



Clement Attlee: The Inevitable Prime Minister

Michael Jago

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Elected in a surprise landslide in 1945, Clement Attlee was the first ever Labour leader to command a majority government. At the helm for twenty years, he remains the longest-serving leader in the history of the Labour Party. When he was voted out in 1951, he left with Labour's highest share of the vote before or since. And yet today he is routinely described as 'the accidental Prime Minister'. A retiring man, overshadowed by the flamboyant Churchill during the Second World War, he is dimly remembered as a politician who, by good fortune, happened to lead the Labour Party at a time when Britain was disillusioned with Tory rule and ready for change. In *Clement Attlee: The Inevitable Prime Minister*, Michael Jago argues that nothing could be further from the truth. Raised in a haven of middle-class respectability, Attlee was appalled by the squalid living conditions endured by his near neighbours in London's East End. Seeing first-hand how poverty and insecurity dogged lives, he nourished a powerful ambition to achieve power and create a more egalitarian society. Rising to become Leader of the Labour Party in 1935, Attlee was single-minded in pursuing his goals, and in just six years from 1945 his government introduced the most significant features of post-war Britain: the National Health Service, extensive nationalisation of essential industry, and the Welfare State that Britons now take for granted. A full-scale reassessment, *Clement Attlee: The Inevitable Prime Minister* traces the life of a middle-class lawyer's son who relentlessly pursued his ambition to lead a government that would implement far-reaching socialist reform and change forever the divisive class structure of twentieth-century Britain.

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