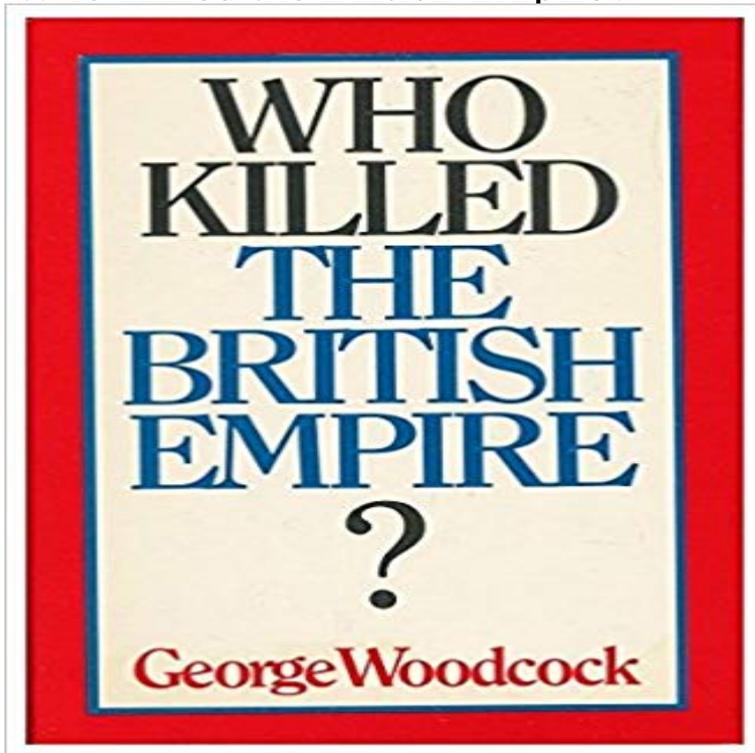


Who Killed the British Empire?



Who killed the British Empire? Why did history's largest imperial system collapse dramatically in the years following the Second World War? In this book, George Woodcock seeks to uncover the conspiracy of human wills and impersonal circumstances that brought the Second British Empire to its sudden end. The book opens in 1930 with the Empire at the point of its greatest expansion. Unexpectedly, three events in that year were to have a cataclysmic effect and start the Empire on an irreversible decline: Gandhi's Salt March, the surrender of Weihaiwei to the Chinese nationalists, and the negotiations leading to the Statute of Westminster, in which Canada was the leading advocate of dominion progress towards virtual independence. Conducting the reader along the great imperial sea-routes to visit the territories of the Empire at its height, Professor Woodcock shows how lands were swallowed up in order to protect the route to India and to the great market of the China Coast, and then as expediently abandoned when their useful role had expired. He explains how, in Canada, the first serious challenges to the integrity of the Empire were made in the struggle for responsible government, which later developed into the struggle for dominion status and virtual independence. He then examines the reasons for the loss of India, the possession in which British Imperial prestige was most concentrated, and in the final chapters he shows how the collapse of the Empire followed necessarily from the liberation of India. Professor Woodcock finally rejects the view that any one man can be held primarily responsible for the death of the Empire. His book shows how complex a web of influences held the destiny of one of the world's greatest and most powerful institutions through its rise and inevitable fall, and the manner of that relatively bloodless fall is probably the only uniquely significant outcome of the

flowering of the British Empire. George Woodcocks versatility and productivity have made him a living legend among Canadian writers. He is author or editor of more than forty books, including volumes of poetry, and criticism, books of travel and history about several parts of the world, and important biographical studies of George Orwell, Aldous Huxley, Herbert Read and others. He has written extensively about Canadian history and literature and is the founder and editor of the journal Canadian Literature.

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