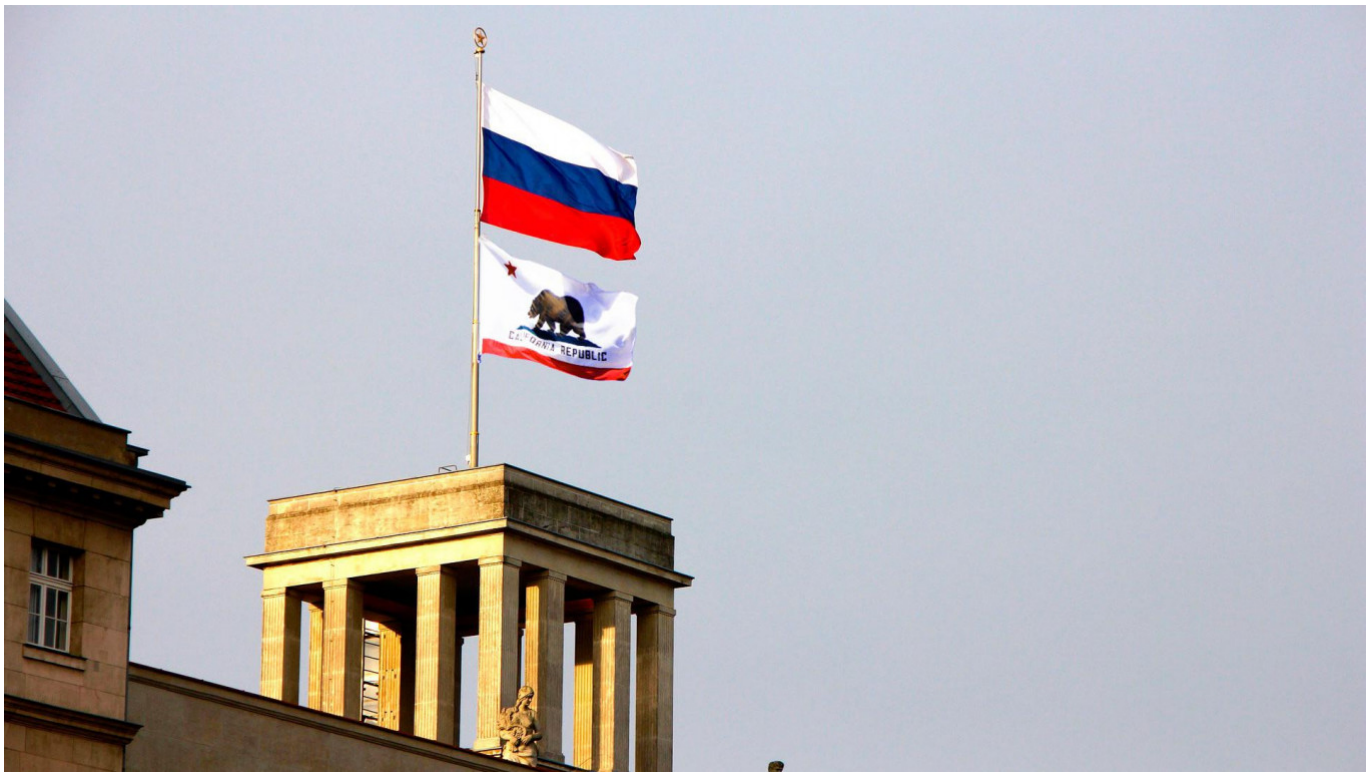
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California's Separatist Movement Gets an 'Embassy' in Moscow

The leader of 'Yes California' might live in Russia, but now he's got a little piece of home with him.

By Kevin Rothrock

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Pixabay, edited by The Moscow Times

A bizarre new facility is coming to Moscow, and you have an American separatist living in Russia to thank for it. After a long courtship between the "Yes California Independence Campaign" and the Kremlin-funded "Anti-Globalization Movement of Russia," the world is getting its first-ever "Californian embassy." Journalists have been invited to the grand opening, this Sunday.

Louis Marinelli, the American activist leading his state's secessionist charge, is adamant that turning to Russia makes perfect sense. "California can't become a country without

recognition from other countries," he tweeted earlier this week, referring to Russia, where he has lived with his Russian wife since September.

For more about Marinelli, read Leonid Ragozin's** recent profile **in Bloomberg.

Despite this weekend's momentous diplomatic occasion, Moscow-bound Californians worrying about their passports needn't fret.

Alexander Ionov, the president of the Anti-Globalization Movement of Russia, told the tabloid Life, "It's not an official embassy, but a people's embassy, between our nations." He presented the grand opening as an opportunity for greater cultural and economic exchange, "despite the sanctions." People in California want to show that they're open to dialogue with Russia, Ionov explained.

Marinelli has been hunting for somewhere in Russia to host his "embassy" since at least mid-October, about a month after Ionov's Kremlin-funded outfit helped him relocate to Yekaterinburg, where he earns money teaching English. In late September, Marinelli was one of two dozen other freedom fighters brought in from around the world to discuss the end of American unipolarity.

That convention, "The Dialogue of Nations: The Right of Peoples to Self-Determination and Building a Multipolar World," wrapped up on Sept. 26 with a press conference at the headquarters of Rossiya Segodnya, Russia's biggest state-run news outlet.

Conspicuously absent at "The Dialogue of Nations" were any separatists from Russia, where state officials even censor references to activists who advocate greater local autonomy for their regions.

***For more on this conference, see** Russian 'Anti-Globalization' Movement to Unite Separatists From Western Countries*

"The Americans got help from France (England's primary geopolitical foe at the time) in the war for independence. History repeats," Marinelli told a heckler earlier this week on Twitter, where he does not indicate that he now lives in Russia.

He's since shared a news story claiming that "a majority of Americans don't think 'Russian hacking' influenced the presidential election," presumably hoping to show that his ties to Russia don't upset his compatriots.

Unlike the vast majority of Californians, however, Marinelli supported Donald Trump in the recent U.S. presidential election, saying he "sacrificed" his vote, believing a win for Trump would "invigorate the people of California to better come to understand that we would be better off as an independent country."

In mid-October, Marinelli told the Russia Today news network (whose stories he sometimes shares on social media) that he planned to open California's first embassy in Yekaterinburg. "There will be picnics in the park, seminars, language courses, and celebrations of national holidays, like June 14, the day California declared independence from Mexico," he said. "It's important to demonstrate to America that its main geopolitical adversary supports California's self-determination and is ready to cooperate in every way, unlike the United

States, of which we're still a part."

In that report, Russia Today said Marinelli's embassy would resemble an existing cultural center established in Shanghai, apparently alluding to the "California Center," an entirely non-separatist business organization founded by a Sacramento-based consulting company in April 2013.

Months after the California Center arrived in China, The New York Times published "A Plea for Caution From Russia," a now-famous opinion piece by Vladimir Putin, urging the White House to reconsider airstrikes on the Assad regime in Syria. "I welcome the NYT opinon [sic] of Russian President Putin," Marinelli tweeted the next day. "The American people have no president, no leader. At least someone can speak to them."

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