

## **In Memoriam**

### **James Cecora (1944–1998)**

Dr. James Cecora, who died on 15 June 1998, was an eminent sociologist and economist, known and respected throughout Europe for his research on rural households, and a pioneer of collective empirical research of eastern and western academics concerning development problems of rural areas.

He was born on 11 July 1944 in Bronxville, USA and after personally experiencing the Vietnam War emigrated to Europe in 1969. After studying at various European universities — sociology and journalism at Munich University, Town Planning and Demography in Paris, Regional Planning at Karlsruhe Technical University, as well as a brief period working at the Fraunhofer Institute of Systems Technology and Innovation Research in Karlsruhe — in 1979 he joined the Institute of Structural Research of the German Federal Agricultural Research Centre in Braunschweig where he worked until his sudden and premature death. In 1985 he took a doctor's degree at Justus Liebig University in Gießen after his dissertation devoted to the influence of settlement structure on the life style of family household members.

In the mid-eighties (i.e. during the period of the so-called Iron Curtain) he made contact with economists and sociologists in Poland and Czechoslovakia and later the Soviet Union. This resulted in a German-Polish-Czechoslovak research programme entitled 'Quality and living conditions of rural households', initiated in 1989 (in other words before the collapse of communism in Central Europe). The empirical research which was designed and coordinated by James Cecora and put into practice in 1991–1992 in rural areas in Czechoslovakia, Germany and Poland aimed at analysing the similarities and differences in the functioning of rural households, value systems and mutual relations of their members. This resulted in international academic conferences (Bonn 1992, Gdańsk 1994) as well as many treaties,

including two exceptional books edited by him: *Economic Behaviour of Family Households in an International Context* (FAA-Bonn, Bonn 1993) as well as *Changing Values and Attitudes in Family Households with Rural Peer Groups, Social Networks and Action Spaces* (FAA-Bonn 1994). His next and unfortunately last work appeared posthumously: *Cultivating Grass-Roots for Regional Development in a Globalising Economy. Innovation and Entrepreneurship in organised markets* (Ashgate Publishing Ltd. 1999), also representing in a certain way a synthesis of research carried out in 1991 and 1992 (to be discussed in the next issue of Eastern European Countryside).

In 1995–1998, further to academic and organizational experience acquired during the first project, Jim and an international group of friends worked on the preparation of the next project concerning the situation of rural household, which surpassed both as regards research size as well as the number of participating countries (14, including many from Central and Eastern Europe — the Czech Republic, Estonia, Russia, Poland, Hungary) whatever had previously been done in Europe in the field of collective empirical ventures. Unfortunately, it was not his good fortune to start its realization, planned for 2000 and nobody knows whether, without Jim's tremendous knowledge, coordination and enthusiasm, this project will ever come to fruition.

### Hanus Schimmerling (1921–1999)

Hanus Schimmerling, one of the most outstanding Czech rural sociologists was born in Brno on 30 March 1921. Between 1942 and 1945 he was imprisoned in Teresienstadt, Auschwitz and Fürstengrube. He and his sister were the only members of their large Jewish family (consisting of about 14 people) to survive. After the Second World War he studied at the Agricultural University in Brno and then worked on state farms. From 1951 he worked as a researcher at the Research Institute of Agricultural Economics in Prague. At that time, along with Professor Jan Tauber, he was very active in the renewal of rural sociology at the Czech University of Agriculture in Prague. After 1989 he was once again involved in rural sociology at the CUA in Prague, at the time of renewal of Czech membership in ESRS, FAO etc. He was a member of the Czech Academy of Agriculture, the Sociological Association and until 1992, chairman of the editorial board of the scientific review *Sociologie venkova a zemědělství* (Rural and Agricultural Sociology). He died on 26 April 1999.