

## 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**



**December 2019**

"Jesus saith unto them, Fill the water pots with water. And they filled them up to the brim."

(John 2:7)

Late Reverend Richard Wurmbbrand spent 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From an unpublished Bible meditation by late Reverend Richard Wurmbbrand

### **Filled up to the brim!**

God filled the barrels of our need to the brim. He gave us sun, moon, stars, and the earth with its forests, mountains, oceans, and all creatures that live and move upon them. He gave us fruit, grains, vegetables, milk. (If there are those who hunger, it is because we misuse His gifts, neglect opportunities, and spend fortunes on weaponry to kill one another.) God gave every man 100 million neurons. Each neuron can contain five billion bits of information - the contents of a library of thousands of volumes. We have, therefore, the mental capacity to make our lives happy and productive and to ensure the wellbeing of others. God gave us His Son to save us from sin, through His sacrifice on the cross. Those who respond to His great Gift do so only by loving and serving Him wholeheartedly - to the brim. At a wedding in Cana, the guests lacked wine. Jesus' command that servants should fill huge pots with water seemed senseless. The practical response would have been to seek more wine. There is no record, however, that the servants objected to the strange order. The true servant does not brood about the will of the Master; his is to do His will regardless. Told to fill the pots with water, the servants, lacking explanation, nevertheless filled them **to the brim**. John Plopeanu, a former fellow-prisoner of mine in Romanian Communist jails, died as a result of the torture he endured. Though ill with tuberculosis, he would volunteer to wash the laundry of other sick prisoners. He had no washing machine in prison and no hot water. His hands

were always cold from the icy water in which he labored. At that time, I was very sick. Doctors had given up hope that I would ever recover. Knowing this, I once apologized to my Christian friend: "I am sorry you have to wash my laundry full of pus and dirt." He was sad that I thought this would be an embarrassment to him. He considered it a privilege to do the dirtiest work. From his insufficient ration of food, he would impart to others, though this was strictly forbidden. The punishment for being caught was to be stretched out on the floor of the cell and have a Communist guard jump with his boots on one's chest and belly. Plopeanu never faltered in what he considered his Christian duty. He filled the pots to the brim. Such men have filled their pots of faith to the brim and are not afraid. Why should you be afraid of grave troubles in your family, your employment, your church, or your mission? Fill your pots to the brim, even if you do not understand your trials and see no immediate results of your actions. Once three Roman soldiers stood before the house where apostle Peter was staying. Having lived under Nazis and Communists, I know what a traumatic experience it is for men under oppression to see armed soldiers before the gate. It probably means arrest, followed by beatings and perhaps death. Then the Spirit spoke to Peter: "Go with them (Acts 10:20) No word of explanation. No consolation, such "Don't be afraid; you are led by an officer who wants to know the way of salvation." This is faith: to go, not knowing where the way will lead. A sister wrote me, "I send my donation cheque before I paid the bills." Abel, too, brought to God "the firstlings of the flock" (Genesis 4:4) without knowing if he would get other lambs. If you make your accounts before giving, the beast Reason gets the upper hand and you will not give. May we all fill our pots to the brim.

The Russian Baptist pastor JACOB SKORNIAKOV was thrown three times in communist Soviet jails for his faith. He suffered 13 years communist imprisonment for evangelizing young people. He writes: "May only our God, the God of Love and Peace, be with us: Then we are powerful even in our defenselessness, yes, even in death, to pray for our henchmen and torturers; not to avenge ourselves and not to curse with hate and despair, but pray that the God of Love forgive them, as Jesus did on the cross; as Stephen, the first martyr for the cause of Christ, did." To suffer for Christ is much, but SKORNIAKOV desired more. He filled the pot TO THE BRIM. In jail, hungry and sick, he brought five men to Christ. \*

\*Jacob Skorniakov, died 2008. Help For Refugees has been able to send several times financial support to Jacob Skorniakov's widow, Nina Stepanovna Skorniakova, now 91. See her picture and read her moving testimony on the web, at <https://helpforrefugees.com>, in the third column, by clicking the link to the May 2017 Newsletter.



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 with your Gifts!  
 Read their testimonies in our past newsletters at <http://helpforrefugees.com> (third column!)



**Baptist Minister  
 Petru PRUTEANU**

was imprisoned 5 years in the former Soviet Union. When he refused to become an informer, he was threatened with homosexual rape. Read his testimony in the 12/2016 Newsletter.



**Christian  
 Vladimir Sergey KOROP**

Suffered two years of imprisonment for not denying his faith, in the former Soviet Union and was threatened with losing his eight children. Read his testimony in the 12/2016 Newsletter.



**Baptist minister  
 Nicolae DRON**

Was imprisoned 3 years in the former Soviet Union, close to the Chinese border, for his underground Christian activity. He was severely beaten. Read testimony in the 12/2016 Newsletter.



**Choir-Conductor  
 Vladimir TIMCHUK**

Both his parents suffered long imprisonment years in Siberia for their Christian faith. He was also imprisoned for his faith in the northernmost part of Siberia. Read his testimony in the 12/2016 Newsletter.

**Christians Helped with Your Gifts  
 Three Years Communist Imprisonment for Evangelism in Coldest Siberian Jails**



Brother Rogalski and wife inside a church. On the wall, the verse from John, 3:16.

“Peace be with you, dear brethren in Christ! My name is Rogaliskii Petru Abramovici and I was born in 1937 in the village of Petrovka, Isilkulskii district of the Omsk region in Russian Siberia. In 1946 we moved to the town of Prokopyevsk in the Kemerovo District. After I finished 10 classes I was drafted into the army for 3 years in 1957. Same year, I repented and received the Lord Jesus Christ in my life. In 1960 I got married. I lived with my wife of 48 years. She suffered from diabetes, and in 2008 she went to

the Lord. In 2010 I got married for a second time. In 1971 I was ordained as a deacon in the local church and in the beginning. I was also a leader overseeing work with the young people in the local church. In 1982 I was ordained as an Evangelist in charge of the Evangelistic work in the whole of Siberia. This allowed me bring the good news of salvation to all those who do not know the Lord Jesus. Also, in 1982 I was arrested and sentenced to 3 years of prison. I was sent to a prison in a very remote city from where I lived. It took 5 months travel-time with the jail-wagon. We transited through the prisons of Novokuznetsk, Mariinsk, Irkutsk, Khabarovsk, Chitinsk (in this order). And then I was taken to a small town of the Chita region, named Borze, where I remained imprisoned until the end of the whole term. In the camp I worked as an electrician. The frost reached up to -63 ° F. Of course, I had to work with bare hands. Fingers on both hands froze and I lost all sensitivity in my fingertips. On my return from the camp and far-off exile, the brethren decided that I should move to the city of Novosibirsk. That's how I and my wife arrived in this city. Apart from all these happenings, I have undergone 6 surgeries. After the first - I remained with only a third of my stomach. Later I lost part of my liver. I have undergone three eye surgeries. The last one was on March 14, 2019. The sewn threads in my eyes were removed after 5 months. I also have grave asthma and diabetes. I use insulin because of diabetes and therefore all my teeth implants ended up damaged and I had to get them out. In all this I want to say, Thank God! I still serve and attend church a little. I move with the help of crutches and also have herniation to the spine (10 XII). To all glory to the Lord! With respect, the smallest in the Lord.”

## Christians Helped with Your Gifts

Ivan Dmitrievich TZERA

### Suffered Three Years of Communist Jail for Spreading the Gospel



**“It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.” (Lamentations 3:22-23)**

I greet you with the peace of the Lord dear brothers and sisters!  
I remember my life and in my heart I have only gratitude to the Lord for my course in life.

I was born in 1950 in a Greek-Orthodox family. In 1969, while I was serving in the army, my mother became an Evangelical believer. After the army, because of her prayers, I came to the Lord myself. I received the baptism, and then, in 1974, I married a sister from the church. God has given us 5 children. The eldest daughter was born with disabilities, without hope, but thanks be to God who

gave her life and a healthy mind.

I, together with my wife, have endeavored to serve the Lord and His people as much as possible. We are keen for the prisoners of faith, we have suffered fines, sometimes we have been arrested for 15 days, often houses were searched by the KGB (Soviet Secret Police.) Also, we were part of the team that printed surreptitiously Christian literature put out by the secret publisher "Khrestianin" (the Christian, N.Ed.)

In the fall of 1980, I was arrested during the divine service in the church. I was sentenced to two years of prison. The eldest daughter was then 4 years old, the son 2 years old and the youngest - half year old. After I was arrested, my wife was immediately fired from her job.

At first, I spent my term in the Nikolaev region, in the so-called "famine area" of the Soviet Union. My nickname in prison was "the Saint". I spent most of the term in the Komi region of the Soviet Union.

I worked in the taiga in cutting forests, also in the opening of trails through the wilderness. The conditions were very difficult. In the summer there was deep mud, mosquitos' invasions, and in the winter the freeze reached -49 ° F. I worked hard from morning till evening, lived in barracks, food was minimal.

Thank God, I had succeeded somehow hide a little pocket gospel with me. That brought me often comfort. The KGB officers came again and again. They asked me sign a statement that wrote I was not sentenced for the faith but for being disobedient to the authorities. Had I signed, they promised freedom. Of course, I did not give my consent and therefore I served my sentence to the end. I do not consider myself a hero of the faith, it was simply our destiny, having joys and sorrows, we were in the Lord's service. I thank the Lord for never leaving me or my family. May His Name be blessed.”

## Christians Helped with Your Gifts

Anatolii Rublenko

### 10 years of Siberian Prison for Spreading Gospel Tracts, 6 Years in Siberian Banishment



**Brother Anatolii Rublenko  
with wife Liubov Yakovlevna**

“Dear brothers and sisters! Dear young Christians!

I want to share with you the joyful news of a loving God who has given His beloved Son on our sinful earth to save us. To give us forgiveness of sins and hope. For this, the Savior of the world, Jesus Christ gave His life, was crucified on the cross, died and rose again. For those who believe in Him and dedicate their lives to Him, they become God’s children.

For the sake of the beloved Lord, faithful

Christians are ready to suffer and to give their lives. "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:10) "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." (2 Timothy 3:12) "Thousands and thousands of faithful sons and daughters went this way - they, "of whom the world was not worthy!" (Hebrews 11: 35-40)

Thus, by His grace, God has also led me through chains, shortcomings and sufferings. Because I loved Jesus, I read His Word, I prayed and witnessed to others about the Lord. For this I was judged, but not only myself. Many other brothers and sisters as well. The evil power of atheism decided to destroy faith in God so that there is no memory of God. An entire state machinery worked at this. "A wall was erected against the church, a fortress at the end of the blockade." Nine years through prisons and camps, underground, hard, lice and fleas, bunkers, among the highly developed criminal world, where the Bible was a forbidden book, day and night screams, swearing and dirty words, cigarette smoke, special diet from which often diseases have appeared. Hundreds of brothers and sisters endured this suffering. Thousands of children were expecting their fathers and mothers return from prison. Wives, mothers, sons, who suffered receiving repeated imprisonment terms without release.

What didn't we like about military atheism? We were a group of young Christians, about 15 people, we gathered for prayer, we read from the Word of God, we sang Christian songs. We pray for prisoners, for the Church, for our city, so that there may be freedom to preach the Gospel. Once we decided to write more Easter greetings - with the following content: "Christ has risen! He has risen indeed!" Then we distributed among the crowds in the city Christian folders about God's love, the importance of repentance, God's judgment. We didn't see a crime in this and we were glad that we at least somehow served God through it. After all, He commanded us to sow His Word to the lost. Once I reproduced a large number of such leaflets for distribution. But we were tracked down by the Soviet secret police, the KGB. We were arrested by two officers and thrown into an underground prison cell. The interrogations began. Day and night. Who runs the church? Who is preaching? Where does literature come from? The Lord has strengthened us, given us wisdom. I felt closer to the presence of the Lord. The prisoners were listening to God. The KGB officers were looking to make us turn-coats. They promised me that if I cooperated with them, then they would reward my life and my family with many earthly benefits. In case of refusal, I will remain in prison all my life. I asked: Do you like traitors? They replied, "traitors,

that's what we want!" I answered: I am ready to suffer for Christ and I will never be a Judas, a traitor to my brethren.

The trial took place on March 5, 1974. (I was only 25.) The big hall where the trial was held was crowded with agitators, communists from all over the city. Believers were not allowed to enter the court, there were many people waiting in the yard. On radio and television, the Church was defamed. The believers were mocked. They badmouthed believers as sacrificing their children. The hall shouted: "they should not be allowed to live! Throw Christians to the polar bears! Take their children away!" The trial lasted two days. I was sentenced to 5 years of prison and 3 years of exile in freezing Siberia. While they were leading us to the "black crows," (this is the name of the transport vehicle for prisoners) the young Christians sang a psalm: "To live for Jesus, to die with Him, is the best part you can wish for." They sang and threw flowers. At that moment, I was severely hit by one of the convoy officers. Thus began my first term of my sufferings in captivity. But with us was our beloved Jesus. And with Him in prison, there is freedom and without Christ even you enjoy freedom, you feel imprisoned by evil.

The second time, I was arrested and tried on February 3, 1982. I was sentenced to 6 years of strict prison camp, and an additional 3 years banishment into cold Siberia. But after 5 years, 2 months and 24 days, all the brothers and sisters were released upon the Perestroika reform of Gorbachev. Above is a short description. To describe everything I went through, I would need write a whole book. But the most important thing is that this was a blessed way to follow the Lord. The greatest happiness is to follow the way of the Lord. " For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him." (Hebrews 10:37- 38). This is what the Lord says.

May the loving Lord bless you dear friends and I hope to see you again, if not here, then in heaven, where there will be no tears and suffering."

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 5th 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	Мефодьевич	1958	Украина
410	Вольф	Андрей	Игорьевич	1958	Казakhstan
411	Нуркин	АЛЕКСЕЙ	ИКОВЛЕВИЧ	1958	Россия
412	Левин	НИКОЛАЙ	ВИКТОРОВИЧ	1958	Казakhstan
413	Романко	Владимир	Николаевич	1958	Украина
414	Таскин	Давид	Давидович	1958	Россия
415	ТУРКЕВИЧ	Василий	Тарасович	1959	Украина
416	Бычков	Степан	Павлович	1959	Украина
417	ДРИСВЯННИКОВ	АЛЕНСАНДР	АЛЕНСАНДРОВИЧ	1959	Россия
418	СКВОРЦОВА	ЛЮБОВЬ	НИКОЛАЙВНА	1959	Россия
419	Варавин	Виталий	Федотович	1959	Россия
420	Дубицкий	СЕРГЕЙ	АДАМОВИЧ	1959	Россия
421	Лещенко	Борис	Владимирович	1959	Украина
422	Ткаченко	ИВАН	ИВАНОВИЧ	1959	Казakhstan
423	МАРЧЕНКО	Станислав	Павлович	1960	Украина
424	Донченко	Александр	Максимович	1960	Украина
425	Откасов	Венедикт	Александрович (Валерианов)	1960	Узбекистан
426	Саченко	Михаил	Михайлович	1960	Эстония
427	Федеева (ШВЕЦОВА)	ДИНА	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1961	Алания
428	ШВЕЦОВА	АННА	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1962	Алания
429	Богоурков	Александр	Валерьевич	1962	Эстония
430	Миньков	Павел	Дмитриевич	1962	Эстония

#### Sample of a List of 480 former Imprisoned Christians

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