

## **JAN KARSKI MEMORIAL**

23 June 2015

**(organized by the Institute for Political Studies of the Portuguese Catholic University, at the gardens of Palace Hotel in Estoril)**

*Intervention by: Tzipora Rimon, Ambassador of Israel to Portugal*

We dedicate this tea break, at the wonderful gardens of Palace Hotel in Estoril, to remember the remarkable personality of Jan Karski and the outstanding courageous activity he developed throughout his life, especially during the 2<sup>nd</sup> World War, and more specifically during the dark Holocaust - Shoah period.

Jan Karski's report on Warsaw ghetto, and other locations, was one of the first comprehensive accounts of the horrors, atrocities and systematic slaughter of the Jews by the German Nazis. No doubt it was a valuable eyewitness.

He became committed to perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust victims and after the War he wrote and lectured about his experience.

In June 1982 "Yad Vashem" – Israel's official Memorial to the Shoah's victims, in Jerusalem, recognized Jan Karski as 'Righteous Among the Nations'. Although he had not saved individual Jews, the Commission for the Designation of Righteous Among the Nations decided that he had risked his life in order to alert the world to the murderous events, and bring the situation in the camps to the doorstep of the Western Allies'

leaders. A tree bearing a memorial plaque in his name was planted that same year at the Yad Vashem's avenue of the Righteous Among the Nations forest.

One of the benches, which were made by the Polish sculptor Karol Badyna, is located on the campus of Tel Aviv University in Israel.

In 1994, Professor Karski was awarded the title of Honorary Citizen of Israel. In a speech he gave on the occasion, he said: «This is the proudest and most meaningful day of my life».

Karski was nominated for Nobel Prize and recognized by the UN General Assembly shortly before his death.

Today, people around the world continue to honor and thank Karski for exposing the evil perpetrated by the Nazis at the concentration and death camps.

When we are facing, more than ever, and 70 years after the end of World War II, growing racism all over the world and waves of anti-Semitism, particularly in Europe, it is extremely important to keep in our minds, teach and educate about the Holocaust and learn from its lessons and universal values.

Today, there are international instruments that promote remembering and teaching aspects: International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (15 years); International Holocaust Day – 27<sup>th</sup> January (UN Resolution - 10 years); and the Global Forum for Combating anti-Semitism (5 years).

The actions of Jan Karski serve as a source of essential lessons to the younger generations: to rise to the challenge of standing up against horrific crimes and for human rights.

**I have the pleasure of inviting Professor Bronislaw Misztal, my colleague Ambassador of the Republic of Poland in Lisbon, to elaborate on the legacy of Jan Karski.**