

STORIES OF POLISH RESISTANCE



Irena
Sendler



Maximilian
Kolbe



Emanuel
Ringelblum



Mordechai
Anielewicz



Witold
Pilecki



Janusz
Korczak



Jan
Karski



Zofia
Kossak-
Szczucka



Father
Marceli
Godlewski



Jan &
Antonina
Zabinski



Józef &
Wiktoria
Ulma

About half of the six million European Jews killed in the Holocaust were Polish. In 1939 a third of the capital city Warsaw, and 10% of the entire country was Jewish. By 1945 97% of Poland's Jews were dead.

These eleven examples of Polish resistance *do not* proprt to give an overview of what happened in Poland during The Holocaust. They have been chosen to reflect the unimaginably difficult choices made by both Jews and non-Jews under German occupation – where every Jew was marked for death and all non-Jews who assisted their Jewish neighbours were subject to the same fate.

These individuals *were not* typical; they were exceptional, reflecting the relatively small proportion of the population who refused to be bystanders. But neither were they super-human. They would recoil from being labelled as heroes. They symbolise the power of the human spirit – their actions show that in even the darkest of times, good can shine through...



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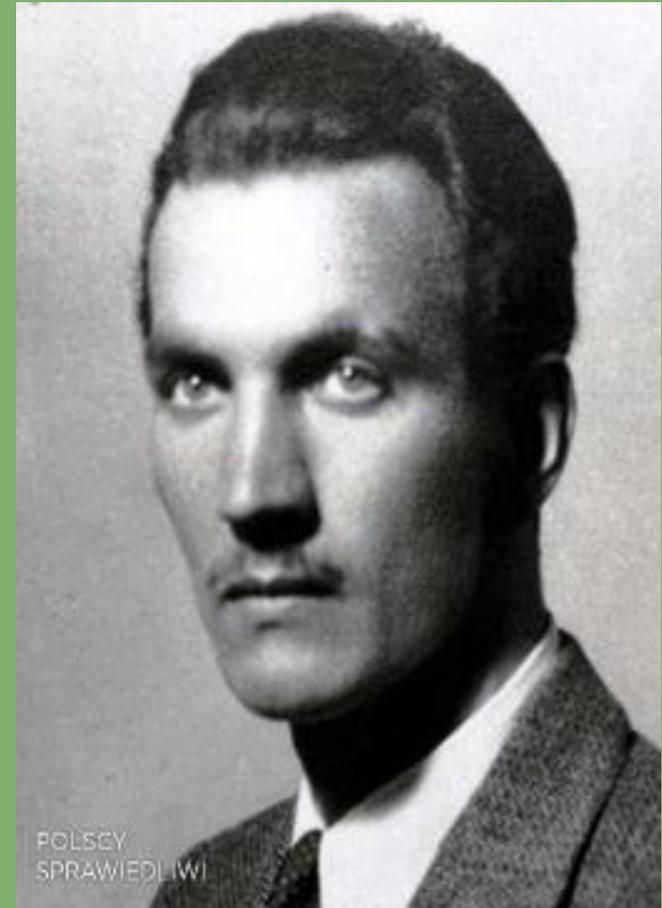
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Jan Karski

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JAN KARSKI 1914 - 2000

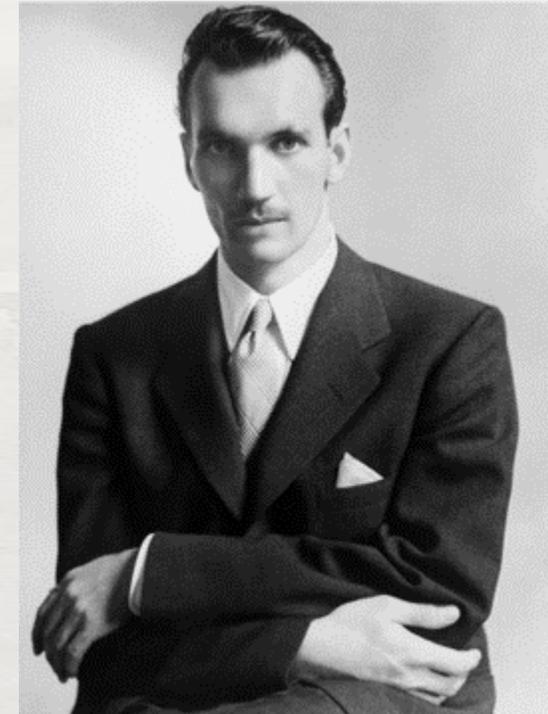


Jan Karski was born Jan Koziński to a Roman Catholic family in Lodz in 1914. After completing his university studies, Karski joined the Polish diplomatic service.

At the outbreak of World War II in September 1939, he joined the Polish army but was taken prisoner by the Soviets and sent to a detention camp. Karski managed to conceal the fact that he was an officer, which enabled him to avoid the Katyń massacre where 22,000 Polish officers were executed. He eventually escaped and joined the Polish underground movement.

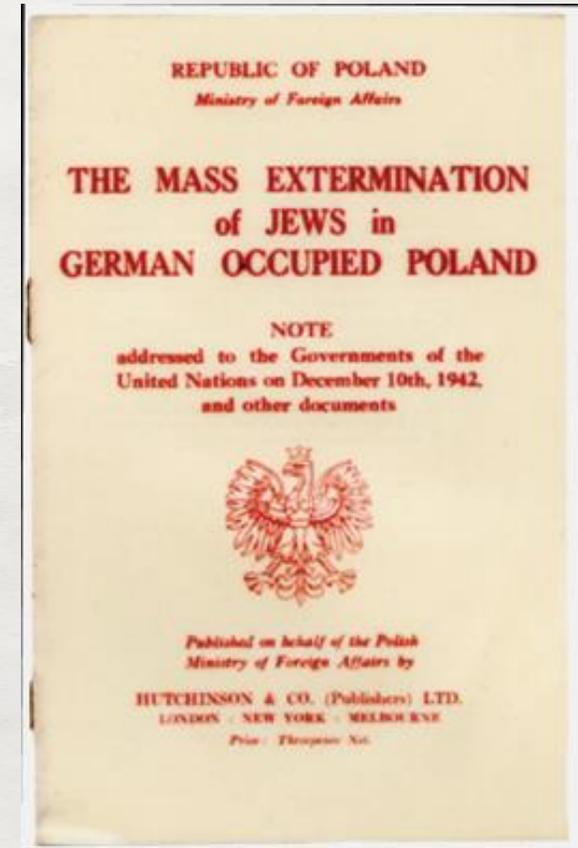
JAN KARSKI 1914 - 2000

With his knowledge of geography and foreign languages and a remarkable memory, Karski became a resourceful courier. He conveyed secret information between the resistance and the Polish government-in-exile. In late 1940, while on a mission, he was captured by the German police and tortured in prison. Afraid that he might give away secret information he attempted to kill himself. He was found alive and transferred to a hospital where he managed to make contact with a fellow undercover agent, who told him that his escape was being planned. Karski feigned illness until the night of his rescue was scheduled.



JAN KARSKI 1914 - 2000

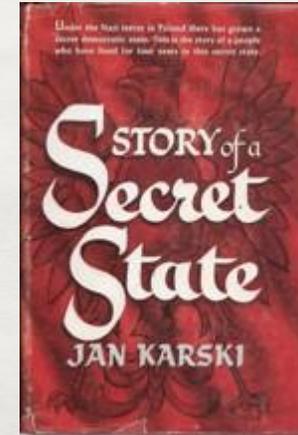
In late 1942 Karski was smuggled in and out of the Warsaw ghetto and a transit camp at Izbica, where he saw for himself the horrors suffered by Jews under Nazi occupation, including mass starvation and transports of Jews to the Belzec death camp. Karski then travelled to London where he delivered a report to the Polish government-in-exile and to senior British authorities including Foreign Minister Anthony Eden. He described what he had seen and warned of Nazi Germany's plans to murder European Jews. In July 1943 Karski went to Washington and met with American President Franklin D. Roosevelt to give the same warning and plead for action. Much to his dismay, Allied governments were focused on the military defeat of Germany, and Karski's message was greeted with disbelief or indifference.



Karski's report – one of the earliest comprehensive descriptions of what was happening to the Jews of Poland

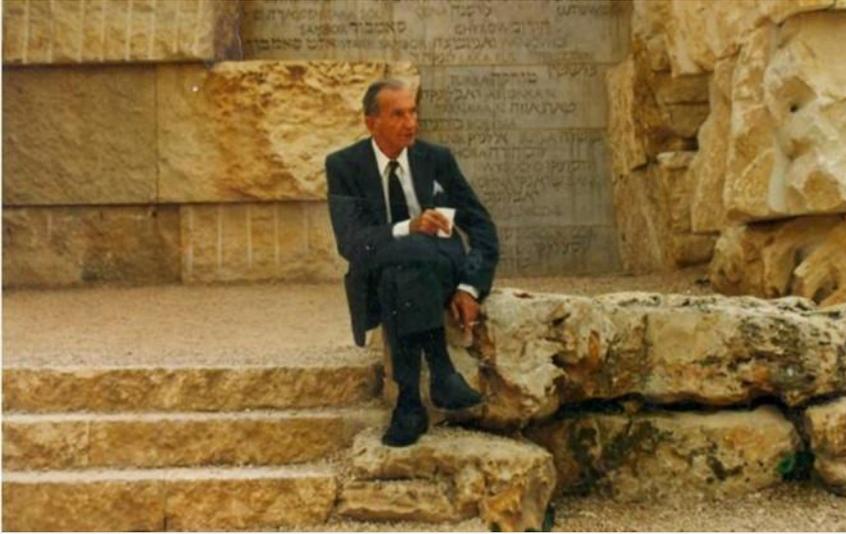
JAN KARSKI 1914 - 2000

Disheartened, Karski remained in the United States. He wrote a book about his time during the war called *The Secret State*.



He refused to return to Communist Poland and remained in Washington promoting Polish freedom and serving for many decades as a professor at Georgetown University. When Poland regained its freedom from communist rule he was honoured by the then Prime Minister Lech Wałęsa.

JAN KARSKI 1914 - 2000



Jan Karski is honoured by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations. He was also granted honorary citizenship of Israel in honour of his deeds during the war.

He is seen as a pillar of humanity all over the world. There are many “Karski Benches” to commemorate his memory.

