



*Robin James Moore*  
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Robin Moore was born in Melbourne on 29 April 1934, and died in Adelaide on 4 January 2009. He attended Melbourne High School, where besides excelling in his studies he was also known for his football and athletic abilities. At the University of Melbourne he completed an honours degree in history and wrote an MA thesis on the social history of Melbourne in the nineteenth century. He moved into the world of business, first in Containers Ltd, and then in Western Mining Corporation. At this time he became interested in Asia. In 1957 he married Ariadne Mikhailiv, who died in 1976. He later married Rosemary Sweetapple, who in 2008 retired from her teaching position in the English Department of the University of Adelaide.

In 1962 Moore attended the University of London on a Sir Arthur Sims Travelling Scholarship. He wrote his doctoral thesis at the School of Oriental and African Studies on the Indian policy of Sir Charles Wood, Secretary of State for India (1859–66). Wood was a major influence in the restructuring of the government of India in the post East India Company period. Manchester University Press published a revision of the thesis in 1966, the same year in which Moore published *Liberalism and Indian Politics, 1873–1922*. This prodigious early output began his engagement with the study of the relationship between Britain and India at the highest levels of government. He felt his most important work was *The Crisis of Indian Unity, 1917–1940*, published in 1974. This book took his work deeper into the complexity of Indian politics. In examining the British attempt to preserve their interests and reshape Indian government so that in time India would be both united and free, Moore showed how the process of devolution of power made unity much more difficult to achieve. The British devolved power to Indians in a gradual, step-by-step process. Each step created interests at the provincial level that made it more difficult for Indian political leaders to agree on the next step. This culminated in the inability to devise a political system in which India was both independent and united. The four books that followed on Indo-British politics during the Second World War, the ‘endgame’ of 1946–47 and the construction of the Commonwealth extended the

threads of this central thesis. Moore's point was that Partition resulted from structural difficulties, not the personal ambitions and hostilities of the major individuals. He was very critical of the demonisation of Muhammed Ali Jinnah in Richard Attenborough's film *Gandhi*.

Moore's massive contribution to the understanding of the high politics of the Transfer of Power and Partition was recognised in 1980 by the award of the degree of Doctor of Letters by the University of London. Later, during sabbaticals, he held visiting posts at the University of London, the University of Cambridge, and the University of Tulsa in Oklahoma. He was President of the Australian Historical Association from 1983 to 1984.

*Paul Scott's Raj*, Moore's final book, published in 1990, demonstrated another side to his scholarship. Through his work on the novelist's papers he helps us understand how Scott developed his view of India and the Raj, as expressed in the *Raj Quartet*, but he also uses the opportunity to portray the ways British imperialism affected both ruled and ruler. This work and his membership of the Board of Governors of the Adelaide Festival from 1980 to 1994 reflected Moore's interest in the arts. As a member elected by subscribers he brought his broad knowledge of opera, theatre and business to the work of the board.

Moore's first appointment was in 1964 as lecturer in South Asian History in the School of Oriental and African Studies. In 1971 he succeeded George Rudé as Professor of History at Flinders University in Adelaide where he introduced Indian history to the range of topics taught in the department. He was a brilliant teacher, bringing no more than a few words on the back of an envelope to the lecture theatre, yet able to convey his argument to the class in elegant sentences. A conscientious supervisor, Moore had more graduate students at SOAS than at Flinders, though Professor Carl Bridge, Director of the Menzies Centre for Australian Studies at King's College London, is prominent among the latter.

As Head of the History Department, Moore demonstrated cool and courageous leadership during a difficult period at Flinders: 'the student occupation' of the Registry in 1974. He encouraged his colleagues to pursue their academic interests and gave them as much support as his role made possible. He alternated with Eric Richards as Head of Department until 1988. He then became Dean (later Head) of the Faculty of Social Sciences until his retirement in 1997. By that year, with twelve departments and 160 academic staff, the faculty was the largest in the university and occupied most of his time. In his vacations he planned and researched a major project on Lord Curzon, Viceroy of India and Imperial statesman, who was involved in the negotiations that reshaped post World War I Iraq.

Though he was externally formal in dress and manner, Robin was the most charming of colleagues. He was unfailingly courteous to all with whom he dealt: from students

to vice-chancellors. To those who were his assistant deans, he gave great freedom and support – and did so with wit and humour.

In retirement he commenced to write his biography of Curzon. Unfortunately, ill health, courageously borne, precluded the completion of this task. He died after an operation for an abdominal aortic aneurism, and is survived by Rosemary.

This obituary owes much to a tribute by our colleague David Hilliard published in *The Advertiser* on 18 April 2009.

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