



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization

Organisation
des Nations Unies
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la science et la culture

Organización
de las Naciones Unidas
para la Educación,
la Ciencia y la Cultura

Организация
Объединенных Наций по
вопросам образования,
науки и культуры

منظمة الأمم المتحدة
للتربية والعلم والثقافة

联合国教育、
科学及文化组织

Address by Irina Bokova,

Director-General of UNESCO

on the occasion of the exhibition on the anniversary of the scientist Jozef

Murgaš

UNESCO, 20 October 2014

Excellency Ms Klara Novotna, Ambassador and Permanent Delegate of Slovakia to UNESCO,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we have gathered to celebrate science, to celebrate radio, and to celebrate Slovakia.

This is the 150th anniversary of the birth of Jozef Murgaš.

Jozef Murgaš was a world-class scientist and inventor, who played a pioneering role in wireless telegraphy through the development of a revolutionary “tone system”.

His work in radiotelegraphy earned him the respect of his peers, including that of Thomas Edison.

UNESCO is proud to be associated with this celebration, and this exhibition, which bears witness to the contribution of Jozef Murgaš not only to Slovakia, but to the world, and I would like to thank the Permanent Delegation of Slovakia for this initiative.

The birth of radio in the 19th century ushered in the era of modern communication.

The world has changed dramatically since then, but radio has hardly aged a day – it remains widely accessible, relatively cheap and very simple to use.

Radio is still *the medium* that can carry any message to any place at any time – even without electricity.

In situations of conflict and natural disaster, shortwave radio provides a lifeline of information that can save lives.

More than ever, radio remains a force for social change, by sharing knowledge and providing a platform for inclusive debate.

This power is what we celebrate now, with the anniversary of Jozef Murgaš.

The same spirit guides *World Radio Day*, every year on 13 February, when we honour a medium that remains a first choice for women and men across the world.

Radio gives a voice to the voiceless, it helps educate the illiterate, and it saves lives during natural disasters.

A force for freedom of expression and pluralism, radio is essential to building inclusive knowledge societies and to promoting respect and understanding between people.

Thanks to the early work of inventors like Jozef Murgaš, who established the precursors of our modern technology, we can enjoy today all the potential of information sharing and communication on a global scale.

UNESCO is working across the world to support the use and availability of these technologies for women and men, especially in crisis situations and in remote locations.

This is the spirit of the community radio programme we have launched to support education and civic engagement for young Syrian refugees in Jordan.

The same spirit guides the community radio programme we have launched to support the prevention of Ebola in Sierra Leone and Liberia – the provision of reliable information is essential for a better understanding of the disease at the community level and a bulwark for more effective prevention.

Mesdames et messieurs,

« *Les hommes font l'histoire, mais ils ne savent pas l'histoire qu'ils font* » disait le philosophe Hegel.

Josef Murgaš, n'avait sans doute pas conscience de toutes les répercussions de ses recherches dans notre vie quotidienne.

Il était à la fois scientifique, peintre, botaniste, prêtre de l'Église catholique, et il finançait d'ailleurs en partie ses recherches scientifiques par la vente de ses tableaux... un exemple du lien entre l'art et la science !

Son parcours en dit long sur les individus qui changent le monde... Ils sont curieux, ouverts, et construisent des passerelles entre les disciplines, dépassent les cloisons étanches qui bloquent la pensée : il était « le prêtre-scientifique » et « l'homme de la Renaissance », un humaniste au sens large du terme.

C'est de cet esprit-là dont nous avons le plus besoin aujourd'hui, et cette cérémonie, qui est un hommage, et aussi une occasion de fortifier en nous le sentiment de la créativité de l'intelligence, de la recherche, du brassage des idées, dont nul ne sait ce qui peut en ressortir à l'avance, mais qui est le moteur de la découverte, et de la science.

Merci.