



### **Following in the footsteps of Karski in Georgetown**

2014 was an exceptional year. April 24 marked the centenary of the birth of one of the greatest Poles of the twentieth century – Professor Jan Karski. As a historian and coordinator of educational projects at the Marek Edelman Dialogue Center in Łódź, the city where the Professor was born, I felt that we must do everything to remind Poles about their hero. The events that we organized in 2014 gave me the chance to learn more about Jan Karski, though I had believed that I had already known him rather well then. I felt that I had a special bond with that man. I never met him in person, but his perspective on history and his moral code are parallel with what I think about the world. Working on the project about Jan Karski gave me a lot of satisfaction and knowledge. I met unique individuals and institutions that opened their doors to me in the name of the Professor. I can confidently say that thanks to Professor Karski I had one of the best adventures of my life.

In the summer of 2015, I learned that the Jan Karski Educational Foundation chose me as one of two candidates for the scholarship at Georgetown Leadership Seminar 2015. When I was notified about being selected I could not believe it, and the seminar seemed unreal to me. On Saturday October 24, I set off to New York and Washington. I had never been to the United States before. I was very excited. At the airport I met the other Foundation candidate, Andrzej Fařara. Andrzej is a young Polish diplomat who had just returned after serving a term at the Polish Embassy in Canada. He proved to be quite a remarkable man. Educated, ambitious and extremely competent – exactly what we want to see in a representative of Poland abroad. From the very beginning we got along very well and we struck up a friendship immediately. The Georgetown Leadership Seminar was an extraordinary experience for both of us, we were aware of the challenge we were about to face but we were also excited to meet other participants and lecturers. We flew to New York late at night. To be able to walk through Manhattan was an amazing experience. We stayed overnight at the Polish Consulate, and at 7.00 am we were already on the train to Washington. The capital of the United States greeted us with a beautiful sunny weather.

Georgetown is a charming town which today is part of Washington DC. It is located around a hill, atop which university complex stands majestically. Georgetown University was founded in 1789. It was founded by Archbishop John Carroll of Baltimore and is the oldest Catholic university in the United States. The neo-Gothic nineteenth century buildings situated on the banks of the Potomac made great impression on us, and we were still in awe until the end of your stay. The Georgetown Leadership Seminar is an annual program for about 30 participants from around the world. The program was started at the initiative of one of the best universities in the world that specializes in international relations –

School of Foreign Service at Georgetown University. GLS participants to date include members of governments, parliamentarians, and business and NGO leaders.

Already the first meeting with all the participants, as well as the seminar supervisors, James Seevers and Helen McNeill, had me convinced that I was about to meet an exceptional group of people. This year, the GLS involved 34 people from 24 countries. Each one was a unique person, curious about the world, ambitious, with extensive experience and their own opinions on the world. The atmosphere among the participants was great. Openness, willingness to help and a desire to learn – these are the qualities they all exhibit. Establishing international contacts was one of the objectives of the seminar. I met many interesting individuals but I was particularly impressed by Achmad Adhitya, who works with the Government of Indonesia on implementing the MDGs, Issa Konfourou, an adviser to the foreign minister of Mali, and the adviser to Prime Minister of Ukraine, Yuriy Tokarski. However, each of the participants of the GLS had something interesting to say and was aware of the importance of the seminar. I made many new acquaintances that I hope will result in joint projects in the future.

Classes began on Monday, October 26. As I said earlier, the organizer of the seminar is the Edmund Walsh School of Foreign Service, so the program focuses on international affairs. Every year, lectures and classes are devoted to several selected aspects of the subject. In 2015, these were:

1. The situation in and around the so-called "fragile states," that is countries in a state of decay, such as Yemen, Syria or Somalia.
2. The future of the relations between the US and China in the twenty-first century and the problems of the Far East.
3. Contemporary economic problems of the world.

The Georgetown Leadership Seminar program in 2015 was very intense. Lectures, classes and meetings started every day at 8.30 am and ended around 6.00 pm. Each class was taught by outstanding lecturers who are recognized authorities in the field of international affairs. The "caliber" of our teachers was remarkable. During the seminar, I participated in classes and discussions hosted by such distinguished individuals as Chuck Hagel – former US defense secretary, Barbara Bodin – US Ambassador to Yemen, Richard Norland – US Ambassador to Georgia and Uzbekistan, and Madeleine Albright – former US secretary of state in the administration of another graduate of Georgetown, Bill Clinton. Most of the lectures took place on the university campus but some were held at the headquarters of the World Bank, the Embassy of Finland and the American Enterprise Institute. The GLS not only taught me a lot but it also inspired me to continue to learn more. Today, teaching classes on the "Causes of the immigration crisis in Europe in 2015," to hundreds of young Poles, I constantly use the knowledge I gained in Georgetown.

One more aspect of my adventure with GLS 2015 was another meeting with the legend of Jan Karski. As I said earlier, going to the US, I was convinced that I knew almost everything there is to know about the Professor and I was not expecting that anything could surprise me. However, it was not until I arrived at the university where Karski had taught for 40 years that I understood what a truly formidable man he was. As the winner of the Jan Karski Educational Foundation scholarship, I was able to meet privately with key figures of the university. Some of those meetings were truly magical, such as my visit to the home of the former dean of the school and man who contributed to the power of the Georgetown University's foreign service, not to mention a great friend of Jan Karski – Peter Krogh. We also met Carol Harrison, an excellent photographer and author of many of the most famous photos of Professor Jan Karski. It was amazing how other participants of the seminar reacted to the story of Jan Karski. To me it was a proof how universalistic that story is. Our friends from around the world were truly fascinated by the Professor. They wanted to hear about Jan Karski, and at Georgetown University one is constantly reminded of him. We were truly proud to be of our hero, basking a little in his greatness.

On our final two days in Georgetown we met with the alumni of the GLS at the "Georgetown Leadership Seminar Alumni Reunion." As graduates of the GLS 2015, we could participate in that reunion of friends and people who are always striving to broaden their horizons. The GLS alumni community now consists of nearly 800 people from all over the world, including several from Poland. Looking at former graduates, I could see what pleasure it was for them to return to their "alma mater" and I was proud that I already belonged in that group.

I would like to thank all the teachers and participants I met at Georgetown University. I am very grateful for the pleasure of learning from them and with them. I also thank Jan Karski the Educational Foundation for the trust they showed me sending me to the university of their patron – Georgetown University.



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