Hello everybody. Thank you very much for coming today. It’s very nice to be in the University of Tromso. Can everybody hear me? I’m sorry I can’t speak Norwegian but I hope you understand me. I’m a producer at BBC Russian. My name is Jessy Kaner and I’m going to talk to you about the Russian Service, its past, present and future. And I’m looking forward to your questions afterwards.

1. What is the BBC Russian Service? First of all I should explain that it’s one of the 31 language services that make up the World Service. And the World Service is part of the BBC, the British Broadcasting Corporation. In the past the language services made radio broadcasts. Today they run websites, broadcast on TV, radio and the internet to millions of people around the world and connect with them on social media and internet channels. Right now the World Service in undergoing its largest expansion since the 1940s. And the Russian Service or BBCRussian as we now call it is tripling in size. By telling you our history I hope to give you some idea of why we do what we do.

2. This is Bush House in 1958. The first home of the BBC WS. WS began life as the Empire Service broadcasting to ex-pats in British colonies around the globe but during the Second World War it grew into something else. As soon as a country was occupied by the Nazis, the BBC started broadcasting there to counter German war propaganda. By the end of the war there were broadcasts in 34 different languages including Norwegian.

3. The History Wall in New Broadcasting House shows the high points in our history.

4. This is an entry marking a broadcast made by the King of Norway in 1941.

5. Maida Vale studios tape machine 1942 - to give you an idea of the recording equipment in the early days

6. This is BBC Russian Service office in Bush House in 1964 - again, look at the technology - typewriters, newspapers and journals, a telephone.

7. “Welcome to the temple of the Arts and Muses” – this was on the wall in Broadcasting house in 1931 and conveys the spirit of fun at the BBC (George Orwell who worked there in the 1940s, described “the atmosphere as a mixture of a girls school and a lunatic asylum”)

8. Swedish gymnast Helmut Ronisch performs at the microphone in 1947 with the BBC Foreign Services as the language services were called – they also were trying to keep cheerful in spite of the war.

9. (Sony Betty Horsfall) The RS began broadcasting on a daily basis on March 24th 1946 after the British PM Winston Churchill made his famous speech in Fulton, Missouri (USA) about an Iron Curtain coming down across Europe. It was the beginning of the Cold War. The RS staff
in those days were mainly White Russian emigres who still cared very deeply about their motherland, like Sonya Betty Horsfall, here in this photograph. She remembered those days vividly (audio clip)

10. Anatoly Maksimovich Goldberg was the most popular RS commentator. They say that diplomats waited to hear his analysis of world affairs before making statements and when he went to Russia, trains were delayed so people could talk to him. He spoke four languages, including Mandarin, and was the only person in the RS allowed to go to the studio without having his scripts checked. To begin with, the RS brief was to give "a dispassionate presentation of the facts, both of world events and of British and world opinion about the Soviet Government and its policy, giving the true proportion both of favourable and unfavourable opinion." Anatoly Maksimovich was famous for his measured style. He often used the words, s odnoi storony a s drugoi storony - on the one hand and on the other (audio clip)

11. This is a radio transmitter. For the first three years the RS broadcast freely to the Soviet Union. One of our colleagues Leonid Finkelstein remembered hearing the RS for the first time in 1949 when he was a prisoner in the GULAG. On an improvised radio made secretly by a fellow inmate, he was delighted when he heard a report about King George visiting the Chelsea Flower Show in London!!! But in the late 1940s the BBC decided to take a more critical stance and allowed opponents of Soviet Russia to speak freely on air. Alexander Kerensky (PM of the interim govt in 1917) made an open plea to the Soviet people to throw over their govt in 1949. (audio clip) The Soviets began to jam the BBC. Jamming is interfering with the signal of a broadcast so that you can't hear it properly. (audio clip of jamming) The RS broadcast on Short Wave and the Soviets would send out signals which blocked them or played their own programmes on the same frequencies. This was known jokingly as Dzaz KeGeBe - KGB Jazz.

12. Gordon Clough - a RS programme assistant enjoyed playing games with the jammers. (audio clip) ...............The RS devised a schedule of repeats at different times of the day on different SW frequencies to give the audience more chances to listen. Perhaps that is where the phrase, "yest privichka na rusi, nochu slushat’ bbc" originated. People used to listen late at night and in their dachas as jamming was aimed mainly at cities. In 1963 the jamming stopped (that political thaw AM mentioned) and there were five happy years of unspoiled listening. More and more letters arrived and a dialogue began.

13. Mary Seton Watson started at the BBC in 1951 and became the head of the RS in the early 60s. Before the BBC she worked in the British Embassy in Moscow. Straight after the war she travelled to Russia by boat from Liverpool with a group of Soviet army officers. They were POWS returning home. On the journey Mary
became friendly with them but when they got to Odessa the soldiers were marched off the ship by an armed guard and taken away and shot. This experience coloured Mary’s entire view of the SU. At the BBC she wanted to engage with ordinary Russians in her listeners letters programme (audio clip) In the Lvov family soap opera Mary played the daughter and when she got married she received a letter full of advice on child-rearing from an old Ukrainian peasant woman.

14. Dance steps - Tony Cash and Nina Rekstin rehearse the Bossa Nova - one of Mary's programmes intended to be fun and appeal to younger listeners

15. Tony Cash started wanted Russians to know about the most important thing happening in Britain in the 1960s - the Beatles - and he played their songs in his pop music programme. Later he met listeners who remembered his playlists off by heart. (sig clip)

16. Nina Dmitrievich - made programmes on culture. Here she remembers her interview with Alexander Tvardovsky (audio clip)

17. 1968 was the year soviet tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia to suppress the Prague Spring. Jamming began again but it didn't stop the listeners. Sylva Rubashova, who made programmes based on works by emigre or forbidden writers, recalled in 1976 (audio clip)

19. Solzhenitsyn gave several interviews to the RS after he was expelled from the Soviet Union in 1974. Mainly he criticised the BBC and the West for not being tough enough on the Soviet regime. His short story "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich" was published in 1962 in the journal Novy Mir (when the same Alexander Tvardovsky was editor). It was the first story to be published in the SU about the GULAG and the entire print run of 95,000 copies sold out overnight. The hero of the story Ivan Shukhov was a Soviet soldier captured by the Germans and when he managed to escape back to his regiment rather than being treated like a hero, he was arrested and sent to Siberia as a traitor.

20. Ivan Denisovich page 1 (audio clip) In 1982 Solzhenitsyn recorded the whole story for the Russian Service to broadcast.

22. Seva in the Rock posevy studio 1977. By the late 1970s the Thaw was clearly over. But things in the BBC were changing. There was a new generation of Russians, recruited from Israel in the third wave of emigration from the Soviet Union. They were younger and more in touch with Soviet listeners. Seva Novgorodsev a jazz musician was one of them and he quickly became a star with
his Rock po Seva music programme and its mix of Western pop and rock music and gently anti-Soviet jokes. (audio clip)

23. RS leaflet shows the various popular programmes and their authors

They were making new programmes interviewing Russian speaking experts on culture, art and religion, health and technology, and more news and current affairs, and Learning English programmes.

24. This is the Sevaoborot team - Leo Feigin, a soviet athlete, Leonid Finkelstein an aeronautical engineer and Seva. They presented the first live unscripted programme started in 1987. Gorbachev had arrived and with Glasnost beginning in Russia, more people were coming out and guests were invited to talk freely about their lives and experience. They wanted to create an atmosphere of civilised conversation which everyone could feel a part of. They drank wine (not vodka), and chinked glasses, and talked to underground rock musicians, poets, artists and dissidents. Seva, started getting a lot of fan mail and like in his Rock music programme he would sometimes spend the whole programme reading and discussing letters from listeners. (This was like interactivity before the internet) Some of the best episodes were live concerts in the studio like this one when Boris Grebenshchikov played songs he hadn't yet recorded (audio clip – BG?)

25. Brodsky - BBC’s Nobel scoop in 1987. Joseph Brodsky had a number of friends in the Russian Service and one of them knew which restaurant in Hampstead, North London to find him having lunch in when the news of the Nobel Literature prize came through on 2nd Oct 1987. They brought him down to the studio and he spent most of an hour reciting poems live on air to RS listeners in the "Argument" programme. (audio clip)

26. Margaret Thatcher phone-in 1988. Glasnost and Perestroika were happening. Thatcher and Gorbachev were great friends. Thatcher was very popular (they called her the Zheleznaya Laidi) RS Thatcher phone -in took 800 calls from SU. (audio clip)

27. Paul Macca phone-in on Sam Jone’s Babushkin Sunduk (audio clip)

28. The Island (Boris Nechaev) Stalin's daughter Svetlana Alliluyeva gave a 3 part interview in 1990 - living in my father’s shadow (audio clip)

30. London team on roof of Bush House - News and current affairs was now taking up half the airtime.
31. Programme Schedule showing programmes and radio frequencies - already some Medium wave

32. (August 1991 – The Coup). It looked like democracy was winning but then in August 1991 Right-wingers opposed to Gorbachev’s reforms tried to reverse the situation. Liz Robson, senior producer and later head of the RS was in Moscow and this is what she told a programme on the anniversary of the Coup (audio clip)

33. White House balcony showing crowd

34. Fima Barban, who usually made jazz and classical music programmes was also in Moscow. He was covering the biggest story of his career (audio clip)

35. Gorby says BBC was the best (audio clip)

36. Letter from PM John Major to head of WS. This was a big boost for the RS

37. New Moscow Office – not just a telephone in a private apartment any more but a studio for recording interviews and presenting news bulletin

38. (Religion - challenging the ROC’s version of events.) When the Soviet Union collapsed many people turned to religion. Although they could worship freely now, the BBC offered them an alternative view of the ROC which was already trying to dominate religious life.

39. In the new Russia there was a huge demand for English and this coincided with the new website which began developing in the late 1990s. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, independent local radio stations sprang up and the Russian Service like other language services in Eastern Europe developed partnerships with them so that our programmes were broadcast on MW and LW and even on FM in Moldova.

40. Moscow office team 2009. By this time more than 3 of the 8 hours a day of radio broadcasting were coming from the Moscow office. But this was the time when the RS faced another major change.

The problems of breaking into the FM market for radio or for TV proved too difficult. The rules on broadcasting licences kept changing and after 2006/2007 and the death of Alexander Litvinenko, Russian radio stations didn’t want to risk broadcasting BBC programmes. The war in Georgia increased the tensions between Russia and the West. The World Service was cutting back on SW broadcasting and the bosses felt the Russian internet and social media was going to be our method of
delivering news for the future. On March 23rd 2011, 65 years after the Russian Service began its daily broadcasts, the radio switch was turned off and everything moved to online. And besides the whole World Service was moving.

41. NBH Spring 2012

42. New Radio studios - we still had three programmes - BBSeva - Seva’s news chat show, Vam Slovo (an interactive current affairs discussion) and Fifth Floor (news discussion and culture) broadcasting on the internet. But whereas in the past the BBC had offered Russians a platform for an alternative community through radio, now social media was booming in Russia and BBC Russian was taking its place in that community. This would be the way forward to continue the dialogue with our audience.

43. BBC Russian Service Video Logo - Video works best on Social Media so we do more video

44. Oleg A. in the studio presenting TV bulletins for our partners TVRain

45. Oleg B. filming in the street

46. Oleg B and Oksana filming in desert

47. Max filming in arctic waters

48. You can broadcast from anywhere in the building

49. Olga Ivshina on English TV from Eastern Ukraine - 2014, Events in Ukraine - Maidan, the annexation of Crimea, war in Eastern Ukraine, the shooting down of the MH17 Malaysian airliner and Western sanctions brought many more users to BBCRussian. Cynically we say that bad news is good for journalists. It seemed like the old battle lines were being drawn again.

Another change was on its way for BBCRussian. In 2016 the government decided to allocate a lot of new funding to the BBC World Service language services and Russian was singled out to expand its internet presence and start producing more TV.

50. Artyom Liss, is the Europe Hub Editor. He is in charge of the expansion of BBCRussian. I asked him to tell us about what's going to happen in the future (video clip)
Please turn on your devices and look up RS on Facebook and like it