

Number one, my colleagues should be aware that all of our friends and partners, particularly the residents of Berlin, grieve with the people of the United States.

From the piles of flowers, cards, and candles stacked waist-high on the barricades just outside the American Embassy to the teary-eyed mayor of a small town who handed a condolence book signed by everyone in his village to our ambassador, the evidence of genuine sorrow for the people of the United States was overwhelming.

On Thursday, I met with my friend, Ambassador Dan Coates, formerly of this body and now our man in Berlin, as he showed me the thousands of drawings, cards, and letters sent to the people of the United States at the embassy, some simply were addressed in crayon to our "Our Dear Friends."

As the only American official at this conference, I was inundated with heartfelt expressions of condolence, and I felt the awkward gratitude of a citizen of a nation not accustomed to asking for help.

Second, I am pleased to report that our foreign policy initiatives immediately following the attack have been an unqualified success. President Bush has reversed many previous negative impressions of our country's leadership. In comment after comment, representatives from countries that had once ridiculed the United States foreign policy heaped praise on the patience and the strength of our President.

Additionally, Hoosiers can be proud of the great work of our ambassador, Dan Coates. He has been the very personification of grace under pressure. I learned Thursday that he and his wife, Marsha, arrived in Germany only 4 days before the terrorist attacks. Less than 1 week after his arrival, he stood to receive the sympathies of over 200,000 Germans who gathered in a candlelight vigil at the Brandenburg Gate. This is a tribute all Americans should know about.

Thirdly, the European political support for military action is firm but not permanent. Most of the participants of the conference openly spoke of the need for a strong retaliatory strike. As one diplomat said, the terrorists must "learn that there is a steep price to be paid for such action."

Most also noted, however, that support for military action might not last long. Representatives from Great Britain and Germany spoke of strong antiwar movements in many NATO countries, and predicted that, after recovering from the initial shock of the attacks, left-of-center governments in these countries would, again, face pressure to withdraw support for U.S. action.

America must act boldly and rapidly in insisting upon a military response before support from our allies dissipates.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, our allies are deeply skeptical about the depth of America's commitment in the Middle East. They must be reassured. Many of our friends in the Middle East told me privately that they believed the United States has been in retreat in the region since the early 1990s. The failure to respond forcefully to terrorist attacks on our North Africa embassies and the USS *Cole*, combined with the last administration's determination to pressure Israel into trading land for peace, has sent the message that U.S. resolve in the region is weakening.

Whatever action we initiate must involve the overwhelming and sustained use of force to demonstrate our unwavering support for stability and democracy in the region. Only this type of response will allay concerns among our friends and provide a clear warning to our enemies that America is in the Middle East to stay.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I told all of the assembled diplomats and parliamentarians at a banquet on Friday evening that it was altogether fitting that we were holding this conference in the city of Berlin.

When I first visited Berlin as a college student 25 years ago, the city was divided by a wall separating east from west. It was nearly universally accepted that this devastated city would remain divided, but the United States refused it abandon the dream of a reunited Berlin.

From President Kennedy's airlift to President Reagan's challenge that Gorbachev "tear down this wall," America stood for peace and freedom in Berlin. Today our dream of a reunited Germany and a thriving and united Berlin is a reality. If Berlin could rise from the ashes of war and division, surrounded on all sides by hostile powers, perhaps the Middle East, too, can rise from a history of warfare and deep disunity to become a place where peace and freedom prosper.

OUR HOPE NOT BROKEN

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ISRAEL) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mr. ISRAEL. Mr. Speaker, recently I attended a candlelight vigil at the Deer Park High School on Long Island on behalf of those missing and lost on the attack on the World Trade Center.

Following that ceremony, I have had the privilege of meeting with the Szewczuk family. Jessica Szewczuk gave me a poem she wrote about the Trade Center attack. Her words are particularly poignant because her father is a New York firefighter, one of the countless heroes who has saved lives in the true spirit of America.

On behalf of all of those heroes, I would like to read Jessica's poem to my colleagues. She writes:

When the Twin Towers were hit
Everyone was in shock
People screaming and running
Not believing what was happening to us
We the nation of strength and teams
The nation that gives hope and dreams
The nation that was built with confidence
and care.
The nation that will always be there
When this tragedy occurred everyone went
mad
The city was in chaos, really bad
People said that everyone would be torn
They were right for we continue to mourn
This tragedy will be hard to mend
But never have we been so close
Everyone is everyone's friend
This terror that happened just brought us
tighter
Boosted up our confidence and made our
hearts brighter
We are all working as a team, we're all help-
ing out
The city is slowly being fixed and there is
less doubt
So there goes to show that whatever may be
Our people will always be confident and free
Nothing can ruin our foundation
No one can take apart this nation
No one can kill America's heart
Nothing can rip our bond apart
Our flesh and blood has built this great na-
tion
Our hearts and mind have created America's
foundation
So whatever happens and whatever goes on
America will always continue to be strong
Nothing can make us weak
Only help build our strength to the highest
peak
No one can ever put us to defeat
For America's heart will always continue to
beat.

I am privileged to represent the Szewczuk family in the United States Congress.

THE RURAL PROBLEM

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2001, the gentlewoman from North Carolina (Mrs. CLAYTON) is recognized during morning hour debates for 5 minutes.

Mrs. CLAYTON. Mr. Speaker, in 1908, President Roosevelt charged the Country Life Commission with the task of solving the "rural problem." He identified this problem as the fact that the social and economic institutions of this country are not keeping pace with the Nation as a whole.

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Uttered almost 100 years ago, those words just as easily describe our situation in America today.

Many people are aware that there is indeed a farm crisis plaguing rural America. However, this crisis does not stop at the farm. Consider the crumbling infrastructure, lack of educational and employment opportunities, out-migration of our youth, inadequate health care facilities, and a growing digital divide. These are just a few of the struggles our rural communities must overcome.

Consider the following sobering statistics: of the 250 poorest counties in