

THE BEGINNINGS OF RADIOPHONY IN SLOVAKIA AND THE SCHOOL RADIO

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Abstract: The beginnings of radiophony in Slovakia reach back to 1924 when the first radio receivers appeared in Bratislava. The subsequent growth in the number of radio licenses led to the construction of two transmitters in Slovakia which were branches of the Radiojournal of Prague in Bratislava (1926) and Košice (1927). Based on the extant archival records of the Division of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment (MENE) in Slovakia in the Slovak National Archive in Bratislava, and on the Journals of the Radiojournal Prague, we can reconstruct the beginnings of the school radio aimed at educating children and the youth. Two facts are undoubtedly interesting: a) the birth of the school radio was directly connected to the broadcasting of the Košice branch and to the dedicated work of E. Rusko, b) the popularity of the school radio among the teachers in turn influenced the actual development of radiophony by massive funding by the MENE for the purchase of radio receivers and the training of responsible teachers/technicians.

Keywords: radio broadcasting, Radiojournal, Slovakia, school radio

1 The Birth of Radio Broadcasting in Czechoslovakia

The beginning of regular radio broadcasting in Czechoslovakia in 1923 was the actual birth of radio broadcasting in the country. It was a time when the first radio stations were being established in the world, this new medium was being promoted and explained, and the first pieces of experience with broadcasting in America were being examined and utilized. Radiophony aroused interest and fascinated amateur radio operators, sought and found enthusiasts and pioneers/technicians, employed industrialists as well as statesmen, brought along new tasks, led to international collaboration, gradually gained recognition and secured its own place in public life.

The Czechoslovak Radio was one of the first radio stations in Europe¹; what is more, Czechoslovakia launched regular broadcasting earlier than all the other neighbouring countries: the broadcasts of the Czechoslovak radio station reached the ether a year after launching broadcasting in London (which gained a leading position in radio broadcasting)², at the time when France broadcast from the Eiffel Tower sporadically, when Germany broadcast only experimentally at times from Königswusterhausen, and a small station was only being built in Vienna.³

Czechoslovakia did not lag behind the global trend in launching radiophony. Already in the first post-war years, academic institutions and industrial corporations tried various ways of the remote wireless transmission of sound.⁴ After the war, telegraph communication fell within the competence of the Ministry of National Defence, therefore it was the military administration that was commissioned to establish new connections. The first Czechoslovak radiotelegraph station was built up in Peřín,

Prague, in late 1918, from where the first radiotelephone broadcast was transmitted in 1919. It was a programme with recitals, singing and violin music. Professor Augustin Žáček listened to in the physics room of Charles University in Prague. In November 1920, non-military telegraphy went into the competence of the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs.⁵ In late 1922, journalists and entrepreneurs from *Radioslavia, akciová spoločnosť pre telegrafiu a telefóniu bez drátu v Prahe [Radioslavia, Public Limited Liability Company for Wireless Telegraphy and Telephony in Prague]*, which was established shortly before that and was selling radio receivers, joined forces.⁶ Their efforts resulted in regular radio broadcasting starting from May 1923, which gained an institutional form as a private limited liability company called *Radiojournal*.

The Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs of the Czechoslovak Republic also supported the efforts to establish radio stations by actively promoting them and taking normative measures:

- the first legislation was Act No. 60/1923 Coll. on Telegraphs of 23 March 1923, regulating the operation of radiophony (transmission and reception) as the exclusive and sovereign right of the state, i.e. a state monopoly;⁷
- a law was issued on 20 December 1923 regulating the production, sale and possession of radiotelegraph and radiotelephone devices, as well as the rules of their import from abroad.

Radio broadcasting was only provisory until December 1923 when the legal grounds of its existence were formed. Only these two laws provided the basis for the production and sale of the first radio receivers in Czechoslovakia.

Some historical facts about the birth of radio broadcasting in Czechoslovakia:

- the first experimental radiophonic concert was organized on 29 March 1923 by the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs for members of the parliament, diplomats and representatives of authorities (the receiving device was supplied by *Radioslavia* and the lecture was delivered by Ing. Jozef Strnad from the Ministerial Council of the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs);
- the second radiophonic concert took place on 15 May 1923 and it was a public one, containing, among other items, presentations by the Cultural Union on radiophony in the lecture room of a boys' school in Vladislavova Street in Prague;
- regular broadcasting from the provisory Klebská Station began on 18 May 1923 (i.e. before the radio corporation was established and the law on telegraphs was published);
- the Czechoslovak Radio Corporation was founded on 7 June 1923 with a capital of 500,000 Czech crowns (for comparison, the BBC in England started its operations in 1922 with an 11-million budget); its main initiators and founders named it *Radiojournal*,⁸ společnost s. r. o. pro československou službu radioelektrickou [*Radiojournal*,

¹ The first attempt at wireless broadcasting was carried out in the garden of inventor Guglielmo Marconi (1874 – 1937) in the 1890s in Bologna and, ever since, there has been a continuous line of inventions and perfections of wireless transmission. The first wireless transmission of human voice (radiotelephony) meant for the general public took place on 24 December 1906 when an American engineer of Swedish origin, Reginald Aubrey Fessenden (1866 – 1932), broadcast a short programme from Brant Rock in Massachusetts, USA – the transmitted information was accompanied by an artistic programme, including music. At a distance of 320 kilometres, telegraphers could listen to readings from the Bible, violin playing, Händel's *Largo* and, in the end, Fessenden wishing merry Christmas. The first radio transmission, carried out by inventor Lee de Forest (1873 – 1961), took place in 1910 from the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

² The British Broadcasting Company was established in 1922 (British Broadcasting Corporation from 1927).

³ The first radio station in today's sense of the world (i.e. an institution which runs regular radio broadcasts for profit) was the American KDKA in Pennsylvania which launched its regular radio broadcasting on 2 November 1921 at 6 pm in Pittsburgh. See KDKA's licence at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:KDKA_-_first_license_-_October_27,_1920.pdf (25/12/2018).

⁴ Draxler, V.: *Začiatky bratislavského rozhlasu. [The Beginnings of the Radio of Bratislava]* Študijný zošit Metodicko-výskumného kabinetu. [Study Brochure of the Methodological Research Department No. 17] Bratislava: The Czechoslovak Radio, 1975. pp. 6 – 9.

⁵ Jirounek, J.: *Počátky bezdrátové techniky v Československu. [The Beginnings of Wireless Technology in Czechoslovakia]* In: Patzaková, J. A.: *Prvních deset let Československého rozhlasu. [The First Ten Years of the Czechoslovak Radio]* Prague: Radiojournal, 1935. pp. 758 – 761.

⁶ Radioslavia was established as a group of three factories: Křížák a spol. (Českomoravské elektrotechnické závody / Czech-Moravian Electrotechnical Plants), Telegraphia (with Josef Strnad and other government officials in its board of directors) and Compagnie générale de télégraphie sans fils (a French company which exported radio devices to Czechoslovakia). Podľa Čábelová, L.: *Radiojournal. rozhlasové vysílání v Čechách a na Moravě v letech 1923 – 1939. [Radiojournal: Radio Broadcasting in Bohemia and Moravia in the Years 1923 – 1939]* Prague: Charles University in Prague, 2003. p. 130.

⁷ It was one of the first laws in the world which regulated the rights of the new field of radiotechnology. After: Draxler, 1975, p. 7.

⁸ Radiojournal – as a synthesis of the names “Radioslavia” and “journalists”. Ing. Richard Gemperle (replaced in December 1923 by Dr. Ladislav Šourek, director of Radioslavia) became the president of the board of its executive directors, Ing. Eduard Svoboda became its technical director, and Miloš Čtrnáctý the programme director.

Private Limited Liability Company for Czechoslovak Radioelectric Services];

- in early July 1923, *Radiojournal* received a concession from the Ministry of Interior Affairs to organize programmes and the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs leased a concession to it to broadcast programmes and also leased the Kbelská Station to it.⁹

The broadcasting studio was set up in Kbely in a scouts' tent borrowed from the Prague Vacation Colony and, in winter, it was replaced by a wooden building. The radio broadcasts were carried out by a minimal number of staff. The broadcasting crew consisted of technician Ing. Eduard Svoboda, lawyer JUDr. Ladislav Šourek (the director of *Rádioslavia*) and Miloš Čtrnáctý, editor of the *Národní politika* [*National Politics*] periodical. The first transmitter of signals was an ordinary telephone microphone (borrowed from the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs) and the first musical instrument was an upright piano. The office of the Radiojournal was set up in the official rooms of the *Rádioslavia* in Národní třída Street in Prague, in the Choděra House. In winter, there was a bus connection between the city and the Kbely transmission station and, in winter, the first performers travelled there by an electric railway. Information about the beginnings of radio broadcasting can be found in the bulletin/programme periodical of the *Radiojournal*, which started to appear in September 1923 and contained a number of interesting writings about the beginnings of radiophony and the programme of the first broadcasts.¹⁰

The first radio programmes in 1923 did not attract the attention of the general cultural public but it was not their aim, either. They had an impact mainly on the technical world: the sound (speech as well as music) coming from the first amplifiers was sensational and, for technicians, it was a means to constantly verify loudspeakers. The Kbelská Station, originally meant for telegraph services, was adapted for broadcasting only provisionally. Until late 1924 when a new studio was opened in the Procurement building of the Post in Fochova třída Street in Prague and, in fact, until late 1925 (when a modern French broadcasting station was opened in Strašnice), radio broadcasting had to tackle not only technical problems but the disinterest of the general public and inadequate funding, too. The licence fee was 50 Czech crowns, which was a high amount at that time, and there were few listeners/subscribers. Therefore, the company raised funds by selling radio receivers.

It should be noted at the outset that the most efficient form of programme broadcast was music. Musical sound was the most perfect one in transmission: it was more differentiated than speech which used to report news and books. Also, speech was largely distorted in the first transmissions and often became unintelligible. Music was welcome and, in the very beginning of radiophony, gained an exclusive privilege in radio broadcasting even before the microphone was seized by reporters, newsreaders, poets or playwrights.

Of course, the broadcasting time was limited: it was an hour daily from 8:15 p.m. when the conditions for broadcasting were the best ones and there was no interference for the signal.

The initial one-hour programme consisted of:

- songs and music,
- sports news from the whole world
- weather forecasts of the State Meteorological Institute,
- stock exchange news (every day except for Saturdays and Sundays).¹¹

We may wonder what the radio could offer to its listeners in this first, provisory stage, with experiments with the microphone

(which was not able to reproduce pure and undistorted sound), in a wooden studio (which could not be adapted acoustically) and without any auxiliary and monitoring devices.

The music items were on a most diverse level and were determined by the technology and the environment: they started with the piano, the violin and singing, and with musicians who happened to be in the immediate vicinity of these first experiments with broadcasting. The first programmes reached the general public by their promotional reproductions in the Sanssouci Cinema in the Nové Město district of Prague and in the concerts of the Cultural Union. The orchestra players of the Sanssouci included the first radio performers (violinist Hašek, cornetist Emil Čermák, cellist František Voženilek)¹² and the radio corporation procured other performers from among the students of music schools and singing schools. According to a news from the bulletin of the Radiojournal of 5 June 1926, these were mostly students of Josef Bastař at the State Conservatory of Music:

"The growing need for musical forces led me to my old friend, professor of the State Conservatory J. Bastař, who eagerly recommended some of his students – violinists to me..." (Miloš Čtrnáctý).¹³

As the programme director, Miloš Čtrnáctý tried to avoid the radio becoming just pure "fun" and strived to maintain certain standards so that the mission of the radio was put into the service of culture and arts, practical life, and the education and edification of the people (bulletin of the Radiojournal):

"The Czechoslovak Radio has to correspond to the cultural traditions of our artistic development and successfully fit into the framework of our public life. Radiojournal wants to lent its own character to the programmes, one that would reflect our different local conditions."

"While German stations help themselves out with gramophones and serve foxtrots and shimmies to their listeners, Radiojournal excluded the gramophone completely and tries to provide truly artistic delights to its subscribers, having regard to all the layers of its listenership."¹⁴

However, obviously, it was not simple to achieve these goals, as can be seen also from an article in their Bulletin (January 1924):

"If the quartet consists only of bowed string instruments and the piano, the wireless transmission is very good. However, if the quartet or quintet contains a flute besides the string instruments, the same unpleasant phenomena of sound interference, and the consequent noises, keep coming up regularly. So far, it is impossible for us to invite more than two or three artists for one night because there is not enough space..."¹⁵

Hence, not only good artists were needed for the programmes but funds were to be raised for a new, independent station, and these were sought really everywhere. To raise the interest of the general public in the new medium, promotional concerts were organized and, from October 1923, there were regular broadcasts on Sundays in front of the National Politics building at Wenceslas Square in Prague.

The foundations of carefully planned radio programmes which fulfilled primarily a strictly edifying function and included all the genres of classical as well as popular music were laid down already in 1924. At the same time, the staff of the Radiojournal

⁹ To obtain the concession, the applicant had to fulfil a number of conditions, including the submission of a document certifying his political reliability. Precaution in issuing the concession was understandable at that time – till then, broadcasting had been connected to the military events of the previous years. After Draxler, 1975, p. 7.

¹⁰ See Patzaková, A. J.: *Prvních deset let Československého rozhlasu. [The First Ten Years of the Czechoslovak Radio]* Prague: Radiojournal, 1935, pp. 17 – 34.

¹¹ After Patzaková, 1935, pp. 22 – 25.

¹² See Hubička, J.: *Jak to začalo: s rozhlasovým archívem do roku 1923. [How it Started: With the Radio Archive until 1923]* [online] Available at: https://www.rozhlas.cz/archiv/zivotsrozhlasem/_zprava/jak-to-zacalo-s-rozhlasovym-archivem-do-roku-1923--1061340 (25/12/2018).

¹³ After Patzaková, 1935, p. 25.

¹⁴ After Patzaková, 1935, p. 28.

¹⁵ After Patzaková, 1935, p. 30.

began to be differentiated and specialize on specific fields within the radio.¹⁶

Only suitable premises could move these Kbely programmes to the next level. The last broadcast from the Kbely studio took place on 1 December 1924 and, on Tuesday 2 December, the radio broadcast from a new studio built up in the premises of the Procurement building of the Post in Fochova třída Street in the Vinohrady District of Prague. Originally, the studio was to be placed in the premises of the transmission station in Strašnice but the 1/2 kW transmitter purchased in that year from the French Société Française Radioélectrique (S.F.R.) took up the major part of the original studio. The technical equipment of the studio in the Procurement building of the Post, an electrodynamic microphone with a 5-level microphone amplifier and a 4-level control amplifier, was also supplied by this French company. The long-time dreams of the founders of the Radiojournal were slowly coming true.

The Radiojournal entered the new season of 1925/1926 with new resolutions and changes. The most substantial one took place in March 1925 when the state became its direct majority shareholder, its board of executive directors was approved, and new programme goals were set.¹⁷

Already in the first years of broadcasting, *Radiojournal* took into account children and the youth, and took the educational and edifying function of the radio very seriously. It engaged specialist teacher Jan Vavřík for children's shows, and he remained in charge of this part of radio broadcasting for many years. He addressed small listeners as "Uncle Wenceslas" for the first time when he narrated "To the New School Year" (1 Sept 1925) and soon built up a new base of young listeners. Another novel programme in that year was *theatre for children*. The first such programme was the theatre of "artistic education" which acted in the lecture hall of a girls' school in Sliezská Street in the Vinohrady District of Prague. This puppet theatre performed not only plays but operas as well, so it was competent to work in the radio. It launched its radio performances on 3 September with Czech puppet classic Matej Kopecký's play *Pan Franc zo zámku [Sir Frank from the Castle]* and regularly performed every Saturday early evening.

Already at that time, Eduard Svoboda¹⁸ wrote in the Bulletin of the Radiojournal (1925, vol. 3, no. 6, p. 7) that the radio had the means by which it would be able to complement teachers' efforts and presented the idea of a school radio.

"Maybe, in the future, the radio will play a major role also in schools, in mass education. However, the receiving stations are not so perfect yet so as to be used for public listening in schools."¹⁹

At the beginning of the 1926/1927 school year, director Eduard Svoboda approached the idea of the school radio within the organization as a new field of radio service. In his article *Výchova mládeže rádiom [The Education of the Youth by the Radio]* (Bulletin of the Radiojournal, 1926, vol. 4, no. 29, 11 Sept 1926), he wrote that:

"It is appropriate to consider what role the radio could play in schools and how it would affect the children. I think radio presentations will become an integral part of the teaching process as soon as the radio becomes widespread and ceases to

be just an interesting novelty. The children could listen to the greatest authorities of any field in the radio... The Radio leads thousands of children at their most perceptive age to contact with the greatest men of contemporary science and arts. Combined with school, teaching foreign languages, for example, can become much easier and better... The general influence of the radio on children can be likened to the effects of a large public library available to one and all: here, too, the result will show only by time."²⁰

Svoboda's extensive article outlined the educational possibilities of the radio and teachers responded to it eagerly. They demanded that the programme was arranged in a way that enabled children to participate in it, i.e. either during the school hours or immediately after them. Therefore, broadcasting was reorganized and, from 29 November 1926, the radio broadcast for schools every day: from 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. for Czech schools and from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. for German schools. However, it took place without an agreement with the school administration, even regarding the programme broadcast. Till then, the radio had no direct contact with the teachers and broadcast programmes for those who wanted to use them, with no specific goal or focus. The Bulletin of the Radiojournal (1926, vol. 4, no. 39) says:

"All our radio stations: Prague, Brno, Bratislava, will broadcast a special school programme on weekdays from 10:00 to 11:00. Therefore, it is up to the local organizers to ensure that the schools could listen to this programme, if possible through an amplifier. However, people will certainly be found who will lend their own station with an amplifier to the school in places where the school does not have its own station."²¹

2 The Beginnings of Radiophony in Slovakia

The beginnings of radiophony in Slovakia reach back to 1924 when the first radio receivers appeared in Bratislava and the number of their owners slowly grew. The initial modest presence of radio receivers followed from several facts: a) almost no availability of radio transmitters (even the transmitter in Kbely was not really audible in Slovakia)²², b) high cost of the radio receivers (the price of a radio receiver was a multiple of the monthly income of the population in Slovakia in well-paid jobs)²³, c) high fees of operating the radio receivers. Therefore, a radio receiver was a "luxury" and, by October 1924, only about 10 licences had been issued in Bratislava.²⁴ Nevertheless, radiophony began to gradually gain ground in Slovakia.

The first amateur radio operating attempts date back to 1925 in the town of Košice. However, regular radio broadcasting is connected with the radio station in Bratislava (Bratislava branch of the Radiojournal) which started its first experimental broadcasting on 3 August 1926 from the Government Building but started to broadcast regularly only on 1 October 1926 (or 28 October when it was ceremonially handed over by Minister of Posts and Telegraphs Fr. Nosek). It should be noted that it was the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs that took care of building radio transmitters, and its interest was primarily to cover Prague and central Bohemia. However, Brno and Bratislava also spoke up. Since there were no companies in Czechoslovakia interested in building transmission stations, the ministry had to turn to foreign companies. Brno worked with the unfit German Hurth station, and the original MD50-type Strašnice Station with 1/2 kW output made by the French R.F.S. company was transferred

¹⁶ Conductor A. N. Nademlejnský (1898 – 1985) was responsible for opera and operette evenings, members of the Czech Philharmonic for classical concerts, Radio-trio and Hanžl's Orchestra for lighter genres, G. Hertl took care of theatre evenings and A. Dobrovolský (1869 – 1934) of recitals. After Patzaková, 1935, p. 50.

¹⁷ See the documentation between the management of the Radiojournal, the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs, and the management of the Ministerial Council of the Czechoslovak Republic from late 1924, from 1925 and from 1926 about the "Reorganization of the Radiojournal Radio Corporation in Prague", no. 1188/XI-25. The documentation is deposited in the Slovak National Archive, Collection of the MENE Div., box 29, no. 134 – 191.

¹⁸ See also Hubička, J.: *Zakladatelé rozhlasu v Československu. [The Founders of the Radio in Czechoslovakia]* [online] Available at: https://www.rozhlas.cz/archiv/zamikrofonem/_zprava/zakladatele-rozhlasu-v-ceskoslovensku--798525

¹⁹ After Patzaková, 1935, pp. 90 – 91.

²⁰ After Patzaková, 1935, p. 133.

²¹ After Patzaková, 1935, p. 134.

²² At that time, a "three-lamp" radio receiver with accessories (accumulator, anode battery, loudspeaker, headphones, small equipment, assembly fees) cost almost 10,000 Czech crowns, and a "five-lamp" one almost 14,000 crowns. After Draxler, 1975, p. 27.

²³ Licensees paid two fees: an annual recognition and registration fee to the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs (60 Czech crowns) and a monthly fee for listening to the radio to Radiojournal (30 Czech crowns). Even though the broadcasting fee was lowered to 20 Czech crowns in the autumn of 1924, it still represented a relatively large portion of a family budget. See Bulletins No. 49/1924 and No. 76/1924 of the Ministry of Posts and Telegraphs.

²⁴ However, it did not deter amateur enthusiasts from assembling radio receivers, although they risked imprisonment for 1 to 5 years, or a fine of 2,000 to 10,000 Czech crowns, for violating the laws on telegraphy. After Draxler, 1975, p. 28.

to Bratislava. The ministry's decision to use a low-performance transmitter for the territory of Slovakia was justified at that time by the small number of licensees (about 2,000 licensees). Stations were bought from the revenues from licence fees. In this case, however, the ministry underrated the rapidly growing interest of licensees which became evident immediately after the installation of the Strašnice Station. On the other hand, this decision by the ministry had its advantages, too – broadcasting could begin almost immediately: the transmitter was situated in the building of the Police Directorate in Bratislava, on the roof of which there were 15-metre posts with a three-wire antenna on top. The actual transmitting equipment was situated on the ground floor of the building.²⁵

Soon, the Bratislava newspapers announced to the general public that: "3 August will again be one of the significant days for Slovakia. Tonight, at 6.30 p.m., radio listeners will hear 'Hello, Bratislava!' for the first time. There are a few fortunate ones who have already participated in tests, especially of a technical nature... However, today, on Tuesday, Bratislava will broadcast a pre-announced programme for the first time."²⁶

The first programme, consisting of the melodies of F. Giordani, G. B. Pergolesi, P. G. Martini, R. Schumann, P. I. Tchaikovsky, H. Joycelyn, B. Smetana, H. Eccles, M. Sch. Trnavský and D. Popper, was broadcast from a studio on the stage of the Great Hall of the Government Building in Bratislava.²⁷ For two months (August and September), there were broadcasts only twice a week. Daily broadcasting started on 1 October 1926. Musical programmes were provided by Miloš Ruppeldt (1881 – 1943) and Oskar Nedbal (1874 – 1930), presentations were taken care of by former district administrator and director of the branch, Ladislav Moyš (1867 – 1950). The Bratislava branch of the Radiojournal very quickly underwent the same course of development as the stations in Prague and Brno and, as early as in January 1927, it began to exchange its programmes with Brno (in February 1927, it developed this kind of regular collaboration also with Prague).

A year later, on 17 April 1927, the Košice branch of the Radiojournal also began to broadcast. The Post administration had a much easier situation in Košice: there was a post station in Haniska near Košice with space for two stations. The timing of the programmes of the Košice branch of the Radiojournal was very limited:

11:00 a.m. – noon only on Sundays: matinée,
7:50 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.: Agricultural radio (Sundays and Wednesdays), presentations, news of the Czechoslovak Press Office (ČTK),
8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.: concert,
9:30 – 10:00 p.m.: reproduced music or news of the ČTK.²⁸

While music was supplied mostly by Kozák's Quartet (sometimes by Kozák's String Orchestra) and salon music by his quintet or sextet, Emil Rusko (1900 – 1961) was in charge of the literary programmes and focused not only on presentations and fairy tales for children but soon introduced the school radio too, the first one in Czechoslovakia.

The Košice branch, away from the centre, had to work independently for a relatively long time (compared to Bratislava and Brno). However, it became gradually connected with the western parts of the republic through Bratislava and Brno, and that moment was the starting point of the development of simultaneous broadcasting by the Czechoslovak Radio.

3 The School Radio

Interest in the youth significantly increased within a few years of the birth of radio broadcasting in Czechoslovakia. Based on the broadcasting experience of the North American Union and England, programmes for children and the youth gradually improved in Czechoslovakia, partly thanks to E. Svoboda. In addition to *Children's Shows* and *Half-hours for the Youth*, which were the first attempts at radio bands and radio editing for the youth, there were also puppet theatres in the radio which became gradually independent of the *Art Education* (ensemble) and were joined also by members of the *Student Stage*. With this theatre, the Czechoslovak Radio gained primacy among European broadcasting stations.

From these first experiments, it was only a small step to the execution of the *School Radio* and to the fulfilment of Svoboda's vision. In 1928, the school administration carried out the first negotiations about the school radio.²⁹

It is undoubtedly interesting that, independently of the negotiations in Prague, the first branch of the Radiojournal to introduce the broadcasting of the school radio was its Košice one which built on local needs. The Košice branch tested the interest in radio broadcasting in a new environment very promptly and enterprisingly. Its literary director Emil Rusko, who came from eastern Slovakia, introduced a novelty into the relatively poor programme. As a former teacher, it was difficult for Rusko to accept that the average citizens in the east know little about school, undervalue schools and are reluctant to send their children to school. The Košice experiments with the school radio were successful and attracted the attention of not only the Prague management of the Radiojournal but also of the Division of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment in Slovakia. The archival records of the Division of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment reveal that, in late 1929, the Košice branch of the Radiojournal informed the given Division about the programmes being prepared for the school radio, and asked for a notification of the respective school inspectorates by a circular.³⁰

What were the contents of the first programmes?

4 Dec 1929: *A Lesson in Homeland Education: A Short-lived Dream of the Independence of Slovakia in the 14th Century – Matúš Čák of Trenčín*;

11 Dec 1929: *Teaching in the Studio: Homeland Education: Heating – Wood, Coal, Peat*;

21 Dec 1929: *Teaching in the Studio: Homeland Education – Christmas, the Festival of Love*;³¹

In January 1930, the programme went on and the Division of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment in Slovakia was notified that the following programme would be aired:

22 Jan 1930: *Teaching in the Studio: Homeland Education – Birds in Winter*;

With respect to the profiling of music, it is interesting to mention that an "Hour of Entertainment" was also prepared in Košice besides this programme: "Introduction / Cheerful Compering / Short Edifying Drama / Driml: Music for Children / Orchestra / Children's Solo and Choir Songs / Recital for the Youngest / From the Age / Songs for Children, Passages from Travelogues, Excerpts from the Life of the Animals, Riddles etc." In addition, Jaroslav Křička's (1882 – 1969) children's opera *Ogari [Lads]* (1919) was also prepared from this studio, "... Exclusively for use by the said radio".³²

²⁵ See Draxler, 1975, pp. 40 – 56; also, Patzaková, 1935, pp. 142 – 143.

²⁶ Zahájenie slovenského rozhlasu. [The Launch of the Slovak Radio] In: *Slovenský denník [Slovak Daily]*, vol. 9, no. 175, 3 Aug 1926. After Draxler, 1975, p. 63.

²⁷ The first performers included: Alojz Urban (singing), Eduard Pollák (cello), Zdenko Hobilík (piano). See Draxler, 1975, p. 64.

²⁸ After Patzaková, 1935, pp. 146 – 147.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Slovak National Archive, Collection of the MENE Div., Section I, Box 81, B.I.14, inv. unit 197.

³¹ Ibid.

³² News from 1 Jan 1930. Radiojournal Košice for the MENE Div., no. 10 Slovak National Archive, Collection of the MENE Div., Section I, Box 81, B.I.14, inv. unit 197.

The Division of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment in Slovakia noticed the broadcasting activities of the Košice radio and the following evaluation can be found in the archives:

*“The programmes broadcast hitherto are from all parts of Slovakia. The interest is unexpected. School administrations are noticing these radio novelties very critically and, in their written reviews, they touch not only upon the technical aspect of the broadcasting but also on its pedagogical purposefulness. We already have several interesting writings at hand, which are highly motivating stimuli for us for the future.”*³³

As part of the broadcasting, Emil Rusko invited children to the microphone and improvised a full lesson. In these select lessons, he presented a demonstrative guidance on how a teaching unit should look like, from the first up to the last year of national schools. It was only natural that the Košice branch attracted the teachers' attention very quickly, and they demanded better technical facilities for the broadcasting, or a transfer of the broadcasting to Bratislava which had a more efficient transmitting station:

*“For example, we have a 5-lamp, well-functioning radio device, and still we could not receive Košice on 4 December 1929 because of its strong capture by the Bratislava transmitting station”.*³⁴ The conclusion of the MENE Division based on several reports was the following: *“It follows from the above that this experiment with a school radio aroused great interest of the teachers and it would be recommended to carry out preparations in this direction for broadcasting from Bratislava”* (signed by the school inspector of Trnava).

The reaction of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment (MENE) of Prague did not take long. On 1 August 1930, Decree No. 107.560/V was issued on the school radio:

*“The development of radiophony and its influence on the adults and the youth requires the school bodies and school employees to take careful notice of it and to bring the school youth in contact with radiophony. For this reason, from the initiative of the MENE, a School Radio Board is being established, which will collaborate with the Czechoslovak Radiophonic Corporation, ‘Radiojournal’, and will take care of the school radio meant for school children at the age of 6 – 14 years. The role of the radio is not to replace teaching in schools but to complement it with suitably chosen materials connected to the school curricula, which they are based on, and to contribute to the acquaintance of the children with radiophony.”*³⁵

It is followed by a detailed description of the organization of the broadcasting and the requested proposals from Košice and Bratislava for the above-mentioned School Radio Board.

Besides the far-reaching significance of the introduction of the school radio for the education of children and the youth, this initiative from Košice had another dimension, too: a de facto direct promotion of the development of the radiophonic industry in Slovakia. Why?

On 30 April 1931, the Division of the MENE issued Circular No. 69/31 titled *Action for the Purchase of Radio Devices for National State Schools in Slovakia*, in which it requested detailed information from the respective school inspectorates (57) about the condition of radio receivers in national state schools: how many radio devices (including amplifiers) were owned by the school, what types, what electrical current they used, where the devices were placed, how much they had been bought for, what funds the school had bought them from (who had donated them

to the school) and what their experience with their use was. The detailed survey and reports from the school inspectorates reveal that the prices of the radio receivers were somewhere between 2,000 Czech crowns (the simplest devices) and 6,000 Czech crowns (e.g. the 4-lamp Zenit from Přelouč in the State Lower-Secondary Mixed School in Revúca).³⁶

To make the teachers acquainted with the new medium and its operation, to build a positive attitude to radiophony, to promote it locally and, of course, to utilize it in the teaching process, the Division of the Ministry of Education and National Enlightenment in Slovakia (MENE Division) organized a two-day course for teachers who were to work as “technical trustees of the school radio” in the second half of August 1931 in collaboration with the Radiojournal.³⁷

The agenda included practical issues connected with radiophony:

1. the essence of radiophony,
2. the receiving device,
3. repairs and faults in the receiver,
4. technical issues of the school radio,
5. a visit to the experimental and transmission station,
6. projection of a specialist film.

Knowing that teachers never had much money, the MENE Division funded this course by 50 Czech crowns per person per day and arranged for a discount from the railway ticket for the teachers with the railway administration.³⁸

The speed with which the MENE Division took up the task assigned to it by the Prague MENE is amazing even in today's electronic age. Why? Based on the evaluation of the reports of all the school inspectorates, it went on to carry out another action, too: to purchase radio devices for schools recommended by the inspectorates. It set aside a considerable amount, 400,000 Czech crowns, for their procurement. However, it soon lowered this amount to 300,000 Czech crowns saying that the newly established schools have to be equipped with other facilities, too. In the end, it lowered the amount even further.³⁹

Nevertheless, it can be concluded that the school radio, with the Košice branch of the Radiojournal and teacher and editor Emil Rusko considered to be its founders, contributed significantly not only to the dissemination of typically radio genres and arrangement techniques but also played a major role in the overall development of radiophony in Slovakia.

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³⁶ Slovak National Archive, Collection of the MENE Div., Section I, Box 81, B.I.14, inv. unit 197.

³⁷ Notice of the MENE in Prague from 14 May 1931 / No. 62778/31-V, that 3 two-day courses would take place between 15 and 26 August 1931. The number of participants was to be 250 in each course, from each school inspectorate. In: Slovak National Archive, Collection of the MENE Div., Section I, Box 81, B.I.14, inv. unit 197.

³⁸ Ministry of the Railways of the Czechoslovak Republic, Prague, 28 May 1931 / no. 25.653-III/3-1931 for MENE – Provincial School Board in Prague and Brno, MENE Div. in Bratislava. In: Slovak National Archive, Collection of the MENE Div., Section I, Box 81, B.I.14, inv. unit 197.

³⁹ Circular no. 7/1932/čisl. 2349/I. ai1932. In: Slovak National Archive, Collection of the MENE Div., Section I, Box 81, B.I.14, inv. unit 197.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Official note of the MENE Div. to Circular No. 192/1929 based on a letter from the School Inspectorate in Trnava to Radiojournal Prague, Košice branch, 10 Jan 1930. Slovak National Archive, Collection of the MENE Div., Section I, Box 81, B.I.14, inv. unit 197.

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