

**JENS ULRIK HØGH**

Jens Ulrik Høgh, 51, is a full-time Danish freelance writer who has been living in Sweden for the last 18 years. He is a family father with vast travel experience and a keen interest in our world. Over the years, he has participated in the ongoing public debate in most Danish mainstream newspapers.

CAN WE LEARN from history? Imagine a Putin-like crocodile in murky waters awaiting its window of opportunity to snatch a juicy wildebeest out of the herd.

If that were me, I would choose my moment to strike just as he did when he sent his army to conquer Ukraine in (what he hoped would be) a swift Blixtkrieg.

In a Western fantasy bubble

LET'S BE honest. From the outside, the Western democracies must have looked weaker than ever. A chaotic, almost circus-like political game was

the norm – especially in the US and UK. Public opinion was almost entirely concerned with debates on subjects like gender identity, the effect of vaccines, structural racism, animal rights, gun rights, sexual harassment etc.

Our societies were busy erasing history by rewriting classic literature and tearing down statues that reminded us of a distant past. We were having endless discussions about whether or not it was offensive to sell standard pig-skin-coloured band-aids as 'skin-coloured'.

The problem is certainly not that these subjects are unimportant. Of course, they are important! The problem is that we – in our eagerness to become the most morally-advanced civilization in the history of humankind – forgot about unpleasant realities outside our Western fantasy bubble.

It was as if a pink veil of fairy dust clouded our collective judgment.

Not only did we ignore, but we denounced the necessity of adequate military strength to meet real-life challenges to our idea of eternal peace, love, and harmony. I am, of course, thinking of challenges like rogue Russian dictators invading their neighbouring countries.

We're a moral superpower!

IN SWEDEN, where I live, politicians got to the point where they announced they were actively working on turning Sweden into a "moral superpower". At the same time, they were dismantling and scrapping most of our military. They obviously believed in eternal peace.

They must have thought that any future conflict could be solved using a feministic approach of love, sense and dialogue. It is undeniably a beautiful thought, but we all got a rather loud wake-up call in February.

It is a somewhat cynical fact that a Patriot missile is far more effective at stopping a Russian



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cruise missile from levelling a Ukrainian playground than all the best intentions in the world.

Asleep during history classes

DID WE forget history lessons because very few of us can remember the harsh realities of war? I sound like a grumpy old white man (and I am), but I cannot recall any examples of significant warlords with ambitions to conquer the world being stopped by dialogue.

My Danish grandparents (may they rest in peace) lived through the World War II. They struggled every day for five years to get through the raw deal. People in their generation risked their lives to rescue Danish Jews from certain death at the hands of the (actual) Nazis. Others got killed fighting against oppression.

These days we are whining about butter prices. Many among us advocate that we let the Russian invaders keep conquered terrain in the hope they will refrain from escalating the war (thus driving the butter prices up). These people actually recommend we appease the crocodile by throwing an entire nation into its wide-open jaws.

I can only presume my grandparents are rotating with disgust in their graves and would be terrified if they saw how soft and naïve we've become. Are human beings truly capable of drawing any lessons from the past, or are we doomed to let it repeat itself forever?

1864, 1940, 2022 ...

BY THIS point in history, we should have realised that evil forces are always lurking in the muddy waters, ready to strike at an opportune moment for a juicy reward. But we have failed miserably to do so. We were unprepared. And now we are in it up to our necks. Again.

Human beings may only be able to truly learn when we get burned ourselves and carry the scars on our bodies and minds for the rest of our days. If so, we need a reminder to keep us alert every 75 years or so.

It's depressing, but burning our own fingers may be the only true history lesson that we can fully grasp. Had Putin waited another 10-15 years, we would probably have softened so much that we would not have resisted the crocodile at all.

**JULIA GRÄSSER**

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just to give, or can it create value beyond the giving. Think outside the gift box (pun intended). Think gift cards for an experience or some self-care, like private yoga, breathwork or a massage (hint, hint ... email me to learn about my gift cards). Or maybe make a donation to a good cause. The recipient might have a charity that is close to their heart, but if not, how about the Earth Child Project, which enables you to gift a child in a township a year of weekly yoga. You will touch more than one heart with this.

Break the routine!

Dance, shake, laugh or do a breathing exercise (yes we want to break our often bad breathing patterns too). Stay with your mindfulness, fitness or yoga routine. This is what we often compromise first when it gets busy. But really, you need to make time for it, even if it's not as long. Don't compromise on taking care of yourself! If your company does not offer any Office Yoga, consult online options and maybe even make your colleagues accountable to stick with your routine. You can thank me later.



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Take it easy on the booze

In Denmark the time of Xmas lunches goes hand in hand with lots of drinks. Take it easy. A hangover does not only cause additional stress on your system, it will also take productive hours from the morning after away from you.

Eat healthily

Uh, Xmas candy. I won't go into details about why too much candy isn't good for you. Rather I want to give some ideas: how you can still enjoy your sweets, but don't forget your nutrition. Add plenty of natural plant snacks to your Xmas plate, such as oranges (yeah vitamin C), walnuts

(great for your brain) or dates (fibre feast!). One candy, one fruit. Reduce the sugar crush and go through Xmas full of vitality.

Treat yourself

Join a mindful, relaxing or self-care event. I have two de-stress workshops at Yogaladen coming up. The wonderful Shanelle and I will be hosting an online self-love workshop. Or maybe your local yoga studio is offering some inward focus classes during this hectic time. Again, during hectic times you must find time for yourself. It enables us all to enjoy a calm and relaxed Xmas together.

Get stuff done early

If you haven't booked catering, booked flight tickets or bought presents, start now! It will feel great if everything is done in good time, and you can then enjoy cosy evenings with friends and family instead of running around like a maniac up and down busy shopping streets.

Talk to family about gifts

Sometimes we assume they want something, but in reality they already have a lot of material stuff. Think sustainability too: do we buy something