

The Tale of 3 Houses

A look at peace and how it continues to remain elusive

Imagine a road in the UK, in the country side with rolling hills on a bright summer's day. Either side of the road is a carpet of green – farming land with trees, a few sheep, and further on in another field, a few cattle grazing and some of them laying down enjoying the sun.

In the UK you tend not see any people on the farm when you are driving through the countryside, say from London to Dorset in the Southwest or anywhere.

Now, imagine you drive further on towards your home, and turn into your road. It has only 3 houses and you all know each other but you have never visited or entered each other's homes.

The first home you come across is a small house, neatly kept with 2 Bedrooms, a small garden at the back but not the front, no garage.

You see your neighbor going to work every day. He has to walk to work – he has no car and no money to spend on buses. His family of 4 kids and his wife have



lived there for many years – in fact you found them there when you bought your house 12 years ago.

You did not 'discover' the house; it was already there – centuries before.

All the same, you prefer to call it 'the Small Cottage'. In fact you refer to it that way every time you talk about your street to your friends. You tell your friends there is always music wafting its way over the wind,

and you hear it every time you drive past the house when you come in from work. You tell your friends you don't much care for their taste in music – you prefer Classical.

So, you drive further up your street and pass the second house. This one is a little more grand. It has a garden at the back AND the front! They also have a garage with 2 cars parked in front of them. It is a much larger plot.

You never hear a noise coming out of this house. There are only 2 kids that you have seen once, many years ago- they never come to visit. But the house does have several visitors come and go- different nationalities and ages. You think this is a 5 bedroom house but you have never been inside the house. You don't really know what they do for a living as they don't look old enough to have retired. Whatever they do they look like they are doing very well at it. The cars alone are top of the range- and would cost a small fortune you imagine.

These people you decide must be a professional couple. Again you have never spoken to them- you know nothing about them, they keep to themselves. You have just seen them on the odd occasion you happen to be getting into your car to go out. You notice one day as you are driving by the house, that the house has a name 'Europea'.

Eventually you get to your house which has served you well over the years. You inherited the house from your parents 12 years ago and it comes with 3 bedrooms – so not as grand as Europea – but this is where you now live and have carried on the family traditions such as the Boxing Day gathering of all the family , that is held every year at Xmas. As all the houses on the street all have a name, you decide to call your house 'Britannia'.

After all, your family served in the British Army in the Gulf, in the 2 World Wars, and even in Northern Ireland. You have friends in America who fought alongside you and who you speak to regularly. You can depend on them if ever you needed help of any sort. Infact you consider them True Allies.

When you arrive home after a hard day's work, facing challenges to your business and then ultimately your way of life, you can close the door, just switch off , take a nice cup of tea (or a stronger beverage) , shower , and call your friends over to join you for a great evening.

They will arrive in one piece – in the UK, this is expected!

As you sit down and relax to enjoy the evening whist you wait for your friends, you switch on the TV to catch up on the news before they arrive, and it is reporting a 'war' in the Middle East or in Africa you are not sure as you have joined midway through the report...

Suddenly, like a Thunderbolt it hits you - as you watch the TV, you realise:

- 1) You have never seen an Army tank driving down your street – or in fact any street in the UK, in your lifetime - and you are over 60!
- 2) In fact, no one in the UK who is a civilian (i.e. with nothing to do with the army) has ever even **seen** a combat soldier on the streets of the UK, in full gear, or any gear (e.g. hand grenades, etc.).
- 3) An ordinary civilian in the UK would not know what to do with a gun if they met one! There is no need for one – unless you live on a farm. Farmers tend to use guns for hunting fowl – not to kill / injure people. Everyone else does not OWN a gun – what for ? – No Need.

So it is possible to live in Peace- we have already proved it.

It is possible because we live in Peace, in the UK, everyday- without a second thought! We live in it, in the whole of Europe, EVERYDAY!

Clearly, this is the benchmark – so we cannot ask “What does peace look like?” – We live in it. We already know. And we should wish it, and more importantly, actively put it in place in every country. This Peace is based on the Rule of Law. Without that foundation, being evenly applied to ALL States/Countries/Civilians it becomes difficult, or even impossible, to create any Peace anywhere. The result is that Peace remains elusive.

So, we live in peace, where you do not fear being bombed at a minute’s notice. You do not fear being told to evacuate , because the troops are coming so you must drop everything and run. There is no time to pack, there is no time to go to the bank and get some cash or book a flight ticket. If you delay you lose your life.

In conclusion, we must always remember, that when a refugee comes to your shore, your ‘House’, they are not on holiday. They have been FORCED to leave their home – their ‘Small Cottage’ , their friends, their customs. This goes beyond trauma, especially for the older adults who will have roots embedded.

ALL they want to do is to go back home- once it is safe i.e. there is PEACE. Some refugees leave behind mansions (not ‘Small Cottages’), prestige, status, a life that would take years to rebuild – if ever. We must have PEACE- it is urgent!

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