

The First German Radio Broadcast (October 29, 1923)

Abstract

With the words “Attention, attention! This is the Berlin broadcasting station at Vox House on wavelength 400 [749.5 kHz],” the announcer Friedrich Georg Knöpfke made history on October 29, 1923, although scarcely anyone knew it at the time. Only 500 officially registered radio receivers existed in Germany to hear the brief station identification marking the birth of German radio. An untold number of additional radio sets undoubtedly listened illegally to the inaugural program—a cello solo with piano accompaniment—but, as Knöpfke explicitly reminded listeners at the end of his introductory message, “the use [of wireless receivers] requires a license” [*Die Benutzung is genehmigungspflichtig*]. Coming near the very peak of hyperinflation, that license would have cost listeners an eye-popping 350 billion marks in the moment, although that fee would quickly fall to less than a hundred marks after the following month’s currency reform. Knöpfke transmitted his historic first sentences from a studio in the headquarters of the Vox Record and Dictaphone Company, known as “Voxhaus,” on the Potsdamer Strasse in the bustling heart of Berlin.

While Knöpfke may have announced the program, a man by the name of Hans Bredow had inspired it. Known as the “father of German broadcasting,” Bredow served at the time as Director of the Department of Wireless Telegraphy in the Postal Ministry and played the key role in expanding radio beyond its initial military, business, and ham-operator uses. He envisioned a new medium that appealed to the broadest possible audience, declaring, “Radio should offer something to the most fastidious and to the most unsophisticated taste in equal measure” [*Der Rundfunk soll dem verwöhntesten wie dem primitivsten Geschmack in gleicher Weise etwas bieten*]. Bredow’s inclusive and democratic philosophy helped German radio to expand rapidly over the course of the 1920s to include around 3 million listeners and a state-of-the-art broadcasting facility by the end of the decade.

Source

Source: *Funkstunde Berlin* first radio broadcast, October 29, 1923. Courtesy of SWR2 Archivradio, <https://www.swr.de/swrkultur/wissen/archivradio/achtung-achtung-so-begann-die-erste-rundfunksendung-102.html?mediald=c1b1c06a-6464-3ef4-b60b-72aac6f14172&>

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