

## **Presentation of the Jan Karski Freedom Award to the European Solidarity Center**

Thank you, Speaker Borusewicz. It is truly a pleasure to be here this weekend at the opening of the new European Center for Solidarity. And today, I am delighted to be here for the presentation of the Jan Karski Freedom Award to the European Center for Solidarity museum.

On July 4, I had the honor of presenting the United States Embassy's Jan Karski Freedom Award to a truly remarkable organization. At a time when organizing civil society groups was a dangerous undertaking, the members of the Komitet Obrony Robotników (KOR) took great risk to provide aid to political prisoners and their families, work with foreign journalists to report on conditions in Poland, and organize student discussions on democratic ideas. KOR and its supporters formed the first major anti-communist group in all of Eastern Europe and laid the groundwork for the birth of Solidarity. KOR's support of imprisoned striking workers forged the link between labor, dissident intellectuals, and society at large which was the foundation of Solidarity's later success.

At the U.S. Embassy, we chose KOR as the recipient of this year's Jan Karski Freedom Award because we continue to be inspired by its legacy. Like Jan Karski, the members of KOR took personal risks in opposition to the abusive authority of the state. Like Jan Karski, they shone a light on vital issues that otherwise might have escaped attention. Like Jan Karski, they were guided by a deep concern for their fellow citizens and their dedication to freedom.

The legacy of KOR, like that of Jan Karski, continued long after its work was finished, and remains an inspiration to us today. As we confront new challenges to freedom and democracy in Eastern Europe, we must be guided by KOR's principles of unity, camaraderie, and strength of purpose in the face of oppression and intimidation.

This award belongs to all members of KOR, and I am very pleased that it will have a permanent home here at the European Solidarity Center. I'd to especially thank the Solidarity Center's director, Mr. Basil Kerski, for agreeing to display the award here. In this wonderful museum, it will be available to all who want to learn more about Poland's historic struggle for freedom.

Thank you.