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Do you remember Yugoslavia?

Sunday, October 25, 2015

Capital Belgrade - controlled by Tito

If yes, you must be at least 40 years old. 7 countries make up that area now - Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Macedonia, Bosnia - Herzegovina, Montenegro, and Kosovo.

Unlike the "Velvet Divorce" that peacefully divided Czechoslovakia into the Czech and Slovak Republics in 1993, the Balkan peninsula experienced much violence and bloodshed.

Much is still visible.



There are many beautiful areas in the region with wonderful, friendly people and I will post a lot of those in future blogs.

Right now my thoughts are about the strife endured by ordinary people during that time.

Earlier in the week we visited a home and a school in Croatia. Today it's Serbia's turn. Our river cruise line offers us the opportunity to interact with local people beyond the tour guides who show us the main sites of each stop.

On this and other visits to Europe we saw many memorials. Some were very old like those erected in gratitude for the end of the plague (most cities have one). Some document the horrors of WWI and WWII. Those events are within the memories of our oldest generations.

Sadly some memorials are more recent and within the memory of my grandchildren.

In a church courtyard these side by side sculptures remember both Christian and Jewish victims with appropriate symbolism.

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It's vital to remember and memorials help us do that, but it's more important to determine how to stop it from happening again.

This now tranquil scene was the site of bombardment across the Danube River separating Croatia and Serbia in the 1990s.



In this town Vukovar Serbian and Croatian children still attend separate schools. This was not the case in the other schools we visited in other towns.

I wonder about the wisdom of such separation. I've often thought that only associating with like minded people, especially from childhood, and surrounding ourselves ONLY with people like us while distancing ourselves from those we perceive as different can have serious consequences.

If we don't see each other as individuals, we run the risk of lumping everyone together based on ethnicity,

nationality, religion etc. If we continue an isolated existence, do not tone down our rhetoric and seek common ground instead of emphasizing our differences, could we not in time become "Balkanized" as well.

After the bombing at the Boston Marathon, the Czech Republic had to put out a press release informing Americans that they are Czechs not Chechnyans so please stop the hate mail and threats.

Obviously we should not ascribe the evil deeds of individuals indiscriminantly to anyone who happens to share a common heritage. It would also help to study geography.

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LYNDALOVES2HIKE



Thanks for sharing this - I still have trouble remembering to say 'Czech Republic' instead of Czechoslovakia - we have a friend in Prague and we first met him before the split. He explained that the Slovaks wanted to be separate and their end of the country was much less desirable for many reasons so when they suggested separating, the Czechs had no problem with it. By the way, he refers to himself as Bohemian and that used to be the 'kingdom' for the area around Prague - there are two other areas in Czech Republic now, Silesia and Moravia. Apparently at one point there was a discussion about whether Czech Republic would consist of only Bohemia or all 3 provinces but it was left up to the people where they wanted to go and this is how the split ended up.

I've never visited Croatia or any of the other former Yugoslavian territories but maybe that will make it to the list someday - for our next several trips, I want to see Spain, Portugal, the Scandinavian countries, England, Ireland, Scotland....and also spend more time in Poland, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg and France, all of which we have visited but not extensively - so I'm not sure I'll live long enough to make it Croatia, etc, haha, since we can only go to Europe once every couple of years!

2041 days ago



SWEETNEEY



I remember Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia. I've never been to Eastern Europe - it's on my bucket list.

2054 days ago



WILSONWR



We should never demonize a group of people for the actions of a few. It is embarrassing what some of our citizens did to the Czech Republic. It is even more embarrassing when the bomber had nothing to do with them! It is a very sad commentary on a segment of our population.

2054 days ago



ONEKIDSMOM



Wise, wise words... nothing to add but "amen".

2054 days ago



LIVEDAILY



I do remember Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia as well. Actually, I've been cleaning out my basement and had to get rid of my set of encyclopedias. No one wanted them, so I ripped out all of the maps from them (circa 1956). Iran was still called Persia, and Burma was still Burma. It was the USSR, and not Russia. So many changes in our lifetime.



2055 days ago



PHEBESS



You've totally summarized what we keep learning over and over again in our travels - "seek common ground instead of emphasizing our differences" - and yes, separate but equal doesn't work, and only breeds fear of the stranger or the different.

2055 days ago

MARYJEANSL



While I certainly agree with you in principle, I do not see terrorists as being willing to see us as



individuals, and, while they continue to feel and act as they do, I don't see a lot of hope, honestly. I wish I did.

I do remember Yugoslavia. I learned about it in school as a kid. I did not learn, or perhaps didn't remember, that it was created artificially by force out of so many different ethnic groups. I only learned that when violence erupted.
2055 days ago



PHOENIX1949

Yes, I remember. Enjoyed the photos and history lesson and your thoughts.
2055 days ago



GARDENCHRIS

it is good to remember history so we do not repeat it.
2055 days ago



WATERMELLEN

Such a thoughtful and moving blog.

In Canada our recent federal election was a massive expression of Canadian people with respect to reclaiming our fundamental national characteristic: an insistence upon mutual acceptance of diversity with kindness and respect.

We've got Canada back. And it feels good.
2055 days ago



HELEN_BRU

Thanks for reminding us! And enjoy your travels.
2055 days ago



CD4114015

YES! I do remember Yugoslavia...and thank you for the awesome BLOG, HISTORY lesson

and GEOGRAPHY lesson! I LOVE these blogs!
2055 days ago



KELLIEBEAN

Thank you for a very insightful and wonderful pictures!

2055 days ago



MISCHAKEO

I like seeking common ground instead of our differences! Thanks for an insightful blog.
2056 days ago



TORTOISE110

'tone down rhetoric and seek common ground." YES!
2056 days ago



SWEDE_SU

i never did understand what went on in that region in the 90s. seven countries now instead of one! we recently met a young woman in sweden who was a refugee from bosnia as a child in the 90s. i can see conversations in the future... thank you for sharing a very insightful blog!
2056 days ago

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