THE THIRTEENTH ANNUAL ATTLEE
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Peter Hennessy

'The Statecraft of Clement Attlee'

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That clever man of biting tongue but limited judgement, Hugh Dalton, declared the day Clem Attlee beat Herbert Morrison for the Labour leadership in November 1935, it is 'a wretched disheartening result!' adding 'And a little mouse shall lead them'. Some mouse. Dalton wasn't the last sophisticate to underestimate 'little Clem' as Ernie Bevin affectionately called him, and Attlee's reputation has been rising almost ever since; so much so that he has become a kind of lodestar for the efficient and successful conduct of peacetime Cabinet government and premiership in the postwar years, and not just on the Labour side.

For example, that connoisseur of his own profession, Rab Butler, said of Harold Macmillan: 'He (Macmillan) was very good, only exceeded by little Attlee who had a habit of biting people in the pants.' Macmillan himself said of the 1945-50 Attlee administration: 'It was a very good government in many ways.' And I shall never forget Christopher Soames a few years after Mrs. Thatcher sacked him from her Cabinet telling me with great brio, despite confinement to his bed with 'flu, that 'she (Mrs. Thatcher) was not really running a team. Every time you have a Prime Minister who wants to take all the decisions, it mainly leads to bad results. Attlee didn't. That's why he was so damn good....'

Lord Callaghan learned 'from Attlee the advantage of keeping your mouth shut, and of not really exposing your point of view if you wanted to get your business through rather quickly in the Cabinet.' And he never forgot the brevity or the wisdom of Attlee's advice when appointing him to his first junior ministerial post in 1947: 'Remember you are playing for the first eleven now, not the second eleven. And if you are going to negotiate with someone tomorrow, don't insult him today.' Lord Callaghan was in and out of the Cabinet Room in two minutes.

Lord Wilson has spoken of his 'filial devotion' to Attlee who sent him to the Board of Trade in 1947 at the tender age of 31. Though it has to be said Harold Wilson's prolixity from the chair, especially during the Cabinets of his first premierships after 1964, shows that he had not fully imbibed Attlee's deliciously paradoxical line on the key to successful Cabinet government - 'Democracy means government by discussion, but it is only effective if you can stop people talking.' For Jo Grimond, for these and other reasons, Attlee was simply 'the best Prime Minister since the war.'

Clem Attlee's Downing Street years between 1945 and 1951 have become a benchmark in another important sense, too, which continues to shape how we think about politics, government and the uses of state power. For example, Nigel Lawson's right to treat what he calls the 'Attleeite settlement' and Mrs. Thatcher's stewardship as the two great political weather systems that have dominated the ecology of postwar British government.

In a 1988 lecture to the Centre for Policy Studies, subtitled 'The Tide of Ideas from Attlee to Thatcher', Lord Lawson claimed the Thatcher governments had:
'transformed the politics of Britain - indeed Britain itself - to an extent no other Government has achieved since the Attlee Government of 1945 to 1951....(which).... set the political agenda for the next quarter of a century. The two key principles which informed its actions and for which it stood, big government and the drive towards equality, remained effectively unchallenged for more than a generation, the very heart of the postwar consensus.'

For all Nigel Lawson's disapproval of the essentials of that postwar settlement, it's no bad epitaph for the pair of Attleean governments charged with reconstructing a nation a third of whose wealth had melted in the heat of war, which still carried huge and, at that time, largely inescapable overseas commitments and with a mandate to foster both social justice and industrial modernisation all drawing on what the diplomat, Paul Gore-Booth, called a 'thinly lined Exchequer.'

For several reasons, therefore, the early postwar years still deserve our current attention and it could well be that future premiers, whatever their political colouration, might benefit from studying the statecraft of the man who presided over it from within a cloud of pipesmoke as, Cabinet meetings over and his colleagues departed, he sat down to work on his files beneath Walpole's portrait in the Cabinet Room, red crayon poised to scribble 'Yes', 'No', or, if feeling especially effusive, 'Agreed' 'CRA' on the papers placed before him.

He was certainly the tersest occupant of the premiership since the war. Douglas Jay said of him 'He would never use one syllable where none would do.' Denis Healey recalls his colleague in Labour's Party Headquarters, Wilfred Fienburgh, as saying 'that a conversation with an ordinary man was like a game of tennis; a conversation with Attlee was like throwing biscuits to a dog - all you could get out of him was yup, yup, yup.'

The King certainly respected his new premier in 1945 (though he was surprised by the election result and pined for Churchill). But he found Attlee's economy with words a strain, not least because of his own shyness and speech impediment. Legend has it that at 7.30 on the evening of 26 July 1945, when Attlee came to the Palace to kiss hands, a long silence was finally broken by Attlee saying 'I've won the election.' To which the Monarch replied 'I know. I heard it on the Six o'clock News'.

What is known is that the first Audience was very short indeed and that when the King's Private Secretary, Sir Alan Lascelles, remarked upon this after the new PM's departure, the King declared: 'I gather they call the Prime Minister "Clem". "Clam" would be more appropriate.' Ever since that evening so-called 'Audience Notes' have been prepared by both the Palace and Downing Street private secretaries, to prevent any more drying up at the weekly meeting between monarch and premier. The King, however, continued to fret that his Prime Minister did not tell him more about what was going on, but both the Palace and the No. 10 archives show that the moment the King requested more background, Mr. Attlee would provide it.

One other surpassing aspect of Attlee's statecraft will, I'm sure, remain unchallenged this century. He was the deftest doodler to fill either the premiership or the leadership of the Opposition.

SLIDE ONE

These fine 1949 and 1951 specimens were created during meetings of the Parliamentary Labour Party. (And I'm very grateful to Mrs. Terrey, mother of my student, Steve Terrey, for allowing me to have slides made of them. Mrs. Terrey was present on both occasions taking the minutes, and as you can see, Mr. Attlee signed his doodles for her).

I'm sure doodling-above-the-fray was part of his serenity on these occasions which, even in those days, could get very heated. George Thomas remembers those PLP gatherings in the early years of the Bevanite split after the resignations of April 1951: 'I'd see him in the party meetings in Room 14 in the Commons, raging row, but he's let all the others do the raging and, at the end of the battle when the dust settled down, there he was, like Buddha....'

Not long before he died, I was able to check with Ian Mikardo the accuracy of the most famous of these legendary manifestations of brevity-cum-sang froid. It's 1952. The United States has just tested its first hydrogen bomb. Mikardo delivers himself of a long and passionate warning about the danger of thermonuclear horrors to come. Clem doodles and smokes impassively as Mik booms. When he finally subsides, Attlee removes his pipe, lays down his pen and says: 'Quite right. Needs watching. Next business.'

Let's linger on these doodles for a moment. One of the Cabinet Room notetakers, Sir George Mallaby, liked to do the same as Mrs. Terrey when, ever security conscious, he would tidy up the detritus from the Cabinet Table once meetings were over. Mallaby, interestingly enough, had a stab at the graphologist's art and attempted to draw parallels between Attlee's doodles and his personality. 'In recent years', Mallaby wrote in the mid-Sixties shortly before Attlee's death, 'it has become the fashion to detect in him a kind of pungent wisdom, in his book reviews and in his occasional interventions in the House of Lords. People are inclined to say that he is not so colourless after all. He never was, but after Churchill he seemed so, and in an age of broadcasting his rather poor attempts at oratory - that hot potato voice, those staccato unarticulated phrases - were disastrous to the development of a popular personality. But he always had a definite personality, an individual shape and pattern - like one of his own doodles, an accurate, painstaking pattern, carefully drawn, carefully coloured, cleverly done, satisfying, attractive, comprehensive - never wild or confused or overpowering.'

'I used ro pinch these doodles at the end of meetings if I got the chance.' Mallaby continued. 'One day he caught me at it. "What are you going?" he asked in a brusque tone of irritation. "I was pinching your doodles, sir." I said. "I sell them for large sums of money." His irritation gave place to something that was nearly a warm chuckle. He liked my cheek...'

This brusqueness could frighten people, both ministers and officials. Ronald Fraser, private secretary to the Cabinet Secretary, Sir Norman Brook, and a member of that formidable breed of Scottish public servant that enriched postwar Whitehall, has told me how Attlee would send cross memos through the newly installed pneumatic tube linking No.10 and the Cabinet Office, upbraiding him for using Scottish archaicisms in covering notes on Sir Norman's hugely influential steering briefs for Cabinet and Cabinet Committee meetings.

It was in the Cabinet Room above all that Attlee, in Mallaby's words 'buzzed....(like a wasp) in your face and stung you hard' if you were ill-briefed or long-winded (unless, of course, you were his great friend and much-admired protector, Ernest Bevin, who was indulged like no other except, perhaps, the veteran and greatly respected Lord Addison.) Harold Wilson, the youngest Cabinet minister since Pitt (as he enjoyed reminding people) could do a particularly good impression of Attlee-the-wasp:

'Attlee', said Lord Wilson, 'was in complete charge of his Cabinet. He would start "Minutes of the last meeting" and if anyone dared to raise anything God help 'em. There was one from Scotland, can't remember his name now, and he would say "Well, Prime Minister, I don't disagree but I do remember a similar occasion three years ago...." Attlee said "Do you disagree with the Minutes?". "No." "All right. Agreed. Next item."

George Strauss, Attlee's Ministry of Supply, was honest about how bruising those stings could be. 'If a minister did something a bit wrong and made a mess of it,' he told Roy Hattersley many years later, 'Attlee would tell him off. And if that minister did something well.... Attlee would say nothing about it. And sometimes we ministers used to say to ourselves "It's a pity he's so ready to tell us off and he might sometimes say 'well done'."

And they all feared the summons to No.10 that might project them once more on to the back-benches. Unlike most of his predecessors and successors, Attlee didn't wrap his dismissals up. These encounters were as brief as the moment of appointment. 'He was the best butcher since the war.' said Harold Wilson (who was one of the worst). 'He'd send for a man and say: "Well, you've had a good innings; time to put your bat up in the pavilion." And that was it. 'This is a most unpleasant task.' Attlee once explained, after outlining the importance of being ruthless. 'But, in my experience 99 per cent of the people I had to sack took it very well and remained loyal.' One of the few who didn't and asked 'Why?' was, according to legend, simply told 'You're not up to it.'

Among the crucial elements in the mountain of respect in which Attlee was held was his straightness as well as his directness. It may seem incredible to successor generations but, like his Chancellor, Sir Stafford Cripps, he simply would not contemplate a pre-election Budget in 1949-50. 'It's dangerous to play party politics with the Budget', he said. 'It opens the way to every kind of stunt.'

From newly discovered files at the Public Record Office we can see how, after the 1950 election had reduced Labour's majority from 146 to 6, Attlee was tempted to call on the King with his resignation plus his advice to send for Mr. Churchill if the old man led the Conservatives into the division lobbies against key aspects of the new King's speech and won. Attlee would not tolerate stunts from that quarter either, and according to Brook's 'No Circulation Record' of the Cabinet Meeting of 9 March 1950, Attlee 'did not think it would be right to ask for a Dissolution so soon after the General Election and he was inclined to think that his proper course would be to advise the King to send for Mr. Churchill....this situation would have been created by the Conservatives and he thought they should be forced to assume the responsibility for handling it.'

This contingency did not arise but it did set off a flurry of do-it-yourself constitution-making in the Cabinet Office and Buckingham Palace that still infuses today's intensely secret contingency plans for a hung parliament which neither the Cabinet Office nor the Palace will divulge.

Decency and straightness are great authority-builders. Douglas Jay has depicted Attlee as the one person to whose judgement all the other big figures in the Cabinet would defer. In his Attlee Lecture, the first to be delivered in this series, Lord Jay said of his old boss, 'He early absorbed the Christian ethic which he always retained. From first to last he believed in doing his job, which he would have called his duty.'

Sir David Hunt, one of his No.l0 private secretaries, said of Attlee recently: 'He had a terribly difficult team to drive but he dominated them...by being a better man and by being a more honest man than some of them, and he was always in control.'

Lord Wilson who, rightly or wrongly, has been seen in political terms as more a 'nine bob note' than an Attlee style gold sovereign, judged that in terms of general acceptability within the Labour Party, Attlee 'stood higher than Nye Bevan... and certainly higher than Morrison, higher than Gaitskell. He was the one above the arguments really.' I have to say, however, that occasionally when reading his papers at the Public Record Office, I have come across nice touches of guile mixed in with the humility when dealing with volatile temperaments like Nye Bevan's. Take a look at this.

SLIDES 2 & 3

In October l947, Nye minutes the PM about the inadequacy of the Cabinet minutes when it came to reflecting his views as Minister of Health as the Cabinet anguished over economies during the Convertibility Crisis the previous August. They were, he said, 'impressionistic sketches which from time to time lack objectivity and which are, moreover, on occasion, painfully discriminating between one minister and another.' Attlee replied with an ever-so-self deprecating, but ever-so-effective put-down of Bevan.

SLIDES 4 & 5

'My Dear Aneurin,
Minute taking is a very difficult task but, in my experience and that of the Cabinet Secretaries, complaints are very infrequent. I am quite sure there is no intention to feature particular Ministers who might be considered senior. I notice that as a rule I myself come in as part of the general view.'

There was a 'serenity' about Attlee's conduct of the premiership, to use a word beloved of Bevan himself. It has to do obviously with that marvellously straight and self-contained temperament. (How I wish he had been preserved long enough to give evidence to Lord Nolan's Committee on Standards of Conduct in Public Life. Indeed, on reading Lord Nolan's 'Foreword' to the 'Issues and Questions' document he circulated at the beginning of its inquiry - especially Lord Nolan's declaration that 'In the end, high standards depend upon the beliefs, philosophy and self-discipline of individuals', I would have simply left the whole thing to Clem alone had he been available!)

Another crucial aspect of the Attleean tranquillity, I believe, is the certainty he brought to the job which rested on his settled views about our constitution, the British political system in general, and the central place of Cabinet government within the constitutional constellation. He would have no truck with the notion that prime ministerial government had replaced Cabinet

government when that particular debate sprang to life in 1960 and his words were carefully preserved in the Cabinet Office's own 'collective responsibility' file at the time.

'There is inevitably in wartime,' Attlee said in a letter to The Daily Telegraph in August 1960, 'an enhancement of the position of Prime Minister. He stands out as the leader of the nation in war. The holders of the office in those conditions may have a certain hangover, but this is, I think, ephemeral: usually there is a return to normal (clearly he saw himself as such a return to normality).

'Again, where the Prime Minister is greatly senior in age and experience to his Cabinet colleagues, he will be apt to dominate the scene, but this was so as much with Mr. Gladstone in 1892 as with Sir Winston Churchill in 1951. Normally the Prime Minister is and should be only primus inter pares.

'The essential principle of our British system is that of collective responsibility. Ministers are not mere creatures of the Prime Minister but, for the most part, elected representatives, Ministers responsible to the Crown, Parliament and the electorate.'

Attlee concluded by saying he did 'not discern a continuous trend towards a Presidential system (in the UK) in recent years' and, almost as if he had foresight into the 1980s with a warning that: 'An approach to one-man Government is in my view a mistake. The job of Prime Minister is to lead and co-ordinate a team, not to seek to be an omnicompetent Minister.' A few years later he said the PM 'was undoubtedly the most important member (of the Cabinet) but not a monarch'; though interestingly enough, the Observer, wrongly I think, detected a kind of creeping prime ministerialism even in him in a January 1949 profile which claimed Attlee 'is today the complete master of his Cabinet, and he has quietly carried through changes in Cabinet structure which place in his hand more of the strings of power than have ever before been held by a British Prime Minister in peacetime'. (Lloyd George 1918-22? Neville Chamberlain 1937-39? The argument doesn't hold.)

A few years earlier Attlee had said of the premiership: 'You will not find much about what the Prime Minister does in the textbooks. What he does is partly made up of convention and custom, but the nature of the office depends a great deal on the person who holds it.' And he was a firm monarchist, despite those awkward silences with George VI. 'A conscientious, constitutional monarch' he said, 'is a strong element of stability and continuity in our Constitution'.

Recently I came across a very revealing paper Attlee prepared for the War Cabinet in 1943 (he was Deputy Prime Minister at the time) on the 'Application of Democratic Principles of Government'. (Rather charmingly, the PRO file contains its first draft tapped out in his two-fingered style on his own typewriter, complete with capitals that fly above the line intended.)

In correspondence with Lord Selborne, the Minister of Economic Warfare, he rather regrets that thanks to the memory of the Kaiser, Germany after the war would be most unlikely to restore a dynasty. He doubted, too, being no lover of the Germans (as Lord Longford so graphically described in the sixth of the Attlee Lectures), whether 'there are among them persons of sufficient intelligence and understanding to play the difficult role of constitutional monarch.'

But the thrust of Attlee's War Cabinet paper is the specialness of the historical soil in which Britain's parliamentary government grew and, a rare thing in 1943, concomitant doubts about the transplantability of the 'Westminster Model' to many parts of the British Empire, even to what he called 'Little Newfoundland'.

Attlee suggested that the 'average citizen' of Britain equated 'democratic government' without own 'particular method' of practising it, the product of our 'long history' of 'constitutionalism'. He went on to think aloud, as it were, before his War Cabinet colleagues in a way which helps explain his profound acceptance of what The Economist magazine described vividly and accurately recently as 'the pile of precedent and anomalies which make up...(Britain's)... unwritten constitution'. For one day, he plainly believed, that constitution, including its first-past-the-post system of voting, would deliver for Labour.

'We are apt to forget' Attlee told the War Cabinet after surveying 'the failure of parliamentary government' on much of the continent, 'that behind our present comparative political calm lie the storms of the Stuart period and the violent political factiousness of the Whigs and Tories in the early 18th Century. Tolerance, which is essential to the working of the Westminster Model, is a plant of very slow growth.' He placed the next paragraph in italics to emphasise its significance:

'But there is one particular condition which is necessary for the successful working of any form of democracy, but more particularly that of the Westminster Model, that is the willingness of the minority to accept the will of the majority in the hope that they too will in due course become the majority. It is this which enables our system to work, but wherever there is a conscious minority which believes that under no circumstances can it become the majority, it proves in practice to be unworkable.'

Given that even as late as the 1945 election campaign itself Attlee had no real expectation of winning a majority (as Lady Felicity Harwood said in the Third Attlee Lecture, 'People find it extraordinary that before that election day in July 1945, we had never sat down as a family and discussed what we should do if my father became Prime Minister), he cannot have been expecting the imminence of what Hugh Dalton called Labour's 'High Tide' as he sat before his typewriter in May 1943. Yet he declared:

'In Great Britain, Liberals and Tories could always hope that a turn of the electoral wheel would bring them into power. I can remember the beginnings of the Labour Party with two members in the House, but faith in the democratic method was strong enough for its adherents to wait and work for a quarter of a century before a (minority) Labour Government was formed (in 1924). The possibility of the conversion was always present. But if the Labour Party had been based not on political and economic principles, but on some racial, religious or cultural difference, such patience would not have been found. The history of the Irish Party illustrates this.'

All this helps to explain Attlee's profound, small 'c' constitutional conservatism. He believed, as his 1945 version of "Questions of Procedure for Ministers", the book of do's and don'ts for ministers of which we have heard much lately, put it: 'The underlying principle is, of course, that the method adopted by Ministers for discussion among themselves of questions of policy is essentially a domestic matter and is no concern of Parliament or the public.' His Government would have no truck with any of the Procedure Committee's idea in 1946 for a new set of commons select committees to examine policy. And he was certainly not an open government man. He was and remained a stranger to the black arts of media manipulation. Generally he ignored the papers, apart from the Daily Herald to see what the Labour Party was up to, and The Times for the cricket scores. But if a journalist got hold of unauthorised Cabinet material, he would have the leak inquirers at work and an MI5 tap put on the journalist's phone.

When it came to the central motor of our constitutional system - Cabinet government - he was a moderniser within the traditional framework. As with his paper to the War Cabinet on the workings of democracy, he had pondered a good deal about this before reaching No.10. Kenneth Harris in his marvellous biography, soon to be reissued to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1945 victory, reproduces as an appendix Attlee's 1932 memorandum on Cabinet government.

At that time he favoured 'overlords' of the kind Churchill introduced in the war to reduce the size of Cabinet and to increase its efficiency and strategic grip. In office after 1945, however, he tried a half-way house with Herbert Morrison as policy co-ordinator on the economics front and Arthur Greenwood the same for social services. After the reorganisation of Cabinet committees following the August 1947 sterling crisis, he abandoned the experiment in favour of using Cabinet committees and their chairmen for this purpose, criticising Churchill for his failure to adopt this method on his return to office in 1951. Attlee's argument eventually prevailed in the autumn of 1953 when Churchill abandoned his peacetime 'overlords' with a grudging nod towards the Opposition Leader's argument in the Commons.

Now with virtually all Cabinet and Cabinet committee material for 1945-51 available at the PRO (even the immensely sensitive papers of GEN 183, the Cabinet Committee on Subversive Activities, will arrive there shortly, and thanks to the ending of the Cold War and to the 'Waldegrave Initiative' to reduce documents retained beyond 30 years to a minimum), scholars can set to work reappraising the efficiency of Mr. Attlee's Engine Room as my colleague, Keir Thorpe, is doing here at QMW. It has to be acknowledged that though he can still claim the palm as the most efficient of our postwar PMs, as previous Attlee Lectures by Sir David Hunt and Lord Sherfield have attested, there were areas of muddle and overlap especially on the economic and industrial side. Just look at this example:

SLIDE SIX

Strange for a Government whose 'big idea' was planning. The Bank of England was so baffled by the maze of overlapping committees as late as 1949 that it asked for this idiot's guide to be specially prepared by the Cabinet Office to help map the confusing terrain (and Bank Officials were, by any definition, 'insiders' with access to the economic and financial processes of government. Yet four years after Labour took office, the Bank was still unsure of them.) Perhaps we shouldn't be too surprised. Attlee had no feel for economics himself. Harold Wilson put it well when he said 'Attlee was tone deaf as far as all economic questions were concerned, unless they involved the kind of people he knew - trade unionists, miners, dockers.'

At first glance, the explosion of Cabinet committees under Mr. Attlee's stewardship (148 standing committees and 313 ad hoc groups created over six and a quarter years) gives an impression of uncontrolled fecundity. But when you look more closely many of them were mere glow-worms, meeting once or twice to tackle issues which, under subsequent premiers, would have been handled by a more substantial, less evanescent ministerial grouping. Of his ad hoc committees, no fewer than 175 of them met on 3 or fewer occasions.

Attlee, in building his machinery of government, did have that 'architectonic sense' he thought necessary in a Prime Minister. And, in terms of his personal workload, he knew how to pace himself. He found the burden of the premiership 'heavy but not insupportable.'

Let me finish by mentioning a few of the hotter Attlee items to have reached the PRO recently. It's fascinating to discover, thanks to a long retained 'Tube Alloys' file from Mr. Attlee's Downing Street papers, just how great a burden the ending of US/UK atomic collaboration imposed upon Britain after the passing of the McMahon Act in 1946, thanks to the shopping list the Minister of Defence, A.V. Alexander, took with Attlee's approval to Washington in October 1949, in the vain hope that co-operation would be restored. Top of the bill was: '(1) The metallurgy and methods of fabrication of plutonium with particular reference to its use in bombs. (2) Proximity fuses, with special reference to their vulnerability to external interference. (3) Arming and safety devices in the aircraft...'

But, on the bomb theme, (the one item he tended to keep routinely away from full Cabinet discussion), probably the most intriguing of the newly released documents is Sir Norman Brook's intensely secret briefing of the PM on the possible clandestine use of atomic bombs by the Soviet Union a few months before the Government fell in 1951. It's an early, probably even the first, version of the 'bolt-from-the-blue' or 'headless chickens' scenario.

SLIDE SEVEN

The Joint Intelligence Committee and the Chiefs of Staff believed the Russians were now in a position either to conceal an atomic bomb inside a Soviet freighter visiting a British port, or to smuggle a bomb into Britain in 50 small bits in their diplomatic bag, piecing it together with the aid of skilled fitters in a garage somewhere in London. Perhaps the Prime Minister might care to discuss 'the problem' with the Foreign Secretary and the Minister of Defence? Characteristically, unfussed and commonsensical, Attlee scribbled in his red crayon the Cabinet Secretary's note:

SLIDE EIGHT

'I will discuss problem with the 2 Ministers. I do not think' he added, 'that any precautions can be effective short of complete cessation of all intercourse with Communist countries. CRA. 12.7.51.'

Stalin's suitcase remained undiscussed. The election intervened before Herbert Morrison and Manny Shinwell could be summoned to contemplate the nightmare prospect of the atom bomb-in-the-garage. He was to the end the least fussed, the least alarmable of premiers. In short, Clem Attlee was a connoisseur's PM, a practitioner of subfuse but effective statecraft at its best. A man who used both silence, modesty and understatement as weapons.

A Conservative MP said of him at the time of his premiership that if he had got up in the House of Commons and announced 'The Revolution' it would have sounded like a change in a regional railway timetable. But a revolution of a kind was exactly what he presided over and the manner of that presiding, its carefulness with ancient institutions and traditional procedures, is one reason why the respect in which his memory is held has accrued with the passing years and why he has been the model for many, if not all, of his successors (and not just his Labour heirs) in No.10 and the Cabinet Room. Long may he remain the exemplary PM.