

## HELP FOR REFUGEES, INC.

A tax-exempt, non-profit corporation

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**We help orphans and elderly Christians (many in their 80s, even 90s) who had been imprisoned for their faith in present or former communist countries**



**February 2020**

"Wherefore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?"

(Luke 19:23)

Late Reverend Richard Wurmbbrand suffered 14 years in Romanian communist prisons. Mrs. Wurmbbrand was imprisoned for nearly three years, also for her Christian faith in some of the same communist prisons.

From an unpublished Bible meditation by late Reverend Richard Wurmbbrand

### **ADD TO YOUR FAITH VIRTUE**

We have marked off another year on the calendar. Aging need not mean getting old. Will we be rather more mature? Moses began his prophetic career at 80. John Wesley preached daily with great success and undiminished zeal at 88.

**Don't count your years, but rather make them count.** We should prepare for an encounter with our Heavenly Judge. The Bible writes there will come a time when God will reckon with His servants. To each He has given some abilities, some capital, to be multiplied so that He might get it back with a profit. Have we increased what He has entrusted to us? He gave us sight, and we increased the range of our vision with microscopes and telescopes. He gave us ears, and we increased hearing with radios and satellite transmission. He gave us feet to cover distances, and we increased our speed with jets and rockets. He also gave us faith and expected us to add to it. Second Peter 1:5-7 reads: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ."

It will not be enough to come in front of the Heavenly Judge only with faith. A very poor evangelist went to a thrifty church which did not have even an offering basket. So, he passed around his hat. When it came back, he turned it upside down to show that there was nothing in it and then said, "let us thank God



for this precious offering." His listeners thought he was mocking, but it was not so. He prayed, "God, I thank Thee that I got my hat back." If we come to God with just faith, His initial gift to us, God at least has His hat back. But where are the fruits of faith? Where is the interest on His capital?

The servants of the "prince of darkness," bring much-fruit. The devil sowed in the heart of Darwin, a believer who had once trained for the ministry, a tiny seed of doubt about God as Creator. To accept a doubt in your mind about God is a grave sin, a capital Darwin deposited in the bank. At first, Darwin doubted his doubts. He hesitated to publish his idea that man is the result of an evolutionary process from animal life. But he yielded to the insistence of friends, who appealed to his pride by reminding him that another naturalist, Russell, was about to publish something similar! and would receive the renown awaiting Darwin. And so, another bit of devilish capital was banked - pride! Marx and Engels read Darwin, who provided the "scientific" underpinning for their revolutionary communist endeavors. They proclaimed, "the whole of life is simply carnage, a battle for survival among different species. The one who bites best survives. The proletariat too must fight, without mercy, like beasts of the field. Man was just one more species in nature, governed by the same laws of the jungle. He must struggle like his ancestors, the gorillas." Marx decided to dedicate to Darwin his book, *Das Kapital*. Darwin refused the "recognition". He shuddered as he regarded the fruits of his own theories, but it was too late. Marx wrote: "We have to repeat the bloody French revolution of 1789. After our coming to power, we will be considered monsters. We surely spit on this." The small capital of Darwin had gained enormous interest. Then Lenin, Stalin and their successors like Mao provided grim "interest on the interest." They slaughtered tens of millions of innocents and continue to do so. At the beginning of the 20th century, all Russian Communist leaders could be accommodated on one single couch. They ended up ruling one third of the world, in which churches, worship places have been turned into storehouses, clubs, stables, and jails. The prince of darkness had amassed great profits on his small evil investment.

A good way to spend another year is to prepare ourselves with our families for the day of reckoning, when we will be asked what we have added to the talents received. Bishop Ioan Dragomir of the Romanian Uniate church suffered 14 years imprisonment in Romanian communist jails. After he came out in a general amnesty (same in which I was freed from communist prisons) given by the communists in order to receive loans from the United States, he left, before his death in 1985, these written words with a German visitor who smuggled them out of communist Romania: "We have endured torture, beatings, hunger, cold, deprivation, and mockery. We kissed the chains and the iron bars of the cell as holy objects. We considered our prison uniforms as priestly garments. We bore our cross willingly, though the Communists offered us money, liberty, and a comfortable life as the price for denial of our faith. Our church leaders and members were sentenced to a total 5,000 years in communist jails. Many died in communist prison camps. ... God who gave us the grace to endure will give us also the grace of resurrection. The church is patient because it is eternal. Jesus has said that the seed which dies will bring rich fruit. We do not doubt His word."



The Communist Jilava Prison.  
Entrance to the underground cells.



Prison cell with bunk-beds with no mattress, prisoners were obliged to sleep on. Stove for show only, never heated in cold winters.



Mug-shot of Late Reverend Richard Wurmbrand when held in the Jilava prison, in communist Romania.



“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father are this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.” (Apostle James Epistle 1:27)

**Some pictures of Christians Imprisoned for the Faith, Helped Now with your Gifts!**  
**Read their testimonies in our past newsletters at <http://helpforrefugees.com> (third column!)**



**Vilchinskaya Sapoval  
Galina**

Was imprisoned 4 years in the former Soviet Union, in the farthest North-Eastern extremity of Siberia, by the Okhotsk Sea, for conducting underground Sunday Schools. Read her testimony in the 1/2017 Newsletter.



**SAVCHENKO  
Leonteva Ludmila**

Her husband, a Baptist minister, was imprisoned 5 times, in the former Soviet Union. She wrote: "We were threatened many times with the taking away of our children." Read her testimony in the 3/2017 Newsletter.



**MURAVLEOV Nicolae  
Petrovich**

Was sentenced for his Christian activity to 8 years of prison and 5 additional years of banishment in the former Soviet Union, in Siberia. Read testimony in the 3/2017 Newsletter.



**Baptist Minister  
NIKITA Gheorghe**

Was imprisoned 4 years for printing Bibles and the magazine Khrestianin, containing pictures and details on many imprisoned Christians. Read testimony in the 3/2017 Newsletter.

### **Christians Helped with Your Gifts**

#### **Christian Father Imprisoned Four Times**

#### **Daughter Imprisoned Two Years in Communist Forced Labor Camps**



**Sister Gotman Margarita**

Sister Gotman M. wrote: “I was raised in a Christian family during a time of intense persecution against Christians in the Soviet Union. We were 8 children. Four older than me and three younger. When dad was arrested in 1967, I was 11 years old. The communists convicted him for 3 years under Art. 142 part 2 for non-compliance with the legislation on religious cults and raising children in a religious spirit. At that time, my older brother was already serving in the army, my sister was in a technical school in another city, and there were six of us with my mother. Mom did not work, because the younger sister was 4 years old only. There were no amenities in the house. It was freezing cold as it was difficult to find fuel. We slept in our day clothing. In the evenings we often gathered in the kitchen and sang Christian songs. We lived very modestly.

The furniture was mainly made by my father's hands. We slept on straw mattresses. We collected vegetables for the winter on the fields of the collective farm, whatever was left behind after harvest: carrots, beets, potatoes. We were allowed by the chairman and shared a supply with him. The Lord moved him to allow us do that. The Lord cared for us, glory to Him!

Sunday services were always held in our house. When authorities came, they often fined us 50 rubles (about a third of a monthly salary N. Ed.) Schoolchildren had squiled on us. By 1982, father had served already 3 prison terms, again searches and again separation. There were at least ten KGB searches in the house. How painful it was to see how spiritual literature, musical notebooks and poems, handwritten materials, were being carried away. And then we tried to learn more by heart, so as not to lose spiritual food.



I was already a member of the church at that time and was engaged with younger children groups. I also wanted to serve the Lord. At night, we were engaged in binding spiritual literature or rewriting sheet music.

Once, a sister came to us from the Council of Relatives of Prisoners (SSU) and invited me to work surreptitiously with them. She worked as a courier, almost constantly on secret trips: collecting information about the persecuted. For the purpose of conspiracy, all addresses had to be memorized so that there were no unnecessary written entries.

Somehow I arrived in the evening in one village in Ukraine. When everyone got off the bus, including myself, I did not see either houses or streets, only one clearing through the forest. How will I now look for the street and the desired house number? I am walking and praying. Suddenly I hear behind me the sound of footsteps, I watch a woman catching up with me. It turned out that she was just from the street I needed. She showed me a light bulb in the distance on a pole. "There you have the house you need," she said. How I was grateful to the Lord that he so quickly heard me and sent the right person. And there were not a few such cases, when the Lord miraculously guarded and accompanied me in the search of the necessary addresses of the families of prisoners or employees of the SSU.

Year 1985 came with numerous arrests of Christians, disruptions and dispersal of worship services, searches and the destruction of houses of worship and tents. When two of our workers were arrested in the Caucasus in April 1986, me and Z. Y. Vilchinskaya and another young brother were sent for the remaining religious literature and documents. We stayed in the city of Prokhladny, Kabardino-Balkar Soviet Republic, bought tickets for the return trip and bags with things and documents were delivered to the station by a local brother. At the station in Mineralnye Vody, police officers entered the car, checked the documents and said that we were suspected of a crime. We were asked to go out with all the things for inspection, then we were loaded into a car and brought to the supreme prosecutor's office in Nalchik. That was May 21, 1986. After the inspection of personal belongings, I was transferred to the arrest cell. Sister Vilchinskaya was already there.

We were under investigation for almost half a year. They did not often call for interrogations. They took us out for a walk once a day for 20-30 minutes. The rest of the time I had to sit in a stuffy, darkened cell. I stayed in this cell until the trial, but I did not know when the trial would be.

On September 25, 1986, they took me straight from walking around the prison-yard and said they would take me to court. In the prison van, I met with Z. Y. Vilchinskaya. While being driven in the prison van, we sang the hymn "You know the way, even though I don't know it." It was a great encouragement for us that we are in the hands of God. Relatives and friends were also placed on trial, since there was no court in Kabardino-Balkaria region at the time.

Although the documents that we had were not defamatory, since they described reliable facts with signatures and a return addresses, which could easily be verified, we were convicted under Art. 142 part 2 and paragraph 190 (slander against Soviet Union.) Vilchinskaya was sentenced to 2 years of general regime, and I to 1.5 years to serve in a labor colony of general regime. After reading the verdict we were given a date. After the trial, we spent another month in the remand prison and again in different cells. I really wanted to be in the same place with Vilchinskaya, but the Lord saw it differently. We traveled in the prison train to Voronezh together, and then I was taken to the Urals, and Vilchinskaya to Belarus.



I arrived at the Chelyabinsk women's colony YaV-48/5 on November 21, 1986. They assigned me to work in a sewing workshop for sewing overalls for workers involved in the liquidation of the Chernobyl accident. Worked seven days a week in 2 shifts. The manufacturing-plan was enormous, 1000 suits had to be sewn per shift. During the non-working hours there was practically no free time. We were loaded with household chores: clean the camp quarters in autumn from leaves, in winter from snow, or drag iron beds in the basement from one corner to another.

Once, the supervising prosecutor came to the prison camp and called me to the head office of the institution. He told me: "We want to pardon you need fulfil one condition. You must write a petition for clemency to indicate that you will no longer engage in such Christian activities." I replied that I would not plead guilty, since there is no slander of the Soviet state in our newsletters and it is my duty to stand up for an orphan and a widow and remember those suffering. Not to obey the commandments of God, to stop the intercessory ministry, means to betray Christ. I continued, I am happy with Him and under no circumstances will I renounce my Christian beliefs. He replied: "Well then, you will sit (in prison) with Christ," and so I ended up serving my entire sentence to the end of the term.

When women told me that on Easter they always declare a communist festivity and all the prisoners are supposed to work in honor of Lenin, I explained my fellow inmates that this is the greatest Christian holiday and this day should be dedicated to God. Then the foreman, the manager and the boss began to persuade us Christians in different ways to participate in the communist demonstration or we would be thrown in a punishment cell. The Lord gave me complete peace of mind in my heart, that if they place me in such a cell, He will be there with me.

I came to my regular cell from work and found on my bed a few letters. I was so surprised and delighted. The Lord "parted the sea" closed the eyes of the censors! I opened one and it contained a whole sermon on the verse: "the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men" (Daniel 4:17.) The episode of the conversation between God and the devil in Job was described also. As God allowed him to touch Job, so much the devil could touch, no more. So nothing can happen to us that the Lord will not allow. He never tests one, beyond one's strength. How pleased this letter was! The Lord wanted to encourage me and confirm me in my decision not to participate in the communist feast. I gave this letter to read to the manager and to other women.

On Easter Sunday morning, the manager comes and says: "Rita, you won." "No, I did not win," I replied, "but my Lord. It is He who ordered you to leave me in the unit and not throw me into a punishment cell." I had the opportunity to mentally fly away to the place where the people of God were gathered, to sing, pray, read my dear letters and congratulations to my friends on this great holiday of the resurrection of Christ, and in the evening tell women about the omnipotence of God. So nothing can happen to us that the Lord will not allow.

My dad was also imprisoned at this time, he already was serving a fourth prison term. He was imprisoned in 1985 and given 2 years of strict regime. He had the right to write only 2 letters per month. Sometimes he wrote one home, the other in my zone. How precious were his letters to me. In the summer of 1987, prisoners were released and rehabilitated. They wrote to me that Z. Ya. Vilchinskaya and Olga Kryuchkova are already at home. In early September, dad was also released under an amnesty. But I didn't know about it yet. It was a big surprise for me when the boss came and said on September 17, "We still decided to let you go under the amnesty, sign here and go out." And I thought to myself that it was not you who decided, but the Lord commanded you. So I was released on September 17, 1987. When I was free, I had a desire to continue in the Christian work, but my mother became very ill. I had to stay home and take care of her.



## Christians Helped with Your Gifts

### Evangelist and his brother imprisoned for their faith



Vera Nikolaevna Goryanina, wife, wrote; "Mikhail Alexandrovich Goryanin was born in 1951, in a Christian family. The family resided close to the Polar Circle in the former Soviet Union. At 19, Mikhail was baptized and was ordained later to the ministry as an evangelist. In 1983 he moved and was assigned to serve as a presbyter in Tikhoretsk, Krasnodar region of the Soviet Union. For a whole year, he traveled daily by car 65 miles to the ministry. In April 1985, at the age of 34, having a serious heart illness he was sentenced to three years in prison camps. Being arrested and being in prison, Mikhail was worried about his family, all the more knowing that they would soon have a sixth child. The first eleven months after the trial, Mikhail spent in the

prison of Krasnodar. In this prison, Mikhail Alexandrovich was together with his brother Vladimir Andreevich Okhotin, who was as well serving a sentence for the Christian faith. Together they prayed, sang Christian hymns, testified to cellmates about Jesus Christ. Due to his state of health, he was more than once really close to death. Contrary to the eagerness of the communist secret police, the KGB and Soviet prosecutors, God allowed him to live. While in prison, Mikhail Alexandrovich refused to work on Sundays. He was deprived therefore of visits and was put in a punishment cell. He ended up being one of the last Christians freed in 1988 at the beginning of the Perestroika. Immediately when freed he worked extensively as an evangelist. He died of a heart condition when 56½. \* “\*Help for Refugees sent financial support to his widow.

### Christians Helped with Your Gifts

Across, a **sample only** of a long list, our mission was able to compile beside other lists, of over 480 elderly Baptist Christians still alive, who suffered for the Christian faith in the former Soviet Union. The prison sentences amounted from 2 years, to as many as 18 years of communist prison. If considered together, their years of prison-sentences shown in our abbreviated table, would most likely add up to over 2,000 years of prison. The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> column together, show year of birth and the most recent country they live in (like Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, etc.) We try obtain exact addresses, so we may be able to send encouraging help to those still alive.

We were able to send repeated help to about 120 such elderly Russian-speaking Christians and over 110 of other languages. Many of their testimonies you can read in the monthly newsletter. Testimonies available also on the internet. **Look up third column at:** <https://helpforrefugees.com>

409	Власенко	Валентин	Медовляник	1958	Украина
410	Вольф	Андрей	Корнеевич	1958	Казахстан
411	Куркин	АЛЕКСЕЙ	ИКОВЛЕВИЧ	1958	Россия
412	Левен	НИКОЛАЙ	ВИКТОРОВИЧ	1958	Казахстан
413	Романко	Владимир	Николаевич	1958	Украина
414	Тистен	Давид	Давидович	1958	Россия
415	ТУРКЕВИЧ	Василий	Тарасович	1959	Украина
416	Балков	Степан	Павлович	1959	Украина
417	ДМИТРИЙНИКОВ	АЛЕКСАНДР	АЛЕКСАНДРОВИЧ	1959	Россия
418	СКВОРЦОВА	ЛЮБОВЬ	НИКОЛАЙВНА	1959	Россия
419	Варовин	Виталий	Федотович	1959	Россия
420	Дубицкий	СЕРГЕЙ	АДАМОВИЧ	1959	Россия
421	Лашенко	Борис	Владимирович	1959	Украина
422	Тягало	ИВАН	ИВАНОВИЧ	1959	Казахстан
423	МАРЧЕНКО	Станислав	Павлович	1960	Украина
424	Донченко	Александр	Максимович	1960	Украина
425	Опмачко	Венедикт	Александрович (Валерианов)	1960	Узбекистан
426	Савченко	Михаил	Михайлович	1960	Эстония
427	Федеева (ШВЕЦОВА)	ДИНА	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1961	Алания
428	ШВЕЦОВА	АННА	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1962	Алания
429	Богородилов	Александр	Валерьевич	1962	Эстония
430	Миников	Павел	Дмитриевич	1962	Эстония

#### Sample of a List of 480 former Imprisoned Christians In the former Soviet Union

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