

Remarks at the Signing of the Golden Book at the Charlottenburg Palace, West Berlin.

February 27, 1969

Mr. Mayor, Mr. Chancellor, Mr. Vice Chancellor, Mr. Secretary of State, all of the distinguished guests who are here in this room:

I speak to you at a time when I have experienced a very moving occasion, to travel through this city and to realize again what Berlin means to all the people of the world.

We have seen here a wall. A wall can divide a city, but a wall can never divide a people. A wall can divide physically but it cannot divide Berlin spiritually because the spirit of freedom that I saw on the faces of thousands of Berliners today is the spirit that will continue to survive and will continue to receive support by those who are free throughout the world.

As I went through the city, too, I realized that those who have indicated that this city was a dying city were wrong because I saw the young faces, the children, the workers, smiling--people who realize that this city does have hope, that it does have a future.

Finally, Mr. Mayor, as one who has traveled to many cities in the world and many in the United States, I am somewhat of an expert in looking at crowds and also an expert in the signs that people in the crowds carry.

In some cities in the world and in some cities in the United States I have seen signs that say "Nixon come back" and other signs that say "Nixon go home." But here in Berlin most of the signs that really have meaning, the expression on the faces of people said: "Welcome. We stand with you. We stand for peace. We stand for freedom."

And I well recall that as we were riding in the car the Mayor and the Chancellor translated some of the signs and one in particular seemed to repeat over and over again. It said: Viel Glueck! So I say to the people of Berlin: Good luck!

Note: The President spoke at 12:15 p.m. in response to remarks by Mayor Klaus Schutcz. An advance text of the President's remarks is printed in the Weekly Compilation of Presidential Documents (vol. 5, P. 342).

The Mayor spoke in German. A translation follows:

Thank you very much, Mr. President and Mr. Chancellor, for coming to Berlin on your first trip after your election--to Berlin, the place where two political worlds look face to face.

You have come here to form your own opinion of the situation. The United States of America is more important to Berlin than to any other city in Europe. They are one of the three protective powers, and that is a very weighty thing.

You said this morning, Mr. President, that Berlin, in your opinion, has been the cradle of German-American friendship after the Second World War. This is where the relationships of our peoples have found a special expression, and this is where their friendship and solidarity spring to the eye and where we find that we can rely on each other.

Six years ago, Mr. President, John F. Kennedy was in this city and, like you, he showed where the American people stand. You, Mr. President, yourself were Vice President when the Honorable Dwight D. Eisenhower and the United States Government helped to overcome and master a very great crisis.

I am glad we have here today among us someone who was then governing Mayor of Berlin, my friend Willy Brandt. He, as all Berliners realized and continue to realize, as we all do, that without the help and support of the American Government, Berlin could not live nor could it live in the future.

We have followed with great attention and sympathy your efforts for peace, Mr. President. You really must know what it is worth to safeguard peace, and we are prepared to make our own convincing contribution to an all-European peace.

Berlin has been and is an advance post for freedom. It has been and wants to be an advance post of peace. You know how shamefully this city is divided, Mr. President, and you will certainly understand when I say that we here in West Berlin, at this very moment, think very intensively of our fellow citizens in the other part of this city.

Mr. President, this is not an easy place to live, but we are not living at an easy time, either; and the solutions to the problems won't be easy, I suppose.

We are against those who try to propose a simple formula and empty phrases, because we know that these easy-sounding proposals do not solve the problems but rather postpone their solutions.

We are prepared, through hard work, to go all the way. We think we have the fight to preserve our freedom, and we want to overcome tensions and safeguard peace.

Mr. President, we are very grateful for the statements you have made about Berlin and we know and appreciate their value. But let me tell you that Berlin has not waited for new guarantees or new promises from the United States, because we know where you stand, as you know where we stand.

Thank you again, very cordially, for coming to visit us; and will you please now give us the honor of signing the Golden Book of the City of Berlin.

Richard Nixon, Remarks at the Signing of the Golden Book at the Charlottenburg Palace, West Berlin. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, The American Presidency Project
<https://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/node/240698>