

FAREWELL TO NINA

I met Professor Janina Józwiak at the Institute of Statistics and Demography of the Warsaw School of Economics (the then SGPiS), in the fall of 1983. I, a young and enthusiastic assistant, just arrived at the Institute to make my first baby steps in demography and statistics, whereas Janina Józwiak, although not yet professor at that time, was an already well-established researcher and the right hand of Professor Jerzy Z. Holzer,¹ the director of the Institute. Janina became later the supervisor of my Ph.D. dissertation and the mentor to me in my further career. Professor Józwiak, and for many of us just Nina, was gentle to me in her supervision and friendly in her approach. She gave me all the space I needed for my work, while keeping a watchful and critical eye on my progress. She never insisted on anything, and never imposed any opinion on me; instead, she encouraged me to explore certain areas of research, and not necessarily go into detail in some others. She always welcomed creative ideas and innovative ways of applying statistical methods, whereas the routine and habit were the last ones on her list. She wanted me to have a serious plan, a vision and a purpose, but also to have fun from practicing statistics and demography, and in particular from modeling. As according to Nina, scientific research was the ultimate fun and pleasure, and only at the second place just a job to do. It was with her that I learned to enjoy my work and have fun from what I did. The joy and excitement from work have been the leading principles of the choices I made in my own career and remained interrupted with me for about 30 years until this day.

¹ Also Professor Jerzy Z. Holzer is no more with the living. He died suddenly in September 2001. He worked at the Warsaw School of Economics for about 50 years (1950–2001). In the years 1978–1999 he was the director of the Institute of Statistics and Demography, where he set up a team of demographers and prepared them for work on the international arena. For many years, Professor Jerzy Z. Holzer cooperated with the United Nations, including as a regional adviser for the African Population Program of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, as a demographer at the Department of Social Affairs of the United Nations in Geneva, and as a member of the Working Group for Social Demography of the United Nations within the framework of the European Program for Social Development. Professor Janina Józwiak was the successor of Professor Holzer as the director of the Institute of Statistics and Demography.

She loved discussing things at a detailed level, but at times, the young assistant was by no means an equal partner for her mind; the mind that later authored the remarkable “*Mathematical Models of Population*”. Nevertheless, she never got annoyed with me and never made me feel small, always letting me talk at my will and thinking loudly with me when needed. What a rare characteristic of promoters and other supervisors! What a treasure!

Her book “*Mathematical Models of the Population*” was important for the European demography; in the opinion of many, it took the demography of Europe several steps further up. It was published in 1992 in the Netherlands, right at the beginning of my career episode at the Netherlands Interdisciplinary Demographic Institute (NIDI) in The Hague (1991–2000). Professor Frans Willekens, one of the greatest scientists in the European and world demography, particularly in the multi-state analysis and demographic modeling and forecasting, and a former director of NIDI (2003–2011), openly and frequently expressed his appreciation and admiration for this work. Dr. Evert van Imhoff,² another former director of NIDI, and one of the passionate and most prominent practitioners of mathematical demography in the world, was equally enthusiastic and forthcoming about it. The book was a subject of many avid discussions at NIDI. Nina had become a respected demographer and a partner in the European arena and her success as a talented and visionary researcher, a charming companion and a warm person made the way for many of us that followed. It is thanks to people like Nina, Professor Jerzy Z. Holzer, and Professor Irena E. Kotowska that the Polish demography has a well-deserved, rock-solid, respected, and stable place in the European demographic research and that many of us – their successors – successfully function alongside our Western colleagues in the complex and demanding world of today.

Nina was one of the kindest and most friendly persons I have ever known. She was observant and sensitive to the problems of others, and was the first one to come up with solutions and help. She cared so much for the people around her. She was the core and warm heart of every group, being it professional or private, somebody to rely on, trust, and get support and advice from.

Her quiet, yet forthcoming and welcoming personality encouraged small and deeper talks as well as establishing and maintaining good relationships at work. I am grateful to her for being this way, and for the many memorable moments with her at the Institute of Statistics and Demography in Warsaw.

² Sadly, Evert van Imhoff died unexpectedly in July 2004. Frans Willekens calls Evert “een van ‘s werelds meest prominente beoefenaars van de mathematische demografie” in a farewell published in *Demos* in the summer of 2004 (No. 8, 2004).

Tributes of Polish colleagues and friends

I will miss her presence, her face, our talks and her unspoken support for me. Her guidance to me at work has been and will be remembered for a very long time. It takes a lot of pain to realize that she is gone and will never return. She will always have a warm place in my heart, however.

Farewell Dear Nina.

Ewa Tabeau, Ph.D.

Senior Research Officer – Demographer
Expert Witness for Victims’ Demographics
Certified Crime and Criminal Intelligence Analyst
Accredited CEDR Mediator

Office of the Prosecutor
United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the former
Yugoslavia
The Hague, Netherlands