

New Feature: This Week in History

3 November 2009

Beginning today, the *World Socialist Web Site* launches a new feature. This Week in History will provide a brief synopsis of important historical events occurring 25, 50, 75, and 100 years ago.

[25 Years Ago](#) | [50 Years Ago](#) | [75 Years Ago](#) | [100 Years Ago](#)

25 Years Ago: India erupts in anti-Sikh violence in wake of Gandhi assassination

In the wake of the assassination of Indira Gandhi by two of her Sikh bodyguards on October 31, 1984, pogroms targeting the religious minority kill 3,000 and leave tens of thousands more homeless. Most of the violence takes place in Delhi.

Leaders of India's ruling Congress Party and the military stand by amidst the violence, and in some cases encourage it. Rajiv Gandhi, who became prime minister within hours of his mother's assassination, comments in the midst of the pogroms that "when a mighty tree falls, it is only natural that the earth around it does shake a little."

Indira Gandhi was assassinated in retaliation for Operation Bluestar, a military assault on the Golden Temple in Amritsar, the most important Sikh religious site, where armed Sikh separatists had taken refuge. The assault resulted in the killing of hundreds of civilians.

[top]

50 years ago: Massive strike of US steelworkers ends

On November 7, 1959, the nationwide steel strike involving 500,000 workers comes to end on its 116th day after the US Supreme Court upholds by an eight-to-one margin President Eisenhower's invocation of the Taft-Hartley Act, which allows the US president to end strikes if he declares that they threaten a national emergency.

Workers organized in the United Steelworkers Union initiated the strike over pay and the steel firms' demand that they be allowed to change work rules in order to cut jobs.

Steelworkers president David McDonald bows to the court injunction, ordering workers back for an 80 day "cooling off period."

[top]

75 years ago: Republicans routed in off-year elections

The Democratic Party increases sizable majorities in both houses of Congress in the 1934 off-year elections. The result indicates popular support for government intervention to create jobs in the midst of the Great Depression, policies associated with the "New Deal" reformist measures proposed by President Franklin Roosevelt.

The result is also a rebuke to the Republican Party, whose policies in the 1920s were broadly held to have been responsible for the Depression, then in its fifth year. Democrats pick up nine seats in both the Senate and the House, controlling 74 percent of the lower

chamber and 69 seats in the upper chamber. There remain only 25 Republican senators and seven Republican governors after the elections.

[top]

100 years ago: Germany's US ambassador says war "improbable"

In an address to the Academy of American Political and Social Sciences in Philadelphia on November 6, 1909, Germany's ambassador to the US attempts to reassure Washington that Germany's rise to world power will not necessarily lead to war.

Albrecht von Bernstorff says that the increasing size of Germany's navy only serves to protect her commerce, and that there is sufficient world trade for all the major powers. The speech is in response to a book by Archibald Coolidge, *The United States as a World Power*, which envisioned the likelihood of a clash between the two powers over trade.

"The trade of the world is now only a fraction of what it will be in years to come," von Bernstorff says. "[T]here is room enough in the world for all manufacturing nations." The ambassador cites the close economic relations between Germany and Great Britain as evidence of trade's role in lessening tensions, and declares that Germany's interests are "purely commercial and without territorial ambitions."

[top]



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