

Märzbericht - Lucari's 7th Report from Estorf & Nienburg (submitted on 4-3-16)



Spring has hit Germany, and it has hit suddenly. Although the others still gawk and cluck at me in my shorts and t-shirts (they are bundled up), the dramatic change from one week to the next has changed the cold blustery weather into sunny mornings filled with bird song and cool breezes. It is in the midst of one of such mornings that I am typing this and have had to put on my sunglasses in order to see my computer screen over the glare of the warm sun, but I just refuse to let the sun evade me! I have also resumed my usual habit of climbing trees.



März – March – Frühling - spring



The last two weeks of school before the Easter break were really interesting because the 12th grade “Abiturienten” had their last weeks of classes and are now preparing for the very challenging written and oral exams of the “Abitur”. (Passing the “Abitur” is the entrance ticket to almost free German university education. It’s also roughly equivalent to completing the first two years at an American college.) After their classes are over, the “Abiturienten” organize a

“Mottowoche” which is similar to the school pride weeks we have in the high schools in Las Cruces. Each day of the week has a theme such as “just one color” or “Alles außer Mensch” (everything except for human) to which each student finds a fitting costume. Also in the same week I had the pleasure of getting to school by other means than the sardine can full of slightly damp and rather loud children that is called the public bus. This alternative was made available due to the fact that Simon turned 18 and is now allowed to drive alone! Even though I know this was a short bliss, I am still very happy to have been able to sleep those extra 15 minutes during that week.



Altes Rathaus

Old town hall (Mannheim)



Jesuitenkirche (Mannheim)

Shortly before the Easter break, Simon was notified that he had an interview with the “Nationaltheater Mannheim”. Since I had time over the Easter break, I decided to tag along and see the city where my mother spent her Rotary exchange year almost 30 years ago. Opting for more flexible transport by car à la Simon, we made way first to Köln (Cologne) where we slept at a friend’s house to start bright-eyed and bushy-tailed for our excursion to the Nationaltheater. I, having the occasional flash of golden foresight, printed a map of the “Innenstadt” (inner city) so that I wouldn’t be hopelessly lost as I wandered around during his interview. Anyway, this happened to be one of the aforementioned sunny days and I was able to hit all of the places I wanted to see - and some I didn’t have planned. During my wanderings I happened to notice the abundance of sushi restaurants, but due to time constraints (and the fact that the car probably would have reeked of fish) I decided to refrain from any purchase.



Wasserturm—the old water tower
arguably the best known Mannheim landmark

Easter in Germany has some of the same traditions we have in the US such as hiding chocolate eggs in the shrubbery and ceramic pots of the garden, but something that I have not yet experienced in connection with Easter celebrations is a bonfire. The traditional “Osterfeuer” (Easter Fire) goes back to pagan times. The old Germanic people greeted spring with a big bonfire to chase away the cold winter for good. The practical side effect of this pre-Christian ritual was that



SUNSET OVER THE OSTERFEUER

the ash was spread over the fields and served as an excellent fertilizer. Over the centuries, the lighting of the Easter Fire developed into a Christian custom. With it, Christians celebrate the resurrection of Jesus and eternal life.



In order to symbolize this, they light a candle at the Easter Fire and carry it into the dark church where other congregants use it to light their own candles. Nowadays

Easter Fires are lit in many communities all over Germany but often not for religious or superstitious reasons. Building a fire is an opportunity to invite friends, family and neighbors, enjoy good food and beverages and just have a good time. By the way, the German word “Ostern” and the English word “Easter” go back to the Germanic goddess “Ostara” or “Eostræ”, the goddess of spring and fertility.



Getting energy from the Osterfeuer

This year the fire was especially big because Wolfgang gave a three-weeks early notice for people to gather their garden waste, and so there was a massive mountain of freshly trimmed wood. Easter morning the universe decided it was the right time to rain, needless to say the wood was not taking to burn. In order to get the blaze started, Wolfgang had to throw a hay bale on the smoldering pile. That was when it all started to burn really nicely and warm those who complained of the cold. Most of the Lesemann clan was present as well as quite a few from Estorf. My hair smelled like smoke even after I washed it twice, but I must say fire has a certain beauty to it that cannot be ignored and somehow just fits the renewal of spring.

Anyway - I shall see what awaits me back at school on Monday.