

IN MEMORIAM: DR. JIRI SKOLKA  
1928–2000

On Wednesday, January 5, 2000—after a short stay in hospital—Jiri Skolka died of pneumonia. He will be widely remembered for his personality and his academic skills, but also for his numerous initiatives in bringing people together. He was not only a remarkable scientist, but also had the rare talent of managing scientific projects in an efficient way.

Jiri Skolka was born in Plzen, Czech Republic in 1928. He attended school in his hometown and then studied at the Faculty of Statistics at the Technical University in Prague. After military service he continued his studies at the Research Institute of Engineering Industry and the Faculty of Economics of Engineering at the Technical University of Prague.

From 1956 to 1965 he worked for the Institute of Economics of the Czechoslovak Academy of Science. There he was primarily engaged in the fields of input-output analysis, linear programming and, in cooperation with the State Planning Commission, in planning models. During this period he also lectured at the Technical Universities in Prague and Brno and the Economic Universities in Prague and Bratislava.

In 1965 Jiri Skolka moved to Geneva and became Economic Affairs Officer in the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). In the Projections and Programming Division he was involved in organizing seminars for the Senior Economic Advisers (a very prominent council of experts in this period), in collecting and evaluating information on the various approaches of economic modeling in the ECE region and in carrying out comparative input-output analysis.

When it became obvious that the “Prague spring” would not be followed by a “Prague summer,” but by a very cold “Prague winter,” he decided not to return to his home country. In 1971 he spent some time at the Chr. Michelsen Institute, Bergen. As visiting professor he participated in a comparative input-output study of Kenya, Rhodesia, West Malaysia and Zambia. In 1972 he joined the Austrian Institute for Economic Research in Vienna as researcher where he remained until his retirement in 1993. He became an Austrian citizen in 1972.

Although he was intensively involved in applied economic research in Austria, Jiri Skolka never lost his manifold international contacts. For example he cooperated in studies on income distribution and employment with the International Labour Office in Geneva; worked as a consultant for The World Bank in Washington; and for the UNIDO in Vienna.

In a private capacity Jiri Skolka contributed greatly to the international community of empirically oriented economists and statisticians and was member in a number of professional organizations. For the IARIW he served as Council Member, on the Editorial Board of the *Review* and organized sessions at the General Conferences.

Out of his membership in the Programme Planning Committees for the Fifth (1971), Sixth (1974), Seventh (1979) and Eighth (1986) International Conferences

on Input–Output Techniques he initiated the foundation of the International Input–Output Association (IIOA). He convinced Wassily Leontief, Richard Stone and the other leading experts in the field that there was a need for such a scientific organization. Drawing from his IARIW experience he drafted the first by-laws, worked hard to raise money to get started and solved all the administrative problems connected with the foundation of an international scientific organization. The Association was registered in Vienna in 1988 and Jiri Skola became the first Secretary. He remained in this position until 1993.

The list of Jiri Skolka's publications is long and includes books and articles in English, German and Czech. His main fields of interest were input–output analysis and studies of all aspects of economic structure and labour productivity. He also worked intensively on the service sector and on the informal economy. In all of his research much emphasis was put on a well established statistical basis of the analysis. He was deeply interested in measurement issues and statistical methodology.

Even after his retirement and after he resigned as a Secretary of the International Input–Output Association, Jiri Skolka remained very active. In particular he tried hard to promote the flow of know-how and information to the transition countries in order to help them build up statistical systems according to the EU standards.

He is mourned by his wife Milena and his two sons Ivan and Michael. He will be missed by many in the scientific community who will lack his advice, inspiration and initiative.

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