

## MOUNTBATTEN: THE SAVIOR OF BRITISH REPUTATION AND THE SLAYER OF INDIAN PEACE AND UNITY

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**Abstract:** After becoming Prime Minister of Britain in a 1946 Labour landslide, Attlee's agenda was to get rid of Britain's empire in order to save money. This was a very practical agenda, since by the end of World War II the gap in Britain's balance of payments had risen to £2.1 billion. Also, by 1943 Britain already owed India millions of pounds. The situation had not improved by May 1947, when the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a freeze on Britain's payments of its war debts, which totaled more than £3 billion, £1.25 billion of which was owed to India. In comparison, Britain's trade deficit in June 1947 was just a microscopic £50 million.<sup>[1]</sup>

**Introduction:** The logical solution to the financial nightmare at home was for Britain to withdraw from India, and the sooner the better. Attlee thought Mountbatten was the perfect man for the job because, as a member of the aristocratic elite, Mountbatten fit the traditional requirements for a diplomat. He would be able to deal with India's 565 princely states on equal standing, all the while protecting Britain's interests in India and Britain's reputation worldwide. With regard to the protection of Britain's interests, Mountbatten went above and beyond the call of duty by expediting Britain's retreat from India so that it occurred ten months ahead of schedule. However, his work as the last viceroy of India had some severe negative consequences as well, from a humanitarian perspective, his decision to partition India proved to be disastrous for the subcontinent, especially immediately after the transfer of power.

A complete retreat would not be that simple, though, because Attlee wanted Britain's departure from India to look "like a triumph of British statesmanship, and not a headlong flight." This is precisely why Attlee rejected the plan for withdrawal from Mountbatten's predecessor as viceroy, Lord Wavell, because he thought it would show a decline in Britain's international prestige. Attlee's rejection of Wavell's plan was the beginning of the end of Wavell's viceroyalty, and both Attlee and his fellow Labour politicians believed Mountbatten would be the perfect man to succeed Wavell and lead Britain out of India with honor. Since Mountbatten had overseen the future of 120 million people in Southeast Asia after Japan surrendered in World War II, he would be "perfect to deal with 400 million people in India," and "Labour politicians also figured Mountbatten's aristocratic charm and royal lineage might awe Indian politicians into compliance." Mountbatten was aware of both the situation in India and Attlee's imperative that Britain's world prestige should not be compromised by a hasty retreat.<sup>[2]</sup> This explains Mountbatten's initial reaction when Attlee offered

him the viceroyalty on December 18, 1946—"I was horrified, knowing from first-hand experience how complex and intractable the situation in India had become." Despite his initial hesitation, Mountbatten accepted Attlee's offer and was sworn in as the last viceroy of India on March 24, 1947.

Mountbatten won over the confidence of the people of the North-West Frontier Province on his April 21 provincial visit there. He personally appeared, dressed in green, in front of its Government House, where a loud and potentially dangerous mob had collected. Mountbatten's choice to wear green is significant because the North-West Frontier Province had a Muslim majority of more than 75 percent, and green was the color one wore when making the obligatory Islamic pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca. Both Mountbatten's skills with dealing with different groups of people and his assiduous attention to the importance and effectiveness of symbolism were invaluable throughout his viceroyalty.

Mountbatten's faced his first failure after his first plan for partition was vehemently rejected in private by Jawaharlal Nehru, the head of the Indian National Congress, on May 17. Nehru's rejection of the initial plan both shocked and humiliated Mountbatten, especially because Mountbatten had essentially guaranteed London that his first plan would be approved. Nehru's rejection was private and not public, if Nehru had done so publicly, Mountbatten's reputation would likely have been ruined.

Mountbatten's second plan for partition included an earlier British withdrawal from and Dominion status for India within the Commonwealth. It is no small feat that Mountbatten persuaded Nehru to accept this plan because Nehru had been involved with the 1930 declaration of India's desire for complete self-rule, although few historians and contemporary writers do believe that Lady Mountbatten was just as important as her husband in getting Nehru's approval. Mountbatten's second plan would also create the new Muslim state of Pakistan, which was one of Mohammad Ali Jinnah's uncompromising

demands. Mountbatten even went so far as to blame Jinnah, who was the leader of the Muslim League, for giving him no choice but to partition India because Jinnah refused to back down from his demand for separate states of Pakistan and Hindustan.

Furthermore, Jinnah was the one person Mountbatten was unable to persuade to maintain Indian unity, even though Jinnah was against partitioning Punjab and Bengal. Mountbatten knew that he had no choice but to partition India when Jinnah refused to compromise because Mountbatten knew how dangerous Jinnah could be. He was not wrong as the Muslim League's Direct Action Day in Calcutta in 1946. According to the viceroy- "he killed 5,000 people and wounded 15,000 people just as a demonstration, and I think he has the capacity to cause civil war if we don't meet him halfway." Direct Action Day led to riots throughout most of northern India that resulted in more than 100,000 deaths. Mountbatten was right about Jinnah's capability to incite civil war. Knowing this, and after spending just a few weeks in India, Mountbatten had already formed a very negative opinion of Jinnah, regarding him as "a psychopathic case; in fact until I had met him I would not have thought it possible that a man with such a complete lack of administrative knowledge or sense of responsibility could achieve or hold down so powerful a position." Ironically, Mountbatten's critics have argued the same things about his career also. Under Mountbatten's second plan for partition, Britain would officially transfer power to India at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947.<sup>[3]</sup> Mountbatten saw four advantages to an early British retreat from India- it would improve Britain's reputation worldwide, it would be better for the defense of the Commonwealth, it would remove Britain's costly responsibilities in India, and it would strengthen the relationship between Britain and India because India would finally get what it had long wanted when the British left.

Along with figuring out how to transfer power from Britain to India, Mountbatten faced a second major issue as viceroy- the future of 565 princely states of India. Since the princes and Mountbatten were members of the elite, diplomatic relations between the two seemed like a match made in heaven, according to Attlee. Indeed, Mountbatten did a much better job of directly handling the princely states issue than he did with the partition of India. He had experience on his side, having previously worked with ten of the Indian princes on the Prince of Wales staff back in 1921. Furthermore, Mountbatten was the king's cousin and great-grandson of Queen Victoria, so he was a member of the royal bloodline and, therefore, knew the seemingly petty intricacies of interacting with other

aristocrats. Mountbatten faced the more difficult task of determining the princely states' futures. He had three options from which to choose- to ignore the states and let them negotiate their futures independently after August 15, to make new nations out of the current states, much like what Napoleon had done in Europe in the early nineteenth century or to work with the states and get them to join either of the new dominions of India or Pakistan by August 15. In reality, the third option was the only feasible possibility for Mountbatten to choose. Although Mountbatten was unable to convince the state of Hyderabad to accede to either India or Pakistan by August 15, he was able to convince India's leaders to agree to a two-month extension of negotiations for Hyderabad's future. Mountbatten also got a second extension of the standstill agreement for Hyderabad, this time for a year, which he believed would help avert potential trouble and civil war in southern India. Without such an agreement, it is likely that Mountbatten's fears of unrest and violence would have materialized in Hyderabad immediately after the transfer of power. Along with Hyderabad, two other major states refused to accede to either dominion before August 15-Kashmir and Junagarh. This caused major problems in the immediate aftermath of partition.

In 1947, India's future was significantly influenced by its partition. Since so many riots and hundreds of thousands of deaths immediately followed India's partition, Mountbatten has received his heaviest criticism for his handling of the partition process. The devastation of India in the time period immediately after the August 15 transfer of power suggests that Mountbatten may not have been the right man for the job after all, despite Attlee's beliefs, which were entrenched in tradition. The criticism of Mountbatten's handling of partition is threefold- his critics claim that he ignored the Sikhs, "who were particularly disgruntled by their lot under his plan and capable of organizing their disgruntlement into military action," that he should have used British troops to stop all the uprisings in India, and that he hurried through the process of the transfer of power and partition "so fast that preparations made for the effects of partition were either inadequate or absent."<sup>[4]</sup>

The first two criticisms are unfair to Mountbatten, but the third is undoubtedly true. In reality, though, because the Sikhs comprised such a small minority on the subcontinent, there really was not much Mountbatten could do to help them and their requests for partition. The Sikh leaders asked Mountbatten in May to partition the Punjab based on landed property, sacred buildings, and interests of the Sikhs. Mountbatten was strongly opposed to

doing that because he thought “world opinion would undoubtedly be against any attempt to put Muslim majority populations of the West Punjab under Sikh Hindu Congress domination merely on ownership of land and religious grounds.” This shows that Mountbatten knew that there was nothing he could do to help the Sikhs that would not seriously tarnish Britain’s international reputation. The fact that Mountbatten could not help the Sikhs might not have been a big issue, but they were so upset by their lot in the partition game that they were willing to protest violently.

A similarly impossible demand for Mountbatten is the assertion that he should have called in British troops to stop all the uprisings in India. This would have been impossible for many reasons: first, all the leaders of Britain and India (Attlee, Nehru, and Jinnah), along with the British military, wanted to remove British troops from India because their presence in India was no longer necessary or desired. The British no longer believed that having troops there was vital for British defense, and the Indians just wanted the British to leave. Even with his plenipotentiary powers, it would have been very hard for Mountbatten to have called for troops against the wishes of all the involved parties. Furthermore, there had been several mutinies among British officers within its civil service and military in India in 1946, which made it clear that they wanted to get out. At the time of Mountbatten’s arrival, he only had 11,400 British soldiers at his disposal in India, which had a population of about 400 million.<sup>[5]</sup> Therefore, even if Mountbatten had wanted to call in troops to suppress the growing Indian unrest, his available resources were too thin, and all they cared about at this point was getting out of India and heading home.

Although it is easy to clear Mountbatten’s name in regard to those first two criticisms, it is his fault alone for driving the transfer of power process at breakneck speed and not giving India nearly enough time to prepare to rule itself by itself. Keeping in mind the fact that he got Britain out of India, ten months early is border line miraculous and it was certainly in Britain’s best interests that he did so. Since that was essentially his job as viceroy, his ability to get Britain out so early is one of his finest accomplishments, at least when viewed from that limited perspective. As important as that was, there were several problems with Britain’s hasty retreat from India. Mountbatten hurried the partition process along with an urgency that was his alone and he did so despite multiple warnings that he was acting with too much celerity. One of his reasons for withdrawing so quickly was, as he said in the early 1970s: “I wasn’t prepared to sit there for five years; twiddling my thumb. I think the time limit was fundamental. I believe if I had gone

out without a time limit, I’d still be there.”<sup>[6]</sup>

However, even if Mountbatten had not transferred power until the original deadline of June 1, 1948, it is highly unlikely that the growing unrest throughout the subcontinent would have dissipated, if anything, it probably would have intensified. The unknown number of deaths as a result of partition, likely between 500,000 and 1 million in the Punjab and Bengal alone, even though Mountbatten preferred to say the total was only 200,000, would suggest that Mountbatten’s quick path to partition helped intensify those disputes. In comparison, rioting in the Punjab between March 4 and August 2 resulted in 4,632 reported deaths, which is relatively minute to the six-digit body count after August 15.

Mountbatten defended his swift pace when he addressed the India Constituent Assembly at New Delhi on Indian Independence Day. Mountbatten told the assembly that, after spending only a matter of days in India as viceroy, “communal tension and rioting had assumed proportions of which I had no conception when I left England. It seemed to me that a decision had to be taken at the earliest possible moment unless there was to be risk of a general conflagration throughout the whole sub-continent.” From the first week of his viceroyalty, then, the situation in India had made it clear to Mountbatten that he needed to act quickly, and he did the same but what he cared was the reputation of Britain and least cared about the riots and bloodshed that followed in India after and before independence.

Indeed, Mountbatten had arrived in India shortly after mid-March riots in the Punjab which had resulted in 5,000 non-Muslim casualties. Thousands more died shortly after his arrival when the worst riots in a century broke out in Delhi. Clearly, after becoming convinced that partition was the only viable solution for the subcontinent and after seeing the growing unrest firsthand, Mountbatten figured it would be best to rush the transfer of power process along? He was convinced it was the best course of action for India and for Britain. To his credit, though, Mountbatten agreed to stay in India as its first governor-general after August 15, even after Jinnah refused to let him be Pakistan’s governor-general as well, which had been Mountbatten’s original plan.

Mountbatten proceeded as quickly as humanly possible despite receiving several warnings about the potential dangers of doing so. Right after Mountbatten assumed the viceroyalty, Sir John Anderson, an ex-governor of Bengal warned him in late March 1947 of the potential dangers of retreating too quickly from India. He also received a warning from Governor Jenkins of Punjab, who argued against partition because he thought it would create two small states without the hope for or capability of

economic development. Furthermore, Jenkins warned that the main trouble spot in Punjab would be the Lahore Division, which was located in the center of Punjab and contained a Sikh holy land, even though the majority of its population was Muslim. In all, the Punjab's population was 28 million- 16 million Muslims and 12 million non-Muslims, both Hindus and Sikhs. Mountbatten ignored both of those warnings, and he also chose not to act on a pair of suggestions that could have avoided or at least greatly diminished the need for and disastrous results of partition. One such suggestion came from Governor Burrows of Bengal who was the same man who had warned of the dangers of setting a deadline for Britain's retreat from India. After that warning had obviously been ignored, Burrows approached Mountbatten with another idea on May 20 that the government in Bengal had agreed to unite and form the Free State of Bengal.<sup>[7]</sup> If Mountbatten had accepted this proposal, it would likely have prevented or at least reduced the extent of most of the atrocities that occurred in Bengal less than three months later as a result of partition. From a historical standpoint, a free and independent Bengal seemed like a much more attractive option because Lord Curzon had partitioned Bengal in the early 1900s. All that Curzon's partition of Bengal accomplished was a stirring up of Indian nationalism and religious tensions between Muslims and Hindus.

Along with refusing to act on Burrows's proposition, Mountbatten also did not pursue Mahatma Gandhi's last desperate proposal to maintain Indian unity. Although Mountbatten was still convinced in early June that preserving unity in India was "by far the best solution to the problem," Mahatma Gandhi had proposed a very radical solution- to create a new Central Government in India with Jinnah as its head. It is no surprise that Nehru thought this plan was treacherous, especially coming from a Hindu like Gandhi, but the grave situation in India required a radical solution if its unity was to be preserved. Therefore, Mountbatten's failure to approach Jinnah with this plan was an error on his part, even though whether it would have worked and saved India from partition will never be known.

Along with Mountbatten's determination to do things his own way, his handling of the process of awarding the partition lines was not good, either, and it contributed greatly to the unrest and deaths that followed the August 15 transfer of power. He chose Sir Cyril Radcliffe to lead both boundary committees for Bengal and the Punjab, even though Radcliffe had never been to India until he was summoned there by Mountbatten in July 1947 to redraw some lines on the map of the subcontinent. Before Radcliffe even went to work, Mountbatten made sure he obtained the

agreement of all involved parties on July 22 to accept the partition lines regardless of wherever they ended up being drawn. He did this because he knew well that no one on either side would be happy with the partition lines no matter where Radcliffe placed them. After securing this agreement, Mountbatten stayed out of the actual determining of the partition lines as if that job belonged solely to Radcliffe. Mountbatten did this because he did not want to seem partial to either the Muslims or the Hindus therefore, "Radcliffe reported to the British government, not to the viceroy." This is noteworthy because Mountbatten did not have to answer to anyone in Britain or India, and as viceroy he certainly could have been involved in the drawing of the partition lines for the Punjab and Bengal. Instead, he chose to take the safest approach by washing his hands of the matter and leaving Radcliffe to take care of it himself. Radcliffe was left even more on his own because the Hindus and Muslims disagreed on nearly every controversial issue related to partition. This meant Radcliffe essentially had to make the decisions about the new boundaries all by himself, and it was no secret to either side that whatever he decided would anger millions of people on both sides.

When Radcliffe's awards were finally completed on August 9, Mountbatten seemingly had two options for announcing the awards. The first was to announce them immediately, which would have been good for two reasons- it would have allowed plenty of time to move troops into the affected areas before August 15 and it would have been great for Mountbatten's reputation because with such immediate transparency he would not be suspected of tampering with the awards. The second option was to wait until August 14 to announce them, which also seemed like a good idea because leaders against the awards would be overshadowed by the imminent celebration of the subcontinent's independence from Britain. Mountbatten had a different idea- the awards, which separated East and West Pakistan by 725 miles of Indian Territory, would be locked in a safe in the Government House and kept secret until August 16 because he wanted nothing to destroy the day of celebration on August 15 therefore Radcliffe was the only man on the earth who knew the boundaries of the new dominions of India and Pakistan when they became independent. Mountbatten's reasoning for choosing this course of actions seems extremely vain because he viewed a potentially tarnished day of celebration as a bigger risk than the new dominions of India and Pakistan having to deal with the "administrative inconvenience of not knowing exactly what their frontiers were at the moment they gained independence."<sup>[8]</sup>

The most possible reason for Mountbatten to keep the awards secret until the day after Indian Independence Day was that the inevitable unrest that occurred as a result of their announcement would be directed by Indians toward Indians. That did not concern Mountbatten; in fact rioting and tension only concerned him when it was directed towards British people. The best example of this occurred in Kashmir after India had gained its independence and Kashmir's future was still unresolved. Hari Singh, the Hindu maharaja of Kashmir who governed a Muslim majority, had been using troops to harass Muslims in Kashmir throughout September and October 1947. Hari Singh's aim was to create a three-mile buffer zone without people to protect Kashmir, so he essentially "had ordered ethnic cleansing under the guise of a defense strategy." This inspired Pathan tribesmen from Pakistan to invade the North-West Frontier Province on October 24. This was more significant that the average showing of post-partition aggression because "there were many British citizens living in and around Srinagar who would have been a tempting target for the Pathans. Auchinleck had pleaded to be allowed to send British troops to protect them. Mountbatten was convinced this would be improper."

Mountbatten's pretense for the impropriety of sending in British troops was that he wanted Kashmir to accede to India before sending in troops. It seems that Mountbatten really did not want to have to answer for what would have happened if he sent British troops into Kashmir. He was willing to accept responsibility for any loss of life at the hands of the Pathans as long as he did not have to get deeply involved in Kashmir. Therefore, what at first looks like an anomaly with Mountbatten willing to take responsibility for something was really a strategic choice to take responsibility for what he deemed was the lesser of two evils. The fighting remained exclusively between Hindus and Muslims, so he had no reason to call for British troops and no British citizens lost their lives.

Therefore, Mountbatten's general indifference to conflicts between natives of the subcontinent, as opposed to his concern for Indian rioting directed against the British, certainly influenced his decision to get Britain out of India so quickly because as long as it remained there, the longer the rioting and unrest in India would be directed toward the British. Yes, this was good for Britain because Mountbatten did everything he could to protect British interests in India. However, it was also disastrous for the subcontinent in the aftermath of the transfer of power because Mountbatten's general disregard for tensions between Indians certainly helped intensify the ethnic and religious rioting in August 1947.<sup>[9]</sup>

Therefore, Attlee's 'right man' for the job was the 'wrong man' for the interests of India and the subcontinent because the "British had got away with their dignity intact and their majesty undimmed," while the subcontinent was left to handle the resulting turmoil of partition. Furthermore, Mountbatten's choice to keep the boundary awards secret until August 16 meant that India and Pakistan would be largely responsible for dealing with their effects, instead of himself or Britain dealing with them. Stanley Wolpert, one of Mountbatten's loudest critics, was especially incensed about this- "He cared nothing for the fact that a week's advance notice would have given all those people most frightened and eager to move enough time to do so before they found themselves trapped in the wrong country. Mountbatten's chief concern was to avoid British responsibility for the hurricane they could all see looming on Punjab's horizon."

Mountbatten even went so far as to claim that it was the Indians alone who were responsible for starting the transfer of power process that ultimately led to the partition of the subcontinent. His quote from his June 4 press conference in Delhi shows his desire to pass such responsibility on to the Indians: "It was the Indians who had wanted independence, it was the Indians who had made partition inevitable, and it was the Indians who must now make it work." His first two claims may be true, but ultimately Mountbatten as viceroy was the one who was responsible for partition and its effects, especially because he remained in the Dominion of India as its first governor-general. Even so, he passed the responsibility for awarding the partition lines along to Radcliffe because he knew that the awards would arouse much ire from Hindus, Sikhs, and Muslims. Mountbatten was eager to praise Radcliffe after the fact, saying in a 1968 lecture that "he did a superlative job. His decisions were inevitably unpopular with both sides, but their unpopularity in both Dominions was equal, so it is clear that he drew scrupulously fair boundaries for which service he has never received proper recognition."

Also, along with his strong devotion to his heritage, Mountbatten was very interested in how long the Union Jack's presence would remain in India after it became independent. He tried and failed to get India and Pakistan to include the Union Jack in the upper left-hand corner of their new flags, much like Australia and New Zealand had done. Mountbatten also had a lengthy talk with Nehru just ten days before the transfer of power about how long the Union Jack would continue to fly in India after August 15. Although Mountbatten's concern about the future of the Union Jack in India again shows his understanding of symbolic importance, the timing of

his discussion with Nehru could not have been much worse.

The effect of Mountbatten's shirking of responsibility was a humanitarian disaster for the newly divided subcontinent after the August 15 transfer of power. Although the actual partition related death count is unknown, the loftiest estimates of one million deaths were lower than the approximately 1.5 million who died in the Bengal famine of 1943. Even so, "human suffering is not to be counted in statistics, the partition of the Punjab caused untold misery to several million refugees and left a scar of pain across the surface of Mountbatten's Indian achievement." Millions of people were affected by partition and millions of others were displaced and forced to live for months as refugees. The death and destruction began almost immediately after the partition awards were announced, and the ferocity and frequency of the atrocities committed during the post-partition riots quickly became a humanitarian nightmare.

Both Bengal and the Punjab experienced rioting after the transfer of power, but Punjab felt the worst of it because Mahatma Gandhi remained in Bengal. Therefore, while Bengal was relatively calm, as rioting did not reach Calcutta until August 31, Punjab suffered nearly instantaneous chaos. Riots had already been visible in Punjab before August 15, as whole villages had gone up in flames. The rioting really took off after both dominions finally received their boundary awards at 2 p.m. on August 16; within a matter of hours, Punjab had "suffered a total collapse of public order." There was unrest and trouble in Bengal as well, but the problems caused by partition were felt over the long-term instead of immediately. It is interesting that there was much less violence in Bengal than in the Punjab despite the fact that Radcliffe's partition lines displaced more people in Bengal than in the Punjab. Instead of violent rioting, the main issue in Bengal was the diaspora of thousands, and eventually millions, of religious refugees. By August 25, more than 100,000 Hindu and Sikh refugees had fled East Bengal, which was now officially part of Pakistan, for Delhi. Those refugees were living in atrocious conditions.<sup>[10]</sup> There was no sanitation or running water, which meant there was great potential for outbreaks of cholera or typhoid fever.

While the large-scale rioting eventually died down throughout the subcontinent, the Bengali refugee problem continued for the next two decades, as Hindus fled East Pakistan for the safety of West Bengal. About one million Hindus took refuge in West Bengal in 1948 and 1949 alone. In comparison, only a matter of thousands of Muslim refugees left Kashmir for West Pakistan. Another problem with the partitioning of Bengal was that Pakistan really got

the short end of the stick. Instead of being awarded Calcutta, Pakistan got Chittagong, which was a severe downgrade because, compared to Calcutta, Chittagong was much smaller, grossly underdeveloped, and bad for land transportation of goods. Therefore, with 725 miles of India separating East Pakistan from West Pakistan, and with Chittagong instead of Calcutta, East Pakistan was "set up to fail" because there was no way it could support itself economically. There is no better proof for this than when East Pakistan became its own independent country of Bangladesh in 1971. This proved for the second time in a century that there was no way to successfully partition Bengal.

Mountbatten's biggest response to all the post-partition troubles was to set up an emergency committee. Doing so was a step in the right direction, but Mountbatten let his wife essentially run the committee while he spent his time fussing over maps. For one last time, Mountbatten showed how quickly he was willing to transfer the responsibility for his power to someone else. After all, that is what he did in India by giving the Indians the responsibility to govern themselves while completely removing the British from the subcontinent. As governor-general, Mountbatten was able to convince Nehru to refer the ongoing conflict between Pakistan and India to the United Nations on December 31, 1947. This was necessary because in a span of less than "five months, the two nations of India and Pakistan had embroiled themselves in an irresolvable war."<sup>[11]</sup> History is the proof that this was the biggest blunder India made after independence. There is no way Mountbatten will be able to avoid the responsibility for the hundreds of thousands of deaths from the unsolvable conflicts created by partition. Finally, even if he wanted to, Mountbatten cannot claim to be responsible for bringing an end to the ongoing unrest on the subcontinent. Ironically, and tragically, it was the assassination of Gandhi on January 30, 1948 that finally brought India to its senses and helped end the needless, continuous bloodshed between Hindus and Muslims.

In conclusion it can be said that Mountbatten was a man with clear intentions for Britain but no idea about independent India. He lacked the time and resources to be able to do find a solution for Britain's retreat from the subcontinent that would be adequate for everyone involved. Attlee firmly believed that Mountbatten was the perfect man to get Britain out of India without damaging Britain's world prestige. He did indeed a wonderful job for Britain of not adversely affecting Britain's image by retreating from India nearly a year ahead of the original deadline. But the 'savour' of prestige of one country became the 'slayer' of peace and unity for other. Mountbatten's

choice to partition India was disastrous for millions of people on the subcontinent. Even though his hastily planned retreat from India did much figurative good for Britain, it caused so much more real, physical damage in the form of hundreds of thousands of reported deaths and millions of religious refugees. The horrific humanitarian consequences of partition cannot be overlooked, and although some form of rioting was seemingly

inevitable with all the religious tension brewing in India, the scale it reached as a result of partition is a serious stain on Mountbatten's legacy. Mountbatten's desire to distance himself from any and all responsibility for it is equally troubling and wrong. As viceroy the responsibility for the transfer of power process was his alone therefore the stains of blood spilt as a result of partition greatly darkens his most decorated achievements and honors.

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