Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen.

Director: Sönke Wortmann
Writer: Sönke Wortmann
Date: October 2006
Genre: Documentary
Length: 108 min.

Precis – Karl Moehlmann

The title, an allusion to Heinrich Heine’s poem “Germany. A Winter’s Tale”, juxtaposes the stiff, pedantic Germany of 1843 with the euphoric Germany of the World Cup year of 2006.

Heinrich Heine (1797 – 1856):
Deutschland. Ein Wintermärchen. 1844

In this critical satire, Heinrich Heine renders his impressions of a trip that he took through Germany in the fall of 1943. Having lived in Paris for 13 years, the poet has “Heimweh” for his “Vaterland” and yearns to see his mother in Hamburg again. What he finds in Aachen, in Köln, in Hagen, the Teutoburger Wald, in Paderborn, Minden, Harburg and finally Hamburg is a country obsessed with militant nationalism, hatred of the French, regressive “Vielstaaterei” and a romantic fancy for the middle ages. The cold, unpleasant wintry weather is mirrored in the attitude of the people.

Caput III: “Noch immer das hölzern pedantische Volk,
Noch immer ein rechter Winkel
In jeder Bewegung, und im Gesicht
Der eingefrorene Dünkel.

Sie stehen noch immer so steif herum,
So kerzengerade geschmiegelt,
Als hätten sie verschluckt den Stock,
Womit man sie einst geprügelt.”

Deutschland. Ein Sommermärchen. 2006

Fast forward to 2006. The contrast couldn’t be sharper. It is summer and the weather is fantastic, refuting Heine’s words that “der deutsche Sommer ist wie ein grün angestrichener Winter”. Germany is hosting the Soccer World Cup for the second time since 1974. The whole country is in a celebratory mood, exhibiting a pervasive, contagious “Fröhlichkeit und Leichtigkeit”. This open and hospitable attitude (unexpected and surprising to be sure) charms visitors from all over the world. Never since the fall of the wall on Nov. 9, 1989 has the country been so happy. A new patriotism, joyful and unthreatening, is evident. National flags are flying from every car and house. Fans are dressed and painted with the national colors. No incident of violence towards foreign visitors or rival fans mars the mood.
The success of the national team under California based German Head Coach Jürgen Klinsmann is a key ingredient of the euphoria. Only weeks before the competition began, the team and the coach were heavily criticized. Klinsmann and his staff had introduced innovative training methods in an effort to bring Germany back to the elite few in the world. But the play of the team during the spring of 2006 was uninspiring and uncreative, the players too stiff, fearful and defensive. The long-distance relationship between Klinsmann and the other coaches and the players was questioned in the media.

The nadir was reached in a friendly match against Italy on March 1, 2006 in which Germany was completely outplayed and lost badly 1-4. Nobody expected them to go anywhere. But everything changed when the World Cup started. The team played the kind of soccer that Jürgen Klinsmann had promoted all along: spirited, offensive, confident, imbued with the quintessential never-say-die German quality. The team reached the Semi-Final after a dramatic penalty shootout victory against heavily favored Argentina. Goalkeeper Jens Lehmann, whom Klinsmann had chosen over veteran Oliver Kahn, became the hero by saving two penalty kicks.

Filmmaker, Sönke Wortmann, who directed the 2003 movie “Das Wunder von Bern” about Germany’s first World Championship in 1954 was embedded with the national team from the preparatory training camp in Sardinia to the third place finish against Portugal. The public loved this opportunity to peer behind the curtain. Wortmann enables you to see the players in their training sessions, to observe the tactical decision making of the coaching staff, to hear the motivating speeches that Jürgen Klinsmann gives before the matches and during half time, to witness what happens between the players behind closed doors in the hotels and in the busses, and to absorb the increasing intensity of the fans as they celebrate the unlikely success of this coach and team.

The film premiered on October 3, 2006, the German National Day of unity. By the end of November 2006, more than 4 million people had seen the film, making it the most commercially successful German documentary. If you wondered how this “Wunder of 2006” was possible, Wortmann’s movie gives you the answer from inside.

**The Songs of 2006**

**Sportfreunde Stiller:**

54, 74, 90, 2006, ja, so stimmen wir alle ein
Mit dem Herzen in der Hand und der Leidenschaft im Bein
Werden wir Weltmeister sein.

**Xavier Naidoo - “Dieser Weg”**

Album: “Telegramm für X” (2005)

Also ging ich diese Straße lang
Und die Straße führte zum Meer
Das Lied, das du am letzten Abend sangst
Das spielte nun in mir
Nur ein paar Schritte und dann war ich da
Mit dem Schlüssel zu dieser Tür

Dieser Weg wird kein leichter sein
Dieser Weg wird steinig und schwer
Nicht mit vielem wirst du dir einig sein
Doch dieses Leben bietet so viel mehr

Es war nur ein kleiner Augenblick
Einen Moment war ich nicht da
Danach ging ich einen kleinen Schritt
Und dann wurde es mir klar

Dieser Weg wird kein leichter sein
Dieser Weg wird steinig und schwer
Nicht mit vielem wirst du dir einig sein
Doch dieses Leben bietet so viel mehr

Manche treten dich
Manche lieben dich
Manche geben sich für dich auf
Manche segnen dich
Setz dein Segel nicht
wenn der Wind das Meer aufbraust

Dieser Weg wird kein leichter sein
Dieser Weg wird steinig und schwer
Nicht mit vielem wirst du dir einig sein
Doch dieses Leben bietet so viel mehr