

Włodzimierz Winclawski

Barbara Weber (1930–2007)

Editor of “Eastern European Countryside” and “Wieś Współczesna”¹



Dr Barbara Weber died in Warsaw on 7 November after a long illness. For many years she was the editor of the sociology department of “Wieś Współczesna” (1958–1989), deputy editor of *Eastern European Countryside* (1993–2007), a rural sociologist, she researched the ideals, attitudes and life style of the rural youth.

She was born in Warsaw in 1930 into the family of Jerzy and Zofia who were both office clerks. Her father died during the war when she was 11. She was supported by her mother who worked as an office clerk in various institutions. She went to primary school which she finished when Warsaw was under German occupation. She started secondary school, attending clandestine classes. With her mother she left the capital after the Warsaw Uprising (September 1944). They found refuge in the country outside Łowicz. In the middle of 1945 they settled in Bydgoszcz which had by then been liberated. She continued her schooling at secondary school and passed her school leaving examination in 1949. She started studying Polish Language and Literature at Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. After passing four semesters she moved to Warsaw University and continued her Polish studies on a specialist editorial course. She graduated in 1952. Her difficult financial situation prevented her from continuing her studies so she was forced to abandon university and start working. She was

¹ Contemporary Countryside.

employed as an editor at the publishers "Iskry" (the socio-political literature section). She worked in the editorial office for 6 years (editor, section manager, department manager). Once her financial situation had become more stable, in 1957 she resumed her studies at Warsaw University, doing a Masters degree in philosophy and sociology which she finished in 1962. She prepared her Masters thesis on *The Subject Matter of Letters of Readers of Nowa Wieś*² sent in 1958 under the aegis of Professor Maria Ossowska. Those studies gave rise to her interest in academic work but she was particularly interested in strictly sociological issues. Immediately after her studies she became a permanent participant in the seminar on ethics run by Professor Ossowska and the rural sociology seminar at the Department of Rural Sociology at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the Polish Academy of Science (under Professor Bogusław Gałęski). In 1970 she obtained her doctorate from Warsaw University, her subject being *The youth and current personality models*. (Her supervisor Professor Maria Ossowska). Her professional experience and the subject of her Masters thesis allowed her to apply for a post on the editorial staff of the newly founded periodical: "Wieś Współczesna" which was the theoretical organ of the Peasant Party. In autumn 1958 immediately after the appearance of the first issues of the periodical she took up a post on the editorial staff of that monthly, where she worked for over 40 years until its closure in 1989. As a valued employee she rose from the position of rank and file editor to manager of the department of sociology of the monthly to the position of deputy editor.

She had already retired when in 1993 she joined the editorial staff of an English language annual *Eastern European Countryside*, which had recently been founded at the Institute of Sociology, Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń. She played an active role in programme discussions calling the periodical to life. She was the deputy editor but in fact also fulfilled the function of secretary. She took part in editing 13 successive issues. After 2000 she continued the editorial work despite her deteriorating health.

She became interested in sociology and more precisely the social conditions of rural youth during her work for the publishers "Iskry". Having access to the wide correspondence of young people from the countryside writing to the editorial staff of the periodical "Nowa Wieś" she decided to depict the problems bothering those people. That occurred while she was studying at Warsaw University. In 1966 while already working on the editorial staff of "Wieś Współczesna" she carried out research on the views and moral attitudes of the youth confronting them with the educational examples propagated by the

² New Countryside.

church and state. She published the results of her research in a monograph *Młodzież a współczesne wzory wychowawcze* (1971)³. In the periodical for almost 40 years she systematically entered reports on the most important conferences, symposia and other sociological events, particularly those concerning rural issues. The periodical "Wieś Współczesna" mainly owes the high standard of its sociology department to her editorial work. Her professionalism was fully revealed during her editorial work for *Eastern European Countryside*. Our periodical has experienced an irrecoverable loss.

³ The youth versus current educational models.