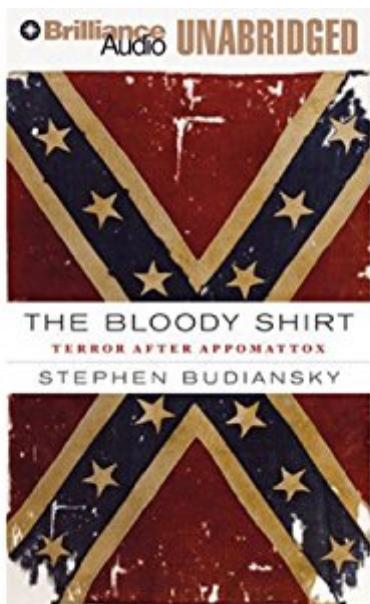


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The Bloody Shirt: Terror After Appomattox



Synopsis

From 1866 to 1876, more than three thousand free African Americans and their white allies were killed in cold blood by terrorist organizations in the South. Over the years this fact would not only be forgotten, but a series of exculpatory myths would arise to cover the tracks of this orchestrated campaign of atrocity and violence. Little memory would persist of the simple truth: that a well-organized and directed terrorist movement, led by ex-Confederates who refused to accept the verdict of Appomattox and the enfranchisement of the freedmen, succeeded in overthrowing the freely elected representative governments of every Southern state. Stephen Budiansky brings to life this largely forgotten but epochal chapter of American history through the intertwining lives of five courageous men who tried to stop the violence and keep the dream of freedom and liberty alive. They include James Longstreet, the ablest general of the Confederate army, who would be vilified and ostracized for insisting that the South must accept the terms of the victor and the enfranchisement of black men; Lewis Merrill of the 7th Cavalry, who fought the Klan in South Carolina; and Prince Rivers, who escaped from slavery, fought for the Union, became a state representative and magistrate, and died performing the same menial labor he had as a slave. Using letters and diaries left by these men as well as startlingly hateful diatribes published in Southern newspapers after the war, Budiansky proves beyond a doubt that terrorism is hardly new to America. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I have been a student of American history for long before doing doctoral work in US history, nearly fifty years ago. With a specialty in the US Civil War, I was surprised by this chapter, of which I had virtually no knowledge. The author is to be congratulated on his meticulous research, and his wonderfully written portrayal of the political betrayal of the 13th to 15th amendments of the Constitution, which effectively deprived an entire race of people of their civil rights and their right to vote; and prolonged their servitude after the failure to implement the vision of Lincoln and others, even before the little-known sell-out around the election of 1876. The restoration of white southerners to social and political prominence facilitated their subjugation of black Americans without meaningful intervention of the federal government for eighty years. A memorable and essential read, to illuminate the puzzle of how the Constitutional amendments of the 1860's were effectively undone within 15 years of their passage. Four and a half stars out of five.

This is a vividly written book that sheds a lot of light on some events and tactics used by many white Southerners after the Civil War to defeat civil rights, defy Federal authority, essentially re-enslave former slaves and rewrite history. We focus a lot on the Civil War and battles and heroism when we are taught about that era in our schools. Less attention is paid to the aftermath and how mistakes then affected us for another century or more. This essential is reading but it should not be read in isolation. It does not provide, nor is it meant to provide a real look at what was happening at the national level in politics, the military, security and social attitudes to give the stories in this book their proper context. Nonetheless, I highly recommend it.

The story how the slaves lost their freedom after the Civil War never got told in school or the media. This book is sorely needed to tell the full story of slavery and the Civil War aftermath. It is a story all Americans should know and see how freedom can be lost.

Stephen Budiansky has written an interesting account of the post-Civil War Reconstruction era. Budiansky reminds us that from 1865 until 1877 the United States essentially fought an insurgency in the American South. And the sad fact is, that the United States lost the insurgency to the Confederacy. The Bloody Shirt is not a straightforward history of the era but rather follows the lives and careers of several people involved in this insurgency. Through these people's stories we gain an understanding of the wider insurgency and the mistakes made by the Union which allowed the Confederacy to overturn the gains won in the Civil War and continue on their way of life. The book focuses on people like; Albert Morgan, who was assigned as a soldier to police the Reconstruction

South and later became a state senator from Mississippi, Lewis Merrill who commanded troops in reconstruction South Carolina, Adelbert Ames, also a soldier, who became the appointed governor of Mississippi, and Prince Rivers, a former slave who fought for the Union and became a county magistrate in South Carolina. Also making an appearance is General James Longstreet, the brilliant Confederate commander who later became a Republican and advocated the Union cause. These men confront the enormously difficult challenge of trying to change a hostile culture. This culture, which could not bring itself to admit wrongdoing or guilt in any of its activities, resisted the attempt to enfranchise the black population with the rights of citizenship granted to them under the 14th 15th and 16th amendments to the Constitution. What is lost to most modern Americans is the fact that this was truly a violent insurgency. Over 3000 people were killed after the United States raised the "Mission Accomplished" banner at Appomattox. Any black who attempted to assert their citizenship or white Republican who sought to enforce the law was a target. Arrayed against them were wide variety of terroristic paramilitary groups, such as the Ku Klux Klan, who killed elected legislators, executives, newspaper people and ordinary men and women. They stole elections by the grossest and basest means possible and did not even try to hide the fact. They shot and hung people with abandon, and openly threatened the rest. The descriptions of the activities of these terror groups shocks the conscience. All the while, the heroic figures charged with rebuilding the culture had neither enough men, arms or authority to accomplish their mission. After four years of civil war, popular support for the reconstruction effort dwindled precipitously. The people of the United States were tired and they wanted it to be *over.* They wanted things to go back to *normal.* Does any of this sound familiar? Tragically instead of doubling down and developing new strategies to enforce cultural change in the American South and allocating the proper amount of resources needed for the task - the Union eventually withdrew, leaving the people left behind, blacks and white Republicans, to their own devices. They did not last long. The long night of despotism continued into the 20th century, up until the 1950s and 60s. Of particular interest is the fact that Budiansky notes that the Confederacy not only won the insurgency in the South but completely rewrote the history of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The one thing the Southerners could not accept was that their culture had been fatally flawed. This is a common trait of pre-modern cultures and is well exemplified in a letter written by General Longstreet to the New Orleans Times that got him in hot water with his compatriots and generally considered a traitor to his tribe for 100 years: He began by saying he was speaking with the plain and honest convictions of a soldier he said that as he thought, the South had fought, and fought well, but had lost; they were a conquered people. It was accordingly their duty to accept the terms of the victor. Even if they were in a position to resist, it would be wrong to

do so. He himself had lost his rights of citizenship under the Reconstruction acts, as someone who had sworn an oath of allegiance to the union and then engaged in rebellion, "but that was one of the hazards of revolution, and I have no better cause of complaint and those who have lost their slaves." To claim now that Southerners need not concede anything to the victor was tantamount to claiming they had not known what they were fighting for in the first place. He hoped he might be forgiven the "bluntness of the soldier" to remind his fellow Southerners what had been decided at Appomattox. "The surrender of the Confederate armies in 1865," he wrote, "involved; 1. the surrender of the claim to the right of secession. 2. the surrender of the former political relations of the Negro. 3. the surrender of the Southern Confederacy. These issues expired upon the fields last occupied by the Confederate armies and there they should have been buried. The soldier prefers to have the sod that receives him when he falls cover his remains. The political questions of the war should have been buried upon the fields that marked their end." In this, Longstreet was remarkable man for his time and culture. And it points out an interesting question. Why is it that modern cultures promote the concept of settlement? The feelings prevalent in the Confederate culture are the norm for humanity. All pre-modern cultures do not privilege settlement. Meaning that there is never a settlement to any particular issue - there is only a standing status quo. And the status quo will hold until the correlation of forces shifts and privileges another party. In the pre-modern world, the negotiation is never over. Once a position has been reached, it is merely a stepping off point for the next round of negotiations. But in the modern culture, the Enlightenment-based cultures, high-priority is given to final settlement of contentious issues. How is it that we have evolved this trait?

Good job showing how the end of the Civil War wasn't really the end of the resistance by ex-confederates or the intimidation of newly freed men and women. Gave narrative to a part of American History that is usually brushed over in broad strokes. I especially liked how Mr. Budiansky told parts of the this story through the lives of some of the men and women how were living in the Reconstruction South and their experiences.

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