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NEWS

Salvini is latest link to Russian funding to undermine democracy in Europe



by Alice Elizabeth Taylor
a day ago



Italy's interior minister and vice premier, Matteo Salvini, went off the grid for 12 hours in Moscow during an official state visit last October, allegedly making backroom deals for Russian financing of his Party's European Parliament campaign, according to investigative media outlet L'Espresso.

A probe revealed that millions may have been given to Salvini and his Northern League Party disguised as the sale of three million tonnes of fuel between a Russian company and an Italian company. L'Espresso said it could not confirm if the deal was concluded but said it held strong evidence of the plan.

Salvini's key tie to Russia is his former spokesman and trusted ally Gianluca Savoini, who the Italian media describes as the Northern League's "sherpa who idolises [Vladimir] Putin".

Savoini is listed as the president of the Russia-Lombardy Association based in the north of Italy, who allegedly negotiated the Russians' funding of Salvini and his Party.

Savoini was photographed by L'Espresso reporters at a meeting with Russian oil executives at Moscow's Metropol Hotel. He was overheard promising Salvini's commitment to the diesel deal.

"The new Europe must be close to Russia. We no longer have to depend on enlightened decisions in Brussels or the US," he told the Russians, according to L'Espresso.



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An unbelievable and shocking story. Russia is funding the Italian far right politician Salvini and his party as a way to have a Trojan Horse into EU political decisions. This should be investigated and prosecuted if true thedailybeast.com/an-italian-exp...

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Most of the meeting dealt with the mechanics of the fuel deal through which €3 million would be made available for Salvini's campaign through a series of complex financial transactions. It also alleged that last October of the same year, a secret

meeting occurred in Russia between Salvini and his Kremlin counterpart Dymitri Kozak.

Salvini said he was not interested in Putin's money. But the allegations tap into wider concerns in Europe and the US of Russian interference in elections, including the 2016 US election that saw Donald Trump elected as well as the Brexit referendum in the UK in the same year. Both are the subject of ongoing investigations.

