On 26 October 1917, the Bolsheviks stormed the Winter Palace in St Petersburg, thus marking one of the “10 days that shook the world”, according to Sergei Eisenstein’s famous film.

The liberal reformist administration of Alexander Kerensky was forced out, and so began the 75 years of communism, ending on 1 January 1992, when Boris Yeltsin and Yegor Gaidar finally scrapped it.

75 years is just a normal lifespan. This prompts one to think about this episode not so much as history as the story of a contemporary lifetime, an episode that ended with the collapse, for all its extraordinary achievements and terrible aspects, of a failed revolutionary concept.

The story of a lifetime

What if Germany had not decided to send Lenin back to Russia already in April 1917, to help him organise the Bolsheviks? And if the Bolsheviks had not prevailed and something like the Kerensky leadership had been sustained, what then would have been the course of Russian and European history? Should one lazily accept Tolstoy’s view, as in War and Peace, that the flow of history may be preordained as an unstoppable river in the affairs of mankind? Or should one remain open to the idea that a very different fork in the road could have been taken?

If the latter, what might the story have been? Back in the early years of the 20th century, Europe was of course not integrated like it is now. But still there was much trade and movement of people across all of Europe, from Lisbon to Moscow. Russia was industrialising and prospering, and its economy may have been more or less as integrated with the rest of Europe as many other European countries.

Culturally Russia had developed in the 19th century its huge contribution to the vast tapestry of European literature, painting, music and ballet. The Tolstoys and Rachmaninovs were making their magnificent contributions, just as the Italians, Flemish and others all made their contributions in earlier centuries to Europe’s common cultural heritage. Among the anecdotes of the years just before the
October Revolution is the story of Sergei Shchukin’s fabulous collection of impressionist artists: the wealthy Moscow businessman commissioning paintings from Matisse, Picasso and Gaugin, and whose collection was subsequently nationalised by the communists and is now housed in the Hermitage. One can also reflect on the role of Prince Usupov, who soon after graduating from Oxford University, organised in 1916 the assassination of Rasputin, in a desperate effort to improve the Tsarist regime before it was too late. And the Tsarist court conversations and diplomatic correspondence were all still in French at that time.

**Counterfactuals...**

So one can move on to the conceivable content of the counterfactual scenario in which the October Revolution failed, and Russia continued on a path of vigorous economic development, with political evolution rather than revolution, a maturing of a constitutional monarchy and other democratic political institutions. Russia would still have been an ally against Hitler in the Second World War, but the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact and the Yalta accords would never have happened. Without the terrors of Stalin’s inter-war *holodomor*, Russians and Ukrainians would have remained united as fraternal peoples. The occupation of the Baltic states would not have happened, nor the formation of the Warsaw Pact or NATO. Central Asia would have joined in the de-colonisation that all the European empires experienced in the post-war period. Something like the European Economic Communities (EEC) would still have started as a core western European integration movement, but flanked by a Council of Europe of which both the UK and Russia would have been founding members.

And to conclude, let us bring the counterfactual story up to the present day. Russia’s current posture as strategic adversary if not enemy of the West would never have developed, nor would some features of the mind-set of the current Kremlin regime: notably the deep sense of national humiliation at the collapse of the USSR and the conviction that the West was set on exploiting the country. And so the rhetorical nationalist foundations of the current Kremlin authoritarianism would not have been laid.

...and continuities

But is this scenario perhaps too naïve? Pre-revolutionary Russia was already a huge menacing power in the eyes of Western Europe, and Germany in particular. Why indeed did Germany help send Lenin back to Russia? Could the inevitable tensions between the massive Russia and the rest of Europe have been restrained and ordered in the post-World War II era within a different common institutional and normative framework? No easy task. One cannot be sure.

Yet still, Russia might have simply remained the largest European state, with a deep and trusting relationship with the gradually integrating and even larger European Union. Maybe the time for that will yet come. Many things can happen in a single lifetime. But for now Russia casts itself into the role of the ‘other’, celebrating its ‘victories’ in Crimea, Donbass and Aleppo, which makes normal political dialogue with Europeans virtually impossible these days.*

Except for the minority of Europeans who turn the question around, and say that the problem is that official Europe does not ‘understand’ Russia, which makes some conversations between Europeans also impossible.

*See “2016 – A Victory of Conservative Realism: Russia Won, Because it Was Resolved to Win”, Russia in Global
General news

Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the 2017 Bled Strategic Forum, 04 September 2017. Link

Remarks upon arrival by HR/VP Federica Mogherini at the Informal Defence and Foreign Ministers meetings, 07 September 2017. Link

Remarks by HR/VP at the press conference following the informal meeting of EU Ministers of Defence, Tallinn, 07 September 2017. Link

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini after first day of the informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers (Gymnich), 07 September 2017. Link

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the joint press conference with Sven Mikser, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia, following the informal meeting of EU Foreign Ministers (Gymnich), Tallinn, 08 September 2017. Link

European Union steps up efforts to prevent violent extremism and counter-terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa, Brussels, 14 September 2017. Link

Remarks by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini upon arrival at the informal EU Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting, New York, 19 September 2017. Link

EU kick-starts its new EU External Investment Plan, Brussels, 28 September 2017. Link

Eastern Neighbourhood

Tackling Challenges for Independent Media in Eastern Partnership Countries, Brussels, 12 September 2017. Link

Azerbaijan

EU local statement of 6 September on the detention of Azerbaijani journalist Mehman Aliyev, 07 September 2017. Link
Georgia

Georgia and EU Publish a Review of Public Finance Reforms in Georgia, Tbilisi, 21 September 2017. [Link]

The EU, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Governments of Azerbaijan and Georgia summarised the results of a three-year initiative which aimed to enhance land border protection between Azerbaijan and Georgia, 25 September 2017. [Link]

EU project supporting Georgian National Agency for Standards and Metrology launches, Tbilisi, 26 September 2017. [Link]

EU-funded Energy Efficiency Project Shows Potential for Energy Savings in Georgia, Tbilisi, 27 September 2017. [Link]

Commission proposes fresh macro-financial assistance to Georgia of up to €45 million, 29 September 2017. [Link]

Russia

Federica Mogherini met with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, New York, 19 September 2017. [Link]

Statement by the Spokesperson on the sentencing of journalist Mykola Semena, Brussels, 22 September 2017. [Link]

Statement by the Spokesperson on the sentencing of Crimean Tatar leader and Deputy Chair of the Mejlis Ilmi Umerov, 28 September 2017. [Link]

Statement by the Spokesperson on the destruction of the chemical weapons possessed by the Russian Federation, 28 September 2017. [Link]

Ukraine

EU-Ukraine relations, factsheet, Brussels, 01 September 2017. [Link]

EU-Ukraine Association Agreement fully enters into force, Brussels, 01 September 2017. [Link]

Statement by the Spokesperson on regional elections in Russia and their non-applicability to the territories of Ukraine, Brussels, 11 September 2017. [Link]

Statement by the Spokesperson on recent developments in Crimea, Brussels, 11 September 2017. [Link]

EU prolongs sanctions over actions against Ukraine’s territorial integrity until 15 March 2018, Brussels, 14 September 2017. [Link]

Trade opening for Ukraine: Joint Statement by Commissioner Malmström and Deputy Minister Mykolska, Brussels, 29 September
Southern Neighbourhood

Migrants in Tunisia/Libya: MEPs to assess migration management in the region, 20 September 2017. Link

**Algeria**

Lancement du nouveau programme d'appui au secteur de la Justice, Alger, 20 September 2017. Link

L'UE félicite l'Algérie pour la destruction du stock restant de mines antipersonnel, Alger, 24 September 2017. Link

**Egypt**

EU supports enhancing research capacities in the field of agriculture in Egypt, Cairo, 19 September 2017. Link

**Israel**

New year, new peace?, Tel Aviv, 25 September 2017. Link

Statement by the Spokesperson on the shooting of three Israelis at West Bank settlement, 26 September 2017. Link

**Lebanon**

EU Ambassador Lassen visits LAF outpost in Arsal, discusses EU support, 14 September 2017. Link

EU Ambassador Christina Lassen meets with President Michel Aoun, 15 September 2017. Link

International Beirut Energy Forum 2017: The EU committed to sustainable energy in Lebanon and the region, 19 September 2017. Link

EU Ambassador Christina Lassen meets Prime Minister Saad Hariri, 27 September 2017. Link

**Libya**

EU-Libya relations, 06 September 2017. Link

Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the High-Level Event on Libya under the UN auspices, Brussels, 20 September 2017. Link
Libya: EU renews sanctions for six months against those obstructing peace, 28 September 2017. Link

Palestine

Speech by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini at the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee for Palestine, New York, 19 September 2017. Link

Statement by the Envoys of the Middle East Quartet, Brussels, 28 September 2017. Link

Syria

EU strengthens its Syria crisis response through additional funding to UNICEF, New York, 19 September 2017. Link

The EU and the crisis in Syria, 20 September 2017. Link

The EU to host the second Brussels Conference on Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region, Brussels, 22 September 2017. Link

Tunisia

Relations between the EU and Tunisia, Brussels, 04 September 2017. Link

Commissioner Hahn in Tunisia today and tomorrow to reconfirm EU support to the country's democratic transition, 04 September 2017. Link

Enlargement/Other

Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Commissioner Johannes Hahn after a meeting with the leaders from the Western Balkans, Brussels, 21 September 2017. Link

Albania

EU Ambassador Romana Vlahutin speech at the Joint meeting for the Ionian Adriatic Pipeline Project, Tirana, 08 September 2017. Link

7th meeting of the EU-Albania Public Administration Reform Special Group held in Tirana, Tirana, 28 September 2017. Link

Bosnia and Herzegovina

EUSR/Head of Delegation Wigemark and US Ambassador Cormack meet BiH Presidency Chair Dragan Ćović, 13 September
EU Ambassador Wigemark marks 20th anniversary of the Central Bank of BiH, 20 September 2017. [Link]

Statement on the 2nd EU-BiH SAA Subcommittee on Internal Market and Competition Including Consumer & Health Protection, 21 September 2017. [Link]

EU helps BiH counter corruption at all levels of governance, 21 September 2017. [Link]

Kosovo

European Union bringing communities in Kosovo together in support of cultural heritage protection, Brussels, 15 September 2017. [Link]

Federica Mogherini meets with President Thaçi of Kosovo and President Vučić of Serbia in the margins of UNGA, New York, 20 September 2017. [Link]

Federica Mogherini met with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kosovo Behgjet Pacolli, Brussels, 29 September 2017. [Link]

Macedonia

Statement by Members of the European Parliament Knut Fleckenstein, Eduard Kukan and Ivo Vajgl after meetings with the Speaker of the Sobranie, Talat Xhaferi, political party leaders and parliamentary party coordinators, Skopje, 01 September 2017. [Link]

Public administration reform is an essential part of the EU integration process and public administration is one of the three fundamentals set out in the EU's enlargement strategy, said Ambassador Samuel Žbogar, 06 September 2017. [Link]


Serbia

Commissioner Hahn pays visit to Serbia, 14 September 2017. [Link]

Hahn and Brnabic on Accession Talks: Quality Goes Before Speed, 15 September 2017. [Link]

Federica Mogherini meets with President Thaçi of Kosovo and President Vučić of Serbia in the margins of UNGA, New York, 20 September 2017. [Link]

Fabrizi: Public administration reform is of crucial importance for EU accession, 25 September 2017. [Link]
EU allocates EUR 27.4 million for education reform in Serbia, 27 September 2017. [Link]

**Turkey**

On 6 September, the European Commission published Seventh Report on the Progress made in the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, 06 September 2017. [Link]

Significant support from the EU for environmental protection in Turkey, 22 September 2017. [Link]

Statement of the Spokesperson on the referendum held by the Kurdistan Regional Government, 26 September 2017. [Link]

EU's support of €315 million to help build and equip more than 150 schools as a response to the Syrian crisis, 27 September 2017. [Link]

EU and Turkey Promote the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights, 27 September 2017. [Link]

**EEA/EFTA**

Seventh meeting of the EFTA Council in 2017, 21 September 2017. [Link]

EEA Joint Committee incorporates directives on package travel and copyright management into the EEA Agreement, 22 September 2017. [Link]

EEA EFTA Comment on ePrivacy, 22 September 2017. [Link]

**Norway**

MEPs urge Norway to stop whaling, 12 September 2017. [Link]

Save the date: Politics and economics of the DCFTA and Eurasian spaces

**Thursday, 5 October 2017, 09:30-16:30, CEPS, Brussels**

Implementation of the Association Agreements and DCFTAs is well underway in Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, albeit with some slippages of timetable and continuing more fundamental problems of governance. Building on the publication of three handbooks on the agreements, CEPS and its research partners will present their findings on 'hot topics' in the relationship between the EU and the three Eastern Partnership countries.
Save the date: Reform and the future of enlargement in the Western Balkans

Friday, 27 October 2017, CEPS, Brussels

In a year in which the European Commission is not publishing progress reports on the countries seeking to join the EU, CEPS will take stock of recent developments in the Western Balkans and assess implications for the EU’s enlargement strategy. Is the prospect of accession - now pushed back to 2025, in the best case, even for frontrunners Serbia and Montenegro - sufficient to drive reform? Is the EU losing momentum in maintaining its influence on a region that is once again becoming a theatre for geopolitical competition? Can the region overcome political tensions and economic dislocation?

Join us for a debate with Angelina Eichhorst, Director for Western Europe, Western Balkans and Turkey at the European External Action Service, and Marko Kmezić, Centre for Southeast European Studies, University of Graz. More detail to follow soon at the link below.

Back issues of European Neighbourhood Watch

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