

In Commemoration of Dr Teresa Halik

Teresa Halik, an eminent scholar in the field of Vietnam studies known for her extensive research in Vietnam and among the Vietnamese diaspora in Poland, passed away on January 4, 2015 at the age of 65. For more than 30 years she had been the greatest Vietnamist in Poland, having achieved expert status internationally. In both intellectual and practical terms, Dr Halik was a bridge-builder between the Polish government and academic institutions on one side, and the Vietnamese community in Poland on the other. She was also the most important expert and interpreter working for the Polish Ministry of Justice, government agencies, border guards, and many other offices and non-governmental organisations, e.g. the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights and the Council for Overseas Vietnamese.

Teresa Halik was very knowledgeable about the history and culture of Vietnam, China and the countries of South-East Asia, in particular the Indochina Peninsula. Her depth of knowledge included historical and cultural and social conditions of the economic transformations in the region, social and linguistic policy; the problems related to migrations within and outside the region; experience in the studies of the reasons and scale of migration and the type of migration and migrants' strategies.

A sober assessment suggests that, with the passage of time, she will be recognised as the greatest Vietnamist in Central and Eastern Europe.

In 2004 Dr Halik became an assistant professor of Vietnamese and Thai philology at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań. From 2001 she had been deputy head of the Intercultural Relations College at the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw. Starting in 1973, she was a lecturer at the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, and from 1996 an assistant professor in the Department of Extra-European Countries at the Polish Academy of Sciences.

Teresa Halik was born in Biała Podlaska 23 September 1949. In 1968 she began studying at the Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, receiving an MA in 1973. From 1977 to 1980 she was also an MA student at the Department of History, University of Hanoi. In 1983, she was on three-month research placement at Birkbeck College, London School of Economics and Political Science. The following year, she received her PhD at the University of Warsaw, with a doctoral dissertation on Chinese cultural patterns in the tradition of Vietnam. The same year, she also received the Indochina Studies Programme Award from University of Sussex (for her research on Vietnam).

In late 1987 and early 1988, she participated in a course on linguistic policy of the state towards ethnic and cultural minorities in the People's Republic of China at the Beijing Institute of Foreign Languages. In 1989 in Amsterdam, she participated in seminars and workshops on ethnic and cultural minorities – a new approach to social disparity problems – at the Institute of Social Science. In 2000, she participated in workshops and seminars on economic transformations after 1986 and their social consequences (migrations) at the Centre of Scientific Studies and Humanities in Vietnam (Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City).

Dr Halik was co-creator of the master's and postgraduate studies programmes at the Intercultural Relations College, Institute of Oriental Studies, University of Warsaw, co-organiser of the Laboratory of South-East Asian Countries Languages and Cultures and a co-organiser of the Historical Laboratory at the Department of Oriental

Studies, University of Warsaw. She supervised numerous bachelors and masters theses in the history and culture of the countries of South-East Asia and migration-related issues (University of Warsaw, Adam Mickiewicz University), and also supervised postgraduate theses (University of Warsaw, Polish Academy of Sciences). A Vietnamese language teacher, she was the author of the only textbook in Poland. Moreover, she published numerous books and articles on the culture of Vietnam and the Vietnamese diaspora in Poland. Dr Halik's deeply reflective and eloquent writings often provided profound and cogent insights on the scope of Vietnamese migration in Europe.

Together with her academic career, Teresa Halik was a wonderful daughter, wife and mother of two sons, always engaged in family life. She is remembered and loved by her friends and colleagues as a lively, joyful, optimistic person, full of positive energy and helpful.

Her absence will be felt not only by her friends, but also by the larger community in Vietnam and Poland. Dr Halik was a woman-institution, with an unusual competence in the area of Polish–Vietnamese relations. Her relationship with and understanding of the functioning of the Vietnamese community were profound, and she enjoyed huge authority among Vietnamese immigrants in Poland.

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