

HELP FOR REFUGEES, INC.

A tax-exempt, non-profit corporation

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Late Reverend Richard Wurmbbrand with wife, Sabina

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"Let be, let us see. ." (Matthew 27:49)

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

From an unpublished Bible meditation by late Reverend Richard Wurmbbrand

The Sin of Apathy

There exists an invincible indifference, insensitivity, apathy towards suffering. We sometimes wonder why people do not react when they are told the story of the cross of Christ, why they remain unmoved when they hear about the sufferings of persecuted Christians in so many countries. There was a multitude on Golgotha who attended the crucifixion, of men who actually heard their cries when nails were hammered into their hands and feet. Many were Romans or Greeks who had only a superficial knowledge of the local languages, Hebrew or Aramaic. Romans and Greeks had become unimpressed, numb to the cruel punishment of crucifixion. Around year 70 BC, as many as five thousand had been punished being crucified, following Spartacus revolt in Italy. Many more around Jesus' cross were the Jews who had shouted "crucify Him," when the Roman governor Pilate presented Jesus to them. Still, there must have been some who should have known that at least one of the three hanging on crosses was the best of men. Otherwise, He would not have prayed for His torturers. Otherwise, He would not have cared to bring a robber to God, while passing Himself through unspeakable physical suffering. Now this Jesus cried, as in despair, "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" And what was the reaction of the multitude? They said to each other, "Let be, let us see." It did not pass through their minds a thought of empathy, an intent to alleviate His suffering by at least giving Him a little bit of water or a word of compassion. "Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save Him."

Elias is not only the proper name of a prophet of old. It is in Hebrew a short sentence which means "Jehovah is my God." In this sense everyone can be an Elias. In this sense the Lord said that St. John the Baptist was Elias. Each of us must have Jehovah as his God. If the compassionate God Jehovah is master of our life, we never could remain passive when we see innocent suffering. Those who are in reality without God have the attitude "Let be, let us see." The Book of Acts describes how Jesus' apostles were summarily flogged by the religious officials of the day (Acts 5:39.) Men of this type were attending also the crucifixion on Golgotha and were not moved by it. Such persons will not be moved by the message of the suffering Church. They are damned. They do not care if little brethren of Jesus are hungry or in jail. We leave these men to the judgment of God.

There is a good deal of inertia and remainders of apathy to be overcome in God's elect. To them we address the present meditation. Some leaders of denominations are hardly more than honest but insensitive bureaucrats. Shortly after arriving to the States, I met one of the bishops of a large denomination. I talked to him at length about the suffering of the underground churches in different communist countries. The bishop was friendly at first and told me: "We want to help the persecuted Christians, send them Bibles and Christian books and help financially the families whose relatives are in prison and so on and I think we could give \$50,000 from our funds for this ministry." I asked him: "When do you think we could start?" \$50,000 was beyond our wildest dreams! The man replied: "You are refugees, you don't understand how things work here. I don't have these \$50,000. The budget is already made for next year so we cannot give it to you. Maybe we'll bring it up and approve it two years from now and make it available for help to these suffering Christians, three years from now." He was extremely honest and innocent and totally not prepared for our mindset and our urgency having escaped from communism. Up to this point the discussion was extremely friendly and favorable to the cause of the suffering Christians I presented. But I continued: "I know how you could give us the money now." It was a big project, a \$50,000 worth project. "We can start it in one or two weeks." I spoke English fluently but with an accent. "We can have the \$50,000 in two weeks!" The Lutheran bishop became curious and probably was asking himself how this person who suffered 14 years of prison in communist Romania, would have any idea how to come up with \$50,000. I continued: "It's very easy. We write to all pastors from the diocese to renounce 15% of their salary, but not for good. We are just borrowing from them and in three years' time when you approve the budget, we pay them back." The bishop quickly dismissed me and then sent a letter to all pastors under him saying: "Please do not invite pastor Wurmbrand to speak because he is irrational! He is crazy! Here is what he said - he wants you to temporarily renounce 15% of your salary for three years in order to help Christians in the communist world."



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 of the Christians who were Imprisoned for the Faith, We Helped with your Gifts!
 (Read their testimonies in our newsletter at <http://helpforrefugees.com> , third column!)



Mikhail PSHENITSYN, suffered 5 years in Soviet Jails and went on a 40-days hunger-strike to obtain back his Bible! See 2/2017 Newsletter.



Valer IRINCA suffered 5 years in Romanian communist jails for his Christian faith. See testimony in the August 2014 Newsletter.



Ioan PRODAN (deceased) was sentenced for his faith to 6 years of prison in communist Romania. See August 2014 Newsletter.



Szekely BALINT (deceased) was sentenced for his faith to 7 years of prison in communist Romania. See August 2014 Newsletter.

Christians Helped with Your Gifts 3 years Imprisonment for his Faith



Peace, dear brothers and sisters! My name is Kosteniuk Victor Iosifovici I was born in a family of Baptist Christians in 1935.

From childhood I suffered from the Soviet atheist system. In school I was scoffed at, and was treated the same way in the village we lived in. In middle-school, I gave up being a communist, red-scarf wearing pioneer, while serving in the army I refused to be a “Komsomolist.” (Soviet Youth Organization, NT) After serving in the army, I got to work. At work, we were deprived of any prize, any additional payment that was paid to those who worked well. I was excluded from those who were entitled to receive a home. During the 70s and 80s I participated in the clandestine printing of Christian literature. In 1980, I was arrested and accused under a criminal code article, as if I had attacked the Soviet system and the Communist Party. I was sentenced to 3 years of jail. At the same time, any possessions I had were confiscated. I was released from prison in 1983. Nowhere could I be hired to work, because I was labeled as belonging to a Christian sect and the Soviet security (KGB) was preparing another criminal file against myself for a next term of imprisonment. After the fall of the Soviet Union, no one is put in jail for religious reasons. Now I am a church worker. We live in a small apartment, that is in the courtyard of the church. At the same time, we are working at cleaning jobs. We enjoy freedom and thank God for everything. God bless!

Christians Helped with Your Gifts Communists Imprisoned Him 3 Years for His Faith



Because of our Christian faith, my husband Oleg Popov was sentenced to three years of imprisonment on December 8, 1981. He spent the term in the town of Tyumen and was released on December 8, 1984. When he was

arrested, I was left with four young children. The oldest girl was 4½ and the youngest daughter was 3 months old. Of course, without the help of the church and the believers, life would not have been possible. Thanks to them, I've been able to survive for three years. Prior to the arrest, my husband had a church youth leadership position and involved himself as well in the surreptitious transport of Christian literature, like Bibles, spiritual song collections, and so on. At the time in the Soviet Union it was impossible to buy such Christian literature in any store. They had to be printed and distributed clandestinely. Prayer services took place in the homes of believers, for which they were often subjected to fines, arrests and many divine services were being dispersed by the police. Church leaders were arrested and imprisoned. In prison there were "interrogations" with the leaders of the prison camp. They denied God. They pressured me when I came to visit my husband. Sometimes they did not allow me to visit him or exchange any letters. He was placed in a punishment cell. There he contracted pneumonia several times. He was obliged to work as a painter, which also led to lung disease. Again, he fell ill with pneumonia, was treated with some antibiotic. This resulted in a blood-clot and he died last year. * He was a Christian poet and song composer. One of his songs is regularly performed at Baptist congresses in the northern regions of Russia. Wife: Popov Tatiana

*(For many Christians we have helped in the past, now deceased, we continue where possible helping, a surviving spouse or a child.)

HELP FOR REFUGEES, INC. has extended for the past 40 years, financial support to Christian refugees from communist countries, orphans and Christians who had been imprisoned for their faith in present and former communist countries. Also helped are the Agape Orphanage in Pascani, Romania and the Richard Wurmbbrand College, an Evangelical and accredited high school in Iasi, Romania, where many children of disadvantaged families are able to study. See <http://helpforrefugees.com>.



Christians Helped with Your Gifts

Christian Preacher Imprisoned During 4 Years

Peace brothers and sisters! I greet you with Psalm 16:6, "Yea, I have a goodly heritage." I am Antonina Kurkina, the wife of Kurkin Alexei Yakovlevich. My husband is with the Lord. * My husband was born in 1950, in the Oryol region, Dmitrovsky district, Rublin village as the second child in a Christian family of 9 children. From childhood, he was distinguished in obedience. From the age of 12, he was not punished, because he was obedient in everything! Yet when he reached adulthood, Alexei did not want to follow in the faith of his Christian family. He joined the communist Komsomol (Soviet Youth Organization) and we met and married in 1972. At first, we quarreled often. My husband wondered why our relationships was not as good as that of his parents.

In 1973, he said to me, "I cannot live like this, I will go to the church. I will be a faithful Christian!" I replied, "I will go with you!" On that day, in the church, we repented sincerely, and decided irrevocably to follow Christ. We were baptized in the same year. From that moment another life began. Alexei Iakovlevich gave his family the full service of the Lord. His statement was: "what is offered on the altar, is not to be taken back." So, it was given to God, and God began to use this vessel.

He worked as an electrician in a factory. When Alexei Yakovlevich turned to God, he came to the executive committee of the communist party and placed his party membership card on the table saying, "I became a Christian." Party workers tried to convince him renounce his faith: "A wonderful future is waiting for you, you are crazy, refuse Christianity!" But Alexei Yakovlevich loved Jesus Christ very much and made a promise to serve him with a good conscience. He kept his promise until the last breath. After his repentance, his life gained a new meaning, he began to tell others about Christ and His infinite love. He began to actively participate in the life of the church (at that time the Kurkin family lived in Dmitrovsk, Oryol region.) The church had 14 members. Alexei Yakovlevich had the opportunity to move to a larger church. But he said, "Our church must grow, there will be young people and children right here!" The Lord heard his prayers, the church membership increased from 14 members to 70. Of these, 23 were youth and 65 children. In 1981, Aleksei Yakovlevich was ordained as an evangelist. The brethren assigned him responsibility for evangelizing the youth in the Oryol region. During the atheist period, the authorities did not allow us to gather together in peace and we had many fines and arrests. At first my husband was imprisoned for 15 days because we spread the Gospel. He was not discouraged, knowing it is an honor to suffer for Christ! In our apartment, we set up a Christian library. In 1984, after another search undertaken by the KGB in our apartment, Alexei Yakovlevich was arrested and then convicted to 3½ years of prison. He spent his term in Siberia, the Kemerovo region, the Berezovsky village. He was released under an amnesty in 1988. He spent a total of four years in prison. During this time, the Lord strengthened his faith in Jesus Christ. Released, Alexei Yakovlevich went on to preach in a gospel ministry. In 1991, the brethren gave him responsibility for a group of evangelists who went, preaching the Gospel, to the cities of central Russia. During this time of liberty, after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Lord blessed the work of the preachers in particular. In 1993, Alexey Yakovlevich was presented and joined the Council of the (Baptist) Churches. By doing this evangelistic work, many communities and groups were created. He was very busy with ministry, dedicating himself all the time, without worrying about his strength and health. All brethren serving with him point out that he was very energetic in the work. He worked from the rugged peninsula of Taimyr, Magadan to the steppes of Mongolia and Turkmenistan, and the Baltic States, Yakutia, Evenkia, Kazakhstan, Dagestan, Ukraine, Moldova. All these far regions were most usual places for his ministry. The brothers assigned him responsibility for the Voronezh-Ryazan association and then was responsible for the evangelism department throughout the association. The brethren mentioned that there is not one church that Aleksei Yakovlevich did not visit in his ministry entrusted to him. Deepening into the church and its personal needs, he was sincerely worried and prayed for these needs. Alexei Yakovlevich met the New Year 2007, in his native church. Prior to his unexpected departure to the Lord, he spoke with every soul in the church as if he were anticipating separation. On January 2, 2007, he went to a nearby town, to the hospital I was in. Talking to me, he said goodbye. While on a mission errand, due to a car accident, Alexei Yakovlevich moved to his eternal abode. In a family of 10 children, Alexei Yakovlevich was rarely home, only for about 2 months a year. The family, the relatives, the church, the association brethren could hardly endure this loss. About 5,000 people attended the funeral. Alexei Iakovlevich experienced much and prayed for the brethren and for the work of the Lord. He was worried about the younger generation and was worried about places where the Gospel had not yet been preached. He asked constantly, "who would go there? Who will preach the message of salvation?"

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The Imprisonment Testimonies of the Shkarovski Christian Brothers



I, Anatolie Sergeyeovich Shkarovski, was born October 15, 1956 in Poltava, Ukraine, former Soviet Union, in a family of faithful parents. I grew up together with four siblings and a sister.

In those difficult times, our mother managed to put in our hearts a living trust in God, despite the ideology of the former Communist government. Our mother brought us to the church and prayed for our salvation. I remember the church presbyter (in full compliance with the communist, atheistic laws) standing at the door of the prayer house and not allowing the children to enter the “official” church. (Communist) stooges posing as Sunday school teachers wrote the names of all the children who came to the divine service, and then the authorities threatened the church leadership: if the children continue to attend meetings and the church service, the house of prayer will be closed. By the grace of God and the prayers of my mother, myself, two brothers and a sister, have received God in our hearts and lives. For the Soviet communist authorities, youth-baptisms were considered an anti-government provocation. In order not to endanger the pastor of a small church who accepted baptize us, baptisms took place at night. During one of the nights in the year 1974, under the moonlight and stars, a group of young people made a covenant with our Lord Jesus Christ. The group of young people who were baptized that year, myself included, formed the future persecuted church of Christ in our city. At that time in the Soviet Union, there was a strong oppression on the part of the KGB, of the Church of God. The teaching of children in Sunday schools was forbidden, the youth were not allowed to receive baptisms yet many people began follow the Lord faithfully. God in a wonderful way led His Church through suffering, cleansing, opening the doors of salvation to many sinners. God encouraged us to serve by proclaiming the Gospel, we traveled through the villages preaching the crucified and risen Christ, who died to justify us, sinners. We used all opportunities to spread the Good News: the Lord's message of salvation. At that time there was a great lack of evangelical and Christian literature, giving people the opportunity to know Jesus.

(Continued in the next column →)

Thus, there was the need to print the Word of God, and many brothers and sisters responded to the call of God and accepted to print surreptitiously the Bible, the Gospels, books of spiritual songs, etc. It was a work of sacrifice but blessed. The devil was not indifferent to the fact that people began to return to God, the fact that the Church of God grew, the children were still going to Sunday schools in spite of the communist laws. The number of young Christians who began serving the Lord, sacrificing their time, was constantly on the increase. The communist authorities instituted a mass surveillance of church ministers and workers. Christian brothers and sisters were oppressed in every possible way and under various pretexts, they were dismissed from employment or had salaries reduced. God ruled His church in the midst of storms and persecutions. I also participated in the transport and distribution of Christian literature and I came to the attention of the KGB (Soviet secret police, NT.) In 1980, during the Easter holidays we went to the village of a sister named Vasilyeva Semenevsky from the Poltava region. A lot of people gathered wanting to hear about the crucified and risen Christ. Many people could not believe there were young people in our country who love God and want to share this love with others. This event took place the Sunday after Easter. We passed through a cemetery, full with mourning families. We stopped, we sang Christian songs, encouraged people with the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and invited them to our divine services. It was a blessed work. In response the authorities were very aggressive, came to the church, wrote the names of all those present, interrupted the divine service, took the Christian literature, they brought a bus and took us to the regional center Semenovka, 30 km from Vasilevka, so we could not return on foot. In the same year 1980, my brother Paul and I ended up arrested. We were sentenced for religious activities. My brother, who had a daughter and a son, received 2½ years of imprisonment under Article 138, Part 2 of the Ukrainian SSR penal code, and since I was not married at that time, the communist judges gave me 3 years imprisonment. When we were judged in court, in the center of Seedsivka district, we could not imagine God's plans for us. Years later, because of the faith seed sown, a Christian community was formed there, and we were pleased to be at the opening of the prayer house in the village of Vasileevka. Today I can say that God blessed me with a beautiful family: I have a wonderful believing wife, six daughters and 11 grandchildren. God bless you fully!

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2½ Years Imprisonment for the Faith



Peace dear brothers and sisters, my name is Shkarovski Pavel Sergeevich (above, with his wife.) I was born on September 7, 1952. I live in Ukraine, the city of Poltava. During the Soviet era, I was a member of the unregistered church (then gathering in private homes) of the Baptist Evangelical Christians. While I was still a school pupil, I experienced harassment and persecution in the atheistic education system: I was threatened not to receive a graduation certificate and therefore I left the public school and found work when I was barely sixteen. Participation in the church's illegal encounters was accompanied by disorder, disruption of divine service, and multiple fines. Threats with the message "We'll close you" came from different officials and especially more from KGB officers (Soviet Secret Police, NT.)

I was arrested on August 24, 1980. I was kidnapped on my way along with the motorcycle I drove. My wife Tatiana could not find me for almost two days. At that moment, she was waiting for our second son, Timothy. He was born four days after my arrest. I got to see him only when I was locked up and they came to visit me. My brother Anatoly described these events in part. (See previous page, NT.) I will not repeat. I spent the term of imprisonment in the Donetsk region for 2 years and 6 months. After the release, there were threats that the KGB would once again put me in jail, but the "perestroika" (Liberalization Period in the Soviet Union, NT) was already beginning. Now I continue to serve in the church, so long there are some "freedoms" and no persecution! May God bless all of us, so that we can serve Him even in a freedom, that we do not know for how long, we could enjoy.

You may use a "DONATE" button on the web site: <http://helpforrefugees.com>

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409	Власенко	Валентин	Мефодиевич	1958	Украина
410	Болыф	Андрей	Корнеевич	1958	Казakhstan
411	Нурани	АЛЕКСЕЙ	ЯКОВЛЕВИЧ	1958	Россия
412	Левен	НИКОЛАЙ	ВИКТОРОВИЧ	1958	Казakhstan
413	Романко	Владимир	Николаевич	1958	Украина
414	Тигсен	Давид	Давидович	1958	Россия
415	ТУРКЕВИЧ	Василий	Тарасович	1959	Украина
416	Барков	Степан	Павлович	1959	Украина
417	ДРИСВИННИКОВ	АЛЕКСАНДР	АЛЕКСАНДРОВИЧ	1959	Россия
418	СВЮРЦОВА	ЛЮБОВЬ	НИКОЛАЙВНА	1959	Россия
419	Варовин	Виталий	Федотович	1959	Россия
420	Дубицкий	СЕРГЕЙ	АДАМОВИЧ	1959	Россия
421	Лашенко	Борис	Владимирович	1959	Украина
422	Ткаченко	ИВАН	ИВАНОВИЧ	1959	Казakhstan
423	МАРЧЕНКО	Станислав	Павлович	1960	Украина
424	Донченко	Александр	Максимович	1960	Украина
425	Спидасов	Венедикт	Александрович (Валерианов)	1960	Узбекистан
426	Сарченко	Михаил	Михайлович	1960	Эстония
427	Федеева (ШВЕЦОВА)	ДИНА	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1961	Алания
428	ШВЕЦОВА	АННА	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1962	Алания
429	Богоринко	Александр	Валерьевич	1962	Эстония
430	Миников	Павел	Дмитриевич	1962	Эстония

Above, a sample of a list, our mission was able to compile, of over 480 elderly Baptist Christians who suffered for their 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 fourth column shows year of birth and the 5th, present country they live in (like Ukraine, Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, etc.) We try obtaining exact addresses, so we may be able to send encouraging help to those still alive. We were able to send help to about 90 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 at: <http://helpforrefugees.com>.

Help for Refugees, Inc. PO Box 5161, Torrance, Ca. 90510, USA. Email: hfr@helpforrefugees.com, website: <http://helpforrefugees.com> (EIN: 95-3064521) is listed in Publication 78, Cumulative List of Nonprofit Organizations described in Section 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Service. Gifts to Help for Refugees are tax-deductible.