



# THE WORLD KNEW

## *Jan Karski's Message for Humanity*

In all of his communications, whether in conversation, confidential reports, or his bestselling book, Karski was perfectly consistent on one issue: the unprecedented character of the Holocaust of the Jews. As he concluded, "Never in the history of mankind, never anywhere in the realm of human relations did anything occur to compare with what was inflicted on the Jewish population of Poland." To us today this seems so straightforward that we might forget that Karski's message went unheeded in London and Washington. (...)

In our own post-Cold War world, in which the Second World War becomes a site of wishful moralization about the Holocaust and much else, Karski remains a marginal figure, though for another reason. His incontestable heroism reminds us that the Allies knew about the Holocaust but were not much interested. Karski recalls our weaknesses, one of which is that we forget them.

Timothy Snyder *Story of a Secret State*,  
Georgetown University Press, Washington, D.C.