

The INDEPENDENT

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Opinion

September 11, 2001

September 11, 2001, is a date we shall not soon forget. In our shock, dismay, anger and sorrow we think we will *never* forget. But we will; just as most of our population is too young to remember Pearl Harbor, just as most of our population is too young to remember World War II and Hitler's "Final Solution," just as nearly all of our population is way, way too young to remember the Great Depression and World War I.

Ah, you say, they were not the same, and they weren't. But mankind has a marvelous capacity to process emotionally devastating occurrences.

Because of our shock, anger and dismay, we are willing to work together at this time. But we must be very aware of our desire (need?) to blame someone, seek vengeance for our pain.

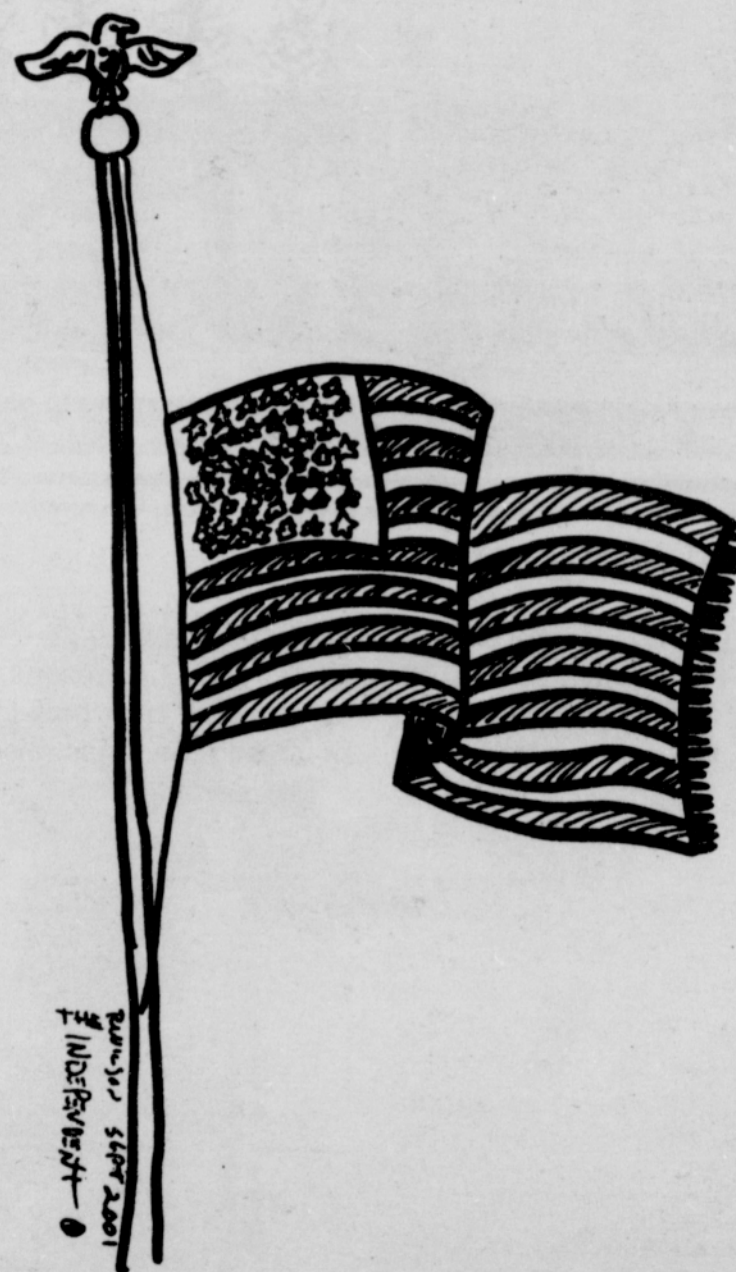
Our enemies are cowardly terrorists who are ashamed to show their faces to the world, so we must be very careful that we don't seek vengeance on substitutes just because they are Muslims, or Arabs or, somehow, "others."

America remains a beacon of hope for people throughout the world. People who are seeking freedom of opportunity, freedom from oppression, freedom of religion, economic and educational opportunity. We have generously shared our skills and our wealth, and that generosity is sometimes returned with hatred. So be it. Those freedoms and opportunities have, nevertheless, defined our nation.

In our differences lies our strength. We can complain about our government, our bosses, our schools, our society. We air our dirty linen in public. We are arrogant and we are generous. We sell armaments and promote peace. We are Christians, Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, atheists and everything else.

We aren't the Great Satan and we sure aren't saints. We put our own citizens in internment camps because they were Japanese. We used troops against students at Kent State because they demonstrated against U.S. action in Vietnam. Yes, we have demonstrated zealous excess and, hopefully, we have learned how stupid and harmful it is.

These cowards will not succeed because they cannot understand that our strength lies not in imposed uniformity of thought and action, but in individual freedom. The only way they can win, is if we become like *them*.



A message from Denmark.....

Editor's note: Last week, Paul Nussle, of Sumner, Wash., a friend and relative of The Independent publishers, sent an e-mail to Johannes Værge, pastor of the Cathedral in Copenhagen, Denmark, asking for his country's reaction to the terrorist attacks in the United States. Værge is a friend and relative of Nussle and his wife, Agnes. The following is his response:

Dear Paul,

Tuesday morning American time was afternoon here. When I heard/saw the terrible news, around 18.30 (6:30 p.m. U.S. time), after a meeting here finished, I realized we had to open the church and invite for prayer and silence. I called a few people from the staff who could come, and I had the opening of the church announced by national radio and tv. Two other Copenhagen churches did something similar. We had candles, I conducted prayers, the organ was playing some of the time.

While still in the church, shortly before 22 h (10:00 p.m.), I was contacted by the bishop, who was at a meeting on Fyn (a Danish island province) and had been asked by the prime minister's office if we would be able to arrange an official service the next day at 19 h (7:00 p.m.). We agreed to try, and the bishop asked me to take care of everything "backstage" and to assist him in composing the service. I was then called by a government official, and meetings were arranged for early Wednesday morning. It was already at that point clear that the queen would participate – along with the cabinet etc.

In the morning I took my bike and went to a meeting with the protocol chief and his staff and

a top national police official at the ministry of foreign affairs; from there I went, with the same people, to the chief of the prime minister's office to find out who should be invited, where they should be in the church etc., etc. The police official was not happy that we wanted to let people, as such in, too, but we agreed to give room for 350 "ordinary people" (to be examined by the police at the entrance) – along with the members of the cabinet and their spouses, the top officials of the various branches of the state, all the staff of the American embassy, representatives from all other embassies, and the majority of Danish parliament members. I was impressed how efficiently the government people worked, and how well the staff of the church took part.

During the afternoon the two big TV channels decided to transmit the service live and in extension and, again, my role was to be the contact person – in between my talks with the bishop. It became an impressive national manifestation. Practically all top persons of official Denmark found it worth putting other duties or arrangements aside to participate.

The American ambassador made a short speech at the end of the service, a speech of thanks for the caring he felt from the Danish people, i.e., the thousands who spontaneously had come to place flowers, candles and other greetings in front of the American embassy.

Yes, we care...I was invited to be in the radio studio of one of the most popular channels the next morning for a program where listeners could call and express their reactions to the terror tragedies – and talk to me. So I have been rather much involved.

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