

“Jan Karski Memorial Dinner”

Estoril Political Forum 2016

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Ladies and Gentlemen!

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Catholic University of Portugal and H.E. Bronisław Misztal, Polish Ambassador to Portugal, for inviting me to this beautiful place. It is a great honour for me to participate in this year’s Estoril Political Forum and to take part in “The Jan Karski Memorial Dinner”.

Jan Karski is arguably one of the most remarkable figures of the 20th century. An officer of the Polish Army during the Second World War and a courier of the Polish Underground State, who informed the Polish government in exile about the atrocities of the German occupation. He showed his enormous courage when he was smuggled secretly to the Warsaw Ghetto and later when he managed to get undercover to the German transit camp in Izbica, where he witnessed the transports of the Jews to the Belżec extermination camp. Karski reported what he had seen to the leaders of the Western Allies, including President of the USA Franklin Delano Roosevelt. He was trying to persuade them to take action and stop the horror of the Holocaust, but to no avail. For his struggle for justice during the war he was recognized as the “Righteous Among the Nations” by the Yad Vashem.

I am honoured to have this opportunity to contribute to the commemoration of this outstanding man. It is particularly important for me because some of my relatives have also been given this honorific title. I may say that for this reason – that is their testimony – in my family we have always felt special responsibility to remember and praise those who risked their lives in the struggle for justice in the most dramatic times of our history. And it is precisely this struggle for justice against all odds that is the essence of Jan Karski’s legacy. For this reason he deserves to be called a true hero. When everyone thought that morality had given way to brute force, Karski appealed to the conscience of the people and reminded them of the universal nature of ethical principles. He was an advocate for values in a world without values. And this is the core of his message to us in the 21st century.

The necessity to defend the universal values becomes obvious when we look at the nature of the international order of our times. I often say to my students that there were three defining moments in the present times. I like to call them the three beginnings of the 21st century. The first was the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. This was the definite end of the bipolar international order build around the deadly rivalry between two global powers and their respective ideologies. The 1991 was also the triumph of globalization. At the time many thought that the Western model of political, economic and social life was the ultimate model of development for all people and states. It was commonly held that the failure of communism and increasing globalization are both proofs of TINA - that there is no alternative for the liberal democracy and the free market economy as represented by the western societies. Francis Fukuyama went as far as to proclaim "The end of history". The world was no longer to be divided by competing ideologies.

The attack on the World Trade Center proved they were completely wrong. The scale of the September 11th attacks was unprecedented and caused massive and widespread shock. It made Huntington's "clash of civilizations" palpable and showed that there is a massive cultural resistance and hostility among the radical Islamists towards liberal democracy, the free market economy, and generally towards the Western way of life. It revealed a new and terrifying threat to the global order – the purely asymmetric conflict with the new form of international terrorism. It is far more dangerous and difficult to combat, because it uses the instruments of the global network and thus forms a sort of anti-network.

And then there is the third major event that shaped the international relations in our century. Unfortunately it is too often overlooked, though each year its significance becomes more obvious. I am thinking about the Russo-Georgian war, or rather the Russian invasion of Georgia in August of 2008. It marked the return of traditional geopolitics with all its corollaries – the struggle for extending one's sphere of influence by any means necessary. Both conventional, like military aggression and territorial annexation, and unconventional, like the widespread propaganda, cyberattacks and all other forms of warfare which fall under the category of hybrid war. It brought back the threat of the "Concert of Powers" – the form of international order in which the important decisions are made by the strongest states. And history shows that in such circumstances it is always the smaller and less developed countries that bear the costs of maintaining this kind of system.

So the global order of the 21st century, as I perceive it, is marked both by the increasing globalisation and the profound cultural resistance to it in the radical form of international terrorism. It is also characterized by the resurgence of geopolitics and the new forms of warfare. As a result, the current international order suffers from instability and potential breakdown.

What is the proper attitude that we should demonstrate in response to it? There is one famous line from Sir Winston Churchill. When asked what to do to have a successful life, he responded: "Conservation of energy. Never stand up when you can sit down. And never sit down when you can lie down". I have to admit that it is one of my favourite quotes and an excellent advise as far as individual life is concerned. But if we consider the international relations and the sphere of politics, then I think that we should act exactly the opposite – never lie down when you can sit down, and never sit down when you can stand up.

What we have to do, then, is stand up and respond openly to the challenges that we are facing. We cannot afford to be passive and ignore the threats to our security. And in the world marked by the fundamental instability we have always one instrument, which has to be regarded as absolutely reliable and certain. This instrument is the international law. In the face of the rising use of sheer force in international relations, we have to stand by the law and the institutions stemming from it.

Throughout history the notion of a law which regulates the relations between nations and states was emerging as a response to the excessive use of force in foreign affairs. I am proud to say that my *alma mater* – the Jagiellonian University in Kraków – contributed profoundly to the development of the international law. In the face of the looming war with the Teutonic Order and its widespread use of the sword to convert the Baltic nations to Christianity, a group of Polish scholars from the early 15th century called for the necessity of respecting "the law of nations" (*ius gentium*), as it was called back then. Stanisław of Skarbimierz and Paweł Włodkowic (Paulus Vladimiri), the most prominent of them, defended the right of every nation (both Christian and pagan) to self-determination and the prohibition of forced conversion.

This idea was developed further by Francisco de Vitoria in response to the brutality of Spanish conquest of America, and later on by Hugo Grotius, whose theories can be regarded as an answer to the cruelty of the Thirty Year's War. And of course there was the horrible experience of two world

wars which prompted the emergence of the elaborate system of international law and the institutions that we live in.

Today, our responsibility for securing the role of international law is as important as ever. And this is the first of the three main points of the message of the President of Poland Mr. Andrzej Duda, who I have the pleasure and privilege to work for. The road to maintain peace and stability is through the force of law, not the law of force.

Over the last few years we have witnessed other instances of military aggression, first in the Crimean Peninsula and later in the Donbas region, both being the integral parts of Ukraine. The Western world managed to show its solidarity in condemning this blunt violation of law and imposing economic sanctions on the Russian Federation. Sustaining this policy and prolonging these sanctions for as long as the rules of international law are violated is our duty. It is not an act of revenge. Sanctions are the basic legal form of response to non-respect for the law. And they are not incompatible with maintaining a dialogue. We want the dialogue even with those, who violate the international law. But it cannot entail a lowering of standards. National sovereignty and territorial integrity are the most fundamental principles of the international law and cannot be violated under any circumstances.

The second theme of President Duda's message is full commitment to collective security. In less than two weeks Poland will be hosting the NATO Summit. It will be an event of great significance, which will define the Alliance's future. From the very beginning of his term, President Duda has been stressing that if the Warsaw Summit is to be a success, it has to become a visible sign of NATO's unity, flexibility and adaptability in the rapidly changing security environment. In the face of the common challenges we all have to show our solidarity and willingness to take decisive actions. It is our duty as member states of the Alliance. And the main challenge for NATO right now is to provide adequate response to major challenges coming both from the East and from the South. However, these issues require different kinds of answers.

The problem of the eastern flank has always been the lack of the military presence of NATO which would deter potential aggressors. As President Duda often says, real deterrence means real presence. Therefore the answer to threats from the East consists in strengthening the cohesion of the Alliance in terms of military presence. On the other hand, the southern flank does not suffer from insufficient presence, but rather from the lack of strategy and a proper course of action in the face of the growing

instability in Northern Africa and the Middle East. The aim of the Warsaw Summit is to give proper answers to both threats and thus to secure peace and stability for all member states of the Alliance.

The third main point that President Duda has been stressing is sensitivity to the voice and feelings of people and the need to provide social support for the foreign policy. And this issue brings us to the problem of the shape of contemporary Europe. Today the European Union is facing some of the most serious crises in its history. Just a few days ago the citizens of the United Kingdom have decided to leave the EU. Brexit is thus becoming reality. It is difficult to foresee exactly what effects it will have on the future of the European unity. What is obvious, though, is that dealing with them will be the most serious challenge for all of us. And let us not forget that there are also other profound problems that Europe is currently experiencing, such as the security crisis that I have previously elaborated on. We also have the financial crisis of the Eurozone. And then of course there is the migration crisis. It goes without saying that all of them pose a major threat to the future of the European Union.

But what is perhaps the deepest and most challenging problem of Europe is the crisis of trust. The European Union is torn apart by sharp divisions within our societies and the appalling lack of trust in the politicians. It leads to the growing sense of indifference towards the European integration and its further enlargement among the European citizens, the most striking example of which was of course the outcome of the Brexit referendum. What we see currently is also the increasing divisions within the EU and the mutual distrust between its member states. If this tendency continued, it would be a visible sign of the failure of the European project. And this is something we have to avoid.

It is our duty to preserve the unity of Europe. But from the Polish perspective this goal cannot be achieved unless we restore social trust in the European project and mutual respect among the member states of the EU. We believe that most of the problems we are currently facing could have been avoided, if only we had acted as a real community and listened to each other with attention and respect. We could see the lack of this attitude in the way the EU has been facing the migration crisis. From the very beginning some countries, including Poland, have been stating that we have to deal with it at its very roots. I am sure we would be in a different position today if the voice of those countries had not been ignored.

The European Union needs to return to its roots. Poland benefits from the unity of Europe. We want to keep the EU unified but at the same time more sensitive to the opinion of the European citizens. That is why we are advocating the return to the idea of community in its proper sense. The European Union must become a community of free nations and equal states that it was meant to be from the very beginning. If we follow this path, we will restore the social trust that we are currently lacking.

Political leaders have to bear in mind that they are representatives of their citizens. History provides plenty of evidence of the disastrous effects of the politicians' inability or unwillingness to listen. Jan Karski experienced it when he informed the leaders of the Western Allies about the horrors of the Holocaust. The scale of these atrocities could have been diminished, if only his reports had been taken seriously. Unfortunately they were ignored.

In the face of the contemporary challenges, we cannot repeat the mistakes of the past. Politicians must not ignore European citizens. Their voice must be listened to with attention and respect. Otherwise we will face the threat of the dissolution of the European unity. And this is something we cannot afford.

Thank you very much indeed for your attention!