OBITUARY

PROFESSOR WANDA TRUSZKOWSKA
DOCTOR RERUM NATURALIUM (1917–2004)
– FOUNDER MEMBER OF THE POLISH
PHYTOPATHOLOGICAL SOCIETY

Professor Wanda Truszkowska was born on 8th April 1917 in Sosnowiec (Zagłębie Dąbrowskie, southern Poland). There she graduated in 1935 from the Emilia Plater Gymnasium and started her studies in the Poznań University in the same year (Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences). Her studies were interrupted by the outbreak of World War II and she had to come back to Sosnowiec, where in September 1939 she started her work in the Polish Red Cross. In Autumn 1939 she joined a conspiracy against Germans (Fighting Resistance Union, Związek Walki Zbrojnej – later Home Army, Armia Krajowa), there taking part in distribution of conspiracy press in Zagłębie Dąbrowskie, annexed already to the
German Reich. Germans cancelled the organization of Polish Red Cross in June 1940, so Prof. Truszkowska began work in the family pharmacy, under the guidance of her sister, Hanna, M.Sc. in pharmacy. In December 1940 Gestapo arrested her sister, who was sent to Ravensbrück Concentration Camp shortly afterwards. The event made Prof. Truszkowska give up the conspiracy to take care of her mother. In 1942 she suffered another personal stroke – Gestapo arrested her dearest friend, student of the Lvov Technical University, Włodzimierz Czapski, who was shot down in Auschwitz Concentration Camp, together with the group of first Camp prisoners – without numbers.

Just after the war Prof. Truszkowska returned to Poznań and graduated there from the University in 1946 with the degree of *Magister philosophiae* (Master of Philosophy). In October 1946 she started her work in the Wrocław University and College of Technology as an assistant researcher in the Department of Botany and Pharmacognosy. From there she moved in 1948 to the Wrocław Division of The State Research Institute of Rural Husbandry (Państwowy Instytut Naukowy Gospodarstwa Wiejskiego) – Experimental Station of Plant Protection, and developed there an interest for plant pathology. In 1950 Prof. Truszkowska started her work as senior research assistant in the Department of Phytopathology (Faculty of Agriculture) at the above-mentioned joint universities, earning at the same year her Ph.D. in the Maria Skłodowska-Curie University in Lublin. Her supervisor was Professor Adam Paszewski and the dissertation was entitled “Investigations on mycotrophism and glucoside content in three *Digitalis* species from natural and artificial stands”.

In 1954 she was promoted to the position of docent, in 1963 to *professor extraordinarius* and in 1973 to *professor ordinarius* (full professor). From 1954 till her retirement she was head of the Department of Plant Pathology of the Agricultural University of Wrocław.

The scientific interest of Prof. Truszkowska was from the very beginning concentrated on microscopic fungi and their role in the environment. Mycorrhiza and saprotrophic fungi were the first investigated objects. Her works on mycotrophism of plants (the 1950ties) – both cultivated and wild growing – contributed very much to our knowledge on the role of fungi in ecosystems. The works on fungi occurring on woody plants in natural ecosystems consist a big part of her scientific output. They were published from late 50ties to the 80ties and *Pyrenomycetes* had a special part in them. This resulted in her being a recognized specialist for the group in Europe. The articles resulted always from thorough investigation of various regions of Poland – just after the World War II Prof. Truszkowska was a member of an enthusiastic pioneer group of Polish mycologists (together with Professors Alina Skirgiello, Barbara Gumińska, Maria Lisiewska, Andrzej Nespiak, Stanisław Domański, Tomasz Majewski and Władysław Wojewoda) who despite great travel and accommodation difficulties investigated Bieszczady (1958, 1960, 1962, 1965), Beskidy and Tatra Mountains, Białowieża primeval forest, Augustów lake region, and a lot of other regions of the country.

With the growing interest in plant pathology Prof. Truszkowska worked also on various pathogens of agricultural plants, particularly of tomato, cereals and
papilonaceous plants. She described a number of pathogens in a variety of cultivated plants, with their biology, damaging ability and control. Her special interest was at first focused in fungi causing diseases of seed material, and then in soil environment as an essential factor in plant disease. Numerous works of Prof. Truszewska and her co-workers (Wrocław plant pathology school) consider the problem of crop rotation as an important factor in plant cereal stem base diseases. Those works, based mainly on analyzing saprotrophic soil fungi communities and their effect on soil-borne plant pathogens, led Prof. Truszewska to a general conclusion that considerable threat by stem base diseases (e.g. take-all and fusarioses in wheat) resulted from simplified technology of cereal production (i.e. from abandoning proper rotation and applying fewer soil cultivation practices than in conventional agriculture) and intensive chemical control. This yielded promotion of control measures, which based on shaping the soil environment for exploiting naturally occurring soil fungi to suppress pathogens. This was long before the general interest in environment-friendly approach in agriculture developed. An offspring of these works was a patented formulation of an antibiotic preparation (in 1989, together with Prof. Antoni Siewinski, Dr. Wlodzimierz Kita, Dr. Violetta Szewczyk and Dr. Bogdan Jarosz).

From October 1963 to February 1964 Prof. Truszewska was fellowship holder in Muse National de Histoire Naturelle (Laboratoire de Cryptogamie) in Paris, which enabled her visiting leading mycological institutions in France.

In the scientific output of Prof. Truszewska (over 110 works) there are chapters in a handbook on pests and diseases of plants (“Nauka o chorobach i szkodnikach roślin”, 1976). The Minister of Science and Higher Education awarded her for her achievements in teaching and research in 1972 and 1987.

A list of publications (including 1999) by Prof. Wanda Truszewska is published in “Phytopathologia Polonica” (Matkowski 2001). After that date a few works were published, bibliography of which is given below.

Professor Truszewska was a tutor to 80 graduates and supervised doctor dissertations of Barbara Łacicowa, Regina Lutyńska, Halina Moroń, Zofia Pudelko, Małgorzata Narkiewicz-Jodko, Anna Szepeieniec-Gajom, Aleksandra Zelenay-Witkowska, Maria Dorenda, Mohamed Khairat Mohamed Dawood, Maria Kutrzeba and Wlodzimierz Kita. She also reviewed numerous doctor dissertations, habilitation theses and applications for the title of professor.

A great passion of Prof. Truszewska was promotion of scientific and intellec-

**Obituary. Professor Wanda Truszewska...**

Prof. Wanda Truszewska congratulating Prof. Karol Mańka on his honorary membership of our Society – Poznań 1991 (photo by M. Babkiewicz)
tual life. She took part in work of numerous commissions of the Polish Academy of Sciences (member of Committee of Plant Protection, since 1964) and scientific societies. For over 50 years (since 1947) she was a member of the Polish Botanical Society (honorary member since 1992), where she was also a deputy chairman of the Section of Mycology (from 1960 on). At the same time she was a member of Wrocław Scientific Society (a secretary of VII Division from 1965), The Polish Phytopathological Society, Polish Society for Agronomy and Society of Białowieża Friends (from 1968).

Professor Truszkowska belonged to the group of 31 scientists who met on 11th November 1971 in Poznań and decided to establish The Polish Phytopathological Society. She was a member of the first board of the Society, and on 19th July 1972 established the Wrocław Division of the Society (the first division active within our Society), which she chaired for 25 years (1972–1996).

In 1987 she was nominated Honorary Member of the PPS. Her interest in seed-borne pathogenic fungi contributed to establishing the Section of Seed Pathology in The Polish Phytopathological Society and her love to the Polish tongue and care for precise scientific language made her chair the Section of Nomenclature which produced the list of Polish names of plant diseases (Truszkowska 1984).

Professor Truszkowska was totally devoted to science, being of opinion that scientific work is at the same time a vocation and an intellectual adventure.

Her merits for science and teaching were awarded with The Knight’s Cross of Polonia Restituta Order (1973), Distinction for Merits to Agricultural University of Wrocław (1976), Medal for Merits to the Faculty of Agriculture (1995) and numerous rewards of the Rector of Agricultural University of Wrocław.

With her broad interest in culture, religion and her homeland, she was also active in other gremials like Friends of the Catholic University of Lublin (Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Katolickiego Uniwersytetu Lubelskiego), St. Brother Albert’s Aid Society (Towarzystwo Pomocy im. Brata Alberta), Katyn Family (Rodzina Katyńska), The World Association of AK Soldiers (Światowy Związek Żołnierzy Armii Krajowej).

Professor Wanda Truszkowska died in a tragic accident on September 20, 2004, in Wrocław. She will be remembered as an outstanding scientist, dedicated teacher to generations of students and plant pathologists and a person of great heart, always open to nature and environment. Her virtues and love to Poland and Polish science are a great heritage to her friends, colleagues and all Polish nature scientists.
Acknowledgements

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Małgorzata Mańka

Literature


LIST OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS
BY PROFESSOR WANDA TRUSZKOWSKA
(NOT INCLUDED INTO THE PREVIOUS PUBLICATIONS)

