

## WAR ON ILLITERACY

A few youth organizations have long been active in teaching illiterates; but on the whole the *international* youth organizations began thinking about literacy as a world problem in the 1950's, when many saw the importance of helping youth and others to learn in order to play their part in the rapid evolution of society. Literacy was generally considered part of youth's responsibility in fundamental education, in community or national development; but in the 1960's there have been increasing efforts to single out literacy for international action, even while recognising that literacy must be accomplished by economic and social measures to transform community life.

*World Literacy Day* was celebrated for the first time on September 8, 1967, in every country represented in UNESCO, following a resolution on this subject adopted by that organization's General Conference at its 14th session. Mr. R. Maheu, Director-General of UNESCO, and U Thant, United Nations Secretary-General, have both launched an appeal for international solidarity. Mass communication media of all kinds were used on that day to publicize national literacy campaigns and to emphasize the necessity of developing this action. The previous day the "Mohammed Reza Pahlavi Prize" was awarded to the pupils of a Tanzanian secondary school who, in March 1964, assumed the rôle of voluntary teachers of reading and writing to four hundred adults.

This is a field in which Red Cross youth is also active. It was in fact in Tanzania that the Junior Red Cross organized courses in the first two R's in various hospitals and in leper colonies. Junior members of the Red Cross in the Republic of Korea give up their holidays to contribute to the literacy campaign among rural populations.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See *Youth*, League of Red Cross Societies, Geneva, January 1967, No. 3.