

This week in history: December 21-December 27

21 December 2009

This Week in History provides brief synopses of important historical events whose anniversaries fall this week.

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

25 years ago: Phelps Dodge strike in 18th month

This week in 1984, the Arizona, copper corporation Phelps Dodge announced it would shut down its Morenci smelter, laying off 450 strikebreakers. The strike against the company continued in its eighteenth month. A striker told the *Bulletin*, predecessor of the *World Socialist Web Site*, that the copper miners “were used and now they’re being thrown out like dirty dishwater.”

To crush the strike, Democratic Governor Bruce Babbitt sent in the National Guard the year before, including tanks and helicopters, to see to it that strikebreakers could carry on production. The striking miners and their communities lived under virtual martial law conditions.

The shutdown of the smelter, the *Bulletin* explained, was a response to falling copper prices on the international market due to global competition—the same motive that had led Phelps Dodge in its attempt to break the locals of the United Steel Workers and twelve other unions.

The *Bulletin* and the Workers League, predecessor of the Socialist Equality Party, called for a full mobilization to defend the Phelps Dodge workers. It warned that US capitalism is “out to destroy the trade union organizations

of the working class... What they are aiming at goes far beyond wage concessions. Massive unemployment, the destruction of welfare programs such as Social Security and Medicare, the elimination of democratic rights—in short the impoverishment of the working class.”

[top]

50 years ago: Franco receives Eisenhower

In the penultimate stop on his final international tour as president, Dwight Eisenhower met the fascist dictator of Spain, Generalissimo Francisco Franco, in Madrid.

The state visit was the last step in Spain’s rehabilitation after the victory of the fascist, royalist, and clerical forces in the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939). That victory took place because of the isolation and defeat of the revolution of the working class by the Stalinists, who acted in defense of the liberal capitalist state.

After this, Franco put in place a reign of terror in Spain, killing thousands and imprisoning tens of thousands more. In WWII, Spain was officially neutral, but maintained friendly relations with Hitler’s Germany and Mussolini’s Italy, both of which had assisted Franco in the civil war.

Washington, however, recognized the strategic importance of Spain. In 1953, the US and Spain concluded the defense treaty known as the Madrid Pact

which allowed the operation of US bases on Spanish soil, and in 1955 Spain entered the United Nations.

[top]

75 years ago: Zinoviev and Kamenev arrested

The Soviet bureaucracy of Josef Stalin confirmed this week in 1934 that it had arrested Grigory Zinoviev and Lev Kamenev, veteran members of the Bolshevik party, along with 13 others. Zinoviev and Kamenev were falsely accused of leading an “anti-Soviet” terrorist group that sought to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union and of responsibility for the assassination of Sergei Kirov on December 1, 1934.

Both Zinoviev and Kamenev had been close collaborators of Lenin prior to the October Revolution of 1917. After the revolution, Zinoviev was Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Comintern, Chairman of the Leningrad Soviet, and a member of Politburo, while Kamenev served as Vice-Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissars, Chairman of the Council of Labor and Defense, Chairman of the Moscow Soviet, and as a member of Politburo.

In the early 1920s, Zinoviev and Kamenev joined with Stalin to form a “troika” within the Communist Party leadership in opposition to Leon Trotsky. The two eventually broke with Stalin and in 1926 united with the Left Opposition led by Trotsky against Stalin, forming the Joint Opposition. Expelled from the party for their political opposition, Zinoviev and Kamenev would later capitulate to Stalin in 1928 and be readmitted to the party.

Their arrests in 1934 came as part of a wave of repression launched by Stalin against party members with ties to the opposition, using the Kirov assassination, in all likelihood instigated by Stalin, as the pretext.

Having learned of the accusations leveled against Zinoviev and Kamenev, Trotsky wrote, “[T]here cannot be the slightest doubt here that the accusation concocted by Stalin against the Zinoviev group is fraudulent from top to bottom, both as regards the *goal* specified—restoration of capitalism; and as regards the *means*—terrorist acts.” (On The Kirov Assassination,

December 1934).

[top]

100 years ago: Zionist Congress held in Germany

The thirteenth International Zionist Congress was convened on December 26, 1909, in Hamburg, Germany, with the settlement of Jews in Palestine in the wake of the Young Turk revolt of 1908 a major topic of discussion. Leadership of the Congress was sharply attacked from the floor for its failure to “inspire enthusiasm among the masses.”

A leading member of the Congress, Professor Max Nordau of Paris, said that Jews “did not intend to establish an independent state” from the Ottoman Empire, the *New York Times* reported. Instead, Jewish immigrants “would become good Osman citizens” if allowed to settle a Jewish nation “like an individual state in the empire.”

Earlier in the year, Jewish settlers had created a national militia called *Hashomer* to deal with the native Palestinian population, the village of Tel Aviv was incorporated near the Palestinian seaport of Jaffa, and the first *kibbutz*, or agricultural community, was founded with funds from the international Zionist movement.

[top]



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact