

LIBERATING A CONTINENT:  
**JOHN PAUL II**  
AND THE FALL OF COMMUNISM



## **New documentary on St. John Paul II's role in the fall of communism premieres in Chicago**

*Liberating a Continent: John Paul II and the Fall of Communism*  
*premieres Dec. 7 on WTTW11, 7:30 pm*

**CHICAGO, Illinois, Dec. 7, 2015** – A new documentary illustrating how St. John Paul II was a driving force in liberating Central and Eastern Europe from communist rule, inspiring a ‘revolution of conscience’ that was pivotal in the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1989, premieres tonight on WTTW. The television premiere is part of WTTW’s December pledge drive.

On Dec. 6, *Liberating a Continent: John Paul II and the Fall of Communism* made its national debut with a special screening at the Copernicus Center in Chicago, a cultural hub for the city’s large Polish community. Chicago boasts the highest percentage of residents with Polish ancestry outside of Poland. In attendance were Robert Rusiecki, Deputy Consul General of Poland in Chicago, Larysa Gerasko, Consul General of Ukraine in Chicago and Marijus Gudynas, Consul General of Lithuania in Chicago, who joined the film’s director and writer David Naglieri and producer Szymon Czystek.

Narrated by actor Jim Caviezel, and with original music by renowned composer Joe Kraemer (*Mission Impossible: Rogue Nation*, *Jack Reacher*), the documentary features rare archival footage and exclusive interviews with several heads of state, including former Polish president and Solidarity founder Lech Wałęsa, as well as papal biographer George Weigel; John Paul’s lifelong assistant Cardinal Stanisław Dziwisz, archbishop of Kraków; and Richard Allen, Ronald Reagan’s National Security Advisor, among numerous others.

“The spiritual dynamic that John Paul II brought behind the Iron Curtain was absolutely essential in the liberation of the continent,” said Carl Anderson, the film’s executive producer and CEO of the Knights of Columbus.

“We often think of political or economic forces changing history, but John Paul II understood that men and women live and die for great ideas. They live and die in defense of human dignity and therefore he was essential to this new birth of freedom on the European continent,” added Anderson, who worked closely with John Paul II both as head of the Knights of Columbus and during his service as a White House official under President Ronald Reagan.

The 90-minute film chronicles Karol Wojtyła's remarkable rise from an underground seminarian and amateur playwright to the Cardinal Archbishop of Kraków and brings to light how Wojtyła's ascension to the papacy in 1978 struck fear in the heart of the Soviet politburo. As archbishop, Wojtyła developed tools for resistance to communist rule that were grounded in defense of human rights and the reclaiming of Poland's Catholic identity. Historians and journalists, with access to recently declassified KGB documents, help to illustrate the vast Soviet campaign to counteract John Paul II's moral crusade. The documentary, in methodical fashion, follows the wave of free thought that swept through the Soviet bloc as a result of the pope's epic nine-day pilgrimage to Poland in June 1979.

"John Paul II sowed the seeds that would later give birth to the Solidarity movement," said Anderson. "Without his spiritual support Solidarity's success would not have been possible and without Solidarity you do not have the fall of the Berlin Wall and the Revolution of '89."

The documentary's television debut will take place this evening on WTTW11 at 7:30 p.m. A national TV distribution in the United States and a theatrical distribution in Poland is planned for the spring of 2016.

For more information about the film, visit [jp2film.com](http://jp2film.com).

**Media contacts:**

Vanessa Santilli, Torchia Communications, 416-341-9929 ext. 228, [vanessa@torchiacom.com](mailto:vanessa@torchiacom.com)

Morgan Roush, Torchia Communications, 419-631-8052, [morgan@torchiacom.com](mailto:morgan@torchiacom.com)