

SANKT PETERSBURG AND THE GLOBAL IMPACT OF THE OCTOBER 1917 REVOLUTION

A roughly century ago Sankt Petersburg, since 1914 officially renamed into Petrograd, became the epicenter of revolutionary events which for several decades strongly influenced the world. The first wave of this upheaval engulfed the Russian Empire in February-March 1917. Its immediate results were the replacement of the imperial government, the abdication of the head one of the oldest European monarchies and the introduction of a dual rule by the “Temporary Committee of the Duma” (Temporary government) and the “Soviets of deputies of workers and soldiers.” The second revolutionary wave followed in mid-October 1917 when the Temporary government lost control of the capital and of its garrison. An almost bloodless *coup d’etat* was declared by the Military Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet at 10 a.m. on October 25. By then Prime and Defence Minister A. Kerensky already sneaked out of the besieged Winter Palace in a car provided by the US Embassy, maskering as a uniformed Serbian officer. The unopposed detention of most ministers of the already powerless Temporary government took place at 2:30 a. m. on October 26, 1917.¹ The storming of the Winter Palace by the Red guards and sailors and a blank salvo from the cruiser Aurora were later elevated into the symbols of the glorious October revolution.

The first powerful message of the October Revolution proclaimed in Petrograd was the “Decree on Peace”. It was adopted by the all-Russian Congress of Soviets on November 8, 1917. The Decree appealed to all belligerent states and their peoples to stop hostilities of the First World War and during the three-month truce to open immediate negotiations for a “just and democratic peace” without annexations and

¹ Pipes (1991), pp. 489-499

reparations. Secret diplomacy was to be abolished and all concluded secret treaties were to be made public.

It was in Petrograd that the key institutions of Soviet Russia were established and functioned for about five months – the Congress of Soviets, the Council of People’s Commissars (Sovnarkom) with V. I. Lenin as its chairman et. al. In March 1918, still in Petrograd, the Congress of Soviets adopted the first Constitution of the Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic (RSFSR)”. Thus the first communist state of “workers” and peasants” as the nucleus of the future world federation of Soviet republics was officially established in Petrograd.

Led by the Russian left-wing Social-democrats (the Bolsheviks) the narrowly successful October revolution called for the termination of the First World War with a “just and democratic peace” without annexations and reparations, for the complete abolition of world capitalism and imperialism and for its replacement with the dictatorship of proletariat in classless societies of a world federation of Soviet republics. According to the Bolsheviks it was to be a step to the abolition of the state as such². The October revolution also had a strong antireligious and anticlerical component.

The Russian October revolution could not stop the butchery of the First World War and actually even prolonged it, probably by several months. The breakdown of the Russian imperial army and the conclusion of the hugely rewarding and separate peace treaty with Soviet Russia in March 1918 allowed Germany and Austro-Hungary to continue fighting until November 1918. In the following decades the Russian revolution had shaken the existing political order in Europe. This order had been already badly destabilized by the ravages of the First World War, soon to be followed by the abolition of three more empires (Austro-Hungarian, German and Ottoman).

² Lenin (2017), pp. 38-49, 169-176

The Russian revolution had exercised a notable impact on the world in several ways and with varying intensity on six continents. It generated a deep ideological and political conflict between the new communist state and other great powers whose troops invaded the territory of the defunct Russian Empire in 1918. This conflict contributed to the outbreak of the Second World War during which the Soviet Union fought in a temporary alliance with liberal “Western” powers. After 1945 the same conflict reappeared and constituted the declared key ingredient of the “Cold War” between the liberal “West” and the communist “East”. However the later rebound of conflictual relations between the “West” and post-Soviet Russia shows that the ideological clash between liberalism and communism actually disguised its basic component -the power competition for influence and domination, essentially between the Americans and the Russians.

The Russian revolution has tangibly influenced the course of human history in the XXth century and also contributed to considerable changes on the political map of two continents – Europe and Asia. The most immediate impact of the Russian revolution has been expressed (1) by the geographic expansion of Soviet or Soviet-like political, economic and social systems imposed on other countries by the Russian Bolsheviks and later by the Soviet communists. The Russian revolution had also exercised (2) notable political ideological and some cultural influence in other countries on all continents. The Russian example served as (3) inspiration in a number of countries where local communists managed to conquer state power predominantly or exclusively through their own efforts. Having declared the right of peoples for self-determination the Russian revolution strongly challenged imperialism and national oppression in a number of multinational states, including those in Europe. Its proclamations echoed in colonies and semicolonial dependencies of European powers on other continents, notably in India, China and Vietnam. Lenin’s proclaimed slogan of people’s self-determination preceded by several months

Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points and was more far-reaching and universal, being applicable also to colonies and semi-colonies of "Western" powers.

Unlike in Petrograd the takeovers in Moscow and in other parts of the already disintegrated Empire took much longer and were more difficult and bloody. The armed continuation of the October revolution ended in 1921 with the termination of the Russian civil war. Having defeated their armed opponents in Russia (Yudenich, Denikin, Kolchak, Wrangel et. al.) the Bolsheviks succeeded in spreading the Soviet system on most of the former territory of the Russian Empire and in reintegrating into a huge multinational state Ukraine, Transcaucasia, Central Asia and the Far East. In this effort the Russian Bolsheviks were more successful than the elites of the two other multinational empires – the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman. They failed however in several other former Russian possessions which allowed for the restoration of Poland's independence and for the creation of new independent states in Finland, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. In 1919 attempts of revolutions inspired by the Russian October were crushed in Germany, Hungary and Slovakia. Several other communist revolts elsewhere in Europe (including in Yugoslavia in 1929) also failed. In the 1920s the Soviet system was expanded in Asia to two peripheral Chinese territories neighboring the Soviet Union – to Tuva and Mongolia. Tuva was later annexed by the Soviet Union while the People's Republic of Mongolia became formally an independent, later internationally recognized state and a member of Organization of the United Nations.

In the 1920s-1930s the ideas and slogans of the Russian revolution generated a considerable political echo in war - ravaged Europe. Its messages of peace, social justice, equality and of peoples' self-determination had attracted and motivated many leftists on all continents. On the other hand the Bolsheviks' victory indirectly contributed to internal splits in socialist and socialdemocratic parties which used to

belong to the dissolved Second Socialist International. In many European countries communist parties sprung up out of their left wings.

In the 1920s - 1930s the strongest communist parties in Europe outside the Soviet Union had developed in Germany, France and Spain and after the Second World War also in Italy. However none of them had been able on its own to stage a communist revolution or to gain state power through election. On the other side of the political spectrum the October revolution provoked strong anticommunist reactions in the rest of Europe and in Northern America. It affected a number of main stream political parties, the extreme right and the established churches, particularly the Roman Catholic Church. The Soviets of workers and Russian Bolshevism influenced the development of the German system of *Mitbestimmung* and the ideology of the German National Socialist Workers' Party (NSDAP). Moreover, the scare of communism contributed significantly to the growth of several varieties of European fascism, including Catholic clerofascism.

The main instrument for spreading world-wide the universal message of the Russian Revolution and communist ideology had been for about a quarter century the Third (Communist) International (Comintern). It was intended to be a centralized organization of the world- wide communist movement, a unified international party with national communist parties as "sections" led from the center in Moscow. Established in March 1919 at its first congress in Moscow Comintern functioned for more than two decades and was officially dissolved in 1943. Its central bodies had confirmed the mandate, appointed the leadership or dissolved communist parties outside the Soviet Union, provided them with general political guidance and financial subsidies, decided on their strategy, provided to the communist who were persecuted elsewhere with political refuge and hospitality in the Soviet Union, new Soviet or forged foreign identity and documents, medical care, general and political education and ideological training. Comintern had maintained two universities, both located in

Moscow - the Communist University of the National Minorities in the West (KUNMZ) and the “Communist University of the Toilers in the East” (KUTV). Comintern had also had a specialized publishing house producing books and brochures in numerous languages and a theoretical journal with a free world-wide distribution. Comintern had combined its promotion of communist ideology, mostly through printed media, with preparations for possible future communist takeovers in the “bourgeois” world.

Some foreign communists, among them future prospective leaders in their countries, were given also military, security and conspiratorial training provided by the Red Army and by the Soviet security services. Among the recipients were future prominent communist leaders, presidents, prime ministers, ministers and other high officials in Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. This list included the future Yugoslav communist leader Josip Broz – Tito. Comintern used also rowing emissars, advisers and controllers who were overseeing groups of countries and their communist parties. One of the best known among them was Mikhail Borodin who as Comintern representative operated in succession in the United States, Mexico, China, Scandinavia, Spain and Turkey. He and a number of other Russian lecturers played prominent roles in the establishment in 1924 and in the functioning of the Whampoa Military Academy in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province, China. Since the 1920s Comintern’s educational, ideological, organizational and security training was provided in the Soviet Union to future leading communists from China, Vietnam and Korea. The future leader of Korean communists, first Prime minister and the later President of the People’s Democratic Republic of Korea Kim Il-sung was educated and trained in Soviet military schools and by 1945 rose to the rank of a major in the Soviet Army.

The Soviet Bolsheviks (officially renamed into communists) considered and justified these activities (and the expense for USSR) as necessary for actively defending the

first in history socialist state “of workers and peasants.” In most countries outside the Soviet Union Comintern’s activities were officially considered as politically subversive, even seditious and criminal (including in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia). An important role in Comintern’s clandestine activities had been played by its internal security service and OMS (International Liaison Department). A considerable part of Comintern’s political activities had been channeled through an extensive network of international “transmission” associations such as the Communist Youth International, Red Trade Union International, Peasant International, Red mutual assistance, a corresponding organization of women etc. Comintern’s activities, including clandestine ones, had been supported by Soviet diplomatic and consular missions abroad.

The Second World War and its outcomes, had provided new opportunities for geographic spreading Soviet-like communist regimes. In 1939-1940 three Baltic republics and parts of Poland and Romania were occupied and annexed by USSR in accordance with the secret clauses of the Molotov - Ribbentrop pact. The defeat of the Axis in 1945 was followed by the imposition of Soviet-like systems in seven “people’s democracies” in Eastern Europe and Northern Korea. Moreover, the victorious communists in Yugoslavia and Albania established in 1945 their own versions of the Soviet system.

The spread of Soviet-like systems into Eastern Europe and Asia corresponded to two key strategic objectives of the Soviet leadership. These were (1) the declared goal of advancing “socialism” world-wide and (2) making the Soviet Union a world political and military superpower. Joseph Stalin utilized the attraction of the Russian revolution to advance and satisfy the Soviet Union’s great power ambitions. Achieving these two objectives had been costly and not always compatible. On a number of occasions they collided and then the latter always prevailed.

Following its official dissolution in 1943 a number of Comintern's functions had continued in different, mostly bilateral forms in relations between the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and other communist parties. In 1947 an Information Bureau of Communist Parties (Informbureau) was established at a conference in Poland, mostly for guiding and disciplining East European communist parties. It was also joined by the two largest West European communist parties (the Italian and French). Originally the seat of the Bureau and the editorial office of its newspaper was in Belgrade. However in June 1948 the Yugoslav Communist Party was expelled from the Informbureau and its office was consequently relocated to Bucharest.

Outside the territory of the former Russian Empire Russian Bolshevism had most strongly influenced the destiny of two states in Asia and two in Europe. The Republic of Mongolia and the People's Democratic Republic of Korea owe their existence as independent states directly to the Soviet Union. In the past it was also true of the German Democratic Republic (GDR). The ideological impact of Bolshevism was crucial for the rebirth in 1945 and forty five years later for the mostly violent demise of Yugoslavia as well as for the peaceful dissolution of GDR and of Czechoslovakia.

Banned in December 1920 the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) suffered greatly from police and judicial repression in the country and also elsewhere. In addition to the underground membership in the country its leadership and about a thousand adherents had as migrants or political refugees acted abroad – mostly in the Soviet Union, France, Austria and during the civil war also in Spain. Soviet organisational, logistic and financial support helped the greatly weakened and politically marginalized party to survive. In the late 1930s, with a new generation of young members and a new leadership, unlike the previous one operating in the country the Yugoslav communists abandoned their sectarianism and started cooperating with other anti-fascists. However under normal peacetime conditions, without the tremendous upheaval and huge social and political dislocation created by

the Second World War the Yugoslav communists would have probably never gained state power through the ballot.

Financially self-sustaining without a Soviet subsidy since 1939, under the conditions of the Second World War and of foreign occupation as well as at a distance from Moscow the Yugoslav communists emancipated themselves from outside control. Their leadership had continued though reporting to Moscow by radio but adopted its political strategy and managed its own affairs independently. At several junctions its actions deviated from the Soviet positions and tactics in relations with the Western Allies. As a centralised and disciplined party without internal factions and with motivated adherents and supporters the Yugoslav communists, inspite their initially small membership proved to be the best organized force of armed resistance on the territory of the defunct Yugoslav monarchy. The line of resolute resistance adopted by the communists brought to the Yugoslav partisan movement, on patriotic grounds massively also non-communists. The Russian Bolsheviks' organisational legacy, transmitted through Comintern, and the attraction of an egalitarian ideology helped the Yugoslav communists to end up on the winning side in the war. From 1943 the British and Americans recognized them as the most effective allied force in the Balkans. In autumn 1944 the Soviet Army liberated part of Yugoslavia's territory but unlike elsewhere in occupied Europe (except in Albania) the Yugoslav partisans in the final stage of the Second World War succeeded in liberating most of the country. The war's outcome allowed the communists to defeat, chase away or annihilate those internal adversaries who collaborated with the occupiers.

Imitating the Soviet system and adhering to Marxist-Leninist ideological precepts became a general rule in post-1945 Yugoslavia. The first constitution of the new Yugoslav state, adopted in 1946 was in good part a mere translation of the Soviet ("Stalin's") constitution of 1936. Very importantly the Yugoslav communists adopted the Soviet system of fake ethnofederalism with often artificial administrative lines

separating federal units. In many respects the Yugoslav communists strived to be and indeed were more “revolutionary” orthodox and Stalinist than other European communist parties. The Yugoslav adaptation of the Russian Bolsheviks’ ideology replaced the pre-war ideological foundation of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and became the chief adhesive element of the newly stitched together multinational state called the Federal People’s Republic of Yugoslavia.

To the sharp conflict with Stalin in June 1948 and to the insulting expulsion from the Eastern European “camp of people’s democracies” the Yugoslav communists responded initially by even sharpened Marxian orthodoxy and Stalinism in internal political and economic life. Only from 1951 on the political shock produced by the conflict with Moscow led to gradual and partial liberalization in Yugoslavia and to distancing from the Soviet system. Its hallmarks had been workers’ self-management, semi-market economy, relatively open borders and non-alignment in international affairs. The Yugoslav communist leaders however, like the Soviets, still continued to erroneously believe that the “socialist revolution” resolved forever the national problem in their multinational state. In 1963 and 1974 under the pressure from below they made however concessions to centrifugal forces and allowed the transformation of the centralized quasi-federation into an incoherent and malfunctioning hybrid of a federal – confederal institutional structure and authoritarian one-party rule. With the waning attraction of an egalitarian communist ideology the “revisionist” deviations from the Soviet model proved to be insufficient to save the Yugoslav state in one piece. Not accidentally the modified imitation of the Soviet system in Yugoslavia went down the drain of history roughly simultaneously with its original form in the Soviet Union.

The dissolution of the Warsaw pact in 1991 marked the end of Soviet hegemony in good part of Eastern-Central and South-Eastern Europe. It was accompanied by the crumbling of European communist regimes and by the end of the “Cold War”. These

dramatic developments allowed for important geopolitical transformation and realignment on the European continent. Four communist-ruled “realsocialist” states disappeared from the European map. Among them were three “socialist federations” (USSR, SFR Yugoslavia and ČSSR). Twenty four new European states existing today on the territories of the three defunct federations, among them seven republics on the territory of the former SFR of Yugoslavia, became independent due notably to the delayed political and ideological impact of the Russian October revolution.

In the 1920s-1930s the Russian October revolution and Comintern had significantly contributed to the growth of Chinese communism. The popularity of the Bolsheviks in semi-colonial China was enhanced by their anti-imperialist pronouncements and the declared intention to renounce Russia’s extraterritorial rights. In spring 1920 Grigorii Voytinski, a Comintern emissary, helped to establish the Communist Party of China and drafted its manifesto which was adopted at the first party congress. In the 1920s-1930s future important communist functionaries Deng Xiaoping, Zhou Enlai and others had attended in Moscow ideological and organisational training at the Communist University of the Toilers in the East. The adopted Bolshevik organizational format, internal rules of a centralized and disciplined party as well as Comintern’s annual subsidy greatly helped the Chinese communists to survive persecution and eventually to come out victorious in guerrilla warfare against of Japanese occupiers and in the several decades-long civil war. The Whampoa Military Academy, Soviet advisors and instructors in China as well as military schools in the Soviet Union contributed to military education and training of some later famous generals of the Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA). In the final stage of the civil war the PLA strength was enhanced by captured stocks of arms of the Japanese Kwantung Army in Manchuria crushed by the Soviet Army in August 1945.

Having gained in 1949 state power on the mainland the communists had adopted and largely followed the Soviet model of state organisation and of economic and social

development. There have been several notable exceptions. Mao Tse Tung disagreed with the Russian Bolsheviks' concept of a "workers' revolution" and opted instead for the strategy of a "peasants' revolution". The Chinese communists eschewed the Soviet model of ethnofederalism and granted only limited cultural autonomy to ethnic minorities. To strategically important peripheral provinces the communists organised mass transfers of the Han population. In addition they, unlike the Soviets allowed the continued existence and controlled legal functioning of eight "fellow", by the Chinese standards small "patriotic" parties. After two disastrous experiments in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s with Mao Tse Tung's "Great Leap Forward" and "Cultural Revolution" the Chinese communist leadership under Deng Xiaoping abandoned Marxist economic dogmas. Moreover, unlike in the Soviet Union the Chinese leadership introduced and until 2018 maintained a system of regular mandatory rejuvenation of the top personnel in the state, based on criteria of proved competence, managerial ability and of personal achievements.

V. Lenin, the spiritual leader of the October takeover, strongly feared that Soviet Russia would not survive without a world socialist revolution³, L. Trotsky, its military leader claimed in his work "The Permanent Revolution" that a socialist revolution cannot be accomplished in a national framework⁴. For more than three decades the prospect of a world revolution had looked unattainable. The future of world communism became brighter however by the 40th anniversary of the October revolution which was solemnly celebrated in November 1957 in Moscow. Conspicuously present at the event were the leaders of the territorially largest and of the most populous states on the globe (USSR and PR of China) as well as of a dozen "people's democracies". During the next two and a half decades the paracommunists gained state power on Cuba, in Kampuchea, South Vietnam, Laos, Angola,

³ Fischer (1964), pp. 309-313, 528, 622

⁴ Trotsky (1972), p. 131

Mozambique, Ethiopia, South Yemen, Afghanistan, Grenada and Nicaragua. All these achievements seemed to presage the communist future of mankind. However soon after the 70th anniversary Lenin's premonition turned out to be correct.

Lenin and Trotsky were however wrong having assumed that the communist system could be defeated only if crushed militarily from outside by "bourgeois" imperialism. Instead the communist systems in the Soviet Union and in Eastern Europe imploded mostly for internal reasons. The Soviet system and the Eastern European "people's democracies" were fatally affected by flawed economic strategies, inflexible authoritarian political systems and by the challenge of nationalism (which was presumably to disappear in communist societies). The Soviet Union collapsed also due to its leadership's grossly excessive global superpower ambitions, to the ensuing economic exhaustion, the cancer of façade ethnofederalism and a conflict within the Russian political elite.⁵ In the last decade of the XXth century all communist - run or dominated "real socialist" systems in Eastern Germany, Central Eastern and South Eastern Europe, in Russia itself, in all other former republics of the Soviet Union (with a possible exception of Belarus) and in Mongolia experienced ostensibly liberal, mostly non-violent counter-revolutions. They ranged from multiparty parliamentary democracies to various kinds of autocracies and personal or family dictatorships behind the imitations of liberal constitutional facades. All these regimes deny any continuity with the heritage of the Russian revolution.

Lenin and Trotsky did not believe that if defeated in Russia Soviet-like systems would still survive elsewhere. Also in this respect they proved to be wrong. The most successful imitators of the Russian Bolsheviks turned out in Eastern Asia. Communist systems inspired directly or indirectly by of the Russian revolution, partly copied from the Soviet model but developed indigenously were created

⁵ Gaydar (2006), pp. 197-205

“through the barrel of the gun” and have survived in Asia and Latin America. One of them, a radical totalitarian and militarized replica of the Soviet system in the People’s Democratic Republic of Korea does not attract today the world’s attention by the well-being of its population but by its successful development of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. To the list of geographically more distant followers one should include the present systems in the Republics of Laos and of Cuba. An aberrant, brutal imitation of war Bolshevism by the “Khmer Rouge” existed for several years in Kampuchia, but was crushed militarily by the Vietnamese communists.

The economically and politically most successful “socialist” state – the People’s Republic of China and to a lesser degree the Socialist Republic of Vietnam have developed and maintained several essential elements of the systems inspired by the Russian revolution : a ruling communist party, an official Marxist – Leninist ideology, mass rituals, red flags, five - pointed stars and other communist symbols. Having abandoned however Marxist economic dogmas the Chinese and Vietnamese communists combined the Soviet- like political features of their political systems with a considerably open and controlled market economy, a large share of private domestic and foreign capitalism and gross economic inequality. These deviations from the Soviet model released the energy of hundreds millions of Chinese. In three decades they made still communist China the second largest world economy and a great political and military power. The Chinese communists since the implementation of reforms inspired by Deng Xiaoping could be considered as followers of the Soviet “New Economic Policy” (NEP) in the 1920s which could be observed first hand by Deng Xiaoping, then a student of the Communist University in Moscow. This policy was however soon abandoned by the scared and dogmatic Soviet officialdom. In retrospect that turnabout and the ensuing suppression of private economic activities in the Soviet Union was one of the fatal errors committed by the Russian Bolsheviks.

The Russian October revolution was much more radical in its proclaimed goals and much more violent than the American revolution of 1775-1783. It also lacked the latter's main secessionist element. However when constructing the Soviet Union the Russian Bolsheviks copied some institutional features of American federalism. In a number of respects the Russian revolution could be more appropriately compared with the Great French revolution of 1789 -1792. The storming of Bastille in Paris and of the Winter Palace in Petrograd became their symbols. Both revolutions occurred in the largest European states of that time and both deeply shook the existing social and political orders in Europe. The French revolution abolished feudalism in France and contributed to its gradual abolition in the rest of Europe. The Russian revolution swept away the remnants of feudalism in Russia. Both anticlerical revolutions, unlike the American revolution, degenerated soon into dictatorships. The liberating appeal of the two revolutions had been abused by the two dictators for conquests and domination in considerable parts of the European continent. The two dictators who came from minorities – Napoleon Bonaparte and Joseph Stalin thus betrayed the two revolutions' declared goals.

Both revolutions were eventually defeated in the countries of their origin (and in their satellites) but left deep impact on their societies. The ideas of the French revolution inspired for more than a century reformers and revolutionaries in Europe and the Americas and were subsequently built into political and social orders of liberal democratic states on five continents. The French revolution also helped to decolonize Northern and Southern America while the French Jacobines influenced many radical leftists around the globe, including the Russian Bolsheviks.

The Russian October revolution failed in its chief declared strategic objective - to destroy and abolish world capitalism. Contrary to their original promise of “the complete abolition of the state,” the Russian communists developed a huge bureaucratic machine. The scare of communism however helped to reform crude

capitalist systems in the West in the direction of more human and democratic social states. The first communist state – the Soviet Union contributed fundamentally, with tremendous human losses to the military defeat of the German-Austrian Third Reich and to the Allies' victory in the Second World War. The Russian revolution had contributed to the decolonization in Asia and Africa and to the rebirth of China as a world power.

On the other hand, some features and symbols of the Russian revolution became discredited in many countries by authoritarian communist regimes. During the last three decades, in addition to over two dozens European, Transcaucasian and Central Asian states the communist parties lost the ruling positions in four Asian (Afghanistan, Kampuchea, Southern Yemen, Nepal), six African (Ethiopia, Somalia, Benin, Angola, Mozambique, Congo, Brazzaville) and in two states in the Americas (Grenada, Nicaragua).

However this discreditation has been geographically very unevenly spread. Communist parties rule today in four East Asian and in one Latin American states. Moreover, in Asia (India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Syria and Palestine), in Africa (South Africa) and in Latin America (Chile, Ecuador, Uruguay, Guyana and Venezuela) the communist parties have participated in ruling leftist coalitions. The Communist party of Japan has been represented in parliament with 14 deputies. Three small communist parties participate today in the ruling coalitions in Greece, Serbia and tiny San Marino while the non-ruling communist parties of note function in the Russian Federation, Czech Republic, Portugal, Spain, Italy, France and Cyprus. In European Parliament there are 15 deputies (out of 751) elected on the lists of seven European communist parties⁶.

⁶ Wikipedija. *List of communist parties* (2018)

While the Communist International has been long defunct there are today two international associations of socialist and social democratic parties with growing and partly overlapping membership. These are the Socialist International with 151 member and associated parties and the Progressive Alliance with 140 participating democratic socialist parties. The former president of the Socialist International Antonio Guterres serves today as Secretary General of the United Nations. In Europe socialist and social democratic parties have played important roles, have been ruling parties or members of ruling coalitions in Germany, Great Britain, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Iceland, Greece, Cyprus, Andorra well as in a number of Eastern and South Eastern European states where former communist parties were dissolved or reformed, reorganized and renamed into socialist or social democratic parties (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Croatia, Slovenia). In European Parliament there are at present 190 deputies – members of the second largest group “The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats”. The constitutions of the two most populous states on the Earth (China and India) as well as of a dozen other states officially define them as socialist ones. There are more than two hundred socialist parties in Asia, Africa, Australia and in both Americas, several dozen of them are or were in the past ruling parties or members of ruling coalitions. Among them were socialist parties in India, Israel, Japan, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Venezuela, Uruguay, Sri Lanka, South Africa et. al.⁷ The negative side effects of globalization and the deepening divide between the rich and poor have stimulated a revival of socialist thought in many countries on all continents. All this indicates that around the world the ideas of democratic socialism are still alive and enjoy considerable public support.

⁷ Wikipedia. Socialist parties, Socialist International, Progressive Alliance. List of Socialist parties in power

Although some of its symbols and many monuments have remained a considerable discreditation of the October revolution in its country of origin is a fact. It explains why the Russian post-Soviet regime stopped celebrating and removed the 7th of November from the list of official holidays. The Americans and the French, on the other hand, joyfully celebrate every year respectfully the 4th and 14th of July as their main state events. The Russian October revolution became thus mainly an intellectual food for historians and other social scientists as well as a topic for writers, films and television producers and for other media.

In 1919 Petrograd lost its position as Russia's capital and in 1924 was renamed into Leningrad, in memory of the October revolution's spiritual leader Vladimir Ulyanov – Nikolay Lenin. This great city has remained however Russia's foremost cultural, intellectual and particularly from 2000 on also a very important political center. In 1991 the liberal counter-revolution restored to the former epicenter of one of the greatest events of the XXth century its original imperial name. Sankt Petersburg's important place in modern European history since it became Russia's capital under Peter the Great has remained unchallenged.

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