

As prepared for delivery.

"Reflections"
Frankfurt September 11 Memorial
September 17, 2002
Ambassador Coats

Last week, we commemorated the first anniversary of the terrorist attacks of September 11. First and foremost, it was a day of remembrance. A day of remembrance for those who lost their lives in a ruthlessly planned, senseless, evil act of terrorism.

That first memorial brought back the shock and horror of those first hours, the images and emotions of that sad and tragic day, one year ago.

I doubt if any of us will ever forget -- where we were, what we were doing, who we knew or lost, how far away we felt -- when we first learned of the attacks of September 11.

Marsha and I arrived in Berlin on September 7. When we first heard the terrible and tragic news of September 11, Marsha and I were at the Residence. "Unsere Koffer in Berlin" were not yet unpacked. We were hosting a lunch -- our first official lunch for new acquaintances and Embassy contacts. September 11, suddenly and dramatically, changed all the plans we had made for settling in and getting to know our new German friends and neighbors.

Like people around the world, we turned to the telephone -- to find out if our loved ones were unharmed. Our son-in-law was working in the Pentagon last September. We finally heard that he was safe, but also that he had lost his commander and friends and colleagues.

We turned to the television -- and first saw those images, the images that remain seared in our minds.

After the initial shock, I proceeded to the Embassy. There were obviously important and immediate concerns about the security of the Embassy and our Consulates and the American presence elsewhere in Germany. As the evening approached, I looked outside my office window and saw people gathering outside the Embassy -- lighting candles, laying flowers. I was most moved.

That began an extraordinary expression of sympathy on the part of the German people that I will never forget, that the American people will never forget.

Frankfurt Consular District

In the aftermath of September 11, the people of Germany displayed in countless ways -- through prayers and gestures, word and initiatives -- heartfelt support for the victims of the terrorist attacks. On behalf of the American people, please allow me to thank you for that outpouring of moral and material support. It was a source of great comfort and great strength.

Thousands of people came to the Consulate here in Frankfurt to offer their condolences and support for the American people, and, perhaps, to light a candle in remembrance or to leave behind a bouquet of flowers. Minister President Koch, Burgermeister Vandreiike, Princess of Hanover, you, and many other high-ranking government officials, are included in these numbers. School children also came, often leaving behind their tears, in addition to a flower or a poem.

Representative of those gestures is a plaque that Lord Mayor Petra Roth unveiled last week on the anniversary of 9/11, at a meeting of the American German Business Club at the Amerika Haus. One year ago, the American German Business Club was just concluding their monthly meeting when the terrible news of the attacks became known. A year later, they met again, in remembrance.

The support has been ongoing. Commerzbank has contributed over a half-million euros to bring hundreds of the relatives of the victims of 9/11 to Germany, offering these visitors from America a way to make new friends and showing them that the people of Germany really do care. You met one of those people a few minutes ago, Dianne Kerwin. We are happy that the Chairman of Commerzbank, Mr. Klaus-Peter Mueller, is with us tonight.

Countless others have collected money and given their time to help the relatives of the victims. One notable example is Christof Schwarzer, a volunteer fireman in neighboring Bad Homburg. He was so moved by the tragedy befalling the New York firefighters that he collected a relatively large quantity of money and stuffed it in a bag. He then went into New York and banged on the window of the first fire truck that he saw. He said to those inside that he had money he wanted to give to them. Well, I am told that the firefighters in the truck looked at him as if he were crazy. However, they sent him to a nearby firehouse, and Christof was able to hand over the money he had collected. This was the start of a special relationship with the Fire Department of New York and the relatives of the firefighters killed on 9/11. Christof and his wife Heike, who are also here, remain active in bringing the survivors of 9/11 to this region.

The Americans, who have benefited from these acts of generosity and compassion, are, themselves, extremely grateful for kindness shown to them. What fine examples of German-American friendship.

A Year Later

And now, one year has gone by.

A year that we will never forget -- because the images that seemed so unbelievable one year ago, have become a part of our world, a part of our common history.

A year that will always be remembered -- because so much has happened, and so much has changed.

For America has changed. Even if on the surface, life has gone back to normal.

The images of September 11, the faces of tragedy and bravery, inspired in President Bush's words, "a deeper appreciation of the things that matter most in our lives -- our faith, our love for family and friends, and our freedom."

America has changed. Americans have had to come to terms with the realization that the United States has determined enemies, and that we are not invulnerable to their attacks. And the recognition that although the attacks may have occurred in the United States, they were aimed at us all -- at all nations and communities that embrace democracy, the rule of law, freedom of expression, religious pluralism, and other basic principles of modern societies.

America has changed. We resolved a year ago to honor every last person lost. And to honor those values we cherish.

In the same spirit with which we fought the tyranny and evils of the past, we must now resolve to

address the challenges of today -- and the challenges are still many. As President Bush said a year ago, and again last week at the United Nations, the struggle will require perseverance and resolve. Together we must go forward.

The horror and shock of September 11th put the list of issues facing our global society in a different perspective. We clearly have been presented with a new, transcending defining issue that has already affected our national, bilateral and multilateral agenda.

We stand today at the future location of the Frankfurt consulate. This consulate, already larger than most embassies, will gain in importance. It is a symbol of our commitment to the German-American partnership and the importance we attach to it.

As we confront the challenges before us, I remain convinced that our common strengths will overcome great evil with even greater good.