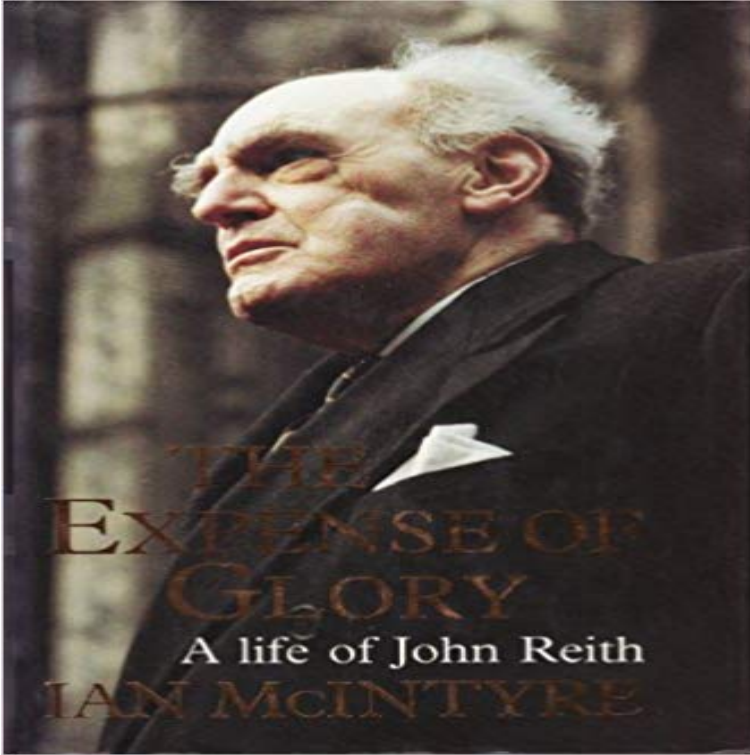


The Expense of Glory: Life of John Reith



The life of John Reith is a classical tragedy, but one of baroque proportions. Reith founded, and for its first 14 years directed, the BBC, imbuing it with that Reithian ethos on which it arguably still runs and establishing a model for public service broadcasting all over the world. In the Britain of the 1930s he was a great man. But at the age of 50 he was persuaded to step down and though he was thereafter successively Chairman of Imperial Airways, Minister of Information under Chamberlain, Minister of Transport and then of Works under Chamberlain and High Commissioner of the Church of Scotland, he never again found a job which would absorb his prodigious talents and energies. His underemployment for the rest of his life vastly exacerbated the maniacal, self-contradicting aspects of his character. This biography uncovers Reith's life, using Reith's diary in the BBC archives which must form one of the most complete and extraordinary confessional documents of any figure in British public life in the 20th century.

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