

THE HUMAN HAND THREAT

By A. PHILIP RANDOLPH

ON Tuesday afternoon, about 2.30 o'clock, September 5, while sitting in my office, I received a package marked "from a friend." This anonymous sender forthwith aroused my suspicions. Immediately I began opening it. I noticed a whitish powder falling out of it. This confirmed my suspicions of there being some foul play intended. Hence, before I had taken all of the brown paper off the box, I telephoned the 38th Precinct Police Station on 135th Street, informed the detectives of the nature of the package, and, post-haste, they came over to my office, regarded the parcel cautiously, and then placed it in water to prevent an explosion in the event that its contents were explosive material.

To the utter amazement and horror of everyone, upon opening the package a human hand was found. In the box also was this letter:

"Listen Randolph—

"We have been watching your writings in all your papers for quite a while but we want you to understand before we act. If you are not in favor with your own race movement you can't be with ours. There is no space in our race for you and your creed. What do you mean by giving us a nigger? Do you know that our organization is made up of all whites?

"We have sent you a sample of our good work, so watch your step or else you. . . . Now let me see your name in your nigger improvement association as a member, paid up too, in about one week from now. Don't worry about lynching in South. If you were here you wouldn't talk about it. Now be careful how you publish this letter in your magazine or we may have to send your hand to some one else.

"Don't think we can't get you and your crowd. Although you are in New York City it is just as easy as if you were in Georgia. If you can't unite with your own race we will find out what's the matter with you all. Don't be selfish. Give your friends a tip.

K. K. K.

All of us immediately set ourselves the task of suggesting some probable theory which would explain such an extraordinary incident. The theories, naturally, were numerous and varied, no one evidencing fright, but a dignified caution.

Of the many theories advanced, the one that seemed to be the most generally accepted, the most logical and real was that one which assigned the dastardly deviltry to the K. K. K.—the signer of the letter.

Their reasons given were: (1) the bitter hatred of the Klan for the position of THE MESSENGER and its editors on "social equality," economic and political. This position had been, time and again, buttressed up by the most exhaustive writing and platform propaganda from coast to coast. For quite some years the MESSENGER editors have been directing a systematic and vigorous campaign through the large white unions against the Klan.

Doubtless, Knights of the Invisible Empire have reported of this work to the Imperial Wizard. In the Socialist and Labor Movement, I have striven, at

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all times, to establish beyond the question of a doubt, the value and necessity of working class political, economic and social solidarity. Naturally, this would evoke the ire of the group of criminal, cut-throat, midnight riders, who vegetate in the shadows of murder and incendiarism. And to the utter amazement and surprise of this stone age fraternity, the MESSENGER'S work has found a marvelous reception, being recognized, as it is, by an increasingly growing body of unionists and white intellectuals. This, of course, riles these inglorious keepers of the virtues of white womanhood and the sacred principles (?) of Americanism. For it is proclaimed from the imperial throne of the imperial city, Atlanta, that it is "a violation of American ideals and of the fetish of white supremacy, for contact between the Negro and white people to be permitted or, for that matter, even advocated."

That the Klan outfit would be interested in terrifying me from continuing to carry on my work, is obvious from the foregoing.

But why would the Klan send a "human hand"? comes the query. This is why: It is well-nigh a part of the traditions and the folk-lore of Negro life in the South, that Negroes are easily frightened by anything which suggests the "dead." The proverbial "haunted house" plays its part in the fire-side tale among Negroes. Everybody in the neighborhood can point out the "haunted house." Stories are current, too, of ghosts lurking around the graveyards, chasing passers-by. This is a vestige of primitive superstition. All races pass through this stage as is shown by the anthropologists. It arises from an effort to explain the behavior of natural phenomena. In the absence of the scientific knowledge which will enable people to understand causes of swoons, dreams, storms, earthquakes, floods, famines, droughts, etc., they have assigned as the cause some super-natural agency. The white South knew of this frailty of the old slave Negro. To the old white slave masters, all that was necessary to frighten the Negro field-hands almost out of their senses, was to throw a white sheet over their heads and prowl around the slave shacks in the night. The Negro slaves thought that the white-sheeted forms were really ghosts. Hence, they fled wildly through the fields, a picture of consternation and despair, or else they knelt down on their knees and prayed fervently to God to protect them from the devil, making effusive promises not to commit any more sins, to obey and follow him ever after, circumspectly.

This method of torturing the Negroes was employed quite generally along with the cow-hide, to break the spirit of the most intractable, independent and militant Negro slaves; and, in accordance with the law of habit, it remains long after the conditions have passed that called it forth, and acts with a punctilious accuracy without the conscious attention of the agent.

This then explains why the "human hand" was sent from New Orleans, to the writer, a Negro, living in New York City. It does not occur to the Old South that there is a "New Negro"; that the "Uncle Toms" are passing, if, indeed, they have not already passed away. The South can't understand how Negroes can

grow up, feeling themselves the equal of any white man, advocating political, economic and social equality. Their treasured type of a Negro is the so-called "good nigger," the *banjo ducky*, the *me-to-buss, hat-in-hand, good-mornin'-massa species*. But this kind is dead or dying. In fact, it does not vegetate in the North, while only a few old, stragging, decrepit, moribund remnants survive in the South. Education, radical propaganda such as THE MESSENGER spreads, is the most deadly antidote to this vicious and virulent relic of the past. To the South, to kill off this last symbol of Southern slave bourgeoisie is the "most unkindest cut of all." Hence, to save this passing show of human iniquity, the Klan has sought to select and defend as the model of Negro leadership, Marcus Garvey, the leader of the Universal Negro Improvement Association, who, during the month of June, held an interview with Acting Ku Klux Wizard Edward Young Clarke, and immediately thereafter through his paper, the Negro World, proclaimed to all of the fifteen million Negroes of the United States of America that they should cease fighting the Ku Klux Klan—the attitude which brought a thunderbolt of fury down upon his head. The attack was led by the writer, his associate, Chandler Owen, and Messrs. William Pickens and Robert W. Bagnall of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Hard upon the heels of this attack, which was sponsored by the writer, the human hand was sent. Obviously the conclusion is that the Klan had come to the rescue of its Negro leader, Marcus Garvey, as is indicated in the letter of warning.

Still the work against treacherous, unscrupulous, disloyal Negro leaders as well as against the Klan will go on unabated. With redoubled efforts, I shall mobilize all of my energies in order to destroy black and white Ku Kluxism in America.

As an evidence of this resolve the Sunday following the receiving of the hand, I assailed Marcus Garvey and the K. K. K. more violently than ever before, and it was hailed by the largest audience yet assembled which applauded more vociferously than ever before.

Thus the slogan under which this crusade began—'Marcus Garvey Must Go!' will be reinforced with "and the Ku Klux Klan, too."