The Fundamentals of German Radio Programming (August 1938)

Abstract

Fostering a sense of national unity within the national community [*Volksgemeinschaft*] remained a top priority for Nazi cultural policy. New technologies like the radio played an important role in this nationalizing project because German airwaves helped the regime reach the population in ways that were previously unimaginable. Heavy state subsidies allowed Germans to purchase radios at reasonable prices, and this led to a surge in household radio ownership across all social strata over the course of the mid-1930s.

Radio was controlled directly by the state, under the administration of Reich Minister for Propaganda and Public Enlightenment, Joseph Goebbels. This newspaper report on the 1938 broadcasting exhibition first reproduces the speech of Reichsintendant Heinrich Glasmeier (General Director of German Broadcasting), in which he explains the programmatic plans for broadcasting. In addition to the effort to broadcast genuinely "German" content, these plans also included the systematic exclusion of Jewish broadcasters. The article then quotes the president of the Reich Broadcasting Chamber, Hans Kriegler, who describes the distribution of a new, affordable radio which made it possible for the state-controlled radio to reach all strata of society.

Source

Broadcasting among the People
Plans for the Year 1938/39

Berlin, August 9. (wire) Every year, during the days of the great broadcasting exhibition in Berlin, German broadcasters from all regions of the Reich gather for the annual meeting of the German broadcasting industry. This year's annual meeting of the German Broadcasting Corporation, which took place on Tuesday in the conference hall of the Kroll Opera House, took its theme from Dr. Goebbels' words: "Germany must become the strongest broadcasting country in the world."

First, Reichsintendant Glasmeier took the floor for his presentation on the fundamentals of programming for German broadcasting. It is important that the basic stance of broadcasting be National Socialist. Furthermore, out of this basic stance, radio must strive to capture the entirety of public life of today, to support it where necessary, namely the momentous work of "Strength through Joy" [Kraft durch Freunde], the great work of the *Winterhilfe*, and the work of the individual branches of the movement.

Regarding the much-discussed problem of giving preference to light entertainment music or great artistic performances, Reichsintendant Glasmeier explained that radio has maintained a healthy middle ground here and will continue to do so in the future.

Reichsintendant Glasmeier was particularly vehement in his opposition to the Jewish spirit of decadence reentering radio by way of a "witty" conférence. It is not acceptable that leading men of the movement speak about the sanctity of marriage or about the ethos of the German soldier, who has to stand up for the fatherland with his own body and blood, only to be followed by a colorful conversation in the evening program in which these things are insulted with the corrosive lye of a so-called conférence. (Loud applause.)

Intendant Glasmeier made an urgent appeal to his musical staff not to fall asleep at their desks, card indexes and music cabinets, but to go out again and again on exploratory journeys into the field of German musical literature, to find unknown, delicious pearls that can be passed on to the German people, works of the past, but also works of today's contemporary creativity.

At the end of this presentation, Intendant Dr. Glasmeier then outlined the tasks of the Reichssender in relation to the Deutschlandsender. In the new Reich, the Reich stations, which were born out of separatism, are tasked with covering their countryside on the one hand, and on the other hand they must always remain aware that they are called Reich stations, that they are heralds of the Reich idea, and that they must contribute to the disappearance of tribal and national borders, and that in all German regions it is the German man who inhabits the German soil.

The Deutschlandsender must show a completely different face; it is the representative of the German Reich government, of the National Socialist movement, the representative of German culture par excellence. It does not have to cultivate the individual landscape as such; it must portray the face of the entire German country.

After the speech by Reichsintendant Dr. Glasmeier, which was received with lively applause, the president of the National Broadcasting Chamber [Reichsrundfunkkammer], Kriegler, took the floor. In his speech, he stated that no previous radio exhibition had ever met with such a great response from the general public. Naturally, the greatest importance was attached to the new "German Small Radio 1938" model, which embodied a truly socialist joint effort of the broadcasting management and broadcasting industry.

Today, on average in the Reich, about 54 percent of households are connected to the broadcasting network. Of the remainder, a relatively small proportion will choose not to obtain a radio because they are not interested. For material reasons, however, the majority of the population has not yet been in a position to pay 65 Reichsmark for a radio and the monthly broadcasting fee of 2 Reichsmark. Special sympathy and support are directed at these members of our population. According to the current guidelines, all members of the population who receive Reich allowance vouchers for cooking fats through the district welfare offices are eligible for the radio fee reduction to one Reichsmark per month for the "German Small Radio 1938" model. Applications are to be submitted to the local welfare offices after the final announcement, which will be made in due course on the radio and in the daily press.

However, one more thing had to be done to make it possible for members of the population to purchase the "German Small Radio." For especially needy people, especially for those who received the radio fee reduction of RM. 1, the Reich Broadcasting Chamber will provide a financing estimate of RM 4.50. from the special budget for reduction of broadcasting fees, i.e.: Some 100,000 members of the population will be able to purchase the "German Small Radio 1938" model with a down payment of 5 RM. and for ten monthly installments of 2 RM. each without any further surcharge.

Kriegler went on to say that it would be completely wrong to regard the "German Small Radio 1938" as an appliance that was only for the so-called less well-off classes of people. The apparatus is, as the technicians unanimously declare, excellent and comes quite close in its performance to the old *Volksempfänger* ["People's Receiver"] model.

On the initiative of the Reich Minister for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda and the Reich Minister Dr. Frank, the Committee for Broadcasting Law was established in the Academy for German Law. The committee immediately started its work with a practical task, by taking on the preparation of a voice protection law.

Another measure in the field of broadcasting law was the trademark for the individual parts and

accessories industry issued by the Reich Broadcasting Chamber, which served to identify the individual parts of political community devices. It was clear that especially where political devices are concerned, Jews must not have their hands in the business. They were therefore excluded from the distribution of these devices.

The previous number of members in the professional association was 811 persons. As of August 1, 1938, all speakers, singers, and instrumentalists from the Reich Theater Chamber would be incorporated into the Reich Broadcasting Chamber who had no engagements in theaters and who drew either their entire livelihood or at least 50 percent of their livelihood from activities in front of the microphone.

After the seizure of power, the National Socialist state had placed the performance principle in the foreground in the development of the cultural-political life of our people. In accordance with this requirement, the Reich Broadcasting Chamber carried out broadcasting aptitude tests at the Reich broadcasters.

So far, 3600 artists have been tested in the fields of speaking, singing and playing, of whom 1576 have passed the test. The Reich Broadcasting Chamber has also made it its duty to pay the greatest attention to the cultivation of the German standard language and has therefore commissioned recognized experts to publish the work *Deutsche Aussprache* [German Pronunciation]. So-called study groups would be set up at the German Reich stations, in which young people of both sexes would hold a kind of student position. If they had successfully completed their one-year study period, they would be recommended to the Central Institute for the Training of Young People in Berlin on the basis of their evaluation by the director of the Reich station in question. Here they would have to pass another one to two years of apprenticeship. Negotiations with the Reich Minister for Education, Science and National Education, which would take place in the near future, would show in which form the intended development of the broadcasting science institutes would be carried out.

The President of the Broadcasting Chamber concluded by saying that the broadcasters entered the new broadcasting year 1938/39 with a sense of pride.

Source: “Rundfunk im Volk,” *Nationalzeitung*, August 10, 1938. Available online at: https://zeitpunkt.nrw/ulbms/periodical/zoom/12605012

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