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FELIX K. ZOLLICOFFER: CONFEDERATE DEFENDER  
OF EAST TENNESSEE

By JAMES W. MCKEE, JR.

PART I

The state of Tennessee has been divided by law and nature into three distinct geopolitical regions. Of these "grand divisions," as they are known, the most unusual in terms of culture and tradition is that portion of the state known popularly as East Tennessee. For the most part, eastern Tennessee is a mountainous region, characterized by a cool climate, wooded mountain slopes, and narrow fertile valleys. As part of the Appalachian Highland System, the region extends on the west to the middle of the Cumberland Plateau and on the east to the highest points of the Unaka Mountains. These two rugged mountain areas are separated by the Great Valley, or Ridge and Valley, province, which contains about one-half of the arable land in East Tennessee. Abundantly drained by the circuitous Tennessee River and its principal tributaries, the entire area occupies around twelve thousand square miles and, because of its isolation and irregular topographical features, has been aptly referred to as the "Switzerland of America."<sup>1</sup>

East Tennessee is the smallest of the state's three political divisions. Yet, despite its small size, the region is unusually rich in natural resources. During the antebellum period, as well as today, the area boasted such resources as fertile soil and temperate climate, dense hardwood forests, and a large variety of important mineral deposits. However, before the Civil War, agriculture dominated the economy. According to the population census of 1860, inhabitants of the region numbered approximately a quarter million, and most of these were listed as small independent farmers who owned few or no slaves. The ratio of slaves to whites was 1 to 12 in contrast to 3 to 5 in West Tennessee. Because the land would not support slavery on a large scale,

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<sup>1</sup> Harry L. Law, *A Brief Geography of Tennessee* (Clarksville, Tenn., 1954), 5-12; Ina Yoakley, *Geography of Tennessee* (Boston, 1943), 1-2, 20-24; Philip M. Hamer, *Tennessee: A History, 1673-1932* (4 vols., New York, 1933), II, 558; Thomas L. Connelly, *Army of the Heartland: The Army of Tennessee, 1861-1862* (Baton Rouge, 1967), 3-22.

the plantation system did not flourish in East Tennessee. This latter factor, coupled with a growing desire for internal improvements as well as industrial development, caused most East Tennesseans not to sympathize with the states' rights movement of that era.<sup>2</sup>

Thus, in 1861, East Tennessee was not only set apart by nature, but also was socially and politically a distinct region. Because it had so little in common with other parts of the South, East Tennessee became a stronghold of Unionism during the Civil War. Here a large number of people opposed every attempt of secessionists to withdraw the state from the Union and then adamantly refused to cooperate with the Confederate government after secession had become an accomplished fact in Tennessee. This naturally had a disturbing effect upon authorities in Richmond, for the region was recognized as having both strategic and political importance to the Confederacy.<sup>3</sup>

Militarily, control of East Tennessee was viewed by some far-sighted government officials as vital to the Confederate war effort. Besides its great value as a wheat-producing area, East Tennessee was extremely important as a source of essential raw materials such as copper, lead, and saltpeter. Also of great importance to the Confederacy was the railroad line through that portion of the state. Traversing the Great Valley, from Bristol to Chattanooga, were connecting lines of the East Tennessee & Virginia and the East Tennessee & Georgia railroads. Since they had important connections to the east and to the south, these lines represented a crucial link among major military theaters in the South, and the loss of either, or both, could produce serious communication and logistical problems for the newborn Confederacy. Indeed, because of its strategic worth, East Tennessee was said to be the "keystone of the Confederate arch." To lose it would

<sup>2</sup> Yoakley, *Geography of Tennessee*, 20-31; James M. Safford, *Geology of Tennessee* (Nashville, 1869), 11, 13-15, 40-42; J. B. Kellebrew and J. M. Safford, *Introduction to the Resources of Tennessee* (Nashville, 1874), 2-5, 230-33, 409, 423-45; S. J. Folmsbee, *Sectionalism and Internal Improvements in Tennessee, 1796-1845* (Knoxville, 1939), 5-19, 20ff, 141-42; Constantine G. Belissary, "Industry and Industrial Philosophy in Tennessee, 1850-1860," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 23 (1951), 46-57; Chase C. Mooney, *Slavery in Tennessee* (Bloomington, 1957), 102, 104-6, 111-13; Hamer, *Tennessee*, I, 455-56; U. S. Bureau of Census, *The Statistics of the Population of the United States: Compiled from the Original Returns of the Ninth Census* (Washington, 1872), 271, 321, 328, 757.

<sup>3</sup> Mary E. R. Campbell, *The Attitude of Tennesseans Toward the Union, 1847-1861* (New York, 1961), 104ff; Oliver P. Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War* (Cincinnati, 1899), 432-34; Thomas W. Humes, *The Loyal Mountaineers of East Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1888), 120-22, 302; James W. Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction in Tennessee, 1860-1869* (Chapel Hill, N. C., 1934), 6-25, 58.

have the effect of opening an avenue for the Federal army to invade the geographical heartland of the Confederate States, wherein lay the greatest resources of food, livestock, and mineral production of the whole South. Small wonder, therefore, that certain civil and military officials placed so much emphasis upon retaining possession of East Tennessee. It was essential to the continued existence of the South as an independent nation.<sup>4</sup>

To hold eastern Tennessee in the Confederacy and to defend it against a Union invasion, the War Department assigned Felix K. Zollicoffer, one of the most underrated generals in the annals of the Civil War. Although some historians have described him as an inept political general, one recent authority has stated that although "severely criticized," he was "actually a capable strategist."<sup>5</sup> It is true that Zollicoffer was not professionally trained in the art of warfare, and that he was even guilty of bad judgment during his short term as commander of East Tennessee. But this does not seem to be sufficient reason to overlook his merit as a military leader—especially in view of the problems he encountered and the hardships endured.

In addition to operating in a densely wooded mountain region, where communication and supply problems were always maximum, Zollicoffer had to maintain the longest line of defense held by Confederates in Tennessee during the war with the smallest number of troops, many of whom were poorly armed. Zollicoffer's command also embraced a region which contained the least amount of sympathy for the southern cause and the greatest amount of Unionist activity, an inherent and continuous threat to successful Confederate military operations in that area. In view of these mitigating circumstances, Zollicoffer deserves a more sympathetic treatment than he has been customarily given by historians.

<sup>4</sup> Jesse Burt, "East Tennessee, Lincoln, and Sherman," Part I, *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 34 (1962), 5-6, 9-10; Charles B. Dew, *Ironmaker to the Confederacy: Joseph R. Anderson and the Tredegar Iron Works* (New Haven, 1966), 97-98, 103-4, 159; Frank E. Vandiver, *Ploughshares into Swords: Josiah Gorgas and Confederate Ordnances* (Austin, 1952), 61, 75-76, 107, 123, 201-2; Robert C. Black, III, *The Railroads of the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill, 1952), 4-5; George D. Turner, *Victory Rode the Rails: The Strategic Place of the Railroads in the Civil War* (Indianapolis, 1953), 102, 106.

<sup>5</sup> Even so competent an authority as Stanley F. Horn, for instance, has asserted that Zollicoffer was unfit for the important command to which he was assigned by the Confederate War Department. "He was simply not a soldier—by training or by instinct," concluded Horn, *The Army of Tennessee* (Indianapolis, 1941), 50. Cf. Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 86-87.

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When the Confederates bombarded Fort Sumter, in April, 1861, Felix Zollicoffer was 49 years old. Of Swiss ancestry, he was born on May, 19, 1812, in Maury County, Tennessee, the son of John Jacob and Martha Kirk Zollicoffer. Little is known of his boyhood and youth, except that he worked on his father's "self-contained" farm, studied "reading, spelling and mental arithmetic" in one of the neighborhood's old field schools, and later, after the untimely death of his mother, attended Jackson College in nearby Columbia. Zollicoffer was probably well-informed for a youth of his age, as is suggested by the fact that he spent many hours reading books in his father's well-stocked library.<sup>6</sup>

After spending a year at Jackson College, Zollicoffer began to explore the possibilities of a career in the developing field of journalism. With his father's financial assistance he soon acquired a one-third interest in the *Paris West Tennessean*, but the paper failed after a period of about two years, and the young aspiring journalist was left deeply in debt. To erase this indebtedness, and perhaps to gain needed experience in the profession, he accepted employment in 1831 as a journeyman printer with the *Knoxville Register*. From its editor, Frederick S. Heiskell, a veteran newspaperman, Zollicoffer learned the finer points of journalism. By 1834, he had settled his financial obligations, and he left Knoxville to become editor and part owner of the *Columbia Observer* in Maury County. The next year he was appointed state printer. On the threshold of a promising journalistic career, he temporarily abandoned the profession to serve one year as a lieutenant of volunteers in the Seminole War of 1836.<sup>7</sup>

Upon returning to Tennessee in 1837, Zollicoffer resumed editorship of the *Observer*, which was operated in the interests of the Whig

<sup>6</sup> Octavia Z. Bond to John T. Moore, March 16, 1922, July 30, 1924, Bond Papers (Microfilm, Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee). Octavia Z. Bond was one of the six daughters born to Felix Kirk and Louisa Gordon Zollicoffer. The above letters were written by her at the request of John Trotwood Moore, director of the Tennessee State Library and Archives in the early 1900's. In view of the unreliability of memory, the letters must be used with care. See also Edd Winfield Parks, "Zollicoffer: Southern Whig," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, XI (December, 1952), 348-50; Marcus J. Wright, "Sketch of General Felix K. Zollicoffer" *Southern Bivouac*, II (July, 1884), 485ff; *The South in the Building of the Nation* (13 vols., Richmond, 1909), XII, 586-87; William B. Turner, *History of Maury County Tennessee* (Nashville, 1955), 288-89; Will T. Hale and Dixon L. Merritt, *A History of Tennessee and Tennesseans* (8 vols.; Chicago and New York, 1913), III, 763.

<sup>7</sup> Parks, "Zollicoffer," 349-50; James C. Stamper, "Felix K. Zollicoffer: Tennessee Editor and Politician," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, XXVIII (Winter, 1969), 358-59; Hale and Merritt, *Tennessee and Tennesseans*, II, 432-35; Raymond E. Myers, *The Zollie Tree* (Louisville, 1964), 3-20; Mrs. Anna M'Kinney, "F. K. Zollicoffer—First and Last Battle," *Confederate Veteran*, XVIII (April, 1910), 161-62. Hereafter cited M'Kinney, "Zollicoffer." See also Bond to Moore, July 30, 1924, Bond Papers.

party, whose political philosophy Zollicoffer had embraced sometime before his tour of military duty in Florida. Hoping to capitalize upon Zollicoffer's talent for political writing, Whig leaders wisely sought his assistance in this particular area, and Zollicoffer was able to advance his own as well as the party's political interests. In 1841 he was summoned to Nashville to become the associate editor of the *Republican Banner*, the party's chief organ in Tennessee. In this post he was soon able to rise to a position of major influence in the party. Since he was credited with contributing significantly to the election and re-election of James C. Jones as governor over the formidable James K. Polk in 1841 and 1843, his reputation as a political strategist was firmly established, as attested by his title "Kingmaker." Indeed, according to one authority, he became the virtual "dictator of the Whig party in Tennessee."<sup>8</sup>

Before the dissolution of the Union in 1860-61, Zollicoffer was to hold a number of public offices, not all of which were indicative of his political power in Tennessee. In 1843 he was elected by the legislature to the position of comptroller of the state treasury, a post he held until his resignation in the spring of 1849. From 1849 to 1853, he represented Davidson County in the upper house of the Tennessee General Assembly. In 1853 he was elected to the first of three consecutive terms in the lower house of the United States Congress. During his legislative and congressional career a major political issue was the extension of slavery into the territories, and Zollicoffer's views were somewhat inconsistent. In 1849-56 he was one of a group of Whig leaders who prevented the legislature from electing delegates to the Southern (or Nashville) Convention and also temporarily postponed the election of delegates by Davidson County. In Congress, however, he vigorously supported the Kansas-Nebraska Bill because he "thought it just to give Kansas a chance to have slavery if her people should desire it."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*; Parks, "Zollicoffer," 347, 351-353; Stamper, "Zollicoffer: Editor and Politician," 360-61. According to his biographer, Governor Jones appointed him adjutant general and he served throughout his two administrations. Myers, *Zollie Tree*, 21.

<sup>9</sup> Charles A. Miller (comp.), *The Official and Political Manual of the State of Tennessee* (Nashville, 1890), 171, 177, 219; *House Journal, 25th Tennessee General Assembly, 1843-44*, 182-83; *Senate Journal, 28th Tennessee General Assembly 1849-50*, 3-4; James L. Harrison, (ed.), *Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1961* (Washington, 1961), 1740; Hamer, *Tennessee*, I, 476; Parks, "Zollicoffer," 350-53; Stamper, "Zollicoffer: Editor and Politician," 366-71; *Congressional Globe*, 33 Cong., 1 sess., 1254, and *Appendix*, 584-86.

From the time of his retirement from Congress in 1859 to the outbreak of the Civil War, Zollicoffer devoted much of his energy to the cause of peace and understanding between North and South. Despite his earlier support of the pro-Southern Kansas-Nebraska Bill, he was profoundly disturbed by all the bitter sectional strife and sought to allay it by appealing to national sentiment instead of sectional prejudice. When the Whig party had disappeared he had become identified with the American, or Know-Nothing group, which later became known in Tennessee as the "Opposition." In 1860, while the Democratic party was dividing into Northern and Southern factions and a sectional Republican party was nominating Abraham Lincoln for the presidency, Zollicoffer was busy assisting in the formation of the moderate Constitutional Union party. He helped secure the presidential nomination of that organization for his friend, John Bell, and then, believing that Bell's success would depend upon a good impression in the North, he set out on an extended speaking tour which carried him through New York and New England in support of the Bell-Everett ticket. That the party failed to develop much voting strength in that region cannot be attributed to lack of effort on Zollicoffer's part. Few persons had been more zealous in the promotion of Bell's candidacy.<sup>10</sup>

Having campaigned vigorously against the "Republican menace," Zollicoffer was understandably dismayed over the outcome of the national election. However, unlike many political leaders in the South, he did not regard Lincoln's victory as sufficient cause for dissolving the Union. In an effort to forestall such action in Tennessee, he helped organize and served as chairman of a public meeting in Davidson County, November 25, which asked Governor Isham G. Harris to call a special session of the legislature to summon another Southern convention similar to the one he had opposed in 1850. The early secession of seven states of the Lower South rendered such a convention illogical, and Harris used the special session he called to promote his plan, aided by a rapidly growing secessionist sentiment, to take Tennessee out of the Union. In response to his suggestion, the legislature pro-

<sup>10</sup> Bond to Moore, July 30, 1924, Bond Papers; Parks, "Zollicoffer," 354; Stamper, "Zollicoffer: Editor and Politician," 372-76; Myers, *Zollie Tree*, 42. For Zollicoffer's earlier relationship with the man who became the standard-bearer of the Constitutional Union party in 1860, see Joseph H. Parks, *John Bell of Tennessee* (Baton Rouge, 1950), 281, 295, 301. Bell did carry Tennessee.

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*Zollie Tree*, 21.

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vided for a referendum on February 9, 1861, on the question of calling a convention to consider secession. It also proposed a convention of delegates from the slave states to meet in Nashville or some other convenient place and named twelve men, one of whom was Zollicoffer, to represent Tennessee. Harris suggested that they should go to Montgomery, Ala., and help organize the Confederate States of America, but Zollicoffer and the other Tennessee delegates decided instead to attend the Peace Convention which was to meet in Washington, D. C. Meanwhile, Zollicoffer campaigned vigorously against the secession convention, and was greatly encouraged by the result of the special referendum of February 9, 1861. Tennesseans turned down the proposed convention to consider secession by a vote of 69,387 to 57,798. Even Zollicoffer's own Middle Tennessee joined the eastern division in rejecting the convention, though by the narrow margin of only 1,382 votes.<sup>11</sup>

As mentioned above, Zollicoffer journeyed to Washington later that month to attend the Peace Convention scheduled to be held at that place. This conference had been called to attempt to devise means which might prevent impending conflict between North and South. Notwithstanding distressing events of the preceding weeks, Zollicoffer was hopeful that this desired goal might be effected by the convention. Therefore, when the delegates failed to adopt a satisfactory plan of adjustment, it was a despondent peacemaker who returned to Tennessee. Nevertheless, he continued to advise caution and moderation and was actually speaking against secession at a rally in Nashville when word of Fort Sumter first reached the state capital. This tragic event, followed closely by Lincoln's call for troops, filled Zollicoffer with apprehension and foreboding. It also caused him to abandon his policy of counseling moderation. To Zollicoffer the time had now arrived for all Tennesseans, former Unionists as well as secessionists, to choose the Southern side for the ensuing conflict.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Parks, "Zollicoffer," 353; Hamer, *Tennessee*, I, 528-30; James W. Fertig, *The Secession and Reconstruction of Tennessee* (Chicago, 1898), 20; Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction*, 9-14; Miller, *Official and Political Manual*, 43; *Senate Journal*, 33 G. A. 1861, pp. 67-68, 98-107; Campbell, *Attitude of Tennesseans*, 143-44, 159-61, 175-76 288-90; *Nashville Union and American*, March 3, 1861. See also, for conflicting figures (68,282 to 59,449), *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (130 vols., Washington, 1880-1901), Ser. IV, Vol. I, 901. Hereinafter cited as *O. R.*, with all subsequent references to Series I unless specifically noted otherwise.

<sup>12</sup> Bond to Moore, July 30, 1924, Bond Papers.



As a native of the South, Zollicoffer knew that it would be virtually impossible for Tennessee to stay out of the impending war. The die for Tennesseans was cast in mid-April when Governor Harris declined to honor Lincoln's request for 2,000 state troops to aid in suppressing the "rebellion" in the Lower South. Although some Tennesseans still held the belief that the state might pursue an independent course, Zollicoffer completely rejected the idea. He said:

If, while we draw the sword we can with the other hand bear the olive branch of peace, I shall most heartily rejoice; but the very act of refusing troops under the call of the President is a refusal of allegiance to the Federal Government. It places us in rebellion. The suggestion, therefore, of an "armed neutrality," of a "masterful inactivity," is not possible for us to pursue.<sup>13</sup>

Zollicoffer's logic was sound, and his prediction that neutrality was not possible was proved correct as events rushed toward a dramatic climax. On May 6, 1861, ordinances of separation from the Union and adhering to the Confederacy and a declaration of independence were enacted by the Tennessee General Assembly. These measures were duly submitted for popular ratification at a special referendum on June 8, and "Separation" was approved by a vote of 104,913 to 47,238.<sup>14</sup>

Zollicoffer's decision to support the Confederacy was obviously not made in great haste. During the prolonged sectional struggle, he must have reflected many times upon his own future course of action in the event of armed conflict. One of the first indications that he would espouse the Southern cause came shortly after the futile peace conference in Washington. On that occasion, he is reported to have said: "Let us emulate the glorious example of our fathers in arms. We must not, cannot stand neutral and see our Southern brothers butchered."<sup>15</sup> This was not an uncommon sentiment in the upper South. Although Zollicoffer had been opposed to secession, he was, at the same time, equally opposed to the use of coercion by the federal government against the seceded states. Thus, feeling that he could not bear arms against his own people, he had resolved to cast his for-

<sup>13</sup> Stanley F. Horn, "Nashville During the Civil War," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, IV (March, 1945), 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Acts, 33rd Tennessee General Assembly, Second Extra Session, 1861*, 13-18, 19; Campbell, *Attitude of Tennesseans*, 294. According to *O. R.*, LII, Pt. 1, p. 148, the vote was 108,399 for separation, and 47,233 against.

<sup>15</sup> Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction*, 15-16, citing *American Annual Cyclopaedia*, 1861, p. 679.

tunes with those of the recently formed Confederate States of America.<sup>16</sup>

Even before secession was an accomplished fact in Tennessee, Zollicoffer became an ardent supporter of the Confederate war effort, as Tennessee had formed a military league with the Confederacy in May. In fact, during the spring and summer of 1861, he was one of the guiding spirits behind the movement to put his state on an effective war footing. As a reward, he was appointed to the rank of brigadier general in the "Provisional Army of Tennessee." Interestingly enough, Governor Harris offered Zollicoffer full command of the provisional army, including the rank of major general, but Zollicoffer had declined to accept the honor because of his limited military experience. Following confirmation of his appointment by the General Assembly, Zollicoffer commanded a camp of instruction north of Nashville. There, at Camp Trousdale, he conscientiously drilled raw recruits until the state troops were placed under Confederate authority in July, at which time he accepted a brigadier generalship in the Provisional Army of the Confederacy. Then, upon the recommendation of General Leonidas Polk, he was assigned to command the Confederate District of East Tennessee.<sup>17</sup>

By the time Zollicoffer was appointed district commander, East Tennessee was on the verge of armed revolt. It was in this pro-Union region that the secession movement encountered its most determined opposition in Tennessee. Signs of deep dissension became evident immediately after ratification of the secession ordinances on June 8. Of the 47,238 votes cast against separation, approximately seventy per cent came from eastern Tennessee. When the result of the referendum became known, the Unionists of East Tennessee, under the leadership of "Parson" William G. Brownlow (editor of the Knoxville *Whig*), Horace Maynard, Oliver P. Temple, Sen. Andrew Johnson, Thomas

<sup>16</sup> Bond to Moore, July 30, 1924, Bond Papers.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*; Hamer, *Tennessee*, II, 545; Isham G. Harris to Jefferson Davis, July 2, 1861, Harris Letterbook, 1861-62 (Tennessee State Library and Archives, Nashville, Tennessee). See also Clement A. Evans (ed.), *Confederate Military History* (12 vols., New York, 1962), VIII, 6-9, 347; Marcus J. Wright (comp.), *Tennessee in the War, 1861-1865* (New York, 1908), 10, 15, 53; Joseph H. Parks, *General Leonidas Polk, C.S.A., The Fighting Bishop* (Baton Rouge, 1962), 171. For a description of the conditions at Camp Trousdale, see Enoch L. Mitchell (ed.), "Letters of a Confederate Surgeon in the Army of Tennessee to His Wife," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, IV (December, 1945), 342-43, and Thomas A. Head, *Campaigns and Battles of the Sixteenth Regiment, Tennessee Volunteers* (McMinnville, Tenn., 1961), 19-24.

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A. R. Nelson, and others, showed no disposition to abide by the majority decision. Instead, they prepared to take independent action against it because they believed the result had been obtained by fraud, intimidation, and violence on the part of the secession party. Many of the Unionists assembled on June 17 in convention at Greeneville, where, in addition to drawing up a long list of grievances, they drafted a memorial requesting that the eastern counties be permitted to separate from the rest of the state. When this petition was presented to the General Assembly, it was referred to a joint committee, which reported on June 29 that it was doubtful that the memorial represented the true desires of East Tennesseans, and no further action was taken. Thus ended the last major attempt of the Unionists legally to defeat the secession movement in Tennessee. Henceforth, they would resort to more aggressive and irregular methods to resist the will of the Confederate government.<sup>18</sup>

One of the primary reasons for the failure of the separatist movement in East Tennessee was the timely occupation of this region by Confederate troops. Zollicoffer's instructions, dated July 26, 1861, from Adjutant and Inspector General Samuel Cooper were direct and to the point: "Preserve peace, protect the railroad, and repel invasion." The importance of fulfilling this order, despite its brevity, was not lost on Zollicoffer, and he announced his intention to proceed at once to Knoxville.<sup>19</sup> He fully appreciated the strategic significance of his district, and as soon as his headquarters were established, he promptly dispatched such troops as were armed and available for duty to various strategic points in the department with orders to guard the railroad and to prepare defenses against any attack from the North. And, since there was no immediate threat of Federal invasion, ostensibly because of the declared state of neutrality in Kentucky, the

<sup>18</sup> Wright, *Tennessee in the War*, 9-12; Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 199-221; Campbell, *The Attitude of Tennesseans*, 205-12; Hamer, *Tennessee*, II, 557-60; Verton M. Queener, "East Tennessee Sentiment and the Secession Movement, November, 1860-June, 1861," *East Tennessee Historical Society's Publications*, No. 20 (1948), 59ff; J. Milton Henry, "The Revolution in Tennessee, February, 1861, to June, 1861," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, XVIII (June, 1959), 118-19; Eric Russell Lacy, "The Persistent State of Franklin," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, XXIII (December, 1964), 330-32. *Senate Journal*, 33 *G. A.*, 1861, pp. 142-44, 176-78. For a full account of the developments at the Greeneville Convention, see *Proceedings of the East Tennessee Convention Held at Knoxville, May 30-31, 1861, and at Greeneville, June 17, 1861* (Knoxville, 1861).

<sup>19</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 374, 375. His orders were expanded on July 31 to stress the "importance of preventing organization for resistance . . . and of attracting people to support the Government." *Ibid.*, 377.

problem of pacifying the "disloyal population" in East Tennessee was given equal priority by Zollicoffer. At first, he was disposed to "exercise authority with a lenient hand and to abstain from needless severities." Although some hot-tempered Unionists were presently urging their followers to commit acts of open defiance against the established military authority, Zollicoffer believed that the situation might be best controlled by tact rather than by force. Therefore, for the next several weeks, he acted with diplomatic caution. Also, his soldiers were not yet mustered into the Confederate service and were not getting paid or supplied with arms by the Confederate government, causing a serious strain on the state's resources and complicating communications between the state and Confederate authorities. The cause was the hastily negotiated military league between Tennessee and the Confederacy before the state had seceded. The transfer of authority from Tennessee to the Confederate government involved all sorts of complications, and the troops in East Tennessee were not mustered into Confederate service until October, 1861. Meanwhile, they were largely dependent on weapons from the state's arsenal, some of which had been used in the War of 1812.<sup>20</sup>

In the interest of "reclaiming" the disaffected population of East Tennessee, Zollicoffer issued in early August, 1861, a firm but conciliatory proclamation. In this address he sought to reassure the citizens of that vital region by carefully explaining that the military authorities were there only to repel invasion and to prevent the "introduction of the horrors of civil war." "All who desire peace," he declared, "can have peace, by quietly and harmlessly pursuing their lawful avocations."<sup>21</sup> To what extent the Unionists of East Tennessee were pacified by this proclamation cannot be easily determined. Some were definitely influenced by his counsel, but, for lack of more evidence, it is impossible to say how many. No doubt those who feared being impressed into Confederate military service were greatly relieved by it and, consequently, refrained from any revolutionary activity. On the

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 374, 375; Bond to Moore, July 30, 1924, Bond Papers; Harris to Zollicoffer, August 4, 16, 1861, Harris Letterbook; Mitchell, "Letters of a Confederate Surgeon," 344-46; Evans, *Confederate Military History*, VIII, 347-48; John B. Jones, *A Rebel War Clerk's Diary* (2 vols., New York, 1935), I, 40-41; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 26-42.

<sup>21</sup> A copy of this proclamation, printed reluctantly, so the paper could "circulate," may be found in the *Knoxville Whig*, August 10, 1861. It had appeared earlier in the pro-Confederate *Knoxville Daily Register*, August 7, 1861.

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East Tennessee was disposed to "exercise needless severity" in urging their established military might be best for the next several months. Soldiers were not getting paid, causing a breakdown in communications. The cause was between the Confederacy and the Union, and the loss of authority from all sorts of combatants mustered into the army. They were largely unaware of which had

population of East Tennessee a firm but conciliatory assurance the citizens that the military would prevent the "introduction of peace," he was pursuing their interests in East Tennessee. Some determined. Some more evidence, no feared being greatly relieved by military activity. On the

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other hand, many seem to have acquiesced in Confederate control, not so much because of Zollicoffer's proclamation and subsequent manifestations of moderation, but rather because they concluded it would be futile for them to resist at that time. Whatever the cause, the majority appear to have accepted their plight for the time being. While not converted, they were apparently content to await their liberation by Federal invaders.<sup>22</sup>

Zollicoffer clearly leaned over backward to avoid unnecessary friction in East Tennessee. By being more diplomatic than forceful, however, he provoked criticism from both camps. Pro-Union extremists denounced him as a heavy-handed despot who constantly abused his authority, while some of the more ardent Confederate sympathizers accused him of exercising too little power in dealing with the "Lincolmites." Such was Zollicoffer's reward for attempting to treat an explosive situation with caution, patience, and justice. Nevertheless, he was determined that conciliation should be given a fair test, and his policies for effecting that end were conscientiously pursued at his headquarters as long as conditions in East Tennessee permitted. To his obvious dismay, however, he was soon compelled to adopt a harder line for controlling the malcontents. This change was at least partially dictated by the outcome of elections held in August to determine the state's representation in the Confederate Congress. In that contest, East Tennesseans clearly demonstrated their resolve to adhere to the Union by electing Union candidates in all four congressional districts composing Zollicoffer's department. Three were seated in the U. S. Congress, and along with Andrew Johnson, who remained in the Senate, worked for Federal invasion of East Tennessee. Doubtless this election, plus the growing alarm caused by reports of armed bands being organized in the mountains, convinced both Zollicoffer and Governor Harris of the need for a more strict military rule in East Tennessee. Their moderate policies had obviously failed to produce the desired result. Therefore, Zollicoffer began to dispatch cavalry units to disarm hostile Union groups operating in Anderson, Campbell, Fentress and Scott counties. Also, under orders from Harris to arrest

<sup>22</sup> Hamer, *Tennessee*, II, 561; E. M. Coulter, *William G. Brownlow: Fighting Parson of the Southern Highlands* (Chapel Hill, 1937), 165-66; Robert W. Winston, *Andrew Johnson: Plebian and Patriot* (New York, 1928), 218-20.

Union leaders and banish them if necessary, he arraigned John B. Brownlow, son of the "Parson," and other Unionists.<sup>23</sup>

By the first week of August, Zollicoffer's command policies also began to be affected by the rapidly changing military situation in the West. He was especially concerned about the unstable state of affairs in Kentucky. From the outset, he had seriously doubted the ability of Kentuckians to maintain their proclaimed neutral condition for any length of time. Since neither the Union nor Confederate governments seemed willing to respect Kentucky's position, Zollicoffer deemed it wise to rely no longer on the pseudo-neutrality of that state to shield East Tennessee from invasion. Therefore, he undertook a comprehensive recruiting program and pondered intelligence reports indicating that a "very large amount of arms and ammunition" was being sent into Kentucky by the Lincoln government.<sup>24</sup> On the basis of this information, Zollicoffer wrote General Cooper on August 6 that much of this material was destined to be used by a Union army "to force a passage through the mountains into East Tennessee." He added: "My information goes on to show that they contemplate a movement very soon, but I am not sufficiently advised of their state of preparation."<sup>25</sup>

Unwilling to delay action until further details could be obtained by his headquarters, Zollicoffer went ahead with his own plans to establish a chain of infantry outposts along the Kentucky border between Livingston, Tennessee, and Cumberland Gap. With only thirty-three companies of infantry and six cavalry companies to spare for that purpose, it was not easy for Zollicoffer to defend the extended line he projected; until reinforced, he had to gamble on his ability to concentrate his scattered forces rapidly in the event of an attack. In the meantime, he began to bombard Richmond with repeated appeals for artillery and men. For the time being, however, he was left largely to

<sup>23</sup> Knoxville *Whig*, January 26, 1861; *O. R.*, VII, 751; Ser. II, Vol. I, 827-32; Patton, *Unionism and Reconstruction*, 28-29; Hamer, *Tennessee*, II, 560-62; Digby Gordon Seymour, *Divided Loyalties: Fort Sanders and the Civil War in East Tennessee* (Knoxville, 1963), 19-25; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 42-43.

<sup>24</sup> Harris to Zollicoffer, August 4, 1861, Harris Letterbook; James Edward Rains to his wife, Confederate Letters of Brigadier General James E. Rains (Microfilm, Tennessee State Library and Archives). Ten thousand small arms were deposited in Kentucky for distribution to Union recruits by Lieutenant William Nelson. Later Nelson was authorized by Lincoln to perform a "similar service for the Union men of East Tennessee." See R. M. Kelly, "Holding Kentucky for the Union," *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War* (4 vols., New York, 1887), I, 375-77; E. Merton Coulter, *The Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky* (Gloucester, Mass., 1966), 111.

<sup>25</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 381-82.

his own devices in preparing defenses for the Confederate District of East Tennessee.<sup>26</sup>

Zollicoffer felt that the most logical way to defend his area of responsibility against anticipated invasion was to occupy the principal passes in the Cumberland Mountains which provided ingress into East Tennessee, of which the best known was the Cumberland Gap. Located about sixty miles north of Knoxville, it was not only the most famous but also the most strategic point of entry into this area from the north. Militarily, it commanded the main road between the Great Valley of East Tennessee and southeastern Kentucky. Should a Union army attempt to enter Zollicoffer's district from eastern Kentucky, it would more than likely approach by this route. Zollicoffer was anxious to occupy the Cumberland Gap area, but, so long as Kentucky professed neutrality, his hands were tied, as the Gap extended into that state. He did not have to wait long, however, for the pseudo-neutrality of Kentucky to end. On September 7 General Cooper notified him that the neutrality had been "broken by the occupation of Paducah by the Federal forces."<sup>27</sup> Two days later, Zollicoffer dispatched the Twentieth Tennessee Regiment to seize and fortify Cumberland Gap. This unit was closely followed by several others with orders to assist in the occupation of the passes at Cumberland Ford (Pineville, Ky.) and Three Log Mountains.<sup>28</sup>

Although the above operation would be ultimately approved by General Albert Sidney Johnston, who was about to assume command of the Department of the West, Zollicoffer's advance into southeastern Kentucky had been made against the advice of Governor Harris and General Simon B. Buckner, commanding officer of the Confederate forces in Kentucky. Both men had urged Zollicoffer to stop his forward movement, but their dispatches had not reached the Tennessean until after his return from London on September 13. By then it was too late

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 406-7, 418-19, 432; Harris to Zollicoffer, August 16, 1861, Harris Letterbook; Rains to wife, August 15, 25, 1861, Rains Papers; R. R. Hancock, *Hancock's Diary: Or, A History of the Second Tennessee Confederate Cavalry* (Nashville, 1887), 42-43. According to Zollicoffer's daughter, Octavia Bond, her father once commented to his adjutant, Major Pollok B. Lee: "We are the stepsons of the army." See Bond to Moore, July 30, 1924, Bond Papers.

<sup>27</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 402.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 190, 194-95, 397, 402, 404, 406, 423; Rains to wife, September 15, 1861, Rains Papers; Mitchell, "Letters of a Confederate Surgeon," 350-51; Burt, "East Tennessee, Lincoln, and Sherman," 12; W. J. McMurray, *History of the Twentieth Tennessee Regiment Volunteer Infantry, C.S.A.* (Nashville, 1904), 192.

to stop the movement, for his troops were already fifteen miles into Kentucky. Even if the above dispatches had reached Zollicoffer, it is extremely doubtful that they would have deterred him from sending his infantry into that state. A resolute commander, Zollicoffer was convinced that his orders were justified, and, in a subsequent letter to General Cooper, he explained that to "withdraw would be unfortunate, unless the Federal forces which menace us will agree to withdraw."<sup>29</sup> Only on this condition would he be willing to retire, he informed Governor Beriah Magoffin of Kentucky on September 14. Therefore, when the Federals were allowed to remain, Zollicoffer felt that he had no choice but to stay in Kentucky, threats of retaliation notwithstanding.<sup>30</sup>

As events were to prove, Zollicoffer did not occupy the Cumberland Gap and Ford areas a moment too soon. In eastern Kentucky, at that time, a sizable Union force was being gathered at Camp Dick Robinson near Lexington, under the command of General George H. Thomas. Moreover, as Zollicoffer's intelligence service had already reported, these troops were expected to operate in conjunction with the "Lincolnites" to seize the Gap and to sever railroad communications in East Tennessee. Impatient for action, Zollicoffer wanted to march northward to disperse the force under Thomas but, much to his disappointment, found that conditions could not for the time being warrant such an expedition. Actually, his decision to postpone the movement was dictated by two prime considerations. First, if the reported size of the enemy were correct, Zollicoffer knew that he did not possess the necessary manpower to ensure a successful military operation against Thomas. On September 15, for example, he estimated his overall strength at 8,594 men, but only five of seven organized regiments of infantry were on his mountain line in Kentucky, four in the Cumberland Ford area and one at the Gap—a total of about 3,500 troops. The other two regiments, only partially armed, undisciplined, sick, had been left behind to watch the "Tories" and to guard the railroad bridges and roads in East Tennessee. Secondly, a cavalry reconnaissance

<sup>29</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 190.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-91, 193-94, 195. By the end of August, Magoffin was really powerless to order the Federals out of Kentucky, even if he had so desired. His authority had been nullified by the state's pro-Union legislature, which had been elevated to control following a special election in June, 1861. See Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment in Kentucky*, 109-10; William B. Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors* (New York, 1948), 211.

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of the region north of Cumberland Ford revealed an area that was exceedingly barren and hostile, and Zollicoffer knew from these reports that it would not be logistically possible for him to sustain a prolonged invasion into Kentucky. Therefore, the offensive was postponed.<sup>31</sup>

Until the Confederates could assume the offensive, Zollicoffer's only alternative was to adopt a defensive-offensive strategy against Thomas. This he did with gratifying results. Despite all the criticism that has been levelled against him, Zollicoffer did possess a keen military mind, and his campaign against Thomas in the fall of 1861 provides ample proof that he possessed exceptional abilities as a field commander. The campaign begun by Zollicoffer in mid-September consisted of a series of raids against important Union positions near Camp Buckner in the Cumberland Ford region. Prominent among the strategic reasons for these raids was Zollicoffer's design to thwart Thomas' plans for invading East Tennessee by keeping the latter on the defensive until such time as he himself could mount an offensive.<sup>32</sup>

Zollicoffer's plan of action was well-conceived. And, considering the fact that it had to be carried out almost entirely by raw, untried troops, it was also admirably executed. On September 18, a combined force of cavalry and infantry of about 800 men was detached from the main body under the command of Colonel Joel A. Battle with orders to destroy the Union encampment at Barbourville, about eighteen miles away. Battle attacked at dawn the next morning, routed the 300 Union defenders, and completely wrecked the camp. This raid was followed in quick succession by two more. On September 26, Colonel James Rains marched sixty-five miles north of the Gap with another detachment and successfully attacked a Union recruiting camp at Laurel Bridge. Rains took the camp by surprise and, after dispersing the recruits, captured a large store of commissary supplies. This raid

<sup>31</sup> Alexander Coffee to his wife, September 19, 1861, Alexander Donelson Coffee Papers (Microfilm, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, N. C.). See also Rains to wife, September 15, October 3, 1861, Rains Papers; *O. R.*, IV, 398-99, 409, 412, 418-19, 424; John C. Nicolay, *The Outbreak of Rebellion* (Vol. I of *The Campaigns of the Civil War*, New York, 1881), 135; Horn, *Army of Tennessee*, 60-61; Peter F. Walker, "Building a Tennessee Army: Autumn, 1861," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, XVI (June, 1957), 111-12; Burt, "East Tennessee, Lincoln, and Sherman," 12-14; Kelly, "Holding Kentucky for the Union," 379; Francis F. McKinney, *Education in Violence: The Life of George H. Thomas and the History of the Army of the Cumberland* (Detroit, 1961), 108-9, 113-14; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 86-87. The name "torries" was used by Zollicoffer to describe the Unionists, usually without "a capital T." R. Gerald McMurtry, "Zollicoffer and the Battle of Mill Springs," *Filson Club Quarterly*, XXIX (October, 1955), 305.

<sup>32</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 424-25, 429, 435, 439.

had been ordered by Zollicoffer primarily to mask the movement of a second column under Colonel D. H. Cummings, whose mission was to capture the Goose Creek Salt Works about thirty-five miles north of Camp Buckner near Manchester. On the same day the Confederates raided the Union encampment at Laurel Bridge, Cummings' troops seized the salt works "without notable incident" and marched away with 200 barrels of precious salt.<sup>33</sup>

Except for minor skirmishes with "home guards" and "bush-whackers," the Goose Creek Raid marked an end to the initial phase of Zollicoffer's campaign to confuse and delay his enemy by defensive-offensive stratagems. As the defender of East Tennessee had hoped, his "whirlwind" campaign against the Federals in southeastern Kentucky produced the desired result. Not only did it serve to create consternation among the military authorities in Kentucky but it also helped to frustrate their immediate plans for a general forward movement.<sup>34</sup> However, it would have been wishful thinking on Zollicoffer's part to have expected that raids alone could keep the Federals occupied for an indefinite period of time, especially in view of the pressure being applied by the Lincoln administration for a speedy advance into East Tennessee.<sup>35</sup>

On October 1, Zollicoffer received word that a large Union column, several thousand strong, was making its way south from London. This force, led by General Albin Schoepf, was marching to relieve the Third Regiment Kentucky Volunteers, which had been posted on the Rockcastle River near Barbourville in late September to keep track of rebel movements in that vicinity. Schoepf's approach at this point naturally aroused Zollicoffer's concern for the safety of his department because he knew that if the Federals should succeed in dispersing his troops around Cumberland Ford they would have little opposition in any attempt to seize the Gap, the gateway to East Ten-

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 199, 202-3, 292, 429; Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 42-46, 50-51; Walker, "Building a Tennessee Army: Autumn, 1861," 112; McMurray, *History of the Twentieth Tennessee*, 119, 192-93; W. J. Worsham, *The Old Nineteenth Tennessee Regiment, C.S.A.: June, 1861-April, 1865* (Knoxville, 1902), 14-15; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 87-88.

<sup>34</sup> Kelly, "Holding Kentucky for the Union," 382-83, 386; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 130; Lloyd Lewis, *Sherman, Fighting Prophet* (New York, 1932), 197-98; W. T. Sherman, *Memoirs of Gen. W. T. Sherman, Written by Himself* (2 vols., New York, 1890), I, 202ff; McKinney, *Education in Violence*, 111-12; Freeman Cleaves, *Rock of Chickamauga: The Life of General George H. Thomas* (Norman, 1948), 84-85.

<sup>35</sup> O. R., IV, 290-91; Temple, *East Tennessee and the Civil War*, 432-34; Burt, "East Tennessee, Lincoln, and Sherman," 10-15.

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nessee. Modifying his strategy to meet this new threat, Zollicoffer hastily prepared for his first large-scale expedition against the enemy. His first step was to concentrate all of his available units in the general area of Camp Buckner. Then, after leaving a token force to guard the Gap and adjoining passes, he set out with the remainder of the division of around 5,000 men on the Wilderness Road to meet the advancing bluecoats under General Schoepf.<sup>36</sup>

Zollicoffer's campaign was anything but a military success. From the outset, the hard-pressed commander was beset with problems which he could not control. For example, a subordinate allowed a detachment of cavalry to be withdrawn from the area around Jamestown, Tennessee, which Zollicoffer had designated as a base of supply for his command. The campaign was also seriously hampered by repeated, but unavoidable, delays on the march northward. The region through which Zollicoffer passed, besides being filled with "bushwhackers," was almost completely destitute of food supplies. Since he could not live off the country, he had to rely on a small, inadequate "fleet" of supply wagons, which traveled at an appallingly slow pace because of the narrow mountain roads. Speed and deception were both important factors to the success of this operation, but both seemed to elude Zollicoffer as he marched deeper into enemy territory. Delayed to an "embarrassing extent for want of subsistence and transportation," his forward progress was so painfully slow that he was not able to confront Schoepf before the latter had been forewarned by loyal local inhabitants. In fact, by the time Zollicoffer reached London on October 19, the plan to take the Federals by surprise on ground advantageous to the Confederates was largely compromised. While the Confederate troops were negotiating the rough mountain roads, Schoepf, now alert to their approach, was effecting a rendezvous with the Third Kentucky Regiment and a portion of the Kentucky cavalry under Colonel Frank Wolford, at its camp on Wildcat Mountain, about thirteen miles west of London, Kentucky.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>36</sup> O. R., IV, 209, 435, 439, 462-63; Rains to wife, October 3, 1861, Rains Papers; Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 51-57; McMurray, *History of the Twentieth Tennessee*, 193; Worsham, *Old Nineteenth Tennessee*, 16; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 88.

<sup>37</sup> O. R., IV, 211-13, 310, 313, 319, 439; Coffee to wife, October 17, 1861, Coffee Papers; Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 53-57; Evans, *Confederate Military History*, IX, 44; Cleaves, *Rock of Chickamauga*, 88-89.

Bordered by rocky crags and steep slopes, Camp "Wildcat" was a strong natural fortification near the Rockcastle River. The position was further strengthened by the Federals with barricades of dead logs, so that by the time the rebels began to arrive in force on the afternoon of October 20, the site was practically impregnable. Certainly it caused Zollicoffer to experience some anxious moments when he studied the rugged terrain the next morning. However, while fully appreciating the strength of this stronghold, Zollicoffer was, nevertheless, determined that his men should test the resolution of the Union defenders.<sup>88</sup> By using the dense cover that fronted the Federal position to shield his movements, he advanced with his troops all the way to the base of the fortification without drawing anything more than light skirmish fire from the enemy. Then, while the regimental officers were deploying their respective commands for action, he rushed forward two Tennessee regiments, the Eleventh and Seventeenth, to determine the strength of the Union position. The going was extremely hazardous, and it must have looked like suicide to the Tennesseans. Between them and the Federal forces was a sharp incline, and, about a third of the way up the steep slope, the Confederates began to encounter the destructive fire power of the Thirty-Third Regiment of Indiana Volunteers, who initially bore the brunt of the assault. Recoiling from the first volley, some of the Tennesseans began to seek shelter behind nearby rocks or trees, but many others pressed ahead to engage the bluecoats at close range, a number of the men approaching within forty or fifty yards of the Federal position. This was the high point for the Confederates. Thereafter, it was clearly a frustrating day for them.<sup>89</sup>

Although the fighting grew intense at times, the Indiana Volunteers held their ground with grim determination until reinforced by Schoepf later in the day. However, it would be an error to think that their position was ever seriously threatened by the Confederates. Not to detract from the fighting capabilities of the defenders, especially

<sup>88</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 210. According to William Preston Johnston, *The Life of Albert Sidney Johnston* (New York, 1878), 356, Zollicoffer believed he faced only two Federal regiments, whereas, according to a letter from Johnston still on the way, there were probably about 4,000 there and another 6,000 nearby. Zollicoffer later estimated the number he had faced as about 7,000. *O. R.*, IV, 210.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 205-7, 208-11, 213; Walker, "Building A Tennessee Army: Autumn, 1861," 114-15; Worsham, *Old Nineteenth Tennessee*, 16-17; McMurray, *History of the Twentieth Tennessee*, 83-84, 119-20, 193-94; Kelly, "Holding Kentucky for the Union," 382-83; Thomas B. Van Horne, *History of the Army of the Cumberland, Its Organization, Campaigns, and Battles* (2 vols., Cincinnati, 1875), I, 39.

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John Coburn's Indianians, it was an uneven fight from the outset. The advantage of both position and terrain rested with the Federals, and, under the circumstances, Zollicoffer wisely refrained from bringing on a general engagement. In his official report of October 24, he explained his decision: "Having reconnoitered in force under heavy fire for several hours from heights on the right, left, and in front, I became satisfied that it [the stronghold] could not be carried otherwise than by immense exposure, if at all."<sup>40</sup> That night, while the Federals were asleep "on their arms," Zollicoffer quietly withdrew from the enemy front and retired in the direction of Cumberland Ford, via London. For a short time thereafter, he was pursued by a detachment of East Tennessee Unionists, commanded by Colonel Samuel P. Carter, but the Union column was halted at London by order of the departmental commander, General William T. Sherman. Therefore, except for the excitement temporarily created by the Union pursuit, the return trip to Cumberland Ford was without incident.<sup>41</sup>

"Camp Wildcat" had been a sharp little fight—but little more. Tactically, there were no decisive results. In terms of tangible evidence, therefore, the campaign yielded little except a few horses, about 100 guns, and 21 prisoners.<sup>42</sup> To Zollicoffer, the result must have been one of bitter disappointment. He had counted on a major victory but had only succeeded in "developing the enemy's strength." However, there were a few consolations. The advocates in Kentucky of an early Union advance into East Tennessee began to express despair for the proposed expedition, especially after Carter's column had been halted at London. The morale of the Confederates was not noticeably impaired by the setback in Rockcastle Hills, and, more importantly, their faith in Zollicoffer was still intact. Also, they had gained some valuable experience operating as a large command. Thus, the campaign was

<sup>40</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 210.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 206-7, 209-11, 323, 340-41, 336, 347; Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 65-66; William T. Alderson (ed.), "The Civil War Diary of Captain James Litton Cooper, September 30, 1861 to January, 1865," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, XV (June, 1956), 143-44; Seymour, *Divided Loyalties*, 37; Walker, "Building a Tennessee Army: Autumn, 1861," 115; Burt, "East Tennessee, Lincoln, and Sherman," 3-25; McKinney, *Education in Violence*, 118-19; Cleaves, *Rock of Chickamauga*, 90-92.

<sup>42</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 210. The Confederate loss was "42 wounded and 11 killed and missing."

not a complete disaster, and Zollicoffer could look forward to the future with some confidence.<sup>43</sup>

Undaunted, he began to plan his next move against Thomas shortly after reaching Camp Buckner on October 25, attempting to incorporate the lessons that he had learned during the campaign against Shoepf. The result was a significant revision of his former strategy. This is not at all surprising because the recent campaign had convinced him of the extreme difficulty of conducting defensive-offensive operations in a barren mountain region where the inhabitants were hostile to the Confederacy. Because of the low level of food production in the region, for man as well as beast, an invading army could not sustain itself for long, and, to make matters even worse, no Confederate advance into the area could be kept secret from the enemy because of the pro-Union sentiments of the local inhabitants. Merely to exist in this desolate region, much less function as an effective military unit, the Confederates would have to haul their supplies from distant bases and over narrow, mountain roads. Of course, the deeper they pushed into the interior of this forbidding land, the longer became their supply routes. This meant that the cavalry, which Zollicoffer badly needed for guard duty and scouting, would have to be called away from these important duties to protect the extended line of communication and supply. Furthermore, the aid of the Confederate reserve force was not available, because it was far to the rear in eastern Tennessee. Small wonder, therefore, that Zollicoffer felt compelled to alter his strategy after the action on Wildcat Mountain.<sup>44</sup>

Another important factor behind Zollicoffer's decision to revise his strategy was recurring signs of strength and aggressiveness on the part of the enemy. By the end of October, he was satisfied from intelligence reports that Thomas had managed to increase his strength sufficiently to launch a major offensive and that the Union commander was, in fact, engaged in revamping his own strategy, preparatory to an invasion of East Tennessee. Zollicoffer's intelligence also indicated that

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 206; Coffee to wife, October 29, 1861, Coffee Papers; Lewis, *Sherman, Fighting Prophet*, 197-98; Sherman, *Memoirs*, I, 232-38; Coulter, *Civil War and Readjustment*, 130; Kelly, "Holding Kentucky for the Union," 383-85; Burt, "East Tennessee Lincoln, and Sherman," 15-18.

<sup>44</sup> Bond to Moore, July 30, 1924, Bond Papers; Unidentified Diary in the William Campbell Papers (owned by Mrs. Ross Ireson, Bristol, Tenn.); Coffee to wife, October 26, 29, 1861, Coffee Papers; Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 55-67; Worsham, *Old Nineteenth Tennessee*, 16-17. See also *O. R.*, IV, 209-12.

the Federals would not attempt to force a passage into East Tennessee through the Cumberland Gap, as originally believed, because they knew it was now heavily fortified. Rather, they would advance by one of five roads which lay due west of the Gap. Of these alternate routes, three could be found within fifty miles of the main pass, but the other two were located to the west in the Cumberland Plateau region. Guarded only by light garrisons, each of these roads passed through the least protected portion of Zollicoffer's defensive line in the mountains, and Thomas could easily turn the weak left flank by taking any one of them. If this should happen, Confederate communications with Middle Tennessee would be severed, and Zollicoffer would be forced to abandon the Gap and upper East Tennessee. As a precaution against such an occurrence, he doubled his own efforts to ready his command for the threatened invasion.<sup>45</sup>

In the meantime, Zollicoffer sought to obtain more exact information about the enemy. According to his best intelligence, the Federals would advance south on one of the two roads located to the extreme west of the Cumberland Gap area. Reports brought in by reconnaissance patrols during the latter part of October strongly indicated that Schoepf's march to London had been nothing more than a feint. Doubtless, this led Zollicoffer to write Colonel William B. Wood at Knoxville, on November 2, that "I have good reason to expect that the enemy is advancing toward East Tennessee, on the road to Jacksborough or that to Jamestown."<sup>46</sup> By the end of the first week of November, Zollicoffer was certain that Thomas would choose the latter road. Not only was it an excellent pike able to accommodate a large army like Thomas', but it also gave to the commanding general advantage of tactical maneuver. To counter this threat, Zollicoffer proposed a major shift of his command westward to the Cumberland Plateau region. This would enable him to cover the distant approaches into eastern Tennessee and at the same time bring him within operating distance of General Simon Bolivar Buckner, who was at Bowling Green with a large number of Confederate troops. The idea was well-conceived.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 211, 338-39; 347, 465, 477-78, 486-87; Coffee to wife, October 26, 29, 1861, Coffee Papers; Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 67-68; Mitchell, "Letters of a Confederate Surgeon," 352; Peter F. Walker, "Holding the Tennessee Line: Winter, 1861-62," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly*, XVI (September, 1957), 237; Van Horne, *History of the Army of the Cumberland*, I, 47.

<sup>46</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 502.

Before the move could be undertaken, however, permission had to be obtained from General Johnston. It arrived with the next messenger from departmental headquarters.<sup>47</sup>

Zollicoffer's decision to shift his command west to the Cumberland Plateau area was not only timely; it was also strategically sound. For weeks, the Federal high command had been concentrating more and more of its military strength, in terms of both men and equipment, in south-central Kentucky.<sup>48</sup> This confronted the Confederates with a problem of major proportions. Once the Federals occupied this highly strategic region in force, they would be in an excellent position to launch a major attack against either Buckner in the center or against Zollicoffer on the Confederate right flank. Moreover, with the important railroad junction at Lebanon, Kentucky, in their possession, the Federals could now draw upon both Cincinnati and Louisville for supplies and reinforcements to support a general forward movement against the Confederates. Thus, the enemy could strike at will. Therefore, by moving the bulk of his command closer to Buckner, Zollicoffer significantly improved the chances of the Confederates to withstand the threatened Federal invasion. If either one of the two commands should be attacked, and at the time there seemed to be every reason to expect that they would be, Zollicoffer and Buckner would at least be within supporting distance of each other. Moreover, by having their lines closer together, Zollicoffer advised on November 4, the two commanders could conceivably launch an offensive movement of their own.<sup>49</sup>

Except for some cavalry and two regiments of infantry left behind under Colonel Rains to defend the Gap, Zollicoffer pulled the troops

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 502, 515, 516-17, 527; Walker, "Holding the Tennessee Line: Winter," 237; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 88-89.

<sup>48</sup> On November 15, 1861, General Don Carlos Buell succeeded Sherman as commander of the Department of the Cumberland, which was enlarged and renamed the Department of the Ohio. It is significant that this change of command also ushered in an intensification of Federal interest in a general advance toward Nashville. Like Sherman, Buell did not regard East Tennessee as the main objective for Union forces in Kentucky. Instead he favored a forward thrust at Bowling Green and soon proved it by ordering a mass concentration of his forces in central Kentucky. Thomas' command, now designated as the First Division of the Army of the Ohio, was directed to take up a new position at Lebanon, Kentucky. *O. R.*, IV, 349, 358; Horn, *Army of Tennessee*, 71; Connelly, *Army of the Heartland*, 63, 68, 94; Van Horne, *History of the Army of the Cumberland*, I, 46; Kelly, "Holding Kentucky for the Union," 385; Burt, "East Tennessee, Lincoln, and Sherman," 19-25.

<sup>49</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 516-17; Evans, *Confederate Military History*, IX, 53-54; Kelly, "Holding Kentucky for the Union," 385; Walker, "Holding the Tennessee Line: Winter," 237.



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from Cumberland Ford back into eastern Tennessee and marched them westward with all possible speed. Simultaneously, he issued orders to have those units already operating in the western sector rendezvous at Jamestown and hold it until the main force could arrive. This they did without difficulty. On November 8, while on his way from Knoxville to Jacksboro, Zollicoffer received a dispatch which indicated that the threatened invasion was not as imminent as the earlier reports had indicated. Therefore, he had time to erect new defenses on his mountain line, as well as to strengthen those already established. Not only were the fortifications at the Gap significantly improved, but the passes on each side of it, some of which were little more than bridle-paths, were blockaded with felled timbers. Zollicoffer was especially careful to block all of the main passes through the mountains, i.e., Rogers', Wheeler's, and Big Creek gaps. This was done by troops detached from the main column and carefully posted in the mountains with instructions to throw up strong breastworks. The object was to seal off every entrance into Tennessee from eastern Kentucky.<sup>50</sup> This he apparently did, for on November 17, Pollok B. Lee, Zollicoffer's assistant adjutant, boasted to General Cooper that the "enemy cannot now cross the Cumberland Mountains with a train anywhere between Pound Gap, in Virginia, and Jacksborough, Tennessee, a distance of 120 miles."<sup>51</sup>

This was a bold declaration, but it was typical of the confidence exhibited by most Confederate partisans in this period. More important, the statement was probably correct, because Zollicoffer certainly exercised meticulous care in blockading paths into East Tennessee as he treked westward toward the Cumberland Plateau. This feat, interestingly enough, was accomplished at the time of a Union revolt in eastern Tennessee, the origin of which can be traced, in part, to Zollicoffer's retreat from Rockcastle Hills back in October. No one had been "whipped" in that indecisive engagement with Schoepf, as one of Zollicoffer's officers later commented, but the graycoats had definitely suffered a loss of face at a time when Confederate prestige was extremely important. On October 26, shortly after his return to Camp

<sup>50</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 521, 530-31; Rains to wife, November 6, 25, 1861, Rains Papers; Coffee to wife, November 3, 8, 9, 1861, Coffee Papers; Mitchell, "Letters of a Confederate Surgeon," V, 60-61; Hancock, *Hancock's Diary*, 69-74; Alderson, "The Civil War Diary of Captain James Litton Cooper," 144.

<sup>51</sup> *O. R.*, IV, 246-47.

Buckner, Zollicoffer reported to Cooper at Richmond: "I learn that some signs of trouble are again arising in East Tennessee, as the impression increases that the enemy is soon to advance in force."<sup>52</sup> Zollicoffer's information was almost entirely correct. His sudden retreat from Rockcastle Hills had been interpreted as a sign of weakness by General Thomas, who promptly ordered Schoepf to dispatch a force to pursue the retiring Confederates. The approach of this Union column so soon after the rebel retreat gave rise to an unexpected militancy on the part of the East Tennessee Unionists, who, unaware that General Sherman would call off the attack, believed that their liberation by a Federal army was close at hand. To hasten liberation, the more aggressive spirits prepared to commit acts of sabotage against the hated Confederates.<sup>53</sup>

(To be continued in *Publications*, No. 44)

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<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 211. That there was some justification for East Tennessee Unionists to expect a Union invasion from Kentucky can be found in the activities of William B. Carter, brother of General S. P. Carter. Having conferred with Union officials in Kentucky as well as Washington, William Carter had been led to believe that a Federal army would be sent to the relief of the Unionists in East Tennessee, provided that they would help pave the way for the invasion by disrupting Confederate communications in East Tennessee. Thus, in early November, Carter attempted to carry out his part of the plan by burning several of the railroad bridges in that sector, but, to his great dismay, the expected expedition from Kentucky never materialized. As mentioned above, both Sherman and his successor, Don Carlos Buell, considered a penetration into East Tennessee too difficult and preferred the "center" idea of an invasion of Middle Tennessee. For further details, see Burt, "East Tennessee, Lincoln, and Sherman," 12-13, 16-18, 20-23; Hamer, *Tennessee*, II, 566-67; *O. R.*, Ser. 2, Vol. I, 900-1.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 205, 207, 211, 482-83; Coffee to wife, November 3, 1861, Coffee Papers; Alderson, "The Civil War Diary of Captain James Litton Cooper," 143-44; Seymour, *Divided Loyalties*, 32; Walker, "Building a Tennessee Army: Autumn, 1861," 115, and "Holding the Tennessee Line: Winter," 235-36.