

Institute of National Remembrance

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"Witness of History" awards for laureates from outside Poland - Warsaw, 24 October 2018

"Being a Pole abroad is a great challenge nowadays," said Jakub Vaugon from France, the youngest of the laureates of this year's IPN "Witness of History" prize. The other awarded come from South Africa, Italy and Lithuania.



















On 24 October 2018, the ceremonial decoration of the laureates of the

"Witness of History" award was held in the Royal Łazienki Park. The prizes are awarded by the chapter of the Institute of National Remembrance. This is the 4th edition of the "Witness of History" award for people from abroad, who contribute to commemorating Polish history in an outstanding way. The ceremony was attended by Speaker of the Senate Stanisław Karczewski, IPN's President Dr Jarosław Szarek and IPN's Deputy President Prof Krzysztof Szwagrzyk, among others.

The winners and the guests were greeted by Zbigniew Wawer, Director of the Royal Łazienki Museum. With reference to the centenary of Poland regaining its independence, he recalled the communists' destruction of Marshal Piłsudski's architectural monuments in "Łazienki".

"You are our ambassadors, the ambassadors of our memory," IPN's President Jarosław Szarek welcomed the laureates. "You have never forgotten our Homeland, although you live far away." Referring to Jakub Vaugon, Jarosław Szarek, who is also the chairman of the chapter said: "There is a special person among the awarded, a young boy, a Pole from France, who protested against a lie in a textbook. For that he was bullied at school. He was even refused to study at the French high school he had chosen. (...) Jakub stood up for Polish history, in defense of something greater, in defense of the truth."

The young courageous Pole was also mentioned in the speech by Stanisław Karczewski, Speaker of the Senate. "I am very grateful to you for your commitment and to the IPN for this initiative. Jakub, we give special thanks to you, as you have become a symbol ..." The

Speaker of the Senate stressed that Jakub is “a representative of the young people who take over the responsibility of preserving our history.” He also announced that work is ongoing on increasing the number of senators by one representative of the Polish community in the East and one representative from the West.

Adam Hlebowicz, Director of the IPN’s National Education Office, announced the laureates and the reasons for which they have been awarded. The prizes were handed to the winners by the President of the IPN, Jarosław Szarek, together with the Senate's Speaker Stanisław Karczewski. On receiving the prize, some laureates were too moved to take the floor. Mr. Gabriel Garçon from France, who researches the heritage of the interwar Polish emigration in France, said that without institutional support from Poland it would have been impossible to effectively preserve the legacy of our compatriots.

"It is not enough to be born a Pole! The challenge is to want to be one!", said Jakub Vaugon with a trembling voice during his speech. "I thought that the truth can defend itself. Unfortunately, in today's times you have to fight for it! This honorable award restores my faith that it was worth the effort!"- with these words the brave high school student finished his speech.

The ceremony was followed by a concert of patriotic songs performed by the soloist Magdalena Jemioł and harpist Agnieszka Miedziedzka.

The laureates of the IPN’s "Witness of History" award:

- Foundation of the 2nd Polish Corps Memorial Museum in Italy – on behalf of the Foundation, the prize

was collected by its President, and the son of a soldier from Monte Cassino;

- Gabriel Garçon, President of the "Le Rayonnement Culturel Polonais" association (France);
- Social Committee for the Care of Old Rossa in Vilnius (Lithuania) - the prize was collected by Dariusz Żybart, the President of the Committee;
- Jakub Vaugon (France), the first-grade high school student from Paris;
- Wacław Wiłkojć (Lithuania), president of the circle of the Union of Poles in Lithuania in Nowe Święciany;
- The Polish Association in Johannesburg (South Africa) - on behalf of Barbara Kukulska, President of the Association, the award was received by Magdalena Libera, a longtime activist of this organization.

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