

THE EPOCH TIMES LIFE & TRADITION

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAN NOVACOVICI

Dan Novacovici on his terrace in Bucharest, Romania, not long before leaving for France, in 1980.



Romanian Gulag Survivor:

‘Communism Is a Cancer on Humanity’

Dan Novacovici details his experience in Romania, and warns against communism’s spread in the United States

Dan Novacovici and his friends take a trip to the Fagaras Mountains to bring supplies to men involved in the anti-communist resistance movement and who were hiding in caves in the mountainous region, circa 1948–1950.



Dan Novacovici (R) as a child, with his mother and siblings.

PETA EVANS

Romanian gulag survivor Dan Novacovici has some invaluable insight regarding the current state of the world: He recognizes all the glaring signs of a communist agenda and began to realize several years ago that “communism was being implanted openly in the United States.”

The 85-year-old Washington, D.C., resident was a political prisoner in Romania during its post-World War II communist era; being the son of a general in the king’s army didn’t help matters. In fact, Novacovici’s father was special forces commander and right-hand man for the last king of Romania, Michael I, who was forced to abdicate the throne in 1947 after being unsuccessful in pushing back against Soviet invasion.

Aside from this family connection to someone the communists deemed an “enemy of the people,” Novacovici was found to be a member of an anti-communist poetry group.

He was sent to two gulags and reached the point of near death under extreme torture and starvation. Fortuitously, he survived and eventually escaped to France, later immigrating to the United States with his wife, Emilia, and daughter, Anca, thinking that “the United States would be the last country in which communism would come.”

“I never thought it would come here in my generation,” Novacovici told The Epoch Times. “It started, I believe, in 1948—every university has a communism club.”

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DEAR NEXT GENERATION

How It Was in the '30s, '40s, and '50s

→ Advice from our readers to our young people

I was born in the middle of the Depression. Two brothers preceded me, and I was followed by a sister. My two brothers were both born in hospitals, but my sister and I were born at home. I guess my folks couldn't afford any more hospital bills. We lived on Whidbey Island, located in Puget Sound in Washington State. We lived in a remote location, so our upbringing was probably a lot different from children raised in an urban environment such as Seattle.

Our lifestyle was pretty much the same as our neighbors and friends, so our living conditions were not unique. Our formative years were shaped by the Great Depression, World War II, Truman, and Ike. Comparing our standard of living then with today's, one would probably consider it to have been below the poverty level. We had what we needed and didn't have to take welfare, even if it was available.

Here is how things were back in my day:

Marriage was between a man and a woman. They stayed together for life. Divorces were an exception.

Couples had children and were expected to love and care for them to the best of their ability.

Children contributed time and effort to the family unit. These contributions were called "chores." Our chores consisted of gathering and bringing in wood for heat and cooking, washing dishes, feeding the animals, working in the garden, digging a new pit for the outhouse, putting up hay for the winter, digging clams, and catching crabs for dinner to name a few. Allowances were not provided.

We were encouraged to begin earning and saving money early on. If we wanted to purchase stuff beyond what our parents provided, the money came out of our pocket. We expected nothing less. I bought my first bike and car with the money I earned.

The only vices I can remember when growing up were smoking and drinking beer. Drugs were unheard of. Out-of-wedlock births were rare.

We said the Pledge of Allegiance every morning in grade school. We learned the 3 R's and were graded on our accomplishments—or lack thereof.

Our parents paid for our school lunches, or more than likely, we brought a sack lunch. I even saved the sack and waxed paper. In my senior year, I cleaned the cafeteria after school to pay for my lunches.

We respected our elders and stayed out of trouble.

We were given the territory and opportunity to roam where we wanted. It was up to us to decide what we were going to do with our free time. Free time came after the chores were done. Most of the time, our parents didn't know where we were. A standing rule was: "Be home for dinner." We had no TV, cellphones, internet, or computer games, only a radio for evening programs.

Kids were expected to attend and graduate from high school. Going on to college was strongly encouraged. All four of us kids attended college. My brother and I graduated. We were able to work and pay our own way, with some help from our parents when they could. I graduated with \$150 in student debt.

Our parents included us in a lot of activities. These included camping, mountain backpack trips, fishing, coming to our sports events, and letting us kids go with Dad to some of his work sites.

I am 86 and my wife, Celie, is 82. We are both physically active and involved in church and community affairs. I would encourage everyone to get involved in community activities. We should be willing to contribute our time and talent. Celie and I have been married for 55 years and have two children, both with families.

The contrast between what it was like to be raised in the '30s, '40s, and '50s against today's environment is truly striking. I consider my growing-up period as the best of times. Young people today are working under a whole new set of rules, and the rules are not good. I find it incredible how far our society has declined since the time I was growing up until today. This nation has got to reverse course if we hope to save this next generation and this country.

—Richard Bryant, Oregon



BIBA KAYE WICH

could turn a tighter circle, and so it went. I wrote to our airplane manufacturers asking for photos of their aircraft. My wall was covered with beautiful color photos of them. We knew that our chances of flying in a war plane was not going to happen. So, for us, we would build and fly gas-engine powered flying models that we could control.

U-Control would be best for us. We had a devise called a U-Reely control handle that we used. Tilt the hand up, the plane would climb, tilt the hand down, the plane would dive. The control handle had two light wires that were tethered to the airplane. We generally used about 75 feet of line. With the pilot standing in the center, he could fly the plane in a 150-foot diameter circle. Sometimes, this method was called "spindizzy." If the pilot attained sufficient skill, it was possible for him to control the airplane in a wide range of aerobatics. But first, we had to learn how to build and fly the thing.

After many crashes, I learned that by careful attention to details, perseverance, and patience, I would be successful. My plane flew successfully and I landed it in one piece. We literally jumped for joy and cheered. The Wright brothers couldn't have been happier!

I thought that this experience would provide me with a framework for success in life. I was wrong! The other two factors that I didn't take into account were timing and luck.

Robert Burns was plowing his field when he noticed that he destroyed a mouse nest. The mouse probably thought it had built a safe, snug home. All its labor, nest, and plans were upended in an instant. "The best-laid plans of mice and men oft go amiss."

After my divorce, I was that mouse. I lost everything that I had worked for in the most productive years of my life. I was homeless and reduced to my only possessions that would fit into my old blue van. Back to square one!

The turning point of the Pacific War with Japan was the Battle of Midway. We had broken the Japanese code and had information of when and where their aircraft carriers would be. These were the same ships that launched their aircraft that attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7. They had to be destroyed!

The plan was: Our torpedo planes and dive bombers would attack the Japanese fleet simultaneously, forcing the ships to divide their anti-aircraft fire. This was critical because the torpedo planes would be flying low and facing the broadsides of the ships with every anti-aircraft firing at them, unless the ships had to fire at multiple angle targets.

As luck would have it, the torpedo planes and dive bombers missed their pre-appointed rendezvous time or place. This error assured that the Japanese ships would have much more effective anti-aircraft fire. The torpedo planes arrived first, so they had to commence the attack alone. The Japanese ships shot down every torpedo plane. Then, the dive bombers arrived and were able to sink four aircraft carriers, as well as other ships. The thin line between triumph and tragedy, success and failure is often governed by time and chance.

If I have learned anything in my lifetime, it is: The vagaries of life preclude any certainties.

—Joseph Cirina, New York

What advice would you like to give to the younger generations? We call on all of our readers to share the timeless values that define right and wrong, and pass the torch, if you will, through your wisdom and hard-earned experience. We feel that the passing down of this wisdom has diminished over time, and that only with a strong moral foundation can future generations thrive.

Send your advice, along with your full name, state, and contact information to NextGeneration@epochtimes.com or mail it to: **Next Generation, The Epoch Times**, 229 W. 28th St., Floor 7, New York, NY 10001

LARGER THAN LIFE: ART THAT INSPIRES US THROUGH THE AGES



1. The medieval town of Assisi, residential and religious buildings, rests on the slopes of Mount Subasio behind the town. The imposing white bell tower of the basilica surveys the urban landscape. The basilica's façade is fabricated from the colored stones of Mount Subasio. The façade reflects a pink color during the day and a white color in the moonlight. Simone di Pucciarello, a wealthy citizen of Assisi, donated the land for the basilica, a hill previously known as "Hill of Hell" where criminals were executed. Today, it is known as the "Hill of Paradise."

The Basilica of Saint Francis of Assisi

How a basilica contributed to the development of the Italian Renaissance

ARIANE TRIEBSWETTER

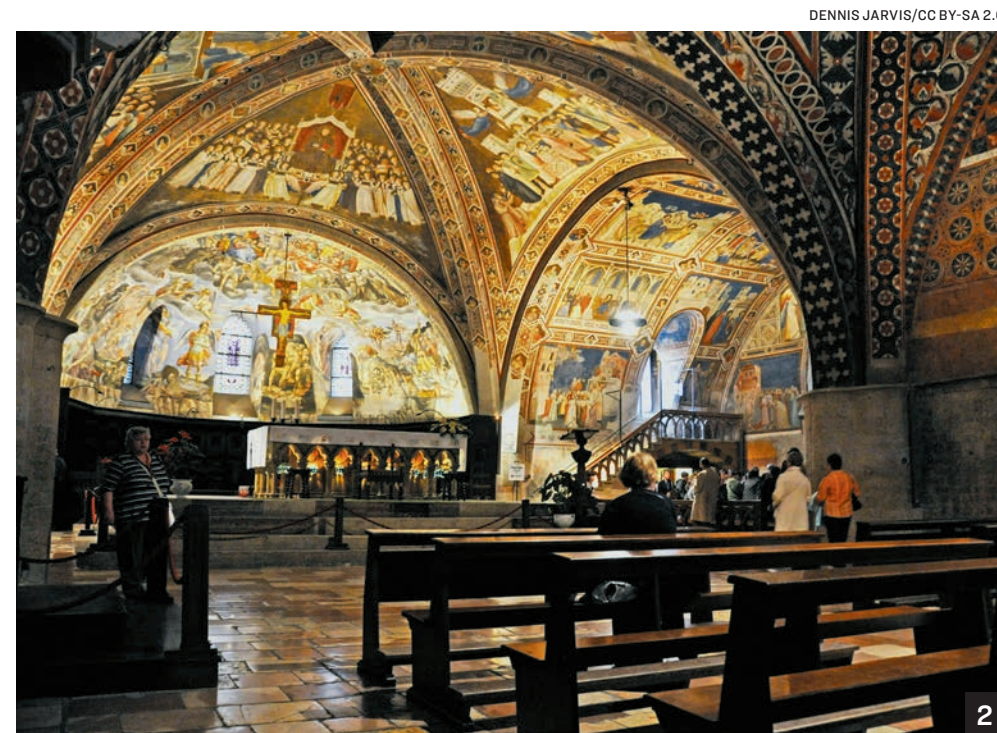
In the charming streets of the Italian city of Assisi, in the region of Umbria, an atmosphere of mysticism reigns. There, perched on the glorious slopes of Mount Subasio in the province of Perugia, rests the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi, a site of incomparable architectural and artistic treasures. The basilica not only influenced Assisi's architecture, but also planted the seeds for the early Italian Renaissance.

The basilica was built as a shrine to honor Francis, the holy man of Assisi. The site was designed by Maestro Jacopo Tedesco and it was completed in 1253. A crypt for the saint's body was added in 1822. The basilica's architecture helped establish typical elements of Italian Gothic architecture, a combination of the European Romanesque and Gothic architectures. Examples of Italian Gothic architecture in the basilica include flying buttresses, a bell tower, a polychromatic setting, a rib vault, and tall vertical windows.

The site has two levels: the upper church and the lower church. The architecture blends Romanesque and Gothic styles as the upper church is in a French Gothic style with a white-washed brick façade and with Italian elements using a variety of colors and adornments. The lower church is built in an Umbrian Romanesque style with ribbed-crossed vaults over the nave and is sparsely decorated and dimly lit to represent the saint's ethos of simplicity.

The site also displays numerous frescos by prestigious early-Renaissance Italian artists such as Cimabue, Pietro Lorenzetti, Simone Martini, and Giotto. The frescos were some of the first examples of the early Italian Renaissance.

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DENNIS JARVIS/CC BY-SA 2.0

2. The papal altar of the lower church is made out of one block of stone from Como in 1230. The altar is complemented by Gothic walnut choir stalls and a series of ornamented Gothic arches, supported by 12 columns. The walls are covered with "Last Judgment" frescos by Casare Semei di Orvieto (1609–1668), and the vaults have paintings by Maestro delle Vele, a pupil of Giotto (circa 1330), depicting the "Triumph of Saint Francis." The stained-glass windows are attributed to Giovanni di Bonino.

3. Halfway down the lower church's nave (the central part of a church, often surrounded by aisles), a double stairway leads into the crypt where St. Francis is buried. The remains were hidden from grave robbers; after the sarcophagus was rediscovered in 1822, Pasquale Belli designed the marble crypt in a Neo-classical style, characterized by simple geometric forms, symmetry, and precious materials. Ugo Tarchi redesigned it using bare stone between 1925 and 1932, in the Neo-Romanesque style, characterized by rough square stones, polychromatic stonework, and an imposing appearance.

4. The strikingly colorful, airy, and majestic nave of the upper church constructed as a simple, single four-bay nave with a cross-vaulted ceiling, and floor patterns of leaves and crosses. Golden stars decorate four ribbed vaults on the blue ceiling. Unlike the design of the lower basilica, the clustered columns have ribs in a Gothic style. Tall Gothic stained-glass windows line the nave. The frescos along the walls depict scenes by artists Pietro Cavallini, Cimabue, and Jacopo Torriti.

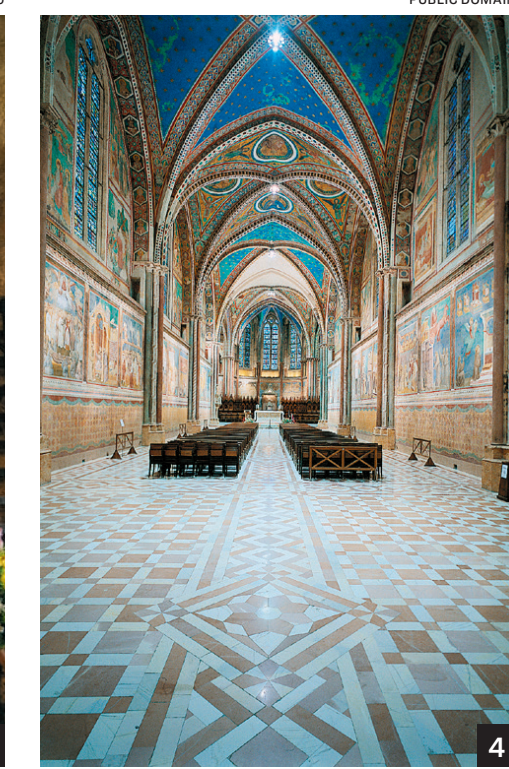
5. A fresco to the right of the lower church's high altar depicts the Virgin Mary and Christ as a child, surrounded by saints. In the right corner, St. Francis is shown. This painting is by the famous Florentine artist Cimabue, who was Giotto's teacher. As such, this basilica saw the beginnings of a new artistic movement. This specific painting is known as the "Maestà," which means "majesty." Maestà refers to any Medieval and Renaissance religious painting depicting the Virgin with Christ as a child, surrounded by angels or saints.

6. In the tympanum (a decorative wall surface above an entrance, door, or window) above the two cusped arches of the basilica's exterior, there is a rose window with carvings, which are typical Romanesque decorative details. It is enclosed in a Renaissance-style porch with large white stone walls and arched windows. This window is often called the "eye of God" or "the eye of the most beautiful church in the world," according to author Gualtiero Belucci in "Assisi, Heart of the World."

7. In the lower part of the nave of the upper basilica are a series of 28 frescoes depicting the life of St. Francis, attributed to the famous Italian painter Giotto. Here, St. Francis's humble life is depicted through his actions. The first fresco on the left depicts the saint's visit to locals, and the second fresco in the center shows him donating his coat. The last fresco shows the building that is going to hold his tomb. The colors of the frescoes are still vivid and, according to famous art historian Giorgio Vasari, the frescos were executed between 1296 and 1304.



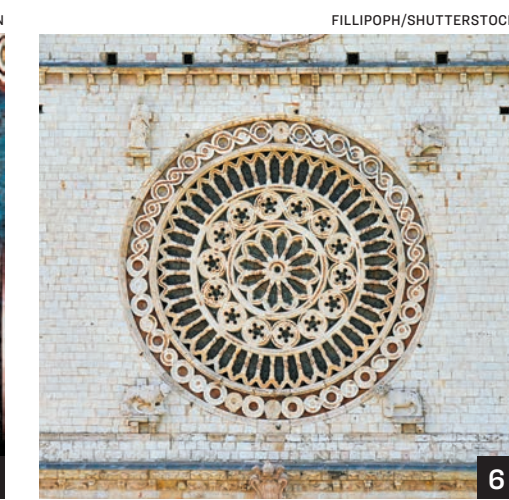
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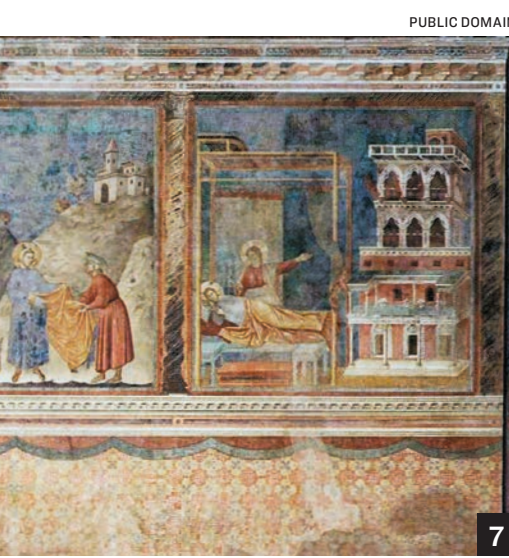
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Kudos to these kind and patient people for not turning their back on the struggling family.



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A recent expedition displays these stunning tifacts in a Grand Bahamas museum.



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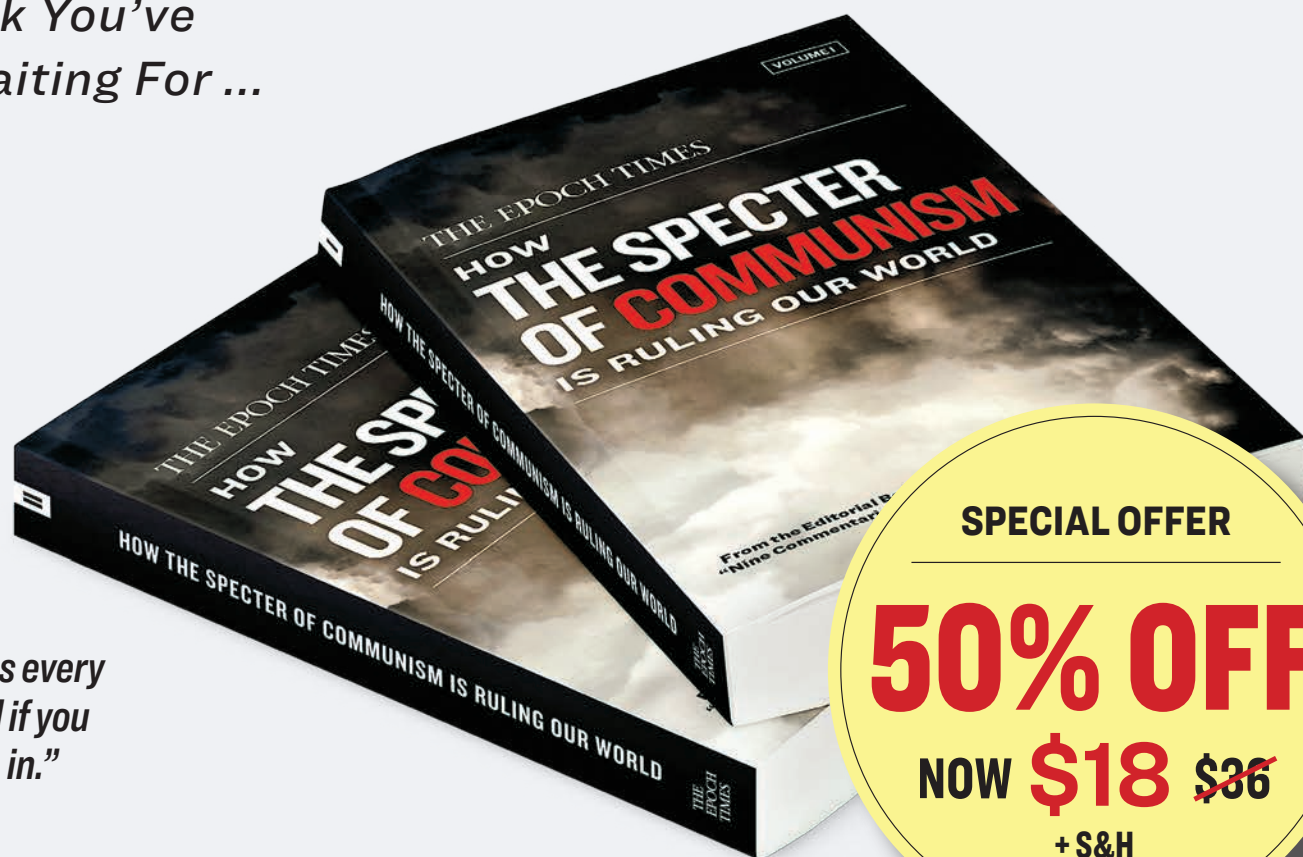
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