

LATE REVEREND RICHARD WURMBRAND BIOGRAPHY

Richard Wurmbbrand, author of 18 worldwide Christian bestsellers, translated in over 80 languages some describing his 14 years of communist imprisonment, was born in 1909, the youngest of four boys, in a Jewish family in Bucharest, Romania. Shortly thereafter, the father, a dentist established a practice and moved the family to Istanbul, Turkey. Upon the death of the father from a flu epidemic in 1919, the now extremely poor family returned to Romania. Richard, intellectually gifted, fluent in 9 languages, had a stormy youth, was active in leftist politics and working as a stockbroker when marrying Sabina in 1936.

Same year, the Jewish couple met during a vacation in the Romanian mountains, a German carpenter who placed a Bible into their hands. Hardly having any education and unable to answer their questions, this carpenter did not do much more than urge these two young, educated, Jewish intellectuals to just take the time and read at least one of the Gospels, in essence a short biography of the most famous personality of the Jewish people, Jesus Christ. Sabina and Richard meeting also other Jewish-Christians converted and were baptized. They joined the church of the Anglican Mission to the Jews in Bucharest, Romania. Eventually studying on his own, Richard a charismatic speaker, was first ordained as an Anglican and then after WW II re-ordained as a Lutheran minister. Their only son, Michael was born in 1939.

Due to Romania's declaration of war against England and the other Western Powers, at the beginning of WWII, the foreign Anglican minister had to leave Romania. Rev. Richard Wurmbbrand and his wife Sabine, without thought to family or possessions, continued unafraid and without respite an intense illegal missionary Christian work. They smuggled numerous Jewish children out of ghettos, preached daily in many bomb shelters and ended up arrested many times for underground Christian activities during a state of war. At least one time they were a few hours away from being sentenced to be shot by a military Romanian tribunal, which had no patience or understanding for two Jews turned Christian and their other Jewish-Christian followers conducting such underground activities while Romania was at war. The Wurmbbrands, loved and respected by many Romanian Orthodox Christian personalities though, escaped only through the intervention of the chief editor of Romania's main newspaper of the time. Sabine's parents, two sisters and a brother perished in Nazi massacres. Also killed by Romanian Nazi Legionnaires in Romania was Isaac Feinstein, an influential Jewish Christian missionary to the Romanian Jews who was the main factor in the conversion of the Wurmbbrands. Their lives during that period was described in Wurmbbrand's book, "Christ on the Jewish Road. "

In the short period after the end of WWII and the transformation of Romania into a communist state (1945-1947) Rev. Wurmbbrand printed and organized the surreptitious distribution of one million Russian Gospels to the Russian troops that occupied Romania. He pastored a church of 1,000, mostly made of Jewish

converts. In February 1948 Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, though under Swedish diplomatic protection, was kidnapped from the street by the Communist government and disappeared in the Communist prison system. In preparation for a show trial he was kept under a secret name for nearly 3 years in a solitary cell, underwent tortures and was sentenced to 25 years of prison as an enemy of the communist state. The show trial was never held as he resisted all tortures to make him confess imagined crimes. He spent 14 years in Communist prisons in two periods, 1948-1956 and 1959-1964. He succeeded to convert to the Christian faith high-ranking secret police officers who helped his eventual release. His wife, Sabina was also imprisoned in a slave-labor camp for 3 years. In 1964 the communist government allowed him and his family be ransomed for \$10,000 by Norwegian Christians. His books *Tortured for Christ* and *In God's Underground* describe above in detail.

The events that gave him worldwide recognition in the Western World have not been gathered before in any book and therefore are narrated here.

The Wurmbrands arriving in December 1965 in Oslo, Norway, and not understanding Norwegian, visited their first Sunday the American Lutheran Church. Impressed by the freedom of worship they cried uncontrollably during the entire service. Rev. Myrus Knutson, the minister of the church, from deep compassion opened generously his home to the refugee family while checking through the US embassy government connections on the veracity of this refugee's strange accounts of suffering and torture. His contacts answered, "fully reliable" and so Rev. Wurmbrand was invited to speak at the largest NATO base chapel meeting in Oslo. The meeting being opened for questions, Colonel-Chaplain Cassius Sturdy asked Pastor Wurmbrand why the West should or not try and coexist with communism? Wurmbrand, always dramatic in his behavior, quickly stepped off the podium, snatched the colonel's wallet from his pocket and replied, "I took your money, your money is in my pocket. Let's coexist!" He replied further that of course communism wants to coexist once it had occupied half the globe. There might be no solution for cancer but no one has decided to coexist with cancer and thus an accommodation with communism is not possible. Every thief would like to coexist with the police but this is unacceptable. Colonel Sturdy stood up on the spot and said, "Gentlemen, let's send this man to America to snatch the wallets from all leftist and open their eyes." Indeed, a collection was taken on the spot and Rev. Wurmbrand was organized an itinerary within a month with speaking engagements mostly in the Eastern United States.

Arrived alone in New York most meetings were small military chapel gatherings and Rev. Wurmbrand scheduled immediately his return for lack of any success. He went though to Philadelphia to visit the only friend he knew, a Jewish-Christian minister. This minister discouraged him from trying to stay in the United States as he was too old and too feeble to pastor a church, and, "you will not be able to raise a salary" were his final words. He asked the minister to show him a little bit Philadelphia. It so happened that the biggest anti-Vietnam rally was that day

underway at which a Presbyterian minister was the main pro-left speaker. Stopping out of curiosity to listen Rev. Wurmbrand, 6'3" went straight for the microphone, shouting, "you know nothing of communism, I am a doctor in communism. You should be on the side of communism's victims instead of defending their torturers." "How could you be a doctor in communism?" was the sarcastic reply. "Here are my credentials," answered Wurmbrand, taking off his shirt to show deep torture scars on his torso. The police took Wurmbrand away asking him to get dressed, yet it was enough for newspaper people to take dramatic photographs and ask for interviews. Next day in nearly all major newspapers in the United States, and some abroad, on page one were pictures of the minister who showed his torture scars and request for interviews and speaking engagements poured in so that Rev. Wurmbrand had to postpone his return and prolong by 1 ½ month his stay in the States. He had to return for another 3 months speaking tour. In May 1966 he testified before the U. S. Senate's Internal Security Subcommittee. His testimony became the US Government most sold publication in the following three years. Together with the family he immigrated to the United States in November of 1966.

Once in the States the Wurmbrand family started Christian Missions to the Communist World, The mission had branches in over 35 countries in the Free World. The organization activities and Rev. Wurmbrand speaking in many countries effectively drew the attention of the world to the plight of their fellow forgotten Christian brethren. Wurmbrand's message at all times: "Hate the evil systems, but love the persecutors and try to win them to Christianity." Profound faith, sharp thinking and quick wit combined to give him a warm personality. His principle, "help anyone and give to anyone who arrived to ask from you, even you can help or give only a little." Christian Leaders around the world have called him a living martyr and "the Iron Curtain Paul."

Rev. Wurmbrand spoke in practically most countries of the Free World, conducted many influential televised interviews. An example would be an amazing 1 1/2 hour appearance with Madelaine Murray O'Hare, the outspoken atheist, that left her literally speechless. Wurmbrand not initially invited to the interview asked from the audience, "I have travelled throughout the world and saw many charitable works like Christian hospitals, Jewish orphanages, even Buddhist nursing homes. Could you give me an example of any atheistic charitable establishment?" Ms. O'Hare remained silent for over 3 minutes, upon which Allan Burke, the moderator invited Rev. Wurmbrand into the debate. Unfortunately, O'Hare did not agree to the subsequent release-publication of the videotape.

Unknown yet in the Free World are theological works already translated and to be published.

Rev. Wurmbrand kept speaking and actively traveling way past 85. Rev Wurmbrand was confined for the last five years, to a bed due to severely advancing leg neuropathy contracted during his 3 years of solitary confinement when he was obliged to stand interminable hours and being kept close to starvation. He died

2/17/01 of respiratory failure. His wife Sabina died 8/17/2000. He is survived by their son, Michael.

In the years following the passing into eternity of Richard and Sabina Wurmbrand, the organization started by them, named now Voice of the Martyrs (VOM) ended up with a leadership that misused their spiritual legacy. Tom White, the past Voice of the Martyrs Chairman for more than 20-years, committed suicide in April, 2012, only two to three hours after an accusation of suspected child sexual molestation (pedophilia) of a 10-years old girl was formally filed by her parents with the local police, and while the Bartlesville, OK. police were searching to arrest him. This terrible event made world news. At the time of his committing suicide, Tom White had a \$140,000+, plus perks, yearly salary and very substantial travel and expense accounts used in his extensive and frequent international travel year after year. Since the suspected perpetrator was dead, the police closed any further investigation of the sexual molestation. The police chief and the former mayor of the town of Bartlesville, OK. were personally serving on the Board of Directors of Voice of the Martyrs.

The organization diverted at least \$28 million donors funds gathered under the claim of helping persecuted Christians and using constantly the sad satory of suffering of the Wurmbrand family to shoring up the local sagging construction industry in Bartlesville, OK so as to build opulent headquarters (previous headquarters had cost only \$90,000.) Donors money was also used to give a loan to a third degree convicted felon, to help him coming sooner from being under parole.

When Michael Wurmbrand asked for a proper investigation, he was summarily dismissed.

Please read further at <http://wurmbrandmichael.com>

OBITUARY Sabina Wurmbrand, born OSTER (1913-2000)

Sabina was born on July 10, 1913 in Czernowitz, a city which became part of Romania after WWI, and since WWII has been part of the Ukraine (present name: Chernivtsi.) This area was an important educational and cultural hub for a very large Jewish population (around 1 ½ million, most of them deported to concentration camps and killed by German and Romanian troops in WWII.) Sabina graduated from high school in Czernowitz, and attended university classes for two years at the Sorbonne in Paris, France. She was fluent in six foreign languages.

Following the worldwide recession, around 1934 she had to drop her studies and return to Romania, being employed in Bucharest in order to support financially her family. While in Bucharest, she married Richard Wurmbrand, at the time a successful stockbroker, on October 26, 1936. During a vacation later in 1936, both Richard and Sabina were converted and baptized in the Christian faith, joining the

church of the Anglican Mission in Bucharest. During the WWII occupation of Romania in 1940-43, Sabina's parents, two sisters, and one brother were killed in Nazi concentration camps. Sabina was active in the Romanian Christian underground ministry from 1940-45. She smuggled numerous Jewish children out of ghettos, preached daily in bomb shelters, and was arrested several times for underground Christian activities during a state of war. She and her husband Richard were spared from execution through the intervention of the chief editor of Romania's main newspaper and the interest shown in their case by prominent religious leaders. During this time, Sabina was one of the founders of the Jewish-Christian Church in Bucharest.

Within weeks of the end of World War II, Sabina traveled in very dangerous conditions, on the roof of a train carriage to Budapest, carrying in goods and food, especially salt, that were needed by refugees living there.

In 1946, she organized a soup kitchen in Bucharest which served 1,000 people a day during a severe drought. During the summers of 1946 and 1947, she organized Christian camps for Romania's religious leaders of all denominations, and held daily devotions for them. During these years she also conducted street meetings with gatherings of up to 5000 people. After her husband's arrest by the Communist government in 1948, she encouraged many young ministers to continue underground Christian activity. She was arrested in 1951 and taken to a labor camp to build a river canal. She loaded and unloaded box-cars with stones. She spent three years in prison, and was under house arrest for several years after release. The Communist authorities promised to free her if she would divorce her husband and renounce her faith, which she refused to do.

She and her family escaped Romania in 1966, traveling throughout Europe and America, speaking for the newly founded organization, Christian Mission to the Communist World. Sabina actively spoke to churches, groups, and conferences for 32 years after the founding of the ministry, and accompanied her husband to testify at Congressional hearings on religious persecution. She wrote and published a book, *The Pastor's Wife*, detailing her Christian testimony and life, which continues to be published in six languages. Sabina's life was characterized by an understanding of Christian love and forgiveness, with an effort to redeem lives for Christ.

My parents' spiritual legacy is continued by myself. See <http://helpforrefugees.com>