

The Major

The Raj's Last Man Standing in Search of Geoffrey Langlands

Born in Hull in 1917, Geoffrey Langlands narrowly survived the Spanish Flu epidemic and Zeppelin bombings of World War I. Coming of age in time for World War II, he joined the elite No. 4 Commando unit in 1940. After successes in Europe, he was selected for officer training and posted to the Indian Army. He never left the subcontinent, serving with distinction and later saving many lives during the Partition of India in 1947. He survived three wars between India and Pakistan, a kidnapping in Waziristan, and the Taliban threat. Realizing the futility of war, Langlands envisaged a more effective approach to resolving conflict: education. He was asked to stay in the newly created Pakistan by its president, Ayub Khan, who entrusted Langlands to educate many of Pakistan's future leaders over a period of 25 years at Aitchison College in Lahore. In 1989, he moved to the tribal heartland of Pakistan to run a school in Chitral. By the time Langlands retired in 2012, aged 94, there were over 800 pupils, both male and female. Prime Minister Imran Khan call him "Pakistan's Teacher." This in-depth study of renowned educator Geoffrey Langlands, who died in 2019, is written by one of his former pupils. It shares Langlands' unique insights and those of associates who knew and remember him, stretching from the last days of British India to the rise of radical Islam. It also reveals previously unknown details of Langlands' extraordinary life, which spanned 101 years. *The Major* is a compelling blend of biography and memoir, in which the author traces Langlands' life from impoverished beginnings through his long career as a pioneering teacher in a lawless mountain region of Pakistan on the Afghan border. In 2012, the *New York Times* described him as "the quintessential Englishman of old, a living relic of the Raj." But "the Major" was much more than a vestige of a bygone era. In the Chitral region, he was the first to provide quality education to young women, a British Christian who persuaded conservative Muslim parents to trust him to educate their daughters.

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