

"Bei uns ist immer was los!"

TANNENBAUM / CHRISTMAS TREE

*The Christmas tree*

The undisputed focal-point of the entire Christmas period, in the community and in the family, is the Christmas tree. A German Christmas without the green fir tree is simply inconceivable. The tranquil splendour of Christmas tree lights is an essential aspect of the festival for both the individual and the population as a whole. This green tree is above denominations and political parties, philosophies and ideologies. It is the symbol of Christmas for all Germans, who have to have their Christmas tree on December the 24th even if they live in South America or Africa, in the Middle or the Far East. Trees are also to be found in churches and public squares. They are used in shops as decoration, and in offices to please staff and visitors. There is a Christmas tree at airports, at railway stations, and in schools. No firm that thinks anything of itself would dare deprive its employees of their Christmas tree. Prisoners doing their daily round of exercise in gaol courtyards are greeted by a tree high up on the roof. Even during the war, soldiers in Africa and sailors on the high seas were not ready to be without a Christmas tree. Christmas and the Christmas tree are almost synonymous. The one would be deprived of content without the other.

In the center of all this hubbub stands the Christmas tree, one of the best exports that Germany had for the rest of us. Candles are still used to decorate the silver or blue spruce that seems to be most popular. Giant firs stand outside public buildings, decorated by means of firemen's ladders. Offices and homes seem to outdo each other with their decorations. In several places, living trees are given the honor of being the community's official Yule tree.



*An enormous Christmas tree, covered with hundreds of lights, stands in the medieval city of Rothenburg, a city in the south.*



Christmas tree decoration from around the turn of the century. Coloured lithograph from 1890.