

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



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“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

(Matthew 5:19)

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From an unpublished Bible meditation by late Reverend Richard Wurmbbrand

Trying to be Great in the Kingdom of Heaven!

Our desire to be in heaven is not just so to arrive there ourselves, but to serve in greater tasks, in keeping with our higher rank. Therefore, we wish to be great in the kingdom of heaven. A saint who is over ten cities can spread more joy than one who is over five only. (Luke 19:17-19)

So let us fulfill even the least of all commandments. One that is repeated in the Bible 366 times, once for every day of the year, is "Do not fear," whatever the day might bring. Fear is a great foe of the persecuted churches in Communist countries. Many fear they will have to suffer if they join the Underground church. In the secret work every mistake can be fatal. Errors in organizing an underground printing plant or in bringing Bibles into a Communist country can result in imprisonment, torture and death. Therefore, some fear to get involved. Those who fear may arrive to deny their Lord, like Peter. Fear grows, like the ripple effect when a stone is tossed into water. The circle gets bigger and bigger. Fear is also a decisive hindrance to Christian life in the Free World. We fear we will have to suffer in the family, in our jobs, in our finances if we obey a commandment of Christ. We also fear mistakes in life, but the greatest mistake is to fear mistakes.

Do not fear. Fear is the greatest enemy of candor. Out of fear, many of us conform to the opinions of others, instead of following our conscience. In the West, too, society demands that we be

something other than what God calls us to. Our models are Christians who have conquered fear. Many Christians, facing for instance communist persecution, sense that martyrdom is the highest triumph. They do not fear. When the Christian lady Nien Cheng was taken to jail in Red China, handcuffed behind her back, she walked toward the waiting jeep, reciting the 23rd Psalm, 4th verse, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." For her Christian witnessing, she was sentenced to 6 years of communist prison. When freed, she commented more on the words of the psalm. It reads, "You prepare a table before me." Sister Nien Cheng described how she ate: She had to drink water with her hands tied behind her back. She wrote, "I bent over a mug of water on the edge of the table and removed the lid by gripping the knob on top of it with my teeth. Then I caught the edge of the mug with my teeth, gradually lowered my body to a squatting position, and tipped the water into my mouth." Standing with her back to the table, she upset the dish of rice, then bent over it and ate like an animal. The movements made the handcuffs cut into her flesh, but she remained unafraid. It is God's commandment not to fear. We cancel the value of our sacrifices by fearing and complaining. When life leads us through the valley of the shadow of death, though less dark than that of Nien Cheng, let us fearlessly sing some psalm, even if suffering is at its peak.

Vasile Moiescu was arrested in former communist Romania together with 12 other believers. For his Christian Evangelical writings, he was sentenced to 25 years of communist prison. The other believers received sentences between 5 and 17 years of prison. The trial was public. When his wife, Sinzeana, appeared before court, she greeted those in the dock with the words, "Rejoice that you suffer for Christ." The judge threatened her with arrest. She replied, "For the cause of Christ no price is too high." If we would take the martyrs as models of life, people would come to church instead of seeking truth in philosophy, even pseudo-science. It is a triumph to accept the daily affliction in our homes and places of business, to bear without complaint poverty, sickness or any other suffering. Why should we fear the betrayal of friends? It helps us come to the peaks of love. We can imitate Jesus, who called Judas "Friend." More difficult to endure is indifference. We can make up for it by showing ardent love to the indifferent. The Lithuanian minister Teofilus Matulionis was free, out of a Soviet communist prison for only six days. He preached one sermon and was again sent to jail. Later when freed again, he wrote: "I will always thank God for the six days in my homeland." Do we also thank God for the few good days in our lives, or do we rather complain about the unpleasant? "Nothing gives more joy than to do His will. Whatever happens and wherever I am, I know that God is with me. In two months they have sent me through six prisons. When I encountered good things, I rejoiced. What was difficult to bear, I took as penance. I got many hurtful words. This is necessary, too. If they insulted Christ, can it be otherwise with His soldiers? If more clergymen would know the harshness of prison life, there would be more of the spirit of sacrifice, love of God, country and mankind."



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



BOGDANOV Iurii Nicolae

He suffered 3 years of imprisonment, for his Christian activity with the youth in the underground Baptist churches. He was tortured during 4 months, in the most dreaded Butyrka prison in Moscow. Read his testimony in the 3/2017 Newsletter.



SMIRNOV Nicolae Vasile

Was sentenced to 1½ years of prison for evangelizing the church youth. His father, a church deacon, was sentenced to 3 years of prison and being banished for 8 years to Siberia. Read his testimony in the 3/2017 Newsletter.



IVASHENCO Iacov Efrimovici

Was sentenced for his Christian activity as an ordained minister to 8 years of communist prison. He refused becoming an informer and the KGB tried poison him. Read his testimony in the 4/2017 Newsletter.



Natalia DUDENKOVA

Was sentenced in the former Soviet Union to 3 years of hard-labor imprisonment, for having participated in the underground printing and distribution of the New Testament in Moldova. Read her testimony in the 4/2017 Newsletter.

Christians Helped with Your Gifts

Sent to a Mental Institution for his Faith



He wrote; “I greet you dear brethren wishing you the Lord's Peace! My name is Didneak Grigore Vasilevici and I was born in 1956. In 1972 the Lord knocked on the door of my heart. In 1973 I was baptized. In 1974 I was called to serve in the army. Because I refused to take the military oath, I was committed to a psychiatric hospital for mentally ill people in Moscow. Eventually, the military commission had to declare me of sound mind and I was returned and sent back to the military unit. There I was assigned to a military unit in Uzbekistan in the Kyzylkum Desert.

In the fall of 1976, I was discharged and returned to my hometown of Nikolaev, Ukraine. The gathering of Christians was happening in different believers' homes. The KGB appeared unannounced to disturb each assembly. I was arrested on March 1, 1982 and blamed for leading the divine services of the church. I was sentenced to one year of prison. I served this sentence in

camp no. 8 of the Simferopol region in the Crimean Peninsula, at the time in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic but nowadays in Russia. In this camp was held also another minister, a Christian brother from Ukraine - Ivashenko Iakov Efremovici.* After liberation I returned to serve the church. To this day, I continue to serve the Lord in the church of Nikolaev, Ukraine.

Thank you for your willingness to help and contribute to our needs. May God reward you and bless you fully! With love in our Lord Jesus Christ, Brother Gregory Didneak”

*Brother Ivashenko who suffered 8 years in communist prisons, is being helped by this mission. Read his testimony in the March, 2017 Newsletter.

Christians Helped with Your Gifts A Minor Sentenced to 3 Years of Communist Prison



Sister Matveichuk Raisa, now 70 years old, wrote:
“Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy.” Psalm 33: 8

“I was born in a Christian family. The parents were kind, caring. They tried to put faith in the living God in their children's hearts. When 17 years old I received the Lord into my heart. Around me in the Soviet Union, there was a strong persecution of Christians.

Our group arrived in the middle of the night by train, to a station close to the designated baptismal site, by a large river. From the station, we had to walk 3-4 more kilometers (about 2.5 miles) to the river. At daybreak, we made a covenant with the Lord. The joy of salvation, forgiveness, overflowed our bosom. We prayed: “Lord, I am ready not only to serve You, but to suffer for You.”

After the baptism, my sister Galya and myself were instructed to tutor in the Christian faith the children of an unregistered church of Radivilov (now in Ukraine.) There was no literature and we wrote Bible verses on small pieces of paper or wrote whole psalms by hand in notebooks. One day when we had gathered for another children's meeting suddenly there was a heavy knock at the door and on the threshold appeared the local teachers from the school where we studied, representatives from the school administration, a total of 10 persons. A criminal case was opened against myself and my sister. The following Friday I was taken by the police from work to an apartment in Rivne to pick up my ID, sign some confession-statement and was summoned to appear in the prosecutor's office the following Monday.

The investigation began. Though I was a teenager, I was retained and interrogated. The prosecutor asked about the church, who was in charge, who was the church-leader and who had instructed us to do Christian work with the children. I was threatened with a rubber truncheon, but thank God they did not beat me up.

From the prosecutor's office we were taken to the Rivne prison where we were held in cells. The interrogations lasted 5 months. Such interrogations took 8-10 hours a day. They used moral pressure. We were told: “Your mother does not stop crying. Just confess you renounce God and you may go home immediately. Otherwise you will be tried and sentenced to prison. Why are you silent? Already Nazaruk and (they named) other members of the church gave us information and they will be released to go home. You will be sentenced to ten years of prison and you will be forgotten. No one will care for you!”

Inside me, my Savior's gentle voice was repeating, "Fear not, for I am with you; do not be troubled, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and support you." I answered to God: “Thank You, my Lord, for your consolation!”

Then we were sent to be sentenced by the communist court. And here in the court, my sister Galya was sentenced to 2½ years or prison. Myself was sentenced to 3 years of prison. Since I was a minor, they cut later the sentence in half.

After 2 weeks we were taken by a prison wagon to a prison in the town of Odessa (at the time, in the Ukrainian Soviet Republic.) After humiliating physical searches, we were moved into a cell holding 56 inmates. The bunkbeds were full of bedbugs. Since we worked in a large warehouse holding 270 sewing machines, other prisoners would receive in prison extra food-rations. I asked the guards, why I could not get same. I was answered, "Because you mention God too much in your letters. " Then I answered, "thank God that I may suffer for my Lord and the precious Savior who gave His life for me."

One day my imprisonment (most likely because I had been arrested as a minor) ended up unexpectedly. After the release, my being surveilled by the KGB (Soviet police, N. Ed.) continued unabated. In order to be able find work, I had to change my last name. Eventually I got married and, moved to another city. The Soviet Union regime fell, my country Ukraine became free. God blessed us with 9 children. Thank God, all children, are members in the church and so are my grandchildren. In 2017, the Lord called to Him, in the 68th year of his life, my dear husband. "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep His covenant and His testimonies." Psalm 25:10

Christians Helped with Your Gifts

Mahovik Stepan Methodovich* Brought Fellow Prisoners to the Faith



Mahovik Stepan Methodovich, when 80, with wife, Evghenia Petrovna and 8 of their 9 Christian children

He wrote (abbreviated, N. Ed.):

"I was born in 1931, in the Leninovka village, Menskiy district, Chernihivska region (formerly part of the Soviet Union, now in the Ukraine.). The village hut I was living in with my mother, ended totally burned down in World War II and we moved therefore to an aunt's house. She was faithful, she read the Bible and my mother secretly converted and received the baptism.

Myself was baptized and I made a covenant with the Lord in 1957, only after I finished my military conscription. In 1959 I married a sister, Evghenia Petrovna, and after having had the first child, I was elected one of the registered church presbyters. After I became a presbyter, I learned of the

secret instructions of the Soviet state which actually prohibited the baptism of young people.

Eventually, the majority of the church members broke away and they formed an unregistered church that met in forests. The brethren who gathered, were often detained by the KGB and blamed and convicted on the false accusation of resisting arrest. Brother Kutsenko P. N., for example, after being sentenced to one year, was not allowed to be present at his wife's funeral.

Authorities deceived us again and again in many ways, by claiming that they will let us gather in a registered church, but everything was arranged to only string us along and prevent us from congregating in unregistered churches.

Eventually I received a new job in a chemical factory. Although much harassed by the KGB, I had the opportunity here to witness my faith. I was initially arrested for 15 days on completely false charges.

After a brief release, I was arrested again and taken to court. I was convicted under article 209 of the Soviet Penal Code. I was accused of encouraging the refusal of other believers to participate in the “communist public life” and to have violated Soviet citizens' rights (by converting youngsters to the Christian faith.) The prosecutor asked for a sentence of 5 years but I was only sentenced to three and a half years, including the confiscation of all our property.

In prison, someone slipped us a gospel. Some of the other prisoners when they heard our Christian message were converted. Even a KGB officer, after I was released and met him on a bus, asked for a gospel. I was released in 1988 (due to the political change called Glasnost in the Soviet Union during Gorbachev's rule. N.Ed.)”

*This biography-letter was sent to our mission by the granddaughter of Stephen Methodovich Mahovik - Mahovik Agnessa Andreevna. She explained that Grandmother (Mahovik’s wife whom we help) lives in Chernigov, on the site of a House of Prayer brother Mahovik, now deceased, completed in 1992.

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 4th 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	Мифодьевич	1958	Украина
410	Вольф	Андрей	Корнеевич	1908	Казакстан
411	Иуркин	АЛЕКСЕЙ	ЯКОВЛЕВИЧ	1958	Россия
412	Левен	НИКОЛАЙ	ВИКТОРОВИЧ	1958	Казакстан
413	Романко	Владимир	Николаевич	1958	Украина
414	Тиссен	Давид	Давидович	1958	Россия
415	ТУРБЕВИЧ	Василий	Тарасович	1959	Украина
416	Барклов	Степан	Павлович	1959	Украина
417	ДРИСВЯННИКОВ	АЛЕКСАНДР	АЛЕКСАНДРОВИЧ	1959	Россия
418	СВЯТОЦОВА	ЛЮБОВЬ	НИКОЛАЙВНА	1959	Россия
419	Варовин	Виталий	Федотович	1959	Россия
420	Дубицкий	СЕРГЕЙ	АДАМОВИЧ	1959	Россия
421	Лашенко	Борис	Владимирович	1959	Украина
422	Тарченко	ИВАН	ИВАНОВИЧ	1959	Казакстан
423	МАРЧЕНКО	Станислав	Павлович	1960	Украина
424	Доченко	Александр	Максимович	1960	Украина
425	Опачков	Венедикт	Александрович (Валерианов)	1960	Узбекистан
426	Сарченко	Михаил	Михайлович	1960	Эстония
427	Федерева (ШВЕЦОВА)	ДИНА	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1961	Алания
428	ШВЕЦОВА	Анна	ВЛАДИМИРОВНА	1962	Алания
429	Богудимов	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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