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Russian Social Media Laughs, Canonizes After Stunning World Cup Win

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Twitter

The outpouring of joy following Russia's victory over Spain may have reminded the Kremlin of Soviet-era celebrations after World War II, but the age of social media gave the scenes a 21st-century makeover.

Russia defied the odds by beating Spain on Sunday to advance to the World Cup quarterfinals, sending thousands of ecstatic Russians in the tournament host country to the streets, where they celebrated well into the night.

Goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev gained the immediate status of national hero after making a crucial save with the tip of his toe during penalty shootouts.

In fact, Akinfeev's foot was put on a pedestal within minutes of Russia's victory, earning it the nickname "Foot of God" among Russian Twitter users.

Embed: https://www.instagram.com/p/Bkslz_5lM8H/?taken-by=innubis

Photoshop artists picked up the religious theme and ran with it. "Russia just officially canonized Akinfeev's left foot," Reuters correspondent Polina Ivanova tweeted.

Embed: https://twitter.com/dan_kidane/status/1013594789844045824

The social media spotlight also turned on three unsuspecting hot dog eating fans in traditional Russian headdresses during the game's extra time, inspiring a variety of memes.

Embed: https://twitter.com/Durevestnik/status/1013719772155006976

Embed: https://twitter.com/martin_camera/status/1013484500322521089

Cartoonist Sergei Elkin made a mashup of the two memes, depicting the three fans carrying Akinfeev's foot on their shoulders.

Later, TV reporters discovered the identity of two of the fans: a fashion designer and an employee of a state contractor that runs Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyanin's re-election campaign.

"It's very strange: we [just] came to cheer for the team [and] had a bite of hot dogs," the fans told Russia's Dozhd TV news channel. "Sausages, by the way, lead to victory."

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