

This week in history: October 14- 20

14 October 2019

25 years ago: Hamas terrorist attack kills 22

On October 19, 1994, 22 civilians were killed and 50 more were injured in a suicide bombing in Tel Aviv by the Palestinian Islamic fundamentalist group Hamas. The attack came on the eve of the signing of the Israel-Jordan Treaty of Peace and was coupled with two other terrorist acts the same week.

Nachshon Wachsman, an IDF soldier and dual citizen of Israel and the US, was kidnapped and held hostage for six days before being executed by Hamas on October 14 during a failed rescue attempt by the IDF. The machine-gunning of tourists in Old Jerusalem on October 10 killed two and wounded 13 more.

The bus attack was planned by Hamas official Yahya Ayyash. Hamas leaders recruited the suicide bomber, Saleh Abdel Rahim al-Souwi, a Qalqilya resident, from among the thousands of desperate and poverty-stricken Palestinian youth on the West Bank. The 27-year-old lost his brother to Israeli army bullets in a clash during the *intifada*, the first Palestinian uprising in the occupied territories.

The terrorist attacks did nothing to advance the struggle of the Palestinian masses against Zionist oppression and Arab reaction. It only strengthened the most reactionary forces of the Zionist state, and further cemented the collaboration of the Arab and Israeli bourgeoisie against both the Jewish and Palestinian working class. The kidnapping of Wachsman was followed by an unprecedented degree of collaboration between the 9,000-strong police force established by the PLO in Gaza and Israeli security services. The Gaza police rounded up nearly 300 Hamas activists, reportedly extracting information from them under torture that was used in the failed attempt to free Wachsman.

Two days after the murder of Wachsman, Israeli leaders traveled to Amman to sign a peace treaty with Jordan's King Hussein. In the wake of the bombing, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin ordered an indefinite closure of the Gaza Strip and West Bank, but he continued talks with the PLO on the further expansion of the stooge Palestinian administration in those territories.

50 years ago: 250,000 demonstrate against Vietnam War

On October 15, 1969 over 250,000 Americans joined the "Moratorium to End the War in Vietnam" demonstrations in US cities. Protesters gave speeches, held teach-ins, sang songs, and read the names of the 40,000 Americans who had died in the war. The official organizing body of the event, the "Moratorium Committee" invited civil rights organizations, churches, and some prominent businessmen to join and speak at the demonstrations.

The largest sites of the demonstrations were in Boston and Washington DC. Coretta Scott King, the widow of murdered civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr., told the demonstrators in Washington that her husband, "would be delighted to have seen people of all races rallying together for the cause of peace." Demonstrations were also held in New York City and at Oxford University in England.

The Nixon White House dismissed the protests. "Under no circumstances will I be affected," Nixon told reporters, "Policy made in the streets equals anarchy." A few days later, on October 19, Vice President Spiro Agnew described the protests as "a spirit of national masochism ... encouraged by an effete corps of impudent snobs who characterize themselves as intellectuals."

Despite Nixon urging the "silent majority" of Americans to express their support for the war, the antiwar movement grew. One month later, on November 15, a second Moratorium rally was held that saw even larger crowds of 500,000 demonstrate at the White House.

The Moratorium Committee sought to channel massive antiwar sentiment behind the Democratic Party, which, under the administrations of Kennedy and Johnson had been primarily responsible for the bloody war in Vietnam, but which was now posturing as an advocate of peace. The October 15 protests had grown out of calls for a general strike. This sentiment was picked up by antiwar liberals like Sam Brown Jr., a Democratic party campaign organizer, and modified to be a less radical protest that would give a "respectable" face to the antiwar movement.

75 years ago: US military launches reconquest of the Philippines from Japan

On October 20, 1944, US military forces, including divisions of the Navy, Army and Air Force, launched a bid to retake the Philippines from Japan. The archipelago had been among American imperialism's first conquests in the late 19th century, and was viewed as strategically critical to defeating Japan in the Pacific theater of World War II.

Amid mass resistance to American rule, Washington had ceded nominal independence to the Philippine ruling elite in the 1930s, though the government functioned as a puppet of Washington. In 1942, the Japanese secured control of the country after launching an invasion after Pearl Harbor. The relative ease with which the Japanese forces conquered the country and established a collaborationist government headed by José P. Laurel reflected the lack of popular support for the US-aligned sections of the ruling elite.

Amid Allied advances throughout Europe and internationally, and a deepening crisis of the fascist governments, the US began preparing to invade the Philippines in early 1944. On October 17, US forces began minesweeping operations, and captured the island of Sulu from the Japanese, which was used as a launching pad for an amphibious invasion of Leyte on October 20. After a four-hour gunfight, the Sixth Army established a beachhead. Over the following days, they would advance through swamps and jungle into the heart of the island, rapidly securing the provincial capital of Tacloban and other neighboring towns.

The more than 400,000 Japanese troops in the Philippines launched a series of counterattacks, involving the use of aircraft raids targeting US beachheads, the deployment of large infantry divisions, and the use of Japanese navy warships. Months of heavy fighting and guerrilla warfare ensued. The war would come to be considered one of the largest naval-based battles to that point in history. It claimed an estimated 1 million Filipino lives, before the US secured victory in 1945.

The US landing was conducted under the command of General Douglas MacArthur. On October 20, he arrived on the main beach of Leyte, declaring: "People of the Philippines, I have returned! By the grace of Almighty God, our forces stand again on Philippine soil." MacArthur had played a central role in the brutal repression of a rebellion against US rule by Philippine military scouts in 1924. His father, Arthur MacArthur Jr., had been appointed governor-general over the Philippines in 1900, shortly after the US conquest of the country. During his reign as quasi-dictator over the archipelago, any resistance was violently

suppressed.

100 years ago: Adolf Hitler gives first speech to fascist party

On October 16, 1919, Adolf Hitler, then working for German military intelligence, gave his first speech to the ultra-right-wing German Workers Party (Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, DAP) in Munich's Hofbräukeller, a beer hall. In a few months, the DAP would become a part of the renamed National Socialist German Workers (Nazi) Party.

Hitler, who had remained in the military (Reichswehr) after the defeat of German imperialism by the Allies in the First World War in November 1918, had entered the small party initially to report on it to the Reichswehr. But he was in full accordance with the group's nationalist, anti-Semitic, anti-Marxist views.

Years later, his superior, Captain Karl Mayr, claimed that Hitler had been ordered to join the small fascist group to help it grow. It soon became clear that Hitler could become its leader. In a September memo to Mayr on the question of the Jews, Hitler had written that anti-Semitism must be based on "reason" and not "emotion" because "its final aim must unshakably be the removal of the Jews altogether."

Munich, the capital of the southern German state of Bavaria, had been convulsed by revolutionary struggles since the end of the war. Earlier in 1919 the working class there had forced the Social Democrats to declare a Soviet Republic as the final episode of the German November 1918 revolution. The Soviet government was suppressed a month later by the right-wing paramilitary Freikorps and the national Social Democratic government, followed by a far-right reign of terror. This was the milieu that nourished the rise of fascist parties, including the Nazis in the next period.



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