



Confusion to Our Enemies: Selected Journalism of Arnold Kemp (1939-2002)

Arnold Kemp

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From the Foreword by Professor Tom Devine: Arnold Kemp, one of the greatest of Scottish journalists and editors of the 20th century, died prematurely at the age of 63 in 2002. He edited The Herald with memorable élan and panache between 1981 and 1994 and his prolific writings also regularly graced the pages of the Scotsman, the Guardian and the Observer in a career which spanned more than four decades from the year he began his first job in journalism in 1959 as a sub-editor on the Scotsman, fresh out of Edinburgh University. Kemp left behind him a rich personal but un-catalogued archive of newspaper articles, chapters in books and opinion pieces. These have now been expertly harvested and selected by his daughter, Jackie. Reading them, it is clear that her father was a master of his trade, and that his published work provides a perceptive and illuminating guide to the key historical events of his lifetime in Scotland. This book encompasses the early rise of nationalism, the traumatic de-industrialisation and then transformation of the economy in the 1980s, the impact of the Thatcher governments on Scotland, the halting progress toward devolution and then the successful establishment of the Scottish Parliament in the last decade of the century. These events and others are all recorded here, not in the arid descriptive prose of the chronicler, but with the eloquence, punch and insight for which Kemp was noted. As a result the recent Scottish past is brought alive in an engaging and highly readable fashion. The immediacy of the reportage, the sense of a writer who, because of his journalistic and editorial eminence knew all the principal actors involved and was close to the unfolding of great events, are all plainly evident to the reader. But Kemp also scorns mediocrity, incompetence, humbug and hypocrisy in the political and cultural life of the nation and several of the excerpts are also fair and balanced judgements, perhaps most notably in the evaluation of the impact of Margaret Thatcher on Scotland. There is a liveliness and breadth in the writing, redolent of Kemp's own personal wide international horizons, his travels in America and Europe, love of conviviality and the craic. The passion for life shines through. This is an important text for anyone wishing to come to a fuller understanding of how Scotland developed from the dark days of the Second World War to the current debates over independence. It is also a hugely enjoyable read which many will savour with interest and delight for its own sake.

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