

USSR

The Soviet Red Cross Review (Moscow, March-April 1965) published an interesting article by Mrs. N. Slaïkovskaia, extracts of which it gives us pleasure to reproduce in translation. Readers will be able to realize the immense work accomplished by the Tracing Service of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR, with which the Central Tracing Agency in Geneva maintains a constant and productive connection.

The Tracing Service of the Alliance of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR in Moscow annually receives over 35,000 enquiries from Soviet and foreign nationals. It is in constant touch, in the course of its tracing work, with the International Committee of the Red Cross and the National Red Cross Societies of more than seventy countries. Replies to requests for investigation come from all quarters of the globe.

From the thousands of recently successful cases let us take at random four files, each containing an account of persevering investigation and moving replies.

Thereska's name is Maria.—The secret had been well kept. It was only after the death of the woman whom Thereska called mother that the young girl learnt by chance that her real name was Maria Kojoukh. She had been born in a concentration camp and her mother had died shortly after. The father managed to save his daughter who was then only three months old and gave her into the custody of a Polish woman. "If I live I shall come back for Maria", said Ivan Kojoukh.

After the war, many letters from Ivan arrived in the little Polish town of Graiewo but the woman, who loved the little Russian girl, did not reply. After the death of her adoptive mother, in October 1960, Maria-Thereska approached the Tracing Service of the Soviet Red Cross. The task was not easy. All the young girl knew of her father was his name which she had learnt from her Polish grandmother.

"Unknown", "Not resident here"; such were the replies which reached the Tracing Service from various regions of the USSR. The enquiries went on for more than two years. There were

many people named Kojoukh, but Maria-Thereska's father was not among them. On learning of Maria-Thereska's story none of the namesakes was indifferent ; all offered their help and asked for the young girl's address.

Finally, a letter arrived from Astrakhan : " I now have but one wish ", wrote Ivan Nicolaievitch Kojoukh, " that is to see my daughter again after twenty years' separation ".

Thanks to a number.—During the Second World War, after a successful guerilla operation, the enemy attacked a village, chasing all the inhabitants from their houses and wreaking their vengeance on defenceless old men, women and children. The wife and five children of the resistance fighter Kourdoumiakoff were deported by the SS to the West with other inhabitants of the village. The mother and the youngest daughter Larissa were cremated. The other four children were dispersed in various places except for Vladimir and Kolia who were together in the same camp.

In 1945, they were released by the Soviet Army, but the younger brother, Kolia, aged 4, could not even stand up. He was like a skeleton covered with a dirty yellow skin. " Your little brother must be taken care of ; we are sending him to hospital ", Vladimir, the eldest brother, was told. They never saw each other again. Vladimir, Nina and Ludmilla Kourdoumiakoff were reunited after the war but they did not know what had become of Kolia.

The Tracing Service of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies of the USSR finally succeeded, recently, in tracing Kolia too. It was far from easy. In the children's home where he had been raised, his name and surname had been registered incorrectly, but one detail which Vladimir had been able to give to the Tracing Service was useful : he and his brother, like all the prisoners in the concentration camp, had had their hand marked with a registration number and Kolia's number followed Vladimir's.

Brothers in arms meet again.—Roman Solovieff was taken prisoner after having been seriously wounded in fighting near Barvenkovo. When he found himself behind the barbed wire of the Tannwals concentration camp (Sudetenland), he swore he would try to escape. After careful preparation, his attempt failed and he realized that alone he would never be successful.

He learnt that there was an escape committee in the camp and he made contact with it. This committee organized a revolt and mass escape. Solovieff's group joined one of the guerilla units in Czechoslovakia.

After the war, the Czech, Polish and Russian brothers in arms who had fought side by side against the common enemy were dispersed. The years passed and one day a letter arrived in Moscow from the Czech citizen Alexander Nicolaievitch Raievsky, asking for the address and news of his comrade, Roman Athanasievitch Solovieff, and 250 others who had broken out of the Tannwald concentration camp. The Tracing Service undertook an investigation and communicated the results to the enquirer.

Tracing the "Tchapaïevtzy".—The fame of the fighting exploits of the first brigade of "Tchapaïeff partisans" which operated in Czechoslovakia during the Second World War, spread far and wide beyond the Carpathians.

Twenty years have not dimmed the memory of the Soviet guerilla who fought with the brigade for a year of severe hardships.

Stefan Richtarek and his friends of the Tchapaïeff brigade wished again to meet their Russian friends in order to visit the scenes of memorable fighting together. Upon their request, the Tracing Service in Moscow found and communicated to them the address of Victor Nicolaievitch Kokine who had directed the "Tchapaïevtzy" military operations during the war.

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It is difficult to undertake tracing work after almost a quarter of a century : records may have been destroyed, details given by relatives are not always accurate and complete. It often seems that all trace of the person sought has been lost and there is no hope of achieving any result. But the Tracing Service staff carry on their work with attention to minute details and with perseverance, displaying both competence and understanding to a marked degree. One enquiry in four meets with success ; such is the result of their humanitarian activity.