

Hans Bredow, “Christmas Message to the American People” (December 9, 1924)

Abstract

On December 9, 1924, on the first anniversary of regular radio broadcasting in Germany, Federal Commissioner for Broadcasting [*Reichsrundfunkkommissar*] Hans Bredow delivered this five-minute Christmas message to the American people over the airwaves. In it, Bredow highlighted the power of new technologies to bring the world ever closer together, noting the zeppelin’s October crossing of the Atlantic in less than 80 hours [see Chapter 5] and then pointing to radio’s ability to transmit news around the globe in a fraction of second. In soaring language, Bredow praised radio’s power to make the world into a single shared “auditorium” and to equalize opportunities by bringing education and culture to socially and geographically isolated communities and to those with disabilities. Bredow’s optimistic radio boosterism reflected his lifelong dedication wireless technology. He had helped to set up transatlantic radio transmissions from the United States before the war, and, in 1919, he oversaw Germany’s resumption of radio communication with stations abroad. His address to American listeners represented yet another step in Bredow’s ongoing effort to forge international networks through broadcasting.

Source

Our generation is living in an age of inventions that have a profound impact on the way we live. The age-old human struggle against the barriers of space and time has entered a new stage. While just a few decades ago a trip to America took weeks, we have now experienced the overwhelming fact of crossing the ocean in 70 hours by zeppelin.

But an even more tremendous shift in the concept of time has occurred in the field of communications, since radio has made it possible to spread news across the entire earth in a fraction of a second. This development has led to the fact that today we can regard the world as a single speaking hall, regardless of whether we are neighbors or antipodes.

And the ethical tasks of radio are crowned by the guiding principle: Our high aspirations open up new paths for the human spirit. In Germany, radio has been greeted like a liberating miracle in a time of deepest emotional and economic hardship and is seen here as a cultural factor whose impact on cultural, political and economic life cannot be overstated.

For the first time since the invention of printing by the German Gutenberg, a new way has been created to transmit intellectual production to countless people at the same time. And it is understandable that the part of humanity that is hungry for intellectual nourishment is flocking to the radio.

Radio in Germany does not seek to sensationalize. It does not seek to appeal to the baser instincts, but to awaken the good and noble in people and to satisfy their longing for inner improvement. It is considered particularly important for the education of the people. All those who, for social reasons or because they live far from cultural centers, have so far been further removed from the intellectual pursuits of life will be helped through lectures in all fields of art, technology, and science.

Every country becomes a large lecture hall through radio, in which everyone, rich and poor, young and old, can listen to what gives them pleasure or benefits them. And consider the sick, the crippled and the

blind, who have been so harshly treated by life: new life opens up for them, they are once again in the middle of the world of events from which they have been so long removed. Light and warmth come to them again.

Radio has become a dear family member for millions of people, because it spreads joy and stimulation. It becomes the center of new interests. But radio will one day have significance far beyond national borders. It will unite nations into one great community and, through daily shared experiences, help them realize that they are all members of a single great intellectual community.

In this way, radio can one day contribute to mutual understanding between nations and perhaps serve the peace that humanity seeks. In this spirit, German radio listeners send warmest Christmas greetings to all Americans.

Source: ARD Archivradio, accessed via ARD Audiothek,
<https://www.ardaudiothek.de/episode/archivradio-geschichte-im-original/hans-bredows-bilanz-nach-dem-ersten-rundfunkjahr/ard/66773146/>

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