

Putin Says Communism Comes From the Bible, Compares Lenin to a Saint

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Russian President Vladimir Putin (R), Russian Patriarch Kirill (L) and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu (Rear L) of Moscow visit a marine church during Navy Day in Saint Petersburg on July 30, 2017.

ALEXEY NIKOLSKY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

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Russian President Vladimir Putin has compared Vladimir Lenin to a saint and declared that Soviet communist ideas come from the Bible.

Putin was speaking during a documentary about the recently-restored Valaam Monastery on [state-funded channel Rossiya 1](#), which tells the story of the building—located near the border with Finland—over the years.

A major point of discussion is the October Revolution of 1917, which led to the execution of the staunchly Christian royal family, the formation of the Soviet Union and a new chapter of atheistic and anti-religious policies by the Kremlin.

Related: Putin says he has always liked Communist ideas but there is a catch

Ever since—and particularly after the opening of the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev in the early 1990s—the role of the church in Russian society has been a dividing issue.

But Putin, who has often backed the church, tells the documentary makers that he does not believe the ideals of communism and Christianity are incompatible.



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"Maybe I am about to say something that some people will not like, but I will say what I think," he says.

"Firstly, faith has always accompanied us. It strengthened when things were hard for our people's country. There have been harsh, godfighting years when clerics were destroyed and churches were ruined. But at the same time (Soviets) created a new religion. Indeed, communist ideology is very similar to Christianity."

Lenin, an atheist who espoused the Marxist view that religion was "the opium of the people," inspired an active campaign to confiscate church property, while his successor, Joseph Stalin, demolished Moscow's biggest cathedral in 1931. In its place he planned a public swimming pool compete with a giant [statue of Lenin](#). Stalin ran out of money for the project but it was later built by Stalin's successor, Nikita Krushchev.

But Putin argues that like Christianity, communism preaches "freedom, brotherhood, equality." He called the *Moral Code of the Builder of Communism*, a pamphlet of guiding principles for all party members, a "primitive excerpt from the Bible."

In ritual too, Putin argued, Lenin and his cohorts borrowed from church practices, though it was unclear if he thought this was a conscious or intuitive effort.

"Lenin was laid down in a mausoleum," Putin reminded his interviewer. "How does this differ to the remains of saints for the Orthodox or even for Christians in general?"

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Ironically, the issue of Lenin's mausoleum is one of the main sources of discord between the church and the Communist Party, which are the country's second largest presence in parliament.

Church officials have long sought to have Lenin—whose mausoleum has stood outside the Kremlin since 1924—buried, arguing that it is improper. Communists argue that the casket sits below ground level, fulfilling the criteria for burial.

Putin has long refused to be drawn either way about the mausoleum, but told [Rossiya 1](#) that the monument was similar to how saints are displayed in the Orthodox tradition.

"I am often told: 'Nowhere in the Christian world is there such a tradition.' How can that be? Go to Athos and see how there are remains of saints and here also there are the sacred remains of Sergius and Herman," he says.

"So it seems that the authorities at the time did not invent anything new, but merely adopted under its own ideology something that humankind invented a long time ago."