

# West Berlin in Mourning, Thousands Pay Homage



VOL. 19, NO. 48 \*\*\* Edition BERLIN BRIGADE \*\*\* Edition FRIDAY, 29 NOVEMBER 1963

## General Polk Leads American Community in Memorial Service

Major General James H. Polk, U.S. Commander, Berlin spoke at Americans at a special service held in the Sports Center Gymnasium Monday morning concerning the death of President John F. Kennedy. The General said:

Today at this hour all over Europe, we of the United States Armed Forces (together with our friends) are gathered to honor the memory of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, our late President and Commander-in-Chief.

It is difficult indeed for us to comprehend the real fact of his untimely death, the brutality, the savagery, the utter needlessness of this tragic occurrence. The whole world recoils at the event. And it is best not to dwell on the fact. Rather we must accept and mourn his passing. But better still we can recall — most of us here at first hand — the tremendous personal impact President Kennedy had on this city. We are indeed fortunate that we are able to remember our late President in the local setting of last June 26th — of the spontaneous enthusiasm, the joy, the love that was showered on him by the citizens of Berlin; and of his unstinted response to these tributes on that memorable day. It was a day none of us shall ever forget. And you will recall some of his words to the American Garrison on that occasion. "You are in a sense the arrowhead of a long line of your colleagues in arms who stand guard and watch in dozens of countries around the globe.

We are proud of you and we appreciate what you are doing."

John F. Kennedy was our Commander-in-Chief in the most literal sense of the word. Not only in his broad direction of the armed forces, but more particularly in his understanding and unyielding support for the Berlin garrison by which he demonstrated to the world on every occasion his determination to maintain Berlin as a free and viable city. His commitment to Berlin was total — he stood solidly behind us in every crisis just as will his successor — and we could ask for no more.

To his devoted wife and family, we can only say that we share their grief, we admire their courage in this adversity, and we send them our deepest sympathy.

It is most difficult for me to try to express our collective feelings at this moment. Therefore, with your indulgence, I will quote a brief statement dispatched to us by the acting Secretary of State as most appropriate for this occasion.

"A great President is tragically dead. At a critical moment in history, he evoked from his own nation and from men who cherish human freedoms and peace everywhere, the confidence and the faith to move forward.

In his person there were courage, grace, and an understanding of the responsibility that power carries with it. There was also a compassionate sense of the meaning of poverty, fear, and in-

justice — and a will to lift them.

In three years he set a course, at home and on the world scene, which visibly raised the hopes of men that freedom could triumph without war and that free men could, by their own devices, elevate their lives and those of their children.

He drew for his strength on the deepest traditions of our nation. As in grief we face the future, we draw from the living memory of his dedication to those traditions — and from his unforgettable courage — the will to carry on."

## JFK's Death Stuns Outpost Residents

One week after the death of John F. Kennedy, the city which gave him the warmest welcome in its history continues to mourn his passing.

Many Americans here in the Divided City feel that the grief of the people of West Berlin may very well be unequalled anywhere outside the United States.

For three days following the shooting of the American President forty-thousand Berliners made their way to U.S. Headquarters on Clayallee to sign a condolence book. It represented their effort "to show the people of America how sorry we are to hear of his death" said one woman waiting to sign her name. The crowd became so great that instead of closing its doors as scheduled the American Headquarters remained open day and night to accommodate mourners.

"These people really cared a lot for the man" said a Berlin Brigade Honor Guard member who volunteered to remain on duty for 15 hours a day to assist elderly people in placing flowers at the base of a large picture of the deceased President set up in the main hall of the building. "After they sign the book they often won't move", said Private First Class Alfred Galdony,

"They just stare at the picture and sometimes mutter to themselves. It's as if he were one of their kin."

Another focal point of the Berliners' demonstration of common grief was Schoeneberg Rathaus, West Berlin's City Hall. At midnight on November 22, four hours after news of the President's death reached Berlin, 50,000 grieving people stood silently in front of the city hall to hear Governing Mayor Willy Brandt tell them with tears streaming down his face "America has lost a president; Berlin has lost a friend."

The following evening 20,000 Berlin youths bearing lighted candles and torches walked in dead silence from the Airlift Memorial near Tempelhof Airport to the square in front of city hall. Even the military bus bringing U.S. servicemen from Tempelhof had difficulty getting through the crowd.

The marchers followed the same route that Kennedy took on his visit to the city five months previous, almost to the day. In windows from where they had cheered the American President last June the Berliners placed lighted candles symbolizing their loss. There was hardly a habitable

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## Mayor Albertz Renames Square

Dear American Friends, Dear Berliners, This place of enthusiasm has today become a place of sorrow and of tears. The radiant sun of June 26 has gone down. It has become very still in this hour of parting from this good and just, this valiant and wise, this young and proud man whose name was John F. Kennedy, and who was President of the United States of America — this man who was powerful yet so heavily burdened by his office; this man who looked toward the future yet was by no means understood by all — not by all Germans either; this man living in the icy loneliness of supreme human responsibility and yet a man like you and me; the husband of his brave and beautiful wife, now so terribly stricken, and the father of his small children; the American whose face bore the marks of the task his nation had given him — and yet the first citizen of the family of nations that want to live in freedom; to the Europeans a warning prophet of their own unity, to the German an open and by no means always an easy friend but to the Berliners, to you and me, to everybody here in this square a brother in whom we recognized ourselves as in a mirror: our troubles, our tasks, our hopes, our aims. He was a friend who raised our sights above so much petty and faint-hearted quarreling, and above any despondency by comparing us with the citizens of ancient Rome and by placing himself squarely in our midst. That was not said lightly. It was not meant to indicate that this man was now no longer an American, or we no longer Germans. Rather, what was expressed here in one simple, brief and yet so deeply significant sentence was what has been sustaining and protecting

this city for years: the bond that ties the most powerful nation of the free world to the risk it is bearing together with us Berliners and the proud recognition that the Berliners themselves are accomplishing so much that the President considered it an honor to say: "Ich bin ein Berliner" — "I am a Berliner".

All this cannot, all this must not be at an end with the death of John F. Kennedy. I have seen enough dead people, and I know what death is, especially such a death, a death by the hand of a murderer, a violent death at the lowest level of evil to which human beings can sink, an evil which seems to give birth to ever new evil. But I say to you: this terrible death is deeply moving to the whole world. It has set an unmistakable mark, visible beyond borders and walls and language boundaries and reaching into the spheres of the enemies of freedom. Like the death of Abraham Lincoln it can summon millions of people to sober vigilance, to human justice, to the unceasing struggle for freedom and peace. Some people elsewhere in the world, and here in Germany too, have accused John F. Kennedy openly or by implication of being soft. This misunderstanding is a terrible thing. If ever a man understood the challenge of world communism, then it was he. He alone had grasped the fact that world communism has to be met by taking the initiative; not only by speeches but by patient, tenacious, immensely difficult action; not by burrowing into one's own fox holes but by standing up courageously and going forth to meet the enemy; not by denying the real power-relationships in this world

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John Fitzgerald Kennedy  
1917-1963





President Lyndon B. Johnson

"This is a sad time for all people. We have suffered a loss that cannot be weighed.  
 "For me, it is a deep personal tragedy. I know that the world shares the sorrow that Mrs. Kennedy and her family bear.  
 "I wish to say here that all I can do is ask for your help and God's."  
 President Lyndon B. Johnson, on arrival in Washington.

—U.S. Army Photo



PEACE MAKERS — In memory of John F. Kennedy, tanks pass in review at 4-Ring last Saturday.

—U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Bostin

## Special Services Mark Observance in Command

Americans in West Berlin mourned their late President Monday morning with a combined memorial service in the Berlin Brigade sports center gymnasium. Protestant services and a solemn Requiem Mass were held at each of the five American military chapels in Berlin, and a 21-gun salute was fired in front of U.S. Headquarters.

Fifteen-hundred mourners filed into the gymnasium to hear Major General James H. Polk, United States Commander, Berlin, speak briefly at the special service.

A crowd of about 3,000 Americans

and West Berliners gathered before U.S. Headquarters to hear the 21-gun salute in tribute to the late Chief Executive. Six self-propelled howitzers fired the salute at one-minute intervals. An honor guard of two platoons came to present arms for each round fired.

A 50-gun salute to the nation was fired at U.S. headquarters at 4:30 Monday afternoon in a special retreat ceremony.

The day was proclaimed a day of mourning by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Only essential activities were conducted in the American garison.

## General Polk Cites Berliners

In a letter to Acting Mayor Lincoln Alberts, Major General James H. Polk, U.S. Commander, Berlin, sent the following letter of appreciation. It read in part . . .

Dear Mr. Mayor:  
 As have my fellow Americans in Berlin and other outposts at home, I have been profoundly moved by the heartfelt sympathy which Berliners have extended to us on the death of President Kennedy.

On the Friday night, still no one could understand why we were deeply touched by the spontaneous gathering of students of the City Hall, as we were by the procession of thousands of young Berliners from the Berlin Memorial to the City Hall on Saturday night. Thousands of thousands of Berliners gave expression to their sorrow and sympathy by placing candles in the windows of their homes. Other thousands, young and old, waited their turn at the City Hall and at the United States Headquarters to sign the condolence books, many of them leaving letters of sympathy. At the Free University yesterday, professors and students met in a formal memorial ceremony at which the name of John F. Kennedy was given to the University's main hall for American Studies. And late yesterday, in one of the most moving ceremonies which I have ever witnessed, the Berlin City Government solemnly marked the passing of our President. In the presence of more than a quarter of a million Berliners the Radeholz Wald Place at the City Hall was renamed for the memory of the man who on that same square few months earlier had declared his faith in Berlin and his personal commitment to this city and its people.

For all these things, as well as for the many individual messages of condolence and sympathy sent to us, we are profoundly grateful. The Berliners have shown us how fully they share with us our terrible sense of loss. We recognize that as doing so, they speak as well for their friends and relatives beyond the Wall whose sympathy is so long and so being made. The memory of these past few days in Berlin will remain with us as long as we live, just as will that inspiring day in June which we shared with President Kennedy. Please convey to your fellow citizens, Mr. Mayor, the warm gratitude of every American.

Most sincerely,

JAMES H. POLK  
 Major General, U.S. Army  
 U.S. Commander, Berlin



COLORFUL DISPLAY — Flags representing the 56 states are displayed during the parade held on 4-Ring Saturday in memory of John F. Kennedy.

—U.S. Army Photo by Capt. Usitt



50-GUN SALUTE — In a retreat ceremony held Monday evening in memory of John F. Kennedy, a 50-gun salute was fired in the U.S. Headquarters compound. West Berliners and Americans were on hand to view the rite.

—U.S. Army Photo by Sgt. Bostin

## Parade Honors Late President

The soldiers of Berlin Brigade held a parade on 4-Ring at McNair Barracks at 10:00 a.m. Saturday in memory of John F. Kennedy.

About 1,500 persons, among them the three allied commandants, West Berlin Governing Mayor Willy Brandt and other city officials and members of the diplomatic corps in Berlin, watched about 2,000 soldiers march on the broad street for the memorial salute to the late President.

The Brigade's Catholic Chaplain, Father (Major) F. Norbert Maguire, recited a prayer for President Kennedy, saying: "Heavenly Father, God of consolation, sustain us and our country in this hour of sorrow. As we lament the untimely death of our devoted President, and Commanders-in-Chief, may you, O Lord, show tender mercy to his soul. In his dying act in his living, President Kennedy accomplished the Godly challenge he sought before us all: 'Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for our country'."

"He was the symbol of a new generation, its leader aiming for greater heights; he is now its first martyr. He dedicated himself to the tasks laid before him, and in their pursuit, he gave the last full measure of devotion."

"May the causes he served be fostered; may his goals be striven for; may his life be the peace he sought and fought for, be our inheritance and his glory."

"Grant, O Lord, to our new President and to us, a spirit of wisdom and courage, a spirit of justice and charity to meet without hatred and rancor the challenges of an uncertain future. From the anguish and agony of this hour, may we experience a rebirth confidence in our institutions, a renewed dedication to our duties so to our steadfastness, patience and courage may be a personal tribute to the memory of our deceased President Kennedy."

"May he rest in eternal peace. AMEN."



WILL NEVER FORGET — John F. Kennedy shakes hands with American dependents during his Berlin visit last June.

—U.S. Army Photo

## Death Stuns Outpost City

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 building from which a tiny flame did not flicker in some windows. The candles were requested list by Mayor Brandt.

The next evening, the day of the President's funeral, 200,000 Berliners gathered in the same square in front of city hall where Kennedy told them "I am a Berliner". Packed in an astonishing silence beneath a large picture of the President taken six months ago as he stood on that same spot, the Berliners heard their square renamed "John F. Kennedy Platz". An American soldier who was present said that after the playing of taps at the end of the dedication he could not find a dry eye among the surrounding Berliners.

To the Berliner, Kennedy was not only a politician; he was even more than a symbol of their freedom. The man whom Americans called president, the Berliners regarded as a friend.



AWAITING TO SIGN — West Berliners and Americans stream into U.S. Headquarters to sign the condolence books. Approximately 50,000 persons signed the books as a gesture of sympathy.

—U.S. Army Photo by Capt. Usitt

### THE BERLIN OBSERVER

The Berlin OBSERVER is published weekly by and for personnel of Berlin Brigade. It is an authorized publication under supervision of the Troop Information Branch, Informative Directorate, Army, Berlin. Express for copyright or other legal matters, including art and photographic items, are solicited from readers but publication depends upon the judgment of the editorial staff. The price of a copy is one cent Wednesday. No payment will be made for subscriptions. Views and opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Department of the Army. Editorial offices are located in Room 12H, Ring 3 (Hqs. Command). Address correspondence to The Berlin OBSERVER, Informative Division, U.S. Army, Berlin, APO 943 (phone: 022 812). Office in charge: Major Edward P. Edrwa.

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