

Swiss radio experiment ends on a high note

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Swiss radio experiment ends on a high note

SWISS Radio International has ended three months of experimental broadcasting in English to the international community in Geneva.

Berne-based SRI – which was established nearly 50 years ago – already broadcasts worldwide in English and eight other languages.

The Geneva experiment – Radio X-tra – was aimed at helping foreign residents integrate into the Swiss community.

SRI is a division of the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation, which is now surveying public opinion and discussing with the Swiss Foreign Ministry and the Geneva local authorities the future of English-language programming.

An SBC spokesman said initial public reaction had been “overwhelmingly favourable”, with thousands of listeners, including many Swiss, urging continuation of the service.

Radio X-tra broadcast seven days a week, 12 hours a day, climaxing the experiment by participating in an SBC nationwide fund-raising appeal in aid of refugees.

On that day Radio X-tra extended its programming to 17 hours of live broadcasting and



The Radio X-tra team – from left to right John Brocks, Susan Calland, Mike McMahon and Colin Farmer.

helped SBC to raise a nationwide total of nearly Sfr. 1.5 million.

The Radio X-tra team comprised programme controller Mike McMahon, a Canadian broadcaster who has headed SRI's English Service for 12 years, news editor Colin Farmer, a former British journalist who has been with SRI for 17 years and is a regular contributor to the *Swiss Observer*, and two British-based broadcasters specially engaged for the Radio X-tra experiment – Susan Calland

(Grampian TV) and John Brocks (DevonAir).

Valery Tarsis dies

VALERY Tarsis – one of the first Soviet writers to denounce the Soviet system after World War II – has died at his home near Berne. He was 76.

Tarsis, who joined the Communist Party in his young years, started his career as a pre-war

contributor to a literary review, along with Alexander Solzhenitsyn and the late Boris Pasternak.

His father, of Greek descent, died in the bloody Stalinist purges. Tarsis' disillusionment with Communism grew also during extensive travels throughout the Soviet Union to gather material for his writings.

In World War II he became a war correspondent and was seriously wounded in the 1943 battle of Stalingrad.

He resumed writing books after the war but none was published in the Soviet Union. In 1960 two bitterly satirical manuscripts by Tarsis reached the West and were published in Britain where they created a stir.

In 1966 Tarsis was unexpectedly granted a Soviet exit visa to lecture in Britain at the University of Leicester, and he decided to stay in the West. Shortly afterwards he was stripped of his Soviet citizenship.

Because of his father's Greek extraction, he subsequently obtained a Greek passport, but lived in West Germany for several years before settling in Switzerland with his Swiss wife, whom he married in New York in 1966.

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