



Department of Justice

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REMARKS OF
ATTORNEY GENERAL ROBERT F. KENNEDY
AT THE UNVEILING OF A PLACQUE IN
PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY PLATZ
MEMORIALIZING THE PRESIDENT'S VISIT
TO BERLIN, JUNE 26, 1963
BERLIN, JUNE 26, 1964

When President Kennedy left this city just one year ago today, he remarked to those with him: "I shall leave a note for my successor, telling him that in a moment of discouragement or despair -- go to Germany, go to Berlin." I know what he meant because I have done so. I see again what he meant because I look out at all of you. I know what he meant when he surveyed the wall of shame and measured it against your courage and said: "ich bin ein Berliner."

President Kennedy clearly saw the qualities of citizenship that make your city's name a password of freedom. He saw clearly the quality of strength which had prevented any assault from breaking your will. He saw clearly the quality of spirit which has prevented injustices from blurring your vision. He saw clearly the quality of courage which has made you free.

Surrounded by hostility, besieged by enemies, your future threatened, your freedom in jeopardy, you have emerged from each of these assaults stronger, greater and more resolute. For this President Kennedy congratulated you and on behalf of free men everywhere he thanked you. For him, for what you do today in his memory, a strong, courageous and free people, I come to thank you.

"Freedom," President Kennedy said when he was here last year, "is indivisible, and when one man is enslaved, all are not free." You citizens of Berlin know the truth of those words as well as anyone in the world. Men who would enslave some are men who would enslave others. The man from Pittsburgh is not free until the man from Peking is free. The man from West Berlin is not free until his brother in East Berlin is also free.

Here on a front line of freedom you serve not only for yourselves and for your country. You defend freedom for my country as well. You stand with your allies and you defend freedom for free men all over the globe. America and other countries have helped you defend your city and we have looked to the day when your families, your city and your country will be reunited in a Europe of peace and progress.

A new President leads our land, but our course is unchanged for under President Johnson, as it was under President Kennedy, is committed to your freedom. But freedom is not propped up here in Berlin. It does

not exist in this city because of assistance from outside. Freedom here rests on your vitality, on your free elections, your trade unions, your great universities, your flourishing industry and on your gallant Mayor. To bear the name "Berliner" means far more than a geographical accident of citizenship. It means courage.

Your freedom has not been given. It has been bravely earned. So it must be with freedom everywhere and so it has always been. "Freedom," said Pericles, "is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it". And his words fit Berlin. And about 2,000 years later, your own Goethe wrote, that "he only earns his freedom and existence who daily conquers them anew." His words come alive here in the city of Berlin, because you know that to be brave without purpose is merely to be daring. They come alive because you know that to be free without purpose is to lead a life that is meaningless.

It is that spirit of understanding, and purpose and dedication which characterizes your city today. It brought Ernst Reuter to this square to rally your response to the blockade. It motivates Willy Brandt. It is in that spirit that President Kennedy spoke, acted and lived. He brought that spirit to the city of Berlin but he also found it here in full measure. And so, by honoring him, really, you honor yourselves and forever more John F. Kennedy will live in this city.

Let us then -- knowing that it is better to bring a light to the barricade than curse the darkness -- resolve here and now to hasten the day when that spirit encircles the globe and all men -- and all Berliners -- and all people will know what it means to be truly free. And so, on behalf of John F. Kennedy and all the Kennedys and the people of my country I thank you and say we are proud to be among you as free citizens of the world.