



Is Vladimir **PUTIN** a Christian?

—by Peter Hammond

Surprising developments are taking place in the world's largest country, Russia. Their President, Vladimir Putin, has authorised over 2 billion Rubles (US\$100 million) of tax money to rebuild churches that were destroyed under the previous Soviet regime. There are a few other pro-Christian moves:

- The Russian government is printing Bibles to place in hotel rooms.
- Russian Orthodox Church leaders are invited to pray at state events.
- Military chaplains are being appointed for garrison churches and to lead Sunday schools and Bible studies in military bases.

• A new Russian public holiday to commemorate the conversion of the country to Christianity under Prince Vladimir in AD988, has been proclaimed: 28 July.

The West's degradation

Putin has expressed his disdain for the hedonistic social revolution that is polluting the West. Putin has condemned the West's capitulation to the sexual revolution of promiscuity, pornography, abortion, same-sex marriage and euthanasia, saying that the West's "movement backward and downward into chaotic darkness and a return to a primitive state."

In several speeches and policies implemented, Vladimir Putin is planting Russia's



"I urge that prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people... for all who are in high positions." 1 Tim 2:1-2

Russia's flag firmly on the side of traditional Christianity. Last year the Kremlin imposed a ban on homosexual propaganda, a ban on abortion advertising, a ban on abortions after 12 weeks and [controversially] a ban on sacrilegious behaviour and blasphemy.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn's books such as The Gulag Archipelago are now required reading in Russian schools.

Rejecting atheism

All of this is most confusing to people who are still caught up in the terminology of the Cold War. Many preachers are still speaking about Russia as a communist and atheist

Having lived under 70 years of atheist propaganda and vicious communist oppression and persecution, Russians today are amongst the most anti-communist people.

Free market economics

Since Vladimir Putin became president of Russia, the Russian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has doubled. Today Russia is rated as the 6th largest economy in the world. Industry in Russia has grown over 75% in the last 8 years. Investments have increased by 125%. The average salary in Russia has increased over 800%.

The middle-class has grown from 8 mil-

lion to 55 million. People living below the poverty line in Russia has decreased from 30% in the year 2000, to less than 14% today. While the United States has a trade deficit of more than US\$500 billion a year, Russia consistently runs a large trade surplus. While America's unemployment is officially 7.4%, Russia's sits at 5.4%. Russia today produces more oil, and more natural gas than any other country. While the United States debt is greater than its Gross Domestic Product (over 110%), Russia's debt is less than 8% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Russia has also added over 570 metric tonnes of gold to their reserves over the last decade. »



Putin is a controversial figure and many people interpret his actions as hostile. Interestingly though, many of his principles have a Biblical foundation.

country, yet today, there are more Evangelical, Born Again Christians in Russia, than in any other country in Europe. Ukraine has the second largest group of Evangelical Christians in Europe, followed by Romania.

Rejecting communism

As one Russian declared: "There are more communists in the university faculties of the United States of America, than there are in all of Russia and Eastern Europe combined today!"



Putin During his service with the KGB



An icon of Jesus in a Russian submarine's lounge



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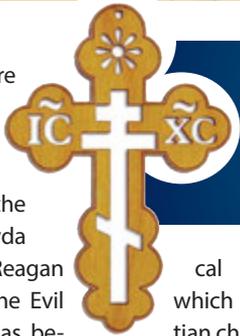


ments foreign policy: The bombing and burning of churches in the Middle East that followed the Arab Spring was in so many ways funded and fuelled by US State Department policy. While the US government was supporting Al Qaeda affiliated Jihadists in the Syrian War, the Russian government was speaking up and acting to protect Christians targets in the Middle East.

As one media commentator writes: "21st Century Russia is proof that Christianity can prevail against darkness and confusion. Today the liberals who control the West fear Putin... it is not a nuclear threat, but rather a spiritual renewal that threatens them. It is not Putin, but Russia's Christianity they fear. Rather it is Christ they fear and hate...devout Russian Christians are on the march...these Russians are like disciples of Christ, who lovingly reach out

The tables have turned

It is pretty serious when Russians are warning Americans about the dangers of socialism and godlessness! Russian Christians have expressed their shock to me at how America has become the new evil empire. Xavier Lerma of Pravda in Moscow has written that Ronald Reagan was right to call the Soviet Union 'The Evil Empire'. But now the United States has become 'The Evil Empire', with an aggressive pro-homosexual marriage agenda, bullying African governments to legalise abortion and perversion and sending generous aid to radi-



Regardless of whether Putin is a Christian or not, we need to pray for our leaders. Keep Putin and Russia in your prayers as they are major influencers in the world.

cal Middle-Eastern governments which severely persecute the Christian church.

A reversal of roles

Most Americans seem oblivious to the devastating consequences of their State Depart-

to their brothers and sisters, helping men and women in darkness, enslaved by a materialistic society, who are truly in need of Christ."

Battle for the family

He further wrote that the reason the Western media are demonising Vladimir Putin, and



"21st Century Russia is proof that Christianity can prevail against darkness."

Top: Putin addressing the Russian Orthodox Church

Russia, is not because he is ex-KGB, but because he opposes the perverse agenda of the radical homosexuals. It is ironic that religious freedom is under assault throughout the United States, with military chaplains facing Court Martials for praying in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. While in Russia soldiers are being urged to attend church services and military chaplains are being appointed to ensure that "the hands that control the weapons are under the control of minds and souls cleaned by the grace of Christ!"

Putin's testimony

Vladimir Putin has testified that he is a Christian. In his testimony he speaks of his mother's faith and how she secretly baptised him because his father was a staunch Communist Party member and would not have allowed it. He always wears a cross around his neck that was given to him by his Mother. Vladimir Putin regularly seeks Christian counsel, and is seen praying and attending church regularly.

The Russian patriarch, Kirill, recognises Vladimir Putin as a faithful member of the Russian Orthodox Church. In his office, behind his desk, Putin has a large icon of the Lord Jesus Christ prominently displayed.

So is he a Christ follower?

Only God knows the heart of Vladimir Putin. There is no question but that the Russian government today is more Christian than it has

been for decades. Where else in the world is a government investing over \$100 million in building churches? It is an incredible reversal of fortunes that countries behind what used to be the Iron Curtain now have some of the most dynamic Christian churches and the highest percentage of church attendance in Europe. It would appear that Western decadence, immorality, materialism, compromise and superficiality, in churches, and shallow, sensational entertainment, have been more deadly to the Church than virulent atheist propaganda and vicious communist persecution in the East.

When Russians enjoy more religious freedom in public than many Western citizens, then something is seriously wrong! When Russians express their concern about lack of freedom and spiritual discernment in America, we should be very concerned. ■



Have Your Say
email us!
 info@joymag.co.za

- **Based on his actions, speeches and support of Christian ideals, do you think Vladimir Putin is a Christian?**
- **If Putin is a committed Christian, do you feel that his political decisions are in keeping with his faith?**



Putin and his wife (centre) celebrating Easter in a church