

Opening Ceremony of the 8th Great German Radio Exhibition (1931)

Abstract

In his very short opening remarks to the “8th German Radio and Phonographic Exhibition,” Hans Bredow struck a purposefully optimistic note in the midst of the Depression by emphasizing Germany’s ongoing technological innovations in the field of radio. Considered the founding force behind German broadcasting, Bredow had already, by 1931, amassed a quarter-century of experience in wireless communication and served as director of the Reichs-Rundfunk-Gesellschaft [National Broadcasting Company] since 1925. The annual radio exhibition welcomed just over 300 exhibitors to Berlin to present their latest broadcasting innovations, including the first television sets as well as equipment for making one’s own sound recordings at home. Thanks to cheaper and easier-to-use receivers, 1931 marked a record year for the industry, despite the ongoing global economic crisis, and—despite the specialized and technical nature of the event—nearly 250,000 visitors walked past the various displays during the last ten days of August. After Bredow’s brief opening remarks, this clip also includes longer portions of a welcoming speech by Berlin Mayor Heinrich Sahn, who presented his city as the global capital of radio, thanks to its “Acropolis of broadcasting,” the cutting-edge Haus des Rundfunks facility that had begun operations just seven months earlier. Sahn ended his speech with a call for people to reject pessimism in this time of economic downturn and instead to draw confidence from the German know-how on display at this exhibition.

Source

I am hopeful when I see that even in this difficult year, the German Reich Postal Service and industry have admirably developed radio technology and that the Radio Industry Association, despite great sacrifices, has decided to further promote the idea of radio by organizing this exhibition.

The phonographic industry and sound film, which are closely related to radio in technical terms, have also made great efforts to provide the people with entertainment and distraction. The joint exhibition of the entire electroacoustic industry at this location is intended to show what German technology has achieved in this field.

[...]

As Lord Mayor of the city of Berlin, allow me to begin by singing the praises of this city just a little bit. Berlin basically encompasses a whole variety of cities with their own character and life. But that is something our capital ultimately has in common with every other metropolis. But among the different cities that make up Berlin, there are two that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. One is the city of scholars in Dahlem, the city of free scientific research, the city of the Kaiser Wilhelm Society, from whose life and work a mighty cultural wave extends across the whole world.

And the second city is the city in which we now find ourselves. The city around the radio tower, the radio city. It is perhaps even more novel and even more peculiar than the city of scholars in Dahlem. Because this radio city is without equal in the past or the present. The radio tower, the huge halls, the mighty and beautiful broadcasting building, they have all been built in an unbelievably short time on this open

space.

A physical discovery that quickly became a powerful tool of culture, and the will of a city to promote this cultural work, have given rise to an entire district here, the Funkstadt. Berlin is the only city in the world to have a radio acropolis. And if you want to take the comparison even further, you could say that the spotlight beams of the radio tower announce this modern-day acropolis just as widely as the gilded spearhead of Athena once did on the Athenian acropolis.

[...]

As an exhibition it is one of the greatest marvels of our time. It is hardly necessary to speak today about the great cultural tasks that radio, records, and sound waves and the whole great ether wave technology fulfill and have yet to fulfill. The influence they exert on all areas of private, state, and international life cannot be overestimated. Therefore, science and technology, the broadcasting companies, but also the industries that work on the further development of this cultural tool, fulfill an extraordinarily important cultural task.

[...]

Ladies and Gentlemen, the economic hardship that weighs so heavily on the German people has almost caused a state of paralysis among all productive workers in recent weeks. The worry about whether the work of the day would be destroyed by the economic events of tomorrow has caused minds and hands to flag.

Is it not surprising that in such a time of general despondency, an industry mustered the strength and courage to prove to the public through a major exhibition that indomitable energies are at work in it, that it is submitting the results of its unfavored, time-uninfluenced work to the scrutiny of the world with unwavering self-confidence?

It would be regrettable if the hardships of the times had influenced the mental and psychological state of the German business community to such an extent that dull pessimism had taken the place of the industriousness inspired by the hope of success. Despair disturbs the harmony of the productive forces.

Only through liberating action, through productive achievement, can the difficulties that work against success be overcome. It was this view that motivated us to organize this exhibition despite the economic crisis, or, let us say, because of the economic hardship of the time.

[...]

Whether the technical and economic efforts made will be crowned with success at a time when the broadest sections of the German population barely have the means to meet the simplest of living expenses remains the anxious question of the moment.

Source: Eröffnung der 8. Deutschen Funkausstellung und Phonoschau in Berlin, 1931. Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv, K000664738

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