

News and Reviews

● **Refugees** (*published monthly by the Public Information Section of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10*) in its November 1986 issue—No. 35—deals mainly with the 37th session of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR. In his opening statement, Jean-Pierre Hocké, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, sought first to define the nature of the role of the UNHCR: “When the UNHCR was set up, refugees were largely a European affair—a legacy of the Second World War and the political upheavals it brought about on the continent of Europe. Today, the refugee problem has an international dimension often inseparable from the range of problems affecting the political, social, cultural and economic development of the Third World”.

He felt that States should not consider their obligations at an end once they had contributed generously to the programmes of the UNHCR; it was necessary that together they displayed the political will to find solutions to the problems of refugees.

“It is vital”, Mr. Hocké went on, “that UNHCR assistance does not become an end in itself; that humanitarian problems are not exploited for political purposes; that refugee aid is not used to numb reaction to the consequences of conflicts and to avoid the obligation to address the root causes for the movements of refugees. UNHCR assistance and the breathing-space it provides should, instead, be used constructively to pursue fundamental solutions to the problems themselves.”

The December 1986 issue (No. 36) of *Refugees* offers a general survey of the refugee situation throughout the world at the end of 1986. Five articles on Africa, Latin America, Europe and North America, South-East Asia and Pakistan and Iran provide an overall view of the plight of refugees and asylum seekers in those parts of the world where most of the refugees are massed.

The excellent co-operation between the UNHCR and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement comes through in the interviews with leading figures from National Societies in both issues of the magazine. In an interview accorded to *Refugees*, Mrs. Meneca de Mencia, President of the Honduran Red Cross, explains the work her organization does to

help Nicaraguan Ladino refugees. After recalling his institution's extensive co-operation with the UNHCR at the end of the Algerian war, when 200,000 refugees returned home, Dr. Mouloud Belaouane, President of the Algerian Red Crescent, describes the assistance programme which the Algerian Red Crescent set up with the help of the UNHCR to assist refugees in the Western Sahara.

In an interview, Jacques Moreillon, Director-General of the ICRC, after commenting on the Twenty-fifth International Conference of the Red Cross, refers to the complementary nature of the respective mandates of the ICRC and the UNHCR. He felt that both institutions could give more thought to the concepts they held in common and to the fundamental principles which guide their activities, notably humanity, impartiality and neutrality. As Mr. Moreillon says: "The driving force of the UNHCR, like that of the Red Cross, is the principle of humanity, that is, identification with another's suffering. It means realizing that a human being is helpless and giving him what his natural protector, i.e. the State, can no longer give him, either because that State has become his enemy, or because he is in the hands of an enemy State. In either case, that person has lost the natural protection that every State owes its citizens and, having lost that protection, he needs another kind of protection, that of the UNHCR, that of the ICRC, that of humanitarian action. I think that the same is true for the principles of neutrality and impartiality."

The 1986 Balzan Prize for humanity, peace and fraternity among peoples was awarded in September of that year to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees "in recognition of its outstanding and unceasing humanitarian work carried out since 1951 on behalf of innumerable people of all ages and backgrounds, who have been forced to abandon their country of origin and who find themselves, defenceless and impoverished, confronted with enormous integration difficulties in national communities whose language, culture and customs are all foreign to them".

- The October 1986 (Vol. 4) issue of the **League**, the quarterly magazine of the League of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies has an article on "Give blood—save life" which was the theme of the 1986 World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day. This instructive documentary article enables the reader to understand more clearly the importance of blood donation, especially to help haemophiliacs (who are the subject of a special study in Brazil) and the activities of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in that sphere. As Dr. Anthony Britten, the new head of the League's Blood Programme Department, pointed out, the League intends to encourage the setting up of blood transfusion services in countries where they do not exist or are on a small scale; but the approach will be gradual and will depend on the standard of health services in these countries. He also believes that it is important to encourage National Societies which are largely involved in blood programmes to help other Societies whose role is on a smaller scale.

The example of the blood transfusion centres in Harare and Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, which is being examined by the League, is very much to the point.

Zimbabwe is one of the very few African countries which is really self-sufficient in blood supplies and could play a helpful role in the future in establishing blood transfusion centres in the English-speaking countries of Africa or, at least, in southern Africa.
