



Across the Divide: Union Soldiers View the Northern Home Front

Steven J. Ramold

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Union soldiers left home in 1861 with expectations that the conflict would be short, the purpose of the war was clear, and public support back home was universal. As the war continued, however, Union soldiers began to perceive a great difference between what they expected and what was actually occurring. Their family relationships were evolving, the purpose of the war was changing, and civilians were questioning the leadership of the government and Army to the point of debating whether the war should continue at all.

Separated from Northern civilians by a series of literal and figurative divides, Union soldiers viewed the growing disparities between their own expectations and those of their families at home with growing concern and alarm. Instead of support for the war, an extensive and oft-violent anti-war movement emerged. Often at odds with those at home and with limited means of communication to their homes at their disposal, soldiers used letters, newspaper editorials, and political statements to influence the actions and beliefs of their home communities. When communication failed, soldiers sometimes took extremist positions on the war, its conduct, and how civilian attitudes about the conflict should be shaped.

In this first study of the chasm between Union soldiers and northern civilians, Steven J. Ramold reveals the wide array of factors that prevented the Union Army and the civilians on whose behalf they were fighting from becoming a united front during the Civil War. In *Across the Divide*, Ramold illustrates how the divided spheres of Civil War experience created social and political conflict far removed from the better-known battlefields of the war.

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