

This week in history: January 2-8

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25 years ago: Deposed Haitian President Aristide accepts US deal

On January 5, 1992, deposed president of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, agreed to accept a US-dictated settlement which would restore him to the presidential palace as the figurehead for a regime run directly by the American Embassy and the Haitian military command. Then living in exile in the US, Aristide made known his agreement in advance to the foul arrangement.

Under the deal, brokered by negotiators of the Organization of American States on January 8, Rene Theodore, the leader of the Haitian Communist Party, known as the PUCH, would be appointed prime minister in return for Aristide's return to Haiti and the presidency. Theodore was described by the US media as a "moderate communist."

Much was made about the supposed irony of the head of the Communist Party being made the chief of a so-called government of "national salvation" with the full backing of both the US State Department and the blood-soaked Haitian generals. Together, Washington and the Haitian army it created carried out unspeakable atrocities against the people of Haiti in the name of fighting "communism." Indeed, many rank-and-file members of the PUCH died terrible deaths in the torture chambers operated by the military during the rule of the hated Duvalier dynasty.

Following Theodore's return from exile in 1986, the PUCH acted consistently to create democratic illusions in the so-called National Council of Government, the regime of "Duvalierism without Duvalier" and repeatedly condemned mass strikes and protests of the Haitian workers as "inappropriate."

While Aristide accepted the agreement, and the US State Department issued a statement declaring its hope that the Haitian parliament would "give prompt consideration to President Aristide's nomination of Mr. Theodore," politicians in the military-controlled regime in Haiti indicated that they might not approve.

In accepting such an arrangement, Aristide acted to legitimize the bloody military coup that overthrew him on September 30. His consent to the appointment of a prime minister approved by the military and Washington amounted to a declaration of surrender, although the deal would fall apart within days.

The capitulation was the inevitable outcome of the policy pursued by Aristide and his petty-bourgeois nationalist supporters. While in office, they sought to defuse the revolutionary energy of

the masses and sow illusions in imperialism and the military.
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50 years ago: Sit-down strike in Spain

On January 2, 1967, workers at four Standard Electrica factories in Madrid staged a day-long sit-down strike, winning the release of six labor activists jailed by the Franco dictatorship.

The six were arrested during a march earlier in the week by the electronics workers, who were demanding full-time employment and production bonuses. The fascist regime maintained a ban on all labor demonstrations and broke up the march using riot police. The jailed men had been on a hunger strike since their arrest.

The strike was organized by members of the illegal "workers commissions" operating inside the official state-controlled unions. Their emergence reflected the growing resistance by the working class to the effects of the economic crisis afflicting Spanish and world capitalism.

Two weeks earlier, in Madrid, the official leadership of the metal workers union was forced to take the unprecedented step of supporting a call by the "workers commissions" for strike action against threatened layoffs at the Barreios Diesel auto company, a subsidiary of Chrysler. Only the hasty intervention of the Franco regime, which moved to halt the layoffs, temporarily averted the threatened strike.

Meanwhile, in Barcelona, 12 leaders of the "workers commissions" were in jail awaiting trial on charges of planning an illegal meeting of labor militants. The SEAT plant in Barcelona was the scene of a recent work slowdown. Seven hundred steelworkers in Bilbao were in the second month of a strike for higher wages, while railway workers were threatening a strike against the state-run railroads.

The strikes and protests represented the most significant stirrings of the Spanish working class since the crushing of the Spanish revolution by fascism in the 1930s.

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75 years ago: Imperial Japanese troops enter Manila

On January 2, 1942 the imperialist war for control of the Pacific intensified further when Japanese troops entered the Philippine

capital Manila on the island of Luzon. The Philippine archipelago of 7,000 islands had become a possession of the United States after the military defeat of the former colonial overlords of Spain in 1898.

General MacArthur held back his troops in early December when Imperial Japan landed at the northern end of the biggest and most populous Filipino island. He decided that the small landings made by the Japanese were a diversionary tactic designed to divide American forces in two.

The Japanese made further military landings two days later on the southeastern portion of Luzon. But the main Japanese attack upon Luzon did not occur until December 22, 1941, when some 43,000 troops of the 14th Army landed just 200 kilometers north of Manila. Their mission was to mount a pincer movement upon the Philippine capital.

MacArthur was said to command a force in excess of 100,000 troops, but the majority of them were local reserve forces that melted back into the civilian population once the Japanese invaded. His effective fighting force consisted only of 31,000 reliable American and Philippine troops, and the Japanese invasion force, aided by an armored vanguard, were soon pushing on towards the Manila Bay.

On December 24, MacArthur enacted contingency plan Orange, whereby the Filipino President Manuel Quezon and government together with MacArthur's troops, retreated to the Bataan Peninsula on the west side of the Manila Bay in order to hold out against the Japanese assault.

The island of Corregidor, where MacArthur established his battle HQ, was positioned at the mouth of the great inlet. Its entrance was controlled with artillery batteries, which also covered the southeastern end of the 50-kilometer-long peninsula of Bataan.

MacArthur, holed up in his concrete bunker on Corregidor was given the moniker "Dugout Doug" by his embittered troops on the mainland, who called themselves "the battling bastards of Bataan." Suffering exhaustion and disease, these troops were forced into hellish conditions fighting in the thick jungle, swamps and ravines against superior Japanese forces.

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100 years ago: SPD theoretician Karl Kautsky promotes pacifist illusions

On January 7, 1917, the centrist opposition in the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) issued a resolution appealing to the imperialist powers engaged in the bloodbath of World War I to accept a "peace of reconciliation without violation of rights."

The SPD, the largest and most authoritative socialist party in the world on the eve of the war, had betrayed the program of socialist internationalism at the outbreak of the conflict in August 1914, voting war credits in support of the predatory military operations of its "own" government.

Karl Kautsky had played a central role in justifying this national-opportunist course. He headed a faction within the SPD which

sought to subordinate the working class to the German ruling elite, while attempting to distinguish itself from the most brazen and unabashed national-chauvinists within the organization.

Kautsky's new resolution described the German chancellor's December 12 note to Britain, France and Russia offering to open "peace negotiations," as a "symptom of a budding desire for peace in ruling circles." It declared that the social democratic parties should be "champions of peace," and stated, "We consider that in all belligerent countries the time has come for the Socialist parties to insistently demand that their governments make known the precise goals for which they are waging war."

The Internationale Group, led by Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, was alone in consistently opposing the SPD's betrayal and exposing the pacifist rhetoric of figures such as Kautsky. It denounced the resolution, issuing a letter which said, "They have not noticed that every reconciliation of the bourgeois governments is a conspiracy against the European proletariat ... The only concern of these people is that no national contingent of imperialism triumph decisively over any other.

"For them, the 'reconciliation' of the imperialists over the body of international socialism and the return to prewar conditions is sufficient. They long for the political status quo of Europe of the past and do not understand that it was precisely the status quo that led to the unprecedented upsurge of imperialism and the outbreak of World War."

Russian Bolshevik leader Vladimir Lenin, exiled in Switzerland, noted that opportunists such as Kautsky were echoing the shift in imperialist politics. He wrote that the basis for the "pacifist phrases" of Kautsky and others lay in "the turn in world politics from imperialist war ... towards an imperialist peace, which will bring the peoples the greatest deception in the form of pious phrases, semi-reforms, semi-concessions, etc."

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