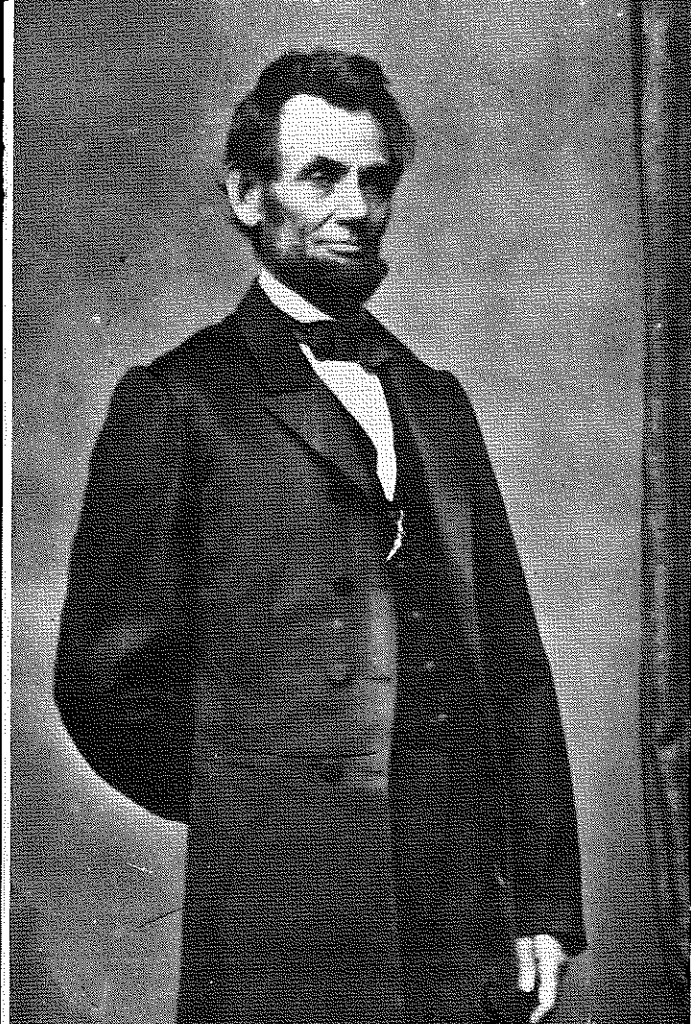


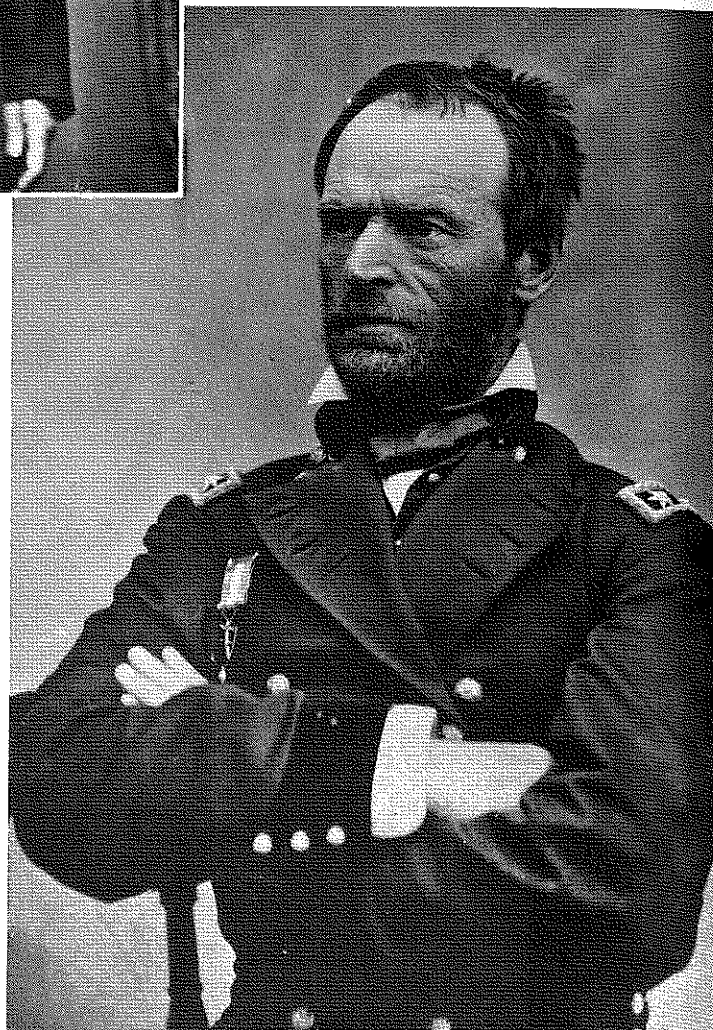
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Gen. William T. Sherman

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EAST TENNESSEE, LINCOLN, AND SHERMAN*

By JESSE BURT

PART I

The 1861-1864 relationship involving East Tennessee, President Abraham Lincoln, and General William T. Sherman was profoundly significant in the conduct of the Civil War, as well as influential in the history of Tennessee, the administration of President Lincoln, and the remarkable career of General Sherman.

The earliest settled of Tennessee's grand divisions, East Tennessee in the Civil War was a romanticized public issue in the North, a geographical entity, a political phenomenon, a strategically important area, and a Federal military problem of first order.

Settlers came into East Tennessee before the American Revolution. Knoxville, the middle East Tennessee population center, served as capital of the Territory South of the River Ohio from 1792 to 1796 and for several years was capital of the state. It was also the site of Blount College—one of the first institutions of higher learning founded west of the Appalachian divide—which developed into East Tennessee University and later into the University of Tennessee. Knoxville had the first newspaper published in the state of Tennessee, the *Knoxville Gazette*. Farming, with corn as the leading crop, was the chief occupation of East Tennesseans during the Civil War period. The farms were relatively small, and were usually found in narrow but fertile valley areas where cotton production was not feasible.¹

As a loyalist area occupied early in the Civil War by the Confederate army, East Tennessee became the subject of poems, melodramatic stories, and extensive newspaper coverage in the North. Usually construed as being mountainous and overwhelmingly Union in sympathy, the section and its population supplied a dramatic public issue in the

*Adapted from an address delivered before a joint meeting of the East Tennessee Historical Society and the East Tennessee Civil War Round Table in Knoxville, May 25, 1962.

¹J. B. Killebrew and J. M. Safford, *Introduction to the Resources of Tennessee* (Nashville, 1874), 428-39; map by E. A. Riggs, *Major Basins and Structural Features of United States* (Maplewood, N. J., 1960); Joseph H. Parks and Stanley J. Folmsbee, *The Story of Tennessee* (Oklahoma City, 1958), 161-62; S. J. Folmsbee, *Blount College and East Tennessee College, 1794-1840* (Knoxville, 1946).



North: the widely supported East Tennessee relief societies collected substantial funds in the North to aid East Tennessee civilian war victims; newspapers as far away as St. Paul printed accounts of East Tennessee's "loyal mountaineers."

Actually, in terms of area, East Tennessee's approximately 11,800 square miles are dominated by a great valley and subordinate valleys extending about 175 air miles, averaging thirty to sixty miles in width, from Chattanooga to Bristol, or from north Georgia to southwest Virginia. The term mountainous has been rather freely used to describe East Tennessee's geography, although the area dominated by heights of mountain proportion is only about 2,600 square miles.

Using the contemporary judicial jurisdiction as guide, East Tennessee in 1861 may be said to have consisted of thirty counties (Anderson, Bledsoe, Blount, Bradley, Campbell, Carter, Claiborne, Cocke, Grainger, Greene, Hamilton, Hancock, Hawkins, Jefferson, Johnson, Knox, McMinn, Marion, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Polk, Rhea, Roane, Scott, Sequatchie, Sevier, Sullivan, Union, and Washington), many of them east of the Tennessee River, and to have, according to the 1860 Census, an aggregate population of 297,596, including 27,539 slaves. Although the state of Tennessee on June 8, 1861, approved an ordinance of "separation" from the Union, East Tennessee voted against this measure by a large majority. The section supplied over 30,000 Union soldiers, a number said to be unequalled in the Civil War in relation to available population. However, there was a significant Confederate population element. While East Tennessee rejected secession, there were in the critical June 8, 1861, canvass 14,229 "Separation" votes, as opposed to 34,186 "No Separation" votes. Nonetheless, East Tennessee, located adjacent to other loyal areas in western North Carolina and eastern Kentucky, was the largest predominantly loyal section within the Confederacy.²

The reasons for East Tennessee's prevailing Union sympathy defy simple explanation, reflecting as they do such circumstances as isolation from Middle Tennessee, a population supported by relatively small

² Killebrew and Safford, *Resources of Tennessee*, 428; U. S. Census Office, *Eighth Census, Population of the United States* (Washington, 1864), 466-67; Oliver P. Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War* (Cincinnati, 1899), 199; Thomas William Humes, *The Loyal Mountaineers of Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1888), 302; Betsey Beeler Creekmore, *Knoxville* (Knoxville, 1958), 112; Samuel P. Angell, *History of Thirteenth Regiment Tennessee Volunteer Cavalry, U. S. A.* (Philadelphia, 1903), 13; Wilma Dykeman, *The French Broad* (New York, 1955), 79.

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yeoman farms with little need for slaves, aggressive Unionist leader-
ship, the state's evil of sectionalism, and a confidence in constitutional
government which was affronted by the politics in Tennessee's with-
drawal from the Union.³

It is less difficult to account for East Tennessee's strategic signifi-
cance in the Civil War. Through the great valley's population centers,
Chattanooga in lower East Tennessee, to Knoxville in middle East
Tennessee, to Bristol in upper East Tennessee, ran a single railroad
line: the connecting East Tennessee and Georgia (which had its south-
ern terminus at Dalton, Georgia) and the East Tennessee and Virginia.
This East Tennessee railroad connected at Chattanooga, an important
southern rail junction, for Atlanta with the Western and Atlantic, for
Memphis with the Memphis and Charleston, and for Nashville with
the Nashville and Chattanooga. While Knoxville was not during the
Civil War period connected by rail with Kentucky, its existing rail
connection, the East Tennessee and Virginia, did (by way of Bristol)
join the states of Tennessee and Virginia and thus directly unite the
Appalachian-divided eastern and western portions of the Confederacy.⁴

For both the Union and the Confederacy East Tennessee was in
1861 a practical military problem. To enter its inland valley the Union
army would have to march through Kentucky, through rugged country
where there were no railroads or good roads, and through Cumberland
Gap or some other gap in the Cumberland Mountains that separated
eastern Kentucky from East Tennessee. The Richmond government
needed control of the section to maintain its direct east-west railroad,
and also telegraph, communication. From the Union point of view,
President Lincoln and military leaders such as General Sherman were
obliged to consider helping the loyalist East Tennessee population, and,

³ Thomas Perkins Abernethy, *From Frontier to Plantation in Tennessee* (reprinted, Memphis, 1955), *passim*; John B. Knox, *The People of Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1949); S. J. Folmsbee, *Sectionalism and Internal Improvements in Tennessee, 1796-1845* (Knoxville, 1939); *id.*, "The Turnpike Phase of Tennessee's Internal Improvement System of 1836-1838," *The Journal of Southern History*, III (November, 1937), 453-77; *id.*, "The Beginnings of the Railroad Movement in East Tennessee," *Tennessee: Old and New*, 2 vols. (Nashville, 1946), II, 164-87; S. J. Folmsbee, Robert E. Corlew, and Enoch L. Mitchell, *History of Tennessee*, 4 vols. (New York, 1960), I, 1-23; Verton M. Queener, "East Tennessee Sentiment and the Secession Movement, November, 1860-June, 1861," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 20 (1948), 59-83.

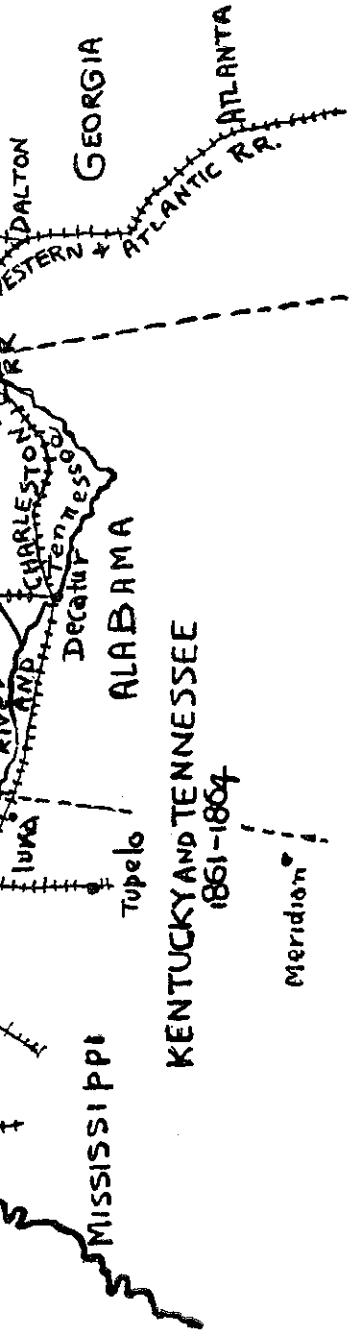
⁴ Report compiled by Captain William E. Merrill, *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies*, 129 vols. and index (Washington, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. 31, Pt. 3, pp. 546-47. This set will be cited hereafter as *O.R.* For discussion of the East Tennessee and Georgia's route see Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, *History of Tennessee*, I, 394.

more important to their cause, eliminating the Confederate railway link.

A number of writers have noted with interest the similarities or coincidences which, in a general way, exist between President Lincoln's personal history and the history of East Tennessee. Lincoln, who was born in central Kentucky in 1809, experienced the same trans-Appalachian frontier process that involved East Tennesseans. In 1798 Lincoln's father Thomas had lived for a year at his Uncle Isaac's farm on the Watauga River in upper East Tennessee, a locale renowned for its interest in constitutional government and timely American Revolution participation in the Battle of King's Mountain. Though he is not known to have visited them, Lincoln had cousins living in Greene and White counties in Tennessee during the Civil War period. The Whig influence in East Tennessee in 1861 was yet strong: Lincoln once had been a Whig. During concurrent 1847-1849 terms in the U. S. House of Representatives, Lincoln and Andrew Johnson of Greene County (in 1861 a loyal United States senator from Tennessee) doubtless, as small as the House membership was, became acquainted; both lived modestly in boarding houses near the Capitol.

Carl Sandburg describes the Union occupation of East Tennessee, a "region of mountaineers and hill people," as a "pet plan" of Lincoln. James G. Randall calls the same objective for "that mountain region" a "kind of specialty" Lincoln had. Federal General Oliver O. Howard, writing in his autobiography about a wartime talk he had with the President in Washington, concludes that the Union sympathy of the East Tennesseans (whom he characterizes as "mountaineers") influenced Lincoln to consider the occupation of East Tennessee as a chief military objective. What Lincoln called "my distress" that East Tennessee loyalists might take up Rebel arms for the sake of personal protection helps to explain his availability to visiting East Tennessee delegates (such as Senator Johnson who became a counsellor on East Tennessee matters) and his attention to the petitions and appeals sent to him about East Tennessee.⁵

⁵ David Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered* (New York, 1956), *passim*; John G. Nicholay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History*, 10 vols. (New York, 1890), V, 173; J. G. Nicholay and J. Hay (eds.), *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 12 vols. (New York, 1905), VII, 214, 238, 248, 255, 260, 261, VIII, 63-64; Samuel Cole Williams, *The Lincolns and East Tennessee* (Harrogate, 1942); V. L. Parrington, *Main Currents in American Thought*, one vol. ed. (New York, 1930), II, 152-60; Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lin-*



Essentially, however, Lincoln's East Tennessee relationship pertained to his main objective: winning the war and restoring the Union. As long as East Tennesseans were predominantly loyal to the Union and Union military forces were threatening, Confederate strength was drained to maintain control in the area and to protect the East Tennessee railroad. In 1861 the occupation of East Tennessee (and possession of the direct east-west Confederate railway link) was a fundamental consideration to Lincoln. As the Civil War's somber chapters unfolded, the essentially strategic consideration of East Tennessee, as Confederate General James Longstreet notes, enlarged into a "politico-strategic" goal for both the Union and the Confederacy. President Lincoln, as commander-in-chief, responded to the complex pressures of the presidential office.⁶ General Sherman, a general officer who could not even acknowledge such pressures, was at several momentous times in a command position to influence the course of Union military action toward East Tennessee.

The affinity seen by some between Lincoln and East Tennessee is less evident for either Lincoln or East Tennessee in regard to General Sherman's background. Descended from an English Puritan, Samuel Sherman, who in 1634 settled in Connecticut and helped to found the town of Woodbury which he represented in the colonial legislature and on the supreme judicial tribunal, William Tecumseh Sherman was born in 1820 at Lancaster, Ohio. His father Charles, a Dartmouth College graduate, had been admitted to the bar in 1810. Sherman was an 1840 graduate (sixth in a class of twenty-three) of the United States Military Academy. One of his brothers, John, having previously served as a member of the House of Representatives since 1855, was elected to the United States Senate from Ohio in 1861. Sherman was married to a daughter of the Whig leader Thomas Ewing.

After West Point, Sherman, who was tall, erect, with sharp, dark eyes, and reddish hair and beard, was stationed in Florida and near Charleston, South Carolina, from the autumn of 1840 until his late

coln: The War Years, 4 vols. (New York, 1939), I, 211; James G. Randall, *Lincoln, the President*, 2 vols. (New York, 1945), II, 266-67; Oliver Otis Howard, *Autobiography*, 2 vols. (New York, 1908), I, 452-53.

⁶ James Longstreet, *From Manassas to Appomattox*, 2nd. ed., revised (Philadelphia, 1903), 516; J. G. Randall, "Civil War and Military Relationships under Lincoln," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, LXIX (July, 1945), 199-206; *id.*, "Has the Lincoln Theme Been Exhausted?," *American Historical Review*, XLI (January, 1936), 270-94.

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1846 transfer to California. He resigned from the army in 1853 to work variously as a banker and with the law and real estate, before accepting a position as superintendent of the new Louisiana state military college in 1859. This position Sherman held until January of 1861 when he resigned and returned to the North. After serving briefly as president of a St. Louis street railway and turning down the first United States War Department job offer, Sherman was appointed colonel of the Thirteenth Regular Infantry in May of 1861.

Devoted to the Union, determined to do his duty as an army officer and to keep free of politically motivated actions and of newspapermen (he called them "paid spies"), the loquacious Sherman developed into a tough, able Union military leader.⁷ As he rose in military rank and influence on policy and strategy, General Sherman significantly affected the relationship involving East Tennessee and Lincoln.

Three days after Confederate forces fired upon Fort Sumter in the harbor of Charleston, South Carolina, Lincoln on April 15, 1861, called for troops to defend the Union. Jefferson Davis called for troops to fight for the Confederacy. On June 8 West and Middle Tennessee votes carried Tennessee into the secessionist movement, and on June 24 Governor Isham G. Harris issued a proclamation dissolving all Tennessee connections with the Federal Union. Only in East Tennessee and in isolated areas elsewhere did Union sentiment in Tennessee still stand in majority. Commissioners representing the East Tennessee Unionist leaders, who had met in the Greeneville Convention on June 18-20 in Senator Johnson's home town, presented a memorial to the Tennessee general assembly on June 26 asking permission to create a new state of

⁷ Consult John G. Barrett, *Sherman's March through the Carolinas* (Chapel Hill, 1956); S. M. Bowman and R. B. Irwin, *Sherman and his Campaigns, A Military Biography* (Cincinnati, 1865); Gamaliel Bradford, *Union Portraits* (Boston, 1896), 151 ff.; W. L. Fleming (ed.), *General Sherman as a College President* (Cleveland, 1912); B. H. Liddell Hart, *Sherman, Soldier, Realist, American* (New York, 1929); M. A. DeWolfe Howe (ed.), *Home Letters of General Sherman* (New York, 1909); Clarence Edward Macartney, *Grant and his Generals* (New York, 1953); Earl Schenck Miers, *The General Who Marched to Hell* (New York, 1951); Rachel Sherman Thorndike (ed.), *The Sherman Letters* (New York, 1894); John Bennett Walters, "General William T. Sherman and Total War," *The Journal of Southern History*, XIV (November, 1948), 447-81, for reviews of much of the extensive Sherman bibliography. For further discussion of Sherman's place in military history see Alfred H. Burne, *Lee, Grant, and Sherman* (New York, 1939); also B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy, the Indirect Approach* (New York, 1954); D. Randolph Keim (ed.), *Sherman A Memorial in Art, Oratory, and Literature by the Society of the Army of the Tennessee* (Washington, 1904). For the specific biographic detail cited see *Memoirs of Gen. W. T. Sherman, Written by Himself*, one vol. ed. (Bloomington, 1957), I, 9-175, confirmed in Lloyd Lewis, *Sherman, Fighting Prophet* (New York, 1932), 151-61.

East Tennessee. The general assembly, however, withheld this permission, and, as the need for force of arms to form a Union state in East Tennessee became clear, Senator Johnson and others turned to President Lincoln for Federal army aid.

Although it is difficult to determine the arrival date for the first Confederate military units to occupy East Tennessee, the presence of Confederate forces in the section before June 8, date of the second Tennessee canvass on secession matters, has been suggested.⁸ On July 9, 1861, after receiving a warning from General Leonidas Polk that "no time is to be lost in East Tennessee," President Davis requested Governor Harris to send two regiments of the Army of the State of Tennessee to the Jonesborough (Jonesboro) vicinity in upper East Tennessee. A Middle Tennessee regiment arrived to occupy Knoxville on July 18, and eight days later Brigadier General Felix K. Zollicoffer of Nashville was assigned to command in East Tennessee. A former Whig who had been a newspaper editor and a United States congressman (1855-1859), General Zollicoffer was probably chosen for this assignment because he had once lived in Knoxville and was thought to be cordially liked there. His orders came direct from Richmond: "The President directs that you repair to East Tennessee, and assume command of that district. Preserve peace, protect the railroad, and repel invasion."⁹

President Lincoln also attached importance to East Tennessee. On July 27 Lincoln composed a memorandum which, apart from consideration for the section's loyalty, gave East Tennessee prominence in Union war strategy: operations in West Virginia and Missouri were to be organized as rapidly as possible; a joint movement of forces was to be made in the West from Cairo, Illinois, against Memphis to assure

⁸ For general chronology see Philip M. Hamer (ed.), *Tennessee, A History, 1673-1932*, 4 vols. (New York, 1933), II, 557-63; Pollyanna Creekmore, "Knox County in Wartime, 1860-1863," *The French Broad-Holston Country*, ed. by Mary U. Rothrock (Knoxville, 1946), 129-30; John R. Neal, *Disunion and Restoration in Tennessee* (New York, 1899). It has been stated that the Greeneville memorial, due to the early Confederate occupation, failed to be presented to the Tennessee general assembly; its presentation is recorded in *Tennessee Senate Journal*, Second Extra Session, 1861, pp. 142-44, 176-78; *Tennessee House Journal*, Second Extra Session, 1861, pp. 166, 192-93. For discussion of the Knoxville and Greeneville conventions of 1861 see Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 340-63.

⁹ *O.R.*, Series II, Vol. 1, p. 827; Series I, Vol. 4, pp. 175, 374. For comment on Zollicoffer see William G. Brownlow, *Sketches of the Rise, Progress, and Decline of Secession* (Philadelphia, 1862), 256. This work is cited often as *Parson Brownlow's Book*, the title on the volume's spine.

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Mississippi River control, and from Cincinnati, Ohio, toward Knoxville to gain a controlling point on the East Tennessee railroad.¹⁰ It has been reported that sometime during this month William Nelson, a Kentucky Unionist, and Samuel Powhatan Carter, an East Tennessee Unionist, met in Cincinnati to plan the recruiting of Kentucky and East Tennessee citizens to support the Federal army activities in the area.¹¹

The Unionist editor of the Knoxville *Whig*, William G. Brownlow (who as early as May had advocated destruction of the bridges of the East Tennessee railroad), wrote in his newspaper during the summer and fall of 1861 about the insult of Confederate occupation, calling attention that "from the beginning of this infamous rebellion this great line of railroad gave new impetus to the Rebel movements, pouring a stream of Secession fire into Virginia from the Cotton States," and pointing to activities in behalf of occupation by some Confederate railroad officials (whom he did not name).¹² Governor Isham G. Harris, evaluating in early August the climate of East Tennessee opinion, admitted, "I fear we will have to adopt a decided and energetic policy with the people of that section." Regiments from Alabama and Mississippi were added to the Tennessee units already there,¹³ as the Confederacy embarked upon a long and costly holding of East Tennessee. Perhaps the occupation, justified by the Confederacy to maintain its only direct east-west communication, hardened and deepened dissatisfaction in East Tennessee with the Confederate cause. Whatever the motivation, thousands of East Tennesseans remained firm in their Unionism, and an uneventful Confederate occupation was not to be.

Soon after his promotion from colonel as a result of valor at Bull Run, Brigadier General of Volunteers William T. Sherman on August 24, 1861, was assigned to the Union army's Department of the Cumberland which at this time included in its scope both Kentucky and Tennessee.

Sherman was sent to the Louisville, Kentucky, headquarters as second-in-command to Brigadier General Robert H. Anderson, the

¹⁰ Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln, The War Years*, I, 309.

¹¹ Robert L. Kincaid, *The Wilderness Road* (reprinted, Harrogate, 1955), 223.

¹² "Murder Will Out," Knoxville *Whig*, reprinted in *O.R.*, Series II, Vol. 1, pp. 911-12; *Parson Brownlow's Book*, 217. For discussion of Brownlow see E. Merton Coulter, *William G. Brownlow, Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands* (Chapel Hill, 1937), *passim*.

¹³ Harris to Walker, August 3, 1861, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 4, p. 379; for regiments in East Tennessee see *ibid.*, 370, 382, 387, 390.

former Fort Sumter leader.¹⁴ General Anderson, a native Kentuckian, was expected to assist the Unionists of Kentucky and Tennessee to the end that Kentucky would remain in the Union and a military force could be organized and led to the relief of East Tennessee.¹⁵ However, before much force could be recruited, trained, and supplied, there were Confederate military moves into Kentucky from Tennessee.

General Zollicoffer, having received the orders from Richmond on September 7, 1861, occupied Cumberland Gap and marched into Kentucky. Three days later General Anderson assigned to Camp Dick Robinson in Garrard County, Kentucky, near Danville and Lexington, his third-in-command, Brigadier General George H. Thomas. Camp Dick Robinson, located over one hundred miles from and lacking railroad connections with Cumberland Gap, was the point of general rendezvous for East Tennesseans and others who were Union recruits. Bowling Green, a point some one hundred miles southwest of Louisville on the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, was occupied on September 18 by Confederate army units from the command of General Albert Sidney Johnston.¹⁶

On September 30, after talking with him at Camp Dick Robinson, General Thomas gave East Tennessean William Blount Carter, brother of S. P. Carter, a note to General George B. McClellan, then in Washington organizing the Army of the Potomac and soon to be general-in-chief. Thomas wrote the powerful McClellan that Carter had a plan for East Tennessee which could be facilitated by Federal money. Without revealing the nature of Carter's plan, Thomas declared, "It would be one of the most important services that could be done for the country, and I most earnestly hope you will use your influence with the authorities in furtherance of his plans, which he will submit to you, together with his reasons for doing the work."¹⁷

¹⁴ Lewis, *Sherman*, 171-81; Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 193.

¹⁵ Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 372.

¹⁶ *Report of the Adjutant General of the State of Tennessee from 1861-1866* (Nashville, 1866), 15. The site is located on U. S. 27, about thirty-six miles south of Lexington, and about eight miles east of Danville. For Confederate military movements consult Stanley F. Horn, *The Army of Tennessee* (Indianapolis and New York, 1941), 55-62.

¹⁷ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 4, p. 284. Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 371, states that Secretary of State William H. Seward provided W. B. Carter with \$2,500 to facilitate the bridge scheme. Francis F. McKinney, *Education in Violence, The Life of George H. Thomas and the History of the Army of the Cumberland* (Detroit, 1961), 117, states that General McClellan issued \$20,000 [sic] to W. B. Carter to further the scheme. Coulter, *William G. Brownlow*, 170, states that Captain David Fry was given

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Again emphasizing East Tennessee as strategic, President Lincoln sent to army headquarters in late September or early October—at about the time W. B. Carter reached General McClellan, if he did talk with him—his views of a campaign in an undated message. It read in part, "On or about the 5th of October (the exact day to be determined hereafter) I wish a movement made to seize and hold a point on the railroad connecting Virginia and Tennessee, near the mountain pass called Cumberland Gap." The existing army organization would require that an East Tennessee movement, designated by Lincoln as a "related diversion" to advance Union effort in Missouri and in Virginia, begin in the Department of the Cumberland.¹⁸ Perhaps Lincoln's directive was the last straw for the hard-pressed General Anderson, who, because of health impairment, resigned from his Department of the Cumberland command early in October. General Sherman by reason of his seniority was compelled "though much against the grain" to assume command at Louisville on October 8, 1861, until a successor to Anderson could be named. Sherman wrote Garrett Davis of Paris, Kentucky, "I am forced into the command of this department against my will," and remarked upon the need in the department for well-trained troops. The same day Sherman wrote in a second note to Garrett Davis, "The real struggle in Kentucky is to be between this [Louisville] and Nashville." On October 10 Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas, brushing aside Sherman's objections to departmental command, advised him of "the necessity of an outward movement on our part to seize the Cumberland Gap and afford protection to our friends in East Tennessee." Thomas emphasized, "It is hoped your judgment accords with the views of the Secretary of War, and [you] will cheerfully aid in carrying them out."¹⁹

\$1,000 with which to organize bridge burners, and was sent into East Tennessee by General Thomas.

¹⁸ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 52, Pt. 1, pp. 191-92. The editorial note reads in part, "In President Lincoln's handwriting, without date, and not entered in Headquarters of the Army books till October 31, 1861." Lincoln referred by their names to Thomas and Sherman. Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 371, states, "Cumberland Gap is distant at the nearest point, about forty miles from the railroad which was to be seized, and sixty miles from Knoxville."

¹⁹ Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 199; Sherman to G. Davis, October 8, 1861, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 4, p. 297; Greene to G. H. Thomas, September 23, 1861; Barnes to Thomas, September 23, 1861; G. H. Thomas to Anderson, October 4, 1861, *ibid.*, 269, 294; Sherman to G. Davis, October 8, 1861, *ibid.*, 298; L. Thomas to Sherman, October 10, 1861, *ibid.*, 299-300.

On the same day that Sherman heard from Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas, Secretary of War Simon Cameron approved a plan for the development of an East Tennessee expedition by Brigadier General Ormsby M. Mitchel, who had assumed command of the Department of the Ohio at Cincinnati on September 21. Mitchel would proceed to Camp Dick Robinson in the Kentucky Bluegrass region, about one hundred and five miles from Cincinnati, take over the raw recruits Brigadier General G. H. Thomas was training, and then, "By direction of the Secretary of War . . . ultimately seize the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad and attack and drive the rebels from that region of country." However, Mitchel was told by Adjutant General Thomas, "You will report your instructions to Brigadier-General Sherman, in command of this department [Cumberland], and be governed by such further orders as he may give."²⁰

On October 11 Brigadier General G. H. Thomas wrote General Mitchel, "I have been doing all in my power to prepare the troops for a move on Cumberland Ford [Pineville, Kentucky] and to seize the Tennessee & Virginia Railroad, and shall continue to do all I can to assist you until your arrival here; but justice to myself requires that I ask to be relieved from duty with these troops, since the Secretary has thought it necessary to supersede me in the command, without, as I conceive, any just cause for so doing."²¹

Secretary Cameron by ordering Mitchel to proceed to Camp Dick Robinson probably was manipulating the growing issue of East Tennessee. A Pennsylvania politician, who reportedly over Lincoln's wishes had obtained the cabinet post, Cameron would be succeeded in January of 1862 by Edwin M. Stanton. In the meantime, by advocating aggressive border state operations and by identifying himself with East Tennessee, Cameron was catering to the Radicals who were critical of Lincoln for dilatory border state policies. Cameron's departure from normal channels for planning an East Tennessee expedition fitted his general conduct while in office. He was said to have had a flair for self publicizing, and received the attention of the *New York Times* special correspondent at Camp Dick Robinson.²²

²⁰ October 10, 1861, *ibid.*, 300.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 303.

²² Randall, *Lincoln, the President*, II, 54-59; *New York Times*, October 21, 29, 1861.

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Aside from winning commendation for Cameron in the *Times*, nothing came of the Secretary's Cumberland Gap gesture. General G. H. Thomas was not superseded at Camp Dick Robinson; in fact, his command made the only perceptible advance toward the Gap. A few advance elements, including East Tennesseans, moved into Rockcastle County on the road to London, about fifty miles north of Cumberland Gap. They were watching for Zollicoffer's advance units. While, as the official records show, Thomas wanted and tried to mount an East Tennessee operation, he was harassed by the lack of trained regiments, payroll money, and wagons for hauling supplies. On October 13 General Sherman wrote Thomas, a former West Point classmate, to forget Cameron's slight, since "General Mitchel is subject to my orders."

There was no issue between Sherman and G. H. Thomas about East Tennessee. Sherman told Thomas, "Of course I would do anything in my power to carry out your wishes, but feel that the affairs of Kentucky call for the united action of all engaged in the cause of preserving our Government." Sherman, on Cameron's orders assessing at Camp Dick Robinson the prospects for an East Tennessee movement, wrote General G. H. Thomas that he understood the political importance of going into East Tennessee, but "I must say you are surrounded by difficulties and exposed to labors of the most serious character." He pointed to deficiencies that Thomas had been mentioning, such as the lack of a railroad which required renting wagons from private owners to haul supplies. The chief objection to an East Tennessee movement, in Sherman's view, was the Confederate occupation of Bowling Green, a menace to Louisville and the mid-western frontier of defense. The Confederates gave signs of planning a Louisville advance.²³

Secretary Cameron, having won praise in the North for his vigorous leadership in East Tennessee affairs, was not deterred by such practicalities as rented wagons and lack of a railroad. Desiring Sherman to take the offensive, he wanted "the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad taken possession of, and the artery that supplied the rebellion cut." Sherman told Adjutant General Lorenzo Thomas on October 22, "You know my views—that this great center of our field was too weak, far too weak, and I have begged and implored till I dare not say more." Sherman seems to have meant by the center the line of the Louisville

October 21, 29, 1861.

²³ Sherman to Thomas, October 13, 19, 1861, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 4, pp. 306, 310-11.

and Nashville Railroad. His use of the past tense suggests an impasse in his ability to satisfy the War Department.

On October 29 General G. H. Thomas called back to Camp Dick Robinson the reconnaissance elements which had been sent to observe Zollicoffer's movements. These elements followed generally the historic Wilderness Road. There had been some contact with the Confederate forces. Thomas said to the reconnaissance leader Brigadier General Albin Schoepf, "He [Sherman] objects to advancing the troops too far on this route, and directs that we go no farther. . . ." Two days later Sherman told Thomas he had talked with Andrew Johnson and as a result he probably would send him one or two regiments, but added, "I do not believe this winter they will give us a chance to invade East Tennessee by the Gap. Winter is near at hand, and the roads will be almost impassable."²⁴

Nevertheless, General G. H. Thomas received word on November 4 from W. B. Carter that he was in East Tennessee and was seeking to find a dozen strong leaders for a general Unionist revolt, but "If I cannot get such leaders, we will make a desperate attempt to destroy all the [railroad] bridges, and I firmly believe I will be successful. . . . I can assure you that whoever is the leader of a successful expedition into East Tennessee will receive from these people a crown of glory of which any one might well be proud, and I know of no one on whom I would more cheerfully bestow that crown than on yourself."²⁵

This same day, however, the doctrine of the center was given the support of James Guthrie, influential president of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, who wrote Secretary Cameron on November 4, "Give us 60,000 men on General Sherman's center, and *we* will awake the Union men in Tennessee." Sherman had in his Department of the Cumberland command at that time approximately 15,000 men.²⁶

Communicating with his immediate superior, General Sherman, on November 5, General Thomas said, "I inclose copies of two communications I have just received from Mr. William B. Carter, the brother of

²⁴ L. Thomas to Cameron, October 21, 1861, *ibid.*, 314; Sherman to L. Thomas, October 22, 1861, *ibid.*, 316; G. H. Thomas to Schoepf, October 29, 1861, *ibid.*, 323; Sherman to G. H. Thomas, October 31, 1861, *ibid.*, 324.

²⁵ Dated October 27, the letter was received November 4. *Ibid.*, 320.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 332, italics added. For further discussion see R. S. Cotterill, "The Louisville and Nashville Railroad, 1861-1865," *American Historical Review*, XXIX (July, 1924), 700-16.

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Lieutenant [Samuel P.] Carter, U. S. Navy. If we could possibly get the arms and the four regiments of disciplined and reliable men, we could seize the railroad yet. Cannot General McClellan be induced to send me the regiments? He can spare them easily, I should think." Two days earlier General Sherman had written to him, "I can only repeat my former orders, for you to hold in check the forces of Zollicoffer and await events."²⁷

In the meantime, General Thomas received a letter from Andrew Johnson at London, Kentucky, apparently located there with the East Tennessee brigade being organized and trained by Acting Brigadier General Samuel P. Carter (on special assignment with the army). Although the text of Johnson's letter is not available for quotation, Thomas' reply of November 7 is, saying in part:

I have done all in my power to get troops and transportation and means to advance into Tennessee. I believe General Sherman has done the same. Up to this time we have been unsuccessful. . . .

I can only say I am doing the best I can. Our commanding general is doing the same, and using all his influence to equip a force for the rescue of Tennessee.

If the Tennesseans are not content and must go, then the risk of disaster will remain with them. Some of our troops are not clothed, and it seems impossible to get clothing.

Writing on the same day to General Schoepf, who was in command at London (again watching for Zollicoffer's advance), Thomas stated, "I sympathize most deeply with the Tennesseans on account of their natural anxiety to relieve their friends and families from the terrible oppression which they are now suffering; but to make the attempt to rescue them when we are not half prepared is culpable, especially when our enemies are as anxious that we should make the move as the Tennesseans themselves."²⁸

On this same day, November 7, McClellan was in touch with Brigadier General Don Carlos Buell, soon to undertake the Louisville command, about the East Tennessee issue. McClellan advised:

The military problem would be a simple one could it be entirely separated from political influences. Such is not the case. Were the population among which you are to operate wholly or generally hostile, it is probable that Nashville should be your first and principal objective point. It so happens that a large majority of the inhabitants of Eastern Tennessee are in favor of the Union. It therefore seems proper that you should remain on the defensive on the line from Louisville

²⁷ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 4, pp. 338, 336.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 342-43.

to Nashville, while you throw the mass of your forces by rapid marches, by Cumberland Gap or Walker's Gap, on Knoxville, in order to occupy the railroad at that point, and thus enable the loyal citizens of Eastern Tennessee to rise, while you at the same time cut off the railway communication between Eastern Virginia and the Mississippi. It will be prudent to fortify the pass before leaving it in your rear.

Sherman said to Thomas on November 8, "Mr. [Horace] Maynard [in 1861 a loyal U. S. congressman from Tennessee] still presses the East Tennessee expedition. I do not doubt its importance, but I know we have not force enough and transportation to undertake it. Instead of dispersing our efforts we should concentrate; and as soon as possible our forces must be brought nearer together."²⁹

On the night of November 8, 1861, occurred the revolt of the East Tennessee Unionists, who apparently were still hopeful that a Union army was about to arrive. Accounts vary, but a reliable source indicates that five railroad bridges at widely separated points were damaged in whole or part: two over Chickamauga Creek near Chattanooga, one over the Hiwassee River at Charleston, one over the Holston River at Bluff City, and one over Lick Creek at Greeneville. Tennessee's Governor Isham G. Harris wrote to President Davis, "This rebellion must be crushed out instantly, the leaders arrested, and summarily punished. I shall send immediately about 10,000 men to that section." General Zollicoffer declared that the Unionists had acted badly and should no longer be trusted. The *Memphis Appeal* stated that East Tennessee was "the vulnerable point." The *New York Times* felt much reassured, "The Tennessee Unionists have proved to the insurgent Government how hugely its confidence is misplaced. . . . A strong National army once established in this all-important locality, the back of rebellion will be broken."³⁰

Reports on the Unionist revolt were dispatched to Richmond by various East Tennessee Confederate sympathizers. The superintendent of the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad, J. W. Lewis, who appar-

²⁹ McClellan to Buell, November 7, 1861, *ibid.*, 342; Sherman to G. H. Thomas, November 8, 1861, *ibid.*, 347.

³⁰ For the bridges damaged see Hamer, *Tennessee*, II, 564-65 (nine major bridges between Bridgeport, Alabama, and Bristol were scheduled originally for destruction). Cf. Kincaid, *Wilderness Road*, 231; Carrter Patten, *A Tennessee Chronicle* (n.p., 1953), 193-94; McKinney, *Education in Violence*, 117. To confirm that the work was believed by the Confederates from the first to have been a civilian enterprise see A. S. Johnston to Isham G. Harris, November 12, 1861, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 4, p. 240; Harris to Davis, *ibid.*, 240. Zollicoffer is quoted in Hamer, *Tennessee*, II, 565; *Memphis Appeal* quoted in *New York Times*, November 10, 1861; *New York Times*, November 14, 1861.

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ently went out of his railway's territory to look over conditions, wrote President Davis from Cleveland, November 11, that "The country is in great excitement and terror." A Jonesborough informant related that Unionists in the vicinity were aroused and "They look confidently for the re-establishment of the Federal authority in the South." President John R. Branner of the East Tennessee and Virginia, in an alarmed report from Knoxville to the Confederate War Department on November 9, revealed that fire had been the agent of bridge destruction. President Branner reported "great excitement along the whole line of road." He had "evidence that the Union party are organizing and preparing to destroy or take possession of the whole line from Bristol and Chattanooga." Branner asked that the government promptly give the railroad military aid and protection, without which "transportation over my road of army supplies will be an utter impossibility." He stated, "We have arrested four of the individuals engaged in burning one bridge, and know who burned another, but for want of the necessary military force fear we cannot arrest them."

On the other hand, General Zollicoffer on November 11, writing Adjutant General Samuel Cooper from Jacksborough (Jacksboro), where he had gone on a fact-finding mission, said that he found the reports of damage were exaggerated. He also said, "the Federalists in East Tennessee believe a large force from Kentucky are to invade us immediately and simultaneously at different points, and are intending, by concert of action in threatening the destruction of the railroad, to distract and derange our plans of defense."³¹

General Buell arrived in Louisville in mid-November as commander, under a reorganization in the West, of the Department of the Ohio which, effective November 9, 1861, included Kentucky (east of the Cumberland River) and Tennessee. The Department of the Cumberland was deactivated. Army headquarters told General Buell to give his full attention to East Tennessee, and assigned Sherman to General Henry W. Halleck's Department of the Missouri staff.

General Sherman's management of the Department of the Cumberland from October 8 to November 15 was characterized by the New

³¹ W. B. Wood to Zollicoffer, November 10, 1861, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 4, p. 233, mentions only bridges at Lick Creek, at Union, and at Charleston; two bridges south of Chattanooga are not located. The reports of Lewis, Branner, and Zollicoffer are in *ibid.*, 235, 231, 237, 239.

York *Times* as gripped by "a spirit of masterly inactivity" in the face of proddings from Washington to be more energetic. Sherman had done nothing to advance toward East Tennessee although the Washington authorities wanted what Andrew Johnson had promised his fellow Tennesseans at Camp Dick Robinson. Johnson had told them they would be home in "six weeks" and "declared it to be his purpose to lead the Tennesseans encamped here back in triumph to their homes." The *Times* stated, "The seizure of Cumberland Gap has been, and still is, the pet project of President Lincoln and some of our highest military leaders." Although Sherman had failed, "General Buell will atone for the inefficiency of his predecessor," or, the *Times* said, "Let us hope so." The *Times* published on the front page of a later issue a large map of East Tennessee with an accompanying statement that said in part, "We have urged over and over again, in this journal, the fundamental importance to the Union cause of our obtaining possession of the East Tennessee and Virginia Railroad."³²

For reasons of his own Secretary Cameron let the press know that General Sherman when in command of the Department of the Cumberland had forecast a need for 200,000 troops to launch an offensive. The Cincinnati *Commercial* thought the forecast signified that Sherman had become insane. It pointed to his attitude toward the Cumberland Gap expedition as typical of his "mad freaks." Perhaps the London *Times* did not greatly distort the true issues in Sherman's Department of the Cumberland difficulties: "The press was again becoming impatient for a battle," or the very thing which Sherman seemed to wish to avoid.³³ Sherman, whose lack of enthusiasm for East Tennessee involvement was used to support the charge that he was unbalanced, always believed Secretary Cameron encouraged the insanity notion.

On November 16 General S. P. Carter, writing from London, Kentucky, to General G. H. Thomas, reported that his brother W. B. Carter had just arrived there from East Tennessee. As many as eight

³² James B. Fry, *Operations of the Army under Buell* (New York, 1862), 6-10; Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 214; Lewis, *Sherman*, 197; Edward Ruger, *Legends of the Operations of the Army of the Cumberland* (Washington, 1869), 1-16. This is a Government Printing Office imprint. The New York *Times*, November 16, 1861, states that Buell arrived in Louisville on November 15, thus confirming Fry and Ruger. For a succinct account of Sherman in Kentucky see Thorndike (ed.), *The Sherman Letters*, 133-36. The New York *Times'* dates are November 25, October 20, December 7, 1861.

³³ Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 205. The Cincinnati *Commercial*, December 11, 1861, on Sherman is quoted in Lewis, *Sherman*, 201. See London *Times*, November 4, 1861.

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railroad bridges, General Carter thought, had been damaged. The time favored an expedition into East Tennessee. However, General Thomas concluded further discussion of the much-bruited Union advance by advising Carter the next day that General Buell had arrived in Louisville to assume departmental command and that he was in charge; so "I would recommend you to write to him immediately for instructions. . . ." ³⁴

Sherman's inability, or lack of willingness, to organize an East Tennessee expedition gave an issue to the London *Times*, which generally favored the Confederacy. The Washington correspondent of the *Times*, William Russell, argued that the failure in the Cumberland Gap project raised questions about the "theory of the divided South . . . by those Washington politicians who held to it with such tenacity." Noting that General Sherman had predicted that a Kentucky offensive would necessitate 200,000 men, Russell stated that the South could be divided only by force. Even East Tennessee, the largest center of Unionism, could be secured only by force, and that force was not available. In summing up the course of events in Kentucky and Tennessee Russell found that "General Sherman was not quite wrong" in his projection of needed strength. In his November 18, 1861, Washington report Russell resumed his argument: "From Kentucky there is such 'no news' that we are justified in thinking the Government has nothing good to tell us." Again, the Washington government depended on force, because, Russell declared, in the instance of Kentucky there was nothing else "to prevent her being taken out of [the Union] . . ." ³⁵

In reviewing the events in Tennessee during the month, *Harper's Weekly* on November 30, 1861, declared, "The Unionists of East Tennessee appear to be terribly in earnest in their hostility to the rebel rule which has recently been forced on them. . . ." In December the army of occupation hanged two men at Greeneville and three men at Knoxville on the charge of having burned railroad bridges. According to the Con-

³⁴ *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 4, pp. 350-60, 361. While there was no further correspondence on the subject of the Cumberland Gap expedition as related to Sherman, additional East Tennessee developments for this general period may be traced in *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 7, pp. 439 ff., and Series II, Vol. 1, pp. 823 ff.

³⁵ For discussion of the role of the London *Times* see Randall, *Lincoln, the President*, I, 250, 387-89, II, 32, 38, 50, 145, 177; also *New York Times*, October 30, December 11, 1861; Frank Lawrence Owsley, *King Cotton Diplomacy*, 2nd ed. revised by Harriet Chappell Owsley (Chicago, 1959), 20-21. Russell's remarks, both quoted and/or closely paraphrased not dated in text from *London Times*, November 9, 1861. Russell was knighted in 1895.

federate Athens *Post* in McMinn County, the tragic hangings were the consequence of activities "preconcerted and arranged by the redemptionless traitor, Andrew Johnson." The East Tennessee paper also reported pre-gallows confessions by two accused bridge burners who claimed that they were "forced and deluded" into taking part in the affair. In New York, however, *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* praised "the volunteers from East Tennessee" for cutting "the line over which the rebel army of the Potomac has received most of its supplies." The *Times* of the same city appraised the sabotage as action by "a free, independent yeomanry with all the traditions and conditions of liberty." The *Times* added that the bridge burnings in East Tennessee have proved that "the patriots of that region have become wearied out [of?] waiting" for the Union army to come.³⁶

At the same time that Northern attention was focussed on East Tennessee by the bridge burnings, William Russell in the London *Times* resumed his discussion of that episode. The bridge burnings occurred on the same day that Confederate agents were removed by a United States ship from a British mail steamer. While the Mason-Slidell incident gave Russell further evidence for his charge that the Union hopes rested on force, the developments in Tennessee caused him to say:

There is news that in East Tennessee Unionists or enemies of some sort are burning bridges and destroying telegraph wires, and giving tokens of an intention to cut off the communications between the Confederates and their friends. The cause of the Unionists is beginning to gain ground, and if the reaction comes now it will produce results of immense consequence in Kentucky and Tennessee, which must react on Missouri and elsewhere.³⁷

The military problem of getting into East Tennessee, in Sherman's opinion, hinged on a dependable line of supply. President Lincoln said in his annual message to Congress in December, 1861:

I deem it of importance that the loyal regions of East Tennessee and western North Carolina should be connected with Kentucky, and other faithful parts of the Union, by railroad. I therefore recommend as a military measure, that Congress provide for the construction of such a road, as speedily as possible.³⁸

Had the Congress acted favorably on Lincoln's recommendation the Union army's division of the South might have been sooner accom-

³⁶ Hamer, *Tennessee*, II, 566; Athens *Post*, November 29, December 20, 1861; *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, December 14, 1861; New York *Times*, December 7, 1861.

³⁷ London *Times*, December 3, 1861.

³⁸ Quoted in Kincaid, *Wilderness Road*, 233.

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plished. Lacking a railroad, and having only Kentucky from which to start, the Federal army for nearly two years would detour around East Tennessee.

Early in December, according to the Richmond press, secret talks in Richmond concerned removal of the Confederate capital to the interior, partly because railroad bridge burnings could at a given moment break the East Tennessee communication line. Nashville was mentioned as the new capital, probably because it was a railroad center; meeting there were the Louisville and Nashville, the Nashville and Chattanooga, and a line from Nashville to Decatur, Alabama (which had connections with Memphis and Chattanooga); and under construction westward to the Tennessee River was the Nashville and Northwestern Railroad. According to the London *Times* of December 17, 1861, the rumors concerning moving the capital were duly considered in Washington, "The Federal General Buell is represented to be making preparations for the invasion of Tennessee, with the design of attacking Nashville." The *Times* said that for the Washington government to let Buell's project to be known meant that "East Tennessee is left to secession and itself." However, not many days were to pass before both sides learned that early reports of East Tennessee communication damage had been considerably magnified. The Confederacy found it easy to dispatch iron from the Richmond foundries and timber from Georgia to repair the East Tennessee railroad. It was in use again by the first of the year.³⁹

Since with the East Tennessee railroad repaired there was less need to consider that Nashville might become the new Confederate capital, Buell's plans to march on Nashville, had they been based alone on this rumor, might have needed revision. Actually, these plans were a development of Sherman's "center" idea, which by this time had attained great momentum. Just as the main Confederate advance into Kentucky in September, 1861, had proceeded with an invasion line toward Louisville along the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, so, there being no

³⁹ The New York *Times*, quoting Richmond *Enquirer* of November 19, on November 26, 1861, presented a detailed discussion of Nashville's railroads. On December 6 it reported that the East Tennessee railroad was being repaired. It should be noted that there was a rail line from Nashville to Guthrie, Kentucky. Kincaid A. Herr, *The Louisville & Nashville Railroad, 1850-1942* (Louisville, 1942), pp. 15-16. Knoxville also was mentioned as a possible site for the capital. Folmsbee, Corlew, and Mitchell, *History of Tennessee*, II, 90n.

other rail line into Tennessee from Kentucky, the Federal army likewise followed the Louisville and Nashville and established an invasion line toward Nashville. These simplicities which had dominated General Sherman's policies when he held the Louisville command also dominated Buell's. One of General Buell's first Department of the Ohio orders, instructing General G. H. Thomas to concentrate his forces on Danville, Kentucky, and avoid even a general move toward Cumberland Gap, strengthened the Union center.⁴⁰

A brooding, anxious General Sherman, who had left Louisville for his assignment to General Halleck's Department of the Missouri staff at St. Louis in late November of 1861, was soon sent on leave to Lancaster. His wife wrote to Senator John Sherman, "I find that the keenest source of trouble . . . is the fact that he could not go to the relief of the East Tennesseans when the bridges were burned."⁴¹ However, General Sherman returned in late December to recruit drilling at Benton Barracks, Missouri.

The year 1861 had been spent in preparation. Great Britain had recognized the Confederate States as belligerents and proclaimed her neutrality. Two major theaters of army operations were emerging during the year: in the East with Richmond as the Union goal, and in the West with control of the Mississippi River and East Tennessee as twin goals. Sherman, followed by Buell, as commander at Louisville, detoured the Union army from the President's East Tennessee goal, and emphasized instead the center of the line toward Nashville.

Lincoln may have reluctantly agreed in December with Buell's plan to move toward Nashville rather than East Tennessee, but with the repair of the East Tennessee railroad by January, 1862, he revived the notion of sending Federal aid into East Tennessee. Andrew Johnson and Horace Maynard sent a joint letter to General Buell regarding the plight of East Tennessee Unionists who were described as being hunted down like animals by the Confederate army. Lincoln telegraphed Buell, "Have arms gone forward for East Tennessee? . . . Answer." Buell's reply was that he always regarded a march through Cumberland Gap into East Tennessee as a diversion from the vital center and that he could not be distracted from the Nashville objective. Responding that

⁴⁰ Kincaid, *Wilderness Road*, 231-33.

⁴¹ Lewis, *Sherman*, 200.

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the answer "disappoints and distresses me," Lincoln said that he "would rather have a point on the railroad south of Cumberland Gap than Nashville. First because it cuts a great artery of the enemy's communication which Nashville does not; and secondly, because it is in the midst of a loyal people, who would rally around it, which Nashville is not."⁴²

Even if so disposed, Buell could not have stopped the progress of his army from Kentucky toward Nashville: Civil War army movements often may be explicated in terms of available rail lines; Nashville had such a line from Kentucky whereas East Tennessee did not. Otherwise, the January, 1862, victory by General G. H. Thomas in eastern Kentucky at Mill Springs (both Zollicoffer and his chief of staff were killed) might have resulted in an unopposed Union march into East Tennessee.

⁴² Johnson and Maynard to Buell, December 7, 1861, *O.R.*, Series I, Vol. 7, p. 480. The letter and Lincoln's reply are in Hamer, *Tennessee*, II, 566-67. For a discussion sympathetic to Buell see Fry, *Operations of the Army under Buell*, 9.

(To be continued)