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The American Race Issue as a Factor in “The Black Horror on the Rhine" Controversy (1919-1922) as Reported by the New York Times and Selected American Periodicals

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THE AMERICAN RACE ISSUE AS A FACTOR IN "THE BLACK HORROR ON THE RHINE"
CONTROVERSY (1919-1922) AS REPORTED BY THE NEW YORK TIMES AND SELECTED
AMERICAN PERIODICALS

by

W. Wilson Woods, Jr.

A Thesis
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Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
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The international controversy arising from the use of black colonial troops by the French occupation forces in the German Rhineland after World War I is examined in this paper. Particular emphasis is given to American press accounts of the events on the Rhine (1919-1922) including those of the New York Times, the Nation, the Literary Digest, and the New Republic. Two questions are addressed: Were the events on the Rhine, particularly the alleged atrocities committed by French black colonials, accurately reported? Secondly, was the reporting of the controversy affected by racial violence in the United States?

With the exception of the Nation none of the cited publications sought to confirm or disprove charges of atrocities, relying instead on second-hand and often highly biased information. Findings also suggest little or no exploitation of the race issue in the reporting of this controversy.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is with deepest appreciation that I thank Dr. Howard A. Mowen, Professor Emeritus of History for his time and expertise. I would also like to extend my thanks to Professor Ross Gregory, Professor William S. Rodner, Professor James M. Ferreira, and Dean Norman C. Greenberg for their encouragement. To my wife Nancy, who saw me through this project, I extend my deepest gratitude.

It should go without saying that the responsibility for the following material is solely my own.

W. Wilson Woods, Jr.
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THE AMERICAN RACE ISSUE AS A FACTOR IN "THE BLACK HORROR ON THE RHINE" CONTROVERSY (1919-1922) AS REPORTED BY THE "NEW YORK TIMES" AND SELECTED AMERICAN PERIODICALS

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

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INTRODUCTION

In the period immediately following World War I the United States experienced unprecedented racial violence. In a nation rigidly segregated by law and custom, in which skin color determined one's social, political, and economic position, a violent clash between whites and blacks seemed inevitable. The black war veterans who returned in 1919 found social and economic conditions little or no better than those which they had left before the war. In fact during 1919, the first full year after the war, violence against blacks in the U.S. included not only the established American tradition of lynching but live burnings as well. Of the 83 lynchings in the United States in 1919 ten were black veterans, several of whom were still in uniform when lynched.\(^1\) Included in the number of black lynching victims were eleven men who were publicly burned to death.\(^2\) The Ku Klux Klan was revived in 1915 and had, by the twenties, evolved into a national terrorist group with expanding political power. No longer confined to its traditional home in the South, the Klan supported and elected mayors, governors and other public officials in the North and West who were sympathetic to its program.

Concurrent with the return of the black Americans who had fought in France, the great wartime migration of blacks continued from the rural South to the urban North. The hard and often brutal existence


\(^2\)Ibid.
in the South could be remedied, it was thought, by the trek north to greater freedom and jobs. As Chicago's leading black newspaper, the Chicago Defender, explained, "To die from the bite of frost is far more glorious than at the hands of a mob." What they too often found were conditions only slightly better than those in the South and the imposition of the same rigid color line. During the summer of 1919 wide-spread racial violence broke out in many Northern cities. Although Northern urban racial violence was nothing new in the United States it had, in almost every instance, ended with non-whites as the victims. In 1919 a new development in racial warfare shocked white America; urban blacks began to fight back. Massive civil disturbances occurred in Washington, D.C., Chicago, Omaha and other cities. In Chicago 38 persons lost their lives with an additional 537 people injured. Sections of the segregated black South Side were reduced to rubble by white mobs in reprisal for black violence. After four days the State Militia was called in to quell the rioting in Chicago.

"What do the blacks want?" was the subject of numerous newspaper and magazine articles. Many Southern editors revelled in the irony of the sanctimonious "liberals" in the North confronting the race problem. Northern editors seemed confused and frightened by the fact that many blacks had armed themselves and that some had actually begun to seek white victims. Were the riots the product of Bolsheviks "stirring up" the blacks? Or, were the riots the product of returning black soldiers who were disillusioned by having made the world safe for

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³Ibid., p. 339.
democracy "For Whites Only"? Had these soldiers been "ruined" by their exposure to a more tolerant French society? The fever of race hatred and fear brought these questions and others to the forefront in the American press.

The Problem

Curiously enough, another story involving race would move from obscurity to front page notoriety. The issue would be the French Army's use of black colonial troops to occupy the German Rhineland after the war. It would elicit such anger and revulsion from many white Americans that it created an ongoing public controversy and, in turn, a foreign policy problem for the years 1919-1922.

How would the American press react to the charges that black colonial troops, under French officers, were committing mass atrocities in the Rhineland? Many American newspapers, particularly Southern and Mid-Western would act predictably, accepting the charges without examination. Some saw profit in exploiting a new race controversy. The fear of the sexually more powerful black male is well documented in American literature.4 Central to the "Rhine Horror" story would be the alleged rape and molestations of German women by black Africans. Were these assaults the result of black troops having experienced a sexual freedom with French white women that had been denied them elsewhere? In a nation awash in race violence the

inherent appeal in such a story is obvious.

Several leading publications looked more closely at the events on the Rhine. While other newspapers fanned the flames of controversy, the New York Times followed the story with caution and restraint. How did the New York Times, arguably the most influential American newspaper of the time, develop the story? How did the leading New York periodicals treat the events on the Rhine? Among the most influential at the time would be: the New Republic, representing views of the political center; the Literary Digest, disseminating both a cross section of U.S. newspaper editorials and its own centrist viewpoint; the Nation, a respected but decidedly left wing periodical that stirred controversy among the top circles of the American ruling elite. These publications reached well beyond their regional base on the Eastern seaboard. In addition to their political influence their voices could generally be heard to question the denial of full citizenship to black Americans. These journals, lacking the baser racist sympathies of some publications, could be expected to treat the black/white issue in the Rhineland with some objectivity.

In this tracing of the development of the story involving the black occupation forces in Germany, I will address two important questions: Was the American readership of the aforementioned publications given an accurate picture of the events in the Rhineland? And to what extent, if any, did racial turmoil in the United States help to create and sustain the story?

THE RHINELAND OCCUPATION

Shortly before the Armistice on November 11, 1918, the Allied High Command including Field Marshal Ferdinand Foch and Marshal Henri Petain representing France, General Douglas Haig of Great Britain, and General John Pershing of the United States met to discuss the possible battlefield truce terms. The British, favoring moderate terms so as not to discourage German capitulation, advocated allowing the German army to remain astride the Rhine. The French, particularly Marshal Petain, argued that the Germans would have to be placed so that they would be at a severe disadvantage in the event that hostilities were to resume. They favored immediate occupation of the left bank of the Rhine and the establishment of bridgeheads on the eastern side. Combining this Rhine policy with the suggestion of reparations so large as to permanently cripple Germany's economy, the French seemed willing to take any measure to insure their military superiority over Germany. General Pershing, at least at this juncture a fortnight before the Armistice, had little of substance to contribute. The French were clearly in control of the discussions involving the fate of the Rhineland.

A military occupation of the Rhineland would meet several objectives of the Allies, and particularly those of France. In effect, a small but heavily populated area of Germany would be held as ransom

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for favorable peace terms. Colonel Edward House, long time confidant of President Wilson, arrived in Europe to join the discussion. Sent on his fourth mission to Europe in five years, House saw the acceptance of Wilson's Fourteen Points as of paramount importance. Both Wilson and House agreed that as harsh as the French armistice terms might be, by agreeing to them French acceptance of Wilson's peace plan might be gained.\(^7\) Wilson was gambling on a long-term comprehensive peace treaty which would show some compassion to the vanquished Germans. The British, meanwhile, seemed most uneasy that the armistice terms might not induce the Germans to quit fighting. Convinced by the French that the Germans would accept an occupation and that the French would eventually withdraw, Lloyd George gave his approval.\(^8\) One German peace negotiator broke into tears upon hearing of the impending military occupation but, in the face of continued fighting, acceded.\(^9\) The plan to occupy the Rhineland would go forward.

**Arrangements for the Occupation**

Immediately following the cessation of hostilities on November 11 the Allied armies (British, French, American, and Belgian) moved into a position to advance upon the Rhine. As part of the armistice agreement the German armies agreed to leave their positions in France and withdraw across the Rhine leaving some 12,000 square miles of Germany

\(^7\)Ibid., p. 31.

\(^8\)Ibid., pp. 34-35.

under foreign rule.

On the morning of November 17 the Allied armies began marching east from their advance positions. Along the entire front they followed the retreating Germans by a pre-arranged distance of six miles. Strict time limits were observed as the Germans retreated from Belgium, France, Luxemburg, and Alsace-Lorraine. The German abandonment of the Rhineland was punctual and orderly.¹⁰

The territory to be occupied, although not large as compared to the whole of Germany (about 6.5%), had a population of seven million. These seven million people represented slightly more than one in every ten Germans. Included in this area of the Rhineland was Cologne, one of Germany's largest and most important cities. Bordering the occupied zone were the cities of Frankfurt and Dusseldorf and, most strategic, the great industrial complex within the Ruhr valley. The military bridgeheads established by the British, French, and Americans were on the "right" bank of the Rhine thus giving a large part of both riverbanks and control of this economically vital river to the Allies.

The occupied area commonly referred to as the "Rhineland" actually comprised parts of four German States. The largest part lay within the so-called Rhine Province which, together with the Province of Hesse-Nassau, represented better than half of the Allied Zone. The Bavarian Palatinate made up another third of the occupied area to the south of the Rhine Province. In addition, a small piece of Hesse-Darmstadt and the enclave of Birkenfeld were included in this area.¹¹

¹⁰Ibid., p. 31.
Historical Background: The Rhineland

From the time of Charlemagne until the 1815 Congress of Vienna, the Rhineland, as a border region, had suffered repeated invasions. French armies had sought to establish the Rhineland as a neutral buffer zone or, as in the Napoleonic era, a province or department of France. In 1802 four French departments replaced nearly one hundred separate rulers in the West Rhenish area. These Rhenish departments enjoyed the benefits of Napoleonic administration, somewhat more enlightened than the various governments they had previously experienced.\(^{12}\) For fourteen years the western Rhineland remained under French rule. With the defeat of Napoleon, Prussian administration replaced French. It was with mixed feelings that many Rhinelanders, even in a time of rising German nationalism, exchanged their French citizenship for Prussian.\(^{13}\) The wars of the Bismarckian period, however, saw Rhinelanders following Prussian banners into battle. The enthusiasm and loyalty with which the Rhinelanders fought was due in most part to rising hopes of a united Germany.\(^{14}\)

The Bismarckian era was followed by the rapid transformation of Germany into a world industrial power. Owing to the great deposits of coal in the Ruhr and iron ore taken from the recently annexed French


\(^{13}\)Ibid., p. 114.

Briey District in 1871, the Rhineland became the crucial center of mineral wealth in Germany. The advent of war in 1914 left no doubt as to where the Rhinelanders' loyalty lay. Over one million of the seven million persons in the Rhineland served in uniform. Although she sacrificed her men in great numbers during World War One, the Rhineland escaped the physical destruction so common in northern France. This stark contrast between the devasted land of the victor and the unblemished German landscape would be responsible for the great resentment and individual acts of retribution by Allied soldiers early in the occupation.

Rhinelander Reaction to Occupation

The people of the Rhineland differed in several ways from their Prussian neighbors. Predominantly Catholic, Rhinelanders were also known for their provincialism. The central government in Berlin, predominantly Protestant and more cosmopolitan, was never very popular in the Rhineland. This fact, combined with the effects of the war, gave rise to Rhenish separatist movements. These separatists advocated an autonomous state in some instances and outright annexation by France in others. They received every kind of encouragement from the French. The population generally greeted the separatist movements with disdain and, in some cases, violent hostility. Throughout the occupation of the Rhineland, the Rhinelanders as a whole looked to a united Germany. The French were bitterly disappointed by the failure of their separatist schemes.15

As the Allied armies, under the command of Marshal Foch, advanced into the Rhineland they were met with a curious reaction from the native population. Although the Allied forces expected a somewhat hostile reaction to the occupation, they were met instead with indifference. Major-General Henry T. Allen, the eventual commander of United States occupation forces, observed:

The German people were accustomed to having troops of their own army quartered on them, and as billeting is provided for in their own laws, they accepted the demands of a foreign army somewhat as a matter of course. From history and experience the population of this entire region was prepared for such an eventuality. In spite of this, the attitude of the authorities and people toward us was variously interpreted. Nearly all of our divisions in commenting on their impressions of the first few days on German soil noted the studied obliviousness to our presence by the people.16

This attitude of "studied obliviousness" did nothing to relieve the Rhineland population of an oppressive military occupation. Among the occupiers the British were described as more reasonable and correct than the French. The British saw their role as honoring their obligation to support France and not as an opportunity to even the score. Yet this very correct occupation force laid down the following living conditions for the British sector of the Rhineland in 1919:

1. 7 p.m. to 7 a.m. curfew
2. permits required to circulate (checked regularly)
3. all telephones disconnected
4. strict censorship of all personal correspondence and newspapers
5. no unsanctioned public meetings
6. registration of all civilians
7. all houses, flats, and hotels required to publicly display a list of all occupants

8. civilians could be court marshaled
9. civilian population had to provide housing, light, heat, service, plate, and linen for the occupying army
10. Central European Time changed to Greenwich Time
11. hats off to all British officers

These ordinances were typical of those enforced by the other occupation armies. With the exception of the early weeks, life under the military occupation was virtually ignored by the American press. But to many Germans and informed German-Americans these occupation conditions provided ample reason to pressure, using any means, for a withdrawal of Allied forces.

Early in the occupation much of the ill feeling of the Rhine-landers would be ameliorated as they came to see the Allied armies as representing a shield against Bolshevism. Many parts of Germany were in total and violent revolution. The Rhinelanders watched in horror as Communist forces clashed with right-wing volunteers (frei-korps) and regular troops in the streets of Berlin. The Communist following in Berlin and throughout the north of Germany was substantial. Hundreds were killed in the fighting before a newly-elected moderate government restored order. This aborted revolution in January, 1919, was followed by civil war in Bavaria in February. Before the Social Democrats could be restored in August the red flag would fly over Munich. It must have been obvious to the population of the Rhineland that the presence of Allied troops spelled the difference between political violence, and the relative calm they enjoyed:

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The Allied Armies, enemies as they were, were far preferable to the anarchy of Spartacists and Bolsheviks. The Coblenzer Zeitung even urged the German government to move the Reichstag to Coblenz. "The American occupation would assure sufficient protection against the eruption of terrorist elements from neighboring German territory. Any attempt at influence on the part of our outside opponents is hardly to be expected as the American troops, where they have hitherto appeared, have not interfered with the political life of the occupied territory."\(^{19}\)

But all would not go smoothly in the Rhineland. Black troops in both the French and American armies crossed the Rhine with their white comrades. The idea of black troops imposing the rule of law on white Germans shocked the sensibilities of the German population and evolved into an international controversy.

\(^{19}\)Ibid.
BLACK AMERICAN FORCES

Black American troops played a vital role in the final months of the First World War. Segregated from white units and serving under both French and American white officers, the black troops quickly established themselves as determined fighters. The 369th regiment served 191 days in the trenches in almost continuous fighting and never lost a man through capture. The French awarded the entire regiment the Croix de Guerre for its fighting at Maison-en-Champagne. The 369th also earned the distinction of being the first unit of the Allied armies to reach the Rhine.20 Early in September of 1918, while engaged in a counterattack against the Germans in the St. Die sector, the black American Ninety-second Division encountered German propaganda for the first time:

On September 12 they [German Army] scattered over the lines a circular that sought to persuade the Negroes to lay down their arms. They told them that they should not be deluded into thinking that they were fighting for humanity and democracy. "What is Democracy? Personal freedom, all citizens enjoying the same rights socially and before the law. Do you enjoy the same rights as the white people do in America, the land of Freedom and Democracy, or are you rather not treated over there as second-class citizens? Can you go into a restaurant where white people dine? Can you get a seat in the theater where white people sit? . . . Is lynching and the most horrible crimes connected therewith a lawful proceeding in a democratic country?"

"Why, then, fight the Germans only for the benefit of the Wall Street robbers and to protect the millions they have loaned to the British, French, and Italians."21

20 Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, pp. 331-332.
21 Ibid., p. 333.
Propaganda proved an ineffective weapon: there were no desertions.

As the war moved toward its conclusion, the French continued their lavish praise of the black American soldiers. General Goybet, commanding officer of the French 157th Division, addressed the commanding officer of the 372nd regiment while it participated in the Argonne offensive as follows:

Your troops have been admirable in their attack. You must be proud of the courage of your officers and men, and I consider it an honor to have them under my command. The bravery and dash of your regiment won the admiration of the Moroccan Division, who are themselves versed in warfare. Thanks to you, during these hard days, the division was at all times in the advance of all other divisions of the Army Corps.22

The Allied forces that crossed into Germany after the Armistice were very much fighting units. They were prepared to resume the battle if need be and built bridgeheads on the east side of the Rhine to guard against that eventuality. Black American units entered the Rhineland alongside white units. Their presence was felt immediately by the populace. In late January, 1919, the New York Times reported that blacks in Coblenz and Treves drew curious, staring crowds. The paper went on to report that military police were used to break up crowds comprised mostly of children. This peaceful show of force was intended to enforce the ban on gatherings in the thoroughfares.23 There was no mention of hostility or violence connected with these incidents.


AMERICAN REACTION TO RHINELAND OCCUPATION

American public reaction was mixed when the U.S. Army entered the Rhineland. In January 1919, U.S. Representative Mahlon Garland (Penn.) sponsored a House Resolution calling for the total withdrawal of American troops. His purpose was to give the French an unfettered hand in the Rhineland, free of American interference.24 In response to the Garland Resolution the New York Times wrote:

Germany is the enemy to be watched and suspected, and, judged by her "bad eminence" in the war until her armies were outfought and beaten, she cannot be trusted now. This should be clear to thoughtful Americans, and pride should restrain them from demanding that every unit be brought home without regard to the performance of a manifest duty.25

Much of the Wilson Administration's enthusiasm for the occupation was tied to the Treaty of Versailles.26 The intense debate over the Treaty often included an argument for and against the Rhineland occupation. Senators who opposed President Wilson and the ratification of the Treaty came to be know as the "Irreconcilables". One argument they used against ratification was that occupation troops abroad were an example of foreign entanglements possible by the terms of the Treaty.27 It is evident in the newspapers and speeches of the period that the American people and their representatives in Congress feared the outbreak of another European war. One view held after the war

27 Ibid., p. 199.
opposed assisting the territorial ambitions of the French along the Rhine. American troops caught in the middle of a renewal of hostilities would have to choose either "dishonorable" retreat or support for the French. An American occupation force in the Rhineland, vulnerable to events around it, was hardly appealing to those distrustful of European politics.28 In March of 1920 the United States Senate failed to ratify the Treaty for a second time. The American military presence, centered in Coblenz, would dwindle steadily until its complete withdrawal in January 1923.

Black American Forces Withdrawn

Among the first troops sent home from Europe were the black American contingents. This action was consistent with President Wilson's views supporting segregation and it raised little comment from the American press. The German government also expressed the strongest opposition to the use of "colored" troops in the Rhineland.

Of course, by objecting to the use of colored troops... the German Foreign Office may have hoped to impose a physical burden on the French army (which relied on them in great numbers), but, more likely, the Germans wanted to forestall a situation which they knew would mean trouble. They undoubtedly realized that African and Asian troops, as occupying forces in a northern European country, would have a difficult social adjustment to make. Indeed, this realization soon prompted President Wilson to bring the subject to Clemenceau's attention at the Paris Peace Conference.29

The remaining American force came to be known as a moderating

28Nelson, Victors Divided, p. 130.

influence in the occupation. Under the command of Major-General Henry T. Allen, the American presence served to restrain French territorial and political ambitions. Several Rhenish newspapers complimented the Americans upon their overall conduct as well as their administration of the occupation.30

BLACK FRENCH COLONIAL TROOPS: A SHORT HISTORY

The French decision to use colored troops in the occupation of the Rhineland was, in part, an outgrowth of previous military policy. France had long supplemented its regular armed forces with colonial troops. The French use of colonial forces dated from the late eighteenth century.\(^3\) In the twentieth century, Lieutenant-Colonel Mangin who later played an important role in the Rhineland occupation, championed the idea of a loyal black "reservoir of men" in Africa. But at the time, 1908, French military authorities saw little use for colonial troops. It was then accepted dogma that the next war would be fought and concluded in a matter of a few weeks. The outcome of the war, according to the prevailing view, would depend on the first battle. This inability to consider the eventuality of a protracted conflict caused the French high command to dismiss the possible utilization of French colonials.\(^2\)

Mangin was unconvinced by the "short war" scenario. In 1911, three years before the First World War, he wrote:

> While making every effort to insure success in this first battle, in which our black troops can play a decisive role, it will not be necessary to regard ourselves as hopelessly lost if the fortunes of war are once unfavorable to us. Such a state of mind would be most dangerous. Final success awaits us in a struggle of long duration, in which the power of credit, the freedom of the seas, and the entrance into line of distant allies, furnish us without ceasing with new


forces. The black army will be added to all the others... We have the disposal, then, of reserves which are so to speak, unlimited, whose source is out of reach of the enemy. As long as we retain possession of one port and the freedom of the seas, we need not despair of success. In the present state of Europe, the black army makes of us the most redoubtable of adversaries.33

Senegalese Forces

It was the Moroccan Crisis in the spring of 1911, however, that spurred colonial recruitment efforts in West Africa. This Franco-German confrontation sent the chill of war through Europe. If the crisis escalated into general war between France and Germany, would France have sufficient numbers of soldiers? The French, in assessing their manpower, saw how clearly outnumbered they would be against the larger German population. The French Army Staff remembered that Senegalese troops had been used in 1908 to maintain order in Morocco. Thus,

[the usefullness of black troops] became evident to a large number of persons hitherto unfamiliar with the history of the Senegalese tirailleurs, that the blacks might replace French troops in the work of pacifying the new territory, and enable these latter to defend France's own frontiers. And it was but a step forward to advocate the use of Senegalese in Algeria for the same reason, and finally to send them to France in case of a prolonged European war.34

In 1914 Blaise Diagne, a Senegalese, was elected to the French Chamber of Deputies. Running against four white opponents, Diagne called for obligatory military service for blacks as well as whites.

33Ibid.

The Senegalese responded both to his race and to the call of the military and sent Diagne to Paris. Premier Clemenceau appointed Diagne to a rank equal to the French Governor General for French West Africa. Recruiting was his primary responsibility and he succeeded in bringing thousands of black Africans into the French Army. In all, the French drew a half million colonials into their armies, about 85% of whom were Africans of all skin colors. It was the introduction of black-skinned Africans of the equatorial region that created the greatest controversy and protest. The public and press outside France often labeled all French troops with black skin "Senegalese."

By the end of the First World War the French army had 134,000 West Africans at their disposal. These troops were used primarily as shock troops and their casualty rate was thus higher than their European counterparts. The Senegalese suffered roughly one-third of the French colonial troop deaths in the war. Statistics are not exact in estimating Senegalese casualties because the French seldom made distinctions between different colonial groups or colonial and native son when recording losses. One estimate places the number of Senegalese killed at 30,000. Twenty-five battalions of Senegalese were decorated for heroism.

38 Davis, Reservoirs of Men, p. 156.
German Reaction to Senegalese Troops in World War I

From their first combat at Rheims toward the end of September, 1914 to the day in November 1918 when they dipped their colors in the waters of the Rhine, the Senegalese played a significant role in the war. General Erich Ludendorff, who from 1916 shared command of the German armies with General Paul von Hindenburg comments in his memoirs, "The use which France has gotten from her colonial empire cannot be estimated highly enough. She has carried on the war, notably in the summer of 1918, in a large measure with colored troops."39

Germany was horrified by the black forces arrayed against it. The German public was constantly regaled with atrocity stories regarding the French Senegalese troops. One of these stories involved Senegalese taking the ears of dead German soldiers as trophies.40 The charge that German wounded were being tortured and killed was also common. Field Marshal von Hindenburg exclaimed in his book Out Of My Life (London, 1920), "When there were no tanks our enemy had sent black waves against us. Waves of black Africans! Woe to us when these waves reached our lines and massacred, or worse, tortured our defenseless men!"41 German Captain Rheinhold Eichacker, published in the New York Times Current History (April-June 1917), described the attack of Senegalese troops this way:

They came. First singly, at wide intervals. Feeling their way, like the arms of a horrible cuttle fish. Eager,

41Ibid.
grasping, like the claws of a mighty monster... Strong, wild fellows, their grinning teeth like panthers, with their bellies drawn in and their necks stretched forward. Some with bayonets on their rifles. Many only armed with knives. Monsters all, in their confused hatred. Frightful their distorted, dark grimaces. Horrible their unnaturally wide-opened, burning, bloodshot eyes. Eyes that seemed like terrible beings in themselves. Like unearthly, hell-born beings. Eyes that seemed to run ahead of their owners, lashed, unchained, no longer to be restrained... Behind them came the first wave of the attackers, in close order, a solid, rolling black wall, rising and falling, swaying and heaving, impenetrable, endless.42

This "monster" image was cultivated in much of the Western Press. It remained in the minds of many Westerners when the French later used Senegalese troops to occupy the "highly civilized" population of the German Rhineland.

42Irvine, Rise of the Colored Races, p. 341.
FRENCH DECISION TO USE BLACK OCCUPATION FORCES

As the threat of renewed fighting lessened in the spring of 1919 the French were presented with a dilemma. Should they deploy colored troops in the occupied area of Germany or should they follow the example of their American allies and withdraw them? The French colonials had certainly earned the honor of crossing the enemy's border and, as long as the threat of hostilities remained, their military value was without question. But signs were everywhere that the continued presence of colored soldiers could prove politically and diplomatically damaging to France. The French government faced not only a hostile Germany but also pressure from the British and Americans to withdraw its colored troops.

Shortly before the end of the war German Foreign Minister Wilhelm Solf, through Swiss intermediaries, expressed concern that the French and Americans might use colored troops in their occupation forces.43 All attention focused on France as the United States expeditiously withdrew its own colored troops. American and British pressure mounted steadily for a withdrawal of colonial troops "of color." Premier Clemenceau reassured a concerned President Wilson that it "would be a grave error to occupy the left bank with black troops."44 And, in fact, the vast majority of Senegalese were sent home in the

44Ibid., pp. 609-610.
early months of 1919.\textsuperscript{45}

Some black colonials remained, however, as part of the French occupation force. General Allen in his report to the United States Secretary of State reported an average of fifty-two hundred black troops in the French Army of the Rhine from January 1919, to June 1920. He reported further that the final Senegalese Brigade was withdrawn from the Rhineland in the first week of June 1920. There remained one black regiment, the First Regiment of Chasseurs Malgaches from Madagascar.\textsuperscript{46} However, in April 1921 the French reinforced their occupation army with three additional black battalions of Malagascans.\textsuperscript{47} The French occupation authorities assured their allies at the time that these troops were to be withdrawn as the necessary regular forces became available. General Allen observed that part of the problem for the Germans was in distinguishing shades of skin color.

The population tends to confuse the Malagascans with Senegalese Negroes and rumors have been circulating that there are three regiments of negroes in the Occupied Territories. The Malagascans in the Rhineland are usually known as Malgaches, but they are negroes with an infusion of Malay blood. There are also some negroes scattered among the various colonial troops stationed in the occupied territories. The 34th and 42nd Regiments of Colonial Infantry are in the same division with a regiment of Senegalese negroes, a fact which may explain why the Malagascans units are identified with negro units by the population. The regiment of Malagascans negroes referred to has not been sent to the Rhineland, but is still stationed in France.\textsuperscript{48}

\textsuperscript{45}Ibid., pp. 612

\textsuperscript{46}Allen, \textit{Rhineland Occupation}, pp. 319-320.

\textsuperscript{47}Ibid., pp. 322-323.

\textsuperscript{48}Ibid.
During this period (1919-1922) the French were criticized sharply in the world press. There appear to be several reasons for the French decision to ignore their critics. During the latter stages of the war the French had struck a "mix" of French natives and French colonials in its armies. It was contended that this "mix" was necessary to maintain war readiness.49 The ratio of colored troops in the Rhineland would of course affect the corresponding percentage stationed in France. To avoid large numbers of black troops in either France or Germany the ratio was lowered and most of the black troops sent home. Since public objections to black troops in France were few it appears that a more practical reason governed the decision to reduce their numbers. Colonials were found to be less productive in the rebuilding efforts conducted by the French Army in the war-ravaged parts of France.50

German Reaction to "Colored" Occupation Troops

The French ignored German objections to the remaining black troops. It fit the harsh and often brutal nature of the French occupation to use colored troops in part to terrorize the German population. Primarily psychological, this terror, wholly in disregard of German public opinion, served to establish the supremacy of the French occupation forces.51 In addition, General Charles Mangin the "father

50Ibid., pp. 612-613.
51Ibid.
of the black forces" was appointed to command the French Tenth Army. This force, centered at Mainz, occupied the largest part of the French zone. Mangin, who was undoubtedly sympathetic to the colonial troops, spent much of his tenure in the Rhineland promoting and encouraging various separatist groups.52 The prevailing French attitude was apparent in a statement by Colonel Auroux, a representative of the French Ministry of War. On May 27, 1920, he described the Moroccans on the Rhine as "doing marvelously; the Germans are very much afraid of them."53

International Controversy: "Black Horror on the Rhine"

German protests against colored occupation troops intensified when France, using the pressure of "sanctions" against Germany, moved into the previously unoccupied city of Frankfurt and used Moroccan troops in the advance units in April 1920. British and American criticism of French insensitivity was expressed by highly placed officials including the American commissioner in the Rhineland, Pierrepont Noyes. German newspapers brought the "Black Shame" to world attention in June 1920, seeking in part to widen the breach between the Allies. General Allen's reports to Washington refuting wholesale black misconduct were attacked in the German press. Some alleged that he had fallen a victim to "French propaganda and... his

own Francophile feelings.\textsuperscript{54} Hysterical charges of atrocities by colored troops echoed throughout Europe. Fifty thousand Swedish women signed petitions expressing outrage. Various radicals and racists joined the fray with unsubstantiated charges concerning the "Black Horror on the Rhine." As the controversy became more heated the propaganda campaign came to include foreign-published pamphlets and films. These dealt most often with the alleged rape and sexual assault of German women.\textsuperscript{55} The French expended great effort rebutting the charges but to no avail.

With the advent of the Harding administration in 1921 the campaign in the United States intensified. The opportunity to persuade a new president to change policy or make new policy encouraged those concerned with events in the Rhineland. The American press, sensing both a real and sensational story, reported both the events and the conflicting claims of the controversy on the Rhine. As the protest and rhetoric became more heated, coverage began to center around the "protest movement" itself.

In the United States, a nation torn by racial violence, Americans watched developments in the Rhineland with great interest. It was a story with all the ingredients of front page sensationalism including racial confrontation with sexual overtones. But some of the major press organs, including the \textit{New York Times}, the \textit{Nation}, the \textit{New Republic}, and the \textit{ Literary Digest}, would examine the charges against the colonial troops with a more critical eye.

\textsuperscript{54}Allen, \textit{Rhineland Occupation}, p. 322.

THE NEW YORK TIMES AND THE RHINELAND OCCUPATION

Although it claimed impartiality, the New York Times was decidedly pro-ally before American involvement in the First World War. Adolph S. Ochs, publisher of the New York Times, maintained that both sides, Allied and German had been treated equally by his paper in the years 1914-1917. In the light of early statements by The Times this contention is difficult to support.

Three chief correspondents were named to follow the British, French, and American armies in the field. Of these, Edwin James, then 28 years old, was ordered on the day of the armistice to follow the American Army into the occupied parts of Germany and to report on the conditions he found. The American public showed great curiosity regarding their recently vanquished enemy. Stories about the Rhineland and the early months of the American occupation centered in Coblenz were given front page treatment. The Times was convinced of the necessity of a military occupation. In an editorial of November


57 On December 15, 1914, The Times' position was made clear in a lead piece: "... The headstrong, misguided, and dangerous rulers of Germany are going to be called to stern account and the reckoning will be paid by the German people in just the proportion that they make common cause with the blindly arrogant ruling class". However, The Times resisted the sensationalism and distortion in which so many other U.S. newspapers indulged. Such inflammatory stories as the sinking of the Lusitania on May 7, 1915, were treated with great care to maintain The Times' coolly professional approach. For additional information see Berger's book.

14, 1918, it said:

The American army, with the armies of the Allies, is now on the point of beginning an essential part of the conduct of the war, the occupation of enemy territory pending the arrangement of the final terms of peace. This work is just as necessary to complete victory as was the fighting itself, but it is not so inspiring as fighting...59

James found the Rhinelanders less enthusiastic than his employers in New York. His early stories were featured prominently on page one and were rife with anti-German sarcasm. On December 3, he reported:

The City of Treves greeted the American Army of Occupation today with sullen, glowering mien. The reception in Treves was just like that all along the 90km. front on which the Third Army advanced into Germany.... It was Sunday, but no church bells rang. There were no flags, no cheers, no smiles, few tears. It was just such a reception as only the boche could give.60

On February 6, 1919, James related to his readers that contrary to earlier reports, seized letters showed the Rhineland populace as hating Americans.61 In a separate item following his page one article readers were informed of three Germans convicted of anti-Allied propaganda. One of the individuals was a shopkeeper who had committed the crime of selling a watch fob with crossed American and German flags.62

On February 26 under the headline "Coblenz Rejoices at New Drink Edict," an edict that allowed the sale of light wines and beer, James continued his ridicule:

... For the last three months one of the saddest sights imaginable had been to see long-faced Germans seated in

their favorite cafés about ten o'clock at night drinking syrup and water. It was the worst sting of defeat the boche here about has felt.63

As the danger of a revolutionary Communist uprising grew James observed the following reaction in the Rhine country:

One with any sense of humor must see something laughable in the Germans -- the haughty, rich, imperious, royalist Germans -- thanking the Americans for keeping their own Bolsheviki away from them.64

Continuing in his front page story, James observes a "typical" royalist German worrying about his property in the event of a "Red" revolution: "It did me good to see this tough old Heinie worrying."65

The editors allowed James to go one step further in his anti-German campaign in an article published on page 3 of the March 8 issue of The Times. Quoting a letter from a young American officer who described the German capitol of Berlin, James wrote, "And it occurs to me [the American officer] that if some more Americans could come here, and if they saw this, felt it, smelled it, they would be inclined to agree with me. There ain't no such animal as a good German."66

Although Edwin James came to be featured more prominently, other chief correspondents cracked the front page with news of the Rhineland Occupation. Phillip Gibbs, reporting for both the New York Times and the London Chronicle, sent the following dispatch as British troops

63 New York Times, 26 February 1919, sec. 1, p. 3.
66 New York Times, 8 March 1919, sec. 1, p. 3.
marched into Cologne shortly after the armistice, "War is war, but children are children, and it is difficult to nourish hatred in one's heart when small boys and girls come to shake one's hand or kiss it." Gibbs repeated his belief that the Rhinelanders saw Allied occupation as a bulwark against Bolshevism.

There was little mention of racial issues at home or abroad in the New York Times through the first six months of 1919. However, the paper did plea for greater employment of army veterans both black and white.68

THE RACE ISSUE IN THE UNITED STATES

The Literary Digest

One of the first references to black soldiers stationed in post-war Europe came in the April 12 issue of the Literary Digest.\(^{69}\) The reference would, unfortunately, tarnish the Literary Digest's usual reputation for "high moral tone." In what seemed to be a blatantly racist attempt at humor, the Digest reprinted an article from The Metropolitan Magazine. The story, entitled "The Discovery of France by Jos. Williams, Colored Doughboy," was a fictionalized account of a black American soldier confronting a black French colonial soldier in France. After making several child-like observations about life in the French countryside, Joseph, an elevator operator from Lebanon, Illinois, meets a black French army soldier on a country road. After exchanging smiles and handshakes the following fanciful conversation was reported in the Digest:

Both broke into speech simultaneously.

Then befell the tragedy. Each spoke a tongue entirely incomprehensible to the other!

Each paused, incredulous; then, convinced there must be some mistake, began again. Then came another pause. A look of almost pathetic bewilderment appeared upon each honest countenance - countenances almost identical in shade and feature. Then Joseph exclaimed:

"Why, nigger, what so 't of fancy nigger does yo' think yo' is?"
The gentleman in the fez retaliated with a query which, to judge by sound and intonation, was very similar to Joseph's.

The look of bewilderment on Joseph's face gave place to a severe frown, which was immediately reflected in that of his double. Each of these children of Ham now darkly suspected the other of imposture.

"Don' yo' go and get fresh with me, nigger!" said Joseph, in a warning voice.

"Yakki-wakki-hikki-doolah!" growled the other - or words to that effect.

Joseph lost all patience. His voice suddenly shot up an octave higher, and he screamed:

"You ain't no nigger at all! You are only a Af'ican!"

Possibly it was in self-compensation for this disillusioning encounter that Joseph promptly mailed to his affianced in distant Lebanon, Ill., the letter which has been mentioned above. It began:

"Well, honey, we has arrived in France, and this war sure is fierce. Every time I steps outside my dugout I wades up to my knees in blood."

This short piece of fiction about doughboy Joseph Williams raised no protest or outcry. Although the story was uncharacteristically crude for the Literary Digest, it reinforced several popular stereotypes. Joseph is portrayed as naive and stupid; with neither man having the intelligence to recognize his fellow as coming from another country and culture. The crowning indignity is the final paragraph which implies that blacks exaggerated their combat role in the war. This final charge, which could be seen as an innocent attempt at humor, was actually much more serious. The often-repeated assertion that blacks

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70"The Discovery of France by Jos. Williams, Colored Doughboy," Literary Digest, 12 April 1919, pp. 80-84.
had shown mass cowardice on the battlefield was highly resented by black Americans. By its very mention the author reminded white America of this particularly scurrilous charge.

The New Republic

Three weeks later the New Republic magazine spoke to the race issue but in an entirely different fashion. Under the title "The Lynching Evil," the May 3rd issue denounced the wave of lynchings in the United States. It compared the violence to the "Red Terror" in Russia and also declared:

... We are a nation disgraced; and the disgrace deepens year by year. In the last twelve months a hundred persons have been lynched, and in as outrageous circumstances as are known to our history.

Lynching, we used to be told, was the only method of dealing with the crime of rape or attempted rape. Legal execution did not afford a sufficiently effective deterrent. But of the persons who have perished at the hands of American mobs since 1889, less than thirty per cent were ever accused of this crime. How large a proportion of these were innocent can not be known, but not a year passes without some instances of the killing of persons later known to be innocent...
The people of America can not tolerate longer this most hideous crime against law and democracy....

This editorial concluded by expressing hope that the National Conference on Lynching, to be held in May, would be successful.

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71Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, pp. 336-337.
72"Lynching Evil," New Republic, 3 May 1919, pp. 7-8. Studies of the NAACP and the Commission on Interracial Cooperation in the Twentieth Century demonstrated that only one-sixth of those lynched since the 1880's were accused of sexual crimes, yet the popular myth endured. (See Gilbert Osofsky, The Burden of Race, as noted in the Bibliography.)
This strong statement against lynching was consistent with the history of this weekly. Although less than five years old the New Republic had established itself as a leading progressive journal and exerted influence out of proportion to its relatively small circulation.73 From its beginning it supported such causes as labor unionism, the eight-hour day, workmen's compensation, the nationalization of railroads, the short ballot, women's suffrage, birth control, prison reform, and academic freedom.74

The Nation

Another periodical which followed the race question with particular interest was the the Nation. A weekly first published in 1865, it had in its founding prospectus the following statement of purpose "... to enforce the doctrine that the whole country has the 'strongest interest' in the elevation of the Negro."75 In fact, in early issues a separate department entitled "The Freedman" was maintained in the magazine.76 The Nation adopted other great "causes" in addition to the welfare of blacks including civil service reform, tariff reform, and proportional representation. Although circulation was never large, the magazine was influential in politics. Theodore

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74Ibid., p. 205.
75Mott, American Magazines, 3:333.
76Ibid, p. 351.
Roosevelt, in a letter to Henry Cabot Lodge in 1892, called the Nation, "that scoundrelly paper," for its anti-imperialist arguments.77 The Nation endorsed Wilson in the 1912 election and steadfastly supported him through the war years. But, in 1918, Oswald Garrison Villard became editor with Columbia University Professor Henry Raymond Mussey as assistant editor. The Nation, reflecting the view of its new editors, began a leftward drift. It was a September issue which brought the magazine its greatest notoriety. Although several articles might have offended the government the entire issue was suppressed for five days. Ironically, the Nation attacked wartime censorship in the suppressed issue and stated that, "personal liberty and freedom have disappeared in America."78 This episode of confrontation with governmental authority focused attention on the Nation. Its circulation and influence grew as its writing became more radical. In October 1918 the Nation instituted a biweekly "International Relations Section." Assistant editor Mussey wrote:

We fed foreign news to a public hungry for facts, for years systematically starved of such facts by government censorship... even those who hated us worst had to come to us for facts at a time when facts were most unwelcome to those in authority. The circulation manager began to smile.79

The Nation would later prove a reliable and dispassionate witness to the "Rhine Horror" story.

77Ibid, p. 349.
78Ibid., pp. 350-351.
79Ibid., p. 351.
As the Nation began its championing of leftist causes, such as supporting the coal and steel strikers in the U.S. and protesting U.S. intervention in the Russian civil war, it never deserted American blacks. In June 1919 it described the explosive state of race relations as "divine discontent." And in the same issue, another article titled "Protecting Southern Womanhood" gave a vivid account of lynchings and burnings of blacks in the South.

American Thought as Reported by the Literary Digest

Lynching was a subject regularly written about by American news magazines and newspapers. The Literary Digest reported each January on the preceding year's lynching record. In January of 1920 it reported 82 persons had been lynched in 1919 of which 75 were blacks. As was its practice, the magazine quoted four newspapers editorials, one northern and three southern, each of which clearly denounced lynching. A year later the Literary Digest reported 61 persons lynched including 53 blacks. It noted the inclusion of Minnesota, Ohio, Illinois, and California on the list for the first time in several years and quoted the Syracuse Post Standard, "the negro does not escape danger of capital punishment by mob law by moving into the

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80"Negro at Bay," Nation, 14 June 1919, p. 931.


The Literary Digest often was identified in the public mind as a journal which reflected national opinion. Before World War One The Digest had already begun polling techniques that would bring it international attention in later years. By using telegraph and telephone surveys of newspaper editors the Digest claimed to know Americans’ opinions on the issues of the day. Later the Digest interviewed Americans directly and built a reputation for accurately forecasting the outcomes of presidential elections.84

Judging from the volume of reporting and commentary, the issue of race relations was of great importance to the American public. Reflecting this interest, the Digest often published articles and editorials on racial issues. The summer of 1919 ushered in the worst racial violence in American history. In the last six months of that year there were approximately 25 race riots. As the North came to grips with urban racial conflict so too did the Digest. The Digest began to show greater sensitivity toward black Americans. The story of "Joseph Williams, Colored Doughboy" would have been inappropriate in the "new" Digest. Violence by blacks in the north spawned a new awareness of racial issues on the part of many periodicals and newspapers. On August 9, 1919, the Digest wrote under the title "'Our Own Subject Race' Rebels," "There is a touch of irony, a good many observers find, in the chance that brought a race-riot to President

83"Fewer Lynchings," Literary Digest, 22 January 1921, pp. 15-16.

84Mott, American Magazines, 4:575-576. With the notable exception of the Roosevelt/Landon race in 1936.
Wilson's door in Washington so soon after he had returned from looking after the needs of suppressant nationalities and subject races in Europe."85 In its next issue under the title "Why the Negro Appeals to Violence," the Digest observed, "... something altogether new has developed in the negroes' psychology. For years they pinned their faith to the spelling-book, then for years they pinned it to the bank-book; now as if convinced that neither education nor material prosperity could advance their cause, they appear to be putting their trust in brute strength. They will fight."86 Quoting the Chicago Defender, which was edited by and for blacks, the Digest stated, "Industrially, our position has been benefitted by the war. Socially it has grown decidedly worse."87 Dr. Willis N. Huggins sought to explain the Chicago riots. Dr. Huggins, editor of a black weekly, was quoted in the Digest from an article he had written in the New York Tribune. After arguing that segregated housing contributed to the violence in Chicago, Huggins added:

The basis of the trouble is this: The large employers of labor who lured my people to the North with high wages and the city of Chicago itself have been derelict in providing housing accommodations for them.

It is impossible to put 80,000 people where 50,000 lived before in utter congestion.88

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85"'Our Own Subject Race' Rebels," Literary Digest, 2 August 1919, p. 25.

86"Why the Negro Appeals to Violence," Literary Digest, 9 August 1919, p. 11.

87Ibid.

88Ibid.
This new-found awareness of the black struggle in America was presented to a predominantly white middle class. In its next issue (August 16) the Digest gave the Southern newspapers a chance to comment. Under the title "What the South Thinks of Northern Race-Riots" a sampling of Southern opinion read as follows:

The immediate cause, like the immediate result, is an old, old story, but both are rooted in a background of silly pampering which leads, and will always lead, to atrocious acts on the one hand and to illogical spasms of temper on the other.... (Houston Chronicle)

The clash of whites and negroes in Chicago, coming hard on the heels of a similar disturbance in Washington, should be a warning to the negroes of the South that the supposed benevolent treatment of their race in the Northern States is largely a myth.... As bad for law and order as lynchings may be, they can in no way compare with the racial outbreaks that occur with a persistent frequency in Northern cities housing a considerable negro population. Mobs in the South vent their revenge only upon the negro who had been guilty of some foul crime. The innocent seldom if ever suffer... (Memphis/Commercial Appeal)

This line of reasoning -- that blacks are lynched for a reason but that mob violence is worse for being indiscriminate -- is echoed in the same article by editorials in the Mobile Register, the Nashville Tennessean, the Knoxville Journal and Tribune, and the Charlotte Observer. Hypocrisy in the north was hit hard by editorials in the Nashville Banner and the Vicksburg (Miss.) Herald, which in an editorial entitled "Chickens Coming Home to Roost," declared:

Not only is Chicago a receiving-station and port of refuge for colored people who are anxious to be free from the jurisdiction of lynch law, but there has been built here a publicity or propaganda-machine that directs its appeals or carries on an agitation that every week reaches hundreds of...

89"What the South Thinks of Northern Race Riots," Literary Digest, 16 August 1919, pp. 17-18.

The "propaganda" of this "receiving-station and port of refuge," the inevitable precursor of race-war, cuts both ways. Its poison indeed is more deadly upon such negro centers as Chicago and Washington than with the negro masses of the South.90

Finally, the Digest quotes several Southern newspapers demanding "a show of firmness" by the authorities.

In December 1919, after the long bloody summer of race violence, the Digest printed for school use "Negroes in America" as part of a continuing series called Education in Americanism. The Digest in a piece that surveyed and emphasized the historical contributions of blacks to American society made a revealing statement. The statement indicated how far the Digest had come. In commenting about the black press it said, "they may be called radical in the expression of their ideas, we are told, on right and justice for the Negro race, particularly as this has been the insistent claim in the war to make the world safe for democracy."91

American Press Attitudes as Reported by the Nation

Although some periodicals and newspapers argued for greater racial understanding, many held firm against the integration of blacks into the American socio-economic mainstream. Black Americans were

90Ibid.

presented by these publications as the sole cause of post-war violence. The blacks' insistence on getting a "fair share" was thought to be unreasonable, particularly in light of their alleged intellectual inferiority. Many newspapers claimed that the riots in Washington and Chicago, and many of the others, were a product of black lawlessness. Social conditions were not considered important as a contributing factor, or, if they were, news publications chose not to mention them.

In the August 13, 1919, issue, Herbert J. Seligmann writing for the New Republic commented on the American press's handling of the race riot story:

The press is not innocent of fomenting race bitterness which wreaks itself in riots such as occurred in Washington July 19th and 22nd. At a time when Commissioner Brownlow of the District of Columbia was characterizing the riots as unwarranted and wanton attacks upon innocent Negroes, the New York Times was printing headlines saying "Negroes again riot in Washington killing white men," the New York World announced, "Three are killed as blacks renew riots in capital," the Evening Telegram announced, "United States cavalry unable to quell Negroes." Seligmann went on to say that with few exceptions the news reports from Washington blamed a "wave of crime" and assaults against white women by black men as the cause of the rioting. These charges were found to lack supporting evidence. Quoting a July 23 editorial of the New York Times, the New Republic attempted to show the prevalent racial attitude of that paper:

The editorial said, "The majority of the Negroes in Wash-

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93 Franklin, From Slavery to Freedom, p. 347.
ington, before the great war, were well behaved...." so much so that "most of them admitted the superiority of the white race and troubles between the two races were undreamed of."

"It certainly is not the old, law-abiding negro population, the friends of the white man, that has been committing these crimes against women, these day-light hold-ups, and other outrages that have incited white men to a general war against negroes."\(^9^4\)

The *New Republic* intimated that elements of the American press were hoping that the gains made by blacks in employment and income during the war would be erased. By creating a climate of fear, certain American publications were helping to prevent the integration of blacks into white American society.

Some black leaders, by warning of growing black militancy, also contributed to racial alarm. On August 29 *The Times* reported the testimony of Mr. Monroe Trotter before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Trotter, a black activist and newspaper editor, argued for amending the Treaty of Versailles. Citing the war record of blacks, he warned of a general insurrection if conditions did not improve. Trotter advocated an amendment to the Treaty calling for racial equality in the United States.\(^9^5\)


White American troops carried their racial animosities with them overseas. These attitudes were generally frowned upon by the more racially tolerant French. The New York Times reported on July 26 the story of French indignation at the mistreatment of its black colonial troops by American military police. The French Chamber of Deputies hurriedly passed a resolution reaffirming French color blindness. The French Minister of the Interior lashed out at "the very regrettable incidents, as France does not forget the services rendered by her colored sons...." An American Army "confidential circular" was read to the Chamber. In it, French officers attached to American units were warned that American opinion did not tolerate familiarity between whites and blacks. One deputy's response was, "And it is America that wants a League of Nations!"96

The first month of 1920 brought the opening chapter of the "Rhine Horror" story to the American public. Although many American publications, including prominent German-American newspapers, had written of colored occupation troops in Germany it was the attention of The Times that heralded a full-blown controversy. On January 12, 1920, the paper quoted the Prussian Minister of Finance, Dr. Suedekum, under the headline "Raise 'Black Peril' Bogey on the Rhine." What Dr. Suedekum said undoubtedly shocked many white Americans. Complaining of an edict against insulting occupation troops the Finance Minister

explained:

[The Edict will] place any French, American or English negro soldier... in a position to terrorize even the most harmless person against whom his brutal African instincts may wish to vent themselves. Hardly a day passes, even now, without a report of some dastardly crime committed by negro soldiers in the occupied districts against German wives and daughters. Rapine and murder may well become a past time of these black fiends if this edict takes effect.97

As if to intentionally add to American racial fears, Dr. Suedekum finished his remarks on the edict by saying:

... [it] practically encourages all those crimes for which, in the United States, negroes are burned at the stake. What do Americans think will be the effect of the return of those negro soldiers, whose licentiousness in Germany is officially encouraged on the rest of their race?98

Directly below this article The Times followed with an article headed "No Negro Units in Our Force." It quoted the Adjutant General of the army, General Peter C. Davis, as denying the presence of any black American troops on the Rhine.99 The second article had the effect of both clarifying the first and cooling its rather incendiary tone.

It is not surprising, in light of events in 1919, that The Times chose to open the new year quoting descriptions of "black fiends." The Times seemed affected by the racial violence of 1919 to a greater extent than some other leading publications, The "Rhine Horror" story would, however, lie dormant again for several months.

97 New York Times, 12 January 1920, sec. 1, p. 3.
98 New York Times, 12 January 1920, sec. 1, p. 3.
In April 1920, under the pretext of keeping order, the French used Moroccan troops as their advance guard upon entering and occupying Frankfurt. This German city, lying beyond the regular zones of occupation, soon stood as a symbol of German humiliation. The German government was powerless to prevent the French move. Pierrepont Noyes, the American commissioner on the Rhine, was concerned that the French would also reinforce British forces in Cologne with colored troops. Noyes noted that this "worries the British. They say that French troops of any kind and especially the African will set the city on fire."\(^{100}\) Even before the Frankfurt occupation there were signs that the controversy was heating up. On March 27, the Nation published a letter on the subject from the well known British radical E. D. Morel. Morel criticized the French who had, in his words, "thrust barbarians -- barbarians belonging to a race inspired by Nature... with tremendous sexual instincts -- into the heart of Europe."\(^{101}\) These views were also being articulated by Miss Ray Beveridge, an American living in Germany, who railed against the "black disgrace."\(^{102}\)

The Literary Digest brought the controversy to its readers in the August 28 issue. Under the title "France's 'Terrible' Black Troops," the magazine argued that it was all a sham -- that German propagandists had in fact manufactured the story of black misconduct on the Rhine. Quoting the German religious newspaper, the Christlicher


\(^{101}\)Ibid., p. 615.

\(^{102}\)Ibid.
Pilger, a point was driven home which appeared time and time again in the press: that a "certain class" of German women were the cause for any misconduct charges. The Literary Digest informed its American readers that the Christlicher Pilger:

... avers that at Spire and in its environs the black troops are held in higher esteem that the white garrison which preceded them. The black troops of occupation in the main conduct themselves very correctly. If complaints have been heard they should rather have been directed against a certain class of young German women.103

Other German newspapers were quoted to reinforce this point. The article closed by reprinting a statement found in the Matin, a Parisian newspaper. The Matin had written off the controversy this way: "It is regrettable but true that the German Republic continues to practice the same detestable methods of duplicity and deceit that characterized the Empire."104 The Literary Digest did little to strengthen its claim to objectivity by finishing its first examination of colored troops on the Rhine with a comment by a French newspaper.

Misconduct by regular French forces throughout the French occupied zone was well documented.105 The French government and press consistently and, in some cases, perfunctorily dismissed charges of brutality by its troops on the Rhine. In the prevailing post-war atmosphere of hatred and "revanche" the French could be expected to care little

103"France's 'Terrible' Black Troops," Literary Digest, 28 August 1920, p. 22.

104Ibid.

105A British journalist provides one of several accounts of French brutality: see Gedye, The Revolver Republic, as noted in the Bibliography.
about German complaints. On several occupation issues, however, the French were not united. On October 9, 1920, the *Literary Digest* examined the views of a well-known French political observer, Jean Finot. Writing for the Parisian paper *La Revue Mondiale*, Finot argued against the use of "black" troops on the Rhine. After prefacing his argument by rejecting German claims of brutality, Finot nonetheless called for their immediate withdrawal. His rationale was based on national self-interest. Finot repeated a popular French explanation of why black troops were used in the first place. In this view, blacks were used to shield the Rhenish population from the "anger and rage" of the French regular forces. The regular white soldier, it was held, would have sought revenge for the war-ravaged parts of northern France. Finot argued that this threat of reprisal had passed by the Fall of 1920. What France should have done was to cultivate "pro-German and anti-Prussian" sentiment among both the Rhenish and French populations. This would allow the "aspirations of the Rhineland to become a state" to come to the fore. Finot expressed himself as against annexation but for Rhenish autonomy. To accomplish this goal, he asserted, all black troops in the French forces should be removed. As Finot explains to his readers, the Germans have "always been imbued with race prejudice." To curry favor with those in the Rhineland who might seek to break away from Germany, Finot wrote, the black troops should be withdrawn.106 Unfortunately, he missed the mark on Rhenish

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106 "French Disapproval of Black Troops in Germany," *Literary Digest*, 9 October 1920, p. 23.
separatist ambitions. At no time did the French support separatist movements gain public favor. Finot, like so many other Frenchmen, engaged in wishful thinking when contemplating an autonomous Rhineland.

In November, the New York Times shifted the focus to politicians in Germany and the United States. The Times reported that the Entente had been severely criticized in the Reichstag for "permitting negro troops in the Army of Occupation." These bitter attacks were "frequently interrupted by cheering and applause."107 This reaction from a helpless German government might have been expected. In any event, it had the effect of keeping the controversy in the American eye. On January 3, 1921, The Times reported the intention of a United States Congressman to involve himself in the Rhineland issue.108 Representative Frederick Britten, Republican of Illinois, announced he would present both a petition bearing 30,000 signatures and a formal resolution condemning the French use of colored troops in the Rhineland occupation. The Times quoted Britten as saying:

I cannot believe... that the civilized nations of the world will long countenance the retention of semi-civilized African troops in the Rhineland of Germany, when repeated protest not only from the women of the world, but of high ranking British and French authorities, are outspoken against this procedure because of the brutalities that are daily being committed against old women as well as defenseless young women and girls.109

Britten offered no evidence to support his contention. Two days later

The *Times* published a French denial of Britten's charges.\footnote{New York Times, 5 January 1921, sec. 1, p. 3.} The French government reported that all black African troops on the Rhine had been transferred to Syria and Africa some months previous. Admitting that Moroccan troops remained on the Rhine, the statement claimed that no recorded complaints had been made against them. *The Times* concluded its piece by characterizing Britten's charges as, "somewhat uncalled for." Later in the year, however, the French statement that black troops had been removed "months ago" was called into question.

On January 9, 1921, *The Times* printed an article under the headline "Blacks Defended in German Paper." *The Times* quoted a piece from a November issue of *Die Friedens-Warte* (Leipsic). The author, Lilli Jannasch, a woman who had lived under occupation by black troops, reassured her readership that charges of troop misconduct were exaggerated. The article reported that she had "witnessed no crimes and said the children were attracted to and befriended by the soldiers." At this point the article recorded the following observation, quoting an unnamed lady from Ludwigshafen:

> When we notice how scandalously our white women and girls make friends with the blacks, how they flirt and accept gifts of chocolate, & etc., we are not surprised if a misfortune occurs. In fact, we know from our own observation that many white women find something alluring in entering into close relations with blacks: this we have frequently been able to verify when members of negro tribes were placed on exhibition in Germany. At the time of the Industrial Exhibition in Berlin, for example, it repeatedly happened that negroes on exhibition there disappeared for several days, and it was town talk that women of "good society" had
been entertaining the negroes... Is not this "white disgrace" on the side of the German women much worse than the "black disgrace"?\textsuperscript{111}

The article continued by disputing reports of violence by blacks against Germans in the French Occupied Zone. Whether to educate or to titillate its readership, The Times had chose to quote "town talk" from an unnamed source as reported to a journalist of a foreign pacifist publication.

The Madison Square Garden Protest Meeting

The year 1921 saw the Harding administration come to power in Washington. This presented sympathetic German-American groups with a new opportunity to exert pressure on the White House to change its Rhine policy. German-American fraternal organizations raised money, printed pamphlets and conducted letter writing campaigns. Congressional resolutions were introduced to have black troops withdrawn from the Rhine and at least one state legislature also voted its support.\textsuperscript{112} Not all German-Americans were preoccupied with the Rhine controversy. The \textit{New York Times} reported a schism within one German-American group. At a United German Societies meeting a visiting journalist, Erich von Salzmann, urged the audience to organize a protest against "African" troops stationed in the Rhineland. His plea was denounced by the Vice Chair of the organization as deflecting the concern of German-Americans from the real issue of feeding the


\textsuperscript{112}Nelson, "Black Horror on the Rhine," pp. 620-621.
starving women and children of Europe.113

Another organization, "The American Campaign Against the Horror on the Rhine," directed by Edmund von Mach, brought the controversy to a climax in the press. Von Mach was busy organizing a rally in Madison Square Garden in New York City when he enlisted the support of the national commander of the American Legion, F. W. Galbraith. What occurred at the meeting between von Mach and Galbraith became front page news. In the February 10 edition, The Times reported that von Mach approached Galbraith to speak at the Madison Square Garden rally to denounce African troops in the Rhineland.114 Von Mach claimed Galbraith's appearance would assure the attendance of New York Supreme Court Justice Cohalan, Senator Borah (Idaho), Representative Britten, and Mayor Hylan of New York City. Galbraith accused von Mach of trying to make the American Legion "the link between the Germans and the Irish...."115 By some accounts, Galbraith was so enraged that he bodily threw von Mach out of his office.116 The Times assured its readers that the issue was moot. "The French Black troops, the Senegalese were withdrawn from the occupied area last June, according to the French War Department," The Times revealed.117 The next day

The Times reported a flood of letters to Congress protesting the "Black Shame" and the intention of Representative Britten to address the rally.

Eight days before the February 28 rally in New York The Times printed several United States government documents which refuted charges of colored troop misconduct in the Rhineland. These documents contained correspondence between the State Department and the Committee on Foreign Relations of both Houses. This correspondence included Major General Henry T. Allen's often quoted report of July 1920. This lengthy document, printed in full, concluded:

1. The wholesale atrocities by French negro colonial troops published in the German press... are false and intended for political propaganda.

2. A number of cases of rape, attempted rape, sodomy, attempted sodomy, and obscene mishandling of women and girls have occurred on the part of French negro colonial troops in the Rhineland. These cases have been occasional and in restricted numbers, not general or widespread. The French military authorities have repressed them severely....

The Times followed Allen's report with Commissioner Dreisel's (American Commissioner in Berlin) description of meetings held in Berlin in July 1920 to protest colored troops in the Rhineland. Dreisel quotes several witnesses who observed American women giving speeches. These speeches were described to Dreisel as both bitterly anti-French and bitterly anti-American.

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Twelve thousand people gathered at Madison Square Garden on February 28, 1921, to protest the "Horror on the Rhine." The Garden was surrounded by American Legionnaires denouncing the protesters inside. One thousand New York City police were used to keep the two factions apart. The Times described a tumultuous scene. Fist fights broke out both within the Garden and at the barricades thrown up by the police outside. The audience was treated to a heavy diet of pro-Irish propaganda. Calling for an Irish-German alliance speakers suggested a "sweeping away of Anglo-Saxonism." According to the account in The Times, a long list of speakers spoke of Irish-German cooperation with only occasional references to the situation on the Rhine. The Madison Square Garden rally provided a spectacular story. The readership was given a detailed but coolly professional description of the events on the night of February 28, reading of scenes of confrontation, violence, and bitter denunciation of their wartime allies. Included in the story was a lengthy description of American veterans being clubbed and dragged off to jail by the police. The story concluded with the description of the crowd outside the Garden singing the "Star Spangled Banner," in stark contrast to those inside who were bitterly attacking their own government's policy. But, after the rally, with the exception a month later of a restate-

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121 In fact, Galbraith organized his own counter-demonstration in the Garden on March 18, 1921, and drew a crowd of 25,000.


ment of General Allen's views, the story of the "Horror on the Rhine" disappeared from the pages of The Times.

As The Times, the leading reporter of the controversy, left the story other publications began reporting it. Some of these periodicals intimated that the Rhine issue was being used as an excuse to embarrass the English. To many Irish-Americans the military occupation of the Rhineland was similar to the British "occupation" of strife-torn Ireland, at a time when the Irish civil war was reaching its climax. Many Irish-Americans were inflamed with hatred for the British and saw a ready friend in the German-American protest groups.

The Literary Digest saw it this way:

There were two distinct elements present in Madison Square Garden, the New York Daily Illustrated News observes: "One wanted Germany relieved, not only of black troops, but also of the Army of Occupation... The other element came to whet its hatred of Great Britain for the love of Erin"... The New York Tribune, noting the fact that Irish and German speakers appeared on the same platform and united in a denunciation of Great Britain, speaks of the occasion as illustrating [the] readiness of the Irish extremist to ally himself with any one or anything in the pursuit of his goal...

The Nation and the New Republic, in issues published March 9, chose to address the controversy. The Nation began by repeating General Allen's now familiar observations from the Rhineland. Allen viewed the sporadic colored troop violence against the Rhenish citizenry as that, "such as generally occur in any land when soldiery

124 New York Times, 4 April 1921, sec. 1, p. 28.
is for a long time quartered upon the population." The magazine argued further that any military occupation was oppressive, including the then current American military occupation of Haiti. As one illustration of that oppression, the March 9 article concluded with a list of brothels ordered established by the French in occupied Germany. These sanctioned brothels, unknown in the Belgian, British or American zones, were used by both black and white French troops. The New Republic, too, defended the behavior of the "colored troops" while arguing vehemently against the occupation of the Rhineland. Its case was stated clearly:

> Whatever influence lies back of the current propaganda against the employment by France of colored troops in the occupied districts, it has greatly miscalculated the temper of American opinion. That propaganda bears every indication of an attempt to turn to account the particular color psychosis of the American people. The familiar charges of fiendish lusts, un governable brutality, which have served for so many years to justify lynchings at home, are now being used in an attempt to create a breach between America and France.128

The New Republic went on to editorialize against the use of any "subject armies" to bolster the military designs of any nation:

> It is not the fact of colored forces serving on the Rhine against which an open protest can be made, but the fact of unfree armies, no matter where they are garrisoned, enlisted and trained, to serve as instruments of a militarism so autocratic and irresponsible.129

Other publications saw the French decision to use colored troops

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127Ibid.
129Ibid.
as a purely pragmatic one. The idea that these colored troops were being exploited for the glory of an imperialist nation was never raised. One such magazine, the Outlook, a religiously oriented publication, staunchly defended the French. It argued that colonial troops were employed in the Rhineland "because Frenchmen cannot be spared from the work of restoring the land that Germany despoiled and outraged.\textsuperscript{130} In its March 9 issue the Outlook also promised its readers that a forthcoming issue would contain: "Special Correspondence on the question of the Black Troops from Stéphane Lauzanne, editor of the Paris Matin with a statement from Marshal Foch."\textsuperscript{131} The magazine's subscribers were not disappointed. On March 16 Lauzanne's article appeared. It attempted to debunk all charges against the black troops on the Rhine. Included with the article was this statement (undated) by Marshal Foch:

\begin{quote}
For several months there has not been a single black soldier on the left bank of the Rhine. The few natives who are still there are the Algerian and Moroccan Rifles, who are Arabs, and not blacks.... No proof whatsoever has ever been brought forward to the military interallied authorities relative to the alleged outrages.... In each case we always found ourselves confronted by a lie or non-existent fact.\textsuperscript{132}
\end{quote}

The Outlook went on to quote three German newspapers, the Augsburger Zeitung, the Christlicher Pilger, and the Volklinger Nachrichten, all of whom absolved the black troops of charges of mass misconduct.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{130}"Propaganda About the Black Troops," Outlook, 9 March 1921, p. 363.
\textsuperscript{131}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{132}Stephane Lauzanne, "The Black Troops," Outlook, 16 March 1921, pp. 422-425.
\end{flushright}
Foch's statement illustrates the confusion present in many publications of the period. By "blacks" he was presumably referring to Senegalese and Malagasy troops. At the same time magazines were printing photographs clearly showing "black" troops in the Rhineland. These were, most often, the Algerian and Moroccan troops to which Foch referred. To a public not sensitive to the many cultural differences on the continent of Africa there was ample proof of black Africans on the Rhine in 1921.

Black Horror Ridiculed

The flurry of articles in the press generated by the Madison Square Garden rally ended in a few weeks' time. The protest movement was widely described as a tool of German propagandists. These propagandists, it was said, were trying to undercut the Rhineland occupation by setting ally against ally. Some in the press began treating the German protests with ridicule and contempt. The Literary Digest in June quoted two New York papers to make its point. Under the title "The Rhine's 'Black Horror' Faded," the Digest repeated the Wall Street Journal's claim that "the only 'horror on the Rhine' is the killing of the rich tourist trade." The Digest observed that the "Rhine's loss is the Austrian Tyrol's gain." The Digest also spotlighted an earlier piece by the New York Times. In The Times

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133The March 16, 1921 issue of the Outlook included photographs of Senegalese soldiers in the Rhineland.


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article a statement by the Councilor of Health at Baden repudiated claims that the colored French troops were "violating German women and spreading disease in the Rhineland." Reflecting a new attitude toward the controversy, The Digest quoted the The Times as summing up the state of affairs in the Rhineland as "a horrid lack of horrors."135

The Nation's Correspondent in the Rhineland

In April, 1921, the Nation took action toward furthering its interest in the domestic racial point of view. It first called upon President Harding to establish a "Race Commission" to look into the plight of black Americans.136 This highly detailed proposal mirrored one given to President Wilson in 1913. Wilson had ignored it for fear, as the Nation explained it, of "offending the feelings of the South." The second, more direct, action taken was for the Nation to send Lewis S. Gannett to the Rhineland for a first-hand report on the situation. His first assessment of conditions was printed on May 25. His reports characterized French denials of black troops on the Rhine as either "cunningly deceptive statements of fact, ignorant misstatements, or deliberate lies."137 Gannett's review of events on the Rhine and his description of the then current situation provided readers with a detailed and seemingly objective appraisal. Gannett

135Ibid.


opened by confirming the presence of "black" troops by the "thousands" at Speyer, Kaiserslautern, Ludwigshafen, and other French occupied German cities. Whether "African" or "Arab," Gannett said, they would not be mistaken for anything but "black" in the United States. But accounts of mass atrocities committed by these troops were, as Gannett put it, "grossly and wickedly exaggerated." Gannett described his investigation of police records and his interviews with the local population. The conclusion he reached was that crimes had been committed by "colored" troops but not to an unusual extent for their numbers. Gannett chided the French:

In the early days of the Occupation, when war passions were hotter and discipline laxer, and when the Senegalese, a proud and powerful race, were present, conditions were, doubtless, worse than they are today. The occupation, by Senegalese troops, in the spring of 1920, of the Goethehaus in Frankfurt - Goethe's former home, now a museum - was undoubtedly, intended as a gross insult to German culture, and was, of course, in fact a shame to French civilization.138

Gannett felt the forced establishment of brothels for the French forces caused as much resentment as any other factor in the occupation. The brothels reminded the Germans that with every passing day women, whether prostitutes or not, were succumbing to the sexual needs of the occupying force. Despite the use of brothels where the women were regularly inspected for disease, venereal disease rates were up dramatically.139 Germany was in a period of great economic distress. Inflation was ruining the life savings of many and unemployment was

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138 Ibid.
139 Ibid.
soaring. To some German women the foreign troops and the currency in their pockets provided the only means of survival. Gannett also enumerated some of the petty humiliations the population suffered:

When a Ludwigshafener is stopped at the Mannheim Bridge by a fully armed black African and made to show his papers; when a proud citizen of an old imperial free city is ordered by a gesture of a sturdy son of Madagascar to pass in front of, not behind, him, which means walking out into the gutter, he feels bitterly about it.140

Gannett finished his article with the observation that the black troops were extremely naive. To make his point Gannett quoted a local German police inspector:

They [colonial troops] do not know why they are here; they merely obey orders. They are not arrogant; they have no pride in militarism; they have no special dislike or scorn for us as Germans.... When there is military arrogance to complain of it is rather the white troops, who are conscious of themselves as French and of us as Germans, who consciously consider us an inferior people, and sometimes make it evident in their bearing.141

The Gannett Rhineland piece provoked a response of anger and disbelief among some readers. Gannett returned from Europe to find a "pile" of letters protesting his May 25 article.142 Gannett reviewed the letters and found an Omaha subscriber accusing the Nation of being in the hire of French propagandists. A New York doctor cancelled his subscription after reading "Gannett's article denying the presence of

140Ibid.
141Ibid.
142Lewis S. Gannett, "Horror on the Rhine Again," Nation, 7 September 1921, p. 264.
black troops in Germany." A Reichskommissar from Frankfurt sent a
picture of a Jim Crow railroad car and suggested Americans felt as
little sympathy for blacks as Germans. These charges provided both
the Nation and Lewis Gannett a chance to drive their positions home.
In July the Nation printed a rebuttal to charges of "bias and pre-
judice." Quoting left wing German newspaper correspondents, the
Nation presented a placid picture on the Rhine. In the German cor-
respondents' view, the violence was exaggerated. In fact the Com-
munist Rote Fahne (Berlin) could not understand why French soldiers
were expected to behave better than the Germans who had occupied
Belgium, France, and Poland during the war. Carrying the argument one
step further Rote Fahne questioned the objections to the Moroccan
soldiers. The paper wrote, "In the Rhineland the Moroccan troops,
which are considered colored, have a racial origin very similar to
that of the Turks, 'Germany's good ally in the World War'."

The Nation, as if to further shame its critics, quoted a German
propaganda piece then circulating in the United States. Written in
parallel columns of English and German this reprint, from the
Hamburger Nachrichte, was violently anti-black. In it Miss Ray
Beveridge, an American, appealed to German men:

Your weapons have been taken from you, but there still

143 Ibid.

144 Ibid.

145 "Is the 'Black Horror on the Rhine' Fact or Propaganda?"
Nation, 13 July 1921, pp. 44-45.

146 Ibid.
remains a rope and a tree. Take the natural arms which our men in the South resort to: lynch!...

It is incumbent to all to spread the knowledge of these terrors all over the world wherever white people live, especially among those whose own vital interests demand check to this beastiality. And these nations are foremost of all the English and the Americans.\(^1\)

By the time Gannett himself responded to his critics the controversy was fading in the American print media. In an August letter to the editor of the Nation Gannett dismissed the Rhine issue as a product of the racially prejudiced. Gannett explained:

Perhaps I fail to understand their [the Germans] psychology, but I think it is very like that of the race conscious Whites of this country; and I cannot, as my colleagues of the Nation cannot, wax indignant because of the suffering imposed by race prejudice which we do not feel....\(^2\)

Gannett reiterated his view that any problems on the Rhine were the result of a military occupation imposed on an unwilling populace and not those created by the presence of black troops.

\(^1\)Ibid.

\(^2\)Lewis S. Gannett, "Horror on the Rhine Again," Nation 7 September 1921, p. 264.
THE CONTROVERSY DIMINISHES

Also in August, the New York Times printed an observation that illustrated how much the controversy had abated. Mrs. E. Schobein-Pabst, a German-American visiting the Rhineland, did not report violence or atrocities: Instead, she said the presence of Moroccan troops was a "degradation" and had caused the residents in Wiesbaden "to go about their business in a lugubrious manner." The Times chose to print Mrs. Schonbein-Pabst's report on page seven — of the third section.

The final references during 1921 to the "Horror on the Rhine" were occasioned by Germans who suggested the use of "black" troops in the Rhineland as a topic of discussion at the Washington Disarmament Conference. This suggestion was made by a German Foreign Office official. The Times quoted the spokesman as follows:

Little did the world dream when it vociferously hailed the liberation of American slaves that a European nation would one day bring black regiments from Africa and make them guardians of European civilization and justice. We did not deduce from a stirring perusal of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" the theory that liberated and so-called subjugated tribes were to be misused in the direction of being assigned to the role of overseers....

This argument offered the new twist that it was the Africans who should be shown sympathy. They were, in this German view, being exploited by the French and should for the sake of justice be sent

149 New York Times, 7 August 1921, sec 1, p. 3.
home to Africa. This same line of reasoning appeared in the December 28 issue of the Nation. Under the title "A German Appeal to Garvey," a letter from the German Emergency League against the Black Horror to Marcus Garvey, president of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, was published. The letter appealed to Garvey to pressure the delegates at the Washington Conference to force a withdrawal of French colonials. In its summary the letter struck the same sympathetic tone in addressing the use of colonial occupational troops:

... The Treaty of Versailles legislated for millions of your brothers without hearing them and without respecting the most elementary principle of the right of self-determination. The outlook for the Washington Conference to do otherwise is as empty.... [We] would like to direct your particular attention to the black shame of France, to the fact that a heavily armed white people enslaves men of another color and sends them by thousands to the continent of Europe which is so fatal to children of a hot climate....

Whether wholly sincere or not, this new German appeal struck a compassionate tone toward blacks. The appeal followed by two months a speech on the subject of race delivered by President Harding in Birmingham, Alabama. Harding told the audience that he was going to discuss the race issue with them frankly and honestly "whether you like it or not." The President stated in his speech that blacks were entitled to full economic and political rights as an American citizen. In a lengthy story beginning on the front page The Times reported Harding as explaining, however, that those basic rights did

151 "A German Appeal to Garvey," Nation, 28 December 1921, p. 769.
152 Ibid.
not include social equality. Among other points he chose to emphasize was the economic lure of northern industries to southern blacks during the expansive war years. This, he explained, made race relations a national problem no longer confined to the South. Harding hammered home another point. Black Americans had served their nation with distinction during the war. For these men to be denied the very rights they fought to defend was unthinkable.

The "Black Horror on the Rhine" controversy was revived briefly in the summer of 1922. Senator Gilbert Hitchcock (D-Neb.) carried the old brutality charges to the Senate and then to ex-premier Clemenceau when Clemenceau visited the United States late in the year. Hitchcock used the words "inferior," "half-civilized," and "brutes" to describe the French colonial troops on the Rhine. His inflammatory rhetoric did not sustain the controversy. The "Horror" was an old story by 1922. Most leading American publications chose not to report it.

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CONCLUSION

In February of 1920 the New Republic published an emotionally wrenching piece about life in America as a black person. The article, authored by W.E.B. Du Bois, was an excerpt from his soon to be published book Darkwater. Du Bois painted a picture of the humiliation and oppression felt during a single day in the life of an urban black. The morning began without milk; the milkman refused to deliver in the "colored districts." White children jeered as the black man passed on his way to work. Women stood on the streetcar rather than sit with a black. The police showed open hostility to blacks and the elevator operator hated "niggers." Work itself was limited and blacks were barred from almost all labor unions. At lunch-time it was a forty block walk to the nearest diner that served blacks. Social societies and churches were predominantly segregated by race. Only the worst seats at the ballpark or the theatre were available to blacks. Du Bois finished his statement with what he saw as the greatest crime against black Americans. This crime was the systematic manipulation of the historical record to exclude the contributions and achievements of the non-white peoples of the world. The racism about which Du Bois wrote was pervasive.

During this period of institutionalized race separation black Americans had been asked to go to war. The army chose to imitate the

home-front by segregating its soldiers by race and staffing the black units with white officers or, in some cases, assigning blacks to French units. This attempt to keep the races apart was, by all accounts, successful. But the racial attitudes of some of the blacks and whites changed when confronted with the more enlightened racial climate of France. The French made black troops welcome in their country and in their homes. Black Americans were experiencing a white society in which color of skin neither held you apart nor suggested an inferior socio-economic position. Any notion of the universality of the racial caste system in the United States was put to rest.\textsuperscript{156} The sight of blacks associating freely with the French sent shock waves through much of the American military force. Several attempts were made to "warn" the French about black American soldiers who were often characterized as rapists. This attempt to influence the racial tolerance of the French reflected a growing fear of minorities in America.\textsuperscript{157}

The dread of immigrants inundating America (nativism) and the fear of blacks moving toward full citizenship pushed people toward extremism. The fear of unrestricted immigration focused on Eastern and Southern Europeans and climaxed in the post-war "Red Scare." The

\textsuperscript{156}Gossett, Race, p. 370.

\textsuperscript{157}In 1915, Thomas Dixon's violently racist novel The Clansmen was released as the hugely successful motion picture Birth of a Nation. The movie portrayed the Ku Klux Klan as a major force seeking to restore the integrity of white society corrupted by integration. Coincidentally the year 1915 saw the revival of the K.K.K. which grew from three to six million members by 1923.
"negro problem" was addressed with restrictive legislation designed to force blacks into a permanently inferior position in American society. Terrorist organizations, such as the Ku Klux Klan, and "Judge Lynch" enforced the separation of the races.

Introduced into this national mood of race hatred, the story of the occupation of the German Rhineland by black troops created a front-page sensation. The idea of armed black men serving as an occupying force within a white population both shocked and threatened many Americans. The first widely published reports from the Rhine followed a summer of unprecedented violence in the United States, during which blacks took an active role in defending themselves. With weekly reports of racially motivated lynchings appearing in the newspapers and with fear of renewed urban violence, the Rhineland controversy seemed particularly timely. But was the "Horror on the Rhine" real? Or, did American newspapers exaggerate and exploit the story for their own purposes?

As this study has established, violence by black colonial troops against the occupied German population was minimal. Several independent reports showed no increase in criminal behavior among the black troops as compared to their white French comrades. Hard evidence to corroborate charges of mass atrocities was never produced. Major-General Allen suggested that the nature of a military occupation elicits charges of brutality from the conquered population. But unfounded charges of mass brutality were made. Many of these accusations ascribed violent sexual crimes to the black soldiers. The
effect of these charges on a color-conscious United States cannot be overestimated. This "story" became front-page news in the New York Times. Large rallies were held to protest the "crimes," with some degenerating into violence. Petition drives were launched in several regions and politicians picked up the controversy as worthy of public debate. American correspondents, however, found only the bare shadow of a story. Several witnesses spoke of isolated acts of violence by black colonial troops in the Rhineland. The level of violence, in an extremely violent historical period, could hardly qualify as a "horror."

What American newspapers and periodicals failed to report were the harsh and often brutal conditions imposed upon the Rhineland populace by the Allied occupiers. It is hardly surprising that German-Americans and native Germans would seize on the "Black" issue. Americans enforced one of the strictest racial codes in the world. No issue could have had the potential for interest and sympathy as did the race issue. That blacks were inferior and given to brutal sexual impulses was widely believed and expressed in America. That they allegedly behaved this way in the Rhineland only confirmed deeply held prejudice. But why did the Germans resort to a propaganda campaign -- a campaign considered so important by some Germans that "pro-German foreigner" medals were struck and issued to those who helped to bring the "Rhine Horror" to world attention?\footnote{New York Times, 16 June 1921, sec. 1, p. 2. The extent of participation by the German government in this propaganda campaign has not been established. The Times report of 16 June 1921, is brief. For a more complete discussion of German propaganda efforts see Nelson's "Black Horror on the Rhine."}
Two very basic reasons could explain German reaction to events on the Rhine. First and foremost, the Rhinelanders were living under foreign rule. As a matter of national integrity, all means short of rearmament were needed to reunite Germany. The occupiers, particularly the French, exacerbated the situation. The French occupation could be characterized as brutal throughout their tenure in the Rhineland. The apparent need for "gloire" and "revanche" is often mentioned as a reason for French behavior in the Rhineland. Their unsuccessful attempts to foment separatism within the Rhenish population contributed to French frustration. In a nutshell, the French held the Rhineland for ransom. Whatever Germany refused to pay in reparations the French would squeeze out of the Rhineland. "Mining German coal with French bayonettes" proved, ultimately, unprofitable. But in the face of slowly worsening economic conditions in France, the French could take some satisfaction in the coal cars bringing "free" coal back from Germany. As Ferdinand Tuohy's first-hand account, Occupied, makes clear, the French were out to "wring the Prussians' necks."

All the social amenities of colonial military life were enjoyed by the French Army at German expense (the German government was made to pay for the occupation).

The American press reported the story almost exclusively from European press accounts. For some publications the charges of mass atrocities were as real as the Germans said they were. To others, reassured by the French, the charges amounted to nothing. Not until

159Ferdinand Tuohy, Occupied (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1931).
the *Nation* sent Lewis S. Gannett to the Rhineland for a firsthand report did any of the four publications reviewed in this study rely on their own information. The *New York Times*, famous for its war coverage and one that had sent correspondents into the Rhineland to cover the early occupation, relied on second and third-hand information regarding the Rhineland controversy. The *New Republic* found in "The Horror on the Rhine" a chance to argue against imperialism and armies comprised of conscripts, particularly colonial conscripts. Sharing the "European View" with its readership, the *Digest* quoted French and German newspapers. Some of these newspapers expressed the view that German propaganda was responsible for the controversy. Other newspapers quoted by the *Literary Digest* said that "a certain class" of German women were responsible for inciting the black troops. In either case it was the *Digest's* view that Germans were at fault and not the much-maligned French colonials. Surprisingly, the *Digest* included in two of its articles highly inflammatory cartoons of black occupation troops characterized as savages. These cartoons, taken from German, Dutch, and Austrian newspapers, appeared to contradict the reassuring tone of the *Digest* articles. Of the four publications, the *Literary Digest* appears to have been the least reliable. Its early attempt at "race humor" ("... Jos. Williams, Colored Doughboy") and its penchant for quoting French newspapers to summarize its articles gave it the tone of a sensationalist publication. Ironically, the *Literary Digest's* final article on the subject of black

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160 *Literary Digest*, 28 August and 9 October 1920.
colonial troops finished by quoting the Nation's Lewis Gannett.

The Nation, by sending Lewis Gannett to the Rhineland at the height of the controversy, took the lead in reporting the story. The reduced coverage by the New York Times after the von Mach protest meeting at Madison Square Garden on February 28, 1921, was counter-balanced by the Nation's increased attention to the Rhineland. Reminding its readers of the earlier report by Major-General Allen, the Nation gave a dispassionate assessment of the situation. Stressing sympathy for the people living under the military occupation the Nation wondered aloud how white Americans would react to a "colored" occupation. It summarized the March 9 article this way:

Suppression of such protest meetings [The American Campaign against the Horror on the Rhine] as those now being held by German-Americans would be absurd... but exaggeration and passion only tend to obscure facts which justify protest. The Nation doubts the wisdom of these meetings in which the emphasis is placed upon race prejudice.160

Gannett's reports from the Rhineland appeared to be particularly objective. He first established that there were, as of April 1921, black colonial troops on the Rhine. The French had simply been lying. Marshall Foch's statement that, "For several months there has not been a single black soldier on the left bank of the Rhine...."161, was contradicted by Gannett. Gannett agreed that Moroccans and other dark-skinned north Africans were, in fact, Arab, but there was no mistaking the black-skinned Malagasies present in the occupation.


force. Gannett found in confidential interviews with German mayors and police inspectors, that the "Horror" was exaggerated. He also established that both private and governmental sources were aiding the propagandists in their attempt to pressure an Allied withdrawal. But the final two-thirds of his May 25 article dealt with life under the occupation. Gannett asked in his closing remarks if the black colonials were not the real victims. By using the debate that followed his initial piece from the Rhineland, Gannett brought into sharper focus the despair of the Rhinelanders. He had, however, found no "Horror," and by late in the summer of 1921 the controversy was fading from the American press.

Of the three periodicals examined, only the Nation "went after" the story. It could be said that it attempted to provide its readers with an objective report. Only in its quotation of German leftist publications, whose ideological bent required a certain interpretation of events on the Rhine, did the Nation move away from objectivity. Failing clearly to identify these sources, the Nation's American readership was left to believe it was reading mainstream German rather than Marxist thought.

None of the three publications examined appears to have purposely exploited American racial attitudes. With the exception of the Literary Digest's occasional lapse into racial stereotyping (common in many American periodicals) there appeared to be no effort to increase circulation by exploiting the "Horror on the Rhine." All three periodicals throughout the period of the controversy played down the
charges of atrocities allegedly committed by black colonial soldiers.

The *New York Times* coverage of the story appears inconsistent. Its attention to the early days of the American occupation was loaded with anti-German sarcasm. Much of E.L. James's writing from this period reflects a strong personal bias that counters any claim to fairness. As the controversy came to a head in the late winter and early spring of 1921, *The Times* displayed an inexplicable unevenness in its reporting. On January 3, 1921, with the article heading "Wants Protest to France," *The Times* quoted without comment Representative Britten as saying crimes were being committed by black troops against "old women as well as defenseless young women and girls."  

From this article until March 1 there was a crescendo of reports from the Rhineland. Strangely, the *New York Times* remained satisfied with second and third-hand descriptions of events in the Rhineland -- this during a period in which *The Times* was placing particular emphasis on international events. However, *The Times* did give close attention to the activities and statements of German-American groups which were beginning to coalesce around the Rhine controversy. These protest group activities culminated in the Madison Square Garden rally on February 28. The front page coverage of the events of that night was so exhaustive that the casual reader might conclude that the "Black Horror on the Rhine" and the groups protesting the alleged "Horror"

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comprised a very important news story. However, for whatever reason, The Times backed away from the controversy. Not until August did The Times contribute any fresh information on the story. During this period (from March until August) the "Rhine Horror" became a major news item in other publications. To speculate on the reasons for this peculiar pattern of news coverage would be fruitless. Suffice it to say, further research into this question is needed.

If The Times was affected by the racial tenor of the period it was not apparent. Although this newspaper was willing to quote unfounded racist remarks on numerous occasions, The Times carefully avoided condemnation of the French occupation of the Rhineland. In fact, in the eight weeks prior to the Madison Square Garden rally, the following article headings appeared: "Show Britten in Error," "Blacks Defended in German Paper," "No Black Troops now in Occupied Zone," "German Propaganda Floods Congressman," "Finds Negro Troops Orderly on Rhine." If there were any thoughts given to exploiting the racial fears of its readership, they were not apparent during this period.

The "Black Horror on the Rhine" was an historical event. Although mass atrocities attributed to black colonial troops were never substantiated, the "Rhine Horror" became a powerful symbol to two nations. In Germany it provided both an avenue for gaining sympathy from a hostile world and an outlet for frustration and anger over the national humiliations of defeat and subsequent occupation. It appears that more lay behind the controversy than the alleged brutalization of the Rhenish people by black soldiers. No issue other than race could spark such intense and violent reaction from white America. The
French might acquiesce if Americans and the American government demanded that black troops be removed from the Rhineland. The issue before the American people was the acceptability of black troops in a white country. There was no outcry over documented brutality by white French soldiers in the Rhineland. The American press, particularly the *Nation*, defused the growing public controversy by the simple act of sending a reporter for a first-hand look. His findings deflated the German-Americans, whose real objective was to end the Allied occupation. His reports also appear to have discouraged American racists from using this particular controversy to bolster the fiction of superior and inferior human beings.
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