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Senior Russian Lawmaker Suggests McDonald's and Coca-Cola Leave Russia

By The Moscow Times

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Alexei Pushkov suggested that McDonald's and Coca-Cola should leave Russia.

A senior Russian lawmaker on Thursday suggested that McDonald's and Coca-Cola should leave Russia due to Washington's confrontation with Moscow over Ukraine.

"Don't McDonald's and Coca-Cola want to support [President Barack] Obama's sanctions and rid us of their products?" tweeted Alexei Pushkov, the head of the Russian parliament's foreign affairs committee. "They would stick to their principles and we would be healthier," he added.

The United States imposed sanctions against Russia last year in response to Moscow's annexation of Crimea and support of pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine. Russia reacted with a food import ban, while some public figures took to denouncing U.S. corporate symbols such as McDonald's.

Coca-Cola and McDonald's both have large businesses in Russia with outlets and infrastructure across the country. Both companies saw sales growth in the country slow in 2014.

Russia's food safely watchdog last year temporarily closed over ten McDonald's restaurants during a nationwide campaign of sanitary spot checks that many saw as politically motivated.

Pushkov's tweet echoes repeated calls by nationalist politician Vladimir Zhirinovsky, head of Russia's Liberal Democratic Party (LDPR), over the past year to close all McDonald's restaurants in Russia.

Zhirinovsky's party in August staged a political rally outside a McDonald's restaurant in central Moscow calling for the removal of its trademark golden arches sign.

"We need to get rid of this sign, this disgusting sign has to go," he said.

"What gives them [McDonald's] the right to teach us how to make pirozhki [stuffed Russian buns]!" Zhirinovsky declared before a few dozen supporters at the rally.

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