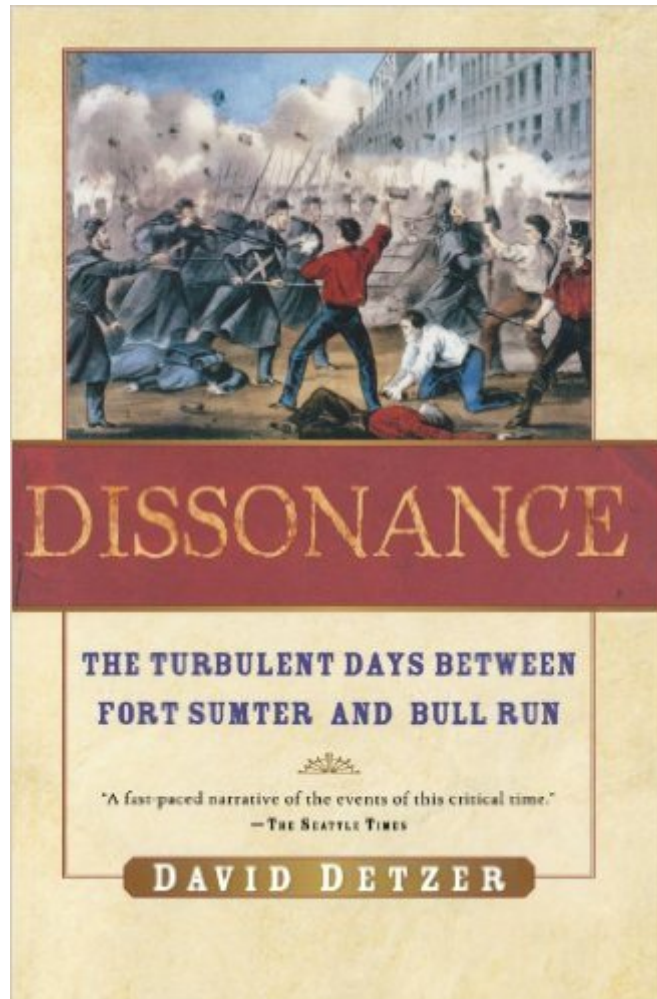


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Dissonance: The Turbulent Days Between Fort Sumter And Bull Run



Synopsis

For two weeks in 1861, Washington, D.C., was locked in a state of panic. Would the newly formed Confederate States of America launch its first attack on the Union by capturing the nation's capital? Would Lincoln's Union fall before it had a chance to fight? Wedged between Virginia and Maryland—two states bordering on secession—Washington was isolated; its communications lines were cut, its rail lines blocked. Newly recruited volunteers were too few and were unable to enter the city. A recently inaugurated Lincoln struggled to form a plan—defense or attack? In this final chapter of his trilogy on the Civil War, David Detzer pulls the drama from this pivotal moment in American history straight from the pages of diaries, letters, and newspapers. With an eye for detail and an ear for the voices of average citizens, he beautifully captures the tense, miasmic atmosphere of these first chaotic days of war.

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Customer Reviews

April of 1865 has been referred to as the month that saved America but April of 1861 may have been just as vital if not more so. It was during this time that Washington DC sat completely surrounded by two states that were teetering on the verge of secession. Once Virginia did leave the Union only Maryland provided the federal government with a connection to the rest of the nation and it was a tenuous connection at best. Abraham Lincoln was clearly out of his league in this early stage of the game and he leaned heavily on General Winfield Scott. For his part, Scott was keenly aware of the danger facing Washington and began to immediately call for any militia units that could get to

DC quickly from loyal northern states. The problem was that these militia units would have to travel through Maryland, a slave state that might well consider these Yankee troops to be invaders and could easily be pushed into the Confederacy by such an affront to state sovereignty. It was also distinctly possible that these militia units might be attacked by not only the people of Maryland but also ultimately by the state militia. In the meantime Virginia forces had seized the federal armory at Harper's Ferry and the Gosport navy yard near Hampton Virginia. Rumors are rampant in DC that the Virginia militia that had taken Harper's Ferry was preparing to move on Washington and many in the Federal City were in a state of panic. The questions that arise from this drama involve the decision making process on both sides and the ultimate question is of course whether Washington DC was ever in any real danger. Did the Confederacy in fact lose it's only real chance for ultimate victory during this time period?

David Detzer's third book in his trilogy about the beginning of the American Civil War in the East will not disappoint readers. The book primarily covers the period of April 12, 1861 (the day Fort Sumter in Charleston, South Carolina was fired on) till 24 May, 1861 (the day Union troops finally captured Arlington Heights, Virginia across the Potomac River from the District of Columbia securing the United States Capitol). Again, the author incorporates the background, thoughts, and actions of a cast of hundreds that are involved in the events that make up this early period of the Civil War. Presidents, government officials both State and Federal/Confederate, generals and soldiers, naval officers and sailors, civilians both male and female, and blacks both free and slave are represented here giving the reader a good feel of what it was all about. The primary places and events covered include Washington, D.C., Richmond, Virginia, Baltimore, Maryland, United States Arsenal at Harpers Ferry, Virginia, United States Naval Yard at Gosport, Virginia, the Baltimore riots as Union volunteers passed through the city, international diplomacy, and Union efforts to reinforce the Capitol. Also explores the feasibility of Virginia/Confederate forces taking Washington D.C. Detzer's writing is always easy to read and understand and the pages just fly by, but again, the lack of good maps makes this only a four star effort (something the author just does not worry about I guess?), a general understanding of the geography of this region will aid the reader in understanding the big picture (a few period maps included in the volume help but more are needed). Also, the author is a true wordsmith!

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