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**Made in Germany
Portrait: Günter Faltin,
Founder of Teekampagne
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Günter Faltin, an economics professor at Berlin's Free University, put his money where his mouth is. Rather than just talking about economics, he thought it a better idea to found a company with his students – learning by doing. That's how the Tea Campaign started in 1985. Concentrating exclusively on Darjeeling tea, the company's philosophy was to avoid the middleman, thus reducing the price. Today, the tea campaign is based in Potsdam and reported sales of seven and a half million Euros last year alone. We met the enterprising professor and tea lover, who already has a new ambition: selling tea to Japan.

Darjeeling First Flush, the first tea harvested after winter, fresh off the slopes of the Himalayas – for Günter Faltin it's the champagne of all teas. Connoisseurs will pay high prices for the fine leaf, but Günter Faltin has found a way of making it affordable. He imports it directly from India. [Günter Faltin:] “If you can buy your product in bulk straight from the producer, you save enormously and eliminate intermediary trade. Acquiring a large enough volume of a product, you can eliminate intermediary trade here too. You can do that for example by concentrating on a single type of tea.”

His idea brings 400 tons of Darjeeling tea from India to Germany every year. Günter Faltin is the world's largest single unit importer of Darjeeling. Following his motto ‘large amounts at low prices,’ customers come to Faltin to buy their entire annual supply of tea. He doesn't go in for expensive advertising campaigns, and the packaging is as simple as his business idea. [Günter Faltin:] “Normally you come up with fantasy names for your tea – ‘Meyer Gold’ or ‘Meyer Premium.’ It's never really exactly clear what ‘Gold’ stands for. It's supposed to suggest some-

thing refined. But we said, we're going to put information on the labels. I'm a university professor, a teacher of economics, so I'm also concerned about consumer awareness, and that's why our tea is called ‘Tea Campaign.’ We sell tea as part of a campaign, and we state exactly what's inside the packaging.”

In his position as a professor of economics at Berlin's Free University, Faltin teaches his students about the benefits of the one-product entrepreneurial idea. Since it was founded two decades ago, the Tea Campaign's sales model has been imitated by numerous adventurous business people – like this young entrepreneur: he wants to sell canola oil along the lines of Faltin's model, but Professor Faltin is skeptical: [Faltin:] “We need to check whether he has really perfected his idea to make the most of what such a business model can and must offer.” Faltin is strict with his students and insists they think their ideas through.

In the evening, the Indian ambassador pays a visit in honor of the Tea Campaign's twentieth anniversary. The Indian government is a key partner for Faltin. His tea is officially recognized by the Indian Tea Board as original Darjeeling. Once a year, Günter Faltin invites tea lovers and dealers to a tea tasting, where they can sample the latest Darjeeling harvest and its delicate aroma.

Back to the tea shipping department – from here, Faltin is seeking to conquer Japan. He is due to begin selling his product there this month. [Günter Faltin:] “Darjeeling is well known in Japan. It's coveted, but extremely expensive. The packages for sale in Japan are smaller than the ones we've found in Germany in 1985 and prices are even higher than they were in Germany back then. I would even go so far as to call them obscenely expensive. So I think we stand a good chance of success with the Tea Campaign in Japan.”

Faltin doesn't have his own store and only sells direct to online buyers. To date, he has 140.000 individual customers and retailers, most of them in Europe – proof that the only thing you need to be a successful entrepreneur is a good idea.