

# DELANE'S WAR

TIM COATES



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## Delane's War

Tim Coates

150 years ago a British Government sent an ill-prepared, poorly equipped army to war in a foreign land. What has changed?

Foreword by Patrick Mercer, author of *To Do and Die*

*Delane's War* is the story of how John Delane, editor of *The Times*, brought about the resignation of the entire cabinet of the British Government over its conduct of the Crimean War. In the aftermath Britain came close to revolution.

The British went to war ill-prepared, poorly equipped and desperately undermanned. Within a matter of weeks their numbers had been decimated by disease and the harsh rigours of the Crimean winter through their inadequate clothing. In addition, poor intelligence had not predicted a spirited Russian defence.

Using the first war reporters and "embedded correspondents" *The Times* revealed to England the terrible drama as it unfolded, in a premonition of modern war journalism. Lack of censorship allowed *The Times'* correspondent William Howard Russell to send back reports on astonishing military incompetence. Delane printed them verbatim and ran excoriating editorials against those in command. He also ran the world's first newspaper appeals, which would inspire Florence Nightingale to visit the Crimea and work in the military hospitals at Scutari.

*Delane's War* describes the four months between October 1854 and January 1855, during which time the Government and Army tried to silence and deride Delane and his newspaper for his coverage of the war, accusing him of treachery, deception and exaggeration.

Delane was steadfast in his editorial line and would not be ignored. Eventually a dramatic debate in Parliament brought about the largest ever defeat of a British Government in office.

With the resignations of ministers, the lying of politicians, the aloofness of generals and the suffering of the troops, this book paints a sadly recognisable picture. From it, however, John Delane stands out as one of the heroes of Victorian England.

Tim Coates is a former head of Waterstone's bookshops, a publisher and a campaigner for the improvement of public libraries. He is the author of *Patsy: The Story of Mary Cornwallis-West* (Bloomsbury).

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