

Madrid, March 11, 2004: A Date Never to Forget



Millions March for Peace

By Rebecca Baird

On September 11 2001, I watched the twin towers come crashing down on CNN from an island in the Atlantic. Where were you? Witnessing 9-11 from afar was horrible. When Madrid was so ruthlessly attacked on March 11, I went through the same emotions all over again, with the added realization that we live in dangerous times, and that terrorism is truly a global problem, not something isolated to certain parts of the world. When President Aznar called for peace demonstrations throughout the country on Friday evening, I knew I had to be there. It was overwhelming: the wave of people marching for their country and for peace. The streets were packed. It was pouring down rain. The Spanish people responded to this tragedy with courage, as millions marched through the streets of Madrid on March 12. Anyone and everyone was on their way to support the victims and denounce terror.

The most touching moment for me came as the people were chanting "El pueblo unido, nunca sera vencido!" (The united village will never be defeated!) A small boy alongside me incredulously asked his father, "Estamos en un *pueblo*?" (Are we in a *village*?) The father answered, "No, son, we *ARE* a village."

May God bring healing and goodness from the ashes of terror.

WHY?

By YuenMary Lo

The one thing I can promise is that I don't have any answers.

On March 11, a woman colleague of my husband died in the bombings at Atocha. She left behind two young children.

My husband and I watched the news and were shown horrific images of the wreckage of the trains, the terror and total bewilderment on the faces of the commuters. We both cried.

In the days following this senseless attack, we were bombarded with heartbreaking stories of those who lost fathers, brothers, wives, and close friends. My many so-called urgent matters all paled into insignificance. The stories of dead immigrant labourers were especially poignant to me, a foreigner. Many had come to Spain because they had no jobs and little hope in their own countries. Their hopes died in the cruel flames of the terrorists' bombs on March 11.

When I was young, I ran away from home once because I wasn't allowed to do something and I just exploded. I caused my mother a lot of pain and anguish. And when eventually I returned and went to sleep in my own bed once again, on waking up the next morning, my first thought was 'Please God, yesterday never happened.' I hoped that I could wipe out the day when so much hurt was felt. I woke up on Friday, March 12, and almost managed to forget the bombings, but then I remembered and wished that the day before had never happened.

My husband suggested that whoever carried out the bombings

should be made to watch the horrific scenes and the desperate families talking about their loss on TV in their prison cells from morning 'til night over and over again until they die to realise what they have done.

I am convinced that these terrorists believe firmly but blindly in their convictions, because otherwise one can't explain why they did what they did. I know we should all carry on with our normal routine and act as if nothing has happened. However, I also know things have changed forever.

I remember reading the word 'forever' in the novel 'The Horse Whisperer'. There was a scene when little boy Frank was out camping one summer in the wilderness with his family. It was a beautiful night and Frank was lying on his back watching the stars with the shadow of the mountains in the background and said to his father: 'If only you could make now last forever'. His father replied, 'I guess that's all forever is, just one long trail of nows. And I guess all you can do is try and live one now at a time without getting too worked up about the last now or the next now'.

Writing this, I have wanted to share a few moments with you in the hope that together we can unload our heavy hearts and find the strength to carry on with our lives.

As I said from the beginning, I don't have any answers.

Emails of Solidarity from Around the World



From: "Open Door"
Subject: Madrid Tragedy
Date: Fri, 12 Mar 2004 09:24:31 +0100

Dear Susan,

I was terribly shocked to hear about the terrible tragedy which occurred in Madrid yesterday morning and my thoughts immediately turned to you and members of International Newcomers Club hoping and praying that none of you had families on board those trains. My thoughts and prayers are with you all at this very sad time.

With deepest sympathy.
Ismelda Pellet
Coordinator of Open Doors, The Hague

From: "agnes vleugels"
To: suebowenmilla@yahoo.com
CC: rlhuey@msn.com
Subject: march 11
Date: Sat, 13 Mar 2004 10:30:23 +0000

dear susan and dear members of "nuevas amigas"

the recent terrorist attacks in Madrid have shocked us deeply. our thoughts of sympathy, support and friendship go to you. in our small way the international clubs try to contribute to a world of understanding each others cultures, backgrounds and ways of living.

we feel concern for all the families that lost a beloved one in this dreadful disaster.

kindest regards
agnes van de walle - vleugels

From: "Paul and Patty Gibian"
CC: "IWAP" , "Open Door"
Subject: Thinking of you
Date: Sun, 14 Mar 2004 11:59:15 +0100

Dear Roberta and Susan,
We have been thinking of you so much in the last days as we hear about this horrible tragedy in Madrid. Here in Prague, we send you our condolences and sympathy at this sad time. It is tragic and frightening times we live in. I wanted you to know you are in our thoughts and prayers.

Sincerely,
Patty Gibian
International Women's Association of Prague

Sun, 14 March
Dear Roberta:

Our deepest sympathy and sincere condolences to you, and the members of the "Nuevas Amigas" International Club on the loss of your loved ones, countrymen and countrywomen.

Our hearts and love reach out to you in your grief. We share your pain.

Julia Banks
Welcome to Colorado International Club

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 20:52:50 +0100
From: Susan Hautefeuille
To: Nuevas Amigas Susan Milla , Nuevas Amigas Roberta Huey , International Women's Club of El Ampurdan Corry Botman, International Women's Club of El Ampurdan Christine Smith
CC: BWC Vice President Linda Martin , BWC Open Door Coordinator Christina Mazeau
Subject: From the Bordeaux Women's Club

Dear Susan and Roberta, and Corry and Christine,

On behalf of the Bordeaux Women's Club, I would like to express our condolences to the families and friends who have suffered in this terrible attack in Madrid. We are solidly behind you and wish for a recovery, rapid and whole. It pains us deeply that such acts could be a part of today's world, but though far in distance, we are united with you.

Most sincerely,
Susan Hautefeuille
President Bordeaux Women's Club France

Date: Mon, 15 Mar 2004 23:39:38 -0800 (PST)
From: Susan Milla
Subject: INC Madrid sends saludos
To:
International Women's Club of El Ampurdan, Girona, Corry Botman , International Women's Club of El Ampurdan, Girona Christine Smith

Dear Cory and Christine,

Greetings from INC Madrid,

I imagine that members of your club feel this present tragedy as hard as we did here in Madrid. Our members are in shock and worried about their safe being which never was a problem before March 11th. We have become a tighter group and personally still feel Spain is a safe place to be.

Someday, if possible perhaps we could plan some sort of excursion to meet members of your club or visa versa. If you come into Madrid, please let us know. Our homes are open to you all.

Un abrazo,
Susan Milla
INC president

Dear Susan,
Thanks for your e-mail.

I think that our members also feel the great tragedy that happened in Madrid.

Not only in Spain, but also in Europe the people had been shocked.

But we have to fight for a safe life for now and for the future.

With you, I hope we can have an interchange between our clubs. I will discuss it in our committee and if there are intentions to it, I let you know.