Twitter Thread by b-boy bouiebaisse



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i'll keep saying this but for example look no further than the ku klux klan, theatrical and silly and also deadly serious

> to the question of larping, yes, most everything starts in the realm of pretense and fantasy but some things get realized, I would have thought people would have learned by now that things can be both absurd and sinister
>
> — John Ganz (@lionel_trolling) January 7, 2021

we often talk about the overthrow of reconstruction as a singular organized effort, but it should be understood as something more disparate and fractured, with success tied less to martial superiority than the indifference of authorities to intimidation and violence.

a group of guys — maybe the owner of the general store, and the sheriff and some farmers who fought in the war — gets together to gripe and complain and plot a little mischief. they put on masks and grab guns and go beat up a black sharecropper or local clerk or whatever...

everyone knows who did it. but there's no one to stop them. the army, if it's even in the state, is tens or hundreds of miles away. and mustering a militia may risk open conflict. the guys realize they can do this and getaway with it. so they do it again.

maybe they have a few more people with them this time. maybe they escalate, not just beating up local blacks and their white allies but killing a few.

and also, this is happening in other towns, and sympathetic newspapers are calling for men to march on the state capitol to take it back from "negro rule"

what begins as a series of larks turns, pretty quickly, into a real force with the ability to inflict real violence and threaten the state's control on violence

for example: in the span of a year, 1874, the White League in Louisiana went from terrorizing local teachers to occupying the state house in New Orleans and deposing the governor

after a few days, federal troops arrived and the League stood down. but no one was prosecuted and members learned an important lesson: they could do it again. so they did, in 1876, securing victory for the democratic candidate for governor in the process.

like-minded people in other states took note, and formed paramilitaries of their own. “White-Line” Democrats in Mississippi formed paramilitaries that killed and terrorized their way to political power in 1875 and 1876. “Red shirts” in South Carolina did the same.

more people know about Wilmington 1898 these days, but supporters of the “white supremacy” campaign that formed the backdrop to the Wilmington coup were very aware of what transpired in Mississippi, Louisiana and South Carolina twenty years earlier.

as always, history isn’t a literal guide to the present; it can only give insight into the social forces that produce certain outcomes. and one important difference to take note of is that, in the late 1870s, an entire generation of men had direct experience in armed conflict.

having said that, we shouldn’t shrug off the fact that one of the participants in yesterday’s mob action was veterans of our forever wars. there were surely others. https://t.co/TXnnErXxQO

https://t.co/YFNIDJYPwI

oh, and one more thing: the men who led this violence didn’t just disappear. they became leaders. a few, even held office. and of that few, some even went to washington, like “Pitchfork” Ben Tillman

there’s a statue of Wade Hampton, the leader of the Red shirts, in the Capitol building right now

with enough impunity, distance and deliberate forgetting, mob leaders and insurrectionists can become statesmen. just an ending note for the “history will judge you” crowd.

happy thursday!