

Liberty or Death: India's Journey to Independence and Division

By Patrick French

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
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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Without a sharp focus, authors tackle the history of modern India at their peril. French, whose first book, *Younghusband*, won the 1995 Somerset Maugham Award, tries to do a bit too much. It's difficult to uncover new ground in the well-spaded turf of Indian independence. French is not the first to see Gandhi as a crank obsessed with bowel functions, Winston Churchill as a racist and the 1947 British exit strategy as a case of muddling through. He does, however, succeed at filling in some gaps, especially about British intelligence operations. French (who ran for Britain's parliament as a Green candidate and is currently director of the Free Tibet Campaign) nagged the Foreign Office to declassify 92 "bottle-green boxes" of files, and his analysis reveals a dying Raj under severe financial stress held together by undercover operations. Although his criticisms of Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre's *Freedom at Midnight* are unlikely to dethrone that classic, he argues persuasively that the authors swallowed an elderly Lord Mountbatten's egocentric recollections and inaccurately made the creation of Pakistan a cliff-hanger dependent on the health of Mohammed Ali Jinnah. Noteworthy also are glimpses of various British viceroys, perspectives on the amalgamation of the princely states into the nation and an update on the increasing adulation in India of Axis ally Subhas Chandra Bose. French's travel notes and wit leaven the narrative somewhat, but many readers will find that this demanding journey covers too much territory too quickly.

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Review

From the reviews of *Liberty or Death*: 'A huge, crowded and kaleidoscopic canvas, which the author handles with remarkable authority. It is also enormous fun to read' Philip Ziegler, *Daily Telegraph* 'Well-researched, beautifully written and immensely scholarly' Andrew Roberts, *Sunday Times* 'Delightful! quite hilarious' Swapan Dasgupta, *India Today*

About the Author

Patrick French studied English and American literature at Edinburgh. His first book, *Younghusband: The Last Great Imperial Adventurer*, won the 1995 Somerset Maugham Award and the Royal Society of Literature Heinemann Prize. He lives in Dorset.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Donovan:

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