

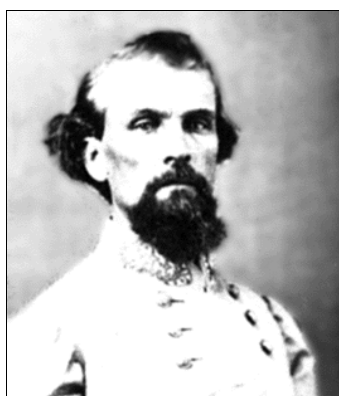
A Time to Kill – The Ku Klux Klan

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The Ku Klux Klan (from the Greek word *kuklos* ‘circle, wheel’) was a secret organisation of white men in the southern states of the US who used violence to oppose social change and equal rights for black people.

The Civil War

In April 1861, the Civil War broke out in Charleston, South Carolina. It was a war between the **United States of America** (the Union) and the **Confederate States of America**, a new country formed by eleven Southern States that declared their independence. 3 million people fought; the war produced about 1 million casualties (3 per cent of the population) and about 600'000 people (almost 2 per cent of the population) died.



Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest

The Birth of the Ku Klux Klan

In December 1865, six former Confederate officers – young college students – founded the Ku Klux Klan in Pulaski, Tennessee as a social club or fraternity. They spent their time with horseplay and enjoyed disguising and galloping about town after dark. They were surprised to learn that this caused fear among black people in particular. In 1867 they set up a number of rules. Also the group was given a structure and a president (the Grand Wizard) was elected – the first being former Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest.

The Policies of Reconstruction

The South had always been a place where black people were suppressed and exploited (slavery). However, the policies of Reconstruction aimed to extend the rights of Southern blacks. This made anxious and resentful white people join the tribe and they soon began instituting a policy of violence in opposition to the new social order. Former slaves were the obvious target of this terrorism, but the Klan also intimidated and even killed Northern teachers, judges, politicians etc.

By 1867, the movement had spread throughout the small towns of the south. By 1869, however, there were problems among the Klansmen themselves and they began to fight each other. Many prominent people left the clan and the higher ranks were filled with criminals. Even Forrest left the organisation.



Klansmen wearing white masks

The First Klan Revival – World War I

In 1915, the Klan was reorganised. At that time – it was the time of World War I – immigration was a great challenge: many Catholics and Jews immigrated to the United States. The Klan promised to defend the home front against “alien enemies, slackers, idlers, strike leaders and immoral women,” as well as African Americans, Catholics and Jews. As a result they attracted many new members. The hypocrisy of a self-proclaimed “law and order” organisation was obvious. Again the leaders among the Klansmen fought each other and soon the organisation collapsed into several small groups.



The Klan often set crosses on fire to frighten people

The Second Klan Revival – World War II

Alliances with groups like the “German Bund” led to a new prosperity and support for the Klan. Several leaders tried to reunify the Klan, but none were successful. However, the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s encouraged some unification into independent groups of different sizes. On the one hand, outrage over the rising fortunes of African Americans led to an increase of membership, on the other hand, American society seemed to turn against the Klan: the FBI and other agencies were committed to fight the Klan.

The Klan Today

Today there is no such thing as the Ku Klux Klan. Fragmentation and decline have continued. There are only a few small independent groups left some of which go by such names as the “Knights of the White Kamelia” or the “American Knights of the Ku Klux Klan.”



Summary

The Klan’s enemies today read like a grocery list of scapegoats for economic failure. These include Jews, who secretly operate the New World Order; African Americans, who survive on welfare; gays, who never work yet seem to have too much money; abortion providers, who profit from the murder of white children; and a corrupt government that does not recognise the rights of white citizens. Every group on the Klan’s list serves as a scapegoat for individual Klansmen to explain and excuse their inability to succeed and advance in modern society.