

History 225

Re: Addendum Notes w/ the KKK or White Terror

Note: Best Source: Allen Trelease, White Terror

Klan of the Reconstruction was never centrally organized nor can it be identified with regional leadership. Acts of violence were generally carried out by local groups on their own initiative. But there was a unity of purpose nevertheless making it possible to generalize about their goals and impact.

By the use of selected terror the Klan (and later policies carried out by southern states) the Confederates were able to achieve through political terror what they had been unable, to win with their armies--the freedom to order their own society and especially to reinforce regimes of white supremacy and control of race relations as they saw fit.

This period revealed that political power can indeed grow out of the barrel of a gun.

Klan terror was generally directed at blacks, although white Northerners and scalawags were certainly not immune from visits from white sheeted terrorists.

Klan terror was generally more flagrant in areas where the black population was either smaller than the whites living in the area or about equal.

While the terror was mostly aimed at denying blacks and White Republicans from political activity. It was also used against black schools, churches, and other institutions that made up the black community.

Equally important it was used to enforce labor discipline on white-owned farms and plantations. The aim was force blacks to work under contract for Mr. Charlie without protest. To use all forms of coercion to get blacks back into day labor on the plantations and farms.

"White capping" was the Klan method here. Any black who was showing a modicum of economic success was a likely target of Klan action. This was a conscious attempt to regulate the "status in society" of blacks.

*addendum
clear and not
to be held*

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Re: Outline/Notes w/ Chpt. 9

I. The White Terror

A. Rise of the Klan

Note that use of Klan is to designate all of the various counter-revolutionary terror groups that rose in the South beginning around 1868--Klan, Knights of the White Camelia. They resisted the Republican governments, sometimes openly and sometimes covertly, often with the most bestial kind of violence and at times with subtly. These groups of nightriders waged a guerrilla war and overwhelmed Republican forces in the South before giving way to federal military force only to regroup and strike again.

The Klan was able to successfully mobilize race hatred effectively for political combat. The goal was to undermine and ultimately pulldown the Radical governments in the deep South.

While racism may have been the prime motivating force it was reinforced by other factors:

The need for southerners to avoid "dishonor" in defeat by fear of economic chaos, by outrage at the Congressional peace terms of 1867, by perception of Republican demands for black civil and political equality as a punitive measure.

By Radical govts' policies of increased taxation at a time of economic stress.

B. This aspect of Reconstruction history begs the question: Could a greater use of force have brought white southerners to accept the black man as an equal in the courts, at the ballot box, and as a free laborer with the right to choose, to move about, to better his condition?

What was to be done?

- Summarily execute several thousand leaders of the Lost Cause?

- Less draconian--to have treated the South as a conquered territory--large occupation army (more than 6,000 troops), black suffrage and massive confiscation of the former landed planter classes with redistribution of the land to newly emancipated freedman and Union whites.

- had hundreds hundred.

Regulars, Black Cavalry

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The question really is how could force have been used to engineer consent.

Force alone would have been self-defeating. Given the nation's traditional commitment to civilian control, rule by law, and majority rule.

It is important to point out as Foner does in this chapt. that beginning in 1871 the use of federal coercion was considerable. The action taken by the Grant Administration in passing and enforcing these enforcement acts and the KKK Act of 1871 was more far-reaching in support of black voting was more far-reaching than any similar action taken by the government in the 1950s and 1960s during the so-called Second Reconstruction.

The fact, as Foner notes, that these southern govts had to turn to the North to save them from the white terror was admittance that they were very precarious governments.