

This week in history: January 28-February 3

28 January 2013

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: Massive FBI spying on US antiwar groups

On January 28, 1988, the *New York Times* reported on the public release of documents exposing a wide-ranging spying campaign against American organizations opposed to US policy in Central America. According to documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by the Center for Constitutional Rights, CCR, a civil liberties group in New York City, the US Federal Bureau of Investigation conducted a years-long extensive surveillance of hundreds of American citizens and groups opposed to the counterrevolutionary policies of the Reagan administration in Central America.

The public release of the 1,300 documents was part of a lawsuit conducted against FBI infiltration of the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador, CISPES. The material shows the FBI spying, which began with CISPES, expanded to all groups that cosponsored activities with it. The Philadelphia FBI field office, for instance, informed FBI Director William Webster of 12 other organizations “actively involved in demonstrations, seminars, marches, etc. regarding the US intervention in Central America, the Caribbean and El Salvador.”

The groups included Hospital Workers Union Local 1199. Also listed were Christians Concerned About El Salvador and the Friends Peace Committee. The investigations eventually involved 52 out of 59 FBI field offices and targeted organizations such as the Council of Churches in New York, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Atlanta, the Roman Catholic Maryknoll Sisters in Chicago and the National Education Association in Cleveland. Methods of surveillance included taking hundreds of photographs, recording and distributing license plate numbers and infiltration organizations with volunteers from

right-wing organizations.

“What we’re dealing with is an illegal FBI campaign,” said Ron Kuby of the CCR. “It is clear that this is just the tip of the iceberg nationally and in New York. We have only received about one-third of the documents that exist and the parts blacked out we can assume contain information that is much more damaging to the FBI.”

Widespread opposition had developed against the Reagan Administration’s counterrevolutionary activities in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua, which included financing and training death squads, assassinations, the imposition of right-wing governments, and conducting illegal war.

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50 years ago: France blocks UK from Common Market

On January 29, 1963, France vetoed the United Kingdom’s application to join the European Economic Community (EEC), also known as the Common Market. The move, which provoked “the worst political crisis in Europe since WWII” in the words of the *New York Times*, kept the UK out of the EEC for another decade.

The French move, directed by President Charles de Gaulle and executed by Foreign Minister Maurice Couve de Murville, provoked sharp protests from other members of the EEC, which had come to favor British entry or at least the continuation of negotiations. The German foreign minister, Gerhard Schroeder, called it a “black day,” the Belgian foreign minister called France’s action “monstrous,” and the Italian Prime Minister, Amintore Fanani, after receiving British PM Harold MacMillan, pledged to seek other ways to integrate the UK into Europe. The sharpest response came from the UK. In an address to the nation, MacMillan accused De Gaulle of “trying to dominate Europe,” and minister for the Commonwealth Duncan Sandys said De Gaulle was a “misguided man who seems to think that France is Europe and that he is France.”

Britain’s decision to apply for membership in the summer

of 1961 had provoked a political storm in the UK and among the Commonwealth nations, the loose formation comprising the remnants of its empire. The application had been an acknowledgement of the failure of London's earlier attempt to challenge the EEC by forming with lesser states—Sweden, Denmark, Portugal, Austria, and Switzerland— a rival organization, European Free Trade Association, which the UK dominated. While the EEC economy grew at a clip of 5 percent per year in the late 1950s, that of the UK plodded along at 2 percent annual increases. Britain's economic stagnation compelled an increasingly public campaign for admittance, as one by one MacMillan's demands for special accommodations had been stripped away over 18 months of negotiations, clearing the path for West German and Italian acceptance of its entry.

On a deeper level, the veto reflected French opposition to Washington and to President John Kennedy's dream of an Atlantic Community. France suspected that the UK would play the role of a US Trojan horse within Europe. Paris preferred a Europe in which it was first among equals, a power rooted in its close collaboration with West Germany.

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75 years ago: Nazis reveal grandiose plans for rebuilding of Berlin

On January 31, 1938, Professor Albert Speer, speaking on behalf of the Nazi regime, announced plans to rebuild Berlin. Hitler saw in Speer an architect who could turn into practice his grandiose neo-classical planning schemes, envisaged as "the representation of Teutonic might and glory that would last for centuries" in the words of a Hitler biographer.

The newly refashioned Berlin was to be named "Germania" and was to be based on a monomaniacal dependence upon a north and south axis. Planned to stretch for almost four miles, the roads would end at newly built railway stations, their length punctuated by various monuments, squares, and even circuses. The east west axis road would co-opt the Unter den Linden and the Brandenburg Gate.

The Germania project was planned to be completed by 1950, and the rebuilt city was clearly intended to be the center of a global empire. Moreover, the resources required for such a project would have to have been the product of imperial tribute from much of the planet. "If all the documents were to disappear the historians would still read Hitler's plans to dominate the world in the buildings of the

Third Reich," Speer wrote.

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100 years ago: Balkan War negotiations break down following Young Turk coup

On February 3, talks between the antagonists in the Balkan War broke down, and hostilities on all fronts resumed. The war would conclude in May, when it became apparent that the Ottomans were no longer able to continue fighting on multiple fronts.

The political crisis in Turkey intensified. On January 28, 1913, the Young Turks Council of the Committee of Union, the governing party, voted unanimously to fight the demands of the Balkan states, largely backed by the Great Powers, that Turkey surrender the Aegean Islands, and Adrianople, which was considered the European gateway to Constantinople (Istanbul), the center of the Ottoman Empire.

Earlier, on January 23, the Turkish Grand Vizier Kamil Pasha had been ousted in a paramilitary coup carried out by a faction of the Young Turks who were convinced that his government was on the verge of conceding to the demands of the major powers and the Balkan League. A couple of hundred armed members of the Young Turk faction led by Enver Bay, a military commander, stormed into a meeting of the Turkish cabinet. Pasha was forced to resign at gunpoint, and his defense minister was killed.

Meanwhile conflicts between the nominal allies in the Balkan League continued to fester over the division of the spoils won from the Ottoman Empire. Greece and Bulgaria were unable to come to an agreement regarding possession of the islands of Salonika, which both attempted to lay claim to. These conflicts portended the second Balkan war, which began in July 1913, and pitted the members of the Balkan League against each other.

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