

LEGAL ASSISTANCE

In July 1971, a "Peace through Law" meeting was held in Belgrade. Mr. H. G. Beckh, a former ICRC delegate, reported on the work of the International Centre for Coordination of Legal Assistance (ICCLA), Geneva, of which he is Chairman and which provides legal assistance to refugees, stateless persons and migrants. The following essential points taken from his statement may be of interest to readers:

The International Centre was founded in 1958, on the initiative of the International Committee of the Red Cross. It adopted the same principles which inspired Henry Dunant: to aid victims regardless of race, religion and political views. Thus it is not concerned with the reasons why a given person may have become a refugee, stateless person or migrant, or with the circumstances surrounding that occurrence. Its purpose is to give the person legal assistance in the country where he is living, even if he has not the means to pay a lawyer's fee. Under the term "legal assistance" we understand:

- (a) legal opinion or advice;
- (b) representation of the parties concerned before the administrative authorities;
- (c) legal assistance in civil or penal courts.

Why are we especially concerned about refugees, stateless persons and migrants, and more particularly about those who are destitute?

Because they often receive no help from the authorities, or from the consulate of their country of origin, and moreover, because they may find themselves in a country which is utterly strange to them, whose language they cannot speak and with whose laws they are unacquainted.

The programme of the International Centre consists in coordinating efforts in this field and, if possible, establishing a National

Centre in every country where problems of this kind exist. And this still applies very much, for there are over fifteen million such uprooted people throughout the world today.

It should be noted that, apart from a very few countries, there is so far no satisfactory connection between the *social element* of a case, to which welfare organizations devote their attention, and the *legal element*, represented by assistance from legal advisers, members of the Bar, etc.

It is therefore imperative that co-operation be improved and that National Centres be set up which may work in close touch with the International Centre in Geneva, to coordinate locally legal assistance to refugees, stateless persons and migrants, in co-operation with the Legal Aid Association, London, which, as we know, is carrying out a considerable task.

THE FIGHT AGAINST TRACHOMA

In the *Newsletter* (1971, No. 67) published by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East may be found an article on the fight carried out by that organization, through education and medical aid among the refugees, against that terrible disease, trachoma. We give below, by way of information, some extracts from that article.

In large measure, the recession of the disease among the refugees has been brought about by the provision of essential camp sanitation services and facilities, including water supplies, waste disposal, bathhouses and insect control. In 1970 UNRWA spent \$1,455,833 on environmental sanitation in the camps.

The usual vector for transmission of the disease is the common fly, which transmits the trachoma virus in its secretions. This