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Chemnitz, 12 November 2019

City of Chemnitz International Stefan Heym Prize 2020 awarded jointly to journalists and writers Slavenka Drakulić and Richard Swartz

The literature award, which includes prize money of EUR 20,000, will be conferred next April.

The City of Chemnitz International Stefan Heym Prize 2020 is being awarded jointly to Croatian novelist and journalist Slavenka Drakulić and Swedish author and journalist Richard Swartz, in an acknowledgement by the Awards Committee of the extensive literary journalistic accomplishments of this married couple. The Committee's decision was announced today by Mayor Barbara Ludwig. The literary prize will be awarded on 3 April 2020; the ceremony traditionally takes place close to the time of Stefan Heym's birthday (10 April 1913).

Croatian novelist and journalist Slavenka Drakulić, born in 1949, shot to prominence with her novels "The Principle of Longing" (1989), *The Taste of a Man* (1997), *Marble Skin* (1998), *As If I Am Not There* (1999), *Frida's Bed* (2007), "Dora and the Minotaurus" (2016) and *Mileva Einstein, A Theory of Sadness* (2018).

Her work examines the role of women in society and in relationships between the genders – a topic that has lost none of its relevance and is still fiercely debated today. She frequently situates these issues in her biographies of famous women. However, her exploration of universal questions also takes the brutality of war as its backdrop. Her non-fiction work, *They Would Never Hurt A Fly: War Criminals on Trial in the Hague* won the Leipzig Book Award for European Understanding in 2005 .

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Born in 1945, Richard Swartz is an internationally acclaimed Swedish writer and journalist, who has worked for a number of renowned newspapers. His reports, articles and novels – including *Room Service* (1996), “Emergency Lies” (1998), *A House in Istria* (1999), “Address Book” (2005), *The Stranger Next Door: An Anthology from the Other Europe* (2007), *Oysters in Prague* (2019) – reflect spiritual and political life in western and eastern Europe. His writings delve into the stories of individual people and their relationships with society. Like Stefan Heym, he views literature as a tool that can help people in their quest for answers in their present life.

Slavenka Drakulić and Richard Swartz are European voices in the best sense of the term: they tackle the big European questions, expressed through the stories of the fates of individuals. War and peace; democracy; dictatorship; war crimes and responsibility; equality and justice: as chroniclers of our time they stand out for their sharp literary observations of the past and present, communicating unassailable truths in superlative lyrical style.

The International Stefan Heym Prize for 2020 is thus honouring two journalists and writers whose works of searing clarity call on readers to form their own judgements and make up their own minds. Their works are protests against collective amnesia, and a beacon of intercultural understanding and reconciliation.

Lord Mayor Barbara Ludwig said, “Stefan Heym made a lasting impression on the cultural and spiritual legacy of our city. He was a lateral thinker, sometimes a heckler. He took nothing for granted. Quite the contrary, in fact: he actively sought out discussion and debate. He questioned, he touched on sore points, he stirred the pot – all to challenge society to think, to reflect, to change its view. “Opening minds” – the belief that underpins our application to become European Capital of Culture – was something that he lived and breathed and embodied. Slavenka Drakulić and Richard Swartz are two journalists and writers who do the same. Like Stefan Heym, they persuade with the sheer force of their analytical insight; their works address the big European issues.”

Regula Venske, President of the PEN Centre Germany: “The City of Chemnitz has done an exemplary job of honouring the legacy of Stefan Heym, and preserving his spirit for the modern age. In Slavenka Drakulić and Richard Swartz, the Award is once again celebrating two authors who have each explored European themes in their own way, and taken a profound look at the relationship between individuals and society. Much in the spirit of Heym himself, Swartz has done this with a touch of humour; Drakulić, meanwhile, has written about disquieting subjects

that are often forgotten or pushed aside. Her novel *As If I Am Not There*, about the systematic rape perpetrated by Serbian soldiers in the Yugoslavian war, is the most oppressive and nightmarish anti-war novel that I have come across.”

Dr. Ulrike Uhlig, Chair of the International Stefan Heym Association

“Both of these authors combine literary storytelling with journalistic analysis, and their work is relevant to contemporary debates today. A Croat and a Swede, an east-west relationship; practically the embodiment of European integration. Literary craftsmanship combined with social and political responsibility: simply an excellent choice!”

City of Chemnitz International Stefan Heym Prize

The City of Chemnitz International Stefan Heym Prize is awarded in memory of the life, work and legacy of Stefan Heym, son and honorary citizen of our city, to individuals with the courage to criticise our times and who like Stefan Heym have produced outstanding literary and/or journalistic work that will stand the test of time. The award was first given to Amos Oz in 2008. Bora Ćosić was recognised in 2011, and, to commemorate Stefan Heym’s 100th birthday, the prize was awarded in 2013 to Christoph Hein. In 2017, the prize went to Polish writer and journalist Joanna Bator.

The Awards Committee comprises the Mayor of the City of Chemnitz, the President of the P.E.N. Centre Germany, the President of the Goethe Institute, the Head of the C. Bertelsmann publishing house, the Chair of the International Society for Human Rights – German Section, the Chair of the International Stefan Heym Society, Prof. Dr. Bernadette Malinowski as the Chair of Modern and Comparative Literature at TU Chemnitz, and two town councils from the City of Chemnitz culture committee.

Further information

Information on the City of Chemnitz International Stefan Heym Prize, Stefan Heym Sponsorships and recipients to date can be found at: www.stefan-heyms-preis.de.