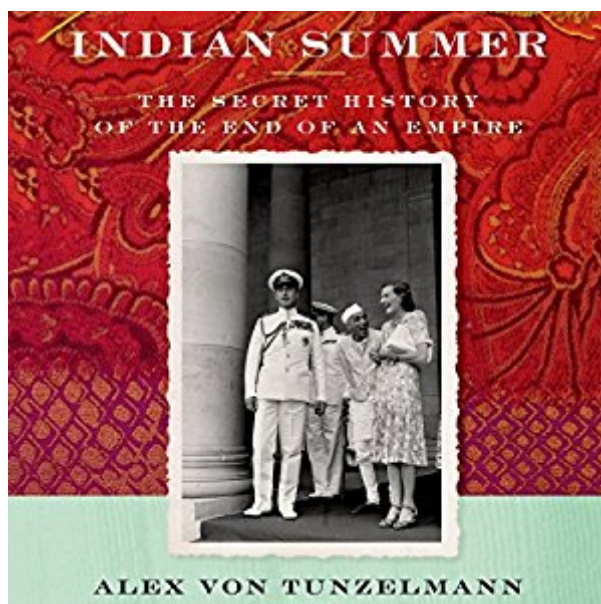


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Indian Summer: The Secret History Of The End Of An Empire



Synopsis

At the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947, the British Empire withdrew from India, igniting the exhilaration and turmoil of a newly free society. In this vivid, atmospheric popular history, Alex von Tunzelmann chronicles these times through the most prominent figures: Dickie Mountbatten, Britain's dashing, inept last viceroy; Dickie's savvy, glamorous wife, Edwina, who found the love of her life in Jawaharlal Nehru, India's new prime minister; Muslim leader Muhammad Ali Jinnah; and Mohandas Gandhi. Tunzelmann's thrilling chronicle "removes the veil from the colorful personalities and events behind India's independence and partition with Pakistan" (The Washington Post).

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Alex von Tunzelmann, student of history at Oxford and editor of OSU's Cherwell newspaper in 1998, passes this book as "the secret history of the end of an empire". "Life and times of Mountbattens in India" would have been a more apt title. The book contains no secret and is not about the end of the empire in entirety. The book places too much importance on the roles of three individuals: Mountbatten, his wife Edwina and Nehru. The long struggle, mostly non violent, to evict an alien rule by a wide and deep political leadership (some meriting reverence for decades after their death) has been trivialized to a vane member of British royal family sent to unwind the empire; his flirting wife and an equally flirting visionary who led India during and after the transition. However, one must compliment Alex von Tunzelmann for the sheer objectivity she brings into describing the events in the last days of the Raj. Alex starts with a funny perspective: There were two countries in 1577. One was a vast, mighty and magnificent empire, brilliantly organized and culturally unified,

which dominated a massive swathe of the earth; and the other was an underdeveloped semi-feudal realm, riven by religious factionalism and barely able to feed its masses. Guess what! The first is India and the second is England. In 1857 it was the other way about! Now you know what alien rule does to the ruler and the ruled! However, a country divided by religion, divided by tribe, divided by caste; a society whose equilibrium derives from repulsion and exclusiveness is, as Karl Marx rightly observed, predestined to be a prey of conquest. Did Britain rule India in discharge of "the white man's burden"? Not really.

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