

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Hanseatic City of Lübeck, I welcome you here in our town hall. You have come to a city that prides itself on having a history that dates all the way back to the year 1143 and is over 850 years old. Our town hall is not only one of the oldest, but also one of the most splendid of its kind in Germany. Although its construction formally began in the year 1230, throughout the centuries it has been repeatedly altered and enlarged. What you see before you today is the culmination of many different styles of architecture working harmoniously together. Indeed, the unique beauty of our town hall once prompted a poet to compare it to a stone-made marvel out of a fairy tale.

Most likely you have all heard that Lübeck was once the leading town of the powerful Hanseatic League. Walking around the older parts of our city, one cannot help but be reminded of the heyday of the Hanseatic Era. Although approximately one fifth of the buildings in the city's historical center were destroyed during a single bombing raid in World War II, Lübeck still houses the majority of Northern Germany's historical buildings from the period between the 13th and 15th centuries. In fact, more than a thousand buildings within our city have been designated as historical monuments. In December of 1987

UNESCO added Lübeck's famous historical center onto its list of World Heritage Sites.

However Lübeck is not only famous for its historical buildings, but also for its reputation as a major port city. Lübeck has always been a city of merchants, its harbor being of great importance to its economic well-being. Through trade with Scandinavia and other neighboring states around the Baltic Sea, Lübeck generated an enormous amount of wealth and became, after Cologne, the second largest city of medieval Germany. During the 13th and 16th centuries the importance of its sea trade was reflected by its large merchant fleet which contained, statistically speaking, one ship for every ten inhabitants of the city. During the post war period Lübeck was able to keep up with this reputation by investing hundreds of millions of Euros into the enlargement of its harbor areas. Today the port of Lübeck is recognized as being the largest roll-on-roll-off harbor in Germany and we expect that Baltic traffic will continue to grow vigorously.

Nowadays, many thousands of tourists come to Lübeck each year to visit. Lübeck's reputation has not only been established by its long-standing history as a wealthy port city, but also by the many famous people who have called this city their home. In terms of literature, I am thinking of the Nobel Prize winner Thomas Mann and

his brother Heinrich of whom the Buddenbrookhaus reminds us. In addition to the Mann's, there is also, of course, Guenter Grass who became famous for writing such works as the *Tin Drum* and *Cat and Mouse*. In terms of politics, I am thinking of Willy Brandt who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1971 for his *Ostpolitik* policy.

However visitors coming to Lübeck are not only treated to great culture and history, but also to the special delicacies that make our city particularly unique. Lübecks marzipan has always been a marzipan of special quality and the name "Lübecker Marzipan" can only be used by local firms. And "Rotspon," an early form of red wine that is tested in France and aged under special regulations in Lübecks cellars, is renowned for its fine taste. I hope you'll find some time to taste both.

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen, I heartily welcome you to the Hanseatic City of Lübeck and wish you all a pleasant and successful stay in our town.

Thank you for your attention.