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Senate

The Senate was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Monday, March 22, 2004, at 12 noon.

House of Representatives

TUESDAY, MARCH 16, 2004

The House met at 12:30 p.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,
March 16, 2004.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHRIS CHOCOLA to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

J. DENNIS HASTERT,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING HOUR DEBATES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 20, 2004, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning hour debates. The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to not to exceed 30 minutes, and each Member, except the majority leader, the minority leader, or the minority whip, limited to not to exceed 5 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida (Mr. STEARNS) for 5 minutes.

THE REAL WINNER OF THE SPANISH ELECTIONS

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Speaker, I am here this morning to talk about the recent tragedy in Spain. The real winner

in the Spanish general elections was not the Socialist Party or its new Prime Minister or the Spanish people. The real winners were the terrorists who murdered 201 and wounded over 1,500 Spaniards.

The results in Spain's general elections, in which Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar's party was defeated while the antiwar Socialist Party came to power after 8 years out of office, can be almost entirely attributed to the devastating terrorist attacks just 3 days before.

Is it a stretch to credit these terrorists with winning the election? Consider this: The day before the train bombings, Aznar's party was predicted to win comfortably. A mere 3 days and a changed nation later, the Socialist Party, whose main election year promise was to pull the Spanish troops out of Iraq, won by 5 percentage points.

It was an incredible change in just 72 hours. All it took was a note from people claiming to be al Qaeda saying they were responsible for the bombing. Prime Minister Aznar was blamed by his countrymen for the bombings, which they linked to his strong support of the war in Iraq. Now the newly elected Spanish Prime Minister is poised to withdraw Spain's 1,300 soldiers in Iraq.

Spain is not the only country under retribution for fighting against terror. Pakistan's President General Musharraf confirmed yesterday that al Qaeda was behind two assassination attempts against him in December.

Mr. Speaker, we have reached a critical moment in the international war

on terror. Al Qaeda has long threatened to attack any country that dares to help us. But now a true and valued ally has been hit, and they have chosen to withdraw from the coalition of the willing.

We extend our sympathies and hand in friendship to the people in Spain, but we must realize that the surest way to encourage terrorism is to let terrorists think that their bombs will make us do their bidding. Retreat will result in more terrorism, not less. Appeasement begets more appeasement, which leads to war. We can either abdicate our responsibilities or face these terrorists with steely resolve.

The Spaniards have their reasons for voting out the Aznar government. They have experienced a shocking ordeal and they responded the only way they knew how in the short time they were given. But the people of America also had to vote against terrorist attacks with a threat of war approaching. In November 2003, the American people stood up to thugs like Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein and defied off-year election history by choosing Members of Congress from the President's party who supported our war against terrorism.

Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is that al Qaeda is an enemy of us and Western civilization, not just against our allies in the war who are fighting terror. In the international alignment of us versus them, the opponents are not the coalition of the willing or, quote, Old Europe, not warriors or pacifists. The two sides are tyranny and democracy. Al Qaeda's mission is

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



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