

Translation

*angefertigt auf Wunsch von Herrn Major Grotz*  
*(Kommandeur der Feil. Regg.) Memmingen*  
Address given by Georg Fey, Bürgermeister of the town of Memmingen on October 26, 1947 in connexion with the state visit of Dr. Hans Ehard, Prime Minister of Bavaria.

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.....More than 1200 years have gone since the Alemanni settled in our part of the world, an imperial Franconian tenement growing up side by side with their village. After this settlement had come under the sway of the Guelphs, about 800 years ago Welf VI., the uncle of Henry the Lion, founded here at the same time as Munich was founded a town which thanks to its favourable commercial location and the capability of its citizens soon grew into a flourishing community. The imperial privileges of the Hohenstaufen provided after their extinction the foundations of imperial freedom: inspite of grievous times of war and of internal conflicts the following centuries saw in the 15th century the highest prosperity of the free imperial town. Its commerce extended to Italy, France and Flanders, it played an important part in the federation of Swebian towns, and it occupied as it deserved a seat on the city bench of the German diet. A high city wall with 30 towers enclosed the proud mansions of the citizens and richly endowed churches, eloquent witnesses of the powerful and pious aspiration and the spirit of community of the town republic. Eleven villages in the surroundings were under the rule of the free imperial townsecular and spiritual potentates from the Swebian and Bavarian neighbourhood often dwelled within its walls, bent on various pursuits in times of peace, looking for protection during the troublous days of war. The shifting of international trade during the age of discoveries and the sufferings entailed by the 30 years' War put a stop to the upward development. The free imperial town froze in absolutism and antiquated forms and fell - an overripe fruit - in 1803 to Bavaria.

After a sleep of 40 years like that of the "Sleeping Beauty" Memmingen awoke again to new life; the rail roads to Ulm, Kempten and Buchloe which were constructed from here, brought the town again into contact with the world at large, steadily growing the town burst its ring of walls and grew into the alert community of which in all due modesty we are yet proud.

The location of Memmingen is particularly favourable amidst afarreaching rustic hinterland. To the south the green meadows and the luscious pastures of the Allgäu/Dairy-Farming, to the north the yellow wheat fields of the suabio-bavarian table land. A happy mixture of wellfounded artisans' shops and of not too large industrial undertakings ensure the prosperity of Memmingen's trade. The importance of



The importance of commerce is shown by the fact that the volume of railborne goods occupied for many years the third highest place in Swabia after Augsburg and Lindau. The Kreis of Memmingen is one of the richest in cattle in the whole of Bavaria; that's why one of the most important cattle markets of Southern Germany has grown up here. This is further advanced by the up-to-date slaughter yard of the <sup>town</sup> as well as by the plan of a spacious house for cold storage in the construction of which we have to thank the Bavarian Government for far reaching help.

I would just as soon pass over in silence the last 14 years; but there is one measure decided on during those disastrous times which I cannot but refer to because we are still smarting under it. By the German law on communities Memmingen was degraded in 1935 to the level of a mediate country town. It is not financial advantages or a disinclination to co-operate with the Landrat which makes the town yearn for its independency as a continuation of its century-old imperial freedom, it is the will to autonomy - alive since the times of old - of the citizens who are fully conscious of their tasks within the greater compass of the country and are anxious to show this by yet greater energy. More than anywhere else this becomes manifest here by the distinctly apparent will to reconstruction.

The town of Memmingen has done for some time everything possible in order to recover its former independence from the Kreis.

We fully expect that the Bavarian state government and the Landtag in the course of reparation of national-socialist wrongs will give back to us our former independence from the Kreis with the shortest possible delay.

Over the lintel of our meeting room the years 1268-1803 are inscribed. They indicate the greatest historical times of Memmingen. These great times put us under the obligation to fight for it in the interest of those who come after us that this town recovers its former municipal privileges!

Memmingen too has not escaped the ravages caused by war. First of all the great stream of evacuees from Rhenania - particularly from Essen - had to be sheltered here, then followed the most grievous burdens imposed on the town by several aerial attacks of which particularly those of July 20, 1944 and of April 20, 1945 inflicted most heavy losses. About 15% of the town's living accommodation was damaged and destroyed, not to mention the several hundreds of dead whom we had to lament. There are painful gaps in the old town as well as in the newer parts and several monuments of the past as the Salzstadel, Siebendächerhaus Gerbergasse and the town walls were partly destroyed.

The occupation of the town by American troops on April 26, 1945 put an end to the war, giving the town a first chance to take breath again and to see to law and order. During the last weeks of the war the stream



of expellees started from the East, from Eastern Prussia and from the ~~Sudetenland~~ Silesia. Later on the expellees started arriving from Sudetenland, all of whom had to be housed, fed and employed. Suffice it to state here, that since the beginning of the war the number of inhabitants jumped up from 16000 to 26000. The town set about a task which seemed nearly impossible with all good will and the greatest possible energy and is striving up to the present to find a solution of these problems.

A walk through the town shows more than anything else that we are in earnest about the reconstruction of Memmingen. Wherever the war has caused gaps in the pattern of our town, the citizens take every possible trouble to repair or to build anew as far as this ~~is possible~~ <sup>can be done</sup>. We are taking particular care that this reconstruction does not destroy the harmony of the beautiful scenery of our town. Much has to be replaced, to be renewed, to be embellished. In spite of the scarcity of building materials and of the other numberless difficulties we are in the right way to do away <sup>entirely</sup> with the imprints of the war in Memmingen and to create as much as possible new living room.

Apart from these most urgent tasks we do not neglect the cultural life of the town; this is clearly shown by our Kreuzherrn hall. In spite of the difficult times an opportunity which occurred but once was seized upon and out of an uncared for store room a stately, precious hall for celebrations and exhibitions was created. That the Siebendächerhaus with its peculiar construction - of which the bombs had only left a fragile skeleton - <sup>is also being rebuilt.</sup> may also be counted as one the successful efforts not only to meet the most pressing demands of the present and not to forget at the same time the obligations attached to our storied beautiful scenery.

The municipal theatre of Memmingen fulfils in Suabia a task far beyond the compass of a single community. They are playing all over the country from Lindau by Kempten and Kaufbeuren to Füssen, from Oberstdorf to Günzburg. Alone in the town of Memmingen 8 well frequented theatre rings provide the necessary funds. During the theatre season of 1946 the number of performances in Memmingen amounted to 157, and that of those outside of Memmingen to 178, altogether 335.

There is also a number of high class concerts providing good music in the municipal theatre, in the Kreuzherrn hall and in the neighbouring carthusian convent at Buxheim. How greatly our population is interested in cultural possibilities is also shown by the high number of about 1200 students entered at the "Volkshochschule" ( popular university ) at Memmingen; there are regularly lectures by important scientists as well as numerous courses and lectures by home teachers.



The reconstruction of trade and commerce has of course to contend here with the same difficulties as everywhere else. Our town has also been deprived of the major part of its natural hinterland across the Iller, which has been cut off by the rigorously guarded zonal frontier of Württemberg.

Separatist circles in Suabia are seeking salvation in the foundation of a tribal land "Greater Suabia".

In these days of great distress we here in Memmingen do not appreciate such efforts. We decline every kind of separatism and declare: "We want to remain bavarian".

While manfully declaring our point of view, we must at the same time point out, ~~that~~ that many a time we considered ourselves distinctly neglected by Munich. Understanding sympathy for our Suabian homeland is the best antidote to nip in the bud all separatist aspirations. But your visit, Mr. President shows that Memmingen is not a stepchild. We do not want anything unfair, only sympathy for our Suabian land and communities. Then there will be no reason why we should expect anything from the tracing of a new frontier line which in any case could not change anything in the existing situation as regards tribal conditions. ....

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