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Love of Russia drove journalist's work

Moscow Calling, by Angus Roxburgh. Edinburgh: Birlinn. 2017. ISBN 978-1-78027-492-8

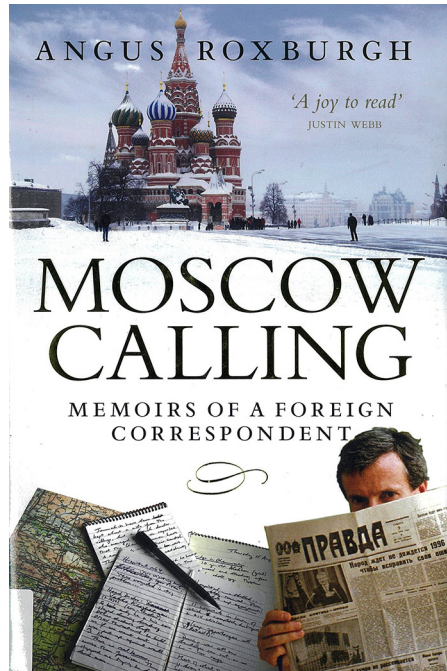
SCOTTISH journalist Angus Roxburgh's account of his life as a correspondent in the Russian capital struck a chord with me immediately, for his infatuation with Russia began with listening to shortwave broadcasts from Radio Moscow.

I too used to listen to Radio Moscow, then the voice of Soviet ideology and power. I knew the Soviet Union was truly dead the night Radio Moscow broadcast a Russian Orthodox Easter service.

Roxburgh began his life as a journalist in the Soviet Union by working as a translator, edging himself into journalism as a stringer and then as a fully fledged journalist, armed with persistence, contacts, language skills and a desire to learn everything he could about Russia and its people.

He charted the seismic changes that brought down Gorbachev and the death of the USSR, the disaster of Boris Yeltsin and the return of bearded Orthodox patriarchs.

Along the way he fended off the attentions of the KGB as best he could and, after covering the murderous



Chechyn war, appears to have suffered some kind of crisis that ultimately cost him his job with the BBC and his marriage.

His love for Russia remained unabated and he caused a scandal among the Moscow press pack by then joining Putin's staff as a PR hack for a few years. Notwithstanding the scorn of some of his former colleagues, his insight into the Russian government paid off in two BBC documentaries about the Russian leader.

Roxburgh's book is a highly readable addition to the canon of literature produced by Western journalists who have lived in and reported on what was once the United States' only serious rival