



The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Civil War

H.W. Crocker III

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The author of "Robert E. Lee on Leadership" busts myths and shatters stereotypes as he profiles eminent--and colorful--military generals. Revealing little-known truths, this is the Politically Incorrect Guide that every Civil War buff must have.

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From Reader Review The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Civil War for online ebook

Alan says

I rated this lower because I felt the formatting of the content was horrible. For example, the early chapters provide a synopsis of the war and the political climate of the day, primarily from a pro-Confederate perspective, and then it dives into chapters concerning monumental battles, and it finishes with chapters that discuss the leaders of those battles. To me, it makes much more sense to introduce the players in the game before talking about the game itself. It seems like the outline of the book put the cart before the horse. However, the book did successfully provide a very insightful perspective from the Confederate perspective and I view the Civil War in a new light.

stormhawk says

I decided to pick up The Politically Incorrect Guide to the Civil War because I didn't actually know much about the War for Southern Independence and I didn't think I have the staying power for Shelby Foote's series of books. Mr. Crocker does a good job of briefly explaining the causes, battles, and personalities of the Civil War without becoming dry ... he personalizes the experience, however, his use of language is sometimes less than flowing, and he has a tendency to repeat cliches; surely there are other ways to say "so and so had his horse shot from under him." He also has a tendency to use "fancy" words that send most readers scuttling for a dictionary, and peppers the text with unexplained and untranslated Latin. This P.I.G. is a good overview, though, which is what the series intends.

James (JD) Dittes says

As a lifelong "Union man" and one of the minority in my southern state who accepts the 13th-15th Amendments, I was skeptical when I downloaded this book, but this was no polemic.

Crocker outlines the South's case very succinctly and offers a sympathetic voice to Jefferson Davis, but the best part of this book are the fascinating anecdotes he mines. Not all Union Men were thrilled about freeing slaves, and not all Confederates necessarily saw slavery as something that must continue, Crocker points out. More fascinating is Crocker's insights into some of the lesser-known generals of the war: George Thomas, Philip Sheridan, James Longstreet, J.E.B. Stuart and Wade Hampton were characters that I hadn't known very much about.

North or South, you will enjoy this book for its interesting historical anecdotes and its thoughtful, "politically incorrect" (but not strident) sympathies.

William says

Having already read the P.I.G. to American History, I thought I would read this book as an expansion of some of the themes covered during its own rendition of the Civil War. This book is a very interesting take of some of our most cherished beliefs about the Civil War and the many many characters and personalities of whom legends and villains are made. We are told in our 8th grade history class that the Civil War is about slavery, and are made to think of every southerner as backward and evil people who clung to slavery right up until the late 1960's. That Lincoln be an angel and Robert E. Lee be the devil. In college you are told that the war wasn't JUST about slavery that it was also about states rights, but even then we are told that both ideas and pronouncements have been relegated to the trash bin of history. I am ashamed to admit that up until a few years ago, I thought along those same lines. The plain and simple truth is that we are woefully misinformed about this bloody and largely avoidable spot on our history. Like all stories there are two sides and the State has done a very good job of rewriting history to paint its actions as angelic while condemning the south without trial. I would recommend this book to anyone who has an open mind and would like to expand their understanding of history, if not just hear another spin. The author does a great thing by profiling many battles, famous and not so famous generals. Robert E. Lee was an infinitely more principled man than Lincoln, and 600,000 dead soldiers is the reason why. I found the last chapter to be a little bit naive, but interesting to say the least. I really really enjoyed this read.

Justin says

Nothing like publishing a book lauding the actions of a petty and tyrannical slaveocracy with a mass murderer on the cover. I can't wait for the next volume in the politically incorrect series: The Politically Incorrect guide to World War Two; potential chapters include: FDR the socialist tyrant, Hitler the misunderstood genius, and the truth behind the "Holocaust."

In all seriousness though these books are reprehensibly bad and pander to the far-right fringe lunatics who find rigorous academic work either too hard to follow, or not partisan enough.

Dan Arnold says

Thoroughly researched 'dummies' type guidebook that gives a passionate and reasoned defense of the southern cause. Prepare to have many sacred cows and long-standing perceptions shattered by irrefutable quotes and documentation. The South may not rise again but Mr. Crocker certainly raises up the much maligned reputation of the brave patriots who gave all in defense of a noble cause.

♥Xeni♥ says

As a person who seeks the truth of all matters, these Politically Incorrect Guides are like holy testaments. Sort of. Generally speaking, though, they really do 'tell the other side of the story' that we don't get in most history books, or really at all, anywhere.

I read this book (and the P.I.G. to the South) for a project I was doing for my English class back in my last

year of school. Both of these books were wonderfully written, in a rather amusing style that reminisced a little of the Dummies guide books.

This book, the guide to the civil war, really opened my eyes to what was going on in those times. How Lincoln really isn't the hero everyone thinks he is (you know the old adage 'history is written by the winners', well, it's true).

I do, truly, wish that the South had won the war. I think the world would be a better place right now, but alas, that's not how this world turned out to be.

Peter says

I was drawn to this book initially by its lean in the direction of political incorrectness in and of itself, and not so much because I viewed myself as a Southern sympathiser. I'm a Yankee born and bred, after all. However, as I found myself plowing on into details, I was thoroughly impressed by the amount of research that went into it, especially from primary source material. For example, neither Robert E. Lee or Jefferson Davis believed slavery was a necessity, and both believed it would ultimately fade away. Going one step further, Gen. A.P. Hill outright detested slavery. The reason he fought for the Confederacy was because he was loyal to his state (Virginia) before all else. And therein lies the principal sticking point of the whole war, and one we ought to keep considering in the modern day: If the U.S. Federal government derives its right to rule from the consent of the governed, do the governed (or states) not have the right to take away that consent if they discern the federal gov is abusing its powers?

It is difficult to look at history this way in our era filled with special interest groups and political gerrymandering controlling things, but it gives reason to pause and think: what would our response be, and what would that of the government be, if once again a state or group of states decided to forgo its place in the union? Would it be easier or harder for them to make a case defending their actions than it was in the 1860s? Which side of that argument do you think you would pick if you had to? Though some may accuse the author's arguments of being solidly slanted against a Northern point of view and out of touch with reality, when was the last time you read a commentary on the American Civil War that didn't say the same thing? I.e., the South was all racist, Lincoln was the great unifier, and the war was essentially a morality play. This completely bypasses the notion of states' rights, which was central to the Confederates' argument that their government was legitimate. In fact, it is bordering on not treating Southerners as human beings just because some of them treated blacks as less than human (two holes don't make a whole, to coign a phrase), which was a mistake that Reconstruction made over again, but now I am straying from the point. More than anything else the book calls into question the presumptions many Americans have about the Civil War, and reminds the reader that there is always more than just the winner's side of history. And in the end, are these things really such bad perspectives to think more on?

Nate says

The title of this book suggests that it will be full of conservative rantings. Though it does have some of that, there is actually some good factual information. The author makes the argument that the South had better generals with more respect for life on both sides of the fighting, while on the other side they had Sheridan and Sherman who openly targeted civilians and often took more losses of their men.

He also claims that the Civil War was not about slavery (a common debate for conservatives, this being not

necessarily untrue I wish the statement would be modified thus: Though slavery a major cause for southern secession, it was not a main reason for the war, but instead southern secession and the desire to protect states' rights coupled with the North's desire to reserve the Union resulted in the war; however, abolishment of slavery (not being a goal for the majority of Unionists, even Lincoln) was a product of the Civil War.

He includes a section for hypothetical scenarios, like: What would have happened if the war never happened? What would have happened if the South had won? A big theme is that slavery would have been abolished peacefully in due time, similar to European countries and he cites the examples of General Lee having freed all of his slaves prior to the war; some segregation existing in the northern states, but not yet in southern states; and more abolishment groups in the south than in the north. That information all makes a good argument, but the thing about hypothetical scenarios there is no way of knowing the outcome. All we know is that the Civil War did bring about abolishment of slavery, which is like an ugly scar on US history, but unfortunately also brought reconstruction, that was packaged with the KKK, segregation, increased racism, I could go on for awhile about the negative effects of reconstruction.

Anyway, it beat my expectations but it was not fantastic.

Manny says

Good book. Unfortunately for me, most of the information in here I have read elsewhere. The book does cover the North and the South protagonists of the war. This book did spark and interest in Robert E. Lee and Grant. I have added some of those books to my list.

Some of the subject are not for those who buy into the "only one side of the story" theory. If you read this with an open mind and put aside the pro-South agenda of the book, you may walk away with at a minimum, a different view. I wish this subject could be debated without the risk of sounding racists or supporter of slavery.

Nathan Albright says

This book suffers from all of the problems that one would expect from a book that tries to take up the side of the Confederacy. None of this should be surprising to anyone who has studied, for example, the genuinely restrained nature of Northern efforts in the war [1] or the frankly racist slave-baiting arguments that secession advocates used to encourage rebellion in the Deep South after Lincoln's election in 1860 [2] or has thoughtfully examined the socialist tendencies of the Confederacy that contemporary libertarians often ignore [3]. This book is mainly of appeal to those who wish to parrot lies about the Civil War that can encourage unreconstructed Southern nationalists to avoid facing the flaws of their worldview, and is not the sort of book that holds a lot of personal interest for me. I knew going into this book that it would be factually inaccurate, deeply biased, and would not be particularly appealing, and that is precisely what I got, although as usual it at least was able to suggest some reading for me to tear apart if I ever feel like it.

This book is a bit more than 300 pages and is divided into five parts and fifteen chapters. The first part of the book gives the author's best attempts to argue (unsuccessfully) that the south was right to rebel (I), with two chapters that deal with slavery as the cause of the civil war (1) as well as Lincoln's supposed blameworthiness in baiting the Confederacy into attacking first (2). The second part of the book looks at the history of the Civil War in sixteen battles (II), with eleven of them being in the period leading up to and including Gettysburg (3) and the remaining five providing the somewhat happy ending of the Civil War (4).

After that, the author provides some eminent Civil War Generals (III) with a marked bias in his presentation for the rebels in discussing: Lee, Thomas, Sherman, Longstreet, Forrest, Grant, Jackson, Hill, and McClellan in that order, each with their own chapter. After that there is a brief discussion of four Cavalry generals (IV) in Hampton, Sheridan, Stuart, and Custer (14), followed by some vain speculation on what would have happened had the Confederacy won, like Cuba becoming a Confederate territory (15), which seems plausible enough.

There are a lot of weaknesses and flaws in this book. The author dishonestly presents the case for rebellion and tries to sugar coat a revolutionary solution as being a constitutionally legitimate one. The western front is downplayed, the author shows a marked case of Virginiaitis, and issues of logistics are downplayed as well. The author tries to defend Forrest from accusations of massacring black soldiers at Ft. Pillow but does not attempt to demonstrate the larger issues of such matters at Olustee, Saltville, and other occasions. The author, moreover, misrepresents the targeted economic destruction of elite property by Northern generals like Sherman and Sheridan as being a use of total war while celebrating similarly destructive Confederate behavior as mere "raids." In short, the biases of this book and the author's deliberate misrepresentations of the historical record make this a book that cannot be relied upon. Like all of the books in the series, it is at least entertaining at points and the author's ready wit is certainly a positive quality, but the author's lamentable bias and poor historical skills are not made up entirely by the author at least being witty about his incorrect perspective. Alas, wit is not enough to make someone competent at writing about a subject as contentious as the Civil War. There is room to be politically incorrect and factually correct that this author does not even begin to discuss.

[1] See, for example:

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2017...>

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2017...>

[2] See, for example:

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2011...>

[3] See, for example:

<https://edgeinducedcohesion.blog/2015...>

Charles Phillips says

Some of the factoids are interesting, but this is such a skewed version of civil war history that after a bit one begins to doubt much of what is written. Yes, it was a war about union, but slavery and union were inextricably intertwined. Read the declarations of secession. Slavery and secession were seen as a piece. The analogy between the American Revolution and Secession is quite a stretch. NY tried to insert a clause allowing secession in it's ratification of The Constitution, and it was deemed unacceptable and not a ratification. So, they were forced to take that clause out. The agreement was for a perpetual union.

Elliott says

My father is an unreconstructed Southerner and for many years I tried to be just like him. I had my own rebel flags, and Confederate toy soldiers, I could spend hours defending the South from all types of criticisms... And then I grew up, and now I look back on all that with distaste. But, accordingly I feel that I am able to give a more balanced and truthful view than this book having swung from one side to the other and read quite a bit more since those unfortunate days of my youth.

First off, I can say now that history has been actually quite kind to the Confederacy contrary to Crocker's statements. It is not politically incorrect to view the Confederacy in a positive manner whatsoever. Indeed there are Confederate P.O.W. graves in my native Wisconsin that (at least not too long ago) were buried in the shadow of the rebel flag. You can go to any shop in Gettysburg, PA and pick yourself up every one of the five official Confederate flags relatively inexpensively. The Killer Angels-the highly acclaimed novel of the Battle of Gettysburg- depicts the South exactly as Crocker wants it to be depicted. Its adaptation Gettysburg goes to great leaps and strides to depict the Civil War as The Grand Lost Cause of the Confederacy. Go to any Barnes and Noble and you'll find a huge section on the Civil War and of these I would estimate that the vast majority of titles portray the South at least sympathetically, if not outrightly praising the usual "honorable men": Lee, Jackson, oftimes A.P. Hill and A.S. Johnston, and even Longstreet. Barnes and Noble even keeps Davis' self serving autobiography/history in print. Overall what I feel is generally presented as history is the Civil War as an American Iliad where one can freely admire both sides and yet still acknowledge a victor.

Now for some actual politically incorrect information: Crocker represents the whiny branch of Civil War history and what is more the wrong side. It is not enough for Crocker that the Confederacy gets to largely keep its Lost Cause mythos enforced on popular history. What Crocker wants is said mythos as well as the elimination of those unsavory factoids that seldom appear but still hurt his feelings. You won't find in this book stories of how ballot boxes in many Southern states were stuffed with pro-secession votes, because at best secession was only the opinion of 40% of the voters (see David Williams' A People's History of the Civil War which quotes leading Southern papers on the matter). You also won't read about how to discourage pro-Union voters from turning out gangs of pro-secessionists attacked pro-Union homes, accosted people on their way to vote, didn't actually print any pro-union ballots, held conventions in secret locations and of course (repeating itself in today's GOP) outright voter suppression. You also won't find any evidence of dissent in Crocker's magically built Confederacy where in real life desertion was common, pro-Union rallies were common, and resistance to Confederate authority actually spawned many guerilla organizations. You also won't read about how short sighted Southern planters didn't bother growing food, or how the Confederate government's laissez-faire economics wrecked the Southern economy far more completely than any dastardly Yankee ever did.

I do not feel it is necessary to denigrate the charitable acts of Jackson and Lee nor do I defend the rampant racism of Lincoln, Grant, Sherman, or McClellan. But, while Jackson and Lee did do some kind acts neither ended slavery, they still fought for the preservation of slavery upheld by the entirety of their Confederate government, and ultimately Lincoln, Grant, and Sherman did fight in part for the ending of slavery. Those are the facts. I also don't feel it fruitful to bother with Crocker's alternative history of the South winning the war save that an imaginary history doesn't actually count as real history.

Finally, I dispute Crocker's feelings on the Constitutionality of secession. The simplest explanation is that when the Confederate government was defeated by and surrendered to the Union armies the Civil War ultimately answered that question: secession is unconstitutional. The Southern States endorsed that view under the terms of Reconstruction whereby they ratified the Constitutional amendments passed during their rebellion. Done. If you want to get more technical the Constitution had been unanimously ratified by the newly independent United States. The Southern States in ratifying this had made certain demands that had been adopted by Northern States: namely the 3/5ths Compromise. To put that into perspective for every five slaves a Southern plantation owner owned in casting his ballot every November he was ultimately voting four times while his Northern counterpart only got to vote once! Does Crocker acknowledge this? No, because defending four votes for every one is even beyond the selling point of this book and besides Crocker couldn't get to whine some more about "political correctness."

If Secession was ever legal it was before the Southern States enforced these terms on the complete United States, and before Southern lawmakers had helped pass laws for the whole United States. The South had

controlled the White House far more often than their Northern counterparts, and had forced compromise after compromise in their favor. In so doing they had expressed their satisfaction with the United States until one election doesn't go their way.

In some more actual politically incorrect terms: the South not only didn't have a right to secede, but that to take so much from the United States only to decide that 'their sacred honor' suddenly was at stake is bullshit. Furthermore, in firing repeatedly on the flag of the country they had taken so much from and had considered themselves a part of is treason by even loose interpretations of the Constitution which then ought to have warranted all the same "noble" sons of the South a date and time with a hangman's noose and not this book.

Joseph says

Did my best to keep an open mind...for don't really care for those that pander to the far fringes of both sides. Though he did make some interesting points and the occasional eye-opener...he flat out had it wrong on so many points I will actually RUN it back to the library. Nice try on Nathan Bed Forrest, Mr. Apologist.

David Robins says

"If we were wrong in our contest, then the Declaration of Independence was a grave mistake, and the revolution to which it led was a crime.... If Washington was a patriot, Lee cannot have been a rebel; if the enunciation of the grand truths in the Declaration of Independence made Jefferson immortal, the observance of them could not have made Davis a traitor." (Gen. Wade Hampton)
