

Harald Huber
Former member of
the International Committee of the Red Cross
Former Vice-President
1912 — 1998

Harald Huber studied law at the Universities of Geneva, Munich and Zurich. He began his career as a lawyer, then was appointed as judge on the Federal Court, the highest judicial body in Switzerland. In 1969 he was elected a member of the ICRC and then its Vice-President in 1971. He became an honorary member in 1982.

As a member and Vice-President, Harald Huber played a key role for the ICRC in a number of spheres.

He was the chief architect of the agreements between Poland and the Federal Republic of Germany, in which the latter agreed to compensate the victims of pseudo-medical experiments confirmed as such by the ICRC after the Second World War.

Mr Huber also acted as a discreet and valuable adviser during negotiations in Europe, the Far East and, particularly, the Middle East.

Moreover, he brought his experience and wisdom to several important ICRC deliberative bodies such as the Legal Commission, the General Policy and Principles Commission and the Management Commission.

But above all, for 10 years Harald Huber was the outstanding and irreplaceable Chairman of the Peace Commission which the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement launched in 1975 and officially set up at the 1977 Council of Delegates in Bucharest. The main purpose of the Commission, which came into being at the height of the Cold War, was to draw up by consensus a programme of action for the Movement

as a factor in promoting peace. Both its membership — men and women working for the Red Cross and Red Crescent throughout the world — and its ambitious but difficult aim made it a very sensitive body to handle. Harald Huber succeeded in this task thanks to that rare quality: uncontested moral authority. He derived his authority from the traits which had made him a President of the Federal Court: integrity, sound judgement, receptiveness, firmness of character and gravity. But his human qualities — particularly his quiet humour and a very special combination of thorough commitment tempered with detachment — also made him well-liked and respected. His vocation for leadership, which stemmed from an exceptional personality that was ideally suited to his work, enabled him to steer the Peace Commission with a firm but gentle hand and in a true Red Cross spirit around the countless pitfalls inherent in its mandate and composition. Thanks to his guidance, the Commission achieved results, always by consensus, without ever violating the Fundamental Principles of the Movement. The Second World Red Cross and Red Crescent Conference on Peace held in Aaland, Finland, in 1984, along with the ensuing programme of action, was its main accomplishment.

Even within the Red Cross, it is only too easy to fight over the topic of peace. Harald Huber not only avoided this but gave the entire Movement a specific direction and sustainable ideas on the path towards a less strife-ridden world.

Jacques Moreillon
Member of the ICRC
Former Director-General