

IN THE RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT WORLD



(Photo B. Plantier)

Death of Mr. Enrique de la Mata

Mr. Enrique de la Mata, President of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, died suddenly on 6 September 1987 in Rome at the age of 53.

Mr. de la Mata was elected League President in Manila in 1981 and re-elected for a second four-year term in Geneva in October 1985. He had previously been appointed League Vice-President and was twice President of the Spanish Red Cross.

A lawyer by profession, Mr. de la Mata was a member of the Spanish Parliament for 15 years and held several official posts in the area of health, social affairs and labour relations. He was married and the father of seven children.

Through his energy and drive, Mr. de la Mata strengthened the League's public image, and sought to adapt the Movement, pressing for a revision of International Red Cross Statutes and the agreement between the ICRC and the League. His personal contact with the leaders of National Societies during some 200 field trips was particularly appreciated and he had contacts with many governments and with United Nations leaders.

Mr. de la Mata tried to enlarge the role played by Third World members in the Federation and sixteen new National Societies were admitted while he was President. He also fostered the Movement's concern for peace, and strongly supported the work of the Commission on the Red Cross and Peace, and the Second World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Peace held in 1984.

Mr. Hans Hoegh, Secretary General of the League, said that "Enrique de la Mata was one of the most active Presidents in the history of our international federation. He was a tireless champion of the Movement's work throughout the world and was particularly dedicated to the cause of peace. He toiled relentlessly to expand and strengthen the Movement's role... The entire Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement will keenly feel his loss".

In a message to the League's nine Vice-Presidents and its Secretary General, Mr. Cornelio Sommaruga, President of the ICRC, expressed his condolence with Mr. de la Mata's family and sent his institution's deep sympathy to all the National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies which are members of the federation. He praised Mr. de la Mata as a man "wholly committed to the Movement, who tirelessly travelled the world to visit the National Societies and was unstinting in his efforts on their behalf".

"Our relationship was based on a spirit of understanding and respect for each other's opinions", said Mr. Alexandre Hay, recalling how he and Mr. de la Mata had worked together from 1981 to 1987. The former ICRC President paid tribute to Mr. de la Mata's work on behalf of the Movement saying that "it is no exaggeration to say that he wore himself out toiling at the great and noble task. I will remember him as a very committed man, constantly striving to promote the National Societies, all the National Societies, in order to create vigorous and effective organizations in the service of humanity".

Mr. de la Mata's funeral took place in Madrid on 9 September in the presence of his widow and his seven children. It was attended by many leading figures from his homeland, the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and the international community. The ICRC was represented by President Sommaruga and former President Hay.
