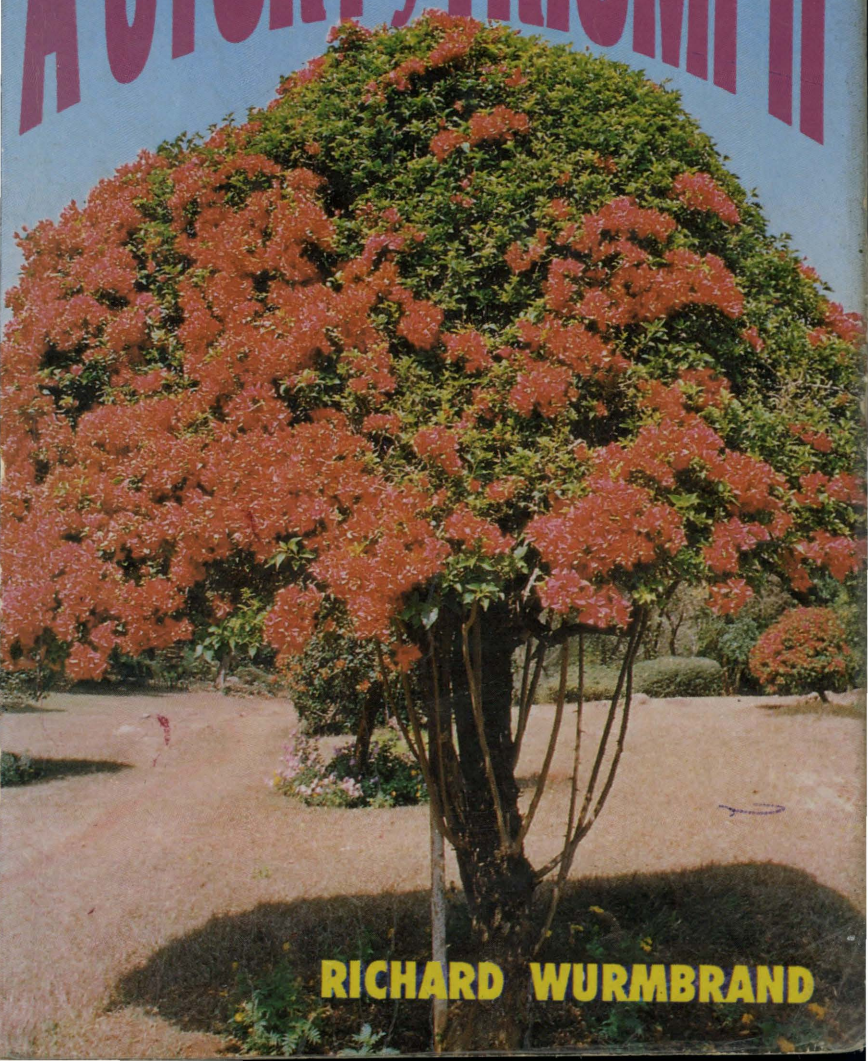


A STORY *of* TRIUMPH



RICHARD WURMBRAND

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info@VM1.global

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A brother who had been terribly tortured by the Communist police shared the same prison cell with me and told the following incident:

"I once saw an impressive scene in a circus. A sharpshooter set out to demonstrate his skill. In the arena was his wife, with a burning candle on her head. From a distance, he shot the candle so that it fell, leaving his wife unharmed.

"Later I asked her, 'Were you afraid?' She replied, 'Why should I be? He aimed at the candle, not at me.'

"I thought about this when I was under torture. Why should I be afraid of the torturers? They don't beat *me*. They beat *my* body. My 'me,' my real being, is Christ. I was seated with Him in heavenly places. This my real person could not be touched by them."

I have lived all the years of enforced exile with the image of such heroes of faith in my heart. Now, on my return to my homeland, I again found this same spirit among the Christians I met.

My purpose in writing this book is help you ascend to such heights.

Communist Police Officer a Prophet

After eight years in Romanian Communist jails, I was released, but only for a short period. I

had failed to pass the test. The Communists considered my sermons after liberation as bad as those before my arrest. The brainwashing to which I had been subjected in prison had not been effective. My mind still harbored the same "wrong" religious ideas.

There was only one solution: send me back to jail-this time for twenty-five years, though I eventually served only six. My total prison experience was fourteen years.

Captain Banciu of the "Securitate" (Romanian Secret Police), who had to investigate me at the second arrest, was an apostate Christian who had been brought up in the home of devout believers. Now he used the whip to convince God's children that they were wrong.

For some unknown reason, he was nice to me. At the risk of losing his own liberty if overheard, he whispered to me on the first day, "My superiors have committed a terrible mistake in ordering your arrest. At first you were an unknown pastor in a small church. Then we imprisoned you for eight years and turned you into a national figure. Now all Romanian Christians know you, and you have become a hero in their eyes.

"Your re-arrest will make you an international figure. That was the wrong thing to do."

Though an enemy of the Gospel, he uttered a prophecy, just like Caiaphas the high priest, who sentenced Jesus to death. (John 11:50)

When I was freed in 1964 after my stint of six years in Communist dungeons, I was not allowed even to attend churches. Pastors of congregations where I tried to worship were threatened by the Communists: "Don't allow Wurmbrand to enter your building-or else!"

I had no other choice but to leave the country, which I did with my wife Sabina and my son Mihai in December 1965.

For twenty-five years we have been forced exiles, during which time the Romanian communists have not ceased to denounce me in their press as their archenemy, principally because of my books exposing their activities and my involvement in Christian Missions to the Communist World.

God used me to start this mission devoted to spreading the Gospel in countries under atheist dictatorships and to helping the persecuted.

I was able to write books that have been translated into over sixty languages. For more than two decades I have traveled and preached the world over in the service of this mission, which has expanded to all continents. I have indeed become internationally known.

Captain Banciu's prophecy has been fulfilled.

Return in Triumph

I value the fellowship of brethren and sisters of all nations and confessions, by my heart has never ceased to ache for my Romanian fatherland,

the country in which I had been born twice.

Patriotism is not very fashionable today. Since Jesus taught us to love even our enemies, how can one do so if he doesn't love his own country first? And so wherever I traveled, the heart that beat in my breast was the bleeding heart of my country and the oppressed Romanian church.

There seemed to be no hope of my ever seeing it again, except in heaven where the great reunion will take place. Not having hope for this earth, my wife and I practiced hope against hope and saw it fulfilled. In a matter of a few days God overthrew Ceausescu's bloody dictatorship. He and his wife were killed. Finally I could return to my beloved country.

My lovely wife Sabina and I boarded the plane in Zurich. We were not sure if we would be allowed to enter the country. A few days before our departure, the Romanian King Michael I and Queen Anna had tried to return. Though much loved by the people, who of course were not consulted, they had been denied entry by the Reds.

It was at the Zurich airport that they had been stopped. The new Romanian government, presumed to be democratic, forbade the King and Queen, pride of the Romanian nation, to visit their own land, in which the Communists were intruders as puppets of the Soviet Union.

The new government of Romania, headed by Iliescu as president, still consists almost entirely of

Communists-"reformed" Communists, to be sure, but still Communists. A tamed wolf is still a wolf.

A stewardess interrupted our reveries: "Will passenger Richard Wurmbrand please identify himself?" My heart sank. We thought surely we would be deplaned.

To our great surprise and relief, unknown friends who had heard from somewhere that we would be on this jet had sent us a box of chocolates and a beautiful message of encouragement.

Some two hours later, we heard the almost unbelievable words, "Please fasten your seatbelts and prepare to land in Bucharest," capital of Romania.

You might be interested to know why the city has this name. My granddaughter Amely once gave this explanation: "Romania is a Communist country. If they catch you there with a Christian BOOK, ARREST follows."

This explanation was no longer valid when we arrived in Romania, exactly a quarter of a century after we had left. The mission to which I belong and many other now cross the border with truckloads of Christian literature. Our organization has even created a large printing press in Bucharest itself, where we hope very soon to produce Bibles and other books.

The printing presses themselves would have cost us a fortune, which we did not have. But the press of East Germany's ruling Communist Party

went broke, and their machines were sold at auction. We obtained this first-class machinery for half-price. The Romanian Bibles will be printed on machines that had printed atheist literature!

We are also setting up the first Christian bookshop and video store.

Seeing Angels and Jesus

At long last we were in Romania. My emotions overcame me. I kissed the soil.

When I returned to Western Europe and America, many asked me how it is there now.

How it is I do not know. I can say only what I saw. The observer is part of the reality observed. Beauty is in the eye of the beholder. If one has a good eye (Matthew 6:22), a dove's eye (Song of Solomon 1:15), he will see things differently from the one who looks with other eyes.

When Peter and John heard a rumor that Jesus had been resurrected, they ran immediately to the tomb, entered, and saw linen and a handkerchief, nothing else. Then they left. (John 20:7)

Moments later, Mary Magdalene looked into the same tomb and saw two angels. How is it the disciples missed seeing them?

Magdalene was not satisfied with seeing angels. She thought to herself, "Where there are angels, there must be something even better to see." She did no more than turn her head. So she

saw the One who was resurrected.

I went to Romania to see angels and Jesus. They are my first love. Why should I spend time with lesser beings?

And so I saw angelic beings and Jesus dwelling in the lives of His saints.

One Sadness Only-Not to Be a Saint

In as much as twenty-five years had passed since we left Romania, a voice whispered in our ears, "Why not give up hope? Perhaps no one will remember you."

We could hardly have anticipated the crowds that gathered from many cities far and near to welcome us! Our joy and astonishment knew no bounds.

The first person I saw was my former cell-mate Nicolaie Moldovanu from the Army of the Lord, a Romanian version of the Salvation Army, but without uniforms and bands. We had been in the same cell in the hundreds-of-years-old prison in Gherla.

The regime was very harsh. From time to time, wardens would shout, "Everyone lie on his belly!" It was winter. We had no sweaters, let alone overcoats. The floor was cold concrete, with not even a bit of straw for warmth. We were allowed no noise.

Prisoners cursed the brutality of the wardens. Not so Moldovanu. He believed that praising God

was better than cursing Communists. With a beautiful smile on his lips, he said, "Let's forget our surroundings. I'll sing you the song I just composed while lying on my stomach." It was a hymn full of joy and hope and praise. It is now sung in many countries.

I am reminded of the Orthodox priest Ghiush, whom I had been with in the Jilava jail near Bucharest. The whole prison is underground, with no building to identify it from the outside. Cows graze over the subterranean cells.

I was then in the eighth year of my sentence, I had grown used to everything. But one day a whole group of newcomers, all Orthodox priests, were brought in. From time to time, the wardens would shout, "All priests out in the corridor!" and would beat them.

I sat down near the priest Ghiush, whom I had known at liberty. My intention was to comfort him. I asked, "Are you sad?" He lifted beautiful eyes to me and replied, "I know only one sadness: not to be a saint."

Moldovanu was the same type of man. What an honor it was for me to receive his brotherly kiss. I did not feel worthy to untie his shoelaces.

Holy Kisses

Many were the kisses I received at the airport. Kisses should play a primordial role in Christ's Church. It is written, "Greet one another with a

holy kiss”(Romans 16:16), not with a cold handshake, a “Hi!”, “Hello!” or other such words that mean nothing.

Jesus Himself longs for our kisses. Is it not written, “Kiss the Son?” (Psalm 2:12) He is not satisfied with anything less.

One evening he was at the house of a Pharisee named Simon, who had invited Him to dinner. On the table there were doubtless beautiful flowers, choice foods, and wine. Jesus looked at them and said with sadness, “I have come into your house, and you did not give me a kiss.” This was what He desired.

In the New Testament, the word for worship in the original Greek is proskuneo, which means a reverential kiss.

When Jesus was on earth, it was easy to kiss Him. Mary must have kissed Him countless times. But how can we kiss Him now?

My wife had more kisses from me when I was in jail than she has now. So often when I want to kiss her now, the phone rings or I have to hurry to a meeting.

But kissing is not so much a touch between two pairs of lips as a coming together of two loving hearts.

Unsunged by Fire

And so I was kissed by Constantin Caraman, who had been one of the main contacts of our

mission with the underground churches. It was through him that we had channeled much relief to the families of those persecuted.

He too had been in prison three times. He had worked as a slave laborer—just like my wife—building a canal uniting the Danube with the Black Sea.

What a place of cruelty that had been! A prisoner was caught stealing twenty onions, which he intended to share with others to enable them to swallow the tasteless food: oats cooked in water, without salt, without fat. The guard gave the prisoner a choice: twenty-five lashes on the soles of his feet or eating the onions without salt or bread. He chose the latter. Tears streamed from his eyes, which swelled and made him look like a frog. In the end, he fell into convulsions.

A convoy of women prisoners were driven from their barracks to the place of work. On the way, they saw the corpse of a dog. One woman smashed its head with a stone. Then others jumped to eat from its brain. So great was the hunger for protein.

Horses were sometimes used to carry wagonloads of stone. Prisoners picked worms from their outfall and washed them. Again, this valuable protein.

I looked at the shining face of Caraman, former slave laborer. He had a triumphant, loving smile on his lips. Observing him, one would never guess what he had passed through.

In ancient Babylon, three Jewish youth who had been thrown into a fiery furnace because they refused to bow to an idol emerged without even the smell of fire on them. So it was with Caraman and a host of other former prisoners I met.

A Convicted Pickpocket

There was Brother X. I would not have recognized him after twenty-five years. But he reminded me who he was: a former pickpocket with whom I had been in jail. He had been won for Christ when I preached in a cell full of common prisoners about Jesus' love for thieves.

Far from loathing them, Jesus went so far as to compare Himself with a thief who comes at night when the residents of the house would not expect him. Even more, He uses thieves as models for honest men. He praised thieves in His Sermon on the Mount for being good to each other.

Now we laughed as we remembered the time I fell asleep in my cell with my shoes on, only to awaken as he tried to take them off. At the time, I was moved by his kindness, thinking his desire was to enable me to sleep better. On the contrary! he had played dice, and my shoes were the stake. After winning, he expressed surprise that I failed to recognize him as their legitimate owner.

There was Vasile Rascol, whom I had known from childhood. He too had been in jail, for the crime of distributing Bibles smuggled in secretly. Now he

is working with us in establishing a press where Bibles and other books can be printed freely.

My Children in Romania

I could not begin to describe everyone I knew in the crowd. But I must say at least a few words about my children.

All my friends in the West know that I have one son, Mihai. He was the only one about whom I spoke and wrote, because he had emigrated with us.

But he is not my only son. In the airport Sandu was waiting. Since he had remained in Romania I could never mention him. I didn't want to endanger him.

Many years ago I had buried a Christian who had two small children. Since his widow was very poor, I took one child into my home, and he never left. He became Mihai's brother. Since he was adopted, he was not allowed by the Communists to leave with us. Today he is married, and I was able to meet his wife Sylvia and their children.

I could embrace granddaughter Doina, whom I had never seen. She is married and will soon have a child. I also embraced my grandson Richard, named after me.

Richard had been arrested in the final days of the Ceaushescu regime and expected to be shot. In his cell he thought, "Well, I belong to the Wurmbrand family. Prison and persecution are its fate." When

he was taken out of his cell for what he thought would be execution, he received an incredible surprise.

"Ceaushescu has been shot," he was told. "You can go home."

There was also Lenutza. Once as I sat in my office a girl of thirteen entered, shy, poorly dressed, very thin and pale.

"Are you Pastor Wurmbrand?" she asked.

"Yes."

Then you are my father from now on. My own father is an alcoholic and has forsaken us. My mother is always bringing home some other man who beats and chases me. I heard that you are a good man, so I will be your daughter."

I called my wife from the kitchen. "Congratulations! You have given birth to a child without any birth pangs. Here she is."

She too remained in our home. A very short time after my being kidnaped by the Communists in 1948, my wife, instead of brooding about her misfortune, prepared for Lenutza a beautiful wedding.

She too was at the airport, with her husband Gheorghe and their daughter Cornelia.

We had six other children, war orphans, whom we had taken for our own, though it was not possible under Communism to adopt them legally. There was plenty of joy and noise in our two-bedroom apartment. We never had to go to the

circus or cinema for amusement. We had plenty in our home.

All six of these children were killed on one day. To reveal the circumstance would mean to accuse some I would not like to mention.

Great sorrow has been my loyal friend from childhood. He taught me to rejoice in tribulation. He is with me in the free world too. My wife and I suffer here more than we ever suffered under the Nazis and Communists.

Politics of Kindly Smiles

At the airport, we all joined in singing, accompanied by Moldovanu on the harmonica. I'm sure the angels participated in this joyous reunion. Police officers from the Securitate (dreaded Communist organ of repression) stood by. They are still in power, wearing the same uniforms, but have been paralyzed by the uprising of December 1989, which overthrew their boss Ceaushescu.

After the singing, there were speeches. A videotape was made by Brothers Neureder and Wieser of our German mission, great friends of Romania who had come especially for this occasion.

A number of individuals from this crowd went for an intimate meeting in a house on University Square. From the window we could see the many thousands who demonstrated against the government day and night.

The square had been declared a non-Communist

nist zone that refused to acknowledge the authorities. There were tents for some twenty hunger-strikers (one in the 36th day) asking the demise of the government. Some of the demonstrators, almost all young, sang a hymn, "Better to be a rascal and a scoundrel than a Communist." This was in response to the prime minister, who had characterized them in such terms. From a balcony, leaders of the opposition harangued them.

The aversion to Communism was understandable, but it was not wise to turn it into a political platform. The Communist Party had four million members. Together with the membership of the Communist youth and their nearest relatives, they were ten million, the great majority of the voters in a country of only twenty million inhabitants.

Instead of trying to win the rank-and-file Communists to their side, the leaders of the opposition frightened them. The Communists thought, "We will all have to suffer if the opposition comes to power." Unwise anti-Communism assured the success of the Communists in the elections.

Jesus knows best what is right for politics. Words of love for the enemy serve the cause better than expressions of hate.

It would have been easy to win the hearts of Communists. They were shattered by the bankruptcy of their ideology in the Eastern European nations. They were depressed as well as disappointed. With a few good words, President Sadat of

Egypt obtained great concessions from Israel, after five bitter wars had led only to terrible loss of lives and territories for the Arabs.

I am for the politics of kind words and friendly smiles in all human relations.

The Hebrew word for "to tell" is *lesaper*, which comes from *saper*, meaning sapphire. "To tell" in Hebrew means "to give a jewel."

We should speak only if we have a jewel to give. If you can enrich another, if you have a jewel to give, talk. If not, it is better to keep your mouth shut. If this simple Hebrew rule were respected, There would be no family strife, no divorce, no political splits, no feuds in churches or between individuals.

Subverting Communism with the Gospel

The Communists have done great evil in the Romanian nation, but most of them did not know what they did. They were not knowledgeable about the satanic roots of Communism, which I have revealed in my book *Marx-Prophet of Darkness* (Marshall & Pickering). Many had joined the Party only for a better job or higher education. They should have found compassion. Instead, they were hardened by evil attitudes.

Finally, the Communist president Iliescu had had enough of the demonstrators. One day he shot and wounded many of them. Over a thousand were

arrested on one day.

How is it that Communism has crumbled, that while it is far from losing the war (China, the USSR, Cuba, Angola, Zimbabwe, Vietnam-about a third of mankind - are still under Communist one-party rule), it has lost some decisive battles?

For years politicians believed that Communism could be defeated only through nuclear deterrents. They spent billions and billions of dollars to produce them and now have to spend more billions to dismantle them as useless.

Others believed we must accept Communism as unchangeable reality and come to terms with it. Their slogan was detente.

The Romanian dictator Ceaushescu was a maverik. Like Tito, he had played the game of being a Communist apart, at odds with Moscow, friendly with the West. He was even granted a title at the British court. But he was a Communist just like the other dictators, only of a different stripe. There are several species of tyrants just as there are different species of wolves, but they all have the same primary characteristics.

Neither anti-Communist armaments nor courting the Communists helped.

In all my writings and speeches I advocated something else: "Communism infiltrates and subverts the free world. Let us subvert the Communist world with the Gospel. Let us win them with love. Christ taught us to hate sin but love the sinner. Let

us introduce, by secret means if necessary, the Word of God. Let us raise an army of prayer warriors."

Alliance with Angels

Furthermore, I said, we should ponder the secret of the Jewish people. Though small in number, they have had to fight powerful foes in order to exist. In the end, they have conquered all their enemies. Today Israel faces the enmity of hundreds of millions of Arabs, who will succeed no more than the powerful Romans, Inquisitions, or Hitlers.

The Jews are 3% of the population of the United States. They are 25% of its millionaires, but also of its revolutionists. They play an enormous role in science and the arts. A great percentage of Nobel prize-winners are Jewish.

The nation of Israel, among the smallest, is in the headlines every day. A third of the world now awakens from the nightmare in which a Jew-Marx played the principal role. The only one who can save it from this nightmare is another Jew-Jesus.

What is the secret of the uniqueness of the Jewish nation? One can say God willed it, and that is true. But there was one event in Jewish history through which this will was manifested.

Jacob, ancestor of my people (I am Jewish), fought with an angel and prevailed. (Genesis 32:28) With one man on its side, a colony of ants is invincible in its fight against other ants. With a few

steps the man can destroy the enemy. Likewise one man, one nation, one church with an angel on its side will prove in the end invincible.

Each of us has a guardian angel. How can two walk together if they do not agree? (Amos 3:3) It was one of the greatest events of my life to know my guardian angel.

Many Christians worked together with their angels for the defeat of Communism. Learn from them and do the same!

In some places angels are described as having wings. They are necessary for communication between men and a distant God. But if God is nearer, wings are not needed. In Jacob's vision it was enough that angels had a ladder. (Genesis 28:12) For some, even a ladder is not needed. The angel of the Lord surrounds them. (Psalm 34:7) He is at their disposal.

Christian Missions to the Communist World and other similar organizations that followed its example have worked hard in the spiritual as well as practical realms. Angels were by our side. Our prayers were added to the prayers and sacrifices of numberless martyrs.

And so it happened that Communist walls have come tumbling down.

How the Revolution Began

A Romanian bishop, one of the many who became stooges of the Communists, fired the Re-

formed pastor Tökes of Timisoara for preaching faithfully. When he was to be evicted from his home and church, a crowd of Christians of all denominations and several nationalities surrounded his house and obstructed the police.

The number of demonstrators grew. When they proceeded to march toward the center of town, the army was called out to stop them. The soldiers began shooting, and soon there were many dead and wounded.

Little children gathered on the steps of the cathedral and sang religious hymns. Again the troops fired, and some children died. The rest sought shelter in the cathedral, but heartless priests had locked the sanctuary.

Then an amazing thing happened. The entire crowd, instead of fighting the army, knelt and prayed. This was too much for the soldiers. They refused to shoot any more.

Meanwhile, the whole town had gathered. Pastor Dugulescu seized the opportunity to address everyone from the balcony of the Opera House. A poem by Constantin Ioanid, "God Exists," was recited. The crowd shouted, "God exists!" Leaflets with the text had been distributed. Some who knew the music began to sing the song that had been composed for the words. Soon thousand joined in singing it again and again. It became the song of the revolution.

(A personal note: One day when my son Mihai,

perhaps five, was walking with us through the park, he stopped in front of a man sitting on a bench reading.

"What are you reading?" he asked with childish simplicity.

"A novel."

"Better read the Bible," said Mihai, "because if you don't follow it, you will go to hell."

"What kind of words are those?" asked the stranger.

"Do you see the tall man with a little lady there behind me? They are my parents. Ask them and they will tell you everything. It's a very serious matter."

Curious by now, the man did ask. It turned out he had been a member of a virulent anti-Jewish organization. Through the witness of a little Jewish boy named Mihai, he was converted and became one of the best Christian poets of Romania.

It was his song that became the hymn of the revolution.)

When it became known elsewhere that innocents had been killed in Timisoara (it was rumored they were in the thousands), other demonstrations broke out spontaneously in different locations.

In one city of Bucharest, thirteen children, the oldest fourteen, had made a barrier with their bodies against the troops of the Secret Police, who could advance only by murdering them.

The children knelt and shouted, "Please don't

kill us!" The police paid no attention.

When the first fell, the others did not run away but remained kneeling with arms outstretched in love and childish confidence toward the murderers, as they continued to beg, "Please don't kill us!"

A cross now stands where the children died.

Soon a legend arose in Romania. It is said that angels made the revolution. Coming down from heaven, they entered the children, giving them a holy courage like that of the good angels who had defeated the hosts of Satan in heaven. The martyr-death of these children gave victory to the unarmed against an army.

Tanks and troops were called out against the populace, but in vain. The soldiers were as fed up with the dictator as the people. In Sibiu, two Orthodox priests who were lifted onto tanks asked everyone to kneel for prayer. The demonstrators, numbering in the thousands, as well as soldiers and officers, did so. An "Our Father" was said together by those who still remembered prayers. Soldiers and citizens embraced. It was no longer possible to repress the uprising.

Communists Hate Each Other

At the same time, another scenario was taking place in the capital.

Communists have a religion of hate. They hate not only capitalists, Christians, and Jews but also each other. Almost all members of the Central

Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR had been killed by their comrade Stalin. In China, the president of the Communist republic Liu-Shao-Chi died under torture ordered by his comrade Mao-Tse-Tung. In Romania, Lucretiu Patrascanu, the Communist who brought his party to power, was killed by their own Secret Police.

So it happened that Ceausescu's comrades in evil deeds, Iliescu, Roman and others, plotted to overthrow him. For them the uprising in provincial towns was the spark they needed. They prepared to arrest Ceausescu, who had just returned from Iran and was scheduled to deliver a speech from a balcony in the center of Bucharest.

When he spoke, instead of receiving the usual cheers (which were compulsory), Iliescu's men of the Secret Police began to boo. No one else would have dared. But this signal was enough to stir up the crowd. They had long desired to boo. Nothing could stop them now.

The shouts against Ceausescu became louder and louder. Sensing the danger, he fled, but something was wrong with his car. He flagged down another. The Security officer who was with him and his wife drew out a revolver and instructed the driver—who happened to be a Christian—where to go.

Pretending that the battery was low, he stopped right where men were ready to apprehend their leader.

In short order, after being paraded on televi-

sion, Ceaushescu and his wife Elena were shot. Several of his adherents were jailed. Romania now has a new government, but one which consists (as of this writing) almost exclusively of former Communist leaders, schooled in Marxism from youth. They claim to have renounced Communism, but Communism does not abandon a Communist.

The Bible tells the story of the exodus of the Jews from slavery. They followed Moses for a while, but at the first opportunity they made a golden calf to bow down and worship, just as they had seen the Egyptians do. They had gone out of Egypt, but Egypt had not gone out of them. The idolatrous practices learned while they were slaves in a heathen country remained in the Jewish mind for centuries.

The new government of Romania, like the old, has also shot and arrested innocents. Ceaushescu can be happy about his successor.

A Church I Founded

On Sunday, I had my first service in the Baptist church of Valaori Street, in Bucharest.

In a sense, I was its founder.

The Communists were not the first to persecute Evangelicals in Romania. In 1940, the rightwing Iron Guard, fanatical Orthodox, had come to power. The first thing they did was to forbid Baptist, Adventist, Pentecostal, and Brethren churches to worship. Consequently, all their build-

ings were closed.

Then Marshal Antonescu dispensed with the Iron Guard and established his own dictatorship, again banning religious freedom. Not one Romanian language Evangelical church was open. Hundreds of Evangelical Christians were sentenced to up to twenty years.

The Orthodox church stood solidly behind this persecution. There had been no Reformation in Romania. The Orthodox church is still as authoritarian as the Catholic church was before Luther and Calvin introduced new light.

All Lutheran churches were free except mine, because I was Jewish and so were the majority of my congregation. (The government was fiercely anti-Jewish.) The Lutheran bishop Stadel was hardly inclined to take our defense. He gained renown through his sermon that proclaimed, "Mankind has had three geniuses: Christ, Beethoven, and Hitler. I dare to assert that Christ is even greater than Hitler."

And so, like the Baptists and other Evangelicals, we too gathered in the underground.

Toward the end of the war, a friend of ours, the Swedish ambassador Van Reuterswårde, succeeded in obtaining for us the authorization for worship.

In one day, we removed all the furniture from our apartment and turned it into a church. As soon as this was known, hundreds of brethren from all the forbidden denominations came to our services,

which we had to conduct five times a day. Thus we were the only Romanian-speaking Evangelical church.

When the Nazis lost the war, my former church again had religious freedom and was given back its old building. Those who had gathered in our apartment formed a Baptist congregation. This has become the Valaori church.

Thus, in a sense, its Baptist pastor Talosh is my successor.

Many who now gathered to hear me had known me personally before. The others knew about me, my books, and my life story. For them I was not a mere human but the incarnation of a legend that had grown more and more beautiful over the years, to the point of losing touch with reality. I had the problem of convincing them that I was not the legendary hero they imagined, but an ordinary man.

The Wurmbrand Land

A joke is told in Romania: The dictator Ceausescu's car was forced to stop on a country road for a small repair. Nearby he saw an old peasant woman shoveling dirt with difficulty and asked about her life. She told him how hard it was and then asked, "Who are you?"

Amazed at not being recognized, he replied, "Read the newspaper. Watch TV. Then tell who I am. I am 'the genial leader,' 'the lay God,' 'the

genius of the Carpathians.' I am the one who brings truth, light, and love to this country."

The woman, full of joy, shouted to her husband who was working at a distance, "Come quickly, John! Brother Wurmbbrand has arrived!"

An American Christian has written a book about Romania, which he calls *The Wurmbbrand Land*.

Dispelling the legend, speaking as a simple man, I preached in church after church, with my heart overflowing with love and joy.

How Much Am I?

One evening I was in the Popa-Rusu church, where I had been secretly ordained as deacon during Nazi times, when it was inconceivable that a Jew should be given office in a church. But this was a German-speaking church, and the Romanian Fascists did not dare to close it.

The ordination took place in the greatest secrecy. Only the two who laid hands on me and two witnesses were present. The door was locked. The German brethren Fleischer and Strobel were not concerned about the anti-Jewish tempest raging outside.

Later it was in this same church that I performed my first baptism—of A Jew who did not know one word of Romanian. During the services he would read his Russian New Testament and just let me talk.

Before baptizing him, I said, "I cannot just perform this ceremony. I bear a responsibility. I must find out what you have learned from Scripture. Read any verse you like and explain it to me."

He opened his Bible to II Corinthians 12:11, where Paul writes, "I am nothing," closed the book, and asked, "If Paul was nothing, how much are you?"

I thanked him. He knew Scripture better than I.

A Heroine of the Faith

After Bucharest, I traveled from town to town. Everywhere we could see the miseries of Socialism. Where there once had been autos and trucks, men rode behind horses. There are no goods in store windows. People stand in line for hours for tomatoes, cabbage, milk. There are ration cards for many articles. An individual is allotted one kg. of meat every two months. The streets and houses are poorly lighted.

In every town I met the great and little heroes of faith, plus cowards and outright traitors.

One hero who traveled with us to some places was Dr. Margareta Pescaru.

In 1950, I was deathly sick in the prison hospital of Tirgul Ocna. The Communists had inherited from the capitalism they despised the notion that every jail should have an infirmary and a physician. However, physicians were told, "You

must practice veterinary medicine on these prisoners. Give them the sort of medicine and care you would give to oxen and horses in order that they might be able to do their slave labor. If they can no longer recuperate, let them die."

In such prisons we knew two kinds of physicians. Some of them, among whom were young female doctors, would be present at the torture sessions and would joke with the savages. From time to time the doctor would take one's pulse and say, "Now give him peace for a little while." During this time, he-or more likely she-would amuse herself with the police officer, then say, "Now you can start again, but be careful not to beat him in the region of the heart. he might die too soon, and you won't get any more information out of him." There were such physicians, if they may be called by that time.

Then there were others who took seriously their primary duty to save life. Pre-eminent among them was Margareta Pescaru. A Christian, she smuggled medicine into the jail. Physicians as well as others were frisked when they entered, but she succeeded time and time again. Many lives, including mine, were saved in this manner.

If a doctor were caught smuggling, he would be badly beaten, then given many years of prison himself. The risk was considerable.

Dr. Pescaru made contact with my family and

friends. She also provided me, and others through me, with streptomycin, the miracle medicine for tuberculosis, which was widespread in prison.

Preventing an Orgy of Cruelty

But she did even more than that.

In the prisons of Piteshti, Suceava, and the Canal, the Communists had begun the so-called "re-education" of prisoners. Some had been corrupted through promises of freedom if they would beat and torture their fellow-inmates, to get them to reveal deeds against the state they had not divulged during the investigation. The prisoners also had to abjure all their convictions, political or religious, for which they had been sentenced. They must promise full allegiance to Communism.

Any method that would produce results was permitted: severe beating on the soles of the feet and on the genitals; breaking teeth with gravel; forcing prisoners to ingest feces and urine; sleep deprivation; forbidding them to go to the toilet; and any other degrading measures.

Men had to be reduced to heaps of fear, nothingelse. The Communists succeeded with most. When prisoners were forced to run up and down the stairs pursued by whips and sticks, everyone ran for his life, which, though wretched, was at that time all that was important to him. Some did not yield, but these were few.

Some died under torture. The henchman, not

satisfied with mere killing, would fulfill their needs over the corpses.

Each prisoner was allowed to take one cup of water from the faucet each day, but he first had to present it to the re-educator, who would spit in it. Then the prisoner could drink.

Jesus used spittle for healing. I know one prisoner who at that time asked himself, "If Jesus' spittle could heal a blind man, can the spittle of such wicked men also heal if we accept it with quiet resignation and love for the evildoer?"

The authorities brought some of these re-educators to my prison hospital, designated for tuberculosis patients, to start their work of destruction.

Re-education had been hell for the sane; what havoc would it wreak among the sick, many sick unto death? In a whisper, we communicated the danger to Dr. Margareta Pescaru. She did the unthinkable. She decided to go to the worst of beasts to plead the cause of lambs.

After traveling a whole night to the capital, she went to the top officials who had oversight of the prisons—in simpler terms, to the chief butchers. God gave her grace in their eyes, as He did to Esther in the eyes of Ahasuerus. We have no idea what convinced them. Was it her physical beauty, or rather rays of God's power shining through her? But she pleaded with success. She appealed to pride: This is the only large prison hospital. The

prestige of the country is at stake, and so on. The fact is that, for the first time in the history of Romanian Communism, the torturing of innocents was stopped.

Christian Becomes Communist Police Officer

Another hero was X, whose name it is not safe to reveal even now, since the Securitate, the Communist Secret Police, is still in power.

During those dark years, some wore the prisoner's garb for Christ. But X brought a greater than sacrifice. To destroy churches from the inside, the Communists infiltrated, placing men who had become priests and pastors for this purpose in positions of trust. Brother X thought "Why not reverse the process?" David said, "There is none like the sword of Goliath." (I Samuel 21:9)

Translators often believe they are wiser than the original authors and should correct them. This is true of Bible translators as well. In the original Greek of Matthew 10:1, it is written that Jesus gave His twelve disciples the power of unclean spirits. The English says over, which is something entirely different.

In times of war, the enemy's spying cannot be counteracted only by preaching the Gospel. There must also be counterespionage.

So young brother X became an officer of the Secret Police to serve the underground church, and

me especially.

Brethren and sisters who had become prisoners wore a uniform that was highly honored by believers. X was loathed as a traitor who had passed to the ranks of the enemy. Believers might well have thought, "Who knows what he really does? Perhaps he has even become a torturer."

He bore the shame and did his job well. He was not the only one. And so we came to know beforehand about threats of arrest. I was informed even after living in the West about threats to my life.

I met this hero of the faith, Brother X. Romanian believers still don't know his story. What a privilege it was to embrace him!

Some brethren, instructed by their faithful pastors, accepted the role of becoming informers of the Secret Police when it was proposed to them (and it was proposed to almost all Christians.) Police officers would meet with these "informers" in conspiratorial apartments, and we were thus able to learn the addresses. Then members of the underground church could spy on these apartments belonging to the Police and learn the identity of the real traitors.

These sham informers were very careful to tell the police only things that would lead them astray. It is wise to say little more, even today.

Collaborators of the Communists

I met with top leaders of different denomina-

tions. Some of them had been collaborators with the Communists. Feeling terribly guilty, they did not dare to lift their eyes. They trembled for fear the archives of the Secret Police and the Ministry of Cults would be opened and the public would know all the details of what they had done.

Some of these were elderly men. Considering the fact that Communism had reigned in Romania for 45 years, they probably asked themselves what they would do at such an age, deprived of their positions and probably of their pensions as well.

I tried to ease their conscience by telling them, first of all, that a measure of collaboration had been legitimate.

21 Not that it would be right to submit to atheist dictators because Paul said in Romans 13, "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God." A God-hating government is not from God. If it were, God would be like the Jewish king Saul, who asked an enemy, an Amalekite, to kill him. (II Samuel 1) God would be advocating a kind of suicide.

I believe with Saint Augustine that "without justice, states are nothing more than robber-gangs." Our duty is to uproot them as gangs and to try to save the souls of individuals in the gang.

Then why did Paul not write like Augustine?

I believe it is wise to say a few nice words to tyrants under whom you are obliged to live, as long as you cannot overthrow them. Daniel the prophet

said some very nice things to King Nebuchadnezzar, who was the Hitler of his day. Diplomatic talk belongs in the arsenal of Christians.

Commenting on the king's dream that foretold terrible sufferings for him, Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar, who not long before had thrown Daniel's three friends into the fire, "My lord, may the dream concern those who hate you, and its interpretation concern your enemies!" (Daniel 4:19) In his heart, Daniel might have thought, "All the punishments from God, O king, are only just, and I hope God will not change his mind."

What Should We Render to Caesar?

Jesus said, "Render to Caesar what is Caesar's," a very clear teaching. The Jews were to render to the Roman emperor what was his. Now, what was legitimately his in Palestine? Simply nothing. The Roman army had invaded Palestine by force and ruled in a tyrannical way. The historian Josephus Flavius wrote that, when the Jews rose up claiming minimal human rights, the Romans crucified so many of them "that there remained no wood for more crosses and no place to put them."

The Caesars had planted not one tree and built not one house in Palestine. "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's" means give him nothing, except a boot in the back.

Who are the governing authorities every-

where? They are the successful rebels of yesterday or their successors. Cromwell and others fought against tyrants in Britain; therefore the democratic regime was God-willed. One royal house has been overthrown through violence by another, therefore the actual queen of Britain is a God-willed authority.

Americans broke an oath of allegiance to the king of England and made a successful revolution. The American authorities of today are therefore of God.

The conclusion? Overthrow Communist and other dictators. If you do not succeed, you are a rebel. If you are victorious, you will be a ruler appointed by God, who gave you victory.

Under Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Ceausescu, as with many despots of old, Christians have been misled by a false interpretation of the one verse from Romans 13 to become collaborators in evil deeds. They failed to observe that this polite word, "Let every soul be subject to governing authorities," appears only on page 1009 of a book that teaches on all preceding pages that one should withstand and tear down injustice and tyranny. This is what Moses, Gideon, Barak, Samson, David, and others did, all of whom are honored as heroes in the holy book.

I did not consider the collaborators with the Communists personally guilty. One born in a heathen or animist environment naturally becomes

heathen. He cannot be blamed. Likewise one brought up in a church in which everyone submits to rogues, considers the practice normal.

The late Karev, one of the top leaders of the official Soviet Baptist church, said, "We have to be submissive to the authorities, which does not mean only to the government, but also to the KGB [the murderous Soviet Secret Police], because it is also an authority and as such is willed by God," which means that if he asked me to spy on my brethren in the faith, to report on and denounce them, knowing murderous arrests will follow, I must do so.

How can one ask Christians educated in such a faith to act otherwise? It is like wondering why a child educated in English does not converse in Arabic.

I managed to have fellowship with the former collaborators who had caused much harm to individuals and churches. They had considered it right to inform the authorities about everything that happened in the church, every word spoken, every decision taken. As for the consequences of what they did? They thought, "Let the chips fall where they may."

I tried to show them understanding. I told them that for the Jews the Talmudic teaching is: When a persecutor of religion arises, the rabbis have to divide into two parties. One must stick to the inherited faith and not change even the Jewish manner of tying shoelaces. The other, on the con-

trary, must be friendly to the oppressor, wine and dine him, in order to obtain at least some alleviation of suffering. The merit before God of the suffering first group is not greater than that of the second group who feast with the tyrant, provided they are prompted by good intentions.

These words helped some to understand themselves better.

Some collaborated very wisely. By giving only a little verbal allegiance to Ceaushescu, they were able to receive many concessions. They would abstain totally from the deification of Ceaushescu, who was called "The lay good," "the genius of the Carpathians," "the greatest thinker ever," and so forth. The Lutheran bishop Muller consented to be a member of the Communist parliament, though he never voted. But the little compromise of being there without ever flattering the Communist rulers had the result that the Lutheran church was among those that suffered the least.

The Traitors

There were not only collaborators. Others were outright traitors, who sold the lives of innocents for money, though they never got more than a pittance, like Judas with his thirty pieces of silver. Even then, I am reminded that Jesus sat at table with Judas even after he had betrayed Him. All the many words of love spoken by Jesus to the disciples at the last meal included him too.

Jesus said, "Let not your heart be troubled. You believe in God, believe also in Me. "This was meant for Judas, who was assured that in the Father's house there are many mansions, even one for a disciple who already had the price of betrayal in his pocket, if only he would repent. Jesus was saying, "There is still time to return" as He continued, "I will receive you to Myself." (John 14:1-3)

When Judas led the soldiers to arrest Jesus and gave Him a treacherous kiss, Jesus even then called him "friend," for His friendship is forever.

In the original, John 5:2 reads, "By the sheep there was a pool." (The word "gate" here is an interpolation of the translators.) Near every sheep of Christ there is an opportunity to be washed from any sin.

The great tragedy is that traitors were recruited not only among the worst Christians but sometimes from among the best, even from among those who had been heroes of faith, who had suffered torture and prison for many years.

The Latins have a saying: *De hic historia silet* -About these history is silent. Not everything should be told. some things are too sad.

Preaching to Unseen Audiences

What were the highlights of our trip to Romania?

Sabina and I stood before the gorgeous palace of Ceaushescu, which dwarfs Buckingham palace.

It is said that even the faucets in the bathroom are of gold, but "the lay god" never once had the pleasure of using them.

The palace is built over the spot on which the Uranus prison of the Securitate had stood. This prison was torn down to make way for the dictator's residence.

I sat in that underground fortress. I even dare to assert that I ruled from my cell, though this may sound like boasting. Let me explain.

I was kept alone in a cell from which I never saw sun, moon, stars, birds, flowers, trees, butterflies. In time I forgot that nature exists, even that colors exist. In my dull gray world of dingy cement walls, tattered clothing, and ashen skin, I forgot what blue, green, and violet look like. There was never a book nor a scrap of paper. In that deep subterranean prison silence reigned. I heard never a word nor a whisper. This was sensory deprivation at its crudest.

Every night in my dark cell I preached to an unseen audience. I was accustomed to this audience even when I was free. In Peter 1:12, it is written that angels desire to look into the preaching of the Gospel. Whenever I preached in churches, I was aware that angels are also present, not only men. (Where else would our guardian angels be when we are in church?) I always endeavored to say a kind word for them too.

But I made the mistake of thinking that only

angels could be my unseen audience. It was not so.

After I came to the West, I published three books of sermons I had delivered in my solitary cell: *Sermons in Solitary Confinement, If Prison Walls Could Speak, and Alone with God.*

And then something very strange took place.

I received a letter from a man in Canada who wrote that he was from a good Christian family but had gone astray as a young man and wound up in jail. There he misbehaved and was put in a solitary punishment cell. In despair, he thought how sad his godly parents must be. He would have liked to return to God but did not know how. He prayed, "God, if there is somewhere in this world another lonely prisoner who knows You, bring me his thoughts."

Then he heard an inner voice telling him, "God seeks you more assiduously than you seek Him. The desire of a cow to be sucked is greater than that of a calf to suck. He seeks you and He knows how to find what He seeks. Sit quietly and confidently. He will reach you."

And then he heard evening after evening a kind of sermon from far away.

He repented. Mercifully, his prison term was short and he was released. Years passed, during which he married, had a family, and became a deacon in a church.

One day he entered a Christian bookstore and saw a queer title on a jacket: *Sermons in Solitary*

Confinement. Having been in solitary himself, he wondered, "To whom does someone in solitary preach?"

He read the book and later wrote me, "Mr. Wurmbrand, you did not preach to nobody. I was in solitary at the same time as you. I recognized the sermons. It was yours that I heard and that brought me back to Christ. Thank you for having delivered them."

I might not have paid too much attention to this letter if I had not received another from a lady in England who described the same sort of effect.

Then I met a French pastor. He told me he had been an unbeliever when he saw a vision of a pastor with a clerical collar who told him about Christ. He was converted and in time became a clergyman who won many souls to his Master. Once he too saw the same book: *Sermons in Solitary Confinement*. On the French edition is my picture with a clerical collar. He recognized me immediately. It was the man he had seen in vision.

Preaching Beyond Space and Time

The Hebrews have three words for "soul": *nephesh*, *ruach*, and *neshamah*. *Neshamah* is its highest stage. The Kabbalah, principal book of Jewish mysticism, calls it "The supersoul."

At its highest level, the soul is beyond space and time. A man enclosed behind four walls can reach men at a distance of thousands of miles away.

When I received these letters, they shed new light on some strange assertions of St. Paul: "The word of the truth of the gospel, which has come to you, as it *has also in all the world*" (Colossians 1:5,6); "Your faith is spoken of *throughout the whole world*" (Romans 1:8), and so on.

These words seem like such gross exaggerations that they could almost be called outright lies. Paul had no knowledge of Japan or America. The Gospel was far from having reached even the known world.

But the hidden man of the heart, the inner man, the *neshamah*, communicates beyond all boundaries. Things happen to the inner man of which the outward man, the conscious, knows nothing.

It is written that all the Jews who passed through the Red Sea at their exodus from Egypt "were baptized." (I Corinthians 10:2) They were perhaps two or three million persons. Not one knew that this was happening to them. "All those who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death." (Romans 6:3) Ninety percent of those baptized, even at maturity, did not know this. My wife and I learned this only years later and wondered about it. Who of us knew that "we were buried with Him" (v.4), or that our old man had been "Crucified with Him" (v.6). A man should remember if he has been crucified. None of us does.

It is because things are happening with our

neshamah in which the conscious, this very little part of our mind, is not initiated.

I personally never had the experience of accepting Christ as a novelty. When at the age of 27 I heard the Gospel from a village carpenter, I had rather the impression of recognizing something I had always desired, for which I had been searching. Plato wrote, "To know is to recognize."

A real sermon that flows from the inner castle of the heart, a sermon to which the preacher also listens in wonder, never having thought that he knew such things, is an existential event remembered by listeners even after decades, and it reaches to the ends of the earth and produces an impalpable effect.

In his book *The Peace Prince*, Richardson tells about many missionaries who have found tribes with knowledge of tenets of the Christian faith that they had no way of learning from other Christians. Sermons from far away have reached them.

As my wife and I stood before Ceaushescu's enormous palace, I remembered these things and meditated on them. In my subterranean cell I had more joy than he could ever have dreamt of, even when he was at the peak of his power. His work was in vain. In this palace, as in all others, one day there will not remain one stone on another. But souls won for Christ will remain forever and ever and will ascend without end from glory to glory.

Sabina and I embraced each other and said a

prayer of thanksgiving.

Winning Souls in Jail

From there we went to the former building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. From its balcony, Ceausescu had started to deliver his last speech when he was rudely interrupted with shouts of "Murder! Criminal! Down with Communism!" He fled in a helicopter that was on the roof and went to his death.

This building is the former headquarters of the Secret Police and hosted another underground prison. There too I spent two years in solitude.

Deep underground I had preached the Gospel by tapping on the wall to prisoners in cells on either side. The inmates changed frequently.

The Norwegian pastor Fjeldstad, a missionary in Israel, told me he had met there a Jew who, when he started to tell him the Gospel, replied with a smile, "You come too late. I heard the Gospel years ago from a fellow-inmate who tapped it in Morse code when I was in a solitary cell in Romania. I believed it then and I still believe it."

I rejoice at every step in Romania. In each place I have beautiful reminiscences.

We stood before the actual police headquarters where my wife and I had often been detained in Fascist and Communist times.

In Bucharest, I saw again a sister who, with her father, a Baptist preacher, had been impris-

oned by the Fascists in these police headquarters, along with me and several others. We had been denounced for organizing underground services in homes. We remembered how happily we had sung there.

Then there was the Malmezon prison in Bucharest, where I had been in both Fascist and Communist times. (It was much worse under the latter.) During the war six brethren and sisters were there. It was a loose arrangement, with male and female prisoners together during the day.

On one occasion the commander, a colonel, entered the room and shouted. "I heard that you sing your hymns here, which is forbidden. What kind of hymns are these? Let me hear one."

We sang "O sacred head, now wounded, with grief and shame bowed down..." He turned around and left without saying a word. Many years later I heard from Filip Shuiovici, an outstanding Hebrew Christian who had been my fellow prisoner on this occasion and now lives in Israel, that the colonel had become a brother in Christ. Our singing might have helped others to salvation as well.

The Central Place of My Life

I found myself again on Olteni Street, where my church had been. On the same street there had also been an Orthodox church and a synagogue. Ceausescu had no need of such buildings. All were torn down.

Olteni! What memories I had of this place. Here I had said with many tears my first public prayer of repentance. The service had been conducted by Pastor Adeney of the Anglican Church, Mission to the Jews. He had dedicated his life to the Jews and had preached some forty years with little visible fruit. But he did not abandon his mission.

Soon it was evident that he had not worked in vain. He had brought to Christ Isac Feinstein, who later became a well-known Hebrew Christian preacher and died a martyr's death. Another was Asher Pitaru, who was with me later in a Communist jail. Prisoners and Communist wardens alike called him "Mr. I Corinthians 13," because this was his main subject when speaking to anyone, even to the guards, who treated him respectfully.

When Pitaru was before court, an intimate Christian friend of his was the main prosecution witness against him. He never spoke about this man with anything but love; he never mentioned his sin.

These and many others were the fruit of Adeney's service.

The main preacher was Pastor Ellison, himself also of Jewish descent.

Olteni was the place of my conversion and later of my pastorate. The church was called by everyone "the church of love," because, though nominally Lutheran, it was really the only interdenominational place in Romania. Worshipers of all

kinds, Orthodox, Baptists, Pentecostals, Nazarenes, Adventists-just name them-felt at home in this nest.

When someone who believed in christening brought his child, we all rejoiced with him. When another asked for baptism at maturity, those who baptized children were present to celebrate. My colleague, Pastor Solheim, preached his belief that at holy communion we receive with bread and wine the real body and blood of Christ. I said that I believe in a symbolic presence. No one quarreled about it. Jesus had said, "Take, eat, drink." He had not said, "Squabble about which interpretation is correct." Communion is what it is, not what we think about it.

We took good care of the poor in this church and helped many other churches as well.

It was here that we started the first secret mission to the Soviet army that had invaded our country. New Testaments and Gospels were printed for them.

The Olteni church is dear to my heart for another reason: here we met secretly in the attic, which was my "parsonage," Rev. Stuart Harris, now chairman of the International Christian Mission to the Communist World, and his friend Rev. Moseley from the USA. They were the first foreign visitors who did not allow themselves to be fooled by official church leaders.

We met at night, and I told them the whole

story of suffering.

This meeting was really the foundation stone of our Mission to the Communist World, which has expanded to over forty countries, has introduced millions of Bibles, New Testaments, Gospels and other pieces of literature into Communist lands, and has mobilized hundreds of thousands in prayer for the persecuted. We also helped with radio broadcasts and financial support for families of prisoners.

Are You Ready to Enter a Chariot of Fire?

I delivered many sermons in Romania, which I cannot reproduce here. But I would like to share a few of my main thoughts connected with the special situation in that country.

I spoke about the ease with which one can be raptured to heaven. Anyone can be raptured today if he is willing to travel as Elijah did. This is how: "A chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire...and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven." (II Kings 2:11)

"Is anyone here ready to enter such an uncomfortable chariot?" I asked. "Then he can be raptured at once."

"Where would you like to be taken? Jesus has given us a great promise: 'To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.' (Revelation 3:21)

"Anyone can come to sit on this throne. Daniel gives us a description (7:9): 'His throne was a fiery flame, its wheels a burning fire. A fiery stream issues from it.' Are you ready to sit on such a throne? Then you can have a place of honor on it.

"I come from the West where some preach easy salvation. Just believe—that is all. If you believe, you will have not only heaven in eternity but also health and prosperity here.

"You might escape totally from Communist persecution, but this false Western teaching is around the corner to destroy your spiritual life much more than Communism could have done.

"To be a Christian means to believe in Him, which is to believe in His sacrifice on Golgotha and in His teaching that we too must deny ourselves and follow Him. We are meant to be crucified and buried together with Him, not in a physical sense (though in southern Sudan Christians have been crucified even in 1990) but in fighting to the uttermost against sin, the world and the devil and never giving up even if you lose many battles. About Britain, it is said that in war it loses all the battles but has the final victory. So must we too.

"Christian faith can bring healing. My wife, my son and I have been healed repeatedly by faith. But it is also true that many fall sick because of their faith. Perfectly sane men became Christians. For this they were jailed, beaten, tortured; they lost their health because of Christ. He has made many

prosper in business, but many with a good living lost everything. Their houses and property were confiscated, or they had to pay heavy fines again and again because they became Christians.

"Don't serve Christ for what you can get from Him. John and Magdalene and others loved Christ when He could do nothing for them. He hung in pain and thirst on a rude cross and even shouted words that seemed to indicate despair.

"Magdalene loved Jesus, period. Even if He could give nothing. She loved Him even when He was a corpse in a tomb, and she spent money on spices to embalm Him.

"Where then is Christian joy? Paul says, 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you.' A Christian weeps with all those who weep, not only for those who weep here a bit but also for those who weep and gnash their teeth in the hopeless pain in eternity. Not only Jesus, but also all His disciples share in everyone's pain.

"They fill up in their flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ. He was not satisfied with just being crucified for mankind. He descended into hell. Even if no one did Him any harm there, just being in such a place of horror, hearing the shrieks and the howling, sensing the fire and brimstone, must have been terrible. No sensitive man can read Dante's description of hell without shuddering.

Union with God

"But this was not enough for Jesus. By His choice he is crucified again as often as spiritual Christians fall away in sin. (Hebrews 6:6)

"This too is not enough for Him to reveal the abundance of His love toward us. He inhabits believers. He lives our life with us. He does it patiently, but still He sometimes asks, 'How long will I bear with you?' (Matthew 17:17) Every fall, every sin, every weakness and doubt of ours tortures Him, because He has become one with us. In us, He is not a separate I. A symbiosis has taken place.

"In Hebrew, Isaiah 48:12 sounds like this: *Ani-Hu-Ani rishon, of ani acharon*, in literal translation, 'A me who is a me-he is the first; one who is only me is the last.' God and I have united in one person. There is no grief of mine He does not share, no doubt, no rebellion, no mistake. It is also His. Out of love, He takes it upon Himself.

"And we find our joy in the supreme priestly service: to bring ourselves as sacrifices. To suffer for everyone, for what is Christ the sufferer in him, for Christ who is not only in glory but has remained the Man of Sorrows acquainted with grief."

I gave an extreme example of this taken from life.

"Baptize Me or I'll Shoot You!"

Annmarie had been arrested for her under-

ground work in the church. As is usually the case, she was beaten and tortured to make her betray the names of other brethren and sisters implicated in her work.

The temptation to yield did not even occur to her. She was too much preoccupied, I would say possessed, by one thought: how to bring salvation to the torturer. For her the question was not how to escape further pain, how to forego being sentenced to long years of prison, but how to make her torturer escape sin and hell.

She said to him, "You beat me in vain. You will never beat out of me my love, not only for God, but also for you."

The torturer laughed heartily. "What a foolish girl you are! I beat you, and you declare your love for me."

There were times when one could have nice talks with the torturers. On occasion they got tired of beating.

One of them said to me. "You prisoners shout when you are beaten. Why? You feel pain, but what is your suffering compared with mine? You get beaten at most for half an hour. We have to beat so many. There is not time for more than that. Then you rest in your cell. But I have to beat eight hours a day. I have done this six days a week, twelve months a year, for ten years. The only music I hear is the noise of the whip and the cries of the tortured. It is maddening.

"In the evening, I get drunk and then go home, where I beat my wife too. This is my life. I am a greater sufferer than you."

So torturers took coffee breaks. They would also smoke a cigarette. If the prisoner was a smoker, they would offer him a cigarette. For a quarter of an hour, he would be a jolly fellow, ready to converse and even to joke with his victim.

And so this one torturer took the girl's declaration of love as a joke.

She continued: "I will now tell you words that under normal circumstances you would never hear from a girl. While you beat me, I looked at your hands. How beautiful they are! I imagine how your wife enjoys it when you caress her. I put to you a simple question: Is caressing not better than beating? When you caress your wife, you and she have pleasure. You surely cannot enjoy torturing more than caressing.

"You have very attractive lips. How your wife must have rejoiced when you first kissed her. Is kissing not better than swearing at people and cursing with foul words?"

He gave her a slap. "Stop this stupid talk! I am not interested in your idiotic talk. You'd better tell us with whom you worked in your underground activity. We are not in the business of love here, but in discovering counterrevolutionist activities."

She could say just a few more words: "I have a boyfriend who not only loves me. He simply is love

itself. From him I have learned to love everyone heartily. I love those who do me good. I love those who hurt me."

He gave her a blow, and she fell to the concrete floor of the cell, hitting herself on the temple, and fainted.

When she awoke, she saw the torturer sitting in deep meditation. He asked her, "Who is this strange boyfriend of yours who taught you to love without distinction both the good and the bad?"

She told him, "It is Jesus" and spoke to the torturer about Him.

"How can I become His friend too?" he asked.

You must repent of your sins, put your faith in His dying for you on the cross, and be baptized."

"Then baptize me," he demanded.

She replied, "I cannot baptize you," which was not true. Anyone can baptize in such exceptional circumstances. But she did not know this.

He took out his revolver, pointed it at her, and said, "Baptize me or I'll shoot you!"

If this seems strange, it shouldn't. He fulfilled the words of Jesus, who said, "Some take the kingdom of God by violence." (Matthew 11:12) "By violence" can mean threatening with a revolver.

He dragged her to a pool, threw her into the water, and she baptized him. It was a sincere conversion. The proof was that, at great risk to himself, he succeeded in freeing her.

This Annmarie is an Ani-Hu-Ani, a symbiosis

between Him and herself. Even under the worst of tortures, she had one thought: the salvation of the worst of men. She accepted and especially severe beating because of her missionary endeavor.

Forgiving a Torturer

Continuing my sermon, I insisted: "You have all suffered much at the hands of the Communists, in one way or another, physically or psychologically or socially.

"There is something lacking in the cross of Christ. All He did for mankind till now is not enough. You belong to His body, you are a new embodiment of His. Wherever you are, Christ is, as it was when the virgin Mary was pregnant. If she went from the kitchen to the dining room He was with her. He and His mother were one. You are part of His body, just as He was part of Mary's body.

"Take all tribulations upon yourself with resignation and joy. They are Jesus' tribulations first. Thus you will fill up what is lacking in the cross of Christ. Apply this to all the hurts you receive in the family, in your job, in society.

"The Uniate priest Demeter had been a prison colleague of mine. When he was in jail, a warden amused himself by beating him again and again with a hammer on the backbone. As a result, Demeter was paralyzed and has lain unmoving for twenty years.

"Now when there has been a revolution, and

Ceausescu has been overthrown, the Securitate officer who had destroyed his life came to Demeter's door and said, 'I know I cannot be forgiven. What I did was too heinous. But only listen to my words of apology and I will go.'

"The priest replied, 'For twenty years I have prayed for you daily. I waited for you. You are forgiven.'

"This is the essence of Christianity. Any other attitude is not,

"When Jesus taught us the 'Our Father,' to make sure we understood the most important part of it. He added immediately. 'If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.' (Matthew 6:14,15)

Communist Air My Sermons on TV

Something very strange happened after I had delivered a few sermons in which I stressed our duty to love our enemies, including the Communists.

One main hour-long sermon was aired at state expenses on TV.

For years the Communists had kept me in solitary confinement so that I could not tell my thoughts, considered poisonous, to even one fellow prisoner. Now the Romanian government, still Communist, took special care to ensure that the

whole populace heard what I had to say.

Why?

The government well knows that the people hate its doings. The dictator Iliescu, wiser than his predecessor Ceausescu, understands this. He considered it profitable for the oppressed to be taught to love their oppressors.

The paradox was that my enemies and Christ's were eager for people to listen to me. In fact, today Communist leaders actually beg Romanian pastors, "Please preach all you want, even in public squares, but stress love for one's enemies. Otherwise the people will tear us to pieces."

Did Jesus foresee that His teaching of love to the uttermost would be welcomed by His enemies when they were in danger and would help the spread of the Gospel because it offered them protection?

We dare to walk our dangerous way, in which we may seem to be fellow-travelers with the worst of men and to strengthen their hands (this is the case with almost all who do good to those who do evil), because we believe that the Word is God and in the end it will change the hearts even of God-haters.

Two thousand years ago, the Jews hated their Roman oppressors. Was it because Jesus taught love for one's enemies that Pontius Pilate, Roman governor of Israel, desired to free Him?

Love just because it is love exposes itself to all

risks—even the risk of being misused by the wicked—in order to win all. We will not give up teaching love for one's enemies, even though, for a time, God-haters profit at our expense.

Not Interested in My Sermons

We met Angela Cazacu.

She had been our co-worker during the War, busy stealing Jewish children from some ghetto and thus saving lives, smuggling food and clothing to the scores of female Christian prisoners in the Mislea jail, and so on.

Then the Soviet army invaded our country. She gave out Russian Gospels and New Testament in railway stations to the trains full of Soviet soldiers. Some sisters were arrested for this but started again as soon as released.

When I was in the Tirgul-Ocna jail in 1951, Romania had the heaviest snow ever, in some places five feet high. I was then deathly sick of pulmonary and backbone tuberculosis, with a couple of other illnesses.

When the cold was most bitter, the prison commander gave the order that no prisoner was allowed to have more than one blanket. We trembled with the cold. Meanwhile, transports were at a standstill. The administration had no food to give us. No family members or friends could come to the jail with a parcel because of the snow.

Only one prisoner of the hundreds who were

in this jail received a parcel at that time. Angela, whose name in Romanian means "female angel," made her way to the jail through the mountains of snow and left a package for me.

At that time I looked like a skeleton. I accepted the gifts carried with difficulty on her shoulder, and we shared them, comforted that we were not alone.

Now she attended a service at which I preached.

I asked her what she thought about the sermon. Her reply was not very complimentary: 'I did not listen to it much. I was not very much interested in what you said. For me it is enough to see that, after all you have endured, you are well enough to preach. I see your radiant face. I feel the love that emanates from you both. If you had given only the blessing at the end of the service after someone else had preached, it would have been enough for me.'

Do Today What You Neglected Before

Many leaders from the World Council of Churches, Lutherans, Baptists, Reformed, Pentecostals, Adventists, World Federations, and world-renowned evangelists now flock to Romania and the other freed Communist countries.

None of them has apologized for having praised nonexistent religious liberty in Romania under Communist rule. None has apologized that during the forty-five years of terror not one of these great bodies or any national denomination had done

anything to give practical help to the families of Christian martyrs.

Though my name was known abroad, my children never received one cent, one parcel, or one letter expressing concern during all my years of imprisonment. I could vouch for the fact that not one of the families of Christian prisoners of that time received anything until our Christian Missions to the Communist World was formed.

This is all in the past now, and I would gladly omit mentioning it if the hardness of heart were not still present.

I challenge anyone to ask the top leaders of the denominations if they have in their budget at least \$100 a year for families of Christians jailed in Moslem countries. There are prisoners of faith in Egypt, Malaysia, Iran. Christians are heavily persecuted in Moslem Turkey. Perhaps the universal church could make up now for what it had neglected then.

There are missions that now work effectively in this regard in Communist countries. Let the denominations do the same in Moslem countries.

The Language of Passion

When I started to tell in the West the story of persecution in the East, I was accused at the very least of gross exaggeration. Bishops and leading evangelists who had been to Russia, Rumania, and Hungary were quick to give the Communist rulers

certificates of good behavior.

I myself heard one of the most renowned evangelists in the U.S.A. say upon his return from Russia. "There is more religious freedom there than in Britain." Such kind words were also spoken about my homeland.

Did I exaggerate?

First of all, what's wrong with exaggeration? Why should anyone object to it, since it is the normal response of individuals speaking about a subject that they relate to passionately?

We read in Mark 1:4, '*All the land* of Judea and those from Jerusalem went out to John the Baptist and *were all baptized* by him.' Is this an exaggeration or not? Those who place high hopes in the victory of the Kingdom see in small beginnings the mighty events that will follow, just like a father with his son.

Have the descendants of Abraham become as numerous as the stars of heaven or the sand of the sea? These are beyond calculation. Yet the promise was such. Was God exaggerating?

Is the bride of Solomon's Song really the only beauty, beside whom other girls are ugly? If not, why does the bridegroom say, "As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters?"

I don't mind being accused of exaggeration when speaking passionately about the sufferings of the persecuted. When one tortured man cries, I hear more than one voice crying. All true believers

suffer with the one who suffers. Jesus Himself suffers in them. Why do you hear only the cry of one insignificant man and not the cry of Jesus who dwells within him?

How many suffer? How great is the suffering? Do you have good ears? When Abel was killed by his brother, his cry was so loud it reached from the ground to highest heaven. (Genesis 4:10) Why then do you hold it against me that I hear one voice as the voice of a multitude?

I never exaggerate willingly, but neither am I a stickler for exact figures. Eichmann, the war criminal judged in Jerusalem for his participation in the holocaust, gave as his defense: "Not six million but only one million Jews were killed by the Nazis. "For me and my wife, who had family among the victims, the one million would never be only one million.

When all is said and done, anyone who now reads even Communist publications from the USSR, Romania, and the other Communist countries realizes that not only I, but also Solzhenitsyn, Bourdeaux, and others are guilty of understatement.

Even now I have not told the whole story. Patrashcanu, the one who brought Communism to power in Romania, was later tortured by his own comrades in such a manner that I could never tell anyone, including my wife. No publisher would print such violent obscenities.

I would not have recounted the story, but the Romanian Orthodox priest Virgil Gheorghiu, a renowned author, wrote about a woman prisoner who was stripped naked and tied to a bed. A specially trained dog had coitus with her, to the point where her will was broken and she became a co-worker of the police against her friends.

Meanwhile, several newspapers and magazines in Europe have asked the World Council of Churches and the Lutheran World Federation to apologize to me. I absolve them of this obligation. But I would be gratified if they would take a stand against the atrocities committed today where Communists are still in power and would expel from their leadership those who have led people astray about nonexistent religious liberty under the Reds.

A Bleak Situation

After speaking in many services, I would be invited to meals in the homes of believers.

In one very poor house my wife and I were served chicken, but from the expressions on the faces of the children I realized they never had such a thing. In Romania there is a proverb: "If a poor family eats chicken, either the chicken or the family is sick."

We said we were not hungry and each took only a wing.

In other homes we were given good food, but soon we realized it had been purchased on the black

market for exorbitant prices and the families would eat minimally after our departure. My own children, knowing for a long time that we would be in Romania, had hoarded food by standing in line for hours day after day, for weeks.

The Talmud says, "Every meal where the conversation is about something other than the Word of God is idolatrous." I try to abide by this. Families have so little time to converse that meal-time should be used for spiritual as well as physical nourishment.

But there were also jokes. A former member of the Communist Party said, "In times past, you had to be recommended by two members of the Party to be accepted. Now, only a certification from a psychiatric asylum that you are mad is sufficient."

There was joy and happiness at meals in spite of the great poverty.

But the situation was bleak, without any hope of improvement in the foreseeable future.

I know the figures: in the first quarter of 1990, the productivity of workers and the gross national product had decreased by 42% compared to the year before. International trade had virtually come to a standstill. There was no new capital infusion into the economy.

All Socialist economic planning went out the window. With no raw material, many factories stand idle. Private enterprise is now permitted, but

where does one begin when there is no capital? There are no goods for even the smallest venture.

The transition from capitalism to socialism is easy. You simply destroy what your predecessors have accomplished. But the transition from Communism to capitalism and the free market system has never yet taken place. Will it succeed? To create or re-create a free market, capital is needed. Historically, capitalism began in Europe because of the huge amounts of gold discovered in America.

Where is Romania to obtain capital? The Western capitalists have no confidence in the new government because it represents no real change. The leaders still feel free to slaughter innocents at whim, just as their predecessors did.

Between June 13 and 15 of 1990, a multitude of corpses (no one knows how many) and countless wounded, many mutilated for life, lay on the streets of Bucharest. The killers were allegedly miners, as reported in the Western press, though the people know they were men of the old Securitate who wore miner's helmets as a disguise. These "miners" had been called by President Iliescu and were congratulated when they finished their bloody work, because they had shown "proletarian solidarity."

Those were apocalyptic days. Hoards of Communist police armed with iron sticks and axes roamed the streets killing people in the name of a government that called itself democratic. Demonocratic would be more accurate. The image

of such scenes persists long after the streets are cleared. People still hear the wild howling of the killers and the moaning of the wounded.

Asane economy, a free market system cannot be built on such a foundation. Romania receives no substantial help from the West, unlike all the other Eastern European countries, which were also Communistic. This was decided at a conference of 24 industrial nations in Brussels.

Capitalism and Communism

And so there were spiritual discussions at meals, along with songs and jokes, but no palpable hope for the immediate future of the country as far as living conditions are concerned.

In view of all their bitter experiences with Socialist economies, it is proper that Christians consider what their attitude should be in the conflict between Capitalism and Communism.

Wicked men cannot construct good social systems. Slavery, feudalism, Capitalism, Communism—all are tainted with sin. However, the wise distinguish not only between good and bad, but also between good and better or between bad and worse.

Of all social systems devised by men until now, Communism is surely the worst.

A hundred fifty years ago Marx believed that Capitalism would soon perish. Seventy years ago Lenin believed in the near victory of the Communist revolution. In the United States, the great

depression of the thirties was considered a sign that Capitalism was on its deathbed. It was not. Capitalism has great vitality. Communism is deathly sick.

Capitalism has proved to be the only system of production that by its very nature assures the development of new techniques that in turn raise the standard of living of the multitudes.

Under Capitalism periods of crisis are followed by periods of recovery. Technical developments assure this. New discoveries result in new branches in the economy. Competition assures that products will become cheaper with time. The number of consumers grows. New enterprises are created and with them more jobs. The great number of unemployed in capitalist countries is due to the fact that job-seekers have not qualified themselves. For those who do and who are willing to work, joblessness is not generally a long-term problem under Capitalism.

In other words, there is no permanent crisis under Capitalism.

Under Socialism, by way of contrast, there can be no long periods of progress. No one is interested in investing capital because all the profit goes to the state. A political organism, the state, decides what factories should be built and how the goods should be distributed. It takes no advanced degree to observe that as a result the shops are almost always empty.

Politicians decide on salaries. Romania provides a bitter example. During the election campaign in June 1990, the government announced a salary increase of 50% in many industries. Since all enterprises belong to the state, this was simple. After the elections, the same government that had used this ruse to win declared that no one in industry would have a fixed salary but rather it would be determined by productivity. However, since there is neither capital for productivity nor goods for even the most urgent repairs of machinery, industry is hobbled and workers are stymied.

Warning signals about the shape of the economy do not worry the planning commissions, who are the real bosses, because their members have no profit motive for what they do. They receive a modest salary whether or not the plan is fulfilled.

Capitalists, on the other hand, react quickly to economic indicators because their capital is at stake. They can become millionaires or go broke. The profit incentive tends to prevent economic catastrophes. Under Communism, antiquated enterprises continue to function even though they bring no profit. The breakdown of Communism came in many countries without revolution. Romania was the exception. In Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Poland, East Germany, and Russia, Communism died a natural death because it simply doesn't work.

Capitalism has grave weaknesses, but it is

the best system mankind has produced. Of necessity, Christians must prefer it to something far worse—Marxist economics.

Nations that have tasted Communism now show their aversion to the system. In Romania, as in neighboring Eastern European countries, people have torn down the statues of Marx, Stalin, and Lenin with strong ropes and multiple manpower, so strong is their revulsion to the “gods” that have been imposed on them. Some are offered for good money to Western collectors.

“Lord, when you awake, you will despise their image.” (Psalm 73:20) Previously, pictures of Ceausescu were seen everywhere. Now there is not one.

The Specter of Famine

Christians in Romania, like the rest of its inhabitants, have little time nowadays to think about heavy social or spiritual problems. The mere earning of daily bread consumes more than a normal man’s power. And there is even worse danger for all former European Communist countries, and especially for Romania, which is excluded from aid from the USA and the European Community. Romania is also shunned by those who could invest capital, because of the brutality and instability of its government, consisting almost exclusively of Communists, who so far give few signs of having changed.

There is rampant inflation. The price of necessary goods has increased. Income is lower. Widespread unemployment is inevitable, since unproductive, inefficient factories kept alive by unreasonable state planners will have to be shut down. There is no legislation providing for the unemployed. All Christian charitable institutions have long since been abolished.

Meanwhile, the specter of famine towers over Romania.

In winter there is not enough heat in the houses. Babies nurtured in a warm womb are born into cold hospital rooms and fall sick.

In neighboring Hungary, also formerly Communist, Mother Theresa of Calcutta was allowed to open soup kitchens—but not in Romania.

Leading specialists in economics, finance, and industry have been dismissed because the public simply abhors Communists. Furthermore, other Communists in government sacrificed their comrades to the fury of the mob, with the result that the economy is ruled by ignoramuses.

The agricultural collectives are no longer productive. While no one really cares to work for them, who has the capital and machinery for individual farming? Former peasants would refuse land even if it were given back to them, because they do not trust the Communists. Romanian peasants once owned land, and it was stolen from them by the Communists. So agriculture was destroyed. What

warrant do they have that the Communists in power now, after allowing them to become productive again, would not take everything away from them a second time?

Whoever can manage to do so flees from Romania, not only German, Hungarian, and Jewish minorities, but also ethnic Romanians. But what country is ready to accept the millions hoping to emerge from the former Eastern bloc?

Except for Christians, no one really knows in Romania, (or Hungary, or Bulgaria, or Poland, or Russia) what to do. The believers know exactly what to do even under the worst circumstances: when one does not know what to do, it is imperative to do nothing, but with patience and trust to let God take over. He had known worse situations than these!

Everything Not Taken Away

When the Communists took over, most of Romania was composed of small peasants. Their land was collectivized.

The Reds were inspired by Lenin's teaching (Vol.40, p.220): "We will introduce collectivization, not fearing coercion. Revolutions were never accomplished without coercion. The proletariat also has the right to use it to obtain its purpose in order to assure that its will is fulfilled."

Trotsky said, "Our peasantry is an ally of American millionaires. We cannot reach America,

but we can suppress these with out cavalry, tanks and swords."

Bukharin, another leading Russian Communist theoretician, wrote, "Our party is the most militarily shaped organization."

In Romania, the Communists did indeed act militarily in taking away from the peasantry everything they owned: fields, sheep, cattle, implements of work, houses, furniture. Every small farmer became a slave of the state, working for a pittance on a field no longer his.

Ceausescu was one of the principal organizers of this collectivization. In Dobrogea province, he did it with the utmost simplicity. All the villagers were gathered together in a square and were asked to renounce their possessions of their own free will. "Who is for this?" No one raised his hand. So Ceausescu personally shot ten people.

Then the vote was taken a second time. All voted to renounce their possessions "voluntarily." There was military music. They were forced to dance. To add insult to injury, a film was made about their enthusiastic adherence to Socialism.

With this, the agricultural sector of Romania was destroyed. In a country that formerly could feed all of Western Europe, farmers were forced to stand in line for bread and were unable to obtain it.

Now I met once more a farmer who had come to see me immediately after collectivization. He reported at that time, "They thought they took

everything. But I told my family, "They left something very important—our hymnals. We sat down and sang."

I was reminded of those who "accepted joyfully the plundering of their goods, knowing that they have a better and enduring possession for themselves in heaven." (Hebrews 10:34) 34

We embraced again. I too had known this joy several times in my life.

Hearing My Sermons Again

One of the most striking events during this visit to Romania was the encounter with brethren who said they had heard me preach thirty, forty, even fifty years before.

When someone tells me he heard a sermon of mine years ago, I always ask, "What did I say?"

I believe that listening to a sermon should be an existential event, something that changes life for better or worse. In a sermon the preacher should not only speak *about* Christ but should impersonate Him. An actor does not speak *about* Hamlet or Romeo; he is the person while on stage. During those several hours in the theater his personal life is put aside completely. He speaks exactly as Romeo would speak, if he encountered Juliet.

Just so the minister. Not only by his words, but also by his gestures, by the expression on his face, by his look, his tone of voice, by the light of the

Spirit shining through him, he must convey the impression, "I had an encounter with Jesus today. He speaks through me."

Fifty years ago I heard just such an existential sermon, and today I could reproduce even the gestures of the bishop who delivered it.

When I became a preacher, I took seriously the words that we should "run so as to receive the prize." (I Corinthians 9:24) This is possible only by outrunning all the others. So I read sermons by great preachers, listened to the best preachers of all denominations in Romania, and nurtured a desire to attain to their level and if possible surpass it.

I have not yet become the great preacher I intended to be (I still have hope-I am only 83), but I wanted to find out how much I had achieved. Therefore I asked those who said they had heard me half a century ago my usual question: "What did I say?" Some told me.

Telling a Legend

One sermon had begun with the legend of Gorun, a very beloved disciple of the Master. "There is good stuff in you," Jesus said to him. "I want you to pitch a tent for yourself on Mount Carmel and stay there for a time in meditation and prayer." And so he did.

Soon the rumor spread to all the villages round about that a young saint had made his habitation in the region.

One day Gorun went to the nearest village and begged, "Please give me a blanket. Rats have gnawed on my old one, and they leave a bad smell. [I know this from my prison life.] Because of this I am unable to sleep."

The villagers gladly gave him what he asked. After a few days, he asked for another blanket, because rats had gnawed on the second blanket too. Soon he was back again with the same request, then again. Finally, someone said, "We'd better give you a cat. That will solve the problem for good."

Gorun returned to his abode happy. The rats were no longer in control. But after two days he was back. "Could you please give me some milk for the cat?" the villagers were happy to comply. But the need persisted. So they decided to give him a cow.

Again he came back. "I need something to feed the cow." They decided to give him pasture land in anticipation of future needs. Soon he came back. He was not used to taking care of both land and animals, so they gave him two workers to help him. Then he needed bricks and materials to build houses for the workers. Then the cow calved, and so on and on.

Years passed, and Jesus went to see His beloved disciple. A fat man greeted Him and asked, "What business brings you to this place? What would you like to buy?" The now well-to-do merchant no longer recognized his Master.

Beginning with this legend, I had taught that

we should not put distance between us and Jesus, not even so much as a stone's throw. Even at such a small distance, disciples slept while Jesus agonized in Gethsemane. Do business only if the Lord works beside you with accompanying signs (Mark 16:20), as He does in your Christian endeavors. If not, abandon the business.

Don't leave Jesus even for holy meditation or great missionary deeds. To lie quietly on His breast like the apostle John is preferable to the greatest enterprises in His service. Whoever has once leaned on this breast can no longer find full joy anywhere else.

Jesus said, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel' (mark 12:29). Hear the beating of My loving heart. Everything else follows from this."

Nothing should be preferred to loving gestures for the One who leads us to eternal life. There is a depth in renunciation of everything else. The devil can tear one away from the life of a hermit on Carmel but not from the very breast of Christ.

Blessed is the man who can do both his secular work and visible work for the church while lying spiritually on His breast. If he cannot do both, he should forego the work rather than the quiet adoration.

A brother of almost eighty repeated to me this sermon heard fifty years before. He served me well.

Curiously, I have no recollection of ever hav-

ing read or heard the legend of Gorun. Yet I am told it was part of a sermon of mine. Perhaps I composed it myself. Legends are often good clothing for truth.

Count Your Seconds

Another person reminded me of a sermon thirty years old about Psalm 90:12. Again, I had started with a story (sermons without illustrations are not remembered):

A man was obliged to walk late at night to a village far away. The journey was monotonous, especially since it was dark and he could scarcely see the road. At a certain moment he stumbled on something in his path. Reaching down, he picked up a small bag full of pebbles. To distract himself, from time to time he threw one in the river bordering the road on which he travelled. *Plitch...plitch...* The sound of the splash was harmless amusement.

When he reached his destination, only two pebbles remained. In the lighted house he glanced down and saw that they were diamonds. He had squandered a fortune.

Our days are made up of seconds. There are 32 million seconds in a year. A person who has lived thirty years is responsible for one billion.

Every second comes to us from God as a gift to use in His service. If we do not, the second returns to God in sadness and reports that we have neglected His precious gift.

Then I told about a general in the former

Royal Army with whom I had been in jail. He was deathly sick. When I spoke to him about God, he showed no interest. But then his last hour came, and he asked for a priest.

There were plenty of priests in that jail, but it took time to bring one from another cell. When he came, the general was no longer able to speak and make confession. The priest gave him Communion, but he could not swallow the water. He died without confession and Communion. He valued the treasure only when the last diamonds remained in the bag.

I spoke about how well Jesus used His seconds, even when crucified: pardon for His crucifiers, salvation to a robber, good words to His holy mother and to a beloved disciple, the assurance that all things needed for our salvation were fulfilled, a trusting prayer to God. Even in those dire circumstances moments were not lost.

“Use your time well. Time is the most precious commodity. You can regain money lost but not time lost. Use your time in the Lord’s service.”

Physical Acts Communicate the Spirit

I was in Oradea, the city with the largest evangelical church in Europe: a Baptist church led by Dr. Gheorghitza and Pastor Negruz, with 2,500 members attending, and a Pentecostal church with some 2,000.

Space forbids my recounting all the things I

preached in these churches, but I will mention one pronouncement that stunned the audience.

Ceausescu is hated by the whole populace. I never heard one good word spoken about him. All speak evil of him except Christians who had learned from the Archangel Michael not to dare to bring even against the devil a railing accusation. (Jude 9)

We often bring such accusations against men, even dead men. For myself, I was once warned in the night by a voice which said, "Don't speak evil against any dead persons. They hear us. If they are lost, they have pain enough. Don't add to it."

Now the congregation was anxious to hear my message. All eyes were fixed on me.

I spoke from John 20:22, 23: "Jesus breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of men, they are forgiven them.'"

"A physical act, a special manner of breathing," I continued, "can impart the Holy spirit. At ordination, another physical act, the laying-on of hands, imparts the gifts of the Spirit. Bodies can be the tool of the Spirit, which can be communicated not only through words, but also through a really warm handshake, a loving look, a face expressing goodness and understanding, a brotherly kiss. A spiritual man should be such not only in words but in all his gestures."

I Defend Ceausescu

Then I made my second point, to the stupefaction of my listeners:

"Why did Jesus impart the Spirit to the apostles?" He answers the question: that they may be able to forgive or retain sins.

"I regret not having been in Romania when Ceausescu was judged. I would have volunteered to defend him."

It was obvious the audience could not believe their ears. I was reputed to be a fierce anti-Communist, having opposed Communism when even some of the best pastors had compromised their beliefs. Defend Ceausescu? Out of the question! Not only had he and his wife been shot, to everyone's satisfaction, but all his children, brothers and in-laws were put in jail. To bear the name Ceausescu was crime enough.

I went on to explain: "I was in jail with a former major in the police during Fascist times. His sentence was twenty years. He claimed to be a Christian, blessed himself the whole time with the sign of the cross, and prayed to God, the Virgin, and a number of other saints.

"This man was sentenced for having arrested during the war (in the early forties Romania was at war with the Soviet Union) a lad of fourteen who had distributed Communist leaflets, then strictly forbidden. This lad was a member of an atheist organization, the Communist Youth.

"What an occasion this was for a Christian! The major should have seated the young lad and taken the opportunity to show him lovingly how wrong he was. He should have pointed him to a better way, the way of Christ.

"Instead, he beat the boy savagely. With every lash he inflicted, he strengthened in him his atheist convictions and confirmed a hatred for God.

"The name of that young boy was Nicolae Ceausescu. Some of the foremost criminals of history—Hitler, Stalin, Lenin, Marx—also had early encounters with Christians who had not used the occasion well.

"At a certain moment, the guards threw in my cell a Catholic priest who had been beaten badly and was bleeding. We washed him as best we could and gave him water to drink.

"When he came to himself, I asked him, 'Can you pray, like Jesus, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?"

"He replied, 'Jesus could, I cannot. My prayer would rather be, "Father, forgive me *and* them, because if I had been a better priest, they might not have become torturers."

"I would have told the court which judged the Ceausescus all this," I went on, "and would have concluded: 'Judge for yourselves if you have no part in their crimes.' Then I challenged the audience: 'You judge yourselves and ask if you have done your utmost to share with the Communists the teaching

of Jesus and to turn them from their wicked ways.'

"In 1918, the Russian Communists killed Czar Nicholas II, his wife, his four daughters, the twelve-year-old crown prince, and their servants. After the murder they found in the house a handwritten poem from the pen of Princess Olga, aged fifteen:

*On the threshold of the grave,
Put on the lips of Your servants
Superhuman power to pray humbly
For our enemies.*

"This too I would have quoted to the judges. May we all learn the beautiful art of forgiveness."

There were tears in the eyes of many in the congregation.

"Gorbachev, Remember Ceausescu's Lot!"

Obviously, I was not able to appear in court to defend Ceausescu. He and his wife Elena had both been sentenced to death. She was executed. He was badly tortured to get him to reveal where he had deposited-abroad-the millions he had allegedly stolen from the country. He is said to have died of a heart attack during the torture. His corpse had no marks of bullets.

Ceausescu's death frightened other Communist dictators and their stooges. The president of the court that had sentenced him committed suicide one week later.

In East Germany, seven generals of the "Stasi," their secret police, also committed suicide. These are known. No one knows how many of their subalterns did the same thing. There were many suicides among the officers of the Soviet KGB as well.

On July 15, the Russian magazine "Gudok" reported on a demonstration in Moscow with an estimated attendance of 400,000.

There were posters with messages that were unthinkable a year ago: "Down with the Communist Party!" "Down with the KGB!" "Communism is the scourge of the 20th century." "The Communist Party consists of henchmen and deceivers." And so on.

But the most striking slogan was: "Gorbachev, remember Ceausescu's lot!" There was another praising Fanny Kaplan, a girl who in 1921 had wounded Lenin in an attempt on his life.

A member of the Supreme Soviet, Murashov, delivered a speech in which he said: "We don't want a restructuring (perestroika) of Communism. No reforms, no changes. Communism should perish. The Romanians did well with Ceausescu."

A general of the KGB, Oleg Kalugin, joined the ranks of the opponents of Gorbachev. He declares he has become a democrat, but the opponents don't believe him. They ask him to enumerate the crimes committed in his career that allowed him to rise to the rank of general. In the debates in the press about him, it is suggested that he and others

have changed sides only because of the fate of Ceausescu.

What happened to him also frightened the Communist dictators of Albania, Mongolia, Korea, and Ethiopia, who began to take steps to come to terms with their own people. Romanian blood shed for the cause of liberty by martyrs of the revolution has had wide-ranging effects.

Do We Need Two Religions?

In Oradea, I had one of my most memorable encounters: with my former fellow-inmates Pastor Visky, Pastor Szoke, and others from the so-called Bethanists, a revival movement within the Hungarian-speaking Reformed church.

Several members of this group, theological students as well as pastors, along with pastors of the Hungarian Unitarian church, were in one huge cell together with Catholic and Orthodox priests, some sixty or seventy in all.

Each confession gathered separately, with no common fellowship in Christ. Instead, there were heated debates, not so much about which religion was right but about what was wrong with another's religion.

The story is told of a lone survivor of a shipwreck who made it to a desert island, where he lived like Robinson Crusoe. Two years later, when he was discovered, his rescuers were surprised to find that he had built two prayer houses. "Why would

you, alone on an island, build even one prayer house, let alone two?" they asked.

"Every man needstwo religions," he explained, "one that he is for and one that he is against."

What was the essential question we debated in our overcrowded cell?

The essence of religion cannot be the subject of debate. If it is, the debaters reveal their ignorance. Religion is life, adoration, silence. Though words may indeed be spoken, it is not in the English sense of the expression "word."

The Hebrew word for "word," *davar*, also means "the real thing." In Hebrew, John's Gospel reads, "In the beginning was *Davar*, 'the real thing,' and 'the real thing' was with God, and 'the real thing' was God." The verb "to speak" in Hebrew is *ledaber*, form the root *davar* in its sense of giving a real thing. Even in Greek the word *logos* has both meanings.

Unhappily, at that time I too got caught up in the debates, but I remember telling the following Jewish joke:

A young couple went to a rabbi for divorce. Among Christians, people go to the pastor or priest only for weddings, but in Judaism a rabbi is needed for divorce as well.

The astonished rabbi responded, "I married you only a year ago, and you seemed so much in love with each other. Why do you want a divorce now?"

The woman replied, "Let's not waste any

time. Reconciliation is useless. Just go through the formality. That's all we want. At this point talk is superfluous."

The rabbi insisted: "At least satisfy my curiosity. What happened? What is the reason for divorce?"

The man said, "We had a child, a boy."

"That's no reason for divorce."

"Yes, it is, because we cannot agree on a name for him."

"What name did you choose?"

"I chose 'Nahum,'" he replied.

"Very good—the name of the prophet. But why did you choose this name?"

"Because it was the name of my father."

"Even better. You wish to honor your parent."

The rabbi then turned to the woman. "What name do you wish to give your son?"

She replied, "Nahum."

Surprised, the rabbi asked, "Why did you choose this name?"

"My father's name was also Nahum."

The rabbi couldn't help asking, with wonder, "If you both want the same name for the same reason, why do you quarrel?"

The man replied, "My wife is shrewd. I wish to call him Nahum for my father and she for hers. But her father was a horse thief, and mine was a sage."

This is the impression I get of religious squabbles among Christians. All Christians want

to glorify God's name, work for the coming of His kingdom, spread the Gospel and the message of His love, and more. Then let us love one another!

The rabbi counseled the couple, "Call him Nahum after the prophet. Then live together happily for some twenty years. By that time, if your son becomes either a rabbi or a thief, you will know which parent's name he bears. Why start the quarrel now?"

In the divided cell, it took a long time for us to persuade even the priests of the two Catholic churches, Roman and Byzantine Rite, to say an "Our Father" together.

A Christlike Pastor

During all this mental, physical, and spiritual anguish, Pastor Visky was a unique example to us. Many considered him the most Christlike among us.

During the time when we had one small slice of bread a day with some "soup" of potato peels or rotten carrots, he would give half of his bread to a sick, weak, or older prisoner. Once I remember he shared a sweater with a fellow prisoner. His words were always pleasant, and a smile did not disappear from his lips.

As for the rest of us, we were happy if we chanced to observe in him some little sign of irritation or a harsh word, because we knew then that we still had a chance with God. We reasoned that if a

Christian had to be as advanced in holiness as Pastor Visky to be acceptable to God, our chances were nil.

He retained this composure though he suffered more than we. Somehow he had received news that his wife and six small children had been deported to a desert place where not only food but also water was lacking.

In Gethsemane, when Peter was ready to defend Jesus with a sword, He said to the disciples, "Permit even this." The worst must be accepted with composure and even with joy.

Now I had the joy of meeting Visky and his family. Our mission had supported such families through secret channels in Romania and several other Communist countries. He expressed deep gratitude to all donors who helped him survive.

Which Is the True Biography?

First there was just small talk, but then he gave me the outline of a book on his prison experience that he was writing. I could not believe my ears. All the beautiful attitudes and laudatory deeds I had said about him as illustrations in my sermons, he attributed to me.

Bemused, I asked him, "Was it you or I? Which of us is telling the truth?" Then I knew the answer. It was neither. It was simply what minds with great love, true attachment, and holy fantasy see in their beloved.

Never believe biographies. If they are written by adversaries, they tell not what the man was but what enmity, rancor, or jealousy saw in him. If they are written by admirers, they will reveal the noble heart of the biographer, who ornaments the subject of his book with his own virtues. As for "objective" biographies that tell the story with pedantic exactitude and thrifty dosages of praise or criticism, don't waste your time reading them. They are boring, worth nothing.

Truth is truth only when told by the passionate. The original of the New Testament had no punctuation marks. It is up to us to decide how to punctuate John 14:6, where Jesus says, "I am the way the truth and the life." I would suggest the following: "I am the way: the truth and the life." Those who think like Him never offer prosaic truth by itself but animate it with the beautiful passions of lives worth living.

Visky's children, who grew up in utter misery, are all believers now, some engineers, some pastors, every one is some useful work for the kingdom.

Men like Visky brought love, peace and light to shepherds at loggerheads with one another, even in a prison cell where all suffered for the same Savior. But this common suffering was worthwhile. Christians learned in time to understand and admire each other.

Now, in 1990, Romanian Christians have formed for the first time in history an evangelical

alliance, which includes Baptists, Lutherans, Pentecostals, Brethren, and the Army of the Lord, the cream of the Orthodox church, with an estimated membership of 800,000.

The Roman Catholic church is not in the alliance, but relations with it are correct and friendly. There is no longer the enmity of times past. One side does not call the other "idolaters" and the other does not respond with "heretics." The Catholic archbishop Robu is the only head of a denomination who, in his sermons, took a public stand against the murder of innocents instigated by the new president Iliescu.

The Most Persecuted

As the Byzantine Rite Catholic church (1.5 million members), also known as Uniates, we all admire the heroism in faith of their members. Almost all its bishops and many priests died in jail after severe torture. Their jail sentences totalled 600 years. All their church buildings, schools, and charitable institutions were stolen from them by the Communists and given to the Orthodox church, whose hierarchy was foremost in collaborating with the Reds.

The crime against the Uniate church has not been repaired even now. The government has assured them that in principle they are completely free. But how can 1.5 million people enjoy religious freedom when deprived of all their buildings? The

Orthodox church has not yet returned the stolen property.

The Uniate church has a history of two hundred years of heavy suffering. The church began in the eighteenth century in the Romanian province of Transylvania, at that time under the domination of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy of the Hapsburgs. It was a split from the Orthodox church, to which most Romanians belong. The Uniates retained all the Orthodox rituals but accepted all the dogmas of the Catholic church.

Composed only of Romanians, it suffered in Transylvania all the vexations to which the nation was subjected under the years of Hungarian rule. The church enjoyed freedom for only thirty years, from 1918 when Transylvania united with Romania until 1956 when the Communists abolished it.

The second most persecuted group was the Army of the Lord, whose very existence had not been recognized, either by the state or by the Orthodox church subservient to the state. Only in December 1990, one year after the revolution they were recognized by the state and the Orthodox Hierarchy.

My First Encounter with Jesus

How can I tell all that I experienced in Romania?

With deep emotion I entered the Zlatari Orthodox church in Bucharest. It was the first Chris-

tian church I had ever seen on the inside.

Brought up by non-practicing Jewish parents, I never heard in my childhood either a bad or a good word about Jesus. He was simply unknown to me.

One day as I returned home from school with another boy, he stopped in front of this church and said, "Wait for me a minute. My father asked me to tell the priest something." I said, "No, I'll go in with you." This is how I crossed for the first time the threshold of a church.

I was deeply impressed. Now, re-entering the church after some seventy years, I relived vividly my initial experience.

I saw a picture of a man crucified. I had no idea who this man was but thought he must have been very bad or this would not have been done to him. As a child I was much spanked and probably deserved it. But this Man, bleeding all over, attached with nails to a cross – why?

I also saw a picture of a beautiful young lady, who looked at me with great love. I was not accustomed to such an expression. I was despised for being a Jewish boy, and was also very poorly dressed, thin, frail, small. This lady loved me. I loved her too, from that moment.

I wonder why some Christians never think of Mary with love. The Bible says "all generations will call her blessed." Why don't we?

Reason tells me that I did not actually see the

Crucified or that lady, but only a representation. At that time I had the impression that I was seeing real persons. It was one of the several existential events in my life.

The other boy spoke with the priest, who then came to me and caressed me on the head. It meant much to me, since I was an uncaressed child. He had a fine touch, the kind I felt at my ordination. Bishop Argay really loved me. Only ordinations performed by those with divine love impart gifts of the Holy Spirit.

As the priest caressed, me, he asked, "Little fellow, what can I do for you?"

I was embarrassed, thinking perhaps I was not permitted to be in that strange place. I replied, "Nothing."

He said, "That can't be. I belong to Jesus, who taught us not to allow anyone to pass near us without doing him some good. It is summertime and it is hot outside. I will bring you a cup of cold water."

Jesus – what a strange being! Probably everyone else I had met till then did not know His teachings. They gave me no toy, no chocolate. (When other children ate chocolate, I licked the paper in which it was wrapped.) Jesus changed the water I received into wine. I was stunned.

Being young, I soon forgot this incident. But when I became a Christian, it came back to my memory.

The name of that priest was Cavane.

Many years later when I was an Evangelical pastor, the Fascists came to power. A new priest in that church, Chiricuta, was the only Orthodox priest who allowed me, a Protestant and, even worse, a Jew, to preach regularly at evensong in his church. He was unconcerned that other priests bullied him for this. I became a collaborator for his Orthodox magazine.

During the war, when my wife and I and several other Hebrew Christians were courtmartialed, he dared to offer himself as a defense witness. He defended a Jew when Hitler ruled Europe! His defense and that of a German Baptist pastor resulted in our being the only case in which Jews were acquitted under Hitler. Normally, we would have been condemned, whether guilty or not guilty.

Now, back in Romania after an absence of twenty-five years, I was able to pray in that same church, remembering how much good God had done to me there. God surely has a reward for the one who offered a cup of cold water and unconditional love in His Name.

Anti-Semitism

Only some 15,000 Jews have remained in Romania, which at one time had a Jewish population of 600,000. Many of those—among them my wife Sabina's family — perished in the holocaust.

Quite a few emigrated to Israel and other countries.

But even this small remnant wants to leave the country now. Again there are the stirrings of anti-Semitism, from which it had been shielded under Ceausescu.

And why didn't this dictator persecute the Jews? No one persecutes a cow that gives him milk. The Jews were a great source of income for the government. They were sold to the state of Israel, sometimes at very high prices, depending on their qualifications. The sale of Jews to Israel and ethnic Germans to West Germany enriched the treasury and – it is said – Ceausescu personally. Anti-Semitic publications were forbidden.

Now the situation has changed in Eastern Europe. There is *glasnost* and relative freedom of speech. So anti-Semites are free to reveal the hatred they have in their hearts for Jews.

The Romanian president Iliescu is a former school colleague and personal friend of Gorbachev, who has shown how he feels about Jews by naming to his presidential council Valentin Rasputin (the name means "profligate" in Russian and gained notoriety in the person of an immoral monk who was an intimate adviser to the Russian imperial family). In an interview given to the *New York Times Magazine*, Rasputin said, "Our Jews must feel responsibility for the sins of the revolution and for its consequences...responsibility for the terror that existed during the revolution and especially

after it... Their guilt is great, for they killed God and also Russians."

It is moving to read how painful it is for this high-ranking leader of a God-hating regime to think of God being killed when He came to earth! Certain Jews of old did play a role in the death of Jesus. It was because He Himself was Jew and lived in Israel. Curiously, I never heard accusations against the Greek people for having killed Socrates or the Italian nation for having persecuted Galileo.

The interview with Rasputin was published in January 1990. In March he was named to Gorbachev's presidential council. This was his reward.

Some knew what conclusion to draw from this interview. In the Moscow magazine "Nedelia" (16/1990), one person proposed a simple solution to the Jewish problem. If everyone who understands the Jewish danger would free the country of one single Jew, tomorrow there would no more Jews. Certainly a programme to which the Ayatollah Khomeini and the leaders of the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah would subscribe.

"Nothing distorts human nature so much as maniacal idea. If a man is possessed by the idea that all evil in the world comes from the Jews, Masons, Bolsheviks, heretics, capitalists,, etc., even the best man becomes a wild beast." So wrote Berdiaer.

One can choose among many accusations

against the Jews:

"Christianity is a Jewish ideology into which nations have been tricked to create a Judeo Christian civilization, so that in the end the whole world will become an enlarged Israel."

"Communists were right in fighting Capitalism, but they did not say who is guilty of it: the Jews."

"Columbus was a Jew whodiscovered America with the purpose of making it a center of Zionism, from which the Jews would dominate the world through the dollar."

"International Communism was also created by the Jew Marx for the purpose of destroying love for one's nation and fatherland." And so on.

This anti-Jewish propaganda could not be spread in the USSR without the connivance of Gorbachev's government.

From the Soviet Union, anti-Semitism spreads to other countries just freed from the shackles of Communism. All are passing through a grave economic crisis. In Romania, the new government has declared it will no longer subsidize the prices of bread, milk, meat, etc., which means prices may soon rise by 50%. In times of crisis people need to blamesomeone, and the Jews provide a convenient scapegoat. For two thousand years of history this has been the case.

Some of the Romanian Communist leaders were Jewish: Ana Pauker, Kishinevski, Rautu,

along with some of the leaders of the Secret Police. That the majority were Romanians or Hungarians doesn't matter, the Jews are guilty.

While it is true that the actual prime minister Roman is a Jew, it must be remembered that Marx himself was also a Jew and a Jew hater.

Romanian anti-Semites who are also anti-Hungarian, are grouped under the name *Vatra Romaneasca*, "The Romanian Home."

Romanian Jews, as well as those in other Eastern European countries, are concerned. But where should they go? The USA does not receive them. In Israel, Arabs kill Jews and there is always imminent danger of war.

There are in Romania Jewish Christian efforts to acquaint Jews with their King, Jesus. Many are from the province of Bessarabia theater of World War II. They remember that when the Nazi army entered, posters were seen everywhere: "Calamities come from the dirty Jews"; "Jews have provoked this war"; "Jews are behind Communism"; "Death to the Jews." And the Jew-haters did not only threaten. Rare are the Jewish families from that province who had no relatives executed by Nazi firing squads or departed to camps. Almost the whole of my wife's family perished in such a camp.

Since the situation of Romania cannot be assessed apart from the rest of Eastern Europe and especially the Soviet Union, a few words are in

order about the latter.

Gorbachev a Blessing

Gorbachev has been a blessing for the Western world. Just imagine the Iraq crisis with the USSR and the West opposed to each other, as in the cold war!

When, during the thirties, Stalin killed all the high command of his own army, suspecting them of intrigue against him, Italy's Fascist dictator Mussolini wrote, "Stalin is a disguised Fascist."

Gorbachev is hardly an agent of the American CIA, but he has done its work well. He undermined the power of the Soviet Union and with it the power of Communism in the whole Eastern Europe. The Western Communist Parties have also been shattered.

I remember how, when I arrived in the USA, the general secretary of the World Council of Churches begged me not to publish the atrocities of Communism. But Gorbachev caused them to be publicized. Today you can read in the Soviet newspapers about the millions of innocents killed and about the whole populace being robbed, exploited, and oppressed by the Communists.

But while he himself exposes the cataclysm Communism brought to Russia, Gorbachev and his comrades, nicknamed the *nomenklatura*, still cling to power. They acknowledge they have nothing to give to the people, yet they continue to wield power

and, begging money from the Capitalists, they lead Russia to tragedy, a bloodbath that might surpass everything history has known till now.

Perhaps they are guided by the instinct of self-preservation. Or perhaps they have simply abandoned planning and thinking about a more distant future.

Though Gorbachev plays a leading role in the preparation of the drama, he himself would be better suited to play the actor in a farce. He presides over the dismantling of his Party and of the Soviet Union itself, yet ends the congresses by singing the "Internationale," venerable hymn of Communism. He and his cohorts chant about fighting to the end the deadly battle that will give the whole world the "ideal" society that is now in its death throes in its homeland, Russia. Their slogan is still "Proletarians of the world, unite!" Then they decide at their congresses that the Ukrainian, Russian, Byelorussian, Baltic, and Uzbek Communists should go their separate ways.

These decisions only help to enhance extreme nationalism. The result will be a new brand of Fascism or, more likely, several brands of Fascism, because each of the Soviet republics will have its own to foster against others.

Gorbachev and his ilk have played a major role in emasculating Soviet and Eastern European Communism. Without intending to do so, they have rendered the free world a great service, putting off

for a time the threat of war between East and West.

Should Christians Be in Politics?

Before going further, I feel I must reply to a criticism often heard. This question is very pertinent. Should a Christian and especially a pastor depart from the Bible and speak out on political matters? This question is very acute for Romanian Christians as well.

Some claim we should speak out on political issues, while others say we shouldn't. They somehow don't realize that by speaking out fervently about not making politics, they are playing the political game. Why don't they use their energy to explain the atonement of Christ or the doctrine of the Trinity.

The word "politics" comes from the Greek *polis*, meaning city. "Alms" is doing good to a few men, "philanthropy" is doing good to many, and "politics" is the art of doing good to a nation, and even beyond.

Some 70% of the Bible is concerned with politics: the constitution of a nation, its liberation from slavery, the multitude of its wars against other nations, laws regarding social relations, agriculture, hygiene, matrimony, inheritance, the establishment of monarchies and the rivalries among them, along with the misdeeds of rulers, much as the media would expose them today.

"Give to Caesar what is Caesar's" is political

advice, as is incitement to rebellion. "Be submissive to authorities" is also political advice, along with descriptions by Daniel and the Revelation of world rulers as ferocious beasts.

We have to evaluate political events to find our way through them. Many discussions among Romanian Christians were not only about the ascent of the soul from the earthly to the angelic, which is holiness, but also about political events in the country under Communism in particular.

Preaching Under Escort

Another place with powerful memories is the Baptist church in Giuleshti, a suburb of Bucharest. I had been invited to preach there the first Sunday after Romania entered World War II, in 1941. At that time the Nazis dominated our country, and when their army attacked Russia, it was in alliance with our troops. The slogan was, "Destroy Communism created by the dirty Jews. Beat the Jews!"

I went to church with a group of other Hebrew Christians. The brethren had invited many unbelievers, telling them who would be the preacher. The Baptists were already hated by the Orthodox. Now something even worse was about to take place: a Jew would preach in the pulpit of the despised Baptist sect.

Anti-Semites could not stomach the situation. They denounced this intolerable crime to the police, and we six Hebrew Christians were arrested. A

Romanian Christian lady, Sister Mindrutz, knocked at the gate of the prison where my wife and I and the four other Jews were detained and said, "My brethren from the chosen people suffer here for Christ. I wish to suffer with them. Her demand was graciously accepted. She was put in the same cell with us. Now we were seven: three Jews, three Jewesses, and the Romanian.

The cell was small, with only one single bed. The police officer said, "You, priest {meaning me}, will sleep in the bed and all the others on the floor."

Meanwhile the Orthodox priest of Giuleshti went to the police to make sure that we would not be freed. He also spoke with me to convince me that there was no place for Jews in Christianity. At that time, the patriarchy had forbidden the baptism of Jews.

Following the Giuleshti arrest we were taken to the prison of the Military Tribunal for interrogatories. While we were being questioned, the air raid alarm sounded. Bucharest was being attacked by Soviet planes.

Soldiers with bayonets on their rifles escorted us to the basement, along with our investigators, the staff of the Tribunal, our prosecutors and future judges. We prisoners were kept in a corner under strict surveillance. The conversation of the others was about trifles. One young lady complained about a new garment she had not yet worn – and now the bombing!

Then the first bombs were heard falling. The explosions shook the earth. Weeping and panic broke out. Seizing the opportunity, I said with authority, "You have a pastor among you. I will give you a word of comfort from Scripture, and then we will pray. Please kneel."

Everyone knelt, including guards, prosecutors, and judges. I was then able to speak to them from the Word of God.

When the bombing was over, we were taken back to our cells, escorted again by soldiers with bayonets they would not hesitate to use if we attempted to escape. Those who had knelt at my command a half-hour before were again my prosecutors and judges.

All these events I relived on seeing the Malmezon prison. What I have just recounted took place in Fascist times. Later, under the Communists, I was again a guest in this same prison.

A Spiritual Experience

In one of its solitary cells, I had had a spiritual experience to which I alluded in several sermons delivered in Romania upon my recent return. I say "alluded" because a deep spiritual experience cannot be adequately expressed in any language. One enters into contact with reality that is neither namable nor explainable. Therefore the Bible is God's revelation in both senses of the word: it reveals something so that we may perceive it, but

it also re-veils it.

Explaining what you experience often does little good. Beethoven had experiences and put them in music. A sculptor in Buenos Aires carved for a cemetery nine statues symbolizing the nine symphonies. After I had visited the site, someone asked me to explain what the statues were. Sentiments had become music, which then became sculpture, which needed words for interpretation. How much of a relationship would these words have had with Beethoven's experiences?

The Bible says, "Taste and see that the Lord is good." (Psalm 34:8) No speech, no music could explain to you the difference between the taste of a watermelon and a peach. Only tasting works.

We can hint at spiritual experiences but only with the aim of encouraging others to have their own. Put through the filter of words, such experiences are diminished in value. Everyone has to make an individual effort to obtain the capacity to see reality beyond appearance.

A Zen master was asked by a disciple, "What is Buddha?" He replied, "This flax weighs three pounds" – another way of saying, "What Buddha is cannot be expressed in words. Let us spend our time better by talking about practical things."

If Buddha cannot be expressed in words, even less can Jesus.

Timelessness

I have spent years in solitary confinement in

three different prisons. While there, I lost track on time. Our solitary cells had only a window facing the corridor, none on the outside. We never knew if it was bitter winter or beautiful Maytime. We could not tell night from day. The same electric bulb burned constantly. Probably for the purpose of confusing us, the prisons had no fixed program of hours when they would awaken prisoners, give them food, or allow them to toilet. We were time-disoriented.

We lived in timelessness as astronauts live in weightlessness. If prolonged for years, timelessness produces a state of mind apart, not comprehensible intellectually.

Our senses had nothing to sense. Perfect silence reigned. We almost never heard a voice or a whisper, and the guards wore felt-soled shoes. There was nothing to be seen. Endlessly we were surrounded by the same gray walls. We forget that colours exist. The stench was overpowering and unrelenting, to the point of paralyzing the olfactory nerve. To this day I cannot smell the perfume of flowers. As for taste, the food was always bland and bad and always the same.

Our minds were not oriented to the senses or regulated by logic.

As I tried to relive those days on my return to Romania as a free man, it was difficult to interpret those experiences for contemporary ears as I spoke in churches. However, being Jewish helps when it

comes to timelessness.

Biblical Hebrew does not have our tenses: *I eat, I ate, I have eaten, I had eaten, I will eat, I will have eaten*, and so on. God's people are not intended to cut time in pieces: past, present, and future. This dividing of time is not natural. The past is not only past; it lives very much in the present, often carrying with it joy or sadness. It will also live in the future. The basis of today and tomorrow is what has been accumulated in the past. Some of the past was also determined by the previous perspective of the future.

We are part of one undivided ocean, in which waves flow back and forth but remain part of the same ocean.

And so as I gazed at the prison walls that had contained me and thought of what went on below, I tried to relive old experiences.

Crucified for You Today

How easy it is for one who can divide time to accept salvation. I can be forgiven of all my sins and obtain heaven by believing that Jesus died for me, a long time ago. He chose to suffer for me without asking me. He suffered on the cross for a few hours and then died. On the third day he was resurrected, then returned to heaven, where He has lived now for two thousand years. It would give Him great joy if I were converted. Then why shouldn't I become a Christian? It would give us mutual joy.

Therefore many people come forward during an evangelistic appeal with a smile on their face. In great crusades few tears are shed.

With us, dwelling in timelessness, it was otherwise. Everything was experienced only in the present. Golgotha did not belong to the past but was a present event. It was as if Jesus were standing before me, saying, "You have sinned. For you I will be whipped and crucified. Before your very eyes you will see and hear nails being driven into my flesh. You will see my holy mother weeping at the foot of the cross. Do you accept this my actual sacrifice for you, or do you prefer to bear the punishment of your sins yourself?"

The crucifixion was no longer an old story read in a book. I had to decide then and there who should die: Barabbas or Jesus.

Peter and John and Magdalene did not have to accept a past sacrifice of Christ, but one in the present or near future. No guilty person with a sense of decency would allow himself to be the eyewitness of the actual cruel death of someone else for what he had done. Neither could we in solitary confinement.

Now I relived what I understood then. It was never intended that salvation should be the result of His dying for me, period. There is no period after His death, not even a comma. We are meant to be "crucified and buried together with Him" (Romans 6:6), which is something entirely different.

Luther called the book of James a "straw epistle" because it teaches that faith alone without deeds is not sufficient. He was wrong. "We are saved by faith" – no period after this assertion. We have to add many sacrifices to this faith (II Peter 1:5-8) It is a sacrifice to remain always pure, loving, forgiving, active in God's service. We have to fill up what is lacking in the cross of Christ.

The priest Cheruvian did so. Forced after unspeakable torture to give a Satanist Communion, pronouncing the holy words "This is My body" and "This is My blood" over human excrement and urine, he later told me, "I have suffered more than Christ." As far as physical torture was concerned, perhaps this was true.

In timelessness, we lived simultaneously the passion of Christ, His resurrection, His Ascension, and His final triumph.

In that solitary cell, we were also concerned not only with the earthly life of men but with their eternal life as well. Death is not an end. In timelessness, we also experienced the afterlife.

Where Is Ceausescu Today?

With these thoughts in mind, I preached again in Romanian churches. I asked my listeners, "Where are the Ceausescus today? He was not able to finish his last speech. The audience booed him and he fled. But now he speaks again. Don't you hear him?"

"In Jesus' parable, the rich man in hell begged Abraham to send someone to his brothers to tell them not to lead lives that would bring them to the same place of torment. He was refused; he had petitioned the wrong man. Abraham had been very harsh with Hagar, mother of his own child. He expelled her from his house with only a loaf of bread and a skin full of water. Why should he show pity to those in hell?

"But perhaps Ceaushescu petitions Jesus, with whom he has a better chance. The rich man was not totally wicked. At least he had love for his brothers. Perhaps Ceaushescu too loves some of his old Communist comrades. Perhaps he asks each of us now, 'Go to other Communists and tell them that I suffer the fire and brimstone of condemnation. Warn them to seek another way.'

"Whoever has experienced timelessness or, in better words, reality beyond the temporal, hears not only the songs of cherubim and seraphim calling him, but also the howling of those in despair in hell. And there is something even more unbearable to listen to: the deep silence of those kept in darkness. (I Samuel 2:9).

"The silence of some pleads from hell, 'Tell the good news to the worst of men. Think about their terrible destiny. Jesus is interested in them. He proved it by descending into hell.'

There were unusual strains in my Romanian sermons. I thank God they were well received. For

those moments of triumph in my homeland I had passed through much suffering and sickness and perils of all kinds. It was all by God's grace.

A Sign from God

In the case of Chinese women over seventy, mortality diminishes by 35% before the harvest feast. In the week following, it returns to normal. This has been established in the studies of the death dates of Chinese-Americans in California. The expectation of a feast, the sentiment of duty to help prepare for it, can influence mortality. With Orthodox Jews, mortality diminishes before the Passover feast and returns to normal during the week following.

Epidemiological research reports only on physical, chemical, and psychological factors that influence mortality. Religion has its influence too.

My wife and I believed that God would prove that we were justified in our fight, in which we had encountered much opposition and contradiction. He would give a sure sign. We willed not to die before revisiting the old places, bearing triumphantly the banner of Christ. More were on our side than the enemy's.

I revisited Romania and its churches at the age of 81. I will not disclose my wife's age, but she too knew the triumph when well advanced in years.

Romania Not Yet Whole

What one sees on the map is not the whole of Romania. The vicissitudes of history have caused much of the national to live outside its boundaries.

In 1939, when Hitler and Stalin divided up Eastern Europe, Russia obtained the Romanian provinces Bessarabia and Bucovina. The Red army occupied them at the end of World War II.

The Soviets renamed Bessarabia "Moldavia" and invented a language that the Bessarabian Romanians were obliged to use. To do so, they mixed Romanian with a number of Russian words and then required that the result be written in the Cyrillic alphabet of Russian instead of the Latin alphabet used in the West. Romanians are the only Latins of Eastern Europe, but they were forbidden to use their own alphabet.

Bulgaria also stole from Romania – the province of Cadrilater.

To the east of Bessarabia is Transnistria, another territory thickly populated by Romanians. The province of Banat, in Yugoslavia, is ethnically Romanian, as is the language spoken there.

We hope this whole territory will be reunited with the motherland once and for all under our beloved King Michael I. It should certainly be the concern of the Romanian churches.

It was special sorrow to me that the Bible, even the New Testament, has not yet been translated into the Macedo-Romanian language spoken

by a compact Romanian minority in Greece, Bulgaria, Yugoslavia, Albania. Lydia, the first Christian in Europe, was a Macedonian. (Acts 16:12-14) Her language must have been Macedo-Romanian, which is nothing but a dialect of Romanian, but the difference is still so great that an uncultured Macedo-Romanian would not understand a plain Romanian Bible. It would be like Breton and French, Frisian and Dutch, Swiss-German and German, though the Swiss-German, being cultured, would know classical German.

European Christians owe it to the memory of Lydia, the first European Christian, to care about the translation of the Bible into Macedo-Romanian.

Romanian Martyrs

Romanian Christians also miss much by the lack of communications with Bessarabia. This eastern province stolen by the USSR is known as a center of exquisite Christians.

The renowned martyr Vania Moiseev was from that area. In spite of his name, he was Romanian and did not even know the Russian language. The Soviets have russified Romanian names. Moisiu was renamed Moiseev.

He had been a soldier in the Red Army. He had the same faith we have, with one difference: his faith was contagious.

True faith is like the flu. If you have the flu, it is catching. So also is faith. In his regiment, soldiers

and officers were converted.

His superiors ordered him to keep silent, to avoid speaking about his beliefs, to stop singing. He replied, "What would a nightingale do if ordered to stop singing? It cannot stop, and neither can I."

So they torture him and in the end drowned him after stabbing him repeatedly in the heart.

While under persecution, he sent word to his mother: "They give me much pain. I might die at their hands. But don't weep, mother. (He was 21. At that age it is still possible to believe you can stop a mother from weeping.) An angel showed me heavenly Jerusalem, and it is beautiful. Do your best, mother, to meet me there."

Did this Vania really see an angel? People can have foolish hallucinations. But we have proof he did, because, as an uncultured peasant boy, he described this angel as no professor of theology would.

He went on to say, "Angels are transparent. When you have one in front of you and a man stands behind him, the presence of the angel does not keep you from seeing the man. On the contrary, you see him better. Seen through an angel, all men look more lovely. You can understand and appreciate even a torturer."

Many regret they have never looked upon an angel. They are wrong. You see an angel as often as you accept an unlovely person, as often as you love the one who hurts you.

Vania Moiseev is the pride of our Romanian nation.

Another is the young girl Sophia Chiriac. From the age of eighteen she worked in the underground print shop of the unregistered Soviet Baptists. Confined in a small cellar full of machines, paper, ink, and stocks of books, she had little room to move, stagnant air to breathe, and never any sunshine.

She became sick but could not go to a physician. The rule of conspiracy is that once on the staff of such a secret enterprise you never leave it till near death. When she was finally taken to a hospital, it was too late.

Sophia was a Romanian girl who had sacrificed her life to give light to the Russian nation that had subjugated her own.

And then there is another Bessarabian, the well-known confessor Nikolai Horev, who was repeatedly in Soviet jails and came out each time strengthened in faith, a shining example to others.

From all he said and wrote I value most a prayer of his: "Lord, you are my shepherd forever, and I am your sheep forever. May Your rod always be in Your hand so that when I am in danger, you will protect me from my enemies, or when I stray from Your way into wrong paths, either through temptation or through the fear of difficulties, You will use Your rod to bring me back to the right way.

"And should I ever ask You, O Lord, for

anything different from what I am asking You now, please ignore it.” }

Have you ever asked God to ignore your prayers if they should keep you, or others through you, from becoming a saint?

We hope Bessarabia, as well as all the other territories formerly inhabited by Romania, will soon unite with the motherland.

At this moment, the fact that we have a Communist government bodes ill for the fulfillment of our national ideal: the union of all Romanians.

Confessions

Much of my time in Romania was taken up with hearing confessions.

I was terribly tired after having preached twice or thrice a day but was not allowed to go to bed. Some with burdened hearts asked me to listen to them. Perhaps it is good for confessors to be tired, because then they speak less and don't interrupt, letting the words and tears of the penitents just flow.

Not one of the main collaborators with the Communists and none of the outright traitors confessed this particular sin. I met with men who had denounced their brethren in faith to the authorities, knowing how much they would have to suffer as a result. When I was arrested, the police officer who interrogated me let slip the name of one who denounced me. In another case, I was given the actual denunciation to read.

Those guilty of such extremes of apostasy never confessed the worst they had done. They told sins that were minimal, but their disproportionate regret showed that they carried a much heavier, though unacknowledged, burden.

I understood. Cain, after killing his brother, said to God, "*Gadol avoni linso* – My sin is greater than one can bear." (So the original of Genesis 4:13)

When conscience reproaches a person for an extreme sin, memory tells him, "You never did it." And memory usually succeeds in convincing conscience. This happened in Germany. It was too difficult to acknowledge that millions of Jews had been killed, so conscience was silenced. Memory won: "It did not happen."

I know how difficult it is for me to admit the worst sins I have committed and my reluctance to confess them to anyone, even to God. On the other hand, reason tells me – very often rightly – that it is far from wise for a person with standing in the church to tell his sins to any man. An American evangelist produced havoc for the babes in Christ by confessing on TV, before an audience of millions, a sin that only two or three persons knew about.

In Romania we had an Orthodox monk, Arsene Boca, who would tell the penitent, "I know it is too difficult for you to relate certain things you did. Therefore I will tell them to you." He was a man with clairvoyance. But a confessor doesn't need this quality. It can drive one mad to know all the sins of

his interlocutors. Be modest. Be happy about the little you are told. God is a modest God. David and Manasseh did not spell out all the gruesome details of their sins.

David simply said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." (II Samuel 12:13) No more was required.

Brethren who sinned the worst under Communism did not confess, though some of them might have made decisions in their heart to change.

You may wonder who confessed with tears: it was the best, the most heroic. They felt guilty, some for having survived. If they had been heroic the whole time – and no one can, – if they had stepped forward and protested each time another was beaten, they would have died of the many beatings they would have received.

Others felt guilty that, because of their involvement in the underground church, the family had broken up. Their children had not approved of the fact that father or mother went to jail for their beliefs and left them to eat from the garbage, suffer poor health, and forego proper schooling. Their reproach was always the same: "If father had kept quiet like so many other believers, we would not have been deprived of a normal childhood." And so the parent returned from jail and found hostile children and sometimes a bitter spouse too. They felt it was all their fault.

It is difficult to win in this life. Other children

were rebellious against parents who had played a treacherous role. These children could not bear the thought of being children of a Judas.

Many felt guilty for having lied to the police during investigation, to protect themselves or to keep others being arrested. They had been taught strict honesty.

For Christians who think like this, it would have been wise never to engage in secret work. Such work is impossible for someone who considers it a sacred principle always to tell the full truth.

A Bible smuggler from the West to Eastern Europe told me, "I never said a lie." I asked him, "When applying for a Russian or Romanian visa, what did you declare as the purpose of your visit?" He replied, "Tourism." This was already a lie.

"Lies" in self-defense, in defense of innocents or the church are not really lies. When in danger of death, Paul defended himself before the priestly council with these words: "I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged" (Acts 23:6), which was certainly not the issue.

But those who felt the guilt of having lied were not accessible to any ethical niceties. They said, "If these Communist police were to find out that I lied to them in matters about which I was questioned, how would they believe what I told them about salvation?"

Others had something else on their heart. They had not seen a female for years, even decades. Once free, they found every girl an irresistible temptation. (This was less true of Catholic priests, who had been brought up with the discipline of Celibacy, than of Evangelicals.)

I told everyone about the blood of Christ that cleanses every sin, and souls found rest. Such conversations in intimacy were as important as speeches delivered to audiences of thousands.

I had the advantage of having known great confessors personally. One was an English missionary to the Romanian Jews, David Adeney. When a person confessed to him a heavy sin, Adeney would weep. His tears spoke. He added to them not a word. I had also known the Lutheran bishop Frederic Muller. No matter what sin of mine I told him, he would always reply, "This I have too. It belongs to all men, just as forgiveness belongs to God."

I had known the Orthodox priest Suroianu, who, when I told him many sins of mine, said, "Well, you have plenty of sins, and grievous ones. But beware of one sin, that of despair. Never believe that your sins can be more or greater than God's grace. You can never out-sin God. He forgives for Christ's sake. Go in peace."

The Brother Who Died for Me

To each person who came to me, probably four or five in an evening, I told a story that I had told

to robbers and murderers in jail. I felt it was appropriate for saints carrying remorse, and I offer it to the reader for comfort, regardless of the monstrous sins he may have committed:

In the olden days there were two brothers, the elder good and devout, the younger a libertine who revelled with unsavory companions.

The elder brother prayed for the younger and often begged him to change his life, but all seemed in vain.

One night as the elder brother sat in his study reading, the younger brother rushed into his room, begging, "Save me! The police are after me! I have killed a man." There were bloodstains on his clothes.

The older brother grasped the situation immediately and said, "I will save you. Let us change clothes." He took the bloodstained suit of the criminal and gave him his white robe.

The two had barely dressed when the police arrived. They had pursued the criminal from the place where the deed had been committed and seized the brother in the bloodstained garment.

Brought before the judge, he pleaded guilty, saying, "I bear the whole responsibility for the crime."

Faced with the evidence before him - the pursuit, the blood, the confession - the judge had no doubt. He sentenced the man to death, then asked him his final wish.

"Only one," said the supposed criminal. "I

want my brother to receive this letter, which I have prepared for him, at the very moment I am hanged."

The wish was granted.

The next day, his brother received the letter. Opening it, he read: "My beloved, at this very moment, I die in your place, in your bloodstained clothes, for your crime – and I am happy to offer this sacrifice on your behalf!

"But I would like you, in the white clothes I gave you, to lead a life of righteousness and purity. I have no other desire!"

The younger brother, on reading these words, was taken by remorse. He ran to stop the execution – but it was too late. Then he ran to the judge to confess his crime, but the judge would not listen to him." A murder was committed; it has been expiated. What was between you two brothers is of no interest to us."

After that, as often as his former comrades in revellry called the young lad to drinking parties and loose living, he would say, "In the white clothes left to me by the brother who gave his life for me, I can no longer do the evil deeds I did before."

You Received an Angel

I was in the Christian home of a couple I had married some forty years before. They reminded me of what I had preached at their wedding.

I had told them that on the preceding evening, unable to sleep, I was wondering what to say to

them at the ceremony. My wife was already asleep. I was having considerable difficulty finding a suitable text for the occasion. Only one verse of the Bible kept coming to my mind: "Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels." (Hebrews 13:2) I dismissed it. How can one make a wedding sermon out of that?

But since it was on my mind, I tried to figure out who of the many who had stayed in our home was an angel. Some later proved to be devils, some were nice people, but angels? None fell into this category.

While speculating like this, I chanced to look at my sleeping wife, and I said to myself, "This is the angel entertained by me unwittingly."

That became the text of my wedding sermon. "You, the bridegroom, are now receiving an angel. Angels were badly treated in Sodom. Others are not taken into consideration. You give to your bride the honor due to an angel."

Forty years have passed. He still calls her not by her name, but "angel."

In the USA, 50% of marriages end in divorce, and probably a good 50% of the other half wallow in quarrels. Even a great number of pastors divorce. I rejoiced that it is not so in my homeland. Divorce among evangelicals is a rare event.

It would be easy to say that this situation is due to the higher spiritual level of believers. But

there is a more down-to-earth explanation: the hardship of life.

When husband and wife, after a day of hard labor, have to stand in line many hours for the bare necessities of life, there is less time to quarrel. One man told me, "Our apartment is not heated in winter. The electric bill is high. We cannot afford to have many bulbs burning. The cozy atmosphere needed for a nice quarrel is missing, so we forego it."

In contrast to this, the opulence in the West favors divorce. I have known couples who divorced because of quarrels about how to squander their surplus on futilities. If Western Christians gave more of their surplus to good causes, the number of divorces would decrease drastically.

Christianity and Communism

This leads me to express a few thoughts about the relationship between Christianity and Communism.

I have long been aware that, on a practical level, sinful mankind does not know a better economic system than capitalism. This contradicts Communism, but between Christianity and Communism the contradiction is not total.

We come from God, theories are from the devil. But how is that the name "Communism" is so much akin to notions dear to Christians, such as "the communion of saints," "holy communion." etc? Whenever I met with a convinced revolutionist, I

felt guilty. I would say to myself, "He is the wrong kind of Communist, because I am not the right kind."

Nowadays we discuss how one becomes a Christian: Is it through infant or believer's baptism, sprinkling or immersion? Does one receive the Holy Spirit at the same time, or is this a second experience? Which denomination should one join, if any?

It was not so in the beginning. In the early years of the Christian church, all believers "had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need." (Acts 2:44,45) Today it is difficult to guess which confession is the church that Christ willed. Is it the Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Baptist, Pentecostal, Adventist? However, we can be sure that one church was organized as Jesus willed it. After the resurrection, he spent forty days with His disciples and surely must have told them what to do. He taught that the multitude of those who believe should be one heart and one soul; that no one should say that anything he possessed was his own; that they should all things in common. (Acts

4 5:32)

Measured by this standard, all of today's Christian denominations are heresies.

It is obvious that contemporary Christianity, which numbers hundreds of millions on all continents, must have other life structures than when it

had only a few thousand in Jerusalem, but the principle should remain the same. We should all be able to say, "None of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself." (Romans 14:7)

A theoretician of the New Age movement read my book *Tortured for Christ*, in which I describe the heroic virtues of Christians in the underground church under Communism. Then he wrote, "If today's Christians in the West were like this, the New Age movement would not have been arisen."

I can paraphrase him: "if we had been the right kind of Communists, we would not have the wrong kind of Communists opposing us."

Meanwhile, we should not deceive ourselves. The Communist ideal has lost some very important battles, but it is far from being defeated or extinguished.

I repeat: a fourth of mankind is still under Communist rule. China with 1.1 billion people and Russia with 280 million, which still has a one-party Communist system at the moment I write these lines. There is Communism in Vietnam, Cambodia, Zimbabwe, Angola and Cuba. In Nicaragua, the army, police and trade unions are still under Communist control, while the government belongs to a divided opposition.

And there are still thousands in Romania and other Eastern countries, where a major change has taken place, who still want Communism—some to regain the privileges they lost, some because they

retain their Communist ideology. Many of the political concepts they believed in, many axioms they took for granted, crumbled with the Berlin Wall, but they are still sure that a society in which people have all things in common and share according to need, a society without millionaires on one side and homeless on the other, is to be preferred to the Capitalist society in which profit is the main spring for action.

Is there any Christian who loves Jesus' teachings who does not see that they have a point? It might not be practicable, but there are many impractical things that have spiritual value.

We should all feel some uneasiness in our conscience when we read the Master's words: "Sell all you have and give to the poor, if you wish to be perfect." Is there anyone among us who does not have at least the longing for perfection?

Our God is modest and looks at our modest, sincere desires as if they were accomplished fact. It is not easy to go back two thousand years and fulfill all commands literally just as they were given. But I feel a bond uniting me with every sincere Communist and can extend to him wholehearted love. The fact that I suffered under Communism is not motive enough to reject it totally.

Communists no longer kill wholesale in Russia or Romania, but they continue to kill retail wherever they have guerrillas, as in the Philippines and Latin America. Though they are killers,

they are also ready to die for their beliefs. Therefore they should not be simply discarded as worthless junk.

Communism is the old dream of mankind for a kingdom of justice and happiness. Whence did this ideal arise if not from a reminiscence of paradise? Many anthropologists maintain Communism is the first primitive social order.

Communism as practiced by Marxism has been and still is horrible. Today even the Communist press in Russia admits this.

Distinguish Ideals from Their Supporters

Some will be shocked that, I, a man who has suffered so much, can still say a good word about Communism as a principle. Intellectual and spiritual progress is impossible if we do not make a clear-cut distinction between an ideal that can be sublime and the gruesome deeds of those who proclaim themselves its adherents.

If we were to take into account the very base deeds committed at a certain stage of their lives by David, Solomon, and Paul, we could have to discard their writings as unacceptable.

Why should anyone in the Caribbean area accept Christianity? Spanish discoverers who in the sixteenth century voyaged to the New World to convert people to the Christian faith, hanged natives in rows of thirteen "in honor of the Redeemer

and His twelve apostles."

"They had their hands cut off when they did not bring in their quarterly quota of gold dust. Their chiefs were roasted on fires of green wood. When their cries kept the Spaniards awake, they were silenced with wooden slats put over their tongues. Ten years after the first landing, the miserable native survivors started killing themselves by eating poisoned roots.

"Yes, Christopher Columbus was the first European to sail to America in recorded history. But Columbus set into motion a sequence of greed, cruelty, slavery and genocide that, even in the bloody history of mankind, has few parallels. He organized an extermination of native Americans. He was also as mean, cruel and greedy in small matters as he was in vast ones.

"I am not giving any radical opinions here. These aren't new facts. You can find them substantiated in the logs of Columbus's son, in the writing of Bartolome de las Casas, a Spanish bishop and historian of the time, and in plenty of other period documents.

"It may seem a pity to let go of dear national lore. But we can no longer in good faith celebrate this man and this occasion. We must look at our own past with open eyes.

"We must end the phony baloney about the white man bringing Christianity, and about Columbus the noble son of the humble weaver. Our

false heroes and a false sense of the meaning of courage and manliness have too long burdened our national spirit.

"We must set out for a new harmony of races, for an atonement of past crimes. In that way, we have a truly New World to discover." (*New York Times*, 6/8/90)

Great crimes have been committed over the centuries against Jews and fellow Christians of other persuasions as well. Because of this, should we forego the Christian teaching altogether?

Christians love their enemies, all their enemies. They have a loving understanding for what makes a man an enemy. Communists, on the other hand, are passionate in evil. They have learned Communism from Marx, who had connections with Satanism, as I proved in my book *Marx-Prophet of Darkness*.

We can teach what the first Christians learned directly from Jesus: to have all things in common; not to claim anything for oneself; to share with the brethren.

After two thousand years, living as we do under entirely different circumstances, we may not be able to follow the command explicitly. But the great principle remains: Christians have to deny themselves, deny their ego, their selfishness. Not one of us lives or dies to himself.

Let us show that the spirit of primitive Christianity, has not been extinguished.

I believe there is no greater and more effective Communism ever propagated in the world than the loving, giving Communism practiced by the first Christians and continued by many groups since. It is the only panacea for the economic and social ills of the world. Mankind will have to ascend a steep road toward this ideal. For the time being, however, Capitalism is surely better than Communism as we have seen it.

Dancing in Prison

Once when I was especially hungry in the Jilava jail, Lieutenant Franco from the Securitate came to investigate me. Angry about such an untimely visit, I decided I would investigate him. I asked him about his soul, with the result that he was converted and gave me the lunch he had brought for himself: sandwiches with fine, white bread and the most expensive sausage. I even had dessert, luscious chocolate candies.

He now lives in Israel.

Another time, in the solitary cell under what later became the headquarters of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, I remembered Jesus' words: "When men hate you and revile you, rejoice and leap for joy." (Luke 6:23) It occurred to me that I had neglected a duty. I had rejoiced but not leaped for joy, which is compulsory in such a situation. So I began to dance around the cell.

The warden, who kept an eye on me through

the peephole in the door, was sure I had gone mad. Guards had orders to behave well toward madmen so they would not disturb the silence of the prison. To quiet me down, he brought a large loaf of bread, cheese, and two pieces of sugar.

Romania should do what all believers are intended to do when in distress. Do nothing practical to remedy a situation that is irremediable. Just praise the Lord, sing, dance in His honor. There are angels who can take care of the rest, not only for individuals but for whole nations. Isaiah recommends just "quietness and confidence" (30:15).

Some will discard such advice as foolishness. It is surely more practical to be a fool in Christ than to be a "wise" man foolishly angry about what he cannot help.

Why No Apology?

In spontaneous actions, Western Evangelical and Catholic groups have done much to help the Romanian people in need since the revolution. Great quantities of Bibles and good Christian books have also been sent in.

But this is not enough to establish right relations between East and West.

After the War, the churches of Germany, acknowledging that Nazism killed millions of Jews, made public statements of apology for having supported the Nazis or at least for allowing mass slaughter to take place without protesting and

helping the persecuted to escape. The German democratic government itself recognized their national guilt and gave great sums of money in restitution to the surviving victims.

Romania and other Eastern European states were given into the hands of Communist butchers—already known as such—by Britain and the USA at Yalta. In his memories, Churchill says that he passed a slip of paper to Stalin, whom he had characterized previously as a bloody criminal, with the following proposal: “You give me Greece and Romania will be yours.” He disposed of Romania as if it were his private possession. Roosevelt went along with him as they committed their nations to handing over whole countries to God-hating rulers. Hundreds of thousands of innocents died as a result. My country has been ruined.

Meanwhile, the World Council of Churches for thirty years has harshly criticized the Western world while covering up the atrocities taking place in the East. It has vigorously supported liberation theology, which means liberation from Capitalism but never from the injustices of Communism. The great Protestant bodies, such as Lutheran and Reformed World Federation, followed suit.

During the worst years of terror, Romania was visited by bishops, pastors, and renowned evangelists. Not one said a word in defense of the sufferers.

I was reminded of the fact that in 1935, when

Hitler ruled Germany, the Baptist World Alliance chose Berlin as the location for its world congress. Hitler's program to exterminate the Jews was known. While the delegates quoted Bible verses written by Jews about the Jew Jesus and spoke about His sufferings, not one word of compassion or solidarity was spoken on behalf of the German Jews threatened with mass murder. There was only one American Jewish Christian among the delegates, bro. Gartenhaus, but he was not allowed to speak from the rostrum.

On one occasion, I read the report of an Anglican bishop in his diocesan bulletin about his visit to Romania. He wrote glowingly about the many lavish breakfasts (wrongly so-called, because they broke no fast), luncheons and dinners, but said nothing about the Christians starving in jail.

Today foreign church leaders are certainly welcome in Romania, but it would be appropriate for them to express some word of repentance. They might also acknowledge publicly that during the years of terror not one denomination had budgeted so much as one pound for the families of Christian martyrs, who never received one parcel of food from abroad.

On the other hand, through the World Council of Churches many denominations have given money to Communist guerrillas in Africa who, when they came to power, imprisoned and killed Christians. Mozambique and Angola are prime examples. Again,

no money ever went to families of prisoners.

Teach, but Also Learn

There is something else that needs to be said about the relationship of the West with Romanian churches (and also for other countries of the former Eastern bloc).

During my visit I met many pastors and rank-and-file American, British, and West German Christians who flocked to Romania. When I asked why they came, the unanimous reply was, "I came to teach." No one said, "I came to learn." Young people under twenty had come to teach. Theological professors sacrificed their vacation time to teach Romanian pastors theology. Some of my countrymen had preached in jail with chains at their hands and feet, when 25 lashes were the honorarium for a sermon, if they were caught delivering it. The same penalty awaited those who preached by tapping out the good news in Morse code through prison walls.

I don't contest that they could learn valuable lessons in theology, but wouldn't it be equally valuable for Western Christians to become learners for a change?

Western Christians can afford the luxury of expensive journeys to teach others. Why then don't they invite Romanian or Russian Christians to evangelize in the West? Why, at large evangelistic congresses, are only well-fed, affluent Western evangelists the key speakers? It was not so in the

early church. There men like Paul shared the mysteries of Christ learned while in chains.

Hands that have worn chains can bless well and should be awarded this privilege. In the first centuries, the church in Rome was heeded by others because it had given the most martyrs.

One more detail: in Romanian Evangelical churches women use no makeup and wear no jewelry. Believers who do so are not accepted as church members. Smoking and drinking are strictly forbidden. American evangelists who wear rings and whose wives use lipstick are not acceptable.

It is good to know this.

The Duty to Howl

Western preachers have surely had the advantage of a theological education, which can be very profitable. Many of the Romanian preachers, as well as Russian, Bulgarian, etc., have not been in seminaries, but they have been in dark cells, hungry, beaten, suffering with the cold.

I could not explain why, but in certain cells in utter cold and darkness, prisoners could not refrain from howling.

God says, "I will howl for Moab." (Jeremiah 48:31) Before being in such a cell, I had never imagined how terrible is God's pain for sinners. It makes Him howl. I now knew another aspect of God: a God who howls. This is also a revelation about Him.

It can be learned best from those who have been through this school. They have fulfilled an amazing commandment from God: "Howl for Babylon." Howl for the worst enemy of your people. We howled in these cells for our Communist torturers, knowing that if we did so, "they may be healed." (Jeremiah 51:8)

We consider it important that a minister be trained in homiletics, dogmatics, Greek, Hebrew, and church history. The West can give us teachers for these. But ministers must also be prepared for howling, in the heart-rending cries of those who feel they will die if souls are not saved.

The prophet Joel says, "Howl, all you who minister before the altar." (1:13)

Preachers should imitate Micah, who at a given moment made the decision, "I will wail and howl" (1:8), not "will preach according to the rules of rhetoric."

Perhaps Eastern preachers can teach the West how to weep when you have been stabbed with the knife of treason, how to bear the burden of suffering for the honor and good of the holy church.

They will add that the greatest suffering is not produced by lost battles (no warrior can win them all) or by physical wounds, but by brethren and sisters who do not take up a cross and fight the good fight, who renounce the holy dream.

They will teach us to smile not only when comforted by friends, with lilies strewn in their

path, but also when surrounded by enemies, with nails, driven into their bodies.

A Heavenly Smile

Speaking of smiles, let me write about one fellow-prisoner whom I did not meet again on Romanian soil because he is now in a better land.

We usually imagine the saints as being in a heaven far away. The Bible tells us in Hebrews 12:1 that they surround us. They continue to be interested in all they left behind and participate in the fight. They inspire us in the very strict sense of the word.

It is said about a disciple of John Chrysostom, the greatest preacher Christianity has ever had, that he peered into the room where his master was preparing a sermon and saw two unknown beings whispering something in his ears. Curious, he asked about them and received this reply: "It was wrong of you to peek, but since you did, I will tell you. These were the apostles Paul and John, who sometimes suggest what I should preach about."

This story might be legend, but the fact remains that we are in the communion of the saints of all times. It is good for those who visit Romania not only to look around to see living saints, but also to look up and through the spirit get a glimpse of those in glory who surround them.

I remembered Milan Haimovici, a Hebrew Christian pastor who spent seven years in jail.

Even enemies of both Jews and Gospel admired his courage. He would protest against any injustice on the part of wardens, though he knew that for this he would be savagely beaten.

Once I was in a large cell holding perhaps a hundred prisoners. We were crammed together in utter misery, with no room to walk even a few steps. We were overcome with the dirt and the stench. At night it was impossible to sleep because there were always three or four who snored, each on a different melody. When they stopped, others started. Some coughed, some sneezed, some quarrelled.

In these close quarters were Christians of many denominations, Jews, atheists, men of all political parties and social categories. Among them was Milan, who witnessed for Jesus. He had no Bible and had seen no book for many years. He could advance no intellectual arguments. He could only say repeatedly, "I know Jesus. I walk and talk with him."

A professor, member of the Royal Academy of Sciences, scoffed: "Jesus has been dead for two thousand years. How can you talk with Him? Even admitting that He was resurrected, as you Christians believe, and went to heaven, this heaven is millions of miles away. Don't tell us any more lies. No one can walk and talk with Him."

Milan replied simply, "I wonder myself how it can happen and have no real explanation, but it is a fact. He walks and talks with me." A great circle

of prisoners listened to the discussion. Continuing, Milan asserted, "I even see Him sometimes."

This was too much for a man of science. "What you say is the greatest lie I have heard in all my life. Since you claim you see Him, can you please tell us how He looks at you: angry , wrathful, bored, indifferent, polite, interested, loving? Does He perhaps also smile at you?"

Milan replied, "How did you guess that? Really, He sometimes smiles at me".

"Well, well," said the professor. 'You are lucky I am not a psychiatrist, or I would diagnose you as having religious mania. Perhaps you can show us how Jesus smiles."

"I will gladly try," said Milan.

The scene that followed was the most beautiful in my 81 years of life. Like all the rest of us, Milan resembled a scarecrow. Shorn, dirty, with dark circles around his eyes, only skin and bones, with teeth missing, in a zebra uniform, he was anything but attractive. But when he received this challenge, his face began to shine—the glory of God can shine through a thick crust of dirt—and a beautiful smile appeared on his lips. Romeo must have looked like this when he smiled at Juliet.

There was a touch of sadness in the smile because of the lost condition of his questioner's soul. But one could read on his lips a passionate love, an unquenchable longing, sure hope, ardent desire of a lover to receive the kiss of the beloved. All the

splendor of heaven was in this magnificent smile.

(An ugly thought passed through my mind on seeing this smile, the definition of the word "kiss" in a Russian dictionary: "the mutual touch of two pairs of lips with reciprocal transmission of microbes and carbon dioxide." Who can avoid such wrong thoughts at a sublime moment?)

The atheist professor bowed his head and said, "Sir, you have seen Jesus."

When I became a Christian, I was advised to read every day a page from the Bible and the life of a saint, a martyr or renowned missionary, which I do. But before I was in jail, I read the lives of saints with skepticism. The writers always seemed to exaggerate. I knew the story of the charming and convincing smile of Bernadette de Soubiroux of Lourdes. I had known several Christians on earth who had heavenly smiles (one of whom is my wife Sabina). But now I saw such smiles in conditions of utter suffering.

I have seen them many times, in many jails. Sometimes I have difficulty remembering the circumstances. All the great smilers became one for me, fusing into the smile of Jesus. Saints bring the smile of heaven into the deepest valleys of the shadow of death.

Men with such a smile do not die. They surround us after death as well, encouraging and helping us. Romania has just such a cloud of witnesses above it. This too is a Romanian reality. A

Christian who goes to such a place must look for it.

A renowned church leader told me that he had visited Lenin's tomb in Moscow and had seen his mummy. I asked him if he had perceived the presence of some other dead person in Russia. He had not. But Paul says in Hebrews 12.1 that he had seen a cloud of God's witnesses from thousands of years before.

Killed for Distributing Bibles

Milan Haimovici is one of many martyrs who beautify the sky over Romania. To some of them I am personally very much attached, because in a certain sense I played a role in their dying under tragic circumstances.

We know the names of four Romanian Christians who had to die for the crime of distributing Bibles they had received from us through underground channels.

Clipa was caught and badly tortured to reveal how he obtained and distributed the Bibles. Then he was found hanged. No one really knows how he died. Did the Communists hang him? Did he commit suicide like many others in Communist China, fearing he might weaken and betray when subjected to further torture?

Another Bible distributor, Bogdam, was also found hanged. Tudose was found electrocuted. Pasotr Radu Cruceru died of a staged automobile accident, a method of killing much practiced by the

Communists.

If we and others from abroad had not smuggled in Bibles, these persons would have lived. We bear a responsibility that their wives are widows and their children orphans. Every Christian who contributes to such a work should know that someone at the receiving end might give blood in the cause for which we in the free world give money.

Some do this underground work in Communist and Moslem countries without pangs of conscience. But I know directors and personnel and supporters of our mission who are very conscious of the risks and suffer because of this. They feel it is not enough to give money and send Bibles; we must share with those in Communist countries the pain, the tears, and the sorrows of the distributors and their families. Some dear saints in the West have broken down mentally under this burden.

It gives me many sleepless nights. Couriers of our mission have been killed in China too. And some were imprisoned for many years under the appalling conditions of Communist jails, among them the translator of my book 'Tortured for Christ' into the Amharic language of Ethiopia.

Don't Give Money Easily

I was scheduled to preach at a large meeting in Norway that was called for the special purpose of gathering money for Ukrainian Bibles. The mission counted on my presence to be encouragement to

others to give more.

I told the crowd the story of Nikolai Hmara, a Soviet Christian who had died for Christ after having his tongue cut off and his eyes gouged out, and I ended by saying, "Don't be quick to give. You might be punished by God for having given money to print Bibles in the U.S.S.R. Some will believe so devoutly that the Bible you donate is the Word of God that they will be ready to endure prison, torture and death for sharing it. Your Bibles will be read in the Soviet Ukraine, where those who read the Word will follow its command and renounce everything for the sake of the kingdom. Some will prefer Jesus to wife, mother, and children and will fulfill dangerous tasks in the underground church, such as working in secret print shops or running forbidden Sunday schools. If they are caught, their wives might remain widows and their children orphans, who may later accuse their father of putting religion above duty to provide daily bread for the family.

"The Bible you donate might inspire someone else to become a Nikolai Hmara. You will answer to God for having given this money if your life does not show that you yourself obey the Bible as the Word of God, if you do not lead a life of intimacy with Jesus, following Him on the way of the cross, of prayer and praise and self-sacrifice.

"If you do not intend to commit yourselves wholeheartedly to Jesus, it is best for you not to

give. Please forego giving."

It remains for the reader of these lines to guess whether the offering on that evening was large or small.

I constantly hear the cries of those suffering in Communist countries because they desire the spreading of the Gospel and wish relief for their abandoned families. This spurs me on when I feel my age and have the temptation to give up. But Bishop Meshkala died in Albania at the age of 84 after 43 years in jail! He was not too old to suffer for Christ and never gave up. Should I give up my fight under entirely different circumstances?

Some, after reading this book, might feel like giving money for the cause of Christians in Communist countries or in those only recently liberated. Giving will oblige you to have fellowship with them in their heavy tribulations. Think carefully about what you intend to do.

Loving the Enemy

Every place I entered in Romania brought back to my mind other memories.

In Bucharest, I preached in the Dragosh Voda Brethren church. This building had been used before by my church in its peregrinations from one place to another under different dictatorships.

It was immediately after the invasion of Romania by Soviet troops toward the end of World War II. Whole units of the German army that had

occupied our country were taken captive. They had no illusions. Slavery in Siberia would be their lot. For many it would mean death.

While a large group of German prisoners of war were being led to their barracks, two officers succeeded in escaping from the surveillance of the escort. Still wearing their Nazi uniforms, they wandered trembling through the streets of Bucharest. The one thing that shielded them was the night. We were still at war, and the streets were only very dimly lighted.

All at once they spotted a ray of hope: a sign saying "Lutheran Chapel." They knew the Lutherans of Romania to be of German extraction. Here someone would help them.

What a disappointment awaited them when they heard that we were Jewish! Jews had more reason to hate the German soldiers than even the Soviets did.

I quieted their fears. "We are Jews, but also Christians and give no one into the hands of their enemies. There is a story about a lamb led to slaughter that fled and ran to Moses, asking him to protect it. He replied, 'I cannot do so. God has ordained that your meat should serve as food for men', and he handed the lamb to the butcher. A Jewish writing says that God hid His face for shame at what a man who bore His name could do.

"We have suffered under the German occupation. But you personally may not be guilty. In any

case, we are not your judges. You are welcome in our home. We will also give you civilian clothes so that you can try to make your way to Germany."

We were then under a decree forbidding anyone to hide a German soldier under pain of death.

In time this developed into a systematic work of helping persecuted Germans just as, during the war, we had used our influence in Christian circles to help persecuted Jews.

The believers in the Brethren church where I was now asked to preach knew all this. They knew that I meant it when I spoke about forgiving those who have abused you, even the God-hating Communists.

So I travelled from one place to another in Bucharest and then to different cities and towns, reliving events of the past.

Revisiting Places Where I Sinned

I saw not only places of pleasant or holy memory but also places where I had sinned gravely.

I saw once again the homes in which my family had lived when I was young. I had been very evil toward a mother who had sacrificed herself for her orphaned children.

Here was the quarter called—I don't know Why—"The Stone Cross." It was a place of prostitution. "Friends" led me here when I was twelve. No Christian stood before the ill-famed house warning youngsters not to enter.

The first time I saw the half-naked women, I fled. Not so the second time.

I saw places where I had taken advantage of other women. I saw gambling houses that I had frequented, places where I had met with other blasphemers and mocked God, places where I had failed and sinned even as a Christian and then a pastor.

I had confessed this whole life of sin and believed that Christ had forgiven everything. Paul wrote that he pressed forward, forgetting those things that were behind him. But he too could not forget totally his whole past. He tells us about it. Neither could I forget all.

In Rumania I thought too of all the shortcomings and grave sins committed during the quarter of a century I lived abroad.

How happy I was that "there is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins" and that if one is plunged into this fountain, a great miracle takes place. Not only are sins, even crimes, forgiven but they become white as snow. They become visible tokens of actual purity. What happens to them is beyond description. Jesus was made sin. One of the purposes was to show what beauties can be made of sins through repentance, as a potter can make a luxurious vase out of what had been mud.

However, like the pieces of pottery or like metal that has to be refined, we must pass through

the fires of affliction. This cleansing process lasts until all impurity has disappeared, which in our case means until all complaining, all rebellion, all pestering God with the question "Why?", all selfishness, pride, and an unreadiness to forgive have disappeared.

A little girl watched a goldsmith hold the costly metal in a jar for purifying. Repeatedly he took out the slack, and the metal shone more and more beautifully. The girl asked, "How long does this go on?" He said, "Have patience." The goldsmith had to repeat the words often as he waited for the moment called "the silver look", when he saw his image in the metal.

This is how the heavenly goldsmith works. A sinner who has passed through his purification has a beauty he never had before, the beauty of Christ Himself.

Encounter with a Top Soviet Official

For twenty-five years I have played in the world the role of Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21), who during Paul's day made known to the brethren how the persecuted were doing. While in Romania, I had the opposite role: to tell how the church in the free world is faring, as well as how we worked for the persecuted while they were under the yoke of Communism.

Romanian Christians were aware of the fact that Bibles and other books entered their country,

along with financial aid and radio broadcasts, but they did not know about the vast organizations that were behind all this and about the thousands upon thousands of fellow believers who gave sacrificially and prayed for them.

They were most interested in our Christian Missions to the Communist World and its work in over forty countries. I told them not only about the relief work for the persecuted but also about our missionary endeavors among their persecutors.

I will mention here just one of my most interesting experiences in this area.

In Switzerland, another brother and I visited a world industrial exhibition. The most beautiful section was the Soviet department, the only one to add a fashion show, which attracted thousands, and a religious exhibit, very well put together.

At the entrance was a huge picture of Billy Graham preaching in Moscow, of the Patriarchy, and of the one single synagogue in Moscow, a city with 200,000 Jews, of a mosque, and so on. The obvious aim was to reveal the perfect religious freedom that exists under Communism.

An album was prepared for each visitor to register his impressions.

I wrote the following: "I congratulate you for this unique idea to ornament an industrial exposition with words and pictures about religion. If there were no God, there would be no human mind and no industry. Everything you show is well arranged,

but as a friend of the USSR, I would suggest that you enrich this exposition with other valorous pictures: that of Nikolai Hmara, a Baptist who, because of his faith, had his tongue cut off and his eyes gogued out. I can provide you with the picture of his corpse. The picture of Nikolai Hrapov would fit well too. He spent 34 years in jail for his faith. Also that of Vania Moiseev, stabbed seven times in the region of his heart and then drowned," and so on and on.

A gentleman I believed to be from the Soviet staff read what I wrote and said, "There is a wicked man by the name of Wurmbrand who spreads such slander about us."

After I told him I was that very same Wurmbrand, we spoke with each other for four hours. He was the head of the Foreign Department of their Ministry of Cults, a top man of the Soviet government on religious matters. He spoke fluent English and German. He had read all my books as well as other publications of our mission.

He started in a bellicose manner by saying there is no persecution. I answered, "It would be useless to contradict you, because you are obliged to speak thus. Let us rather pass to something much more important.

"A day will come when you will no longer be a man in high position in the Communist Party and government, and I will no longer be a pastor. We will both die. For a short time someone who loves us

will weep at our grave. Then those who knew us will die too, and we will lie in a forgotten grave.

"What happens after that? If at this point everything is ended, then it is stupid to be a Christian pastor and just as stupid to be an atheist opponent of religion. The best course is to eat, drink, and have some amusement; nothing more.

"In my homeland of Romania, there was a custom in the olden days to give a person sentenced to death a good meal with all his favorite dishes before his execution. The accused ate and drank well, and then he was shot. If everything ends with death, the most beautiful life that Communism or Capitalism can provide is no more than a henchman's meal. It would not be worth while to fight for any cause."

He listened without interrupting.

I told him that in my youth I was meditative, inclined to melancholy. I had had a bitter childhood behind me, without any such childish pleasures as toys or chocolate. When other children in school ate chocolate, I would lick the wrapping paper because it smelled good. "I was sure that a God could not exist. If He did, He would have given me a nicer childhood.

"But for some reason I liked to take lonely walks through cemeteries and read the inscriptions on gravestones. I do so even now. It makes for highly interesting reading.

"This person had been a general, and he died.

Another was a renowned poet, and he died. Another was a banker, another a beggar, But the end of life was death.

"On every gravestone there were two figures, the year of birth and the year of death, with a stroke in between. This is the sign that nature draws over every life: a stroke. Thus life is annulled.

"Without knowing a thing about any religion, I said to myself at that time, 'I wish to find Someone who can give youth without old age and life without death.'

"It took me a long time, but I finally found this Someone."

He continued to absorb my words without interruption. He had a soul hungry for God. I told him how I had prayed the prayer of an atheist: "God, I know for sure You don't exist. But if you exist—and this I contest—it is not my duty to believe in You. It is Your duty to reveal Yourself to me. I regret that You do not exist. I could have wished that somewhere in this universe there should beat a heart of love. I speak as a madman to Nonexistent. Well, that is all."

I went on; "This prayer was accepted. God sent a carpenter my way, who told my wife and me the story of the Carpenter of Nazareth who lived and died for us and was resurrected."

Mr. Smirnov asked question after question. At the end of four hours he said, "I must admit there are two problems to which we Marxists have no

answers: 1) How is it that something exists? We explain everything by evolution, but how come evolution exists and that the first living cell existed from which all animals, the monkey, and man came into being? 2) What happens to man after death? We have no answers; you have. Therefore you are strong and we are weak."

Later he played a role in liberalizing the Soviet policy toward religion, which in turn had an effect on Romania and the other Eastern European countries.

Our mission sees to it that specific Christian literature for Communists, such as my books *Answer to Moscow's Bible* and *Marx-Prophet of Darkness*, gets into their hands and those of their leaders, with amazing results. These books have been translated into many languages and distributed in Romania, Russia, China, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Angola, among others.

The professor of atheism at the highest school of the Romanian Communist Party was converted through their ministry, along with many others in a number of Communist countries.

A Country Reduced to Poverty

Back in Bucharest I was driven around and I also walked the streets, but it was no more the same city. In times past it had been called "the Paris of the East" because of its beauty, but it had long since foregone its proud boast. The impression was one of

hopelessness.

Grand avenues such as grace the largest Western cities lie unfinished; they end in nothing. Ceausescu had the sickness of gigantomania. All his enterprises were to be unsurpassed in greatness, but he could never finish what he began.

Most houses are decayed. They were in ruins before the windows were put in. You can see the results of the ravaging earthquakes of the recent past but also of the bloody unrest. Facades are blackened by fire. In the walls one can see bullet holes.

The shops are empty. Long lines of people wait for hours in the hope, often vain, that there will be something to buy. The queues for bread begin at four in the morning. By seven there is no more chance for bread.

The black market flourishes. There you can buy strawberries, or furs and shirts, or suspect alcoholic beverages, made with chemicals that have already produced many deaths.

Small children beg. Crime is rampant. Tourists are advised not to walk at night carrying money.

The economy is in a coma, and the populace lacks even basic necessities. Skyrocketing unemployment seems unavoidable.

The USA and the European community have stopped giving aid because there still is Communist terror. The present regime is unhappy, but the

rulers continue to live well.

In fact, Ceausescu would be pleased with his successor, who has also killed innocents, just like his predecessor.

Communists are still in power in Romania, but they are politically bankrupt, reduced to the level of a theatrical prop, just as in Russia.

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The Danger of Commentaries

God declared that His name is "I am what I am," not what men believe Me to be. He is the entirely Other. We cannot fathom His ways.

Innumerable books have been written explaining how Biblical prophecies correspond to current events. Many books were full of predictions about how the Communist colossus in the north, Russia, would attack Israel. Then the much-dreaded Battle of Armageddon would ensure, along with the reign of Antichrist.

There were suspicions that Kissinger is the Antichrist. Before these, others had offered Biblical proof that Stalin was the Antichrist. Now a book denounces Gorbachev as this enigmatic person, especially since he is marked with an indisputable sign: a red spot on his forehead.

I said to a writer of such a book on Bible predictions, "Every book on prophecy written till now proved to have been false in twenty years." He did not mind.

When my twelve-year-old grandson Alex was

with me at a Christian booksellers' convention recently, he saw much advertising for Bible commentaries. "What's a commentary?" he asked. I responded that there are many things in the Bible difficult to understand, for example, predictions of doom and great suffering that will arise in the latter days. These are explained.

His reply was, "Such predictions should not be explained but contradicted. Abraham did not write a commentary on God's prediction that Sodom would be destroyed, nor did Moses on the prediction that God would destroy the Jewish people. Instead, they pleaded with God that it should not take place, and they changed His mind. Why shouldn't we do the same instead of writing commentaries?"

The Power to Overturn Communism

God is not bound by what men say who are not commissioned to write or speak in His name. He had destroyed a great deal of the power of Communism and will destroy the rest, not through political events, but through the prayers of the saints and the power of the Word distributed under duress.

He altered the mind of Gorbachev and of many of his comrades. They in turn destroyed the power of Communism as no bombs or political combinations could have done. No plagues from above were needed. Men can forestall tribulations even if predicted in the Bible. God foretold Nineveh's destruction but then relented from this decision.

Jesus, the truth.

But the true Romanian church, like that of other former Communist countries, needs your help.

Give them Bibles and Christian literature. Give them Christian teaching by radio. Help the impoverished churches rebuild their prayer houses. Help former prisoners remake their lives. And help us bring Communists to Christ.

If conquerors are not capable of converting the conquered, the conquests are not complete. The Allies conquered Germany in World War I but did not convert the Germans to their way of thinking. And so the stage was set for World War II.

Communists have lost decisive battles in Eastern Europe. If they are not won for Christ or at least for decent human behavior, the devil will be loose again in a very few years.

We have to be on the alert. I certainly am. Many aged people live only on rehashing the past.

His love is more reliable than any word spoken or written in His name.

When He has shed His love in our hearts, we have enormous power. Then we can change even God. It is written in Zephaniah 3:17 that we can make God rejoice with singing. Our burning love can change men too. They can be consciously won by it. Others will be confused by the rays of our spirit and will lose the capacity to oppose us.

The sun shines on some and gives them life. It burns others. So love is always effective regardless of whom it touches.

Humans do not realize what enormous power they possess. It extends not only to the whole earth but also to the cosmos.

Daniel 8 tells about a king who cast down some of the host of heaven, exalted himself as high as the Prince of hosts, and cast truth down to the earth. So much power for evil can exist in a man.

But at least this much power exists in good and saintly men.

The church of Christ can finish with Communism, with fanatical Islam, with the darkness of heathenism, with a Judaism without the King of the Jews.

I have many more things to say about my visits to Romania after twenty-five years of enforced exile. But I will permit myself to imitate Paul when he said, "Time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and

the prophets." (Hebrews 11:32)

Strange Communion Services

Pastor Vasile Vadan's church in Bistritza was destroyed with bulldozers. Teacherous official Baptist leaders connived in this act. In a heavy frost, he gave Communion to his flock on the ruins. The surface of the wine was frozen.

After preaching in the open, he fell gravely ill of pneumonia, but that did not prevent the Communists from putting him in jail.

Many Communion services in Romania have been strange. In home churches there would be bread and wine on the table, but also a pot of tea and cookies in reserve. When a guest appeared unexpectedly, a person known as a Christian but suspected as an informer, the wine would disappear from the table in a second. The pot of tea and cookies would be in readiness and those present would give the appearance of being just a social gathering.

In jail there were times when we had no bread and certainly no wine. Then we took Communion with nothing, remembering how precious a thing nothing was.

The world was created out of nothing. The earth is suspended on nothing. Paul wrote that he was nothing. "Nothing" is a valuable thing that we learned to appreciate.

To tell all the beautiful things that can be said about today's Romania and its church would fill a large volume. But I would like to say a few words

about what our Christian Missions to the Communist World is doing in other parts of the world.

A Great Communist Strategem

When I left Romania, I thought to work only for my own country, but then Rev. Stuart Harris, director of the European Mission, offered me a larger sphere: the whole of Europe. However, Communism is broader even than this. It stretches to all continents. And so we enlarged our vision to include the whole Communist world, though I never forgot Romania.

We men with a world vision Rev. M. Knutson (U.S.A.) Rev. Maris (Holland), Dr. Hans Braun (Germany), Mr. Zurcher, Mrs. Hedi Fluri (Switzerland), Rev. Pat Henegan (S. Africa) Dr. P.P. Job (India) and many other founders of our mission branches in 40 countries were of one mind with me, that we must confront Communism as a whole, of which Romania is only a small part. And the whole is affected by any one of the parts.

What is happening in Communism today? We have seen great changes. Are they for real?

The changes in the USSR and Eastern Europe are real enough and concern politics, economics, even religion, all institutions that can be controlled. But there is no change in the attitude toward God or in a basic outlook on life.

In his speech on the Seventieth Anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution, Gorbachev said, "We

are moving toward a new world, the world of Communism. We shall never turn off that road. "He said repeatedly, with the same vigor, that he remains an atheist.

If there is one thing we can learn from the Communists, it is consistency. They abide by their teachings.

At the end of World War II, the Communists were granted dominion over all of Eastern Europe, without firing a shot. Roosevelt and Churchill ceded them this hegemony at the Yalta conference because they promised free elections, which of course never occurred. They had won through deceit.

The bloody dictator Stalin, whom the Soviet press now accuses of having killed twenty million innocents, had made a tremendous impression on Western rulers. After meeting him, an American diplomat commented, "His brown eyes are exceedingly wise and gentle. A child would like to sit on his lap and a dog would sidle up to him." (Nixon, 1999)

Nothing has changed. After meeting Gorbachev, even a world renowned evangelist praised his charm and his "warm eyes". But Gromyko, former president of the USSR, had recommended Gorbachev as successor with the words, "He can smile beautifully, but he also has steel teeth for biting."

Marx said, "Religion is the opiate of the people," which means it must be countered as resolutely as drugs. Lenin wrote, "Thousands of epidemics and

natural catastrophes are to be preferred to the slightest notion of a God."

Marx wrote in his poem "The Player" that "hellish vapors" filled his brain and that he "brought a sword from the Prince of Darkness." (Such things take in satanic rituals.) Communism continues to brandish this sword against religion.

God-haters are also haters of mankind. In a letter to Engels on June 18, 1882, Marx called mankind "a bunch of rascals" who can "kiss my (obscenity)."

But miracle of miracles, the party he created, which never renounced its militant atheism, has now reopened hundreds of churches and closes its eyes to intense religious activity.

Today there is mass evangelism, Sunday school for children, and charitable work—all totally proscribed a short time ago.

There are even processions on the street in which these words are sung: "For the Czar (title of Russian emperors), for our country and faith."

Bibles and other Christian literature continue to enter freely. We have 100,000 letters from the USSR alone thanking us for the literature individually received.

Communism is far from being defeated, but it has received mortal wounds. The Berlin Wall and the Iron Curtain crumble!

Religion in the USSR is far from what we call "free," but many churches have been reopened,

prisoners have been released, Christian literature and Bibles are widely distributed. Open evangelism and Sunday schools for children, which no one dreamt of a year ago, now bring thousands to Christ.

Communists have killed millions of believers and they were sure religion was dying. Now the church triumphs. It is Communism that struggles for survival in Eastern Europe. There is no human explanation for these events. Thanks be to God for working this miracle!

When we began our mission twenty-three years ago, anti-Communists thought that Communism could be defeated only through war. They said, "Only a dead Communist is a good Communist."

We came with a new message: just as Communists subvert the free world with their poisonous doctrine, let us subvert them with the Gospel. Let us work secretly to make Christ known! Let us help the underground churches!

Though the Communists hate us, let us win them with love. Let us pray for them and bring them to Christ.

I ended my book *Answer to Moscow's Bible* by calling upon the Reds to repent and confess their crimes openly.

The Soviet press now acknowledges that their Party has killed tens of millions of innocents, and Gorbachev has apologized to the Patriarch. Articles

by atheist lecturers and officers of their Secret Police appear, acknowledging that they have lied to the people and shed innocent blood.

But quite a number of generals still stick to their ideology, modified by what they call "Glassnost" (openness) and "Perestroika" (reconstruction).

What is the secret behind Glassnost? We fear it is another example of Communist deceit, a maneuver intended to lull the West to sleep. Terror could not uproot religion—the blood of the martyrs has always been the seed of the church—so the Communists are trying another approach.

In an article in "Kommunist," Lunacharsky, author of *Socialism and Religion*, is quoted as predicting that persecution of religion would be counterproductive. (After seventy years of terror, 70% of adults are still believers.) He advocated that Communists create a "religion without God," a "religious atheism."

"Let the Christians believe," the argument runs. "Communists will infiltrate Christian ranks, will befriend them, disguising themselves as having similar ideals in many points. They will attract Christians to common social actions and will influence them to keep only an external form of religion, while becoming basically as godless as ourselves."

The same situation took place in the Roman Empire during the fourth century, under Constantine the Great. Ten emperors had slaughtered Christians. Constantine did an about-face,

gave them full liberty, and made Christianity a state religion.

Under him every baby was baptized and declared a Christian. Thus Christianity seemed to triumph—but it ceased to be truly Christian. The church leadership became more and more a tool of the emperors.

In the USSR, the Orthodox patriarch Pimen cabled to Gorbachev, "We express deep thankfulness for your attention to the needs of believers and for all you do to re-establish the Leninist norms."

Lenin's norms included the killing of millions of Christians and the destruction of churches.

Kharchev, then head of the Religious Council of the Soviet government, declared, "Religion is penetrating socialism, not on foot but on wheels. And since power belongs to the Party, it is up to us to steer those wheels in one direction or another, according to our interests."

Few Soviet Christians are aware that Gorbachev and his kin follow the same Constantinian road. He wants to give liberty to the church, but to a church that will not be really Christian. It will be an outreach of Communism just as it had been of the Czar.

The media have created the impression that Communism has been overthrown and a Communist world no longer exists. If this is true, there is no need for our mission.

On the contrary, Communism has full power

over a third of mankind, including China (1.1 billion), the USSR (280 million), Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Cuba, Ethiopia, Angola, Zimbabwe.

In Eastern Europe, Communist governments have been overthrown, but not Communist domination over the minds of men. Marxism has filled the whole populace with fear. People feared to say what they thought, whether by phone, in the marketplace, or even in the privacy of their own homes.

Everyone was forced to inform on everyone else, even on members of their own family. Priests had to report privileged confessions to the police. Letters were censored. It was dangerous to meet a foreigner. Spies of the Secret Police were everywhere.

Publicly, everyone was on the side of the Communists, who always got 99% of the vote because no one dared to vote his convictions. But in reality everyone hated the government.

Millions have passed through jail. Many died before gaining freedom.

Their relatives well knew what took place in prison. Torture has been used throughout the whole history of mankind. It would seem that all methods of torture were already known.

But Communists are innovators. Knowing that few men volunteer to do the work of torturing and those they victimize are many, thus allowing much respite between torture sessions, they forced others into torturing. Not satisfied with squeezing

out of the victims a denial of their convictions and a betrayal of the secrets of their organization, the Communists tortured them to the extreme until they consented to become torturers of their brethren in faith.

The result was that a new prisoner, thinking he was in a cell with fellow-believers, was subjected to the worst ignominies, not by officers of the Secret Police, but by those he had trusted and worshipped with. He was together with them day and night, tortured without pause, until he too consented to become a torturer.

Some became sadists for life, others went mad.

All nations under Communism have been traumatized, not only those of Eastern Europe, but also Mozambique, Laos, Mongolia, etc. It will take decades for them to recover. The best medicine is the Gospel.

The work of our mission in providing these people with the Word of God is needed now more than ever before. Neglect of our duty angers God. Fulfilling it will make Him rejoice with singing.

The believer is a temple of God (I Corinthians 3:16), in which Jesus dwells. He teaches us: "Take heed that no one deceives you." (Matthew 24:4)

The warning is pertinent because Christians in the free world are in danger of being deceived by changes in the USSR. Apologists are saying, "Gorbachev is democratizing the country and ex-

tending liberty, so missions to the Communist world are no longer necessary."

Lenin, founder of Communism and Gorbachev's avowed mentor, wrote: "Hundreds of epidemics and natural catastrophes are to be preferred to the slightest notion of God. Even flirting with a god is an unspeakable abomination."

He also wrote: "The more representatives of the reactionary clergy are killed, the better."

In their *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels wrote that the aim of Communism was "the abolition of all religion and all morals." Gorbachev calls himself a Communist and remains such even if, like Yeltsin, he ceases to be a member of the Party.

Let us not forget that Communists seized power in Russia under the name "Social Democrat Party (Bolshevik)" and in Romania under the name "National Democratic Front." A change of name is not a change of heart.

Stressing the point that Gorbachev is still a Communist and thus a God-hater, let us remember too that Castro, general secretary of the World Council of Churches, wrote in a letter to Gorbachev, "Christianity and Communism pursue the same aims."

The Lithuanian cardinal Sladkevicius, former prisoner in the USSR, wrote: "The fascination with stars is a great mistake. Such stars can blind people. Be cautious. Stalin, too, was applauded in

the West. You admire Gorbachev too much. Nobody should be admired like that, only God. I am afraid the changes may not last long. We have a one-party government. There is danger. Stalinism is dormant but not dead."

Why So Much Suffering?

There is one pain above all others endured by Romanians and inhabitants of other Communist countries, and that is not knowing *why* the pain. The thought paralyzes the mind.

It is supposed that in the USSR fifty million innocents were killed, and another fifty million in China. No one knows how many in Romania and other lands.

One person was in prison for being a Jew, another for being an anti-Semite. Pastors were imprisoned for spreading religious propaganda, atheist lecturers for not having been effective in their anti-religious propaganda. Anti-Communists suffered next to convinced Communists who had fallen afoul of their party about the interpretation of some tenet of Marxist teaching.

Communists used to condemn whole families if one member had done something amiss. I remember a father imprisoned with his four sons in my cell. His wife and daughters were in other jails.

Hungry, beaten prisoners renounced some of the few hours of sleep allotted them to discuss without end such questions as "*Why did all this*

come upon us and upon the word.?" "Is there a God?" "Where is God in all this?" He is supposed to be all-powerful and loving. He could have kept these things from happening or could at least end them now. Why doesn't He?"

A Jewish prisoner went out of his mind. He repeated the whole time one Hebrew word: *Maduah*. Why? He said, "I could fill volumes with *mah* (what) is happening, but no one can reply to the question *Maduah*."

I never met even one sufferer who was satisfied with the explanation that all evil—Auschwitz, the Gulag, Piteshti, and so on—is due in the last resort to the fact that Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. Their sin was inherited by their descendants in all generations. It even passed into nature. Lambs are eaten by wolves, little fish by bigger fish, and children are beaten to the blood by Communist torturers in the presence of their parents to make them confess—all because many thousands of years ago a couple ate some fruit. The original sin is to blame.

It might be because of the sinful nature inherited from Adam that his descendants of our generation cannot comprehend this explanation, but the fact is they can only pretend to accept it.

Other explanations I heard in these marathon discussions that repeated themselves endlessly without resolution over the years were: "There is no God and therefore no sense." "It is punishment

for our own personal sins." "Suffering is not real, it is *maya*. It belongs to a world of delusion." None satisfied.

One prisoner who had escaped from Nazi camps, in which he had lost almost his whole family, and now suffered under Communism, shouted in despair at a certain moment, "Haven't I endured enough from the Nazis and the Reds? Why must I bear the torment of listening to your senseless explanations? Suffering is bad enough. Don't make it worse with explanations."

Believers who know God personally should trust without asking questions. We are still small and have no minds to understand ultimate answers.

The Jewish people, generally considered very intelligent, had Jesus in the flesh in their midst. He spoke to them in plain language, but they did not understand him even when He spoke in very simple parables. The disciples themselves understood Him only in part.

But they believed in the unintelligible Jesus. This is faith. It supplements reason, which can know only an infinitely small range of things in this huge universe. We still don't know what an atom is. The image of an atom provided by science changes every couple of years. How then can we understand God?

I learned something in this regard from my grandson Alex when he was eight. We had guests in

our home who discussed higher mathematics in his presence. I did not know how to hint to them in a polite manner that they should change the subject because it was boring for a child. So I asked him, "Alex, do you understand what we're talking about? Do you know what logarithms are?"

He replied, "Yes, I do."

Amazed, I asked, "What are they?"

"Logarithms are things I will learn about when I'm in high school."

Like children in school, Jesus' disciples advance from the merely human to the divine. They are learners. One cannot learn in elementary school what is taught in universities. One day "I shall know even as also I am known." (I Corinthians 13:12)

Of all the explanations in answer to the question "Why so much suffering?", the most compelling is simply, "We don't know."

One day God will be in all, which means that He will be all in Richard Wurmbrand. There will be no questioner, no questioned, no question. We will be one spirit. It will be a mini-incarnation.

Jesus said, "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me and My throne, even as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." (Revelation 3:21)

Somewhere there is a throne from which universes are created and ruled. This will be my throne too. Today I have to learn patiently all I will

need at the moment of enthronement. The knowledge of suffering is part of the curriculum. Jesus Himself was made perfect through suffering.

Some theologians want to be gentler than the Bible. They claim that God only permits evil. Isaiah is blunt. According to him, God said, "I make the good and create the evil" (45:7, according to the original).

If a person trains racehorses, he makes not only a course but also obstacles to be conquered by the horses.

This comparison may seem inadequate to us because we have to overcome terrible physical and psychological torture, which is tremendous from a human point of view. When we meet Jesus at last, we will see that our sufferings were insignificant in comparison with what we have attained. Scars will be ornaments. The wounded will be enriched by what they lost. Those who were killed will have exuberant life.

Christians face not the problem of evil, but its challenge. Problems depress, challenges spur to right activity.

The Christians in Romania see no possibility for solving problems, but they have learned to transcend them, to view them from heavenly places.

It was enough that the Communists tortured us. We decided not to add self-inflicted torments, such as philosophizing about the unknowable. Every torment was only a challenge to surmount the

biggest obstacle: to win the tormentor through love.

David was our example. He wrote Psalm 9 on the tragic death of one of his sons, as is indicated in the title. But he does not complain about God and his own fate. He says what he would have said at the birth of a son: "I wil praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart."

The Bible tells us that in the beginning was *Tohuwabohu*, dark, formless chaos. God, the spirit of love, worked on this, encountering resistance, to create a kingdom of unspeakable beauty and truth. I adore the audacity of this enterprise, His persistence in the face of failure, and His readiness to sacrifice His dearest for the salvation of the children of chaos. Psalm 121 tells us that from Him comes your help, not your sorrow.

The Legend of Kishagotami

Whenever I was confronted now in Romania with questions about suffering, which very often were overwhelming, I told the old legend of Kishagotami, a young woman whose only baby had died and who could not bear to bury him. She went from one person to another asking how she could have him back alive.

One man told her, "Your only hope is the Savior. He has miraculous power like none other."

She brought Hun, knelt before Him, and begged, "Please resuscitate my child."

He replied, "Gladly, if only you will bring a

little bit of salt to Me."

Now, salt could easily be obtained, so she started to run. But He shouted after her, "The salt must be from a house in which no one has died."

"All right, all right!" she shouted back.

At every gate at which she knocked, she was gladly given salt. But when she asked if there had been a death in the family, she was always told, "I'm sorry, yes. My father... or my spouse... or my child died."

She wept with everyone who gave such a reply, because now she knew what the sorrow of bereavement was. She comforted them and received comfort from the consolation she gave to others.

In the end she came to the Saviour again and said, "Thank you for what You taught me. I will give back the body of my baby to the earth. Praise to You who give to Him and to all of us eternal life."

I have seen many a sad face illuminated when they heard Jesus' teaching.

"Why suffering?" is a wrong question. There exists no right answer to wrong questions. Who can tell the melody of a peach? The question is wrong. Ask instead, "What good can I do with my sorrow? How can I use it to become more loving and more understanding toward others?" Sympathy will surely do them more good than theological explanations.

As for the rest, accept what Jesus said to

Peter: "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this."

Why Cruelty in the Bible?

One more very troublesome question I met often in Romania was, "Why does God order so many horrors? He commanded Moses, Joshua and others to exterminate whole populations, specifying each time that children and infants should be slaughtered, animals hamstrung, and trees felled. Such destruction surpasses even what Stalin and Ceausescu have done."

I had heard these questions in the West too, but rarely and not with such insistence as in my homeland. The many mass murders to which my nation was subjected made hearts more sensitive to such passages of Scripture.

Therefore I am against what is much practiced in the East nowadays: the indiscriminate distribution of Bibles to everyone we can reach.

This was not originally God's intention. He gave to mankind a Bible and a church with wise teachers to explain it. Where there are no such teachers, it is preferable to give at first popular books explaining the main Biblical messages.

But now I had to answer this difficult question. I preferred to give the simplest answer possible.

In a sense, criminals decide what weapons the forces of law and order should use against them.

Police don't use guns against pickpockets, because these have no guns. But they do use guns against armed robbers. Some methods used in a just war might be considered inhumane if the same results could have been obtained otherwise. Against Nazi and Japanese aggressors who had tanks and bombers, tanks and bombers had to be used; otherwise evil would have been victorious.

God can evaluate evil in certain nations and social structures as we cannot. If widespread anti-American feelings in the West had not impeded the victory of the U.S. in Vietnam, Cambodia would not have become communistic and its leader Pol Pot would not have killed two million innocents.

God alone knows the whole of a person, including the genes that will determine a baby's character. Jesus says about some, "It would have been better if they had not been born." He calls others devils and has a right to treat them as devils deserve to be treated.

His decisions and actions are not subject to our judgments. We have to submit to His.

Lenin, founder of Russian Communism, said, "If Kerensky (prime minister of Russia before the Communist takeover) had arrested in time two dozen leaders of our party, we would never have come to power." And millions of innocents would not have been killed and mankind would have been spared a seventy-year bloodbath.

No doubt some crusader for human rights

would then have criticized Kerensky for depriving Communists of their "right" to prepare evil.

Don't philosophize about the Bible but enter into the holy nation of God's children. Flee from those who deserve God's wrath.

But be attentive. In the original of the Bible, there are no punctuation marks. There is not one single period or comma. Only in translations is there a period after expressions such as "They killed" or "God killed." In Hebrew, it is "The Lord kills *and* makes alive." (I Samuel 2:6)

In heaven, we will meet many of those we thought were slaughtered. Alive and happy, they are thankful to God for elevating them from the level of pagan notions to that of children of God.

It is also good to know what the words "God said" mean in the Bible.

No one has seen the heavenly Father (except Moses, in one instance). When Biblical authors, like today's believers, say, "God spoke to me," they mean an inner voice. None of us is of one piece. We have the conscious, the unconscious, different inclinations and impulses, even contradictory ones. All these take in our mind the shape of voices that counsel and prompt us to action. Religious people call the voice that calls them to what they consider the noblest action the "voice of God."

Sometimes they are right. But they can also be terribly mistaken. Ayatollah Khomeini, Rev. Moon, Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism-

each was sure that what he said was "God's word."

Jesus is skeptical about some events in the Old Testament. It is reported there that the prophet Elijah caused fire to fall on the troop of a wicked king. Elijah was sure that his action fulfilled God's will. When Jesus' disciples wanted to proceed in such a manner against those who opposed Him, confident that what Elijah had done was inspired by God, He chided them: "You don't know what manner of spirit you are of." Not in all circumstances was the spirit of an Old Testament personality God's spirit, though they believed it to be.

Let us cherish Jesus' revelation: God is love.

The Task of Healing Nations

Communism is finished as a political institution in almost all of the former satellite states of the USSR. In Romania and Bulgaria, Communism still fights to retain political power. It still does much harm, but we can be sure that it is a rearguard fight; it is the despairing fight of a defeated enemy, the last writhing of a serpent before it dies.

It will not survive in the Soviet Union either, except that Communism is more than a political institution.

A Filipino who heard me speak twenty years ago in the Military Academy of Manila and who took part in armed fighting against Marxist guerrillas reminded me that I said then something that made a lasting, because unexpected, impression on

him: "There is a Communist rebel in each of us."

Marxist hatred of God is the deepest essence of the human heart alienated from the Creator. It has always existed in fallen mankind in a latent form, but all societies tried to repress it. Communism lifted the lid.

Marx wrote, "It is the evil side that makes history." I heard a Communist torturer say, "I thank God, in whose existence I don't believe, for making me live just at such a time when I can do all the evil I want without fear of punishment—yes, even with the assurance I'll be rewarded for it."

This evil spirit has come out of the box under Communism, and the church will have to fight many decades against Communism's poison in human hearts: hatred, envy, betrayal, lawlessness. (The Hebrew word *Belial* means etymologically "without yoke.")

In Romania, as in Bulgaria and Mongolia, the 1990 elections were free. After forty-five years of fierce terror, the Communists won great victories. There were several serious reasons for this, which I mentioned already. The opposition parties pleaded for friendship with the West. Romanians had been taught for decades that Western governments were oppressors and exploiters and that their people went hungry.

But the principal reason for Communist success lay elsewhere: Who dared vote against the Party?

If Communism had fallen from power and the volumes of the Secret Police were opened, whole families would have been split apart, because wives had denounced husbands, brides bridegrooms, children their parents, pastors and priests members of their churches and vice versa.

Even where the transition from Communism to a free society has been the most profound, as in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, the archives of the Secret Police were not made public. If they were opened up to public scrutiny in Russia or Romania, these would cease to exist as nations. People would not be able to look into each other's eyes.

The pastor of a small Romanian Baptist church of only forty members confessed to me that he had been an informer of the Secret Police and that he knew five members who informed against him.

I was in jail with an atheist who had had a quarrel with his bride. She told the police that he had expressed anti-Communist sentiments to her and he got twenty years of prison.

The Romanian nation feels guilty. (In Nazi-occupied countries, the number of collaborators had also been significant, though not so great because only a few years were involved, not forty-five as in Romania or seventy as in Russia.) It fears disclosure. Thousands voted for the Communists they hated, because they had been their accomplices. It is estimated that every tenth adult was an informer at least for a time.

Our Orthodox synod called back Patriarch Theoctist, bootlicker of Ceausescu, when he retired after Ceausescu's fall. The guilt had been collective involving the priesthood as a whole.

When the final judgment is near, Satan will be released from his prison of a thousand years. Only he, restored to power, could cover up—men will hope—all the satanic deeds they themselves will have done. (Revelation 20:7)

All Romanian writers, almost without exception, had flattered Ceausescu's pride, calling him "the greatest genius ever" and other such stupidities. Not one had admitted guilt. They all keep silent.

The Romanian churches have an enormous task: to heal the nation.

God's Remnant

God has a remnant in Romania as He has in other Eastern European countries. Thousands of those with a healthy soul died in the revolution of December 1989. Thanks to them, Ceausescu has been overthrown. It was on Christmas Eve—a sign from God. The celebration of Christmas had been forbidden.

But other thousands are alive, and they have an amazing Christian spirit.

On July 13, 1990, just a few days after so-called miners, in fact men of the former Communism Secret Police, had killed five, wounded hun-

dreds, and arrested over one thousand peaceful demonstrators in Bucharest, there was again a demonstration. Thousands marched with flowers in their hands, chanting a slogan that rhymes in Romanian: "You came to us with clubs and axes, but we come to you with flowers."

The army sent out to quell the demonstrators was showered with flowers. The soldiers were overwhelmed. This time there were no bloody incidents.

It was the first demonstration in which flowers were used against an oppressor. It epitomized Jesus' teaching: "Respond to evil with good."

This was what our mission had taught Romanians for over twenty years through the written word and by radio. It was my message from the first day of my pastorate, at liberty and in jail, and it was what I preached in Romania on my return. It was Christ's triumph but also the greatest personal satisfaction of my life.

And it had not remained the only one. The river Prut separates Romania as it is today from its province of Bessarabia, stolen by the Soviets and renamed Moldavian Republic. On the fortieth anniversary of this tragic event, Romanians from both sides of the river turned it into a flowery carpet in a huge demonstration as people threw blossoms into the water.

A people that has such a remnant will not perish. God will turn its mourning into feasting. Marx and Lenin, the deceivers, will be defeated by

