

FAHY



27 April, 1949

MEMORANDUM FOR MR. FAHY

SUBJECT: An Interim Report

I have been at this job just short of two months. My ideas on what a report should contain are somewhat changed, and my ideas on recommendations are greatly changed, from what they were after the first month. This is the result of considerable reading in historical documents, of talking to the specialists in the bowels of the Pentagon who are familiar with the way policy is affected by practice, of the testimony at the hearings, and of Secretary Johnson's recent memo.

During my first month I thought that the Committee would be doing a real service if it came up with a report that advanced one more step along the direction set by the Gillem Board. If we could get the quota abolished in the Army by insisting on the other services taking their share of recruits with low scores; if we could step down the unit of segregation to ^{the} company with a recommendation that it should be subsequently brought down to the platoon; if we could make more specific the order to use men in overhead installations regardless of race -- then, I thought, this would be a pretty sizable achievement. I am not so sure now.

Especially I am doubtful about any recommendation for a progressive stepping down of the segregation level. I see nothing wrong with segregating at the company rather than the battalion level. But I can't see much positive advantage. The company is the lowest administrative unit. Segregated companies would have separate messing, bunking, and social arrangements. There would still be segregation without much added association that builds respect and strengthens morale.

And there may be some possibility of trouble. For example, at Meade there is an armored cavalry regiment composed of two white and one Negro battalions. Suppose you break up the Negro battalion by working a Negro company into each of three battalions. The Negro company will not really belong. And if anything goes wrong, the blame is sure to be directed at the Negro company.

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This trouble may not develop. But I have a feeling it would certainly develop at the next step -- segregation at the platoon level. The platoon is not an administrative unit. The men would eat in the same mess hall, but not necessarily at the same tables. They would have their barracks in the same area, and possibly would bunk in the same building -- but not in bunks side by side. Here you have segregation at the lowest level --but still segregation. And I am certain that this situation contains dynamite.

I thought at first that segregation by platoons as an intermediate step was a good idea. I think I was unduly influenced by the experiment on the Western Front early in 1945. That experiment proved that Negroes fight better in small units. I don't think it proved that segregation by platoons is an ideal arrangement for combat or peacetime post.

If we propose a stepping down process, I now think that we better jump from the battalion to man-to-man integration. I see no harm in stopping at the company, but such a recommendation will hardly set the Potomac on fire after Johnson's statement. I see potential harm in the platoon step.

If you have man-to-man integration, I think you may avoid this trouble. Where a white company will regard a neighboring Negro company in the same battalion as an unwanted stranger, where a white platoon will resent a Negro platoon, I do not think there would be the same resentment of a Negro -- a qualified Negro -- who is in your tank crew, who mans the same machine gun, who is put of a Field Artillery team servicing a cannon. Such a Negro becomes a member of the family because he depends upon his closest neighbor who also depends upon him.

This, I am certain now, is not just a literary idea. General James K. Parsons, an Alabaman I believe, addressed a fairly long memo to the War College Commandant on this subject as early as 1924. Parsons said that Negroes and whites work side by side in the fields of the South; they could fight side by side. Racial hostility, Parsons said, was a matter of groups, not individuals. General Edwin Chamberlain, I understand, made much the same point in a study in 1942. (It is interesting that no one seems to be able to find General Chamberlain's report, and that General Parsons's is never mentioned in all the studies between wars.)



I formerly thought that our report could be something in the nature of the Gillem report -- expanded, of course, with historical chapters, and embracing all the services. But I did think it should be fairly general, and that we had better not get mucked up in the details of actual application, but trust to the military to carry through general principles and recommendations set down by the Committee. I don't see how we can do this now.

My explorations into G-1 -- Personnel and Administration -- have convinced me that there is where policies are dissected and applied. The result often is that the new policy is nothing but the old practice in small print. I have been convinced of this by the tepid application of the 124 Circular. Only one command -- Gillem's -- has a board reporting on 124, and from all I hear that reportage is merely perfunctory. Our visit to Meade convinced me that while Negroes are indeed being put into overhead installations, they are not being assigned in anything like the numbers they could be. My conversations with some of the specialists has convinced me that even so sound a policy as the new career guidance program has limited application for Negroes.

Secretary Johnson's memo raises real problems for the Committee, in my opinion. Except for a flat statement eliminating all segregated units, there is not much by way of a policy statement that the Committee could make which would go beyond the Secretary's. Therefore, the Committee must concentrate on procedural matters in its recommendations. I do not know what procedures the three services will propose in reply to Johnson's memo -- I daresay nothing very revolutionary. But I think it would be very bad if the Fahy Committee proposed concrete steps which seemed to fall short of the promise of the Johnson policy.

Perhaps it isn't a policy, as Reid says. But the press and the public think it is a policy, and they think it is a promise. Perhaps the General Staff and the Chief of Naval Operations won't propose measures that come up to that promise. But I think the Committee must. We have been put in a tough spot.

For myself, I think we should come down heavy on Johnson's promise of assignments according to ability. This will mean seeing that the new career guidance program has the gimmicks taken out of it by which Negroes are denied what Johnson has promised them.

This is going to be a tedious business, but I think it is the only way. Furthermore, the more we muck around in G-1 and G-3, the more the military will be likely to put speed on and do something itself.



All of this leads up to this conclusion: in my opinion, man-to-man integration has got to come much sooner than I thought a month ago.

This does not necessarily mean that there will not be for some time all-Negro units. A good many service units which are now Negro are composed largely of IV's and V's. I don't see how these can be immediately broken up because many of the men are already doing the work for which they are fitted, and I think it would be dangerous to infiltrate a few whites into such an organization.

It may be that under a scheme for assigning men according to their ability, the dispersion of Negroes according to MOS will still look -- as Davenport said -- much like Major Fowler's present distribution chart. All right. The Negroes have got to take their chance. As their educational opportunities increase, they will get a chance at the better jobs. But at least those who are fitted will not be denied school training and assignment because there are no course for Negroes or because such and such a unit has quota of Negroes in the Table of Organization.

I think that under such a scheme there will be a good many fewer Negro non-coms and company officers. Very well. They must take their chance again. And most Negro leaders now are convinced that the emphasis on quantity was all wrong and that progress can be made only by having the Negro make his way on strictly competitive basis in a non-segregated system.

I agree. If a large proportion of the Negroes end up in the laundry or other menial tasks, at least under the system of assignment according to ability, they will land up in such jobs because they are fitted only for such jobs and not because those units have been set down as Negro units.

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If we can clear up our thinking on the issue of non-segregation -- not necessarily on a moral basis, because that is something that is difficult to impress upon the Army -- but on the limited basis of military efficiency, then I think the rest of the Army problems will not be so tough.

Negroes will have to get their NCO and commissioned officer ratings in competition. There will be at the beginning the problem of command. I am not sure that this cannot be settled for quite a while by assigning Negro NCO's to the Negro units that will still be in existence, and assigning Negro commissioned officers to Negro units or overhead installations. But I think fairly rapidly it will be possible to put qualified Negroes in command of mixed units -- providing those Negroes have made their way not in competition only with their fellows but with Whites. Respect will come with achievement. (Bunche is an example)



If the Navy and Air Force are made to take their fair share of IV's and V's, I see no reason why the quota system should not be abolished if efficiency becomes the criterion. If it is efficient to use more than 10% Negroes, then they should be used. If it becomes efficient to use less than 10%, then there should be whatever number as can be used to advantage. The argument that Negroes must suffer casualties proportionately does not impress me. In the first place, they won't suffer proportionate casualties by drafting 10% because as war becomes more technical, it is outstripping the limping educational opportunities for Negroes. Consequently Negroes will not be committed to battle proportionately to their population. Secondly, the suffering of proportionate casualties does not guarantee efficiency.

I think there wouldn't be much of a social problem under such a system. In the first place, social facilities would still be by companies or battalions. The Negroes that share these facilities will belong to some small unit. There will be no ganging up because his buddies from his own small unit won't stand for it, whereas there might be all kinds of trouble if Negroes tried to use social facilities when they were still part of a segregated unit. Those units which are still all-Negro during any transition period will still have their own clubs as they do now --with the same understanding that they can go into any club.

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All this I think is possible without great fuss because it is common sense, it is not dramatic, and because it is the federal forces which are involved.

The National Guard is another matter. I think it won't do much good to try to bring them abreast of the Gillem policy at a time when the military is preparing to move ahead of that policy. And frankly I don't see how you can coerce these state units. I have a healthy respect for states rights and for historical sentiment.

What is the history of National Guard Divisions? I don't think they have been used as divisions recently. Smaller units may remain intact, but generally I think the Army now sends small detachments and individuals where they are needed.

Under a program for using men according to their ability, the National Guard outfit, I should think, presents difficulties. Only the largest states can have the completely staffed divisions with all the specialties represented.

I should thin there would have to be some sort of understanding that National Guard units will be broken up in time of war and the men used according to their ability. Then there would be no necessity of getting snarled in state prerogatives.



I know nothing about this National Guard business, and I will have to see some of the Table of Organizations for their units. It is going to be a very hard nut to crack, and I would hate to jeopardize the federal program for the sake of being logically inclusive.

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So much for the Army. I don't know what I think about the Navy. All discussion so far about the Navy has been heavy with rhetoric and righteousness, and pretty light on fact. I think we will have to get down in the bowels of Bupers before we can really make recommendations. I really am not much interested right now in the officer problem. What bothers me is why more Negroes don't sign up in an allegedly non-segregated Navy.

I don't feel qualified on the Air Force either. I suspect the answer lies in their personnel office, also.

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I am not certain we can work up very sound ideas on the Navy and Air Force before June 1. I would be happy if we had our ideas on the Army in defensible shape.

I think the interim report, then, should devote itself to a brief historical resume. This historical chapter would not be, as I originally planned, an account of the Negro in American wars, but a history of the Army's evolving policy on using Negroes. (I want to shy off from a narrative history of the Negro in the Army. It is hopelessly controversial and the truth is almost impossible to come by. We would involve ourselves needlessly in recrimination. But a history of the Army's policy is not controversial; the records are full and precise; there is a mixture of sound sense and ignorance, but there is some progression. Moreover, such a history fits in with the emphasis on efficiency. The Negro in combat would be used only where it has a bearing on the policy -- as it did after World War I.)

There should then be a chapter on what the Army's current policy is, followed by an examination of practice.

Then a chapter on the new personnel program, with its failure to include the Negro fully in its benefits.

Finally, recommendations on the Army only.

The reason I think we should do the Army only is that our thinking is likely to be pretty conclusive on the Army. Therefore, if there are leaks -- and there are bound to be -- at least the recommendations will stand examination. I would want to know a lot more about the Navy and Air Force before I submitted any recommendations even in an interim report.