



Department of Justice

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STATEMENT BY ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT F. KENNEDY
THE BERLIN CITY HALL STEPS, FEBRUARY 22, 1962

Mr. Mayor, General Clay and my friends in Berlin:

Over the past few weeks my wife and I have traveled many thousands of miles across the United States, across the Pacific ocean, from Japan along the Chinese coast, down to Indonesia, across the Indian Sea, across Pakistan, up through the Middle East, through Italy, and now we arrive in the free city of Berlin. Nothing we have seen has touched us as much as your reception to us here today.

The warmth of your greeting will always remain indelibly in our hearts. and the message it gives is one that I will report back to the American people. For we know that this reception is a sign of your friendship towards the American people. And I want to report to you that it is reciprocated: friendship and affection for the people of Berlin and the admiration of your great courage.

So I am proud to be here in the City of Berlin. This is my third visit to your city. I came here first in 1948 during the Berlin airlift. It was when Berliners and Americans were standing side by side. General Clay and your mayor, Ernst Reuter, were standing shoulder to shoulder when the Communists were attempting to bring the proud City of Berlin to its knees. On that trip I traveled not only to West Berlin but to Communist East Berlin, and the contrast between communism and freedom was there for all to see. And I saw it for myself.

But on my return back here in 1955, I came from a long trip to the Soviet Union and I came here to West Berlin and saw your pleasant streets and gay shops and your fine people. And when I went over to East Berlin again it was like returning to a bad dream. (loud noise, red balloons dropped red flags)

The Communists will let the balloons through but they won't let their people through.

I have seen the contrast between this city in the west part and in the Communist part as many hundreds of thousands of people have seen that contrast. And that is why Herr Ulbricht had to erect the wall. Because it was a contrast that he could not tolerate.

That is the true meaning of the wall that lies like a snake across the heart of your city. Mr. Ulbricht and the Communists cannot have the contrast. (another loud noise; two more red flags dropped by parachute from small balloons).....

That is the only thing that he can do.

He cannot tolerate the contrast between freedom here and Communism over there so that everyone can see it. He has to do that. We are aware of the heartbreak and anguish this wall has caused to the people of Berlin. But I would also ask you to look at the other side and see what an impression it has made all across the rest of the globe. Because this wall is an admission of failure by Communism, it is an attempt for the first time in the history of mankind to erect a wall not to keep marauders or bandits out, but to keep their people in.

This is understood every place. I was in Indonesia and talked to a

young Communist student. And he was saying that the Communists regimes throughout the world were supported by the people. And I asked him: I said, "well, how can you explain the wall in Berlin?" He blushed for a moment, and he said: "I don't want to get into details."

And this incident has been repeated over and over again in my travels.

If the purpose of the wall was to destroy Berlin, Herr Ulbricht and his cohorts have erred sadly. Berlin is not only going to continue to exist --- it's going to grow and grow and grow.

Its ties to West Germany will not be severed. Companies from America and other foreign countries will erect their plants here. Corporations from all over the globe are going to open outlets in this city. West Berlin's brightest pages have yet to be written in the books of history. And Berlin, although on the edge of totalitarianism, will not be attacked, because an armed attack on West Berlin is the same as an armed attack on Chicago, or New York, or London, or Paris.

You are our brothers and we stand by you.

And now I have a message from President Kennedy to you of free Berlin. It is to Mayor Brandt, the Senate and the people of West Berlin.

"I am delighted to send my warmest greetings to the people of West Berlin through my brother, The Attorney General of the United States. His visit to Berlin is one more testimonial to the ties that bind your city and the American people. I am grateful to you for having invited him, and the message which he brings is the message of

American solidarity with the free people of West Berlin. The courage and determination of the people of your great city are a constant inspiration to free men everywhere. Our people and yours have stood firm for freedom in the years that lie behind us; together with other determined peoples we shall sustain both freedom and peace in the years ahead."