

World Soccer Match

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Driving home from church after lunch on July 13 we passed the local Erling Klinger plant, a German run manufacturing business which has had a presence in our community for 20 years. The black, red and white German flag flew on a tall pole out front and rippled in the wind. "Yes, Klinger is very big here in Germany," my cousin Martina told me when Klinger first came to town. "It is very well known." After throwing down some lunch I announced to my husband that "of course we will watch the game. I am just going to send Martina a quick e-mail." I ran to the computer and typed "HOPE WE WIN." As I pushed the send button I promptly pondered to myself, "who actually is the WE in that statement," plainly aware of the fact that Argentina also boasts a huge Russian German population.

The game opened as the Argentinian and German teams strutted out onto the massive new soccer field, which had been reported as being ripe with controversy. There had been lingering questions posed in the media as to who would all be getting slices of the Fifa pie. Chancellor Angela Merkel and Putin strolled out amongst a host of dignitaries and I wondered if the two of them they had exchanged any pleasantries. Russia had been awarded the next World Cup games in 2018, and I wondered how many shanties Putin planned to demolish in order to build his new stadium. National anthems were played as my husband hummed along with the German one. "Don't you recognize it?" he asked as I muttered "hmm, I don't know. I'm sure they changed it after Hitler killed himself." I watched Merkel, dressed in a 2 piece pant outfit, as she proudly sang along with her team. "Why it's the melody to a well known hymn," he says, hitting all the right notes of the anthem as he hummed along. Leggy super model Gisele Bundchen of Brazil strutted onto the field along with Tom Brady as they revealed the World Cup, housed in a Louis Vuitton case. Again I reflected in her German name, which is even complete with it's own "Umlaut. Again I surmised that she must be of Russian German descent. There was speculation over which team the present Pope favoured. I remember when the parents of one of the local Klinger plant managers from Germany, an ethnic Romanian, sat at our supper table as my mother and the manger's parents sang the numerous stanzas of the Romanian national anthem together. It was a solemn occasion, a mixture of tears and laughter.

"Who will be the first to blink in this game?" an announcer says as security personnel in black suits are televised patrolling the stadium. The total pool of security consisted of 28,000 workers we are told. Crime, human trafficking and rioting have been rampant throughout these games. I wondered how many had gathered at the our local Rhine Danube Club to watch the action. I think of a local Russian German recently killed in a random car jacking in Brazil, while on business there.

9 minutes into the game Argentina had a great scoring chance. "That came with a ribbon around it," an announcer said. "There won't be many more chances like that!" They give kudos to Klos, the German goalie. "He must be the happiest guy on the team right now," they surmise. 29 minutes into the game Argentina scores a goal, greeeted with jubilation by the fans, but promptly called offside. The score was still 0:0. 46 minutes into the game Germany attempted a shot which bounced off the goal post as the crowd

roared. I watched the lanky Thomas Mueller and Schweinsteiger with their boyish good looks ply their trade as their team still came up empty handed at half time. "I think he's SO hot!" my teenage daughter says, referring to Mueller. I was tempted to switch channels to see where the "Tour de France" was that day and catch up on some of the scenery as well as the action itself. "Yes," my Uncle Harri from Belgium had said to us several years ago. "The Tour is coming right through our town here tomorrow. You guys are in luck," as my jaw dropped. With front row seats we watched Lance lead the pack as I was interviewed for the local paper. Uncle Harri always referred to soccer as "fussball" and regularly attend local games.

88 minutes into the game I decided to start to get supper ready for our company as I peeled the potatoes in front of the television. I cut the watermelon on my mother's wooden breadboard and thought of how she always talked about the abundance of melons in Bessarabia. I was surprised that the melon was nice and ripe, as I never had the knack of picking out a perfect melon as my parents had. 93 minutes into the game overtime will soon start as our company arrives and I give my sister-in-law, also a Russian German, with no interest in history, a short run down on current events in the Ukraine, in response to her question. I also inform her who Chancellor Merkel is.

106 minutes into the game my husband rummages in the kitchen cupboard looking for a clean platter for the steaks he has on the barbeque. Emerging with my mother's fine porcelain gold rimmed square china plate I snatch it out of his hand and cradle it tightly in my arms. "Not that one you don't!" I shriek. It is stamped "BAVARIA" on the bottom.

112 minutes into the game Germany finally scores and victory suddenly appears within reach. A soothing commercial plays for the manufacturer of Guinness. It appears to be the melody to a hymn, "Leaning on the Everlasting Arms." We all lament to each other "isn't that sad. It sure seems to be sending a mixed message on what we should be depending on." We continue eating our Fastbar in front of the TV, minus some potato salad. Everything tasted good. Only the water melon would have tasted better with some freshly fried Rollkuchen....