with the sex issue between races: *Race and Rumors of Race* (Chapel Hill, 1943). Blacks, on the other hand, normally reacted to rumors of discrimination.

58. Still, in spite of the official policy of equality and strong command action in that direction, there were numerous examples of local commanders who did not provide adequate food and billets to blacks as they moved around in their work, especially as they hauled equipment and supplies. USSTAF, History: 1942-1945, 2:107, AFSHRC 519.91.

59. Alleged Mutiny, AFSHRC 519.771-1; 1st Ind from VIII BC, 30 June 1943, AFSHRC 527.765.

60. Ltr from Gen Ira C. Eaker (Retired) to the author, 5 December 1974.

61. 8AF Minutes of Commanders and Staff Meetings, Meeting, 10 July 1943, Box #21, Ira C. Eaker Papers, L/C. The official USSTAF history also reported that whites were responsible for the racial problem; "all too frequently, the initial provocation for fights was offered by white soldiers who gratuitously cursed and insulted negro soldiers." USSTAF, History: 1942-1945, 2:112, AFSHRC 519.10.

62. Ltr from Eaker to ETOUSA, "Combat Support Wing," 11 August 1943, AFSHRC 519.201-25.

63. Interview with Col Grubb, 5 July 1944, Eighth Air Force, AFSHRC 519.01.

64. Memo from Goodall to WD, AG, "Activities of Combat Support Wing," 3 October 1944, Box #124, NARG 107 (S/W). The report was based on an average strength of 4,000 soldiers.

65. Ltr from ETO to 8AF, "Racial Problems," 25 October 1943, Eighth Air Force, AFSHRC 519.01.

66. Minutes of Advisory Committee, 11 March 1944; ltr from White to McCloy, 22 February 1944; memo from Leonard to the Committee, 3 April 1944; Box #123, NARG 107 (S/W). Walter White, *A Rising Wind* (Garden City, 1945), pp 15, 18-19, 22, 29, 64. Testimony of Walter White before the Gillem Board, 15 October 1945, Brief of Testimony by Capt Pease, Gillem Papers, USAMHRC. *Crisis*, June 1944, pp 198-199.

67. MacDill Field, History: 1 January 1939-30 September 1944, 1:73-155, AFSHRC 286.01-3.

68. *Ibid.*

69. Report from AAF to WD, "Participation of Negro Troops in the Post-War Military Establishment," 17 September 1945, Tab T, AFSHRC 143.041.

70. Second Air Force, History: 7 December 1941-31 December 1942, 2:578-583, AFSHRC 432.01.

71. Second Air Force, History: 1943, 1:275-287, AFSHRC 432.01. The commander at Bruning was told that it was 2AF policy "to employ colored troops wherever it was feasible and whenever they were available."

72. Second Air Force, History: 1944, 1:203-206, AFSHRC 432.01.

73. Memo from Gibson to Lovett, 9 December 1942, and ltr from Gibson to Col Estabrook, 9 December 1942, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

74. 2d Ind from Sheppard Field to CG, ACTTC, "Colored Personnel for Air Corps," 17 March 1942, AFSHRC 220.765.3.

75. Memo from Gibson to Lovett, 23 August 1943, Box #96, NARG 107 (S/W).

76. 2d Aviation Squadron, History: Activation to Deactivation, 10 June 1941-15 December 1943, AFSHRC SQ-AVN-2-HI.

77. WFTC, History: 1 January 1944-30 June 1944, 4:939-941, AFSHRC 224.01.

78. In fact, they did not receive approval, but were told by CFTC that this was considered a local matter. CFTC, History: 1 January 1944-30 June 1944, 4:688-689, AFSHRC 223.01.

79. Study of the Women's Army Corps in the European Theater of Operations, Study No. 11, 1:127, AFSHRC 502.101-11.

80. AAFTTC, History: 1 January 1939-7 July 1943, 2:402-404, AFSHRC 225.01.

81. Chanute Field, History: 1 January-7 July 1943, 2:741-742, AFSHRC 281.46-3; Second Air Force, History: 1943, vol 1, AFSHRC 432.01.

82. ETTC, History: September-November 1944, 2:456-464, AFSHRC 225.01. On the other hand, at Langley an officer with 3 years of experience handling black troops noted that white officers often aroused a

“feeling of intimidation” in black enlisted men, and that blacks could sense discrimination in criticism.

83. Air Transport Command, North Atlantic Wing, History: April 1944, pp 33-34, AFSHRC 303.01.

84. MacDill Field, History: 1 January 1943-30 September 1944, vol 1, AFSHRC 286.01-3.

85. 3d Ind from CO, Strother Field, 3 April 1943, Box #250, NARG 107 (S/W).

86. AAF PDC, History: 1943-1945, 3:1025-1027, AFSHRC 254.1. In August 1944, Hq AAF notified PDC to investigate alleged mistreatment of blacks at the convalescent hospital at Nashville, Tennessee. As a result PDC ordered that racial segregation on post buses be discontinued immediately. Memo from DC/AS to Gen Arnold, “Colored Returnees,” 7 April 1944, Box #104, NARG 18(AAF). A WD press release on 8 October 1944 announced that the WD was expanding its program for processing soldiers in the Centers: “Pending the establishment of the camp type Redistribution Centers, and in order to avoid taking over additional hotel facilities in housing shortages areas, Negro returnees will be processed with white returnees through existing northern Redistribution Centers.” WD Press Release, 8 October 1944, Box #314, #4, NAACP Papers, L/C.

## **Chapter VI**

### **CONFRONTATION AT FREEMAN FIELD**

1. The Training of Negro Combat Units by the First Air Force, 2 vols, AFSHRC 420.04C. Unless otherwise stated, all references in this chapter are from Lyon's study. This study of the 477th is most unusual in that where Capt Lyon thought there should be criticism, there was criticism. He not only provided memos, letters, and editorial comments, but made use of recorded telephone conversations. These recordings were known to the participants. As far as is known, Lyon's work was not discovered until 1972 or declassified until 1973. At times, Lyon did exercise poetic license, but his comments do not detract from his accurate historical portrayal. In referring to 1AF, he noted: "Once, glad of ambiguity, it resisted the presumable intent and broad hints of the highest authority, harked only to encouragement, and steered its chosen course into spectacularly troubled water." In referring to himself, he said: "In the meantime, the historian had two concerns: accurately to evaluate sources of unusually erratic reliability, and to be mindful of the *lucunae*—for almost all the sources are white paper." 1:2-3, 1:6. An extensive search has been unsuccessful in uncovering any biographical or military data on Capt Lyon.

2. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 1:26 and 1:28.

3. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 1:46.

4. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 1:34, 1:113, 1:116.

5. 477th Composite Group, History: January 1944–September 1945, pp 14–18, and plates, AFSHRC GP-477-HI.

6. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 1:150.

7. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 1:163.

8. Ltr from AAF to NAACP, 7 October 1944; ltr from DC/S to NAACP, 18 November 1944; Box #59, #2, NAACP Papers, L/C.

9. Interview between McAlpin and Briscoe, 23 August 1944, Box #241, NARG 107 (S/W).

10. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 1:86–87.

11. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 1:114. General Hunter felt that the AAF did provide separate-but-equal facilities for blacks. Ltr from Gen Hunter (Retired) to the author, 30 November 1974.
12. Appearance of Mr. William T. Coleman before the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services, 26 April 1949.
13. Interview with Lt Col Spann Watson (Retired), USAFAOHP, 3 April 1973.
14. Interview with Gen Noel Parrish (Retired), USAFAOHP, 30 March 1973.
15. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 1:63.
16. Memo from AC/AS-Training (Harper) to Giles, "Colored Program," 20 June 1944, Box #72, Henry H. Arnold Papers, L/C.
17. Report from Col John E. Harris, "Negro Units at Godman Field and Walterboro Army Air Base," 29 May 1944, Box #104, NARG 18 (AAF).
18. Memo from Gibson to Lt Col Gerhardt, 7 June 1944, Box #126, NARG 107 (S/W).
19. *Courier*, 9 September 1944. It seems that in 1943 Selway had done a good job with the 332d and was instrumental in preparing it for combat operations. One report noted that he had changed the attitude of the group from "a sullen, lackadaisical, indifferent, careless, irresponsible group into an alert, more efficient, cooperative, interesting group." Report from Regional Safety Officer to CO, HQ Region One, "Review of the 332d Fighter Group Training at Selfridge Field, Michigan," 12 January 1944; found in Lyon, Training First Air Force.
20. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 10 March 1945 conversation. For the sake of clarity, the two clubs will hereafter be referred to as they were in practice—the white club and the black club.
21. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 10 March 1945 conversation.
22. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 6 April 1945 conversation.
23. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 1:201-203, 10 April 1945 conversation.
24. Interview with Lt Col Spann Watson (Retired), USAFAOHP, 3 April 1973.
25. It seems that the base opened and closed the white club on several

occasions during April, but it is difficult to determine from the record the precise dates that this occurred.

26. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 12 April 1945 conversation.

27. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 12 April 1945 conversation.

28. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 14 April 1945 conversation.

29. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 1:87-88.

30. Interview with Lt Col Spann Watson (Retired), USAFAOHP, 3 April 1973; interview with Maj George Martin (Retired), 17 November 1973; interview with Mr. David Smith, 6 February 1974.

31. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 1:235-237.

32. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 16 April 1945 conversation.

33. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 10 May 1945 conversation. In this conversation, Glenn and Owens also discussed the black pilots already overseas in the Mediterranean, and it is obvious that they did not think too highly of them. They discussed their overseas service, and Owens commented that when they returned, "they will be cockier than ever and harder to control." Glenn added, "That's exactly it," and Owens continued that "the way to control them is to knock them off now while we can." It is assumed that "knock them off" referred to winning on the segregated club issue.

34. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 18 April 1945 conversation. The Air Staff was aware of the pressures Selway had been under; Stewart commented that Selway had "the jitters so bad that he is going to have a breakdown if we don't relieve him."

35. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 20 April 1945 conversation.

36. Ltr from Administrative Assistant, S/W, to Senator Johnson, 3 July 1945, Box #85, NARG 107 (S/W). Mr. David A. Smith, a former officer with the 477th, reported that a team of three colonels came to Godman from Washington and interviewed each of the 101 men. These inspectors, as well as many other AAF officers, knew that the blacks understood their situation. Interview with Mr. David A. Smith, 6 February 1974.

37. Lyon, Training First Air Force, 10 May 1945 conversation.

38. Box #1063, NARG 407 (Army-AG). Most received the standard reply from the WD that it was investigating the matter.

39. Agenda for the Meeting of the Advisory Committee on Negro Troop

Policies; memo from AAF, Personnel, to DC/AS, "Remarks and Recommendations on the Proposed Report of Advisory Committee Meeting," 29 May 1945; Box #29, NARG 18 (AAF). WDP 20-6, "Command of Negro Troops," 29 February 1944, p 14.

40. Memo No. 600-45, "Command of Negro Troops," 14 June 1945, Box #241, NARG 107 (S/W). Later, General Hunter wrote that he believed that he had been let down at Freeman Field, but that was because "General Arnold got his orders from General Marshall, and he got his from Sec. of War Stimson, and he got his from Mrs. Roosevelt." Letter from Gen Hunter (Retired) to the author, 30 November 1974.

41. Statement by Eaker, 22 June 1945, Box #260, NARG 107 (S/W). This box of material contains the publicity effort of Gibson for the ceremony. The 477th history reported the change of command in this manner: "Col Robert R. Selway Jr. was in command of this Unit from its activation until June 1945. The standards set forth by him were closely adhered to and the Group was in the final stages of training when Colonel B.O. Davis assumed command." This is a clear example of an historian who wanted to or was directed to keep the racial problem out of the history. 477th Composite Group, History: January 1944-September 1945, AFSHRC GP-477-HI. For the story of the 477th Composite Group and what happened to it in the postwar years, see Alan Gropman, "The Air Force Integrates: Blacks in the Air Force from 1945 to 1965" (Ph.D. dissertation, Tufts University, 1975), in publication for AFCHO.

## **Chapter VII**

### **THE POSTWAR SURVEYS**

1. Ltr from McCloy to Advisory Committee, "Participation of Negro Troops in the postwar military establishment," 1 September 1944; ltr from WD, Special Planning Division, to AAF, AGF, ASF, same subject, 23 May 1945; St. Louis National Personnel Record Center (hereafter SLNPRC), Box #144-528.
2. AC/AS, Personnel, Project Book, AFSHRC 141.04-4.
3. Training of Negroes within First Air Force, p 34; Training and Utilization of Negro Personnel in the Second Air Force, p 7, and Deming AAF report; Training of Negroes within Third Air Force, pp 6-7; Utilization of Negro Personnel within I Troop Carrier Command, pp 18, 69-76; SLNPRC, Box #114-528.
4. The above represents a summary of the surveys from 1AF, 2AF, 3AF, 4AF, ITCC, and Combat Support Wing. Also, see interview with Lt Col Andrew F. McMeekin, HQ 4AF, 24 July 1945, AFSHRC 450.765. McMeekin made some comments based on 43 months experience with black troops. Among other things, he noted that officers of black units had to work twice as hard, causing a constant strain.
5. 1AF, pp 2, 19, 25.
6. Ltr from Hunter to AAF, 20 July 1945, 1AF. 1AF report stated that outside pressure played up the race issue and caused insubordination and disobedience, p 44.
7. 2AF, p 16.
8. ITCC, Appendix.
9. 4AF, p 15.
10. 3AF, p 8.
11. 4AF, p 18.
12. 9AF Service Command, AFSHRC 519.168-3.



13. Hq Combat Support Wing, "Information with respect to Negro Troops," 25 July 1945, AFSHRC 519.168-3. The Wing based its evaluation on an average of 3,259 men between September 1943 and April 1945. After its formation, only one serious racial incident was reported—the reaction of some men with the 82d Airborne to blacks escorting white women in Leicester.

14. HQ IX AFSC, "Participation of Negro Troops in Postwar Military Establishment," AFSHRC 519.168-3. The AFSC evaluated a maximum of 2,273 men.

15. 1AF, cover letter, p 42, Appendix #18. 1AF observations were based on a total of 4,099 black personnel, 10.1 percent of its strength as of 31 May 1945.

16. 2AF, 23 bases, 6,984 blacks; 4AF, average of 3,500-5,000 blacks out of a total of 80,000-90,000 personnel, pp 19-22; ITCC, 3 July 1945, total of 1,893 blacks, pp 69-76.

17. Captain Earl Lyon gave a critical analysis of the 1AF study in Training of Negroes in the First Air Force, 1:8-32, AFSHRC 420.04C. Lyon reported that the board "had the qualifications sought for a fourteenth century jury." On the other hand, Gen Hunter felt that Col Selway was a good officer; "I don't consider him biased at all." Ltr from Gen Hunter (Retired) to the author, 30 November 1974.

18. *Ibid.*, 1:32.

19. Report from AAF to WD, "Participation of Negro Troops in the Postwar Military Establishment," 17 September 1945, AFSHRC 143.041.

20. *Ibid.*, pp 1-4.

21. *Ibid.*, pp 13-25.

22. *Ibid.*, pp 4-20.

23. *Ibid.*, pp 11-12, 24. The AAF racial policies which affected the 332d and 477th are discussed in Chapters III and VI.

24. Parrish Thesis. Also, see interview with Gen Parrish (Retired), USAFAOHP, 30 March 1973; and Draft of "Report made by Colonel Noel Parrish to War Dept.," n.d. (ca. fall 1945), 26pp, Box #312, #6, NAACP Papers, L/C. Parrish believed that the Gillem Board was appointed because the mass of data collected in the surveys was too confusing to form a basis for postwar policies.

25. Interview with Gen Parrish (Retired), USAFAOHP, 30 March 1973; Interview with Gen Parrish (Retired) by Dr. Hasdorff.

26. Memo from Gibson to McCloy, 30 May 1945, Box #215, NARG 107 (S/W).

27. AAF Report, pp 7 and 14.

## ABBREVIATIONS

A-1	Air Staff, Personnel
A-2	Air Staff, Intelligence
A-3	Air Staff, Operations and Training
A-4	Air Staff, Materiel and Supply
AAF	Army Air Forces or Army Air Field
AAFFTC	Army Air Forces Flying Training Command
AAFTS	Army Air Forces Training Station
AAFTTC	Army Air Forces Technical Training Command
AAG	Air Adjutant General
AC	Air Corps
AC/AS	Assistant Chief of the Air Staff
ACFTC	Air Corps Flying Training Command
ACTC	Air Corps Training Command
ADC/S	Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff
AF	Air Force
AFAAP	Air Staff, Personnel
AFACT	Air Staff, Training
AFCAS	Secretary of the Air Staff
AFCHO	USAF Historical Office
AFDMR	Directorate of Military Requirements
AFDPU	Directorate of Program Planning
AFPMP	Military Personnel Division
AFRIT	Directorate of Individual Training
AFSC	Air Force Service Command
AFSHRC	Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center
AG	Adjutant General
AGCT	Army General Classification Test
AGF	Army Ground Forces
AGO	Adjutant General's Office
AI	Air Inspector
AJA	Air Judge Advocate
AR	Army Regulation
AS	Air Staff
ASC	Air Service Command
ASF	Army Service Forces
AS/W	Assistant Secretary of War
ASWAAF	Arms and Services with the AAF
AWC	Army War College
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
BPR	Bureau of Public Relations

CAA	Civil Aeronautics Authority
C/AC	Chief of the Air Corps
C/AS	Chief of the Air Staff
CFTC	Central Flying Training Command
CG	Commanding General
CO	Commanding Officer
CPTP	Civilian Pilot Training Program
C/S	Chief of Staff
DC/AS	Deputy Chief of the Air Staff
DC/S	Deputy Chief of Staff
DDEL	Dwight D. Eisenhower Library
DOD	Department of Defense
EFTC	Eastern Flying Training Command
ETO	European Theater of Operations
ETTC	Eastern Technical Training Command
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FDR	Franklin D. Roosevelt
FDRL	Franklin D. Roosevelt Library
FEPC	Fair Employment Practices Commission
FTC	Flying Training Command
G-1	General Staff, Personnel
G-2	General Staff, Intelligence
G-3	General Staff, Operations
G-4	General Staff, Supply
GCACTC	Gulf Coast Air Corps Training Center
HQ	Headquarters
HSTL	Harry S. Truman Library
IG	Inspector General
Ind	Indorsement
ITCC	I Troop Carrier Command
JA	Judge Advocate
L/C	Library of Congress, Manuscript Division
Ltr	Letter
Memo	Memorandum
MOS	Military Occupational Specialty
MOWM	March on Washington Movement
MP	Military Police/Military Policeman
MTO	Mediterranean Theater of Operations
NAACP	National Association for the Advancement of Colored People
NARG	National Archives Record Group
NCO	Noncommissioned Officer
NPR	National Public Radio
OC/AC	Office of the Chief of the Air Corps

OCMH	Office, Chief of Military History
OCS	Officer Candidate School
OTS	Officers' Training School
OWI	Office of War Information
PCS	Permanent Change of Station
PDC	Personnel Distribution Command
PL	Public Law
PX	Post Exchange
S/AS	Secretary of the Air Staff
SEACTC	Southeast Air Corps Training Command
SETC	Southeast Training Command
SLNPRC	St. Louis National Personnel Records Center
SOS	Services of Supply
S/W	Secretary of War
TAG	The Adjutant General
TAI	The Air Inspector
TC	Training Command
TTC	Technical Training Command
T&O	Training and Operations
USAF	United States Air Force
USFAOHP	United States Air Force Academy Oral History Program
USAMHRC	United States Army Military History Research Collection
USMA	United States Military Academy
USSTAF	United States Strategic Air Forces
US/W	Under Secretary of War
WAC	Women's Army Corps
Wac	A Member of the Women's Army Corps
WC	West Coast
WD	War Department
WDGS	War Department General Staff
WDP	War Department Pamphlet
WPD	War Plans Division
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

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