

in public like the foreign women, share her lament, each thinking of

Bruner provides a short introductory preface and a longer introduction to each of the four sections (Western, Eastern, Southern, and Northern Africa). The introductions, aimed at a general audience, do not provide in-depth information, but they do give useful antidotes for stereotypical pictures of African women: "often highly trained as sociologists, anthropologists, linguists, historians, scholars of world literature [the writers] bring a broad perspective to their work. Their female protagonists are as often educated urban women as they are illiterate villagers" (6). Since many of the writers in the volume are not widely known in the west, perhaps most useful to scholars in ethnic studies are Bruner's "Notes on Contributors," which are more extensive than those in *Unwinding Threads*.

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William L. Burton. *Melting Pot Soldiers: The Union's Ethnic Regiments*. (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1988) 282 pp., \$78.90 hardback.

The title is somewhat misleading if the reader is expecting the author, William L. Burton, to include all ethnic groups in this book. The book is about foreign born ethnic soldiers in the Union Army and excludes Native Americans and Black troops. In fact, the book's major emphasis is on German and Irish soldiers of the Civil War, and largely about the steps taken to organize military units rather than about the battles these groups participated in.

Nevertheless, within its scope, the book is carefully researched and well written. Burton, a professor of history at Western Illinois University, is sometimes quite eloquent stylistically in such passages as:

The Civil War is the great American epic. Nothing in the nation's history did so much to create myth, manufacture legend, challenge the character of the people, and shape the destiny of the nation for so many generations. Dominating the town and city parks in thousands of communities, North and South, is the statue of the soldier. Burton's emphasis on the recruiting and organizing of troops rather than their battle records is explained in his theory that the ethnic regiments, like all of the volunteer regiments of the Union Army, were "a direct outgrowth of local politics" (ix).

The Prologue describes the Forty-eighters, such as Franz leaders in America, and who recruited, organized, and lead regiments.

Explorations in Sights and Sounds

Hecker, Carl Schurz, Franz Sigel, and Augustus Willich, who were losers in the revolution in their native country, but became political Thomas Francis Meagher, Michael Corcoran, James A. Mulligan, and Thomas Cass all were Irish politicians who, at the beginning of the war, saw opportunities for personal and ethnic achievements in raising troops for the Union.

Among other ethnic groups who joined the Union Army were the Scots, the Scandinavians, the Poles, the Italians, the Hungarians, and the Spanish: "Optimistic promoters went after every identifiable ethnic group" (169). Interestingly, two separate attempts to recruit a French regiment in New York failed. However, a hodgepodge of Hungarian, Spanish, French, and German recruits there eventually formed the "Garibaldi Guard," the Thirty-ninth New York Infantry.

Ethnic songs and stories helped organize the raw recruits into fighting units and identified them stereotypically in newspapers. The Irish were associated with heavy drinking, and Meagher, as a general, was accused of being drunk in battle. A favorite story was that of an Irish soldier who apparently did some incredible heroic deed in battle, only to admit afterwards that he was only saving his whiskey from the enemy. German songs and stories emphasized that their troops had the dual obligation of fighting for their adopted country and showing that men of their nationality defended liberty everywhere.

Indeed, all these regiments fought well on the battlefield, and at times, fought with other ethnic groups off the field during and after the war. Often they showed themselves as racists in such songs as "I Am Fighting for the Nigger," and in their fear of economic competition from the former slaves and Jews.

In many ways, these troops fought more for personal and political gains and to establish themselves and their ethnic group as American citizens than for the ideals of abolition and preserving the Union. By the war's end they had succeeded in all these goals. Burton concludes, quite correctly, "The best kept secret of the ethnic regiments is how truly American they were" (233).

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