

This week in history: October 15-21

15 October 2018

25 years ago: Benazir Bhutto begins second term as Pakistan prime minister

After two weeks of political maneuvering following Pakistan's general election, Benazir Bhutto of the Pakistan Peoples Party won the endorsement of parliament October 20, 1993 to become the country's prime minister, displacing an interim military government which had replaced Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in April. Bhutto's party actually won slightly fewer votes than Sharif's in the October 6 election, but the PPP won more seats in parliament thanks to its dominance in its political base of Sindh province.

The PPP won 86 seats compared to 73 for the Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz), sweeping Sindh province, where the country's largest city, Karachi, is located, as well as rural districts in Punjab, the most populous province. The PML carried Punjabi cities like Lahore and Rawalpindi.

It was the second time that Bhutto, daughter of murdered Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, had led a government in Pakistan. Her first term, from 1988 to 1990, ended with an election rigged by the military in favor of Sharif. Neither the PPP nor Sharif's PML were actual political parties, but instead constituted groupings of camp followers and courtiers around a wealthy figure drawn from the semi-feudal ruling class.

One of her first actions after resuming the premiership in October 1993 was to free her husband, Asif Ali Zardari, from prison, where he was serving a term for corruption. She later appointed him investment minister, chief of the Intelligence Bureau, director-general of the Federal Investigation Agency and chair of the Environment Protection Council.

Bhutto had long ago repudiated the socialist rhetoric of her late father, in favor of austerity policies based on privatization of public services and industries. By one estimate, the Bhutto-Zardari family had accumulated a fortune of \$1.5 billion by the end of her second term in office, while paying no income taxes at all in 1993 and 1994. Zardari shifted considerable assets to Britain and other overseas locations to safeguard them from expropriation after any future change in government.

While stealing as much as possible, the Bhutto regime bolstered the military, then engaged in a frenzied drive to develop a Pakistani nuclear bomb, while cracking down on domestic social opposition. She authorized Operation Blue Fox, a violent assault on the MQM, the political grouping in Sindh

among the muhajirs, Urdu-speaking Moslems displaced from India during the partition of 1947, who were a sizeable minority in the province, where Sindhi was the dominant language. More than 3,000 died in Karachi alone during this repression.

Shortly before taking office in 1993, Bhutto had herself declared chairperson-for-life of the PPP, which proved to be a grim forewarning of her eventual fate. She was assassinated in 2007 shortly after returning to Pakistan, after a long period in exile, to begin a third term as the country's prime minister.

50 years ago: US Olympic medalists protest during the national anthem

On October 16, 1968 two African American Olympic athletes, Tommie Smith and John Carlos, raised their fists during the United States national anthem after winning gold and bronze in the 200-meter dash. The silver medalist, Peter Norman, from Australia wore a badge of the Olympic Project for Human Rights (OPHR) in solidarity with the two Americans.

The protest was aimed against racial oppression in America. While the raised fist is generally associated with black power and black nationalist organizations, Smith later said that their demonstration was a "human rights salute." Further explaining why they protested, Smith said, "If I win, I am American, not a black American. But if I did something bad, then they would say I am a Negro. We are black and we are proud of being black."

The protest caused immense controversy. Immediately after the protest the athletes were booed by the crowd at the games. Then Smith and Carlos were banned from the Olympic Village and the remainder of the games.

The decision came from Avery Brundage, president of the International Olympic Committee. Brundage, who allowed German athletes to make Nazi salutes during the 1936 Berlin Olympics, argued that the games were apolitical and that only salutes representing a particular nation are allowed. The removal of Brundage as president of the IOC was a central demand of the Olympic Project for Human Rights. Brundage went as far to threaten expelling the entire American track team if Smith and Carlos remained in the Mexico City Olympics.

The Olympic protest, as stated in the goals of the OPHR, was mostly concerned with racism in the Olympics and other sports. They opposed a lack of black coaches in the games and called for the restoration of Muhammad Ali's heavyweight boxing title.

But the protest was caught up in the midst of other mass demonstrations that opposed inequality. The 1968 Olympic Games in Mexico had itself been the target of mass student demonstrations from Mexican youth who opposed the government's authoritarian rule. Just a few weeks prior to Smith and Carlos' protest the Mexican government had murdered hundreds of protesters during the Tlatelolco Massacre.

Later in his life Smith explained that the protest went further than sports. He said that in addition to the concerns surrounding sports the demonstration was "About the lack of access to good housing and our kids not being able to attend the top colleges."

75 years ago: Allied conference prepares to repress working class

On October 18, 1943, British Foreign Affairs Secretary Anthony Eden, US Secretary of State Cordell Hull and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov met in Moscow to discuss proposals for Allied strategy in the war against Germany.

While the conference dealt with a wide variety of issues relating to the prosecution of the military war, the specter that haunted these representatives of Stalinism and British and American imperialism was that of socialist revolution in Europe.

The centerpiece of the conference, the Four-Power Declaration, called for united action to maintain peace and security after the war against Germany was won. From their standpoint, the only threat to peace and security after the defeat of Hitler's Germany would come from the European working class, which had already begun to stir in Italy and the Balkans.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill spoke of this threat as "anarchy and chaos." Just before the Moscow conference, Hull referred to the possibility of 14 revolutions breaking out in Europe. A correspondent with the *New York Times*, who had intimate contact with the Stalinists, wrote, "Many Russians with whom the writer has talked frankly discussed the dangers of a communized Germany. They take the view that this would eventually turn in the direction of Trotskyism, and might conceivably once again, therefore, foment dangers for the Soviet Union—a possibility which must at all costs be avoided."

In order to secure the counterrevolutionary services of Stalinism, Hull tacitly left control of Eastern Europe to Stalin, by opposing Churchill's and Eden's calls for East European

federations and "joint control" of the region by the Allies. He called for military operations to be focused not in the Mediterranean or the Balkans, but on a cross-channel invasion of northern France.

100 years ago: Germany accepts Wilson's armistice

On October 20, 1918, the new German government of Prince Max of Baden accepted the terms of a military armistice offered by US President Woodrow Wilson. The prince, a liberal, had been named chancellor on October 4 with the support of the Center, Progressive and Socialist parties.

On the same day, the German and Austrian governments appealed to Wilson for an armistice, accepting his Fourteen Points as a basis for peace. These points, first enumerated in January 1918, embodied the US imperialist "peace program." They concluded with the pious proclamation of the need to form a "general association of nations to afford mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small states alike."

On October 12, a German submarine sank the *Leinster*, a ship running between England and Ireland, with 450 passengers aboard, some of them American. Four days later, Wilson replied to the Germans demanding that submarine warfare be stopped at once; that an armistice, as distinct from peace negotiations, be settled by the military commanders; and that Germany produce clearer, more convincing evidence that it had become a democratic state.

By this time, Gen. Ludendorff, the German military commander, who had originally demanded the armistice appeal and the reorganization of the government, had changed his position. He now advocated resistance, renewal of the war in the spring, etc. This was apparently a maneuver on Ludendorff's part to shift the blame for the military defeat onto the civilian ministers.

Prince Max rejected Ludendorff's proposal. Unrestricted submarine warfare was called off unconditionally. Wilson's condition of a military armistice was accepted. He was also assured that Germany had become a liberal democracy.



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