



## Remarks at the Groundbreaking Ceremony for the New American Embassy in Berlin

Berlin, October 6, 2004

Ambassador Coats

Guten Morgen und herzlich willkommen. Wir sind heute hier an diesem historischen Ort, am Pariser Platz, um offiziell mit dem Bau der neuen Amerikanischen Botschaft zu beginnen. Sehr geehrter Herr Minister Schily, sehr geehrter Herr Bürgermeister Wowereit, sehr geehrter Herr Staatssekretär Scharioth, General Williams, Ambassador and Mrs Kimmitt, Ambassador Kornblum, Exzellenzen, sehr geehrte Damen und Herren, meine liebe Marsha, our Deputy Chief of Mission, John Cloud.

On October 6, 1987, President Ronald Reagan issued an official proclamation naming October 6 as German-American Day and calling on the American people to observe each succeeding October 6th with appropriate celebrations and activities. German-American Day honors the unique relationship that has been forged between Germany and the United States since the end of World War II. That partnership was the foundation for the great transatlantic alliance of democracies that was born in the second half of the 20th century - the most successful alliance in history. I cannot imagine a more important celebration of German-American Day in 2004 than this groundbreaking ceremony - here beside the Brandenburg Gate, just meters away from where President Reagan called upon the Soviet Union to tear down the wall that divided a city, divided a country and divided a continent.

We honor his vision, leadership and courage with this event.

During the long years of the Cold War, the Brandenburg Gate was a symbol of division. Today the Brandenburg Gate is a symbol of unity and strength for Germany, Europe and the world. The decision of the United States to return to this historic site symbolizes America's support for a unified Germany.

We are returning to Pariser Platz 2, the former site of the American Embassy at the Blücher Palace. The Palace was named after Field Marshall Blücher, who received it as a gift from King Frederick Wilhelm III of Prussia for his role at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815. Before the battle began, Marshall Blücher, the Commander of the Prussian troops, managed to get a message through to the Duke of Wellington. Napoleon thought that the Prussians had been defeated the day before and that he would only have to face Wellington. Wellington stood firm. Blücher arrived, and Napoleon was defeated.

The United States of America at that time was a young nation. Not many years before that decisive battle at Waterloo, in 1797, John Quincy Adams, the son of President Adams and later America's sixth President, was appointed Minister Plenipotentiary to Prussia, the first American diplomatic representative to a German-speaking nation. In his memoirs, Adams recalled that a dapper lieutenant who had never heard of the United States of America questioned him at the Berlin city gates.

Adams found combined living and office quarters at the corner of Friedrichstrasse and Behrenstrasse. In the years following, American representatives and Ambassadors occupied no less than fifteen different locations as America's foreign policy interests became more complex and Embassy staffs grew larger. Then on December 11, 1930, Americans awoke to a story in the New York Times that said:

AMERICA BUYS BERLIN PALACE FOR \$1,800,000

## TO HOUSE THE EMBASSY AND OFFICIAL MISSION

General Williams, don't you wish that today we could duplicate that price in establishing this new embassy. Both of our jobs would be much easier.

Just 10 days later, another story in the New York Times headlined:

## NEW EMBASSY OF OURS TO BE BEST IN BERLIN

The Times went on to say, "The Blücher Palace, which will be the new home of the American Embassy in Berlin in about a year and a half, after internal alterations have been completed, will be the envy of the whole diplomatic corps and unquestionably will be the most imposing and handsome ambassadorial quarters in the German capital. The palace occupies," the Times said, "one of the choicest sites in the city, facing the Pariser Platz at the end of Unter den Linden on the north and the Tiergarten to the west, with Brandenburg Gate touching the northwest corner of the building."

Tragically, just four months later, a new story appeared in the Times that said:

FIRE WRECKS THE BLÜCHER PALACE IN BERLIN;  
JUST BOUGHT FOR \$1,800,000 FOR OUR EMBASSY

"The famous Blücher Palace on Unter den Linden, which was recently bought by the United States for its embassy, was almost completely destroyed by fire during the night... The Palace was one of the historical landmarks in the German capital...and figured prominently in the social life of the German capital under the Hohenzollerns."

It was only in 1939, after extensive renovation, that part of the Embassy staff moved in, but the occupancy was short-lived. Our Ambassador had been re-called to Washington, as war clouds were gathering over Europe. The Blücher Palace was heavily damaged during the war, and demolished in April 1957 by the East German government. Until the Berlin Wall came down in November 1989, this site where we stand today was part of the non-accessible border zone between East and West Berlin. When the wall finally did come down and the decision was made to return to Pariser Platz, we were confronted with new problems.

The next several years saw a number of postponements due to events and other issues related to building on this site. In 1993, Ambassador Kimmitt placed a plaque on this site designating it as the new location for the American Embassy. I'm sure Ambassador Kimmitt, who is here today with his wife Holly, didn't realize then that it would take 11 years and four more Ambassadors to get to this groundbreaking stage. We had hoped, Ambassador, to bring that plaque out and place it here in front, only to realize that after it was removed to begin this construction phase, it weighed 600 pounds, and we didn't have the equipment to move it. If you have room in your suitcase, we'd be happy to give it to you to take back to America as a memory of your dedication 11 years ago.

The story of the once and future site of the American Embassy in Berlin is of course, more importantly, a story of people. The period between 1930 when the United States government purchased the property and today, October 6, 2004, mirrors a lifetime - lifetimes that have seen 12 years of dictatorial rule in Germany, lifetimes that have seen more than four decades of a threatening and bitter East-West confrontation, and 15 years of challenges of the post-Cold War period.

I would like to express my personal appreciation to those people who have made this event possible. First, Secretary of State Colin Powell, who personally visited the

site and gave his the final approval for building here; secondly, to General Charles Williams, Director of the State Department's Office of Overseas Buildings Operations, and his team, who have tirelessly worked to make this project a reality - and you will hear from General Williams in a moment. Credit and thanks must also go to previous Ambassadors - Ambassador Kimmitt, Ambassador Kornblum, who are both here today, and also Ambassadors Redman and Holbrooke; to our Deputy Chiefs, as well as my Deputy Chiefs, first Terry Snell and today John Cloud; and to the Embassy staff members who have dedicated thousands of hours of effort; to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Scharioth, for obtaining the building rights to construct our Embassy on the site; to you Mayor Wowereit and your Berlin city government team - the Capital City Development Office, city planners, and the State Security Office - who worked so diligently with us to successfully complete all the necessary work that has brought us to this important moment; to Moore Ruble Yudell Architects and Planners for their ingenuity and their patience; and of course, my former colleagues in the U.S. Congress who have given approval and funding. I would also like to thank Michael Cullen for his personal initiative in documenting the history of the American Embassy in Berlin.

In the spirit of the sacrifice and perseverance of generations of post-war Germans and Americans and their bold vision of a united Germany, we celebrate German-American Day 2004. President Bush's German-American proclamation this year reads, and I quote: "The history and, more importantly, the future of our two peoples, are utterly intertwined. Together, through our common values and common efforts, Germany and America can build a better future for the benefit of all nations."