

In the Middle Ages, the Arab civilization had reached a degree of learning and mastery in the field of medicine which even today is a cause of admiration. And if, in that age, the contacts which the West had with that more civilized Arab culture had the fortunate effect of tempering the too violent habits of our ancestors, one great figure in Arabic history still stands out today as an example to the Red Cross movement, that of Saladin, the illustrious Sultan who treated his enemies with a generosity which made such a strong impression on the Crusaders.

Arab history also supplies another example of a virtue regarded by the Red Cross as cardinal, that of toleration which implies respect for individuals and their convictions.

In fact, at a time when, moreover, so many men did not hesitate to massacre each other because they disagreed on the best way of worshipping God in Moslem Spain, the great monotheistic religions, such as Islam and Christianity, lived together in mutual esteem.

Thus, in this admirable cradle of civilization, the Arabs, ten centuries ago, put into practice the ideal of mutual respect which was to be that of the great humanitarian movements of the modern age, in particular that of the Red Cross movement.

At the Central Tracing Agency

The vicissitudes of three sisters separated by the war. — In May 1962, Mrs. Berta B., a German who married an Englishman after the war and went to live in England, appealed to the International Committee of the Red Cross to attempt to trace her sisters, Natalia and Olga. Their parents had been members of a German community in Byelorussia and they had died when the girls were very young.

The community was sent to Siberia in 1940, but Berta and her younger sisters managed to escape on the way and returned alone by their own resources to their former home.

They were sent to East Prussia and Poland during the occupation by the German army. At the time of the armistice, Berta was in Federal Germany and had lost all touch with her sisters.

Thanks to the persevering research of the ICRC, with the help of the Soviet Red Cross, Natalia was traced in the USSR in 1963.

Fortunately, she knew Olga's address in Siberia and this enabled the three sisters to contact one another.

Mrs. Berta B. has just written the ICRC that she recently visited her sisters in the USSR. The meeting was in Kiev, where Natalia was living. Olga did not shrink from a voyage of five days and nights to keep this touching rendez-vous.

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A mother finds again the son she thought dead.—In 1944, Günter B. was only 8 years old when he was suddenly parted from his mother and sister who had to flee from East Prussia.

Later, when he had become an adult and was known by a Russian name, he made several efforts to trace his mother and sister but to no avail. His only clear childhood memories were the Christian names of his mother and sister and the place where the family lived before their exile.

His enquiries reached the ICRC through the intermediary of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR. Its investigations enabled it to establish the fact that Mrs. B. was living in Federal Germany and was seeking her son. He had indeed been officially reported "missing" in 1950 and, in 1960, was officially declared dead. Just before Christmas, Mrs. B. learned that her son is still alive.

Found after twenty years.—In 1944 a young German boy living in Czechoslovakia had fallen ill and had to be sent to hospital. He was still there, when, the following year, his mother and five brothers and sisters were expelled from Slovakia. Since then the family lost all trace of the child left behind.

It appears that the young boy had been evacuated, together with other German children, to a camp in Moravia, but had got lost on the way. He was found abandoned, alone on a station platform with a ticket round his neck giving his name and age: Josi Strone, 6 years old. A Czech policeman gave him into the care of a woman dentist, but as she in turn had to return to Germany, she left the boy in the hands of the authorities which kept him,

thinking that he might be a child connected with Lidice. He was then placed and brought up in a State home.

In August 1963 the German Red Cross in Hamburg, drew the attention of the ICRC's Central Tracing Agency to the case of Joseph Strone or Stroner.

An enquiry was immediately opened and thanks to a photograph of the child, sent to the Czechoslovak Red Cross, that organization discovered the young man's present address, who had in the meanwhile taken the name of his adopted mother.

His own mother, his brothers and sisters have now had the joy of having news of him at last after twenty years.

New Year Message

The message of Mr. S. A. Gonard, President of the ICRC, was this year recorded by the ICRC Broadcasting and Television Service and sent to 127 countries in all the five continents. It was recorded in six languages and the French or English versions were sent to countries speaking other languages so that each broadcasting organization could make a translation. The message is as follows :

During the year which has elapsed, the Red Cross has added a series of actions of aid to the list of those which it has accomplished over the past century. To mention but one undertaking, I would recall that throughout the year our flag has flown in the desert in the Yemen on a completely equipped field hospital, which has unceasingly cared for all victims of the fighting.

The year 1964 also possesses special significance, since it marked the centenary of the first Geneva Convention. This was indeed to be the basis of all humanitarian law aimed at safeguarding the victims of armed conflicts. It is not possible to estimate how many thousands, how many millions of people the Conventions have snatched from death.

The International Committee of the Red Cross is pleased to see that the movement of fellowship which emanated from Geneva has wide-spread effect, since more than a hundred States, that is to say nearly the whole world, have acceded to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and that Henry Dunant's ideal everywhere arouses fresh enthusiasm.