

PROFESSOR KAROL WOLFKE
- *HOMO UNIVERSITATIS* -

Notwithstanding the honours and privileges, for us – the members of the Chair of the International and European Law – Professor Karol Wolfke has always been a particularly recognized scientist, whose authority and dignity could create an intimidating and distant climate. They could, but the Professor did not let it happen. He was always cordial, friendly, even jovial to all of us as well as in his interactions with master and PhD students, taking their first steps in the field of international law. Following our first encounter, which happened to be a lecture on public international law, his brilliance, bright and acute mind together with a sense of humour, endeared Professor to students. He was extraordinarily gifted and he always knew how to create a spirit of good fellowship and solid working environment based on the best traditions and practices of the University. He knew how to create the nurturing relationship between Master and student, to convey and share the knowledge of rules of the effective scientific work (index cards! absolute silence while working in the office) and in this regard he was very demanding but fair at the same time. Indeed, Professor was very demanding, but his expectations were always reasonable and equal of the ones he imposed on himself. Professor Wolfke's continuous pursuit of self-development was, without a doubt, beyond reproach despite of his golden years. While advancing into his late nineties, he continued with his research work and even stay current with his computer skills. Perhaps one of the notable examples of such perseverance would be his arrival at the reunion at the Chair and deliverance of impressive presentation of his Study on Customary International Humanitarian Law.

It was amazing that he never lost his patience. He was always very understanding to the various challenges of his students. He was disarmingly persuasive when he explained that the lack of knowledge of the foreign language should not be the barrier to exploring the scientific literature in this language because reading goes without saying. Also today the author of these words communicates this information to the seminarists, who, at first sight, do not believe and then they start to believe in... themselves. Because the Professor knew how to encourage, motivate, and even to comfort. I remember a Thursday morning in May, just a few years ago. A telephone rang and I heard in the receiver: "Hello, it's Karol" and everything became easier, however trite it sounds. Because Professor knew that the simple things are not always insignificant and that everything depends upon the feeling of the moment. He knew how to capture these precious moments, to analyze them and to understand the essence. Precious moments, such as his memory of wandering back from captivity, when on the threshold of a destroyed house he saw German soldier feeding a child with the strawberries from a silver spoon.

Life can be tricky and Professor realized this truth like no one else. He often reminisced many happy moments from his childhood such as sitting on the lap of Albert Einstein, or listening to Einstein playing the violin. Although his father was a great scientist, whose contribution to Poland was enormous (he inherited his father's analytical mind and the competence in the sciences and humanities), he had to leave the University in the Stalinist days. He was not willing to teach about the leading role of the party and of the "proletariat" (as he used to say intentionally). Professor Wolfke was a humble man who would most often shy away from the spotlight. He did not chase the honours, but his presence was strongly felt amongst all fellow researchers and students. His cheer and contagious smile, his jokes and accurate spot-on responses made every conversation with Professor Wolfke the original intellectual experience.

The 4th of June 2015 it was the centenary of Professor Karol Wolfke's birth. The Professor passed away, but his considerable academic work remained. We, his former students and his friends, will always remember him as an outstanding scholar and an excellent academic, who was completely devoted to the science and his students. But above all we will honour his memory as a noble and loyal friend, always faithful to the founding ideals of the University studies, regardless of the winds of fate and paths of the history - *Homo Universitatis*.

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