



Gilgit Rebellion: The Major Who Mutinied Over Partition of India

William Brown

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In 1942 William Brown was posted as a recently commissioned Indian Army Officer to the Gilgit Agency in the very north of the North West Frontier. He travelled widely, learnt the local dialects and built the Chilas Polo ground. After a brief period away from Gilgit, just prior to Partition in early 1947 he was appointed acting Commandant of the Gilgit Scouts. To his horror he learnt that the Viceroy Lord Mountbatten had ruled that Gilgit, despite being 99% Muslim, should be ceded to Hindu rule. Knowing that this was a disastrous and callous decision that would lead to insurrection, chaos and bloodshed, the 25 year-old acting Major Brown took it upon himself to oust the Indian Governor, fly to Karachi and offer Gilgit to the Pakistanis, who accepted with alacrity. Brown knew that he was in the eyes of the Indians and Mountbatten, a mutineer who would have been executed, had he fallen into Indian hands. Thus it is all the more extraordinary that six months later he was awarded the MBE, the citation of which was so vague that it gave no indication of the reason. As well as giving an hour-by-hour account of this unfolding political and military drama, Brown's memoir captures the atmosphere and magic of this remote country at the close of the Empire.

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