

# I Was a Slave in Russia - Part 2

by John Noble

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*John Noble shares his harrowing experiences in Soviet labor camps, drawing parallels to the moral decline in America.*

**Duration:** 25:59

**Scripture:** Exodus 1:14, Psalm 146:7, Proverbs 29:2, Isaiah 61:1, Matthew 6:33, John 8:32, 1 Timothy 6:10

**Topics:** "Russia"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker shares his experience of being in a prisoner camp in the Soviet Union. He describes how prisoners from different backgrounds and professions were brought together and initially hesitant to speak up. However, as they worked together, they began to share their stories and experiences. The speaker highlights the use of slave labor in the Soviet Union and the negative impact it has on the American economy. He also mentions his own journey from being a dedicated communist to realizing the true nature of communism and becoming dedicated to fighting against it. The sermon ends with the speaker recounting the brutal suppression of an uprising in the camps and the execution of those who spoke up.

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## Transcript

After leaving Moscow, we went on a 1,400 mile trip high up into the Arctic Circle. And as the train was moving up north and we were laying on our shelves, looking out those small windows on the guard side, we could see those vast forests accompanying the tracks up north. And after we crossed the timber line into the Arctic Circle, the trees disappeared, the bushes disappeared, and yet we were traveling on and on to the north tip of the Ural Mountains.

And up there, the north tip forks out. We have high mountain ranges on the west, south, and east. So our train had to make a big circle to come in from the north.

And as we landed at this high plateau of Vorkuta, the train stopped, the doors were open, we were pushed out, even though there was no vegetation up there, but it just seemed like a forest of pole and barbed wire, one camp right next to the other. Approximately 200 camps with a prisoner population of close to a half a million. That's just the one camp region of Vorkuta.

I might add that the greater Vorkuta camp area, which includes the Pechora camps, which includes the Intak camps and the Ichiga camps, this whole complex up there was holding approximately 1.1 million

prisoners. At this point, too, I might add that in the summer of 1954, now I use this figure because that's the time when we established them, in the summer of 1954, they had a total number of close to 28 million prisoners in the Soviet Union. 28 million people completely deprived of everything that God has provided for man.

I know, today they claim they haven't got them anymore. If they haven't got them, they've liquidated them. No one has been set free, at least no greater amounts have been set free.

At least the 3,000 Americans have not returned yet. But up there at Vorkuta, amongst these half a million prisoners, there were somewhere between 70,000 and 100,000 girls and women. These girls and women were working in cement factories, brick factories, limestone plants, and so on, while the men were working under the most primitive conditions deep down in the coal pits, conditions comparable to the American and British coal mines of 1912 and 1913.

Now that, too, might shock some of you because we're told that the Soviet industrial conditions have improved so tremendously. Of course, they have an exhibition coal mine where everything seems to be fine. They have an exhibition steel mill where everything seems to be fine.

But there where coal is being produced, there where steel is being produced, there the conditions are the same as they are up there at Vorkuta, comparable to American and British coal mines of 1912 and 1913. May I just add at this point, too, that I had a discussion with our chief engineer, who was a high-ranking party member, and also an MBD member, in regard to these things, because frequently they showed us pictures of modern coal mining equipment. And I asked him if they really had this type of equipment in the Soviet Union, and he assured me that they did.

Well, then I asked him, well, why don't you use it? He smiled and he said, well, we can't use it here in Russia. I said, why not? He said, look, take this one machine, for example. This machine is so efficient that just by putting one man behind it, that machine replaces approximately 200 workers.

Now, that might have been exaggerated, but that's what he said. He said, now, look, if that one man that's operating that machine does not go along exactly the way we want him to go along, just with a twist of the wrist, he can put that machine out of production, and the manpower of 200 men is lost. If we take 200 human beings and stuff them down into those coal mines, even if 10 guys work, but 190 are still working.

That's the basis of Soviet economy. Slave labor. Just talking about slave labor for a moment, are you aware of the fact that 85% of the products that are shipped out of the Soviet Union are slave labor products, strictly produced by prisoners, not only underpaid workers, but the world buys them.

And it's ruining our American economic system. And we don't care, or we don't seem to care. Now, you might say you don't know about it, but how about Washington? They know every detail about these things.

The time is flying away, but let me explain one more thing to you, one more thing that's of vital importance. Daily new prisoners were coming in, prisoners from all walks of life, some out of the defense plants, some from jet training bases, many from the farms, a few out of the Kremlin, some from high schools and colleges. And these prisoners coming into those camps, oh, for several weeks they were quiet, they were afraid to talk, they hadn't found confidence in us.

But then after a few weeks of working together, shoveling together, pushing together, then they'd start to unpack, because all their life they'd been hammering all these things inside of themselves and no one to

share it with. A husband over there in Russia cannot even tell his wife how much money he makes, because she could possibly figure out how much production is going out of that plant. But there up there at the Arctic Circle, there they would tell us what type of armament they were producing in the defense plants, the quantities that were being produced.

They told us how many planes they had at the jet training base. They told us how the spirit was in the army and the navy. They told us what kind of an education they had in the Soviet Union.

They told us about their church life. They told us how much money they made, how many government bonds they had to buy, how much taxes they had to pay. And I'm sorry to say that, but these things that we read in our newspapers, brought back by these two-week experts, are all wrong, because they haven't seen it, they were just told so.

Just one word about Soviet education. I know it's shocking and I know there are hundreds of people that could stand up and say, no, I heard exactly the opposite. But just one word about Soviet education, and it's vitally important for the situation here in America.

We're told that the Soviets have such a tremendous educational system. They're improving, there's no question. But the average Soviet citizen, still today, only has three years of education.

Not three years college, not three years high school, only three years. That nation is kept in complete darkness over there, with exception of one small group. One group that they are giving an extreme high education.

These are the people that the foreign visitors come face to face with. The Soviets know that they cannot control an educated Soviet Union. But by pulling one out of a thousand, and giving him a very high education, and constantly reminding him of the privilege that he is receiving, of having this education, he's going to be loyal, despite of his education.

They too know that they cannot control an educated United States. And therefore, if you look across our nation, thank God there are exceptions, but as you look across our nation, you will find that in the majority of schools, the fundamentals are being pushed away, and socialism is being brought in, getting along together with anyone and everyone, just washing things out. You know what's going on.

A systematic destruction of the education of the American person, brought down to a level so that the Communists can control it. March 1953 came along, Stalin's death. And with Stalin's death, of course, new hopes rose into the hearts of those people.

Hopes that possibly the conditions would change. All Stalin's pictures were snatched off the walls. In the so-called library, the magazines were Stalin's pictures visible, they were torn out, and black plot put upon Stalin's face, so you couldn't recognize him anymore.

He was gone. But soon he came back. About two weeks later, they brought his pictures back.

Because they were losing hold of that nation, and so they thought by bringing Stalin back, they might rescue for their cause. But conditions were getting worse instead of better. They made many promises, but not a single one kept.

But then the uprising in East Berlin came along and gave us courage. Courage that there were other people too, that were standing up against Communism. Because if you take the Soviet newspapers, the newspaper that the average man reads over there, he's daily being reminded, it's against us.

Look at all the nations that are holding hands with us. You can't rise up against all of them, you might as well give up. But here, people rising up in Eastern Germany, demanding their freedom.

Beria was purged, the chief of the NBD, the man that was holding that nation together. Seven and a half million members of NBD were split right down the middle. No one knew to whom one or the other was loyal.

And so the central control, central power, was lost in the Soviet Union for approximately six weeks. In July and August 1953, the Soviet Union was practically open for anyone to walk in and take over. I know it sounds fantastic because the Western world was not informed about these things.

Washington knew it, and also the United Nations had a daily record of exactly what was going on over there. Now I hope this reference to the United Nations doesn't mean that I have high regards for this organization. I'm glad you feel that way too.

You know why I have not only not high regards, but extremely low regards? Because when any organization or any individual denies the word of God, denies prayer, that organization is of the devil. But after this purge of Beria, the loss of central control, approximately 100,000 of these 500,000 prisoners up there at Merkura put down their tools and said no, we're not going to take it any longer. We demand international rights.

We demand our freedom. And we managed to get some of it at least inside our camps. We did not permit any officers or guards to enter our camp.

We had our own administration for approximately six weeks. But as these weeks were coming to an end, General Maslennikov moved up to the Arctic Circle with two divisions of armed forces. They dug their trenches around the camps and put their machine guns in place.

Then Maslennikov came in and asked the people to speak up. But what are you demanding? Why are you discontent? What do you want us to do? And we had approximately 20 men in our camps speak up. And the same thing in camp after camp throughout those 200 camps up there in the Arctic.

And just let me recall two of the brief speeches that were made there. One of them, the first one, was brought by a professor of history from the Leningrad University. And as this professor spoke up, he said, General, I know that for the words I have to speak, I will receive at least another 10 years.

But the general assured him, no, no, you have the freedom to speak, nothing will happen. And so he spoke. And he went back into history and recalled every stage of slavery that had ever existed.

And then he came to the present Soviet system. And he said, General, never in the history of mankind have we had such a brutal system of slavery as we do have today here in the Soviet Union. That man did not receive the 10 years he was expecting.

He was executed. And one more, a young officer, officer of the Red Army, was a prisoner. He recalled a little bit of his life in his speech to General Maslennikov.

He said, General, I was born a communist, I was raised a communist, and I was dedicated to fight for communism. World War II came along. I went out on the front.

And I was wounded 17 times, and I had received 17 different medals. And when I was wounded the 18th time, I was taken into German captivity, being unconscious. I was over there for about six weeks.

And then I managed to escape and get back to the Soviet lines, and I continued to fight on Soviet side until the war was over. The day the war was over, I was sentenced to 20 years and shipped up to the Arctic Circle because of being in German captivity. And he said, General, as I said, I was born and raised a communist and was dedicated to fight for it.

But now that I know what communism really is, I too am dedicated but to destroy it wherever I find it in this world. That man too was executed about a week later. And so were approximately 7,000 more executed because they spoke up.

The uprising as such was crushed with the most horrible bloodshed. They opened fire into those camps until everyone was down on the ground, either killed, wounded, or just seeking protection. But immediately after this uprising, I was shifted away to another camp.

And in this other camp, working on the lumber yard, I managed to sneak out a postcard, a postcard that went all the way back to Detroit, Michigan into the hands of my parents. My dad wasn't home at that time, but I didn't know. And this postcard served as evidence for them that I was still in Soviet hands and still alive.

They immediately passed it on to Washington. The State Department for eight years had been sending notes demanding my release, but the Soviets simply denied it. They said, we haven't got them, we've never heard of them.

But no evidence was on hand. And with this evidence, they started sending more forceful notes, but not a single one was answered until President Eisenhower sent a personal note and I began to move. But first I was taken away from the Arctic Circle, brought down to the small camp of Putman near Moscow, a camp of approximately 400 people.

And while I was there, I had the opportunity to talk to Mrs. Khrushchev, number one. But from Putman, I was taken to Moscow. There in Moscow, they gave me the red carpet tour, Lenin's Stalin's tomb, Gorky Avenue, Red Square, the university, the museums, and so on, just to get me soft on my way home.

But had I not heard from those thousands of prisoners up at the Arctic, what was being prepared for these foreign visitors, I too would have stumbled into the same ball pits and would have thought, well, Moscow anyhow is a fairly good city. For example, here in Houston, if you step out there on the street and you see a truck driving by with the words, oh, silver bread or wonder cup or something like that written on the side, you know that that truck is transporting bakery goods. In Moscow, you step out on the street, then you see a truck driving by with the words klep written on the side, which means bread.

If you could step to that back door and unlock that back door and open it up, you would find our prison cells in there and prisoners being transported, disguised as a bread truck. I personally was transported in a prison car from the outside, disguised as an interest traveling agency bus. Masters of deceit, but the world is swallowed.

And there from Moscow, the very last day in that town, an officer was there to bid me farewell. An officer and civilian. That man was General Moskvinnikov, the henchman of Verkhovna.

And he asked me after he told me we were going back to the American zone the next day, he asked me, where did you spend your prison life here in the Soviet Union? I said, at Vorkuta. At Vorkuta? In what camp? And I told him the number of the camp. And he sort of turned white and he said, do you recognize me? And I was not truthful.

I said, no. I didn't want to take any chances. I wanted to go home.

Well, I came to Berlin. In Berlin, I was brought to the Soviet headquarters. And there I was under guard for approximately 20 minutes before an American officer and two civilians walked in.

And frankly, when I read that U.S. on an American officer's uniform, it just seemed as if my knees were ready to give in, to realize that I was free again. A few moments later, I was taken down to the car and were driven over to West Berlin. And there taken to the high cock of the American headquarters.

As I entered the door, the American flag was standing right around the corner. And as I saw the American flag, I stopped for a moment and tears came into my eyes, because for so many, many years I hadn't seen this emblem of freedom. And the reporters gathered around.

And the reporters that had gathered around, they found it quite unusual that someone had emotional feelings when they see the flag. And they began to make their notes. And I couldn't understand why.

I can now, I might say so, because recently I spoke to a state convention of a group, and they just completed a survey across our United States, trying to find out how many schools still displayed the American flag. Do you know the results? Two-thirds do not display the American flag anymore. Two-thirds of our American schools.

A disgrace. I mentioned this also recently at a fairly large meeting in a town in Ohio, excuse me, in Indiana. And the people were shocked.

They didn't believe it. And one man stood up and he said, may I add something to that? Here in our town, and it was a fairly good-sized town, on the 4th of July, 1959, on the government, on the city buildings, not one flag was raised. It seems to be a disgrace to raise the American flag.

It seems to be a disgrace to be a patriot over here in America. Thank God there are some organizations that see to it that a little bit of patriotism is still kept alive. I was brought to the Army Hospital in Berlin.

There I underwent a thorough medical examination because the Army wanted to find out what a body looks like after nine and a half years of that kind of a life. I might add that for approximately eight years, I was under 100 pounds in weight. That's what we looked like over there.

But then from Berlin, I was flown to Washington, spoke before the Foreign Relations Committee in the House of Representatives, then spent many weeks with the various Congressional Investigation Committees, many weeks with the State Department, Pentagon, Atomic Energy Control Commission, and then I began to travel throughout the United States, sharing some of my experiences. But I must say that as I began to travel across our country, I began to get more and more discouraged. More and more discouraged because I told those people over there in Russia about a Christian America, and we haven't

got a Christian America.

Here and there you find groups of Christians scattered throughout our nation, but as a whole we're just about as rotten as they are over there. By law in the Soviet Union do they have to break the Ten Commandments, and over here in America we have the freedom to choose the type of a life we want to live, and yet look what horrible examples we are presented. Just go down the major streets of some of these major cities of our country, look at some of those shows, look at some of those billboards, some of those magazine stands, look at some of those programs on TV, and you have to admit that it's the most horrible example.

Yet what personally hurts me most, and I've got a couple of little kids, what hurts me most is when I go down the street and I see a mother pushing a baby buggy down the street, the babies can't even walk yet, but have two pistols in their hands. How can we raise a decent America if we bring crime right into the cradle? But America doesn't seem to care, and yet that's only the beginning. Look from there on, look into the schools, look what the kids are being taught, examine the books.

Maybe in your schools they're okay, God give that they are, but look across our nation, and then go on, look at the higher education, and then even go on beyond that. Look into all the other organizations, look into your newspapers, and down the whole line. You know all these nests, all these facilities through which the communists can poison the American mind.

Those are the ones that are unharmed. And yet, possibly worst of all, is that this book, the word of God, is being distorted. Communism is being brought into the churches, and the basic rock, the basic foundation of America is being destroyed.

And Americans don't seem to be much concerned. I must admit that probably you here are a little more concerned than the average American. But look at a town like this tonight.

Praise God for everyone that has come, but this auditorium should have been packed. And not only that, ten auditoriums like this tonight should have been packed. The people should rise up against these things that are going on in our country at this moment.

I must say in the last weeks while I've been traveling around and speaking just about every day, I have yet to find that first person who was really in his heart convinced it was good to have Khrushchev come over. Many people, they don't know. The greater majority says no, no, no, and yet he's coming.

Do we have a dictatorship here or something like that? May God give that we don't. Do you care? Do you care about our country? Thank God. Thank God for people that care.

But are you going to do exactly what the communists want you to do, namely nothing? Are you going to stand up for those things that our constitution provides? Are you going to stand up for freedom? Are you going to stand up for the word of God? There are so many opportunities, so much to be done, and yet it just doesn't seem as if we really got the moment to go ahead. We've got the most wonderful nation in this world. We've got the most wonderful heritage of any nation in this world, and yet we're losing.

And if we just think tonight of those things that are going on in Washington, the millions of dollars that's costing that American taxpayer to bring this crook around our country, and yet he's traveling. In the beginning, the question was raised or the mention was made that I probably had some suggestion as to how we should receive this man. Let me pass the responsibility of this answer on to the word of God.

And the Bible says, no, do not receive this man. And if we hope and believe that we'll keep America free, we better listen to the word of God instead of to the word of man. And it might be quite unusual at this time to end the meeting, to end this type of a meeting, in the way I would like you to end this portion, namely by doing something that we did over in the Soviet Union.

Please understand that when I have the opportunity to talk to a group such as this, and when I feel that the people want to do something, then first thing is to unite them with those people behind the Iron Curtain that are hoping and praying that somehow they'll get the strength to overthrow their system. You know that over there behind the Iron Curtain, there are more than 95 percent people dedicated to overthrow that system, but because the Western Road is holding hands with that nation, they just don't see the possibility of doing so. And those people over there, as they close their little services, services where they worship God, God Almighty, the only one that can save us from this satanic, godless force, they don't sing, they bow their heads and hum a song, a song that you all know.

And I did not mention this to anyone of the program, but I hope it is approved that we hum this song too here right now, and so with unite us in love with those people that are dedicated to fight communism. There are hundreds of thousands humming tonight over there in Russia, there are thousands more here throughout the United States tonight too humming this wonderful hymn, the hymn What a Friend We Have in Jesus. Because if we would not have this friend, we would not have America, freedom in America anymore.

We need God, we need Christ. Let's thank him for the many, many blessings that we've had in a simple way of humming a word of thanksgiving. You have just heard a presentation distributed by Diane Publishing, an outreach of Reverend Richard Wurmbrand, who was a prisoner of the communists for 14 years.

Reverend Wurmbrand is also founder of Jesus to the Communist World, a Christian non-profit organization dedicated to helping the underground church in communist countries and to warning the free world about the dangers and atrocities of totalitarian atheism. For further information about Reverend Wurmbrand and the mission he leads, write to Jesus to the Communist World, Post Office Box 11, Glendale, California, zip code 91209.

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