

Lord Mountbatten

Louis Francis Albert Victor Nicholas Mountbatten, 1st Earl Mountbatten of Burma, was a British statesman and naval officer who was the last Viceroy of India and the first Governor-General of India.

As the last Viceroy, he would oversee the British withdrawal from India and ensure in the smooth transition to power, but his efforts would fail as the partition of India he tried to prevent would take place regardless.

This article will give details about Lord Mountbatten within the context of the Civil Services Examination

The early life of Lord Mountbatten

Lord Lois Mountbatten was born in Windsor on 25 June 1900 to Prince Louis of Battenberg and Princess Victoria of Hesse. His family belonged to the German nobility with close links to the British Royal family (His grandmother was Queen Victoria herself).

Lord Mountbatten's father was the First Sea Lord but the outbreak of World War I and the subsequent anti-German sentiments forced his resignation. The family also had to change their name from Battenberg to Mountbatten for the same reason.

He joined the Royal Navy in 1916 and saw action in World War I, then briefly attended Cambridge University for a year after the war.

The inter-war years were spent by Lord Mountbatten in pursuing his naval career where he would command the destroyer HMS 'Daring'. He would see considerable action in the Mediterranean region following the outbreak of World War II.

Lord Mountbatten would become the supreme allied commander in South East Asia in October 1943. Working in coordination with American commander, General William Slim, Mountbatten would prevent the Japanese invasion of India through the decisive battle of Imphal and would begin the reconquest of Burma which had fallen in 1941. In September 1954, he received the Japanese surrender at Singapore.

As the Last Viceroy of India

Due to his experience in the region, the new British Prime Minister Clement Attlee advised King George VI to appoint Lord Mountbatten as the Viceroy of India. He arrived in the country on 20 February 1947, tasked with avoiding a partition of the subcontinent but with the leeway to adapt to the changing situation in order to preserve Britain's reputation.

Setting out on his task he made good relations with other Indian leaders such as Jawaharlal Nehru (Born on November 14, 1889) and Mahatma Gandhi but he felt differently about Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Jinnah was immovable regarding the creation of Pakistan. Lord Mountbatten tried to persuade Jinnah about the benefits of a united India but it was of little use.

In the end, when the deadline to achieving India's independence was first expiring, the sentiments about a united India began to die down. even Mountbatten's determination, Nehru and Patel's inability to deal with the Muslim League and lastly Jinnah's obstinacy, all Indian party leaders (except Gandhi) acquiesced to Jinnah's plan to divide India, which in turn eased Mountbatten's task.

His good relations with the Indian princes was instrumental in persuading many of them to join the Union of India, but his failure in persuading the princely states of Jammu and Kashmir, Hyderabad and Junagadh to come to a similar conclusion would lead to future tensions between India and Pakistan.

Mountbatten brought forward the date of the partition from June 1948 to 15 August 1947. When Pakistan and India attained independence at midnight on the night of 14–15 August 1947, Mountbatten remained in New Delhi for 10 months, serving as the first governor-general of an independent India until June 1948. The Partition of India and the subsequent violence that followed did have an effect on him.

Later Life and Legacy

In 1953, Mountbatten returned to the Royal Navy, becoming commander of a new NATO Mediterranean command. Then in 1954, he was appointed first sea lord, a position which had been held by his father more than 40 years before. Finally, in 1959, he became chief of the defence staff, then in 1965, he retired from the navy.

On 27 August 1979, Mountbatten was assassinated when IRA (Irish Republican Army) terrorists blew up his boat off the coast of County Sligo, Ireland, near his family holiday home at Classiebawn Castle. Two of Mountbatten's relations and a 15-year old local boy were also killed.

Mountbatten's most controversial legacy came in his support for the burgeoning nationalist movements which grew up in the shadow of Japanese occupation. His priority was to maintain practical, stable government, but driving him was an idealism in which he believed every people should be allowed to control their own destiny. Critics said he was too ready to overlook their faults, and especially their subordination to communist control., with some going as far as to state that he was soft on communism. Regardless he is still remembered as one of the foremost commanders of the British Empire who played a key role in the allied victory in Asia