



Attlee's War: World War II and the Making of a Labour Leader (International Library of Twentieth Century History)

Robert Crowcroft

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As deputy prime minister of Britain's coalition government during World War II, Clement Attlee became one of the most powerful figures in British politics and subsequently played a crucial role in the reshaping of the post-war party-political landscape. The architect of Labour's entry into the wartime coalition, Attlee came to straddle the workings of government to a unique degree. Unmatched in his range of influence, he dominated party politics; directed a doctrinal struggle within the coalition; and even sought to create the conditions for a cross-party alliance to be maintained after the war. His goal was to carve out a position of greater strength than Labour had ever occupied before and he succeeded when he led his party to power in July 1945. No public figure did more to manage the new political system created in the wartime conditions of 1940 and the post-war election marked the beginning of a decisive shift toward the policies and doctrines of the Labour party, which would endure well into the latter half of the twentieth century.

Robert Crowcroft here examines the political leadership of the unsung architect behind the development of wartime politics and the rise of the Labour party: Clement Attlee. Attlee's role in the Labour party's political dominance during and after the war has been overlooked by a generation of historians. Crowcroft here re-examines Attlee's influence, contextualizing his political manoeuvres and casting him as the central player in the attempts to plan for and mould the inter-party dynamics of post-war politics. From the parliamentary debate on 'appeasement' to the vast expansion of government on the home front, Crowcroft follows Attlee's political positioning and enduring influence within the context of his political environment. The war serves as a window into his evolution as a political leader - and provides a point of departure for a unique study of the strategic, tactical, and doctrinal goals of the party's senior figures. Attlee's War mounts a challenge to the popular image of Attlee as a reticent collegiate, and unravels his elusive path to power. Not a biography but a study in 'leadership', this book will appeal to all those interested in modern British history and major political figures.

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