

“Patriotic Recording Made by Deutsche Grammophon for the Benefit of German Soldiers and Their Families” (August 1, 1914)

Abstract

Hörbilder [audio dramas], dramatized scripted scenes with added sound effects, were a precursor to radio plays which emerged after the invention of sound recording technology. They were recorded first on wax cylinders and later on records and distributed as entertainment media. This recording produced by the Deutsche Grammophon record label in the August of 1914 represents an example of the enthusiasm, and the commercialization of that enthusiasm, that accompanied the mobilization of troops ordered by Wilhelm II on August 1, 1914. (This commercialized enthusiasm, though completely unofficial, was the earliest example of what we might well call “propaganda” in the German war effort.) This audio drama was sold under the title “*Vaterländische Aufnahme der Deutschen Grammophon zum Besten deutscher Krieger und deren Angehörigen*” [Patriotic Recording Made by Deutsche Grammophon for the Benefit of German Soldiers and Their Families]. Like many record labels, film production companies, newspapers and magazines, Deutsche Grammophon advertised its willingness to support the war effort on the home front (and capitalized on that support) by producing patriotic fare such as this recording.

In a fictional scene a battalion is leaving its garrison in an unnamed German town. The town’s mayor and the battalion’s colonel both give a short speech to the assembled citizens and soldiers before the battalion boards a train. While the mayor repeats the German government’s official assertion that Germany had been forced to fight a defensive war, the colonel emphasizes the willingness of the soldiers to sacrifice their lives for their country. The text is interspersed with military commands and patriotic or military songs, such as *Die Wacht am Rhein*. The belief held by many Germans at this point that the war would be short and victorious for their country is expressed in the words of a family member who wants to know where to send his letters to a frontline soldier and then confidently decides to just send them to Paris since the German troops would soon occupy the French capital.

Source

[Music and cheering]

Battalion! Halt! Arms! Stand at ease!

Mayor: Colonel, in this difficult hour, I cannot deny myself the privilege of bidding farewell to our beloved regiment on behalf of the city and its inhabitants.

Hard times have befallen us, enemies surround us. After forty-four years, we are being forced to take up arms to defend our possessions and our position as a great power after years of peace.

Germany has risen as one, and the sons of our people are setting out joyfully to protect German honor and German property in bloody battles.

We must prevail, for we are fighting for a just cause.

Our best wishes accompany our beloved regiment, and in this solemn hour of farewell, we all hope for a

joyful reunion after a victorious battle. But now we want to join in the rallying cry: Our beloved regiment, hurrah—hurrah / hurrah—hurrah / hurrah—hurrah

[Song: Die Wacht am Rhein]

[Cheers]

Colonel: My dear Mr. Mayor! On behalf of the regiment, thank you very much for your kind words of farewell.

With joy in our hearts, we follow the call of our emperor to fight for our fatherland. Each of us is proud to lay down his life for his country.

We will always remember with gratitude the long and blessed years of peace we have spent within the walls of this city that has become dear to us, in heartfelt harmony with the entire citizenry.

Now is not the time for words, but for deeds to prove that we are ready to fight for our fatherland and our emperor. With the best wishes for the future of our garrison and its inhabitants, we march out to meet the enemy.

Join me in the rallying cry: Our supreme commander, His Majesty Emperor Wilhelm II, Hurrah - Hurrah / Hurrah - Hurrah / Hurrah - Hurrah

[Song: Heil dir im Siegerkranz]

[Sound of marching]

[Song: The Russians are all criminals]

[Laughter]

So where am I supposed to write that down? Oh well, best in the main camp office in Paris, we'll be there soon anyway!

[Fanfare]

[Song: Muss I denn zum Städtele hinaus]

Source: Vaterländische Aufnahme der Deutschen Grammophon zum Besten deutscher Krieger und deren Angehörigen, August 1, 1914. Stiftung Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv

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