

October 09, 2001

Dinner at Atlantik-Brücke
Berlin, Atlantik-Brücke

Dear Dr. Oetker,
Dear Dr. Lindemann,
distinguished members of Atlantik Bruecke:

It is an honor for me to be here, and I appreciate your generosity in welcoming me to Germany. I came here but a few short weeks ago, yet the events that have transpired have made my time here very full.

In some ways, the name of your organization says it all: Atlantik Bruecke. You were quick off the mark nearly fifty years ago, eager to span the distance between our nations, not only the physical space but also the social distance created by war. You recognized the need to re-establish the community of values that Germany and the United States share at the deepest level and your success is notable. You have also evolved with the times: organizing exchanges, developing analysis, reaching out to new audiences. Today your bridge has grown into a network that engages political and business decision-makers; military echelons; journalists, scholars, and educators; young leaders and high school students.

Let me say how much I admire not only what you do but also what you stand for. We all were sorely tested on September 11, when terrorist attacks devastated American lives and buildings and hearts. In many ways, we are trying to understand these horrific events, even as we proceed with deliberation to root out the scourge of terrorism. The United States asks every nation to join a world campaign to combat this evil and the effort has begun and continues as we speak tonight.

Thanks to the kind of work that Atlantik Bruecke has done, Germany stands shoulder to shoulder with the United States. The outpouring of sympathy and the countless public and private actions and initiatives from Germany have touched the United States to the core. And for me, personally, bearing witness to this response has been a most humbling and meaningful experience. I would like to take a moment to personally thank you for the benefit concert which you organized on behalf of victims and their families immediately following the terrorist attacks. You incorporated sorrow and compassion, respect for the people of New York and the resolve of Washington, and the hope that from this senseless tragedy the world can forge new relationships, renewed commitment and a renewed stability.

What has been said in many times can also be said here: the roots of democracy are deep and strong. Terrorism will have no victory over the American spirit - its openness, generosity, and respect for individual rights. We will work with Germany and with nations around the world to protect and defend open and free societies.

As I begin my new position as U.S. Ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany, I rely on organizations such as Atlantik Bruecke to provide me with the benefit of your experience. While the United States and Germany are joined historically, democratically, and economically and are allies in a great range of organizations, including the United Nations and NATO, we of course, have differences. Certainly our respective founding and historical experiences cause us to approach a range of social questions somewhat dissimilarly. I believe these differences are healthy, in that they allow us to learn from one another. We do not want to duplicate our experience but to enrich it, and that enrichment is possible because our starting point is shared commitment to democratic values. And so, even in the shadow of September 11 and the concentrated effort we must make in a worldwide coalition effort, we must be committed to furthering the discussion between Germany and the United States. Of course, we are focussed now almost exclusively on the primary task before us, but let's also talk about other issues of concern to our citizens: about the environment, about social structures in our societies, about which values ultimately define us as people. Some of the mutual stereotypes we still have about one another continue to define relationships, and I know that Atlantik

Brucke is doing much to move us beyond these cliches.

But I am not telling you anything new. The Atlantic Brucke has been fostering a multi-faceted discussion between two great nations for nearly half a century. It is vitally important that this discussion occur around boardroom tables in New York and kitchen tables in Indiana, in chambers of government and civic institutions, in universities and schools - in synagogues, mosques, and churches. It also is important that the discussion engage leaders and Multiplikatoren but also those who do not occupy positions of leadership but want to understand the evolving world in which the United States and Germany play important roles.

As I look at the faces before me, and examine the list of attendees, I am struck by the wealth of knowledge, experience, care, commitment and support that you, the members, have brought to Atlantik Brucke and its activities. I am honored to be here among you, I look forward to working with you, and I am happy to continue a discussion of matters of interest and importance to our respective countries.

Thank you.