

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR: THE ITALIANS AND THE FOREIGN EXPERIENCE

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the U.S. Army
Command and General Staff College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE
Military History

by

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>	
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1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 12-06-2020		2. REPORT TYPE Master's Thesis		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) AUG 2019 – JUN 2020	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE American Civil War: The Italians and the Foreign Experience				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Maj Giorgio Giosafatto				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(E.S.) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301				8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(E.S.)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT This thesis aims to explain the historical context and the reasons that led numerous foreign soldiers to enlist in the Union and Confederate armies during the American Civil War and to illustrate their war experience. It will consist of four main chapters, starting from the American Civil War's historical context, causes, and consequences. Thus, it will explain the foreigners' role in the war, starting with the Germans and Irish. Finally, it will illustrate the Italians' contribution starting from their background, the evolution of the migration, and the main Italian characters before the war. Then, it will describe the Italians' war experience in "Blue and Gray." The focus will be on the main Union Italians' military unit, the 39th Infantry regiment, analyzing origins, actions, and fate. Concerning the Gray, the focus will be on the multiple units where Italians fought, including the experience of the soldier John Garibaldi, whose forty letters represent an important legacy of the Italian Confederate experience. The thesis will demonstrate that foreigners were not decisive to the Civil War's outcomes, but they largely contributed to the Union victory. The Germans, Irish, and Italians made a large effort to preserve the US as a single nation. At the end of the Civil War, they offered a significant numerical contribution, and many families mourned their fathers, husband, and sons. The United States compensated them. However, the price they paid was extremely high.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Foreign troops in the American Civil War					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT (U)	b. ABSTRACT (U)	c. THIS PAGE (U)			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
			(U)	117	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std. Z39.18

MASTER OF MILITARY ART AND SCIENCE

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

AMERICAN CIVIL WAR: THE ITALIANS AND THE FOREIGN EXPERIENCE, by
Major Giorgio Giosafatto, 117 pages.

This thesis aims to explain the historical context and the reasons that led numerous foreign soldiers to enlist in the Union and Confederate armies during the American Civil War and to illustrate their war experience. It will consist of four main chapters, starting from the American Civil War's historical context, causes, and consequences. Thus, it will explain the foreigners' role in the war, starting with the Germans and Irish. Finally, it will illustrate the Italians' contribution starting from their background, the evolution of the migration, and the main Italian characters before the war. Then, it will describe the Italians' war experience in "Blue and Gray." The focus will be on the main Union Italians' military unit, the 39th Infantry regiment, analyzing origins, actions, and fate. Concerning the Gray, the focus will be on the multiple units where Italians fought, including the experience of the soldier John Garibaldi, whose forty letters represent an important legacy of the Italian Confederate experience. The thesis will demonstrate that foreigners were not decisive to the Civil War's outcomes, but they largely contributed to the Union victory. The Germans, Irish, and Italians made a large effort to preserve the US as a single nation. At the end of the Civil War, they offered a significant numerical contribution, and many families mourned their fathers, husband, and sons. The United States compensated them. However, the price they paid was extremely high.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, praises and thanks to God and my father, “Lello,” that from the sky safeguard my family and support me in my professional development.

I would like to express my deep and sincere gratitude to my research supervisor and committee leader Dr. S. Laver (Ph. D), for giving me the opportunity to do research and provide me invaluable guidance throughout this research. His vision, motivation, and trust have deeply inspired me. He has explained to me to present the research works as clearly as possible. It was a great privilege and honor to work and study under his guidance, and I thank him for the valuable time he dedicated me during the research work and thesis preparation. I would also like to thank Mr. Crumrine and Mr. Rosson for their patience and for the suggestions they gave me during the thesis revision process. I am grateful to Colonel Vitiello and Colonel Fisichella, the senior officers I had the privilege to work for at the Italian Defense General Staff, for having favored my professional development and inspired the research topic. Finally, I thank the personnel of the Combined Arms Research Library for their professionalism and reliability.

I am incredibly grateful to my parents for their love, caring, and sacrifices for educating and preparing me for the future. I thank my wife and my little kid Raffaele for supporting me in this challenging adventure and continuing support to complete this research work. Together we can go beyond every obstacle. Finally, I thank all my instructors of the Command and General Staff Officer Course for helping my professional development with their professionalism. The Command and General Staff College is an invaluable source of knowledge and the right place to forge the future generation of military commanders to the Art of Command.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Patrioti italiani! Honvedek! Amis de la liberte'! Deutsche Freiheits Kaempfer!
The aid of every man is required for the service of his adopted country! Italians,
Hungarians, Germans, and French, Patriots of all Nations. Arouse! Arouse!
Arouse!

—Recruiting Poster of the Garibaldi Guard, in John M. Pellicano,
Conquer or Die: the 39th New York Volunteer Infantry, Garibaldi Guard

That was the Garibaldi Guard's recruitment poster, later called the 39th Infantry regiment, a multinational military unit born in May 1861 and aimed to join the Union Army and support it in the fight against the Confederate Army.

Numerous journalists, politicians, and writers of that historical period wrote numerous papers on the American Civil War (1861-1865). Translating the American question to something comprehensible even to the foreign audience, very few of them wrote about the countless immigrants or sons of immigrants who went to the United States (US) to embrace the war's political causes (both Union and Confederate). As testified by multiple writers, volunteers overwhelmed the US legations to join the American cause and fight overseas. Numerous were the reasons for that wish: professional soldiers asking for a commission, common people looking for a possibility to improve their social condition, and ethical fighters, including Italians inspired by the ideological Risorgimento and Garibaldi. Immigrant soldiers from all parts of Latin America and Europe volunteered for the American war, several thousand of them for the

Confederacy, but the greatest number fought for the Union and contributed effectively to the conflict.¹

By 1860, the United States had more than four million foreign-born inhabitants, about thirteen percent of the total population, concentrated in the North's free States.² Hence, while on the one side, jobs in the urban economy attracted them, on the other side, they generally avoided the South, probably to avoid competing with slave labor. Immigrants and sons of immigrants constituted well over forty percent of the Union's armed forces. Germans and Irish made up the largest number, followed by professional and non-professional soldiers from Great Britain, Canada, France, Sweden, Norway, Hungary, Poland, Italy, Latin America, and elsewhere.³

The precise number and national origin of the foreigners who fought remain uncertain, but for the historians' central part, they were vital to the Union's perseverance, and their participation underlined the perception of the war as an internal struggle. Existing prejudice and language barriers conspired to leave immigrant soldiers in the shadow of the American Civil War narrative. During the war, fellow Unionist or Southerner detractors denigrated them, calling them mercenaries and soldiers of fortune, implying they had no good reason to enlist other than earn a bounty or for a spirit of

¹ Don H. Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations: An International History of the American Civil War* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 158-159.

² Ibid., 159.

³ Ella Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy* (1951; repr., New York: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1969), 1-3.

adventure. Additionally, some critics suggested that the foreign recruits lacked patriotic worth and were unwilling to fight and die for a nation that was not their own.⁴

In 1850, about 4,000 American citizens declared they were born in Italy, and by 1860 this number increased to 11,000. Most Italians landed in the ports of New York and New Orleans. Many joined up with relatives who had previously emigrated; others left their motherland for political or religious reasons. They sought asylum in a land where they could find a community that spoke their language and owned schools and newspapers.⁵

Given this background, this thesis aims to explain the historical process and the reasons that led numerous foreign soldiers to enlist in the Union and Confederate armies and to show that they were not decisive to the American Civil War's outcomes but largely contributed. Italian experience, whose presence in the American territory was not as numerous as other nationalities when the Civil War broke out, was significant for the Italian Risorgimento ideals and European battlefield experiences they imported.

The intended audience of the research are foreigners, international students, and American students not familiar with the American internal struggle, such as the American Civil War was. It aims to give a basic general knowledge of the War, the reasons that caused its break-out and its consequences. Moreover, the main topic is the foreign-born experience. The analysis is focused on the reasons that pushed many foreigners (mainly

⁴ Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations*, 159-160.

⁵ Emanuele Cassani, *Italiani nella Guerra Civile Americana (1861-1865)* [Italians in the American Civil War] (Roma: Prospettivaeditrice, 2006), 26.

Germans, Irish, and Italians) to enlist in the Union and Confederate armies, their attitude toward the war and the slavery, and their war experience.

This work will consist of four main chapters. After the introductory chapter, the second chapter will describe the historical context that framed the American Civil War and its causes and consequences. For a comprehensive approach to the topic, it is necessary to introduce two broad and significant concepts that history experts often use to categorize the American Civil War: the military revolution and Clausewitz's concept of absolute war, or total war. The American Civil War seemed to exemplify a real military revolution, "a genuine earthquake largely independent of purely military factors."⁶ It took political, social, and economic changes and reformed the notion of war in all its aspects, from the states' purposes to the organizations' weapons and tactics. It was "uncontrollable, unpredictable, unforeseeable" and suddenly blew up in a unique historical moment characterized, on the one hand, by the spread of nationalistic emotions that had swept Europe because of the French Revolution and introduced the concepts of national political and economic mobilization.⁷

On the other hand, there was the Industrial Revolution, with the inferred novelties of the financial and economic power and the technological revolution in land warfare and transport (telegraph, railroads, steamships, quick-firing smokeless-powder small arms,

⁶ Mark Grimsley, "Surviving military revolution: The U.S. Civil War," in *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050*, ed. MacGregor Knox, and Williamson Murray (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 74.

⁷ MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray, "Thinking about revolutions in warfare," in *The Dynamics of Military Revolution, 1300-2050*, ed. MacGregor Knox and Williamson Murray (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7.

and artillery). Neither of the two sides of the conflict completely understood the changes mentioned above. As President Lincoln said, “nobody was able to control the circumstances of the war, they controlled me. But with that control they made me grow or die. And I have grown.”⁸ This point introduces the second important consideration on the US Civil War, namely the absolute war. As Clausewitz defined, war is “an act of force” without any specific limitation to the use of force. In a conflict, each side forces the opponent to adapt to its actions, in a sort of reciprocal action that “must lead, in theory, to extremes.”⁹ Therefore, the Union and the Confederacy deployed incremental armies that surpassed the overall numbers of all the previous conflict fought in the New World. For the first time in United States history, both Union and Confederate armies conscripted men for military service and enrolled foreigners as bounty soldiers.

In their search for the resources to finance the military expenditures, Union and Confederate states set aside principles such as limited taxation and fiscal rectitude. Both sides accepted attack on enemy civilians and property as necessary.¹⁰ Ultimately, the Union and Confederate armies mobilized all their available human and material resources. They implemented all the possible actions to “overmatch the enemy’s means and will,” and their efforts drove “war to the extreme of absolute (total) war.”¹¹

⁸ Knox and Murray, “Thinking about revolutions in warfare,” 13; Grimsley, “Surviving military revolution: The U.S. Civil War,” 75.

⁹ Carl von Clausewitz et al., *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 77.

¹⁰ Grimsley, “Surviving military revolution: The U.S. Civil War,” 75.

¹¹ Clausewitz, *On War*, 77.

The third chapter will describe the foreigners' role in the war, specifically the Germans and Irish, definitively the most numerous during the conflict. The analysis will show that their presence in the United States was largely superior to what everybody can presume and that they supported the war led by the actual willingness to preserve their adoptive country and show their national pride and honor.

The fourth chapter will describe the contribution of the Italians to the Civil War. The analysis of the Italians' contribution will start from the Italians' historical background in the United States. It will describe the migration process's main phases beginning from the seventeenth century and the main Italian and Italian-American characters in the years before the Civil War. Then, the analysis will shift to the Italians' war experience, starting from the ideal comparison between the newborn Italian national sentiment, that was leading to the Italian peninsula unification, and the American national feeling that was leading the Union to fight the Confederates to preserve the young "American Nation." One of the primary analysis points will be Giuseppe Garibaldi and his feats. With his military actions, the Italian patriot inspired most fighters, especially the Italians, in the war and "moved tremors and alarms all around Europe," probably deterring the British-French intervention in favor of the South.¹²

The final sections will be the Italians' identification and the war actions description in "Blue and Gray." The attention will focus on the main Union Italians' military unit, the 39th Infantry regiment "Garibaldi Guard," explaining its origins, military actions, and fate in the American Civil War. Concerning the Gray side, the focus

¹² Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations*, 227.

will be on the multiple army units that saw the Italians' presence and the description of the war experience of "a figure that stands out among rank," the soldier John Garibaldi.¹³ He was a native of Genoa who enrolled in the Twenty-seventh Virginia Infantry: his forty letters to his wife represent one of the "most significant surviving collections written by an Italian American soldier during the war," an important legacy of the Italian Confederate War experience.¹⁴

The research on Italian and Italian-Americans' contributions to the Civil War presents some challenges. Primarily, they were not very numerous as other nationalities either in the army or in the larger population count. On the other side, it was difficult for most of them to talk about their military experiences because of the English language problems. The collections of letters and diaries are incredibly scarce, except for the correspondence of an Italian Confederate soldier, John Garibaldi. Several Italians fought in some of the most challenging American Civil War battles, such as Gettysburg and Bull Run, and executed essential duties as guarding key ports or main cities. Although not numerous, "the role played by Italian and Italian Americans through the war is informative, colorful, and incredibly fascinating. It deserves to be told."¹⁵

¹³ Frank W. Alduino and David J. Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray: Italians in the American Civil War*, student ed. (New York: Cambria Press, 2007), XII.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid., 75.

CHAPTER 2

THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR (1861-1865)

Causes

The American Civil War was a significant phenomenon, not just American. It was the first industrial war of the contemporary age, probably the misunderstood prodrome of the two world wars.¹⁶ As the first conflict of the modern era, it was even the first one in which military power and popular will cooperated and supported each other, empowered by the industrialization process.¹⁷ It combined the “mass politics and passion of the wars,” the French Revolution results, with the technology and productive capacity, other than the managerial style, from the Industrial Revolution.¹⁸

The armies of the two sides of the United States deployed incremental military formations never seen on the battlefield before that time. Two of the Industrial Revolution’s central innovations, the railway, and the steamship, permitted the troops to supply food, munitions, and equipment. Additionally, the telegraph allowed a swift exchange of messages, enhancing the troops’ command and control and the coordination and synchronization on the battlefield.¹⁹

¹⁶ Raimondo Luraghi, *La Guerra Civile Americana. Le Ragioni e i Protagonisti del Primo Conflitto Industriale* [American Civil War. The Reasons and the Main Characters of the First Industrial Conflict] (Milano: RCS Libri Spa, 2013), 48.

¹⁷ Williamson A. Murray, “The Industrialization of War 1815-71,” in *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Warfare: The Triumph of the West*, ed. Geoffrey Parker (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 233.

¹⁸ Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations*, 90.

¹⁹ Grimsley, “Surviving military revolution: The U.S. Civil War,” 75.

Understanding the essence and genesis of the American Civil War helps set out an in-depth historical analysis of the events that occurred. When we try to analyze its causes, we generally face a dualism. On the one hand, is the South's old ideology as an idyllic society based on agriculture and profound social values to defend; on the other hand, is slavery and its blind defense as the moral cause of the conflict.²⁰ The analysis of different historical sources shows that both explanations contain some truth, and perhaps they are interrelated. However, what appears even more evident is the particular historical context in which these two explanations interacted.

The southern aristocracy, made up of owners of large numbers of slaves, had provided the ruling class to the newborn United States of America for many years following the American Revolution with its own culture, the vision of the world, life principles, and wise and prudent leadership. It provided military and political leadership to the revolution, the first President, George Washington, and the politician that formulated its political ideals, Thomas Jefferson. This aristocracy, informed on ideals of moderation, democracy, tolerance, and communities' significant autonomy, maintained the power thanks to slavery, which was the social basis of the southern civilization's structure.²¹

Over the years, the southern aristocracy changed its ideals of tolerance and moderation in favor of a different approach to political relations characterized by aggression, laying the foundations for the revolution that changed the United States'

²⁰ Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations*, 51.

²¹ Luraghi, *La Guerra Civile Americana*, 169.

history. The main factors were the innovations introduced by the industrial processes and the growing immigration from Europe that determined the necessity to expand to the western territories.²²

The first of these factors was the industrial revolution. The embargo to Great Britain of 1807, which affected trade to and from Europe, and the war of 1812-15 against the same European power stimulated the North's manufacturing development. These events favored a frenetic rise in industrial products' prices in the North, allowing fabulous profits for the manufacturing ruling class. In 1817, the first city based on the textile industry, Lowell (Massachusetts), bloomed, and the following development of this industry branch was unstoppable (mainly in Massachusetts, New York, and Pennsylvania). Due to extensive investment in lands and slaves, the southern aristocrats did not own the capital to favor local industry development, and they did not perceive its development as a danger. Nevertheless, they judged the Northern industries' development as positive, considering the possibility to absorb their cotton productions and profits. However, the industrial revolution in the North went beyond all expectations and favored the development of new and modern social classes, the entrepreneurs and the wage-workers, who constituted a society largely different from the Southern society.²³ In this context, a formidable boost to industries' development came from the growth in rail transport and the electric telegraph, whose extension soon reached over 80,000

²² Eugene D. Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery—Studies in the Economy and Society of the Slave South* (New York: Random House, 1966), 4.

²³ Luraghi, *La Guerra Civile Americana*, 204.

kilometers. This development took place mainly in the North, while the South remained tied to its agriculture and forced labor exploitation.²⁴

The second decisive contribution to the change of the Southern aristocracy's ideals and life principles that led to an internal conflict outbreak was the growing immigration influx from Europe. It provided an almost inextinguishable workforce and exacerbated the problem of expansion towards the west's immense unexploited lands. These territories, necessary to release the possible social tensions created by the sudden increase in workforce available on the American labor market, were the North and the South states' forbidden desire. The North's population, with their new mechanized agriculture, was determined to control these territories and to exclude African slavery from them. On the other side, the Southerners claimed their ownership because their agriculture model (without fertilizer) continually needed new land.²⁵

The expansion of this debate, the dangers for the Northern industries' growth, and the development of the new social classes of entrepreneurs and wage-workers led the Southern States to consider the Northern as competitors. The Southern aristocrats slowly understood their economic dependence on the capitalist market. Some of the essential phases of the cotton production and sales process were in Northern entrepreneurs' hands.²⁶ They owned the insurance companies, were responsible for the products' growth and distribution, and led the transportation and sale overseas. Additionally, the southern

²⁴ Grimsley, "Surviving military revolution: The U.S. Civil War," 76.

²⁵ Luraghi, *La Guerra Civile Americana*, 239.

²⁶ Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations*, 53.

aristocratic class feared the social revolution that happened in the North and the loss of the benefits it enjoyed.

The initial clash took place on the settling and exploitation of the western territories. The land was the foundation of the southern aristocracy, and expansion was essential for the survival of its culture and its way of life. The Southern landowners continually needed new land due to the slave farming tendency to deplete cultivated land's productivity, and they did not have the liquid capital to buy fertilizers. On the other side, the western expansion was necessary to the North to relieve the vast immigration flux from Europe that significantly increased the North's white population.²⁷ The Southerners aspired to the western territories because of their awareness that without expansion into new lands, their world was at risk of dissolving: "There is not a single slave owner in this Chamber or outside it" declared a parliamentarian of Georgia in 1856, "who is not entirely aware that wherever slavery reduces within specific limits, it has no future."²⁸ Conversely, Northern politicians' program key points were the prohibition of slavery expansion into the west and its slow extinction.²⁹

Another factor that pushed the Southern ruling class to aspire to the western territories was the desire to regain control over Congress (representatives' election was in

²⁷ Genovese, *The Political Economy of Slavery*, 144.

²⁸ Ibid., 260-261.

²⁹ Ibid.

proportion to the population). If the Northern settlers expanded to the western territories, the Senate balance could have been totally in the Northern states' hands.³⁰

Southern political actions were defensive, but fear and frustration for anti-slavery ideologies generated the aggressiveness. The growing tension between the two parties caused conflicts, misunderstandings, and irrational reactions. The constant attacks on slavery, the climate of contempt and resentment pushed the South's people to isolate themselves. Emotional and irrational feelings overwhelmed the Southerners, who seemed to lose sight of their society's good. The whole southern culture found its existence on an African-American servile mass, and the Southern people accepted the risk of losing everything to fight for their ideas and nature.³¹

The Southern people showed their characteristic pride of courage and placed an unconditional trust in their leadership, declaring the Confederate States of America's secession the real point of no return for the internal conflict outbreak.³² In February 1861, the Confederate states claimed their secession as a nation, while the newly elected President Lincoln accused them of rebellion. Lincoln repeatedly charged the Southern states of violating the principles of democracy, people's sovereignty, and majority rule, addressing the rebellion as a slavery cause.³³

³⁰ Luraghi, *La Guerra Civile Americana*, 324.

³¹ Peter J. Parish, *The American Civil War* (New York, Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1975), 83-84.

³² Luraghi, *La Guerra Civile Americana*, 520.

³³ Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations*, 69.

The Southerners, especially their ruling class, did not realize the North's social revolution's unstoppable forces. The new modern social classes of entrepreneurs and industrial proletariats aspired to transform the United States into a single national market, excluding slave agriculture from the western territories in favor of mechanized agriculture.³⁴ The Union's social transformation aimed at reshaping the United States as a single nation, and Abraham Lincoln, the political and ideological leader, did not accept any compromise to the constitutional mandate. The new capitalist class would have changed America with their revolutionary actions.³⁵

The American Civil War was the American nationalist revolution, the birth of a modern, homogeneous nation, similar to what was happening in Italy and was about to happen in Germany. Abraham Lincoln was "Cavour and Bismarck," and the new country was made "according to the Bismarckian definition, with iron and blood."³⁶

War

The American Civil War can be considered the most important conflict of the nineteenth century. Thus, it blew up suddenly in a period of relative calm characterized by unprecedented peaceful development. The Congress of Vienna (1815) accommodated the major European powers' interests after twenty-five years of war and tried to control the spread of nationalistic ideals. The first signal of the international balance's weakness created by the Congress of Vienna occurred in 1848. Some revolts began in France and

³⁴ Luraghi, *La Guerra Civile Americana*, 531.

³⁵ Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations*, 55.

³⁶ Luraghi, *La Guerra Civile Americana*, 566.

gradually spread across Europe. One of the most critical happened in the Habsburg and German lands. Nevertheless, the 1848 revolutionary movements failed, but nationalism started to jeopardize the European equilibrium.³⁷

The first real modern military engagement of the nineteenth century was the Crimean war (1853-56). It was the first where the science and technology of the Industrial Revolution impacted the battlefield. This conflict had little effect on the European equilibrium, but the advances in weaponry, transportation, and communication underlined that technology and science were now crucial to battle success.³⁸

Some of the most important Industrial Revolution modernizations were rifled muskets and telegraph, but the most crucial was the railway. North America developed its railway almost simultaneously to Great Britain, and its construction shaped the American Civil War battleground. The “New World battlefield” was too big for armies moving on foot, and the roads generally underdeveloped. The steam-powered railroad’s introduction improved logistical capabilities and moved more people and equipment quicker and further, and represented “a military instrument that changed the face of warfare forever.”³⁹

The American Civil War’s opposing governments deeply took advantage of Western countries’ popular and nationalistic enthusiasm. However, the counterparts

³⁷ Murray, “The Industrialization of War 1815-71,” 216-217.

³⁸ Ibid., 218-220.

³⁹ Christopher R. Gabel, *Railroad Generalship: Foundations of Civil War Strategy* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, US Army Command and General Staff College, 1997), 296.

underestimated the opposing governments' political wills and perseverance to claim positions without compromising.⁴⁰ The conflict appeared unbalanced from the very beginning. The population statistical survey showed that the twenty-five million in the North were more than triple than the just nine million in the South, of which three million were slaves. Industrialization and the nation's railway amplified the differences.⁴¹

A common issue related to the war that both sides faced was the non-existence of professional military forces. The United States' founding fathers decided to create a new nation without a standing army following a liberal model. The officers' education and training purpose was to overcome Indians, and for this reason, they used to employ small groups of soldiers. They disregarded how to lead large and organized groups in a considerable conflict.⁴² Moreover, the officers were not numerous, and because they were trained primarily in engineering, they had to oversee the new nation's public works, like bridges, dams, and ports, in addition to their purely military duties. When the danger of war became imminent, the Union and Confederate governments, conscious of the limitation of the officer's class, started to replenish officers' ranks with middle-class people (lawyers, teachers). They generally guaranteed good support and respect from the population but did not cover the military preparation and experience gap.⁴³

⁴⁰ Parish, *The American Civil War*, 32.

⁴¹ Murray, "The Industrialization of War 1815-71," 221.

⁴² John Keegan, *The American Civil War: Military History* (New York: Vintage Civil War Library Vintage Books, 2010), 38.

⁴³ Ibid.

In 1861 the United States Militia had only 16,000 men, mainly deployed in fortified positions in Indian territory, west of the Mississippi, or in the great federal fortresses guarding the nation's coasts. The United States' military philosophy envisaged that the militia should provide large numbers of soldiers in need, as stated in the Constitution's Second Amendment. The militia was an essential tradition of American history, but it became of secondary importance in the aftermath of the independence. A significant boost and reinvigoration to the militia came with voluntary recruitment, a European model. The voluntarism shook the bourgeois and popular masses, especially in the South, willing to take up weapons against the Northern aggression.⁴⁴

By 1861, many volunteer corps appeared in the South, adopting unusual names and sometimes bright and colorful uniforms. Enthusiasm for volunteering varied in intensity from state to state. The foreigners' military units were essential in this recruitment and later indispensable for the war results. The Union's and the Confederate's laws allowed the regiments' formation very quickly. Recent historians' estimations show that about 750,000 men died on the battlefield, and another 470,000 men were wounded. The capability to replenish their armies and enlist large numbers in a brief period was the key to success. During four years of war, the Union Army enlisted about 2 million men, while the Confederate just 850,000. The foreigners were essential, and their enormous presence in the Northern states gave the Union a specific advantage.⁴⁵ America in 1861 was a populous and growing country, partly thanks to

⁴⁴ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 39-40.

⁴⁵ Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations*, 167.

immigration. The 1860 census listed a total population of about thirty million. The white military population (thirty years old) was approximately 2,500,000 in the North, 900,000 in the South.⁴⁶

The Confederate states had an administrative system new and inefficient, but the cause of secession and the defense of its model of society permitted them to overcome these issues since the armies formed spontaneously. In April 1862, the Confederates understood that enlisting short-term volunteers was not enough for a protracted war, established the draft. It began by conscripting white men eighteen to twenty-five years of age and later expanded to include seventeen to fifty. Moreover, before the end of the war, the Confederate states enlisted slaves.⁴⁷ Despite this, the Confederation never formed a regular army, and its fighting force consisted of state forces overseen by its War Department. The troops and their regimental officers up to the colonel's rank belonged to the state militias or wartime volunteer organizations.⁴⁸

The recruitment model adopted by the North was similar. Spontaneous volunteering widespread in number often centered on existing militias or volunteer units. A federation of volunteers made up the Union Army of the American Civil War, organized on a state basis and financed by government bonds.⁴⁹ As the war began to overwhelm the Union, Lincoln's first task was to expand its tiny regular army, state

⁴⁶ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 42.

⁴⁷ Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations*, 167.

⁴⁸ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 42-44.

⁴⁹ Murray, "The Industrialization of War 1815-71," 221.

militias, and volunteers who served as state forces. Lincoln's first mobilization measure in April and May 1861 required state governors to send 117,000 volunteers from their militias to help the Union Army. The states responded promptly and sent regiments of volunteers to Washington, close to the site of likely confrontation.⁵⁰ The military service called initially for three months, but in April 1863, the Union introduced a draft of one year. Until that moment, bounties and other inducements at the state and local level encouraged enlistment. Another vital source of Union recruit came from the Southern territories invaded by the Union troops. More than 76,000 whites from the Confederate states enlisted for the Union; many of these were immigrants.⁵¹

The Civil War battles took place between April 12, 1861 (battle of Fort Sumter) and May 13, 1865 (battle of Palmito Hill). The principal engagements happened in two main areas, the eastern theater that includes the important battles of Antietam (September 17, 1862) and Gettysburg (July 1-3, 1863), and the western theater, which includes, among others, the Battles of Shiloh (April 6-7, 1862) and Vicksburg (May 18 – July 4, 1863). The trans-Mississippi area was crucial for the naval engagements, and the southern area saw some minor military confrontations.⁵²

On April 12, the Confederate troops bombarded Fort Sumter, forcing its capitulation. This episode was not necessarily significant from the military point of view, but it represents the American Civil War's official initiation. The following military

⁵⁰ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 51.

⁵¹ Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations*, 169.

⁵² Murray, "The Industrialization of War 1815-71," 222.

actions of 1861 underlined the inadequate preparation of both armies for war and a lack of a clear vision.⁵³ Many of the Civil War's most important and bloodiest battles occurred in the eastern theater between Washington, DC, and Richmond. It included some of the most famous campaigns in the history of the war. Due to the proximity to large population centers, major newspapers, and the opposing parties' capital cities, the amount of information propagated about the eastern campaign was considerable. Webs of telegraph lines spread information about the War and represented one of the most important historical examples of the massive use of propaganda.⁵⁴

Another factor that emphasized the importance of the American Civil War eastern theater was the railway. It was mainly developed in the east area and dramatically impacted the strategies of both sides of the Civil War. The railroad enlarged the gauge of warfare and probably contributed to the Civil War's extension. It was more challenging to defeat the enemy in a decisive battle because the planning process's geographical temperaments were less relevant.⁵⁵

The reliance on rail lines of communication was something new for the mass of foreigners that enlisted in the Union and Confederate Army and reduced their possibility to contribute to war's tactics based on previous European wars' experiences. Strategic surprise reduced drastically, and the adversary could predict attack direction along clearly defined axes. The railroad altered Civil War's strategic thinking, and the leaders of the

⁵³ Murray, "The Industrialization of War 1815-71," 221-222.

⁵⁴ Grimsley, "Surviving military revolution: The U.S. Civil War," 75.

⁵⁵ Gabel, *Railroad Generalship*, 297.

Union understood this opportunity. Army leaders at the strategic level learned how to take advantage of the railway and deal with troops and resources' long-distance movements..⁵⁶

In July 1861, the Union government sent its army to march to Manassas, probably considering the ninety-day volunteer period's close expiration. The result was the Battle of Bull Run (July 21, 1861), during which the Union Army collapsed and retreated to Washington..⁵⁷ The Battle of Bull Run's results convinced President Lincoln to recognize long-term enlistments and change his army's leadership. General McClellan became the commander of the Army of Potomac. However, the situation did not improve, and McClellan's excessive prudence and overestimation of the Confederate capabilities caused the loss of significant opportunities on the battlefield. In 1862, he planned to send his troops to seize Richmond, the new Confederate capital city. Nevertheless, the advanced movement's rhythm was slow and confused, and when they reached the city's gates, the Confederate troops were ready to fight and repelled the attack..⁵⁸

The failure of the expedition to Richmond induced President Lincoln to discharge McClellan, guilty of ignoring the president's suggestion to pressure the South in all the operation's theater at the same time, breaking its resistance and taking advantage of the Union's superior resources and manpower. The president appointed General Pope as the new commander in Northern Virginia, but the battles' fate did not change. The Second

⁵⁶ Gabel, *Railroad Generalship*, 299-301.

⁵⁷ Murray, "The Industrialization of War 1815-71," 220.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 222-223.

Battle of Bull Run's (August 29-30, 1862) defeat was proof of the Union's poor conduct of the war. General Lee devised a well-organized deception plan that confused Pope's course of actions. With the Army of Potomac moving back and the Pope's troops in disarray, Confederate troops could move to the North and enter into Maryland.⁵⁹

At this point, Lincoln re-appointed McClellan as commander of the Army of Potomac and assigned him to pursue and halt the Confederate troops in Maryland. McClellan's actions result was Antietam's battle, the bloodiest day of the entire Civil War, with a total number of casualties around the twenty-thousand. McClellan launched multiple attacks against the Confederate defensive positions, but he never engaged them decisively due to tardy orders. Confederate troops could re-organize and withdraw back to Virginia without any interference.⁶⁰

After Antietam, President Lincoln definitively fired General McClellan and issued the Emancipation Proclamation, freeing the slaves in all the rebel territories. The military campaigns of 1863 in the east represented a shift in the balance of power between the two sides. During the battle of Chancellorsville (April 30-May 6, 1863), the Confederate troops defeated the Union troops again, taking them by surprise with an envelopment on its flank. The effect of that maneuver was devastating, and the night's arrival avoided the Union troops' destruction. Nevertheless, the Confederate leadership had to make a tough decision: consolidate gains and prepare defensive positions in the east while reinforcing the west or continuing the attack. Underestimating the difficulties on the western theater

⁵⁹ Murray, "The Industrialization of War 1815-71," 223-228.

⁶⁰ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 113-114.

of battle, they decided, under General Lee's pressure, to continue the attack and pursue the Union troops for a decisive victory. The following advance in Pennsylvania represented a no return point for the war's course and the Confederate Army's ambition.⁶¹

At Gettysburg, two months later, the conflict's decisive battle took place, but the Confederate Army came out with shattered troops and morale. The battle lasted three days, but the military confrontation was destructive. The Confederate decision to take by surprise the Union troops' by attacking the slight slope of Cemetery Ridge with three Divisions in the center of its formation was the decisive action. The Union Army anticipated that attack, and during the mile and half march up the slope completely wrecked the Confederate troops. The battle of Gettysburg was more than a tactical defeat because it led to the Confederate troops' withdrawal on the eastern war front.⁶²

In the Western theater, the battlefield situation was wholly different and favorable to the Union's troops from the first stages. In early 1862 the Northern troops, under General Grant's command, took control of Fort Henry (February 6, 1862) and Fort Donelson (February 11-16, 1862). The two forts were critical points to control the two main rivers of the area, the Cumberland and the Tennessee Rivers, and to cut the only east-west Confederacy railroad in the area. Grant moved his troops to Shiloh, waiting for reinforcement before engaging the battle, but the Confederate forces caught him by surprise. However, after a day of fighting, his reinforcements arrived and inflicted a

⁶¹ Murray, "The Industrialization of War 1815-71," 224-227.

⁶² Luraghi, *La Guerra Civile Americana*, 246.

severe defeat on the Southern troops.⁶³ The battle of Shiloh was significant for two main reasons. On the one hand, Grant understood the necessity to build protected defensive positions or dig trenches in order to resist the new weapons and technologies' terrible combat power. On the other hand, Shiloh's victory permitted the Union's troops to access the Mississippi River and reinforce the land operation with Navy forces sailing the river and engaging the enemy. Grant still needed to seize Vicksburg to take complete control of the river. In July 1863, he finally figured out how to control such a critical node city through an impressive maneuver that separated and weakened two Southern armies.⁶⁴

Due to Grant's success, President Lincoln appointed him first as commander in chief of the entire western theatre of operations and, later, the Union forces commander. The first decision included the reinforcement of the west by taking two corps from the east. Grant continued his victorious campaigns and defeated the Confederate position at Chattanooga (November 23-25, 1863) through a full-scale assault, carrying the Tennessee River's total control.

Once commander of the entire Union Army, Grant studied a plan to engage the Confederates in multiple vital locations simultaneously and conclude the hostilities quickly. The Overland Campaign (May 4-June 24, 1864) was the American Civil War's key to success, although Grant suffered a series of tactical defeats (most notably Cold Harbor, May 31-June 12, 1864). It was the bloodiest in American history with about 55,000 Union casualties and 32,600 Confederates. Due to poor officers' and troops'

⁶³ Murray, "The Industrialization of War 1815-71," 224.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 225-227.

quality, the Union Army failed various attempts to exploit this tactic. Therefore, Grant decided to change the approach to face the Confederates and started to develop an objective geographical strategy. He aimed at seizing Petersburg, the Confederate refueling center for Richmond (near the Appomattox River), and the central hub of five Confederate railway lines.⁶⁵ Grant encircled Lee's forces in just over eight weeks and did not allow them to escape into the Richmond and Petersburg siege (Virginia). The siege of Petersburg (June 15, 1864-April 2, 1865) led to Lee's army's surrender and marked the end of the American Civil War.⁶⁶

Effects

The American Civil War can be considered the first conflict of the modern era. It was the first in which the military component, supported by the population and the massive industrialization process (railway and steamboats projected the forces over hundreds of miles rapidly), touched the total war concept.⁶⁷

In its early stages, the Civil War was a unique conflict. In their learning process as soldiers, the combatants tried to do as much harm as possible to their opponent. Military clashes seemed more like conflicts between armed crowds than wars between regular armies of sovereign states. Until Gettysburg, very few were the regiment's commanders and officers of both sides that had doctrinal knowledge of war conduct or knew the war's

⁶⁵ Murray, "The Industrialization of War 1815-71," 229-232.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 239-241.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 233.

principles. The most interesting component was the citizens' determination and will to fight to defend ideas that we could define as nationalism today.⁶⁸

The military confrontation's strength decimated the Civil War's armies almost as quickly as they were forming. The general death and injury rate was so high throughout the conflict that it seems illogical that the citizen-soldiers found the courage to continue fighting. The reasons for this determination probably laid in the real motives that triggered the conflict's break out. North volunteers joined the struggle out of outrage over the South's assault on the integrity of the republic, while those of the South led by the will to defend a *status quo* of their society, an institution for the most part still rural and founded on slavery. The opponents continued to fight, aiming for a final decision, stimulated by the desire to justify all the sacrifices made up to that point. Nevertheless, their persistence started to weaken as the brutal battles' deaths increased, and the consequent stress began to cause a high desertion rate. There was a growing awareness that as long as the war persisted and the casualties continued to increase, the North's victory was inevitable, but its continued setbacks, especially in the first two years of the conflict, increased the South's hope to prevail.⁶⁹

The American Civil War caused more than a million total casualties, of which 200,000 died in combat. The total number is impressive compared with the American casualties of the Second World War or the European Great War's losses. It remains the Great American War, "the struggle that completed the revolutionary process and made

⁶⁸ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 355-356.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 355.

possible the realization of the republic's ideals on which the founding fathers founded the country in the eighteenth century." The pride for the sacrifice that a previous generation made for fundamental ideals of equality, human freedom, and the individual's rights before the law is still the pillars and the essence of the modern United States.⁷⁰

Large numbers of foreign-born soldiers contributed and shared the natives' sincere desire to serve the national cause from both sides, and the military forces represented the whole American nation. Without any regard to the nationality, soldiers shared their pain on the battlefield and continued to fight flank to flank. The foreigners' Americanization process proceeded wholly and rapidly, and the American element absorbed the foreign elements. The enlistment in nationality units was the initial stimulus to enlist many foreigners for the Union and Confederate causes and produced rivalry among the groups of adopted citizens to show their gratitude and devotion.⁷¹

The places where the main battles happened remain the proof of the sufferance. Visiting these places, transformed in most cases into war cemeteries, the foreign observers can still relive the bloody battles and the sufferings of the protagonists of the time. At the end of the conflict, the leading cause appeared to be the struggle to abolish slavery. However, the nature and scope of this conflict cannot be so simplistic. Unlike any other great war in history, the American Civil War has been the only great war fought between citizens of the same democratic state. It was undoubtedly one of the most ideological wars in history. This interpretation is the only one that can justify the

⁷⁰ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 355-357.

⁷¹ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 660-661.

determination of the protagonists to deploy ranks in close order, gathered at short distances, and facing the intense firepower never seen before in a war.⁷²

The American Civil War was a war of battles in which both sides looked for a decisive action that never happened. In this sense, the decisive element was undoubtedly the American continent's geography, which constituted a fundamental war element, considered "the most formidable ally of the South and inflexible adversary of the North." The significant obstacles for the North's troops were the enormous distances to cover, the multiplicity of waterways, the dense forests, and the immense mountain ranges. The courageous men that fought the war died, the causes that generated its outbreak are uncertain, but the "war places remain dominant and eternal."⁷³

Many European countries underestimated the American Civil War's immense legacy. One of its inheritances was the proof of the volunteer armies' value. Some European politicians hindered the formation of voluntary armies, suspicious of the dangers of arming the masses. In societies like many European countries based on the king and property's supremacy, officers feared that a voluntary army could bear strong democratic values. Consequently, the European ruling military class refused to deeply study the American Civil War campaigns or its mobilization of all national resources.⁷⁴

In the United States, the Civil War's legacy was more substantial and immediate. Several Civil War leaders continued their military careers, and the Department of the

⁷² Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 357.

⁷³ Ibid., 358.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 358-359.

Army incorporated tactics and procedures used during the conflict. One Civil War inheritance was the United States' capability to mobilize enormous masses for the First World War, generating an army of five million in less than a year. Moreover, its capability to produce many weapons and equipment for war use due to the military-industrial development amplified during the Civil War.⁷⁵

On the other hand, the American Civil War did not leave, despite the enormous number of battles and fighters, many literary narratives. In most cases, the Civil War tales were a legacy of the war veterans who wrote their memoirs. Nevertheless, these accounts were typically war diaries rather than great literary works. The most important literary memorial of the war was General Grant's memoirs, published shortly before his death to save his family from bankruptcy. Despite their nature of the literate country, the United States of the nineteenth century did not have an authentic literary tradition, or probably "nobody wanted to talk about the great war experience torture in poetic terms."⁷⁶

America before the Civil War was a country more than a state. Its political ideals did not influence its citizens to permit them to develop a natural sense of belonging. After the Civil War, everything changed, and probably the hardness of the conflict and the firmness to stay in line during the battle gave the citizens the power to reaffirm their citizenship. The war revolutionized the perception of concepts like duty and sacrifice and gave the American citizens the pride to become the pillars of their republic and national communities. The American Civil War transformed "a society in a nation," and probably

⁷⁵ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 359.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 360-361.

the Civil War's hardness initiated the "great nation's ambitious project." All the various racial groups in the American population presented to the world a striking and thrilling example of devotion and loyalty to the government that welcomed the exiles of the world. The Italian and German tricolor, the British jack, the Ireland green flag, and the Garibaldi flag floated all together with the stars and stripes and the star and bars flag, as "a token of adherence to ideals represented by each of them and token of their conviction for the preservation of their cause."⁷⁷

The War of Independence was the first United States revolution that founded the republic; the Civil War was the second revolution that completed its original and unique idea.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 661-662.

⁷⁸ Keegan, *The American Civil War*, 365.

CHAPTER 3

THE FOREIGN TROOPS IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

German and Irish before the Civil War

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the United States started its evolution from an agrarian to an industrial, urbanized society. The evolution process caused by the Industrial Revolution was rapid, and at the eve of the Civil War, it was evident that the innovations introduced by the industrial development had changed American life. The process pushed the growth of immigration, which became an integral part of the nation's social fabric. The need for labor attracted a multitude of newcomers to the United States. Approximately 2.4 million immigrants arrived in the United States in the ten years following 1845. About 14.5 percent of the United States population was foreign-born, and the most numerous of them were the Germans and the Irish.⁷⁹ This chapter aims to explain the contribution of Germans and Irish to the American Civil War outcomes. This first section aims to illustrate their distribution in the American territory years before the Civil War outbreak and the reasons that pushed a multitude of Germans and Irish to emigrate to the United States.

In Germany, the first half of the nineteenth century recorded a real economic and social change. The industrial revolution altered some of its regions' economic conditions, and the adaptation process took some difficulties. At the same time, crop failures caused the agricultural sector to collapse, and the repression of the 1830 and 1848 revolts and the revolutionary uprisings failure (1854) interrupted the political reforms, creating

⁷⁹ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 1.

disillusionment for a new German revolution. Many Germans left the country looking for a new permanent settlement.⁸⁰

Contemporary Ireland was experiencing a likewise complicated economic situation. Repeated crop failures, the overwhelming land management system and the repression of a national independence attempt pushed thousands of Irish to leave the “Emerald Isle” in search of fortune in America.⁸¹

In this context, the narrative coming from America and the enormous economic opportunities offered to the immigrants became an attraction for the multitude of unsatisfied Germans and Irish. The United States offered them the possibility to experience democratic liberalism, political and religious freedom, and participate in the state’s political life.⁸²

The majority of the Irish reached the American coasts in miserable economic conditions. They resided for a long time in the port cities where they landed, and the only available resource they had was their physical strength and the ability to work manually. Very few managed to reach the United States central west’s inner areas due to the lack of financial resources to pay for the trip.⁸³

⁸⁰ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 6-7.

⁸¹ Damian Shiels, “Ireland’s Forgotten ‘Great War’?,” *History Ireland* 27, no. 4 (July/August 2019): 30, accessed March 16, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26853084>.

⁸² Christian B. Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 11.

⁸³ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 14.

Completely different was the nature of German emigration. It involved Germans of every social class, but the majority belonged to a distinguished social class characterized by liberal political ideals and high moral standards. They were “citizens aware of their cultural wealth and national excellence, from Kant’s philosophy to Goethe’s passages, from choral societies’ taste to Schubert and Von Weber’s beautiful songs.” Their migration aimed at creating a very German colony in the land where they arrived, with solid ethnic and cultural foundations: a sort of society within the society.⁸⁴

Many of them, especially among the first to emigrate, were radical and revolutionary reformers that aimed to rebuild and reform their society. They exported to the United States social life their political idealism, social radicalism, and religious skepticism. An emblematic example of the type of people who left Germany to land in America were those defined as the Forty-Eighters. During the German revolutions (1848-1849), they were leaders exiled to America for their exalted idealist activities. They were “steadfast crusaders who did not yield an inch on what they considered a matter of principle.”⁸⁵ The majority of foreigners that landed in the United States until 1860 reached the Union’s states, and only a minority of them the Confederate states. Specifically, about eighty-six percent lived in the Northern states, while just fourteen percent in the slave states.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 7.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ella Lonon, *Foreigners in the Confederacy* (2002; repr., Chapel Hill, The University of North Carolina Press, 1940), xii.

German was undoubtedly the more significant European nationality that emigrated to the United States of America, spread fairly uniformly in all states. Large numbers approached the Union states and remained in the eastern states and cities as citizens, small traders, or craftsmen. The artisans found a market full of possibilities adapted to their skills, from the shoemaking to the cabinet and beer making to the woodworking. Many thousands moved west into the Mississippi Valley, searching for land to make their home. About one million German-born settlers were in all the Northern States at the break out of the American Civil War, and another two hundred thousand were in the four border states.⁸⁷

The Irish were not numerous as Germans, but they were the second-largest nationality in the United States. They settled in the eastern cities because the growing industries offered numerous employment opportunities and guaranteed temporary employment and a daily wage. They had limited possibilities for social development because of their relegation to the lower social classes. Many planned to secure their livelihood working in the eastern states and then emigrate to the west in search of lands that could guarantee their families' livelihood.⁸⁸ Over the years, the Irish' migration across the Atlantic increased more and more due to the insistent propaganda coming from the United States about employment opportunities and better working conditions. American contractors were continually looking for excellent low-cost labor to carry out the numerous projects in the country's internal areas. The Irish were probably the main

⁸⁷ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 6-8.

⁸⁸ Shiels, "Ireland's Forgotten 'Great War'?", 31.

contributors to building canals or railways in the United States' internal states. Thus, many of them that moved in the hinterland took part in big construction projects of canals and railways settled in those territories.⁸⁹

In 1848, the nature of Irish immigration changed. The great famine (1845-1848) forced numerous and less qualified masses to leave the homeland searching for a fortune in the United States. The Irish government sent numerous agricultural laborers with minimal English knowledge and reduced adaptation capabilities to the United States, amplifying the Americanization process's difficulties. Starting from the 1840s, Irish people in the main eastern industrial cities expanded very rapidly. The rapid growth of the Irish colonies and the continuous influx of people from the motherland caused accommodation problems. In the big cities and port centers started to appear "shanty towns" and public houses, in which numerous families lived in inhospitable rooms. The native Americans' attitude toward them further hindered the Irish's Americanization process. Natives did not facilitate the development of this ethnic group, worried by the famous Irish's working reputation. They kept voluntarily Irish's wages low and often paid them in liquor and merchandise.⁹⁰

The Americanization process of the multitude of Germans was entirely different. In 1860, New York had a German influence area inhabited by about one hundred thousand Germans, with their schools, churches, bookshops, and two German newspapers. From the main cities, they began to move towards the hinterland, and their

⁸⁹ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 15.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 15-16.

influence started to change the habits and lifestyle of the people they came in contact with. Numerous Germans moved to Ohio, one of the most populated states. Cincinnati was a crucial German-American city with about thirty percent of the German population and the German language widespread. Additionally, before 1860, large congregations of Germans existed in Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Cleveland, where a third of the population was German (seventy thousand people).⁹¹

Large groups of German settlers moved to Pennsylvania, and they became so vital for the region's economic and social apparatus that the state's governance spread messages and published laws in German translation. Thus, the German language became an official instruction in the school.⁹² In Missouri, the number of German settlers became more and more consistent starting from the 1830s. Over the following years, the German communities spread in the state essentially along the Missouri River banks. St. Louis was the German regional center.⁹³ The American state characterized by the German population's absolute pre-eminence was Wisconsin. The region's soil and climate favored their settlements due to their similarity to the German motherland. The state government launched several initiatives to facilitate immigration in its semi-deserted Northern lands. Milwaukee was the nucleus from which the settlers began to disperse throughout the state, spreading their music, art, culture. The Teutonic rural settlements,

⁹¹ William L. Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988), 80.

⁹² David L. Valuska and Christian B. Keller, *Damn Dutch* (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2004), 1-3.

⁹³ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 8-10.

which developed in the densely wooded areas of the central-eastern and Northern counties of Wisconsin, were significant and characteristic. Many Germans bought abandoned American farms in these areas and turned them into large companies with their fertilizers, crop diversification, and intensive agriculture.⁹⁴

In the Confederacy, numerous German communities were present in almost all the states, even if they were not as numerous as in the North. The common characteristic was that the local community seldom integrated them. They generally lived in restricted German groups and did not like to associate. By 1860, Texas was one of the most populated German states. Almost one-fifth of the white Texas population was German blood, and twenty thousand were born in Germany. These Texan Germans held themselves apart in four purely German counties and founded three German cities, Fredericksburg, New Braunfels, and Boerne. There were only German churches, and there was a real influential German press. In Virginia, the German population was even widespread. The majority of them were “Americanized Germans,” or “old Germans,” descendants of the Germans community that settled there in the eighteenth century. During the war, they became the core of the Stonewall Brigade and produced some of the Confederate force leaders.⁹⁵ South Carolina and Alabama saw in the period between 1845-1860 a large migration of Germans. About the fifteenth percent of these States population were foreigners and ten percent German. Among the main cities of the South, Savannah (Georgia) and Memphis (Tennessee) presented peculiar data concerning the

⁹⁴ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 11.

⁹⁵ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 1-4.

foreigners. About 40 percent of the population had foreign blood, the majority Irish and German. The greater portion of the mechanics and artisans were European natives.⁹⁶

Conversely, the Irish nearly settled in large commercial centers and crossroads of the west. Their preference for large urban centers most probably resulted from their unfortunate experiences with the Irish landlord system. The Ireland people who settled in the Middle West at the American Civil War outbreak were about 320,000. Their presence was numerous, certainly less than the German groups that settled in the area, and the largest Irish colony was Chicago. In 1860, the Irish represented almost a fifth of the inhabitants. Furthermore, they were also present in Milwaukee, permanently outnumbered by the Germans.⁹⁷ The Irish peoples lived apart from Native Americans and other foreigners for religious reasons (Roman Catholic) or their preference for life in small communities. Large colonies of Irish were present in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, and Iowa, probably hired in low-paying coal, iron, and mining jobs. Some Irish Catholic farming communities existed in the 1860s in Michigan and Iowa. In 1860 the number of Irish in Wisconsin was fifty thousand.⁹⁸

This examination of the German and Irish settlement within the United States shows that these communities were significant and widespread in almost all the Union and Confederate states. The reasons that pushed them to leave their native countries to look for fortune in the United States should demonstrate their attitude and sympathy for a

⁹⁶ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 8-9.

⁹⁷ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 15-17.

⁹⁸ Shiels, "Ireland's Forgotten 'Great War'?", 32.

foreign country that adopted them and offered them a second opportunity of life. They largely embraced the Union or the Confederate cause and fought to show their gratitude to their adoptive country during their internal struggle. Their contribution to the war was different. The German were people of a specific social class with very tough ideals and capabilities. They produced large numbers of officers and some important General officers. The Irish were likewise numerous, but their main characteristic was physical strength, energy, and determination.

German

The German-American community had a substantial impact on the war, and many were those who fought, especially in the ranks of the Union, to defend ideas that were not their own but still decisive for their future. This section aims to describe the German ideologies that guided the majority of Germans to support president Lincoln's election, and that pushed them to embrace the causes of the two opponents of the American Civil War. Furthermore, the section describes the German contribution to the war, analyzing some German units' experience and their battles' contribution.

The attitude towards the Civil War of the various foreign groups was of primary importance at the time, especially if we considered the German-American communities' large numbers and their compact reactions toward common issues. The German communities did not only contribute by fighting to the Civil War's fate, but they largely influenced the presidential elections..⁹⁹

⁹⁹ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 41.

The natural immigrants' political affiliation was the Democratic party, always a guarantor of the ideal of individual freedoms and democracy. The US Democrats rushed to seek every opportunity to garner new German votes. Among these, some Democratic newspapers of the time praised foreign-born voters and supported numerous initiatives to print official German documents. They further underlined the Republicans' natural sympathy for American-born citizens. On the other hand, the Republicans tried to attract foreign-born favors, perpetuating a new Republicans' sympathy for workers and immigrants. Initially, Germans, mainly the German Catholics, remained suspicious of the new Republican orientation, and considerable numbers espoused precisely the Democratic cause. Only a specific group of them, the Forty-Eighters, radical free thinkers and atheists, embraced the Republicans' cause.¹⁰⁰

In the late 1850s, the German communities' support for the Democratic ideals started to vacillate due to their opposition to the slavery expansion into new territories. Slavery was the main political problem and the real battleground of the time between the two political sides, and Democrats favored the slavery expansion to the west. The Kansas-Nebraska Bill (1854) shocked the German-American communities and revived the controversy over property legislation. Slavery could extend into new western American territories and the Germans, looking for lands to cultivate, perceived this extension as a threat. Furthermore, they were suspicious of the growing control exercised by southern Democrats over the entire party executive.¹⁰¹ The majority of the German

¹⁰⁰ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 13-14.

¹⁰¹ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 44-45.

immigrants were not radical abolitionists, they did not want to expel slavery from the states where it existed, but they strongly opposed its extension into other territories. Consequently, most of them pulled back their support to the Democratic party and joined the new Republican idealistic movement.¹⁰²

Many Germans indisputably contributed to Lincoln's election, but it was unclear whether this support derived from his appointment or their natural conservatism. Their party change causes remain essentially unclear, but it was not perceptible before Lincoln's political campaign. The historical moment in which they lived oriented the German groups' change of attitude and political preference. Before 1850 the Democratic party was the best defender of the freedoms that pushed them to exile from the beloved homeland. When the secession became the compelling question, they chose the party that at that moment better represented all classes' freedom and the common welfare, the Republican.¹⁰³ The German community's position was evident in this sentence:

We Germans are no friend of slavery, but it by no means follows that we shall become sectional fanatics. We are and what we have, our freedom, our existence as independent men and citizens, we owe to the Union; without the Union, no more immigration. With the Union, we break down the last asylum of the oppressed of the entire globe. Therefore, must the Germans in the Northern tiers of Southern States stand for the united and undivided Union.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰² Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 14-15.

¹⁰³ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 46-50.

¹⁰⁴ *Washington Tagliche Metropole*, October 29, 1860, quoted in Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 51.

They sided in favor of the Union's defense to preserve individual freedoms and took part in the war as United States' citizens, even if they never totally agreed on it. Another statement more moderate to describe the Germans' attitude toward the war was:

The Germans adopted citizens of Baltimore and Maryland regret the war and the teaching of the irreprehensible conflict; they stand, however. After the present situation had become unavoidable, on the side of loyalty and follow without bitterness, the lamentable scenes which the drama of war unrolls before our eyes. They wish peace under guarantees of a better future; they advocate freedom and the Constitution as they were founded by the fathers of our republic and look toward the New Year with hopes of reconciliation.¹⁰⁵

The Germans felt the need to maintain their adopted country's unity and integrity and fight at all costs to preserve it. They had experienced the disunity in their native country and the disastrous consequences of a nation divided into small kingdoms and principalities. They were ready to give back to their adopted country what they had received by welcoming them and offering better future perspectives.¹⁰⁶ In the North-West, the German vote, and the foreign-born vote, decided the outcome of the United States presidential election, "even one in twenty votes cast in any other way would have reversed the outcome."¹⁰⁷

In the war recruitment campaign, many German leaders appealed to the German national sentiment and their old homeland's love to stimulate the new country's service. They felt the obligation to respond numerically to defend the old homeland's honor,

¹⁰⁵ *Baltimore Der Deutsche Correspondent*, August 10, 1861, quoted in Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 53-54.

¹⁰⁶ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 67.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 46.

recalling their Teutonic pride.¹⁰⁸ The typical German pride was evident in some German recruitment posters: “Brave Germans! Let us show, unconcerned about praise or censure on the part of the other nationalities, that we are Germans and in German loyalty are prepared to defend our American home as the blessed place of freedom,”¹⁰⁹ or “A German soldier has double fame in this war. He enters for his adopted country, and he has to do honor for the German name. He will show the world that the German stands in the foremost ranks of Fighters for freedom.”¹¹⁰

Besides the ideological causes, the material incentives were probably the main reasons that moved vast masses of foreigners and Germans in favor of the American cause (especially for the Union). The citizenship’s automatic acquisition certainly attracted the majority, but other incentives were money bounties and the officer ranks in the Union and Confederate armies. Who could persuade eighty men to enlist could secure the captain rank, who formed a regiment earned the Colonel commission.¹¹¹

The Germans’ experience of the American Civil War was the most exciting and significant among all foreigners. They mainly arrived in the United States with skills and resources. They established in large part in the prosperous North-East communities but also contributed to the Midwest settlement. At the outset of the Civil War, the German

¹⁰⁸ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 28.

¹⁰⁹ *St. Paul Minnesota Staats-Zeitung*, May 4, 1861, quoted in Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 71.

¹¹⁰ *Chicago Illinois Staats-Zeitung*, June 5, 1861, quoted in Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 72.

¹¹¹ Valuska and Keller, *Damn Dutch*, 20-21.

American population's central part supported the Lincoln administration in its struggle to suppress the rebellion.¹¹² They aimed to build secure and prosperous communities to preserve their cultural identity and exert political power within their communities. In April 1861, Germans responded to the war call by organizing more than 125 separate regiments. About two hundred and eighty thousand Germans fought for the Union, and a number of them reached the rank of general. Practically, every regiment marching out of New York City had some Germans in its ranks.¹¹³

The Germans sent the most significant number of soldiers and units, between foreigners, to serve the Union cause. The regiments that historians usually consider Germans amounted to about 36,000 men and might comprise a division-size unit. The division grew up in the first phases of the war due to the Germans' enormous response to Lincoln's call in New York and Pennsylvania. Additionally, various German regiments grew up spontaneously in many parts of the United States. In New York, during the Civil War, the Germans originated ten complete regiments.¹¹⁴ In Pennsylvania, at least five regiments were mainly German, with a big part of the troops, staff, and non-commissioned officers born in Germany or German nationality. Some of the regiments counted on experienced Prussian officers and were examples of units' organization in

¹¹² Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 3.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹¹⁴ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 113-114.

drill and discipline, as German tradition. Colonel von Schimmefennig, the commander of the Seventy-fourth Pennsylvania, was one of them.¹¹⁵

Ohio German colonies formed and sent to the field at least six infantry regiments. Indiana's Germans formed six wholly German regiments, and Illinois assured extensive participation in the American cause. These included three mainly second-generation German regiments and ten half German Infantry and artillery regiments.¹¹⁶ Missouri offered the maximum contribution to the Union side, compared to the total state population. Their participation proved crucial, and although four regiments were the state's quota, they organized a fifth one. Wisconsin Germans formed three mainly German Regiments with less than two-thirds of its members of that nationality.¹¹⁷

The Germans Division remained in service for the first two years of the Civil War and was distinguished for courage and the high losses during the battles. A military unit with many Germans was the First Brigade of the Fifth Division at colonel Blenker's command. His unit stood its ground during the first Battle of Bull Run. During the disastrous battle, the unit composed mainly of foreign-born regiments (Eighth, Twenty-ninth, Thirty-ninth "Garibaldi Guard," Forty-first New York, and Twenty-seventh Pennsylvania), the majority German, was the Fifth Division reserve at Centerville. The First Brigade did not fight actively during the battle but received the task to advance upon the road from Centerville to Warrenton and cover the division's retreat. Although tired by

¹¹⁵ Valuska and Keller, *Damn Dutch*, 44-46.

¹¹⁶ Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers*, 80-81.

¹¹⁷ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 107-109.

thirty hours of marching and fighting, these foreigners covered the overall Division retreat and withdrew in great order in the Union debacle's chaos, bringing back even some equipment left on the battlefield by other units.¹¹⁸

Its baptism by fire was at Cross Keys (June 8, 1862), where while the German division soldiers performed well, their officers did not. The Brigades arrived on the battlefield unordered, and the regiments engaged the battle separately without the main attack plan. The result was that the 8th New York regiment fell in a Confederate ambush and met its destruction. A Confederate observer described their action as a “drill parade” until they reached a small incline toward a fenced-in treeline. When they passed the line, about 1,300 muskets began to fire on them. The result was over 180 casualties and 74 captured. In its first battle, this German regiment suffered one of the worst regimental casualty rates of the Civil War. The decimation of the 8th New York decided the battle outcome because the Confederates counterattacked, and the Union troops could not push them back. Despite the defeat, a large part of the New York press reported a good performance for the German Division and recognized its leadership error to split up the regiments.¹¹⁹

After the battle of Cross Keys, Lincoln restructured his force in Virginia and assigned the command to general Pope. He reorganized his divisions in three corps and broke up the German Division, distributing its regiments within the First Corps. General Sigel received the command of one Corps, with about two-thirds of German soldiers, and

¹¹⁸ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 488-489.

¹¹⁹ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 39.

a German general officer, Carl Schurz, was assigned the command of a division. With this organization, the Army of Virginia began the military operations that culminated in the battle of Second Manassas (June 29-30, 1862). During the prolonged skirmishes that preceded the main clash, the two sides' armies tried to outflank each other along the Rappahannock River. At Freeman's Ford, the Schurz's division showed admirable courage and determination. Specifically, the 74th Pennsylvania distinguished itself during the fight attacking the advancing enemy to permit its sister regiment to disengage intact across the river.¹²⁰ One German soldier of another regiment described the attack:

The drums rolled the sound for the charge, the flag waved, and under the personal leadership of our brave colonel Schimmelfennig, the regiment forcefully attacked the enemy. March! March! Hurrah! Hurrah! Onward it went, and like chaff, in the wind, the rebel fled in disorder before the German bayonets of the 74th regiment.¹²¹

The battle of Second Manassas ended in favor of the Confederates because they could outflank the Union formation on the left. The Union German regiments demonstrated their determination and ability, and their performance was again exceptional. During the bloody battle of Antietam, the Germans units continued to distinguish themselves. In the first phases of the battle, the German regiments fought with credit, and the Twenty-eighth Ohio was the first regiment to cross the river and attack the strong enemy position, drawing the whole enemy fire upon themselves. Its action permitted other regiments to locate all the enemy positions and prepare for the following successful attacks. The fall of 1862 remained one of the most pleasant days in the war for

¹²⁰ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 41.

¹²¹ Ibid., 42.

the Germans in the Union Army. However, shortly after the battle, the First Corps regiments converged into the Eleventh Corps in the Army of Potomac.¹²²

The Army of Potomac had just experienced the bloody disaster at Fredericksburg, and the Germans of the Eleventh Corps did not receive a good welcome. Additionally, its leadership soon changed due to General Sigel's dissatisfaction to lead the smallest corps in the army even if he was the most senior of the major generals. The Army of Potomac's commander assigned the Eleventh Corps leadership to General Howard, and other leadership changes occurred.¹²³

The events of the following battle of Chancellorsville destroyed the German regiments' reputation for the entire American Civil War. General Howard was probably guilty of the unbelievable failure that gave the Germans the label of coward or "Flying German."¹²⁴ Specifically, he did not recognize the increased Confederate activity to the Eleventh Corps front, and even if some regiments' picket reported Confederate increasing activity in the front, he believed they started a retreat. He mistrusted his subordinate reports waiting for military information from his higher headquarters. On May 2, 1863, undetected Confederate troops marched at the edge of the woods near the Chancellor crossroads. On the other side of the woods, there were the Eleventh Corps' campfires, exactly where the Army of Potomac's commander decided to deploy "the unreliable

¹²² Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 43-45.

¹²³ Ibid., 46-47.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 78-79.

Germans, well behind the battlefield.”¹²⁵ Suddenly, the Confederate attacked with a mile-wide battleline the unsuspecting Union troop. The soldiers of the first regiments of the Eleventh Corps were not able to respond, and the panic caught them. A few regiments tried to organize a resistance while others left their position without firing a shot. The Confederates pushed the Union line causing a one-mile movement backward and shattered the unprepared Eleventh Corps’ units. In the aftermath of the battle of Chancellorsville, the Germans of the Eleventh Corps suffered the blame for the tragic defeat because they ran under Confederate’s attack without any resistance. The American press and the entire Union Army labeled them as cowards. The German earned the nickname “Flying German” in a short battlefield experience, influencing the German reputation for a long time.¹²⁶ However, the causes of that defeat developed before the battle: leadership mistrust for their men, suspicion for the Eleventh Corps by the other units of the Army of Potomac, failure of the corps command whose situational understanding overlooked the possibility of a Confederate flank attack.

All the various nationalities represented in the Army of the Potomac gave their contribution during the battle of Gettysburg. The main Union unit involved was the Eleventh Corps that reached the battlefield after a ten miles warm march. Among the Germans, the most important personality was General Schurz, the corps commander in the battle’s initial stage. The German Rifle (Fifty-fourth New York) was one of the

¹²⁵ Kathleen Thompson, “Flying Dutchmen: The XI Corps at Chancellorsville,” *Civil Discourse* (blog), July 31, 2017, accessed March 18, 2021, <http://www.civildiscourse-historyblog.com/blog/2017/6/7/flying-dutchmen-the-xi-corps-at-chancellorsville>.

¹²⁶ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 78-79.

regiments that gave a great contribution. After being surrounded by two Confederate regiments, the German Rifle maintained its position and engaged its enemy in a desperate fight before they withdrew, leaving many men on the battlefield. Another decisive foreign-born unit was the Irish brigade. Engaged in battle on July 2 in the woods on the west side of the field (near the foot of the Little Round Top), its men made a strenuous effort to surmount the hill, sometimes fighting hand to hand.¹²⁷

The Germans did not redeem from the bad epithet they gained at Chancellorsville, and the retreat of some German units on the first day of the Battle of Gettysburg did not support their reputation of compact, courageous, and disciplined men, as recited in the recruiting poster of some German regiments. The German soldiers were the “scapegoat for the Union Army’s defeat at Chancellorsville.” However, they continued to fight sacrificing their lives on the American battlefield to defend the Union and the Confederate cause.¹²⁸

Several German elite regiments of eastern and western armies also participated and had a significant share in the battle of Chattanooga. Among the others, some units that distinguished themselves during the fighting at Lookout Mountain and Missionary Ridge were the Third and the Thirty-seventh Ohio that were completely German, and the Twenty-fourth Illinois that under the command of a Hungarian Colonel wounded at Chickamauga, made a glorious record in all the crucial engagements in Tennessee.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 521-528.

¹²⁸ Thompson, “Flying Dutchmen.”

¹²⁹ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 521-528.

The examples reported are just a minimal part of their war experience, as imaginable considering the German's numbers in the United States at the eve of the Civil War. However, these misfortunate episodes of Chancellorsville often come to light to describe their bad contribution to the internal American struggle.

The German experience of the American Civil War was a story of successes alternated to defeats. Their contribution was important for their numerical consistency and the officer that reached the general ranks. German Americans fought steadfastly throughout the Civil War to defend the Union and the Confederate, "all too often offering the last full measure of devotion." However, like most ethnic groups, they "received the nativistic prejudice that it did during the war."¹³⁰

Irish

Like the Germans, the vast presence of Irish people in the United States at the eve of the American Civil War meant a large contribution to the growth of enormous armies that both sides developed. Irish involvement contributed to creating and developing an Irish-American identity. Their war experience shaped their future political awareness, and the various independent republican movements imported into the United States from Ireland largely contributed to developing their political ideals.¹³¹

During the five years of war, about 200,000 Irishmen fought on the battlefields. Of them, about 180,000 supported the Union Army and 20,000 the Confederate.

¹³⁰ Keller, *Chancellorsville and the Germans*, 166-167.

¹³¹ Fiona Fitzsimons, "Tracing the Irish in the American Civil War," *History Ireland* 22, no. 6 (November/December 2014): 17, accessed February 26, 2021, <http://www.jstor.com/stable/44897443>.

Additionally, about 20 percent (23,600) of the Union navy members were Irish-born because of their sailing capabilities. At the end of the conflict, nearly 30,000 Irishmen died in the numerous battles they fought, showing their tough temperament.¹³²

The Irish attitude toward the war was different from other groups of foreigners. Their political pre-eminence was essentially Democratic until the outbreak of the conflict due to the Democrats' attention to this specific nationality and their fear that the end of slavery could complicate their integration into American society.¹³³ They were essentially poor people and tireless workers and practically were the natural slaves' competitors. Slaves' emancipation could cause their mass migration to the Northern territories, increasing the competition with Irish for a job and decreasing the salaries and job opportunities. Many Irishmen worked as dockers at the piers of the ocean and lakes' main ports. They almost held the monopoly of hard work at major American ports or in yards to construct railways or canals.¹³⁴

The majority of Irish recalled the compliance with the American laws and the firm interpretation of the United States Constitution that willingly guaranteed slavery. A part of the Irish embraced the Republicans' cause against slavery. At the presidential election of 1860, few Irish people supported President Lincoln's election, preferring the

¹³² Fitzsimons, "Tracing the Irish in the American Civil War," 17.

¹³³ Daniel Downer, "Fighting for Lincoln? Irish Attitudes to Slavery during the American Civil War," *History Ireland* 21, no. 3 (May/June 2013): 26, accessed March 2, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44897519>.

¹³⁴ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 41-42.

Democratic candidate.¹³⁵ However, when the American internal conflict broke out, many Irish communities in the United States promptly responded to President Lincoln's call to preserve the Union. After Fort Sumter, many Irish gathered to express their affection for their adopted country, declaring themselves ready to support President Lincoln in his fight against the rebel citizens of the South. No other group of foreigners residing in the United States at the time responded to the call to arms with more patriotic sentiments.¹³⁶

Irish communities' attitudes toward the war changed during the conflict. Thus, when the internal conflict began to extend, they urged the signing of an armistice to end the hostilities.¹³⁷ Then, they returned to their moderate pre-conflict positions and opposed the emancipation proclamation, fearing the slave competition in the labor market. At the emancipation proclamation, many Irish started public demonstrations.¹³⁸

The Irish took up the war with passion and spirit of sacrifice, pushed from different values and ideals, from the higher ideals like homeland and freedom to those who enlisted, hoping to improve their social status and earn their place in American society.¹³⁹ One of the characteristics that distinguished the Irishmen was the patriotism and affection for a government they considered liberal. They did not love the United

¹³⁵ Toby Joyce, "The American Civil War and Irish Nationalism," *History Ireland* 4, no. 2 (Summer 1996): 37-38, accessed February 16, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/27724344>.

¹³⁶ Downer, "Fighting for Lincoln?," 26.

¹³⁷ Susannah Ural Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 3.

¹³⁸ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 42-43.

¹³⁹ Downer, "Fighting for Lincoln?," 26.

States, but they would like to fight to honor the Irish people's names. Many joined, hoping that Great Britain could join the conflict and they could somehow hit it.¹⁴⁰ The green flag deployed as a symbol of many Irish regiments was proof of the Irish national sentiment. Most of the Irish people fought to preserve the Union as a duty to Ireland for the American national cause: "I hold that if only one in ten of us come back when this war is over, the military experience gained by that one will be of more service in a fight for Ireland's freedom than would that of the entire ten as they are now."¹⁴¹ Many volunteered for materialistic motives, undoubtedly the main reason, due to their poverty conditions and their relegation to the American society's lower ranks.¹⁴²

The Union and Confederate governments knew the Irish's poor condition and tried to take advantage of it, securing people of this physical and moral strength in their ranks. New England states produced the majority of the Irish Regiments of the entire United States. New York was the city to enlist the higher number of Irish regiments, but Boston (Massachusetts) was an actual American Irishmen home city. Massachusetts contributed to form two entire Irish regiments, the Ninth and the Twenty-eight Massachusetts, and numerous companies. In other parts of New England, the Irish formed other three regiments with most Irish components.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Joyce, "The American Civil War and Irish Nationalism," 40.

¹⁴¹ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 75.

¹⁴² Joyce, "The American Civil War and Irish Nationalism," 38.

¹⁴³ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 116-117.

In New York, the recruitment first phases saw the influx of large quantities of poor Irishmen, the workers who could not leave the great metropolis due to their poverty. The first Irish military organization to leave the city for the Union's defense was the Sixty-nine New York Militia, composed entirely of Irish and American-Irish. Its components were proud Irish.¹⁴⁴ Its departure created great excitement worldwide and attested to the ardor of Irish patriotism. Enthusiastic Irishwomen crowded the housetops and windows, exalting the crowd below, and several Irish civic societies escorted the parade. It was a triumphal pride procession for people always relegated to the American society's lower rank to contribute to the American cause.¹⁴⁵ In total, New York City produced only three Irish regiments that went to the front in the late fall and early winter of 1861, utterly full of officers and men.¹⁴⁶ They reached Camp California in Virginia, and there they converged with other Massachusetts regiments to the Irish Brigade.

Finally, Pennsylvania Irishmen recruited two complete Regiments and several companies of the regular and reserve force. Despite the presence of many Irish in the cities and the farms, Central West states produced only seven regiments.¹⁴⁷

The Confederate side did not present precise data about the foreign Regiments' exact number and conformation. The destruction caused by the battles in its territories wrecked the central part of the roll lists. However, the Irish community was the larger

¹⁴⁴ Shiels, "Ireland's Forgotten 'Great War'?", 31-32.

¹⁴⁵ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 119.

¹⁴⁶ Shiels, "Ireland's Forgotten 'Great War'?", 33.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

foreigner's community in the Confederate States and contributed to the formation of entire Regiments. Like the Northern Irish, the green flag seemed to exert magnetic control over the Irish communities. They tried to found more units, considering that Irishmen fight better "shoulder to shoulder with Irishmen as comrades, and always yearns to reflect honor on Old Ireland."¹⁴⁸ They formed at least three complete Regiments, and Irish companies contributed to the formation of multinational regiments.¹⁴⁹

Wherever on the battlefield, the fighters showed a green flag, the beholders knew that an Irish unit was fighting. One of the best-known Union Army brigades was indeed the Irish Brigade.¹⁵⁰ On the whole, it enlisted not less than seven thousand men, and when it returned to New York, at the end of the war, "its roll-call did not disclose as many as seven hundred."¹⁵¹ It experienced the most brutal fighting of the war and developed an essential reputation as a dash and gallantry unit. In 1862, the Irish Brigade earned growing fame for tenacity at Malvern Hill, Second Bull Run, Antietam, and Fredericksburg, and in the following years, it took part in the battle at Chancellorsville, Gettysburg, Cedar Run, Wilderness, Spotsylvania Court House, Cold Harbor, and Petersburg, in the first Division of the second Corps.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 91-98.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 91-98.

¹⁵⁰ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 82.

¹⁵¹ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 121.

¹⁵² Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 82.

During the battle of Bull Run, the Sixty-ninth New York, an Irish-born regiment of the Irish Brigade fought well showing formidable courage. It was appointed with other regiments to form a line of battle at the center of the enemy formation and move against the enemy to capture some abandoned batteries. Despite previous failure of other units, these courageous men reached the hill's top and moved close to the enemy batteries.¹⁵³

In September 1862, the Irish Brigade crossed Antietam Creek with the I Division of the II Corps. The Irish Brigade received orders to attack the excellent Confederate defensive position along the northern and eastern banks of the Sunken Road. The Irish Brigade advanced across the cornfield and approaching the slope before the Sunken Road, a tough fire fired. The Brigade commander ordered to charge in the desperate attempt to “push the enemy . . . as they displayed themselves to us, and relying on the impetuosity and recklessness of Irish soldiers in a charge, felt confident that before such a charge, the rebel column would give way and be dispersed.”¹⁵⁴

A portion of the Irish Brigade was able to advance under enemy fire and almost reached the Sunken Road. There, the Irishmen held their position while continuing to fire into the Confederate ranks. When the Brigade commander fell from his wounded horse, the Division commander relieved the unit and ordered them to withdraw. This action permitted the unit that replaced it to occupy a formidable site on that battlefield. The Irish Brigade did not personally drive the Confederate from the Sunken Road, but the unit

¹⁵³ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 488-489.

¹⁵⁴ US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1884), accessed December 15, 2020, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/>, quoted in Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 118.

received a large part of the merit for the final victory. General McClellan underlined the honorable reputation they earned during the Antietam battle. The Brigade's losses were terrific, nearly forty percent of the men: 540 casualties and two of the regiments with sixty percent of their number lost. The Irish Brigade maneuvered with precision under enemy fires and its never-failing promptness on every field were among the military unit's best characteristics.¹⁵⁵

Another important action the Brigade performed during the war was the desperate and unsuccessful attack in the Battle of Fredericksburg (December 1862). It remained in the American people's minds for a long time. The battle result was horrifying for the Brigade, and it lost forty-five percent of its men. Even worse were its leadership losses; forty-five officers were killed or wounded. The Irish Brigade never recovered from the losses and the moral devastation that came in Fredericksburg.¹⁵⁶

The Irish Brigade took successively part in the Chancellorsville Campaign. Its Irishmen helped to gather the fugitives after a strong Confederate flank attack perpetuated by Stonewall Jackson and marched from Scott's Mills to near the Chancellor House to support the 5th Maine Battery. The Brigade suffered 102 casualties in the fight, and the Brigade's total force reached only 418 men.¹⁵⁷

In May 1863, the Irish Brigade commander, General Meagher, asked the War Department to replenish his Brigade's losses after the heavy battles. The War Department

¹⁵⁵ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 117-120; Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 507-509.

¹⁵⁶ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 124-132.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 156.

refused probably because of his bad reputation among the other high-ranking army officers and his constant political speeches. The general opinion was that he regarded his brigade more as an independent symbol of Irish glory than an effective Union Army unit. Meagher resigned, and Colonel Kelly took command of the unit.¹⁵⁸

The Brigade took part in the battle of Gettysburg with a completely new organization and reduced forces of only five hundred men. Three Battalion of two companies each was the remainder of the onetime three New York regiments, while the 116th Pennsylvania had four companies. Although with small numbers, the Irish Brigade contributed to the final Union victory in the battle, and their fight in the wheat field represented one of the most important events of their battle experience. The residual part of the Irish Brigade took part even in the effort to get the crest of the Little Round Top, a crucial moment of the second day of the battle, and in the Union defense of Cemetery Ridge during Pickett's charge. The Irish Brigade's casualties were again heavy; it lost 202 of the 530 men who started Gettysburg's battle.¹⁵⁹ An Irish-American officer of another Union regiment described the Irish Brigade effort during the battle: "by their courage and bravery in the late fight, nobly sustained the honor of the land which gave them birth."¹⁶⁰ After Gettysburg, the Irish Brigade continued its service in the field, one

¹⁵⁸ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 156-159.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 160-167.

¹⁶⁰ *New York Irish-American*, July 25, 1863, quoted in Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 172.

of the longest in the entire Civil War, and “made it a sturdy tag attached to the Irish race’s history.”¹⁶¹

Another Irish unit that proved extraordinary military capabilities and courage during the battle of Gettysburg was the 69th Pennsylvania regiment of the Philadelphia Brigade. It was in the center of the Union formation when the Confederates tried the final counterattack on Cemetery Ridge’s slope. Thus, when the Confederate troops came out from the artillery fire smoke, the Irish freed all their fire on the enemy killing hundreds of them. These Irishmen were decisive in the final battle victory, and the fact that New York cared to appropriate money for a monument to commemorate their service at Gettysburg demonstrates the quality of their military actions.¹⁶²

In conclusion, the Irish community contributed largely to the growth of the United States. They occupied the lowest American social classes, and their work was indispensable for the West’s enlargement. Their manual workability and obstinacy were a resource for them, but even a limitation. The native-born probably relegated them to the poor classes to keep such a critical workforce resource. Additionally, when the Civil War started, they were ready to fight for their adoptive country, showing the battlefield Irish people’s proudness. Poor but proud Irishmen contributed to the war results; their contribution was indispensable for the Union to maintain its number superiority. At the end of the conflict, the Irish community was probably the most damaged by the war, especially considering the number of casualties that never went back home. Nevertheless,

¹⁶¹ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 123.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 521-528.

the Irish community gained its role in the American society, and the war accelerated their integration. A sense of community took the place of their individualism before the conflict.¹⁶³

¹⁶³ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 263-264.

CHAPTER 4

THE ITALIANS IN THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

Background

The first half of the nineteenth century saw significant transformations in the United States economy and society. In the transformation process, the immigrants from multiple European countries became part of the American society and helped assimilate the enhancements fueling the industrial revolution innovations. The growth of big cities and metropolis requested a large amount of manpower that could be satisfied only with newcomers from other countries. Between 1845 and 1854, about 2.4 million migrants arrived on America's shores. They were about 14.5 percent of the total United States population at that time. Hence, it included about 12,000 Italians, and the central part arrived in American ports by 1860.¹⁶⁴ The Italian number appears limited if compared to the more considerable amount of Irish and Germans. The Italian peninsula's late unification into one sovereign state was the major reason for that limited number of Italians. 1860 was the year of the unofficial Italian unification, and the various Italians' peninsula kingdoms merged in the Kingdom of Sardinia under the House of Savoy leadership. The young Italian government and the people were still celebrating the unification and figuring out how to support different people's coexistence after such long years of division. Hence, the Italian government did not support people's migration

¹⁶⁴ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 1.

economically, and it was not easy to migrate because people had to pay the travel expenses by themselves.¹⁶⁵

The records of the Italians' presence and contribution to the United States' development during the first three centuries of the nation's history are little. However, the Italian contribution to America, as for all Americans immigrant groups, "lies in its enduring characteristics that helped to make up the fiber of the American nation. In assessing that contribution, scholars have hardly begun to scratch the surface."¹⁶⁶ Many know Italians like Christopher Columbus and Giovanni Verrazzano, but few know the Italian-American immigrants' legacy in the centuries before the Civil War.

This section describes the Italian presence in the United States before the Civil War. The purpose is to demonstrate that the Italians roots were well settled in the United States when the civil war broke out and underlined that the Italian communities fully embraced the American cause.

The Italian presence in the United States is more ancient than commonly known. Italians lived in Spain's North American areas and explored the Old Southwest territories for Spain's government years before the English started the American colonization.¹⁶⁷ For instance, in 1607, many Italians lived in the English permanent settlements in Virginia, New England, and Georgia, and in the Chesapeake Bay, within the English community. In 1622, sixteen Venetian glassmakers moved with the English to

¹⁶⁵ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 1.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 4.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., 5.

Jamestown, hoping to create a future profitable industry for the colony. In Maryland, a cluster of Italian Catholics migrated to the Atlantic seaboard looking for religious freedom. Although it is difficult to determine their actual numbers, they were numerous enough to deserve mention in some Maryland General Assembly law. By 1720, 400 Italian families lived in Louisiana, imported by the French during the colonization period as soldiers. Italian groups also participated in England's early colonization efforts.¹⁶⁸

One century later, a Venetian, Onorio Razzolini, emigrated to Maryland and became the first "Italian native to occupy a public office in the American colonies." He arrived in 1732 as an English Lord's son tutor, but later, the Lord put him in charge of the colony's defense. Other Italian groups resided in New Netherlands (later called New York). Nevertheless, the majority of the Italian population resided in New Jersey, the Carolinas, and Delaware, where a group of persecuted Italian Protestants from the Piedmont region settled in New Castle.¹⁶⁹

As the English colonies flourished in the second half of 1700s, further Italians moved to North America. Despite their modest numbers, Italians probably took part in the late eighteenth-century revolutionary movement. It is not clear how many Italians served in the American military during the Revolutionary War; however, the names of some French Army regiments (Third Piedmont, the Thirtieth du Perche, and the Royal Italien) let us hypothesize they were numerous. Italians like Filippo Mazzei, Francis Vigo, and William Paca contributed as civilians to the American revolutionary cause.

¹⁶⁸ Giovanni Schiavo, *Four Centuries of Italian American History* (New York: The Vigo Press, 1955), 93, 99, 103.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 110, 148-153.

Mazzei was an agriculturist operating an Italian food import business in London. There, he met Benjamin Franklin, who invited him to test Italian agricultural products in Virginia.¹⁷⁰ He arrived in America in 1773, and George Washington and Thomas Jefferson financed his activities. Although officially committed to the olives and silk plants, Mazzei joined the American revolutionary movement. He was a fervid egalitarian and published some articles suggesting the immediate separation of England's colonies. In one famous article, translated by Jefferson, he wrote: "All men are by nature equally free and independent...each equality is necessary in order to create a free government. All men must be equal to each other in natural law." His first sentence was similar to the ruling in the American Declaration of Independence, "all men are created equal."¹⁷¹

Another Italian-American patriot who made an indelible impact on the Revolutionary War was Giuseppe Maria Francesco Vigo. He contributed to General George R. Clark's campaign in the Northwest Territory, seizing the British territory for the newly independent United States. His actions were decisive for General Clark's campaign's fate, and he earned American citizenship and the colonel rank in the militia. Finally, William Paca was a Revolutionary War patriot and postwar governor of Maryland. He was the only Italian American to sign the Declaration of Independence.¹⁷²

Between the beginning of the nineteenth century to the American Civil War, the Italian presence in the United States primarily increased, with a growth rate of almost 300

¹⁷⁰ Schiavo, *Four Centuries of Italian American History*, 129-130,136-139.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 132-135.

¹⁷² Ibid., 122.

percent. The Italians grew from the 3,645 of 1850 to the 10,518 of 1860, while between 1820-1850, just 4,560 Italians arrived in the United States. When the Civil War broke out, groups of Italians were in almost every Union state; the majority were in New York (1,862), Louisiana (1,134), Pennsylvania (622), Missouri (554), Ohio (407), and Tennessee (373). The state of New York was the one that had experienced a substantial increase in Italian citizens during the second half of the nineteenth century.¹⁷³ One aspect that largely contributed to this immigration increase was the inauguration of the naval steam line between Philadelphia and Genoa. The project realization took place in July 1856, after the Paris Peace Conference, even if the Kingdom of Sardinia Minister of Agriculture and Commerce, Cavour, agreed to it years early. The final plan provided two steamers from Rio de Janeiro (Brazil) to Genoa and two from New York to Genoa.

The nature of Italian immigration to the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century has been a discussed point for a long time. It generated some problems between the two governments, inducing the United States to introduce control measures to check the mass migration. Many of the Italians living in New York were patriots released to look for asylum in the United States. Among these, there were many outstanding men, some of whom succeeded in establishing themselves in the American professional world. In this sense, some examples were Giuseppe Avezzana, Giuseppe Garibaldi, G. F. Secchi de Casali, and L. W. Tinelli.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Howard R. Marraro, "Italians in New York in the eighteen fifties," *New York History* 30, no. 2 (April 1949): 181, accessed January 12, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23148214>.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 182-183.

The immigration increases of the following years exacerbate the debate on the nature of the migration: were they real exiles for political or religious intolerance or criminals sent overseas to free the Italian prisons? In January 1855, the debate became even more heated, with the arrival of sixty-four immigrants from Sardinian Reign. The editor of the only Italian newspaper *L'Eco d'Italia* of New York, G. F. Secchi de Casali, lamented exile's non-political nature, classifying those men as criminals. The United States introduced the American consuls' visa requirement in the European ports to prevent these incidents, and the American migration phenomenon diminished.¹⁷⁵

The last interesting point to analyze is the Italian conditions in American societies and their integration process. The majority of the Italian exiles who emigrated to the United States were in dire straits and needed relief through public and private charity. American citizens were worried about the Italians' conditions and, over the years, initiated multiple initiatives to help them grow in social condition and prestige. They organized a Committee for Italian Political Refugees to provide relief to these groups of Italians.¹⁷⁶ The Children's Aid Society, a private child welfare non-profit founded in New York City in 1853, developed multiple initiatives to improve Italian children's condition, especially those living in New York. Among the various initiatives, they opened a school where they learned to read in Italian and English and knew the country's fundamental cultural bases.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Marraro, "Italians in New York in the eighteen fifties," 189-191.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 183-184.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., 285-287.

Another significant initiative to improve Italians' social and economic conditions in New York City was the Society of Italian Union and Benevolence. It aimed primarily at mutual aid but assumed increasing importance at keeping alive a real feeling of Italian nationality over the years.¹⁷⁸

In conclusion, the Italians in the United States before the Civil War outbreak were numerous, and their condition and integration in the United States society and culture improved over the years. Only the New York Italian colony numbered about two thousand people when the Civil War broke out. Among them, many were poor people but generally competent and with great intellect. Many Italians were doctors, lawyers, and artists that gained the respect of Native Americans. Italians were a foreign group that, although not as numerous as that of other nations or not specialized in the art of war, made a compelling and practical contribution to the US internal conflict's fate.¹⁷⁹

The Italians in Blue (Union Army) and Giuseppe Garibaldi

Historians' tendency to consider the American Civil War as an internal conflict completely disregards the role that the most traumatic event in American history played for many immigrants. It was a struggle between native-born people to defend or preserve the Union or the Confederacy, but among them, many Europeans understood the nationalistic reach of the conflict and decided to protect their adoptive country.

In the North, they strongly opposed secession and slavery, considered the ideological reason for the secession. Many Italians were ideologically supportive of

¹⁷⁸ Marraro, "Italians in New York in the eighteen fifties," 288-290.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 300.

President Abraham Lincoln's attempt to preserve the Union.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, in evaluating the sympathy that many Italians felt for the United States, one must consider a factor that many Americans did not know. The Italians were proud that America had been "discovered" by the Italian Amerigo Vespucci and took its name.¹⁸¹

After Fort Sumter's defeat in April 1861, President Lincoln called for 75,000 volunteers for the militia to provide a public defense to the Union and suppress the rebellion in the southern states. President Lincoln's call created a patriotic surge throughout the Northern states to preserve the Union.¹⁸² Excited men rushed to join the newly formed regiments throughout the states of the North and a large part in the metropolitan area of New York. Immigrants anxious to prove their loyalty to their recently adopted country were caught up in this fervor.¹⁸³ Some Italian-American leaders in New York City were grateful for the opportunity to earn the benefits of native-born citizens through their service. Considering the important chance to improve their social condition and the possibility to prove their committed devotion to their adopted country, most of the Italians and Italian-Americans moved to organize a military unit to assist in

¹⁸⁰ Valentino J. Belfiglio, "Italians and the American Civil War," *Italian American* 4, no. 2 (Spring/Summer 1978): 163, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41330626>.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² *New York Herald*, April 19 and April 25, 1861, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1861-04-19/ed-1/>.

¹⁸³ *New York Daily Tribune*, April 27, 1861, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030213/1861-04-27/ed-1/>.

the Union defense. They did not want to watch their adopted and future country involved in a civil and destructive war without doing anything. They went as volunteers to serve the United States Army, the majority fought for the Union cause, but others choose the Confederate Army.¹⁸⁴ Most Italians and Italian-Americans enlisted in various regiments that appeared in New York, but a particular part of them embraced the dream of an organic Italian unit, the Garibaldi Guard.

One of the most famous Italians in New York, G. F. Secchi de Casali, published a flier for the recruitment of an Italian Legion in his newspaper, the Italian language *L'Eco d'Italia*. Alessandro Repetti, an Italian exile in Switzerland for disseminating Italian Unification political propaganda, supported de Casali's initiative. They opened an enlistment office for the Italian Legion in midtown Manhattan, and their initial project envisaged an entire Italian regiment, from the Officers to the troops. At the same time, Luigi W. Tinelli, an Italian patriot businessman exiled in 1836 for taking part in the revolutionary nationalistic organization *Giovine Italia* di Giuseppe Mazzini, was using his considerable contacts between the Italian community in New York to organize his regiment.¹⁸⁵ A local newspaper reported his effort:

A regiment of Italians, under Col. Tinelli, is in the process of organization-a regiment which will include, as we are informed, all the organ grinders of the

¹⁸⁴ John M. Pellicano, *Conquer or Die: The 39th New York Volunteer Infantry, Garibaldi Guard: A Military History* (New York: Pellicano Publications, 1996), 21.

¹⁸⁵ Michael Bacarella, *Lincoln's Foreign Legion: The 39th New York Infantry, The Garibaldi Guard* (Shippensburg, PA: The White Mane Press, 1996), 4-9.

city-a hardy and enduring race, familiarized with hardship and exposure who will make excellent soldiers..¹⁸⁶

Tinelli successfully recruited several men from the Guardia Nazionale Italiana militia club and former Garibaldians and veterans of the Crimean War in Italy and the United States. However, he was unable to induce enough of his countrymen to form his regiment. As a result, Tinelli joined forces with Repetti and Secchi de Casali. Nevertheless, after an initial volunteer's enthusiasm, the recruits started to diminish, and their unity of effort did not produce enough force to complete a regiment..¹⁸⁷ Thus, the number of Italians residing in New York, in age and health to volunteer for the Union Army, was insufficient..¹⁸⁸

Secchi de Casali, Tinelli, and Repetti joined their forces with a Hungarian refugee, Frederick G. D'Utassy, who likewise was recruiting New York City immigrants for fighting on the Union side..¹⁸⁹ Finally, their united effort produced a regiment of 1,086 men from different nationalities, with each company having its own ethnic identity. This multilingual regiment, the Union Army 39th New York Volunteer Infantry, took its name after the Italian Risorgimento symbol and hero of the two worlds, General Giuseppe Garibaldi. It included ten separate ethnic companies: three German, three

¹⁸⁶ *New York Herald*, April 27, 1861, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1861-04-27/ed-1/seq-4/>.

¹⁸⁷ Pellicano, *Conquer or Die*, 23-24.

¹⁸⁸ Howard R. Marraro, *Lincoln's Volunteers From New York* (New York: New York History, 1943), 56-57.

¹⁸⁹ *New York Times*, May 9, 1861, 8, ProQuest Ebrary, accessed December 11, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/hnpnewyorktimes/news/fromDat 2>.

Hungarian, one Swiss, one French, one Spanish and Portuguese, and one Italian. Colonel Fred G. D'Utassy took the command as the main enlister and established his headquarters at 594 Broadway, New York City.¹⁹⁰ Alexander Repetti became the Lieutenant Colonel and Tinelli the Major. This multi-cultural regiment attracted multiple interests, and the local newspaper commented:

What glorious reminiscences of the past, what thrilling anticipation of the future, cluster around the battle name assumed by the brave men who, under the flag of the country of their adoption, once again fly to arms-not now in a death struggle for freedom; not now, as heretofore, to woo, and if possible to win, the glorious prerogative of freemen, but to fight to the death for what which they having once secured they are determined to preserve. Freedom has been no part of the inheritance of these men, but it has been their dream by night as it has been their struggle by day; and none can so well value freedom as those who, highly appreciating it, nobly fight for it.¹⁹¹

The story of the 39th New York Volunteer Infantry Regiment, the Garibaldi Guard, is a complex one, and the name that the recruiters chose for it, from the famous Italian patriot Giuseppe Garibaldi, “gave it a special heritage and a unique character.”¹⁹² A temporal comparison could be raised between Italian and American peoples of the historical period, committed with all their energies to affirming a national idea.

Garibaldi metaphorically inspired the Northern and Southern Americans with his nationalistic emotions and the dream of liberty that shook Europe and Italy in the same period. Those dreams of freedom and self-government were the fundamental idea that

¹⁹⁰ *New York Times*, May 9, 1861, 8.

¹⁹¹ *New York Herald*, May 10, 1861, 8, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1861-05-10/ed-1/seq-8/>.

¹⁹² Bacarella, *Lincoln's Foreign Legion*, vi.

guided Europeans to leave for a new American world. Garibaldi was a central figure of the time and fought in different continents and countries to preserve the liberty ideal. He could be considered the Italian counterpart of the hero who contributed significantly to the Civil War's fate, General Ulysses S. Grant.¹⁹³ In 1860, less than a month before the start of the American Civil War, with the secret support and connivance of Vittorio Emanuele, he led 1,000 volunteers to take Sicily and, subsequently, the Kingdom of Naples. Hence, Garibaldi ceded his conquests to Vittorio Emanuele di Savoia, who became the first king of Italy in 1861. The American Civil War ended on April 9, 1865, when Confederate General Lee surrendered to General Grant to the Appomattox Court House, Virginia. The Italian War between the Italian states ended on September 20, 1870, when Italian troops took the Papal State.¹⁹⁴

Garibaldi was the son of a Sardinian Merchant Marine and received a practical education of sea life. Furthermore, because of the diversity of cultures and races he encountered in the ports where he traveled with his father, he had a deep respect for cultural diversity and universal equality.¹⁹⁵ He became a source of interest of President Lincoln, as proved by correspondence exchange sent to Caprera (the island where Garibaldi retired) and some American diplomats offering him the command of a division during the American Civil War.¹⁹⁶ He was an iconic figure of the nineteenth century,

¹⁹³ Belfiglio, "Italians and the American Civil War," 163.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Bacarella, *Lincoln's Foreign Legion*, 1-3.

¹⁹⁶ H. Nelson Gay, "Lincoln's offer of a command to Garibaldi: light on a disputed point in history," *Century Magazine*, 75 (November 1907): 67, quoted in Howard R. Marraro, "Lincoln's Offer of a Command to Garibaldi: Further Light on a

with stories of his adventurous life gaining international fame as he defended equalitarian ideals worldwide. He left home aboard a Russian ship and traveled between the Mediterranean and the Black Seas at seventeen. In 1833, he met Mazzini and joined the *Giovine Italia*, the political movement for Italian youth born to create a united Italian republic. The movement promoted a general insurrection in the Italian states and in the Austrian' lands aimed at unifying the Italian peninsula. He was accused of illegal political propaganda and had to leave the country.¹⁹⁷

In 1836 he went to Brazil, where he took part in the Rio Grande del Sul revolt against the Brazilian government and personally organized an expedition with that purpose. In the same year, he moved to Montevideo (Uruguay) and joined rebel forces fighting the dictator Juan Manuel de la Rosa. His commitment to liberty contributed significantly to the Uruguayan independence.¹⁹⁸ In April 1843, Garibaldi founded and led a sizeable polyglot organization known as Garibaldini. Their uniform was a red tunic, and Italians, Spaniards, Frenchmen, Portuguese, Englishmen, North Americans, Brazilians, and freed slaves were his unit members. In 1848, Garibaldi finally sailed back to Italy during one of the most boisterous periods in modern European history, mainly influenced by liberal and nationalistic undercurrents. In 1849, under the guidance of Giuseppe Mazzini, the Italian nationalist movement proclaimed the Roman Republic in

Disputed Point of History,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 36, no. 3, (September 1943): 237, accessed February 2, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40188072>.

¹⁹⁷ Gay, “Lincoln’s offer of a command to Garibaldi,” 70-72.

¹⁹⁸ Jasper Ridley, *Garibaldi* (London: Phoenix Press, 1974), 41-47, 94-99.

Rome. Garibaldi had the task of defending this new sovereign state with his legion. French troops (35,000 soldiers) sent to restore the papal rule in central Italy defeated Garibaldi and his Garibaldinians and proclaimed the end of the Roman Republic's short life. Garibaldi sailed for America. His imminent visit to the United States brought great excitement to the Italian-American community in New York. Garibaldi arrived in New York in June, and the Italian Committee of the United States welcomed him. A group of prominent Italian refugees hosted him. Some of the most important Italians were Antonio Meucci, a successful business leader and future inventor of the telephone, and Giuseppe Avezzana, an Italian General during the Italian revolution attempt that guided the *Giovine Italia* revolutionary.¹⁹⁹

Giuseppe Garibaldi's arrival in the "land of liberty" created a great deal of excitement in New York and across America. Declining a hero's welcome, Garibaldi hoped to live an unassuming life in New York. He chose to earn a living.²⁰⁰ However, he soon made plans to return to his adored homeland. Leaving from the city of Baltimore, he returned to Italy for good in 1854. He lived quietly for a long time on the tiny island of Caprera, located in the Tyrrhenian Sea, which soon became the homeland of the Garibaldinians. In 1860, as the United States started the crisis that led to the Civil War, the Italian general and his "Redshirts" conducted a brilliant campaign in Sicily and Naples, securing those territories for the King of Italy. Although the king appointed Garibaldi a general in the Sardinian Army, he asked to become Naples's governor.

¹⁹⁹ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 26-27.

²⁰⁰ Ridley, *Garibaldi*, 357-359.

Vittorio Emanuele II denied his request. Disillusioned by the king's response but proud to have conducted one of the most daring military campaigns in modern European history, he returned to his island of Caprera.²⁰¹

By the summer of 1861, some American journalists started to spread the news that President Lincoln was considering giving Garibaldi the Union Army's command. Well-known across the United States, his arrival in America would have brought a great deal of excitement inside and outside the Italian-American community. Although the real foundation of President Lincoln's interest in Garibaldi has been for a long time a contested debate, it is a credible hypothesis to think that President Lincoln believed that, based on the description of his deeds, "the Italian general could strike a quick and decisive blow against the Confederacy, thus avoiding a protracted and bloody conflict."²⁰² The voice for the recruitment of Garibaldi in the Union Army intensified after the humiliating Union defeat at the battle of Bull Run. During this uncertain period, there were several meetings between Garibaldi and representatives of the Lincoln government. Nevertheless, Garibaldi never left Caprera for the United States, but his nationalistic ideals and the hope for freedom and equality profoundly influenced the American community, especially the Italian immigrants.²⁰³

²⁰¹ Ridley, *Garibaldi*, 496-506; Gay, "Lincoln's offer of a command to Garibaldi," 65.

²⁰² Lisa Sergio, *Lincoln and Garibaldi*, (paper, Georgetown University Special Collection, Lauinger Library, Washington, DC), quoted in Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 31-32.

²⁰³ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 32-38.

In April 1861, thousands of Italians, veterans of General Garibaldi's Sicilian and southern Italian campaigns, offered their services to the Union Army and Navy. Secchi de Casali's initial recruitment call intended to attract even Italian soldiers from Italy. Hence, many Italians invaded American consulates throughout Italy, willing to enroll for the American cause. In Turin, the response was so overwhelming that the State Department officials placed a notice in the city's newspaper to inform Italian citizens that the US government had not authorized the recruitment of soldiers in Italy.²⁰⁴

By the first ten days of May 1861, the regiment completed its organization and equipment, but the uniforms were not ready.²⁰⁵ The official inspection of the Garibaldi Guard took place on May 14, 1861. A week later, on May 22, the Guard marched for a full-dress parade at Tompkins Park, New York City.²⁰⁶ On this occasion, the regiment showed the three battlefield standards flags. One of those was such an important symbol; it was the original flag that Garibaldi carried in Italy throughout the independence wars of 1848 and 1849. He brought the flag to America in a previous journey and gave it to General Avezzana. The official flag was the standard Hungarian flag with the motto "*Vivecere aut morire*" on one side and its English translation, "Conquer or Die," on the other side.²⁰⁷ On May 23, the regiment marched through a fervent mob on Lafayette

²⁰⁴ Belfiglio. *Italians and the American Civil War*, 164.

²⁰⁵ *New York Times*, May 3, 1861, 9; May 8, 1861, 8; May 10, 1861, 5, ProQuest Ebrary, accessed December 11, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/hnpnewyorktimes/news/fromDat>.

²⁰⁶ *New York Times*, May 18, 1861, 8, ProQuest Ebrary, accessed December 11, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/hnpnewyorktimes/news/fromDat>.

²⁰⁷ Marraro, *Lincoln's Volunteers From New York*, 6.

Place in New York City.²⁰⁸ Frederick D’Utassy addressed his men about the significance of the colors:

This is your native flag to which is added the emblem of the Union, and the almost sacred name of Garibaldi-let its past, present, and future glory be your guiding star. Men, who have so manfully fought in the glorious cause of liberty in their own Fatherlands and who have now so nobly and generously volunteered their services to their adopted country will not fail to gain new honors and glory.²⁰⁹

The Italians enlisted in the regiment took part in Company A, but some Italian-Americans were also in leadership positions of other companies (Giovanni Marco Colani served as the first lieutenant of the Swiss Company). They came from the poor immigrant neighborhoods of New York, and they were mainly vendors of plaster statuary and organ-grinders. A large part of them were political refugees of the Risorgimento, exiled for political propaganda. Regiment quartermaster sergeant W. R Molo and commissary sergeant Alex Biscaccianti were Italians. Captain Caesar Osnaghi was the first company commander. At the same time, other commissioned officers and non-commissioned officers included First Lieutenants Antonio dal Molin and Andrew Fontana, and Sergeants Annibal Ferrari, Angelo Gori, Giovanni Ferralasco, Raffael Frixione, and

²⁰⁸ *New York Herald*, May 23, 1861, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1861-05-23/ed-1/seq-8/>.

²⁰⁹ Frederick D’Utassy, “Address by Frederick D’Utassy to officers and men of the Garibaldi Guard,” May 29, 1861, Frederick D’Utassy Collection, New York Historical Society, New York, quoted in Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 53.

Edward Boas, all with previous Garibaldinian experiences.²¹⁰ The Garibaldi Guard attracted these immigrants for a variety of reasons. Ideology was one of them, but the most important was possibly economics. All the new enlistees in the Union Army received thirteen dollars a month, higher than what most of them could earn. Moreover, the enlistment qualified them for state and federal government cash bounties, and, at the end of the War, the government promised property, land, and citizenship. These were significant encouragements for Italians and other newly arrived foreigners, willing to assimilate into American society and accelerate their naturalization, creating better economic opportunities after the War.²¹¹

Once the officers and the staff were complete, and the enlisted were enough to declare the main enlistment closed, it was necessary to conclude the final organizational and logistical details before the unit could leave for the front.²¹² Besides, it was still missing the chaplain and training while equipment reception was still ongoing. Finally, on May 28, 1861, the Garibaldi Guard left New York. After being reviewed in Lafayette Place, the regiment marched to the Bowery and up Broadway and boarded two ships at

²¹⁰ *New York Times*, May 26, 1861, ProQuest Ebrary, accessed December 11, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/hnpnewyorktimes/news/fromDat>; Bacarella, *Lincoln's Foreign Legion*, 264-268.

²¹¹ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 36, 140-141; Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 54.

²¹² *New York Times*, June 6, 1861, ProQuest Ebrary, accessed December 11, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/hnpnewyorktimes/news/fromDat>.

the Cortland Street Ferry to Washington, DC.²¹³ They marched through the streets of New York City with their attractive new uniforms.²¹⁴

The uniform of the chasseurs is a tunic made of strong, serviceable blue cloth, trimmed with red braid; the trousers are of the same material, with a red stripe, but made short and tight at the bottom, so as to be covered by a strong, black leather gaiter, which comes up to the thick of the leg.²¹⁵

Upon their arrival in Washington, the nation's capital, the Garibaldi Guard marched past the White House, where President Lincoln and Secretary of State William Seward reviewed it.²¹⁶

After some days, the regiment reached Camp Grinnell (Virginia), where it bivouacked for several days. The First Brigade of the Fifth Division was its higher headquarters, in Brigadier General Irvin McDowell's Department of Northeastern Virginia.²¹⁷ The 39th, Garibaldi Guard's first task was to protect the capital city from a Confederate attack.²¹⁸

The time for the exhibition and the triumphal parade was now a reminiscence. It came the time for the war training and military life's hardness, apparently the most difficult for the Garibaldi Guard. Its members had to adapt to camp life's realities, and it

²¹³ Pellicano, *Conquer or Die*, 24.

²¹⁴ Bacarella, *Lincoln's Foreign Legion*, 31-34.

²¹⁵ *New York Herald*, May 10, 1861, 1.

²¹⁶ *New York Times*, June 9, 1861, 1, ProQuest Ebrary, accessed December 11, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/hnpnewyorktimes/news/fromDat>.

²¹⁷ US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 2, 315.

²¹⁸ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 56.

was not simple for people coming from civilian life. Nevertheless, the adaptation was even more difficult because of the carelessness of the regiment commander Colonel D'Utassy for his soldiers' welfare. He "cared less for his mob of immigrants than he did for the fortune he could gain through its exploitation." He delegated the main part of the commander responsibilities to Lieutenant Colonel Repetti, certainly more popular in the regiment, especially among the Italians. He was even responsible for giving military instruction to his men.²¹⁹

The lack of leadership soon started to create severe disciplinary problems, exacerbated by communication difficulties, cultural differences, and camp life complications. Incidents involving excessive drinking and gambling began to increase in every Union Army regiment, especially in the Garibaldi Guard. The animosity between the various nationalities that sometimes regressed into physical confrontations caused even the refusal to accept officers of different nationalities in the ranks.²²⁰

Suddenly, one of the regiment's founding officers, Major Luigi Tinelli, resigned on June 10, 1861. He informed Colonel D'Utassy that "Important engagements, connected with public service, will in all probability compel me to leave very soon for Europe, for an indefinite period."²²¹ Colonel D'Utassy accepted with regret Tinelli's resignation. However, Tinelli did not leave military service, as within a short time, he received an appointment as lieutenant-colonel of the Ninetieth New York Volunteers.

²¹⁹ Bacarella, *Lincoln's Foreign Legion*, 36-39.

²²⁰ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 58.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 59.

Tinelli understood the “unsolvable nature” of the Garibaldi Guard’s problems and sought to separate himself from the regiment’s reputation before his reputation suffered.²²² His instinct was correct as the Garibaldi Guard soon suffered through a series of uncomfortable episodes. Hence, his sudden departure from the Garibaldi Guard created significant consequences to the regiment and particularly shocked his Italian fellows. Sadness and panic started to spread among the Italians who enlisted because of him.²²³

Additionally, other reasons for dissatisfaction and objection were weapons and equipment. During the recruitment, the enlisting regiment officers promised soldiers the finest weapons and equipment, including new rifled-muskets, to attract recent immigrants. Therefore, they offered the possibility of joining an elite unit. Thus, they received 100 new Neall’s breech-loading rifles from the Union Defense Committee for their march to Washington, DC (May 1861). Nevertheless, they had to return the rifles upon their arrival in Washington. This episode started to exacerbate men’s dissatisfaction.²²⁴ Some companies started to accept the temporary assignment of antiquated and inferior muskets (Spanish and French companies), while others persisted in their refusal and instigated the other groups. Soon real battles started among national groups, and Colonel D’Utassy could not quiet the protests. Anger over the weapons situation and an absence of competent leadership had created a severe morale problem in

²²² Bacarella, *Lincoln’s Foreign Legion*, 28-45.

²²³ *Ibid.*, 39.

²²⁴ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 57-58.

the unit that eventually led to endemic insubordination. Moreover, soldiers did not receive their payment and officers their commissions.²²⁵

Despite the serious discipline problems that affected the Garibaldi Guard, their external appearance during the military parade was still outstanding. Thus, on the Fourth of July, the Garibaldi Guard joined many other regiments in a colossal parade through the streets of Washington, DC.²²⁶ The regiment looked like a cohesive, well-disciplined fighting unit. A spectator in the crowd wrote a letter to Colonel D'Utassy to underline their performance:

dress and its artistic ornaments so harmonious and in good taste, the cadence of the step, the tenure of the offices, the picturesque and suitable costume of the vivandieres, [which] all created quite an effect and elicited loud hurrahs from a hitherto silent crowd. Nor was this all; every man had a sprig of box or cedar in his Garibaldi hat and on passing the stand, company by company, pulled these out and threw them toward the President, making a perfect shower of evergreens, but without the slightest degree disturbing the ranks or the perfect step of their marching. The Colonel, too, showed off on his horse, on passing the stand, and saluted with infinite grace.²²⁷

However, serious moral and disciplinary problems continued to affect the Garibaldi Guard. The main complaints were again the promised new rifled-muskets. Some Italian officers, including the Italian company's Captain Caesar Osnaghi and Lieutenant Ignazio Allegretti, originated a petition demanding the rifles and officers and

²²⁵ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 59.

²²⁶ *New York Herald*, July 4, 1861, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1861-06-04/ed-1/>.

²²⁷ John D. Hayes, ed., *Samuel Francis DuPont: A Selection from his Civil War Letters*, vol. 1 (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1969), 93-94, quoted in Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 59.

men's pay. The petition underlined the soldiers' intention to die for the cause they enlisted, but they demanded the leadership respect the enrollment promise, giving them modern weapons.²²⁸ Colonel D'Utassy tried to placate the disorder that became worse day by day. He reorganized the 39th regiment and redesignated the companies. The attempt was ineffective for the discipline and morale of the unit. The second instance of riotous conduct broke out two days later, this time even more serious than before. The Hungarian company left the camp without any authorization and tried to get to Washington asking for more modern weapons. Major Waring, Tinelli's substitute, ordered his men to stop them before crossing the Columbia District. The attempt to halt the Hungarian company was successful, but the Garibaldi Guard's bad reputation started to circulate through the Union Army.²²⁹

Meanwhile, President Lincoln decided to send the Union troops to Richmond, Virginia's capital city. Worried that the 90 days enlistment period was expiring, he enforced the decision to leave the Washington defenses to march toward Centreville, Virginia. On July 18, skirmishes started between the Union and Confederate armies along Bull Run. Union troop commander was General McDowell. On July 21, he prepared and executed a detailed attack plan that almost defeated the Confederate defenses. However, Confederate reinforcements arrived just in time and changed the battle's outcome. General McDowell had to order a withdrawal to avoid his unit's collapse. Untrained and

²²⁸ D'Utassy, "Address by to officers and men of the Garibaldi Guard."

²²⁹ Pellicano, *Conquer or Die*, 36-37.

undisciplined soldiers retreated quickly without organization, leaving in some cases weapons and equipment on the battlefield.²³⁰

During this initial military campaign, the Garibaldi Guard took part in McDowell's army as First Brigade (Fifth Division) reserve and deployed near Centreville. As the Northern army started to retreat, the brigade commander, Colonel Blenker, ordered his units to advance to hold back the Confederate advance. Because of its reputation, the Garibaldi Guard was First Brigade rear guard and confronted the enemy's cavalry. The first battle results were not encouraging, and the Garibaldi Guard left on the battlefield two dead, five seriously wounded, and fifty-four missing in action.²³¹ So wrote Colonel Blenker some days after the battle:

The officers and men did their duty admirably, and the undersigned commander deems it his duty to express herewith officially his entire satisfaction with the conduct of his Brigade. The Eighth, the Twenty-ninth, and the Garibaldi Guard regiments arrived in Washington in good order at 6 o'clock, after nineteen hours march. Thus far, my report of the action taken by my Brigade in the engagement on the unfortunate day at Bull Run.²³²

The Garibaldi Guard returned to the camp with the rest of the Union Army. Some days after the Bull Run debacle, the Union Army created the Army of the Potomac, and General McClellan became the commander. He had an important military reputation, distinguished for his military capabilities during the Mexican War. He studied the European tactics during the Crimean War and, at that time, he was one of the few Union

²³⁰ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 62.

²³¹ US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 2, 315, 335, 425-428.

²³² *Ibid.*, 428.

generals to have beaten the Confederate Army in battle (Rich Mountain battle, western Virginia). He apparently enjoyed Colonel Blenker's foreign troops, and he visited more than one time their camp. However, he did not have an accurate knowledge of foreigners, and in his speech, he often showed his firm reliance on the foreigners' inferiority stereotypes. He openly criticized Secretary Seward's attempts to recruit foreign officers, noting that, with some exceptions, "few were of the slightest use to us."²³³

While General McClellan was organizing and trying to instill military discipline in the Army of Potomac, the Garibaldi Guard continued to have intense problems. After the battle experience, the main issue to face was the high percentage of resignations and desertions. By the end of August, more than fifty percent of the original staff officers and commanders had left the unit to look for luck in other units or, simply, to distance themselves from that bad experience. Some of the main Italians who resigned included Captain Caesar Osnaghi, Lieutenant Ignazio Allegretti, and Second Lieutenant Ciro P. Verdi. Allegretti resigned on September 21 for a family emergency, but after twenty days, he reenlisted in the Twenty-ninth New York Cavalry. Verdi left the Guard to join the 101st New York Infantry.²³⁴ The resignation phenomenon of officers had a harsh impact on the morale of the enlisted rank. Thus, almost two hundred men left in the following two months, and only about twenty percent of the initial men enrolled in the Garibaldi Guard were still in its ranks. Tough military camp life conditions, ineffective leadership (their resignation), and the impossibility to guarantee better and modern

²³³ Bacarella, *Lincoln's Foreign Legion*, 67-69.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 58, 267-268.

weapons were the main reason that caused the resignation problems.²³⁵ Despite that, the Garibaldi Guard continued to attract foreigners to recruit and continued its American Civil War experience gripped by internal conflict, undisciplined behavior, and leadership troubles. Its first military service month was afflicted and arduous, as was the entire American Civil War experience.²³⁶

In April 1862, the Garibaldi Guard served in the Shenandoah Valley, and in June, it took part in the Cross Keys battle.²³⁷ Even in this case, the battle's results were catastrophic, and the Guard lost forty-four men (ten killed or mortally wounded). Continuing its misfortune, in September 1862, the regiment had to defend Harpers Ferry in Virginia, an area between the Potomac and the Shenandoah rivers.²³⁸ Unfortunately, that position fell to General Jackson's forces during General Lee's invasion of Maryland. The Confederate Army captured more than 500 soldiers from the Thirty-ninth.²³⁹ The Garibaldi Guard and the other Union soldiers captured at Harpers Ferry received battlefield paroles from the Confederate. They moved first to Annapolis (Maryland) and

²³⁵ Marraro, *Lincoln's Volunteers From New York*, 65.

²³⁶ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 65-67.

²³⁷ US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 12, part 1 reports (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1884), accessed December 15, 2020, 654-664, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi>.

²³⁸ *New York Herald*, September 18, 1862, Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers, Library of Congress, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn83030313/1862-09-18/ed-1/seq-4/>.

²³⁹ US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 12, part 1 reports, 654-664; Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 66.

then to Baltimore. Finally, Union forces took them to Camp Douglas in Illinois, a Union Prison for Confederate prisoners also used to hold Union parolees awaiting formal prisoner exchange. The camp's overcrowded and inadequate sanitary conditions and the lack of food caused multiple Garibaldian soldier desertions. Of the regiment's 525 men that had surrendered at Harpers Ferry, only 400 remained. In November 1862, the Thirty-ninth New York survivors were formally exchanged and assigned to Washington's defense.²⁴⁰

The Garibaldi Guard took part at the Battle of Gettysburg (July 1863). Reduced to a four-company battalion under Major Hugo Hildebrandt, the Garibaldi Guard performed its most valiant service. On July 2, the Army of Potomac set up an impressive defensive position at Gettysburg. The Garibaldi Guard reached the place in the morning and moved into the line with its Brigade on the II Corps' right flank. General Hays, the brigade commander, immediately ordered Major Hildebrandt to deploy forward to the skirmish line, with the task to engage the enemy's forward line and disorient the Confederacy troops. Even though they had just finished the long march to Gettysburg, the Garibaldi Guard soldiers obeyed promptly. Private Lightfoot, a soldier of a flank unit, described the Garibaldi Guard action:

Brave fellows -brave or stupid, which is it?- there they stand in the open field, and the crack of a rifle is heard. The rebels are down behind the fence and are sheltered. 'Drop Garibaldi!' Yes, they did drop, one after another, as the bullet did

²⁴⁰ Bacarella, *Lincoln's Foreign Legion*, 106-109.

its work. Some to rise not again, and here come some of the poor fellows with shattered jaws and maimed limbs and cut faces.²⁴¹

The regiment fought on the battle line for over four hours, continuously engaged with the enemy skirmishers.²⁴² The Garibaldians performed efficient service and partially redeemed the cowardly capitulation of Harpers Ferry (with the 111th, then 125th, and the 126th regiments).²⁴³ They evoked admiration from the Generals that observed their movements and courageous bearing. Successively, although severely reduced in numbers after such a tough battle, the Garibaldi Guard protected the left flank of the Brigade while three regiments were preparing to charge the Confederate troops. The Gettysburg campaign had not finished yet. The third day of bloodletting followed July 3, one of the cruelest of the entire American Civil War. As the Garibaldi Guard members prepared themselves for the third day of battle, General Lee, believing that the Union defensive formation was vulnerable in the center, ordered Gen. Longstreet to make a massive assault. The attack, preceded by a thunderous artillery bombardment, hit Hancock's Second Corps primarily positioned along Cemetery Ridge, including the Garibaldi Guard. Despite facing murderous Union cannon fire and musketry, the Confederate troops

²⁴¹ Arabella S. Wilson, *Disaster, Struggle and Triumph, The regimental history of the 125th New York State volunteers*, 103, quoted in Bacarella, *Lincoln's Foreign Legion*, 136.

²⁴² US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 27, part 1 reports (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1884), 472-476, accessed February 15, 2021, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924077730186&view=1up&seq=3>.

²⁴³ In 1895, a monument was dedicated to the Garibaldi Guard at Gettysburg in the spot where the heroic actions occurred. *New York Times*, July 3, 1895, 3, ProQuest Ebrary, accessed December 11, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/hnpnewyorktimes/news/fromDat>.

reached the Union line and engaged in hand-to-hand combat with the defenders. The charge failed, and the Garibaldi Guard contributed mainly to hold the Union position and repulse the attack. Moving from the flank of the Union formation near Cemetery Ridge, they successfully counterattacked the Confederate troops, caused them to withdraw into the woods.²⁴⁴ General Lee ordered a retreat, and the Union Army started to pursue the enemy. The Garibaldi Guard was one of the regiments ordered to pursue toward the Potomac River and Virginia. Unfortunately, the heavy downpour of the night made the road impassable and caused swollen rivers. These circumstances aided Confederate troops in their retreat. The Gettysburg battle ended.²⁴⁵

The Garibaldi Guard distinguished itself during one of the most important battles of the Civil War. Receiving special mention for their actions were Sergeant Ferdinando Maggi and Corporal Francisco Navarreto, who captured Confederate regimental battle flags. The 39th New York Infantry lost fifteen dead and eighty wounded, including Major Hildebrandt, but had regained its honor.²⁴⁶ By December 1863, 90 percent of the men enrolled in the original muster rolls were no longer with the regiment, and “barely a company of men remained from the original muster.” Death, disease, discharge, and above all, desertion radically changed the ethnic composition of the Garibaldi Guard. Irish and native-born Americans often replaced the original members of the 39th New

²⁴⁴ Bacarella, *Lincoln's Foreign Legion*, 138.

²⁴⁵ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 75.

²⁴⁶ US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 27, part 1 reports, 177.

York that left the regiment. The once polyglot regiment that bore the legendary Italian general's name did not exist anymore because it ceased to be a multi-ethnic regiment.²⁴⁷

The Garibaldi Guard remained within the Army of the Potomac for the remainder of its service in the War. Heavily engaged during Grant's 1864 Overland campaign and during the siege of Petersburg, it went back to New York on June 11, 1864, with 100 men. The Union Army discharged the regiment from military service in July 1865.²⁴⁸

The 39th New York was one of the most colorful but controversial regiments of the American Civil War. When the conflict started, many recent immigrants showed their eagerness to defend their adopted country, bringing pride to the various ethnic communities of New York City, including the tiny enclave of Italian Americans. Inspired by Garibaldi's ideals, they enlisted in the Union Army, hoping to gain personal advantages. The regiment failed to live up to the hopes and promises of European war experienced soldiers and officers. A big part of the failure came from the poor leadership of Colonel D'Utassy and the incapability, or impossibility, of staff and line officers to influence his poor decisions. Ethnic antagonisms and difficulties in communication weakened unit cohesion. The first year of the conflict saw mutinies and disobedience episodes that left the Guard with a terrible reputation. By 1862, the unit's performance began to improve, and from the Valley Campaign, the Garibaldi Guard performance was generally good. It is impossible to deny the multitude of problems the regiment faced, but

²⁴⁷ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 76.

²⁴⁸ *New York Times*, June 11-12, 1864, 8, ProQuest Ebrary, accessed December 11, 2020, <https://search-proquest-com.aufric.idm.oclc.org/hnpnewyorktimes/news/fromDat>.

at the end of the conflict, the Garibaldi Guard “earned its place in the line of battle.”²⁴⁹ A testament to the regiment’s symbolic importance was the about 1,200 casualties left on the battlefield.²⁵⁰

The Italians in Gray (Confederate Army) and John Garibaldi

Some studies on the American Civil War have emphasized foreigners’ presence in the Union Army’s ranks, underlining some units’ multi-ethnic composition. On the other hand, it is essential to highlight that the two major ports of the American territory were New York and New Orleans, respectively, in the Union’s and the Confederate regions. Therefore, in-depth studies have found that, although fewer than those of the Union, representatives of foreigners served the Confederate Army during the Civil War, providing an effective contribution and suffering huge losses. Among these, in addition to the innumerable Germans and Irish, there were also Italians.

The 1860 population census indicated that the total number of United States immigrants who had declared Italy or Sardinia as their birthplace was about 11,500. Thus, this number should increase if we consider that some Italians said themselves to be French, Austrians, or Spaniards since they came from Italian territories still occupied due to a national unity not yet achieved. California had the most significant Italian population with 2,805, followed by New York with 1,862 and Louisiana with 1,134. The entire Italian people in the eleven secession states was just 2,500. After Louisiana, the most prominent Italian population was in Tennessee with 379, in Virginia with 263, and in

²⁴⁹ Bacarella, *Lincoln’s Foreign Legion*, 102.

²⁵⁰ Pellicano, *Conquer or Die*, 21.

Alabama with 214. In 1860-1861, most of the Italian immigrants who lived in the southern states were sailors or artisans who resided in the port cities such as Memphis (Tennessee), Mobile (Alabama), New Orleans (Louisiana), Savannah (Georgia), or Charleston (South Carolina).²⁵¹

When the Civil War broke out, individual Italians enlisted in various military units, especially in Virginia, Louisiana, and Alabama. Southern Italian Americans could not play a primary role in the Confederate cause's success or failure with such small numbers. However, the percentage of Italians who enlisted for the Confederate cause was higher than the more representative nationalities if we consider the ratio with the total number of the Italian population residing in the Confederate states. In this regard, the historian Giovanni Schiavo stated: "the proportion of Italian officers and enlisted men who served during the Civil War was perhaps the highest of any ethnic group in America . . . It was a contribution of which any immigrant community can be exceedingly proud."²⁵²

On the eve of the Civil War, the Italians who landed in New Orleans actively contributed to the city's development. When the civil war broke out, these citizens, like the natives, felt the duty to take action to defend their adopted territory, enlisting to defend the Confederate cause. About 500 Italians officially served in the Confederate

²⁵¹ Superintendent of Census, *Population of the United States in 1860; Compiled from the Original Returns of the Eighth Census, Under the Discretion of the Secretary of the Interior*, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1864), <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1860/population/1860a-02.pdf>.

²⁵² Giovanni Schiavo, *The Italians in America Before the Civil War* (New York: The Vigo Press, 1934), 279.

military units, but the actual number is still unknown.²⁵³ Some Italian research reveals numbers highly superior to the official ones.²⁵⁴ The state with the most significant number of Italian fighters during the American Civil War was Louisiana. Several companies in the Louisiana regiments had at least ten Italians, with large numbers drafted into the New Orleans militias. In January 1861, before the Union's separation was officially declared, there was already one of the first attempts to create an entirely Italian volunteer's regiment. A few days later, about 170 Italians offered their service for the newly formed Confederate States of America.²⁵⁵

This first Italian Confederate military unit took the Garibaldi Legion's name under Captain Giuseppe Santini's command. On March 19, 1861, the Garibaldian Legion of New Orleans paraded through the city's streets, distinguishing itself, as did their Italian counterparts in New York, for their picturesque and characteristic Garibaldians clothing of Garibaldi's red shirts. A local newspaper described their parade: "Company A of the Garibaldi Legion, Capt. Santini, was on drill last night, appearing in strong force, and for the first time in their handsome and dashing Garibaldi uniform. For the halt and serenade in front of the Crescent office, we return to the gallant Italians our warmest

²⁵³ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 300-301.

²⁵⁴ Pierluigi Rossi, "Il Regio Esercito Borbonico nell'Esercito Confederato," *Brigantino-il Portale del Sud* (2009), appendix 1, accessed April 4, 2021, <http://www.ilportaledelsud.org/confederati.htm>.

²⁵⁵ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 302.

acknowledgments.”²⁵⁶ Unfortunately, despite an initial wave of enthusiasm, the legion could not attract enough Italians to form an entire regiment. For this reason, the newly formed company associated with the Spanish Hunters, a formation of the Louisiana Militia, and subsequently incorporated into the European Legion, formally defined as the 6th Louisiana Infantry Regiment.²⁵⁷

In the following months, the events in the Italian liberation wars and Giuseppe Garibaldi’s success and his “thousand expeditions” led many veterans of the Royal Bourbon Army, with valuable military experience, to join the Confederate cause in the American Civil War. Their recruitment was possible thanks to Captain Chatham Roberdeau Wheat, an American citizen who Garibaldi met in New York in 1850. Because of their friendship, when Garibaldi started his operations to conquer Italy’s south with his thousand (October 1860), Captain Wheat arrived in Italy with 650 men from the British legion to support him.²⁵⁸

General Wheat, a rank that Garibaldi himself conferred him for having contributed to the victory in the challenging siege of Capua, was a firm supporter of the presidential United States candidate Breckinridge and a devotee of the southern states cause. Wheat predicted President Lincoln’s electoral victory and the subsequent

²⁵⁶ *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, March 19, 1861, *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, accessed November 12, 2020, <https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn82015753/1861-03-19/ed-1/seq-1>.

²⁵⁷ Ustica, “Italians in the Confederate Army: Sixth Regiment European Brigade (Italian Guards Battalion),” https://www.ustica.org/genealogy/italian_brigade.htm; Rossi, “Il Regio Esercito Borbonico nell’Esercito Confederato.”

²⁵⁸ Rossi, “Il Regio Esercito Borbonico nell’Esercito Confederato.”

secession of the southern states. Therefore, he asked Garibaldi to recruit prisoners and stragglers from the Bourbon Army to go to Louisiana to support the Confederate cause. Since a large number of prisoners and stragglers was creating management problems for the newly established government and Garibaldi himself, the Italian government decided to endorse Wheat's proposal, and the ships Charles, Jane, Utile, Olyphant, Franklin, Washington, Elizabeth, and Monroe left the ports of southern Italy for New Orleans. The ships arrived at their destination from January to May 1861, before the Northern naval blockade considerably reduced ship traffic to the southern ports.²⁵⁹

About 1,800 former Bourbon soldiers landed in New Orleans and joined the Louisiana militias ranks. These soldiers were not all Italians; there were also many French and English natives. Beginning in July 1861, foreigners residing in New Orleans organized into battalions and regiments with references to the soldiers' country of origin under the command of Belgian General Paul Juge.²⁶⁰

The European brigade was one of these newly formed multi-ethnic units. Like the Northern 39th Infantry Regiment (Garibaldi Guard), it was one of the most multi-ethnic regiments in American Civil War history. The brigade, so-called even though it was a regiment, was made up of five companies, four of which were mainly Italian.²⁶¹ Lieutenant Colonel Giuseppe Della Valle, a native of Nice, was the battalion commander. This unit's main task was to protect the city of New Orleans, and its contribution was

²⁵⁹ Rossi, "Il Regio Esercito Borbonico nell'Esercito Confederato."

²⁶⁰ Ibid., appendix 3.

²⁶¹ Ibid.

instrumental in preventing the city from being burned by militant rebels when it was about to fall under Union control.²⁶² Also, this group of foreign citizens, including many Italians, carried out police functions at the beginning of the city's Union troops' occupation.²⁶³

Another distinctive Confederate unit was the 10th Louisiana Infantry Regiment, later referred to as the "Lee Foreign Legion." Tenth Louisiana included enlisted men from at least twenty-two different states, mainly in New Orleans. Native individuals only composed two companies, while the other eight companies were predominantly of foreign origin. Five companies were primarily Irish, one Franco-German, one Spanish company, and one almost entirely Italian company. This company was the one with the highest percentage of Italians in the entire Confederate Army.²⁶⁴

The French colonel De Marigny was the first commander of the unit. Tenth Louisiana served throughout the war in the Northern Virginia Army. The regiment was heavily engaged by Union troops at Malvern Hill (July 1, 1862), losing more than eighty men on the battlefield. In addition, they took part in numerous battles between 1862 and 1863, including Second Manassas, Sharpsburg, and Chancellorsville, and were nearly decimated due to heavy losses. Particularly famous and portrayed in many illustrations was the second battle of Manassas episode (end of August 1862), in which the members

²⁶² Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 112.

²⁶³ Ibid., 114.

²⁶⁴ Thomas W. Brooks and Michael D. Jones, *Lee's Foreign Legion: a history of the 10th Louisiana Infantry* (Gravenhurst, Ontario: Watts Printing, 1995), 79.

of the Tenth ran out of ammunition and started to throw stones at the enemy..²⁶⁵ In the Battle of Gettysburg, the regiment lost nearly 150 men killed, wounded, or captured..²⁶⁶ Tenth Louisiana took part in the 1864 Overland campaign and early stages of the siege of Petersburg before being deployed with the Second Corps in a failed attempt to retain control of the Shenandoah Valley. Later, in 1865, it was reassigned to the Northern Virginia Army. Its men, exhausted by the long and intense years of war, trudged on their march west to Appomattox, and in the end, the last eighteen men surrendered to the Union troops without engaging in battle..²⁶⁷ The Tenth Louisiana Infantry Regiment had a total of 976 soldiers in 1861, but throughout the entire conflict, suffered a total of 724 casualties, including a high percentage of Italian soldiers..²⁶⁸

Another Confederate state characterized by a conspicuous presence of Italians in its ranks was Alabama. The unit with the most significant number of recruits born in Italy was the 21st Alabama. This regiment was organized in Mobile (Alabama) port city between April and September 1861 for twelve months, subsequently increased to three

²⁶⁵ Brookes and Jones, *Lee's Foreign Legion*, 34.

²⁶⁶ US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 27, part 2, 315.

²⁶⁷ Rossi, "Il Regio Esercito Borbonico nell'Esercito Confederato."

²⁶⁸ Brooks and Jones, *Lee's Foreign Legion*, 20-74.

years (May 1862). The first battle in which it took part was Shiloh (Tennessee)²⁶⁹ and subsequently Corinth's campaign (Mississippi).²⁷⁰

Finally, individual Italians served in units throughout the Confederate Army, but their number is difficult to document.²⁷¹ An Italian Confederate who left a great legacy of the conflict's suffering and hardship was John Garibaldi. His letters to his wife in Italy narrate every single moment of the conflict and its complexity and represent the only written testimony of the Italian soldier's experience in the American Civil War.

John Garibaldi was born in Genoa on April 30, 1831, and emigrated to the United States at the age of twenty. In May 1861, he enlisted in the 27th Virginia Infantry, Stonewall Brigade. In early 1862, his regiment took part in the Shenandoah Valley campaign, suffering heavy losses. Union troops captured a large number of its soldiers, including John Garibaldi himself.²⁷² Later, he spent a few months in captivity at Fort Delaware before returning to the battlefield at Fredericksburg, although his regiment did not actively participate in the fighting. The 27th Virginia Infantry, however, took part in the Battle of Chancellorsville, taking part in the famous Stonewall Jackson side attack on

²⁶⁹ US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, ser. 1, vol. 10, part 1 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1884), 383, accessed November 24, 2020, <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=coo.31924077730160&view=1up&seq=948>.

²⁷⁰ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Confederacy*, 126; US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 10, part 1, 789.

²⁷¹ Rossi, "Il Regio Esercito Borbonico nell'Esercito Confederato," appendix 4.

²⁷² US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 12, part 1, 342.

May 2 and heavy fighting the next day.²⁷³ Overall, the Stonewall Brigade suffered nearly 500 casualties, including 73 men killed, wounded, and missing from the 27th Virginia Infantry.²⁷⁴ John Garibaldi also took part with the 27th Virginia Infantry in the Battle of Gettysburg, and in the fighting at Wilderness and Spotsylvania, at the start of Grant's Overland campaign in May 1864. His letters clearly describe the severity of the fighting. In May 1864, John Garibaldi again fell into the Union troops' hands as a prisoner with most of his fellow soldiers and still spent a period of imprisonment in Fort Delaware. In his last letter, written shortly before his capture, John Garibaldi expressed what was the feeling of most of the American Civil War's fighters at the time: "I am pretty tired of this war by this time, but there is no chance for us unless the war stops for, we shall all have to keep fighting until the Yankees us up or until we shall be subjugated."²⁷⁵ Garibaldi died in September 1914, and Civil War's followers buried him in the Stonewall Jackson Cemetery in Lexington.

The letters of soldier John Garibaldi represented a small part of the Italians' legacy, but more generally foreigners' legacy, at the end of the American Civil War. These also represented a small testimony of the not numerous Italian populations' contribution to the Confederate cause. Historians' accounts of the foreign contribution to the nineteenth-century American internal conflict often focus on those Italians who filled the unfortunate ranks of the Union Army's 39th Infantry Regiment "Garibaldi Guard,"

²⁷³ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 311.

²⁷⁴ US War Department, *The War of the Rebellion*, ser. 1, vol. 12, part 1, 384.

²⁷⁵ Garibaldi to wife 22 April 1864, Garibaldi Letters, quoted in Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 372-374.

neglecting those Italians who lived in the secession states. However, the cosmopolitan make-up of southern cities such as New Orleans, Mobile, Savannah, Charleston, Memphis, and Richmond allowed Italian, Italian-Americans and other immigrants to serve their adopted nation in more significant numbers than expected. The Italians' contribution to the Confederate cause was certainly not decisive, and in part, it remained untold due to the small numbers. However, it is certainly possible to conclude that "the small southern Italian population had done its part for the Confederation."²⁷⁶

Mass Italian immigration to the United States will occur in the decades following the end of the Civil War, and large numbers of Italians will be able to contribute to the development of the great American nation we know today.

²⁷⁶ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 309.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

America was born as a nation of immigrants, and ethnicity has always been one of American society's significant historical characteristics. During the thesis' research, I have experienced the complexity to describe the characteristics of the American nation and the main aspects of the American societies at the eve of the American Civil War. The enormous existing literature that I have analyzed on the specific topic has highlighted conflicting descriptions and ambiguities. I started this research with the ambition to demonstrate the importance of the foreign-born for the Union and Confederate causes during the American Civil War. My reference was the liberal American model, later symbolized by the Statue of Liberty, that attracted many immigrants leaving Europe to avoid political or religious oppression. Millions of refugees and people looking for new life opportunities landed at the United States ports.

On the other side, my research discovered America's image as a land of bigotry and oppression, where immigrants confronted the harsh prejudice of the native-born. The innumerable books that describe foreign-born regiments war experiences during the American Civil War as unsuccessful or damaging for the entire Union or Confederate cause demonstrate this prejudice. The 39th Infantry "Garibaldi Guard," the multi-ethnic Union unit where hundreds of Italians served the Union cause, is a demonstration of the general tendency to underestimate and criticize the value of these men that sacrificed their lives to defend a cause that was not their own.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁷ Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers*, vii.

Nevertheless, the image of the United States pre-civil war as a “society in which a bigoted Anglo-Saxon majority debased and exploited ethnic minorities, and immigrants arrived only to find themselves the victims of a system more vicious than that from which they fled”²⁷⁸ is not the reality that emerged from my research. My study on the Germans has shown an image of a society that embraced immigrants and quickly gave them social skills and political rights. They formed a community in the American society and imported their values, traditions, and political ideals into the states and cities where they established. During the American Civil War, the Germans had a prominent political class, and the number of German general officers that reached the highest ranks in the Union and Confederate armies demonstrates their influence.²⁷⁹

The Irish American Civil War experience was different from the Germans, and the central aspect that differentiated them was the social status of the Irish people that emigrated. They were workers and poor people that remained in the lower classes of American societies for a long time. Personal needs and desire to improve their condition were their paramount wishes. After the war, they developed a sense of community and evolved as Irish-Americans, beginning to participate in American political life. They began to demand their place in American society, their rights, and power, creating a personality as Irish and American. When the Civil War broke out, they embraced the Union and Confederate cause hoping for better conditions at the end of the conflict. It is challenging to evaluate if their situation improved because of the war, but it is

²⁷⁸ Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers*, viii.

²⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, viii-ix.

undoubtedly true that they adjusted their culture and customs to enable integration in American social life. Their dual loyalties during the conflict, primarily for Ireland and their American communities, and for the Union or Confederate causes, permitted them to continue fighting and contribute to the war effort, even if they never ultimately agreed on a long and strenuous conflict that killed a big part of their compatriots.²⁸⁰

At the end of the Civil War, the foreign-born communities, particularly the three analyzed in my research, were proud, despite their different numerical contributions, to have contributed to help the United States, their adoptive country, to preserve its national idea. However, these communities lost the main part of their young generations and “mourned its husband, fathers, and sons.”²⁸¹ Many kids and wives did not meet their fathers anymore, and the entire communities lost a big part of their workforce and intellectual vigor. The United States showed big generosity in the payment of the back pay and bounties to the relatives of the foreigners who lost their lives on the battlefield, and pensions were granted. The claims were most numerous in the Irish communities for the impecunious conditions of many Irish families and the greater contribution that they offered on the American battlefields.²⁸² The foreign-born communities validated their position in American society, but their price was high.

The purpose of this research thesis was to investigate the contributions of the foreign soldiers, especially Italians, to the American Civil War outcomes, while the thesis

²⁸⁰ Bruce, *The Harp and the Eagle*, 263-264.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 151.

²⁸² Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 612.

statement to demonstrate was: the foreign soldiers were not decisive for the American Civil War's outcomes, but largely contributed to them. After eight months from its beginning, my opinion is that my thesis strongly supports my initial assessment, and the foreign-born soldiers' contribution to the Union and Confederate cause was not essential but important.

The several nationalities fighting on the battlefields gave different contributions based on their numerical presence and their wars' traditions and experiences. However, many foreigners took part in the American internal struggle and gave their contribution on the battlefield, often losing their lives and leaving their families. The numbers of immigrants that lived in the United States before the Civil War broke out and the numbers of foreign-born that enlisted in the Union and Confederate armies should prove it. The literature did not help my research, and it was necessary to read and refer to multiple sources to develop an objective idea of the foreigners' contribution during the war and their war experiences. The shortage of primary sources and the book's nature written by people who took part in the war (primarily diaries) did not allow proper analysis. However, it is evident in several authors that foreign-born soldiers shared the native-born desire to serve the national cause, and the composition of the Union and Confederate armies accurately represented the American nation. Soldiers shared luck and misfortune on the battlefield, disregarding in the majority of the cases the nationality, the "American element slowly absorbed the foreign element."²⁸³

²⁸³ Lonn, *Foreigners in the Union Army and Navy*, 661-662.

The assumption that the Italians imported to the United States the Italian Risorgimento ideals and their European battlefield experiences could not find an actual confirmation. The 39th Infantry Regiment “Garibaldi Guard” war experience does not validate it. However, more than 25,000 Italians took part in the American Civil War, and Giuseppe Garibaldi, the Italian patriot, became a symbol for the multitude of Italian and foreigners that fought in the war. The two regiments entitled to him, one in the Union Army and another in the Confederate Army, support this point. The Garibaldi Guard’s departure from New York brought pride to the various ethnic communities of New York, even if it did not maintain its promises. An incompetent leadership that exacerbated the natural ethnic antagonisms and difficulties in communication was the main cause of its poor performances in the first two years of the war. Starting from the Valley Campaign (1862), the regiment performance improved, and its service at Gettysburg remained the primary demonstration of its value. The regiment’s 1,200 casualties on the battlefield demonstrated the foreigners’ commitment to the American Union cause.²⁸⁴

The American Civil War was a significant historical event that changed the future nature of warfare and how the military confronted on the battlefield. It moved close to the total war, and the politicians of both parts could not keep control of its destruction. It affected the future American and European society for a long time. Numerous foreigners were already in the United States when the national crisis began, and large numbers reached the United States in the first phases of the war. In many cases, they found death and never could live the American dream. For the survivors, the war accelerated the

²⁸⁴ Alduino and Coles, *Sons of Garibaldi in Blue and Gray*, 75-76.

Americanization process, and they could experience the American life and the liberal model that attracted them.

The vast majority of people in the United States, ethnics and nonethnics, recognized the opportunities that the Civil War could offer them. They enlisted in the Union and the Confederate armies for ideological reasons, perspectives of better living conditions, bounties, American citizenship, or spirit of adventure. However, “the ethnic regiments represented the basic loyalty and patriotism of immigrants as well as their skill in manipulating political practices and institutions to their advantage.”²⁸⁵

The Statue of Liberty, or better the Liberty Enlightening the Worlds, erected in New York in 1886, was born in 1865 with the idea of a monument to symbolize the American unity and independence and seal the America-France friendship. It “remains the greatest monument to America’s Civil War as the cause of all nations. It honors the international struggle that in the 1860s shook the Atlantic world and decided the fate of slavery and democracy for the vast future that lay ahead.”²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ Burton, *Melting Pot Soldiers*, x.

²⁸⁶ Doyle, *The Cause of all Nations*, 311-313.

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