

This week in history: September 30-October 6

30 September 2013

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

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25 years ago: Palestinians call general strike in West Bank against Israeli violence

October 1, 1988, Palestinians called a three-day general strike in Hebron against Israeli violence. Two were killed in the city and more than 10 wounded by Israeli soldiers in the West Bank and Gaza. The Palestinian uprising known as the *intifada*, which had brought masses of young people into the streets to protest the Israeli occupation, had been going on for almost 10 months.

A Palestinian shopkeeper, Kayed Hassan Salah, was chased down and killed by Israeli settlers and soldiers, allegedly after a car was stoned by Arabs. Said Hafez Karaki, 18, was shot to death after troops fired on a group of masked youth who pelted their patrol with rocks. A curfew was then imposed on Arabs in the city, restricting them to their homes. The Arab population in Hebron at the time was about 70,000.

Israeli troops patrolled the empty streets to enforce the curfew. At the same time, members of the small Jewish settler community in the city sang and danced in the streets in celebration of Succot, a Jewish holiday.

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50 years ago: Bloody right-wing coup in Honduras

On October 3, 1963, the Honduran military toppled the elected government of Ramón Villeda Morales 10 days prior to a general election and installed as president Colonel Oswaldo López Arellano, beginning a long period of military dictatorship in the Central American country. Modesto Rodas Alvarado of the Liberal Party, who had run a populist campaign calling for greater land reform, had been expected to win the election.

Morales, who along with Alvarado was banished to Costa Rica following the coup, had instituted a series of modest reforms, including legislation granting labor certain protections. These measures brought charges of “communism” from the Honduran right and the US-based United Fruit Company, which dominated Honduras. A previous coup attempt in 1959 had been beaten back by workers and students, and had led Morales to create a Civil Guard outside of army control. The move only deepened and emboldened military opposition. Fearful of a coup, Morales had sought to win greater US support by reversing land reform. This did not convince the UFC, which asserted Honduras was “on the path of Communist China.”

It was the second right-wing coup in Latin America in eight days, following the September 25 toppling of the elected government in the Dominican Republic. Guatemala and Ecuador had fallen to coups the year before. The proliferation of right-wing coups sunk US President John F. Kennedy’s Latin America policy and his “Alliance for Progress.” Kennedy had sought to cultivate what he called a “third force” in Latin America between revolution, on the one hand, and dictatorships (and longstanding US assets) such as Samosa in Nicaragua, Battista in Cuba, and Trujillo in the Dominican Republic, on the other. Though the US initially refused diplomatic recognition to the new Honduran government, Kennedy decided to scrap US adherence to the “Betancourt doctrine,” which held that the US should not recognize extra-constitutional

governments. After Kennedy's assassination, President Lyndon Johnson quickly granted Honduras diplomatic recognition.

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75 years ago: Munich Agreement dismembers Czechoslovakia

At around 1:30 a.m. on September 30, 1938, at the Fuhrerbau, Munich, after 13 hours of talks, Hitler, Mussolini, Chamberlain and Daladier drew up a draft agreement on the future of Czechoslovakia that became known as the "Munich Agreement." No Czechoslovak representative was present. The agreement reached at Munich was to all intents and purposes Hitler's "Godesberg Memorandum," whereby the Czech territory of the Sudetenland became part of Germany. Additional areas of the country were to be handed over to Hungary and Poland.

Later, Chamberlain, the British prime minister, approached Hitler with a joint declaration of German and British determination never to go to war again. Chamberlain landed back at Heston airport later that same day waving the declaration above his head and promising "Peace in our time." Instead, the world was heading inexorably down what George Orwell called "the scenic ride to catastrophe."

The German occupation began on October 1 and was completed by October 10. With it, Czechoslovakia remained only nominally independent. It lost all of its defensible border territory, 70 percent of its steel and electrical production, and 3.5 million citizens. Within a year it ceased to exist.

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100 years ago: Ottoman Empire and Bulgaria sign Treaty of Constantinople

On September 29, 1913, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire signed the Treaty of Constantinople. The terms of the treaty saw the Ottoman Empire regain

Adrianople, which they had lost in the first Balkan War, and Kirk Kilissé and Demotica, which were part of eastern Thrace. Bulgaria lost its rights over the single railway, which led to Dedeagatch, their only port on the Aegean Sea.

The treaty was an attempt by Bulgaria to address the severe terms of the Treaty of Bucharest, concluded on August 10, 1913 in the aftermath of the second Balkan War. Having lost Macedonia, and therefore all hope of Balkan hegemony, Bulgaria approached the Ottomans to forge a relationship for the purpose of recovering Macedonia in the near future against Serbia and Greece, both of whom had increased their territories during the Balkan Wars.

For the Ottomans, the Treaty of Constantinople was beneficial not only for its acknowledgement of Adrianople, but also in that the alliance with Bulgaria eliminated a serious threat. Leading up to the Treaty of Constantinople, Russia had made a feeble attempt to negotiate for Adrianople to go to Bulgaria. However, Andrei Toshev, a Bulgarian representative, explained, "The Russians consider Constantinople [Istanbul] their natural inheritance. Their main concern is that when Constantinople falls into their hands, it shall have the largest possible hinterland. If Adrianople is in the possession of the Turks, they shall get it too."

Lastly, the treaty sought to reestablish political and economic ties between Bulgaria and the Ottomans: both joined the Central Powers against the Allied Powers in World War I.

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