



Enlightened Rule: Portraits of Six Exceptional Twentieth Century Premiers

Paul Maylam

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The twentieth century has been called an 'age of catastrophe', characterized by devastating wars and a general poverty of leadership at government level. This book, written in a more optimistic vein, offers biographical essays on six twentieth century heads of government – three from Latin America, and one each from Africa, Asia and Europe – who were exceptions to the norm. During their terms of office each displayed admirable qualities: moral authority, integrity, an egalitarian spirit, and a firm commitment to democracy, human rights, social justice and international peace. They shunned personality cults, grandiosity and conspicuous consumption. Their governance was shaped by high ideals, in the tradition of democratic socialism or social democracy, but also marked by pragmatism and an awareness that the realization of these ideals was not always practicable. Although some of the six became iconic, venerated figures, none of them are presented here as 'heroes' or 'great leaders'. Each had failings and flaws, and each has been subject to critique. They are rather presented as government heads whose leadership has been worthy of deep respect and admiration. Had other premiers emulated their style of governance, twentieth century history would have taken a very different course.

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