

Putin Returns Nazi-Looted Icon to Greek Prime Minister

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras meets with Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia Kirill in Moscow Apr. 9.

President Vladimir Putin has presented Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras with an ancient Greek icon that had been looted decades earlier, during the Nazi occupation of Greece.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said in comments to news site Vesti.ru on Thursday that Putin personally gave Tsipras the icon, which depicts Saint Nicholas and Saint Spyridon, following their talks at the Kremlin on Wednesday.

Peskov said the icon was stolen by a Nazi officer when Greece was under German occupation during World War II, and had recently been purchased from the officer's descendants by an unnamed Russian man.

News of the icon's return broke as the State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament,

prepares to host the relics of St. George, which hail from Greece's Mount Athos.

Saint George is one of the most venerated saints in the Russian Orthodox Church. Seen as the patron of warriors, he is portrayed on Moscow's coat of arms.

The Russian Orthodox Church has been the bulwark of President Vladimir Putin's turn toward conservatism and traditionalist values during his third term in the Kremlin.

In recent months, the federal government has sided with the church in a scandal with over a rendition of Richard Wagner's opera "Tannhauser" in the Siberian city of Novosibirsk, and Patriarch Kirill has delivered his first speech in the State Duma this January.

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