Book Launch: From Partition to Operation Bluestar: Tales of a Journalist, Bureaucrat, Spy
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From Partition to Operation Bluestar: Tales of a Journalist, Bureaucrat, Spy was released at the Singapore Management University (SMU), on Wednesday, followed by book readings and discussion.

Introducing the book, Prof. Kirpal Singh, Director of the Wee Kim Wee Centre at SMU, spoke of the importance of such books, written by those who have lived through history as it was being made.

The author, Som Nath Dhar, started his career as a journalist in Lahore in 1947, went on to working as Nehru’s personal assistance over the period of Indian independence, worked for many years as a radio reporter before joining the Indian government.

From Partition to Operation Bluestar: Tales of a Journalist, Bureaucrat, Spy provides a fresh first-hand accounts of major public events in Indian history since independence. The author, Som Nath Dhar, relies on his journalistic skills to weave an engrossing narrative that covers India’s independence from Britain, its bloody partition into two countries, the roots of the conflict in Kashmir, and much more. Dhar, who was personal assistant to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru at the time of independence, also throws light on the public and personal characters of the towering personalities of the era. He has worked closely with four Indian
prime ministers and one president. The book ends with Indira Gandhi’s assassination and a comparative assessment of three prime ministers: Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.

In his long career, Dhar worked as a newspaper journalist in what is now Pakistan, a radio reporter and editor in India, and one of India’s covert intelligence agencies. He ended his career in government as Director-General of News, All India Radio, a government job. After retiring from government, he taught for five years at the Indian Institute of Mass Communication.

One of the strengths of the book is its highly readable style and its obvious authenticity. Early readers have commented on how the narrative pulls one in. “It’s like a detective novel – you can’t put it down!” said Rajat Nag, Managing Director General of the Manila-based Asian Development Bank.

Dhar passed away in Singapore in December, weeks before his book was published. He was 88. He is survived by his wife, Indira Dhar, and their two daughters. His daughters initiated the book discussion and answered questions about the book.