

Institute of National Remembrance

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The IPN's "Custodian of National Memory" prize to be awarded on 29 June 2021 at the Royal Castle in Warsaw

The ceremonial gala during which the laureates of this year's "Custodian of National Memory" Prize will receive their awards from the hands of the President of the Institute of National Remembrance, Jarosław Szarek Ph.D., is going to be held at the Royal Castle in Warsaw on 29 June 2021 at 12:00. The event will be broadcast live on IPNtv.



The "Custodian of National Memory" prize is granted to individuals, as well as to institutions and social organizations for their particularly active participation in the commemoration of the history of the Polish Nation in the years 1939-1989, and for public activity coinciding with the statutory objectives of the Institute of National Remembrance. The laureates are selected by a panel headed by the President of the Institute of National Remembrance.

The prize is awarded to private persons, institutions and organizations. As of 2012, one of the five distinctions can be awarded posthumously, which allows the Institute to express its gratitude and recognition also to those who are no longer with us. The prize is honorary and its laureates receive the title of Custodian of National Memory.

In 2021, the prize will be awarded for the twentieth time. The laureates of this year's prestigious award are:

Jerzy Giza



An educator, publicist, and social activist from a family of patriotic traditions. President of the Józef Kustroń Society in Nowy Sącz, member of the Committee for the Preservation of Józef Piłsudski's Mound, Committee for the Commemoration of Nowy Sącz Citizens murdered in the East, the Katyń Institute, the Katyń Family of Nowy Sącz, and the Clubs of the Service for Independence. He is a co-founder of the Józef Piłsudski Society, its secretary and vice-president, member of the Society's Historical Commission, and a collaborator with the Polish authorities in exile.

He is actively involved in the organization of patriotic events and concerts, and the initiator of historical exhibitions and plaques commemorating places and figures associated with the independence activity. Jerzy Giza is also the author of numerous articles, biographies and historical publications, including "Nowosądecka lista katyńska" ("Katyń List of Nowy Sącz"), "Sądecy generałowie w służbie polskiej i

obcej" ("Generals from Nowy Sącz in Polish and Foreign Service"), "Cmentarz Komunalny w Nowym Sączu – rejestr zasłużonych" ("Communal Cemetery in Nowy Sącz - Register of Distinguished Persons"), "Sądecki kawalerowie Virtuti Militari 1918-1920" ("Cavaliers of Virtuti Militari of Nowy Sącz 1918-1920"), "Sądecki garnizon i jego żołnierze 1918-1922" ("The Garrison of Nowy Sącz and its Soldiers 1918-1922"), "Organizacja Wolność" ("Organisation Freedom").

He participated in the opposition activity of Cracow and Nowy Sącz pro-independence circles. Because of pressure from the SB, he was dismissed from his job at Primary School No. 13 in Cracow in 1988. After the political transformation, he took over the management of Józef Piłsudski Community Primary School No. 1 as the first non-public primary school in Poland, and also Zbigniew Herbert Community Secondary School No. 1 in 1999.

Currently, Jerzy Giza is involved in activities aimed at restoring the Military Garrison in the Nowy Sącz region, as it was before the Second World War.

Czesław Nowak,



A politician, social activist, one of the organisers of the strikes in Gdańsk in December 1970, August 1980, December 1981, and August 1988. President of the "Dignity" Association. Since 1980, he has been a member of the Independent Independent Trade Union "Solidarity". After introducing martial law, he was arrested and sentenced by the Navy Court to 4,5 years in prison, and lost his civil rights for 4 years. He served his prison term in detention centres in Gdańsk and Potulice and was released under an amnesty in late April 1983. In 1988, he was arrested again and sentenced to 6 weeks in jail. In July 1988, the Secret Commission of the "Solidarity" Trade Union at the Port of Gdańsk elected him chairman. He was also editor-in-chief of the trade union magazine "Portowiec" ["Dockyard Man"].

In the elections to the Sejm on June 4, 1989, he won a seat as a member of the Civic Committee in Gdynia. Two years later, he was re-elected to the Sejm, this time on the initiative of Centre Agreement. In Parliament, he worked in the Foreign Economic Relations and Maritime

Economy Committee and the Social Policy Committee. After leaving the Parliament in 1993, he returned to work for the Gdańsk Port Authority and went about organising the Duty-Free Area.

Since 1994, he has been the president of the "Dignity" Association, of which he was a co-founder. The Association defends the ideals of "Solidarity", seeks to punish those guilty of communist crimes and remove judges and prosecutors who ruled or accused in political trials in the Polish People's Republic from their positions. Additionally, the Association undertakes initiatives to commemorate heroes and spread knowledge of Poland's recent history, such as restoring the cross on the grave of Westerplatte soldiers, putting up a plaque commemorating the meeting of Pope John Paul II with young people at Westerplatte, and erecting statues to John Paul II, Ronald Reagan, and Anna Walentynowicz.

Currently, Czesław Nowak is supporting the initiative to build a monument to Ignacy Jan Paderewski, one of the Fathers of Independence, in Gdańsk-Brzeźno.

Rev. Władysław Palmowski



A chaplain of "Solidarity" and people repressed in the martial law period. As early as December 13, 1981, he organised help for the interned and their families. Together with members of local branches of "Solidarity", he built the first underground structures. He followed the interned and imprisoned to Rzeszów-Załęże, Nowy Łupków, Uherzec, and Racibórz. While celebrating mass, he also acted as a courier: he brought information about families and the political situation in the country and smuggled letters. He was under surveillance, repeatedly detained and controlled by SB officers.

He was one of the co-founders of the Salvation Committee of "Solidarity" in Nowa Huta, a member of the management of the secret structure GROT, and at the same time the only chaplain of the underground "Solidarity" in Nowa Huta. He coordinated actions and manifestations starting or finishing within the churches. He initiated the creation of the Social Fund for Workers' Aid (SFPP), which in the years 1983-1989 covered almost 7 thousand members of "Solidarity"

from various workplaces. Father Palmowski collected contributions and paid statutory benefits and allowances. Having completed these tasks, he handed over the collected funds to the legal authorities of "Solidarity".

At the same time, Father Palmowski was an organiser of pastoral activities for the workers and intelligentsia in Nowa Huta and Drawsko Pomorskie. In 1982-1986, he was an organiser of the Civic Committee in the Łęczyce commune, and after the elections in 1989, he became deputy head of the commune.

Father Palmowski was also involved in restoring the historical memory of the prisoners of KL Stutthof: he initiated the restoration of the graves of murdered prisoners and the construction of a church monument in Nawcz, commemorating the victims of the 1945 death march. After taking over the parish in Morawica in 2003, he started the educational-patriotic work with the youth. He built a monument, "Polish Eagles", dedicated to the Polish pilots fighting in the West, by the grave of Captain Mieczysław Medwecki, the first pilot shot down in 1939. He created a hill – the Mount of Transfiguration – with 'The History of the Polish Nation' educational path, and monuments to the creators of Independence. Not only is he involved in the dissemination of knowledge about the most significant moments in the history of our country, but he also speaks about complicated matters – deportations, imprisonments, and martyrdom of the Cursed Soldiers.

Redemptorist Fathers serving in 'Radio Maryja'



Founded by the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, the radio station has been run by Redemptorist Fathers for 30 years, bringing the listeners religious and social history of Poland. The programmes "Rozmowy niedokończone" ("Unfinished Conversations") or "Aktualności dnia" ("News of the Day") allow preserving the memory of the past, both distant and recent. In 1998, the editors of Radio Maryja called on the listeners to give testimonies concerning the times of German occupation. The reaction revealed the enormous scale of help given by Poles to Jews doomed to extermination. Based on the collected testimonies, a two-volume publication entitled "Godni synowie naszej Ojczyzny" ("Worthy Sons of Our Fatherland") was published.

The Redemptorist Fathers continue to preserve the memory of Poles' heroism during World War II. In the Sanctuary of the Blessed Virgin

Mary, Star of the New Evangelization, and St. John Paul II in Toruń, which they run, a Memorial Chapel with names of more than a thousand Poles who died at the hands of the German occupants for helping Jews are immortalized has been erected.

In August 2020, the Redemptorist Fathers also opened the Park of National Remembrance "Zachowali się jak trzeba" ("They Did the Right Thing"). The names of people involved in rescuing Jews from the Holocaust are inscribed on one hundred three-metre-high pedestals, set in a granite-lined avenue forming the contour of Poland's borders. A meaningful object in the Park is a pavilion with the symbolic name "Poland blessed through blood spilled", with a list of localities where Poles were persecuted, arrested, tortured, and killed by the German occupier during World War II. It is also a place to pay tribute to Polish patriots and prisoners of war or victims of the Katyń crime.

The Polish Museum of America



The Museum, established in 1935, is one of the oldest Polish organisations in the United States.

The Museum's mission is to promote Polish culture through exhibitions, library and museum classes, concerts, plays, film screenings, workshops and lectures on history, literature and the arts. To this end, the organisation cooperates with many cultural, educational, professional and social institutions.

Thanks to the work of Mieczyslaw Haiman, organiser and first curator of the Polish Museum of America, who in 1939 urged the American Polonia to collect Polish memorabilia, documents, books and works of art, the Museum boasts the most extensive collection of Polonica in the United States. They are gathered in 3 departments: Archives, Museum, and Library.

The Archives, keep, among others, files that testify to the activities of the Polish Exile in America and its contribution to Poland regaining independence. Among the most valuable archives, there are the collections concerning Tadeusz Kosciuszko, letters written by six Polish kings (including the oldest letter from Sigismund Augustus, dated 1555), a unique set of documents left after the Polish National Department (1916-1926), including those from the years 1917-1919 concerning recruitment for the Polish Army in France. The largest group is the archives of the Polish American Council from 1938-1970.

The central part of the Museum's art collection consists of objects from the Polish Pavilion at the 1939 New York World Exhibition. The exhibits include a monumental stained-glass window, designed by Mieczyslaw Jurgielewicz, entitled "Symbol of Poland Reborn", examples of craft and folk art, militaria, paintings, sculptures, prints, and models. A separate room is devoted to Ignacy Jan Paderewski; the exhibition consists of furnishings from his last residence at the Buckingham Hotel in New York, personal belongings and precious keepsakes, including the golden goose feather he used to sign the Versailles peace treaty.

The Library, which gathers and makes available publications on Poland and the Polish community, has about 100,000 volumes. Among the oldest and most valuable works, there are two Latin textbooks written by Wawrzyniec Korwin at the beginning of the 16th century.

The ceremony has received the National Patronage of the President of the Republic of Poland Andrzej Duda to mark the Centenary of Regaining Independence

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The winners of the 19th edition of the "Custodian of National Memory" Prize will also be awarded during the official ceremony:

Kazimierz Cholewa

Wasył Haniewicz

Gusen Memorial Committee

Andrzej Pityński

Wojciech Ziemiński (post mortem prize)

The full list of laureates is available at :

The laureates of the "Custodian of National Memory" Prize

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