

## Book Review

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Sher Muhammad Garewal: *Mountbatten's Viceroyalty and the Creation of Pakistan*

Pakistan Study Centre, University of the Punjab,  
2011, Price: Rs. 600/- PP. 431

Reviewed by: Ali Abbas

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I have had the opportunity to study hundreds of dissertations published and unpublished, submitted to Pakistani Universities as well as international institutions; on politics, Muslim or non-Muslim cultural life, relating to medieval times or the recent past. The work of Sher Muhammad Garewal stands, in all of them, distinguished. I consider it so because under the limitations of research guidance in this country, in particular at the Punjab University, a quality work of the type which Garewal has produced is most encouraging. I deeply congratulate Dr. Qalb-i-Abid, Chairman Department of History and Dean Faculty of Art (Punjab University) and Dr. Massarrat Abid, Director, Centre for Pakistan Studies (Punjab University), for picking the raw jewel to shape its beauty, before publishing, what must be seeking recognition of the scholars of Modern History of Pakistan and India.

Mountbatten's viceroyalty, lasted about six months (February to August) or even less, as he took charge of office only in March. It was most hectic period, full of excitement, political tensions, a deteriorating law and order situation, and challenging ambitions of political and communal groups and parties. Wavell, Mountbatten's predecessor, was not a weak man. He too was a

man of strong nerves: thoughtful, imaginative, and his initiatives to meet the ambitions of the Indian National Congress for transfer of power were both positive and mostly in the Congress's favour. However, as an administrator, he resented the Muslim slaughter in Calcutta which offended the Congress High Command, which requested the Home Government for his dismissal and recommending him to be replaced by a person with a close relationship with the Congress leadership. How Mountbatten responded to this, since his assuming the position of Viceroy, is well-elaborated by Sher Muhammad Garewal in an introduction and six chapters, conclusion, appendices and a very comprehensive bibliography. The chapterization of the book is as follows:

- Chapter I: Wavell's Dismissal and Mountbatten's Appointment (February to March 1947)
- Chapter II: Mountbatten, the New Viceroy: Problems, Parties and Politics (March to April 1947)
- Chapter III: The Partition Plan: Formation and Enactment (April to July 1947)
- Chapter IV: Partition of India and Creation of Pakistan – I (June to July 1947)
- Chapter V: Partition of India and Creation of Pakistan – II (July to August 1947)
- Chapter VI: The Finale (August 1947)

## Conclusion

In addition to making use of all statements with credible, authentic documents from important archives from the year including official and private papers, letters, and the minutes of meetings, the use of secondary sources in drawing opinions to support and shape his conclusion conclusion, has added support to Garewal's thesis. However, some instances of repetition, however inevitable from an author's point of view, could be avoided with proper guidance. At the same time, such oversights have not affected the value of the overall analytical discourse, except that a more moderate tone, and a slight change in the title of the book i.e. 'Mountbatten's Viceroyalty and the Partition of India' instead of 'the Creation of Pakistan' could have added to the marketing scope of the book both in India and Pakistan.

Nevertheless the book under review shall play an extraordinary role in helping research students of M.A., M.Phil. and Ph.D. in postgraduate colleges and universities in Pakistan and abroad for the extensive use of material in a disciplined and orderly manner. To my surprise, I could not find in the book a single hazard in its factual or analytical discussion, which is common even in theses submitted to universities in the West. This book is good reading and it keeps the interest of the reader alive, which is a rare quality. I am sure this work shall go a long way as a contribution to the literature on the Partition of India with Mountbatten's negative role. I think that educational institutions in the country (postgraduate colleges and universities) should recommend this book as a prescribed textbooks in their syllabi.