

## **Ambassador Feinstein's remarks on Jan Karski's legacy at the Polish Senate, as prepared (14 February 2012)**

Good afternoon. First of all I would like to thank the Senate for inviting me here today, especially Senator Bogdan Klich, Deputy Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and Andrzej Person, Chairman of the Committee for Immigration and Contacts with Poles abroad. I would also like to thank Professor Adam Rotfeld; Robert Kostro, Director of the Museum of the History of Poland; Wanda Urbanska, Director of the Jan Karski US Centennial Campaign; and Ewa Wierzynska, Director of "Jan Karski: The Unfinished Mission," also of the Museum of the History of Poland. Thank you all for being here today, it's a pleasure to be with you.

There's probably not a lot about Jan Karski I can tell you that you don't already know. Indeed, I'm certain there are a great number of things I can learn from you. What I do know, however, is that Karski's story is every bit as important for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as it was for the 20<sup>th</sup>. I know this not only as a matter of historical fact, but also as a matter of personal experience.

I was a student at Georgetown University in the 1980s, the same university where Jan Karski spent nearly forty years as a faculty member, influencing thousands of American students over the decades, including future President Bill Clinton. Although I never crossed paths with Karski in person, I have heard many stories about the countless lives he touched during his time in the U.S. Today, influenced by Jan Karski's legacy, Georgetown offers a Certificate in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Even in my own career, much of which I have devoted to figuring out how the international community can stop genocide in today's world, I recognize Karski's influence, and the work he did to make sure that we never forget the lessons of the Holocaust.

I'm proud to say that the US Embassy did not forget. In 2007, we inaugurated the Jan Karski Freedom award, which honors Poles who have made outstanding contributions to democracy and human rights. Through the Jan Karski Freedom award, we accomplish two major goals. First, we keep the memory and the legacy of Jan Karski alive in the minds of Americans and Poles alike, honoring our nations' shared commitment to liberty and human dignity. Second, we recognize that there is always more to do, that there are always outstanding individuals working hard to advance human rights in today's world.

We presented our first Karski Freedom award to President Lech Wałęsa, for his leadership within Solidarity, and the critical role he played in seeing Poland through the transition from communism to the thriving democracy we see here today. Our second Karski Freedom award went to Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Solidarity activist and Poland's first post-communist Prime Minister, who also worked on behalf of German-Polish as well as Polish-Jewish reconciliation. In 2009 our Karski Freedom award was co-presented to Marek Edelman, for his wartime heroism and lifelong leadership, and Barbara Skarga, for her own wartime heroism, as well as lifetime of philosophical writing and reflections on freedom, power, and relationship between politics and morality. I look forward to announcing our 2012 recipient of the award in the days to come.

As most of you know, 2014 will mark the centennial of Karski's birth. The Embassy intends to work closely with the U.S. Centennial Campaign to honor Karski's legacy in both Poland and the United States.

I consider myself lucky to be able to work with all of you as we pursue our common goal to keep Jan Karski's memory alive for generations to come. Thank you, once again, for inviting me here today, and thank you for the work you do.