

June 5, 2020

So, a bit more distraction seems to be needed, and you seem to appreciate it, so I will tell you a little bit about Copenhagen.

Copenhagen has many, many parks but none more solemn and striking than Ryvangel Memorial Park a few minutes bus ride from central Copenhagen. Ryvangel means "rye field", and in the 19<sup>th</sup> century it was acquired to be used for military barracks and military training.

Denmark is one of the few places in Europe where every Dane, from the king and royal family to the oldest senior citizen or the smallest child, made it their business to make sure not one Jewish person was killed or deported to a concentration camp after the Nazis took control of the country when the king capitulated because he knew armed resistance would be futile and result in many, many deaths.

Some Jewish people were smuggled out of Denmark in small fishing boats to neutral Sweden, others were hidden in the forests and in remote summer cottages, and some were kept in plain sight in Copenhagen and other larger cities.

When the Nazi occupiers ruled that all Jewish people had to wear a yellow star on themselves whenever they were out and about, the king had yellow stars sewed onto his uniforms and regalia, and every other Danish citizen from infants on up did the same.

Ryvangel is a memorial to the members of the Danish resistance who were killed by the Nazis for undermining their plans to export iron ore, coal, and other industrial materials and saving Jewish people.

There is a striking memorial holding the tombs of 106 members of the resistance killed by the Nazis, and a plaque honoring another 91 who were buried in their home towns, and a memorial wall honoring a further 31 who died in German camps and prisons, and plaques with the names of a further 106 who were never found.

So, you get the picture of the reason for the park. Now I will tell why I find it to be such a remarkable and human place. The overall size is rather small, as it is

designed specifically as a memorial; it is not for recreation in the typical sense of that word.

On one side of the park there sits an elementary school, filled with little kids, and if you visit in warmer weather during the daytime, you can hear the kids laughing and playing, and you can hear singing from inside the classrooms when they are not out playing.

The contrasts are heartwarming and heart wrenching; the nobility of the human possibility stands in stark realization of the inestimable value of the sacrifices of those who died so that those children could have a childhood free from violence and fear and loss.

There are many other parks in Copenhagen, several botanical gardens associated with the universities and colleges, lovely lawns and flowers on the grounds of former royal palaces, very modern leisure areas in the extremely modern area out near the airport, and many buildings in central Copenhagen with what are called living walls, which means that a whole 2 or 3 story wall on a building or the roof will be planted with succulents in the summers and in the winter, mosses, and other native vegetation that can survive the cold.

In this time of stark contrasts in our country and in our world when our pasts seem in conflict in many ways with what our future may or may not be, it is important to try and hold so many, many feelings in some kind of patient silence and remember that the laughter of children, all children can be our greatest legacy if we choose to leave that to them.

One of my most favorite images of Copenhagen can be found by clicking on the following link. It is a "Flash Mob" event that takes place on the driverless metro trains.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gww9\\_S4PNV0&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gww9_S4PNV0&feature=youtu.be)