

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://ipn.gov.pl/en/news/4898,The-laureates-of-the-Semper-Fidelis-Prize-2020.html>

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The laureates of the "Semper Fidelis" Prize 2020

The announcement of the laureates of this year's edition of the "Semper Fidelis" prize took place on 3 November 2020 (Tuesday), at 12:00 a.m., during a press conference at the IPN's Janusz Kurtyka Educational Center in Warsaw. The "Semper Fidelis" prize, established by the Institute of National Remembrance, is awarded to persons, institutions and organizations active in commemorating the heritage of the Polish Eastern Borderlands.









“The history of the Polish Borderlands , their culture and heritage are an integral part of our national identity. Both the Sienkiewicz's romantic vision of the Borderlands and the achievements of science, art and culture have permanently shaped our tradition,” said Adam Siwek, director of the IPN's Office for Commemorating the Struggle and Martyrdom before the announcement of the laureates of the 2nd edition of the IPN’s "Semper Fidelis" prize.

“Even if someone is not particularly interested in the history of the Polish Borderlands, they benefit from this heritage, “ emphasized Director Adam Siwek. He also pointed out that by using the term Borderlands, we deform reality, because these lands had constituted a

half of pre-war Poland, and if we referred to the tradition of the First Polish Republic, it would be a much, much larger area.

“The great merit of people involved in the work for the community is collecting, protecting and passing on this heritage to the next generation. This activity is not only the protection of material monuments, but also culture - the specific atmosphere of the Borderlands, which is still nurtured there by Polish communities scattered far in the East, which need support,” said Director Siwek. “The activities related to learning the language, getting to know Polish culture, and maintaining ties between the present-day Republic of Poland and these former territories are very important. This is what the "Semper Fidelis" prize is for. This distinction is addressed to people who are often very modest and do not look forward to any awards. They must be put on a pedestal as an example to follow for the next generations.

A hundred and seven applications were submitted for this year's edition of the award. From this number of candidates, the jury selected five winners (we present their short biografies below).

Due to the Covid-19 epidemic, we were not be able to organize an official ceremony with the participation of the winners. We truly hope that next year's edition will end in a ceremonial meeting with our distinguished laureates.

This year's edition of “Semper Fidelis” was organized under the honorary patronage of Prime Minister

Mateusz Morawiecki.

What is the „Semper Fidelis” prize?

The Institute of National Remembrance established the “Semper Fidelis” Prize in 2019. It is an honorary distinction annually awarded to individuals, institutions and social organizations whose public activity coincides with the statutory objectives of the IPN, for their particularly active participation in commemorating the heritage of the Polish Eastern Borderlands both in Poland and abroad.

The winners are selected by the Prize Committee chaired by the President of the Institute of National Remembrance. During the award ceremony, the laureates receive a commemorative statuette and a diploma. The committee also may award one post-mortem prize each year.

The educational value of the prize is also worth mentioning. It serves as a means of disseminating knowledge about what Poland lost after 1945. And, undoubtedly, the loss was enormous. The change of borders after 1945 meant that part of the centuries-old heritage of the Republic of Poland was included into the territories of today's Ukraine, Belarus and Lithuania. These lands, however, are still the source of our national identity, tradition and culture. Persons devoted to restoring and preserving the memory of the history of the Borderlands deserve special recognition and gratitude on the part of not only present but also future generations of Poles.

The laureates:



Father Roman
Twaróg, photo
from a private
collection

Father Roman Twaróg

Father Roman Twaróg was born in 1951 in Dąbrowica near Tarnów. After graduating from high school, he joined the Society of Christ for Poles living abroad. After the official taking over of the cathedral in Kamianets-Podilskyi by the authorities of the Catholic Church and the restoration of the Kamianets-Podilskyi Diocese, Fr. Twaróg was appointed parish priest of the cathedral and began the work of re-evangelization of this part of the former Borderlands of the First Polish Republic.

During his over thirty-year service in Podolia, Fr. Twaróg has been carrying out extensive activities aimed at rebuilding and renovating damaged, historical churches in the Khmelnytskyi and Ternopil Oblasts. Thanks to his efforts, the churches in Zhvanets, Zińkiwci and the Ramparts of the Holy Trinity have regained their former splendor.

His greatest achievement is the restoration of the Kamianets Cathedral, where the Soviet Museum of Religion and Atheism used to operate (in the years 1945–1989). Father Roman Twaróg is currently carrying out renovation and construction works at the former convent of Dominican Sisters in Kamianets-Podilskyi' old town. These works are part of a museum project authored by Father Twaróg, intended to commemorate the martyrdom of Christians and Jews in the south-eastern Borderlands of the former Polish Republic and to preserve Polish cultural heritage as the former "bulwark of Christianity".



Bishop Jan
Purwiński

Bishop Jan Purwiński

Senior Bishop of the Kiev-Zhytomyr Diocese. He was born to a Polish family in Latvia in 1934. In 1961, he was ordained a priest and began his pastoral activity in Daugavpils - a city with the largest concentration of Polish people in Latgale. In 1977, he came to Ukraine - initially working as a vicar, later he became the parish priest. While serving in the parish of St. Sophia in Zhytomyr, in 1981 he also took on the duties of the vicar of the bishop of Ukraine and Moldova. In 1983, he was awarded the honorary title of the personal chaplain of John Paul II, and in January 1991 he was appointed bishop ordinary of the Diocese in Zhytomyr, which at that time encompassed 8 oblasts of Ukraine. With the establishment of the Kiev-Zhytomyr Diocese in 1998, he became its bishop ordinary. Thanks to his service, the Catholic Church in the Zhytomyr region survived the most difficult period of persecution and radical communism. Bishop Jan Purwiński was also one of the first initiators of the Polish diaspora movement and a defender of Polish culture and history. Thanks to his efforts, it was possible to save the Polish cemetery in Zhytomyr - one of the largest Catholic necropolises in the former Borderlands, where, among others, the Paderewski, Moniuszko, Dąbrowski and Czacki families rest. Bishop Purwiński strongly believed in the importance of preserving the Polish language, primarily trying to ensure that local Poles could pray in their mother tongue. He contributed to the establishment of the Polish Chaplaincy of the Zhytomyr Region. He retired in 2011, but to this day he has been actively participating in many projects initiated by local Polish diaspora organizations. For his activity and patriotism, he was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Merit of the Republic of Poland and the "Meritorious for Polish Culture" award.



Iness Todryk-
Pisalnik and
Andrzej Pisalnik,
photo from their
private collection

Iness Todryk-Pisalnik and Andrzej Pisalnik

A married couple from Grodno, journalists, editors of the Polish community weekly "Głos znad Niemna na uchodźstwie" and the znadniemna.pl portal. One of their projects which has received wide recognition is a series of historical publications "Dziadek w polskim mundurze" [Grandfather in a Polish Uniform]. Its purpose is to present the profiles of ordinary people from the Borderlands of the Second Polish Republic, whose fate was related to the Polish uniform - worn in various significant circumstances. In 2014, the Pisalnik family issued an

appeal for memorabilia and souvenirs related to those who had been serving in Polish armed formations, still stored in private homes, to be handed over to them. On the basis of the materials collected from Poles living in Belarus, Poland and the U.S, the Pisalnik family developed over 70 biographies in 5 years. They were collected in the album “Dziadek w polskim mundurze” published in 2019.



Waldemar
Szełkowski. Photo:
Bartosz Frątczak

Waldemar Szełkowski

Since 1993, he has been a history teacher at the Józef Ignacy Kraszewski Gymnasium in Vilnius. Since that time, he has been awarded three times in the competition "The best school - the best teacher". He is involved in various educational projects, such as an expedition to Siberia following the trail of Polish deportees. For 5 years, Waldemar Szełkowski has been active in the Vilnius Historical Reenaction Club Garnison Naujoji Vilnia, of which he is the originator and president. The Club's mission is to spread knowledge of the history of Lithuania and Poland, with an emphasis on the history of the Vilnius Region. It carries out projects aimed at popularizing military history and collects information about Polish soldiers. It also takes care of the places of their commemoration. Waldemar Szełkowski has authored over 150 press articles on history, sightseeing and travel, and the monograph „Akademicki Klub Włóczęgów Wileńskich” [Academic Club of Vilnius Wanderers] published in 1999.



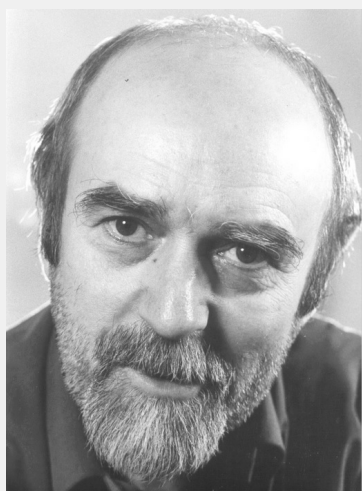
Dora Kacnelson,
photo public
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Dora Kacnelson

Post mortem award

Polish Slavist, literary scholar and historian of Jewish descent. Before the war, her parents fled with her from the Soviet Union to Poland. During the occupation, she found herself in the Soviet Union again. After the war she studied in Leningrad. In 1966, Dora Kacnelson moved to Drohobych. At the local university, she lectured on Polish literature and history. She also organized Polish language clubs and Polish poetry evenings. She specialized in the poetry of Adam Mickiewicz and the insurgent songs of the 19th century. Her research also focused on the fate of Polish deportees to Siberia after the January Uprising. She

combined her work with maintaining lively contacts with Polish and Jewish centers in the Lwów region. She supported Polish veterans of the 1939 war, soldiers of the Home Army, Peasants' Battalions, as well as veterans of the National Armed Forces, which she clearly emphasized, while demanding pensions for them from the Polish authorities. She was a great supporter of Polish-Jewish-Ukrainian, as well as Polish-Lithuanian dialogue and understanding, which she expressed in her speeches at various meetings, in letters and publications. She cared for the Poles who remained in the Borderlands, especially the lonely and sick, for Polish children in orphanages and for veterans. In her numerous publications and speeches at home and abroad, Dora Kacnelson tirelessly defended the good name of Poles. In 2002, she was awarded the Polonia Mater Nostra Est Medal.



Stanisław

Srokowski, photo
from his private
collection

Stanisław Srokowski

Honorary mention

A poet, prose writer, playwright and literary critic born in the Polish Borderlands. In his works he refers, among others, to the genocide of Poles by Ukrainian nationalists committed in 1943. Based on his short story Wojciech Smarzowski made the famous film "Volhynia" in 2016. Stanisław Srokowski is also associated with the "Solidarity" movement - he was the founder of this trade union in the editorial office of "Wiadomości" and the press spokesman of the "Solidarity" of Individual Farmers in Wrocław. From 1982 he was active in Fighting Solidarity, for which he was awarded the Cross of Fighting Solidarity in 2010.

Last year, the laureates were: scoutmaster Stefan Adamski, the "Wołanie z Wołynia" magazine, Father Roman Dzwonkowski, Polish Army Colonel Weronika Sebastianowicz and the Polish Scouting Association in Lithuania. In addition, Wiesław Helak received a special distinction.



The press conference was additionally be broadcast on our IPNtvPL channel.

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