

This week in history: September 7-13

7 September 2020

25 years ago: *International Workers Bulletin* available on internet for the first time

On September 11, 1995, the *International Workers Bulletin*—the US predecessor of the *World Socialist Web Site*—was made available in its entirety on the internet for the first time.

A statement in the IWB read:

At a time when the official mass media is attempting to chloroform American and international public opinion with misinformation and conformist propaganda, the internet has a great progressive role to play. The global pervasion of online technology is not some passing trend, but a new and immutable feature of daily life. We aim to take advantage of the opportunities provided by this rapidly growing technology to expand the influence of socialist ideas.

By making the IWB available online, we intend to provide a worldwide audience with a Marxist analysis of political, economic, social and cultural developments. As we gain experience and expertise in this medium, and the following of an active and critical audience of socialist-minded workers and intellectuals, it is our hope that The IWB Online will contribute to the resurgence of a powerful anti-capitalist movement of the working class.

Because of the expansion of internet access providers, most people in the US could access the world wide web via a local phone call by 1995. This overcame many previously existing limitations on online communications. In 1995, the internet had a worldwide user base of less than 40 million. Just five years later, by 2000, there were 361 million users internationally.

The IWB was launched in April 1993 to spearhead the struggle for the international unity of the working class. Using the most advanced publishing technology available, the IWB broadened its appeal and deepened its coverage of social and cultural issues. Making the IWB available online was an enormous step forward in the development of a world socialist publication, transcending national borders to provide workers with an international perspective.

On September 9, 1970, members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) hijacked the last of four planes seized and taken to Dawson's Field, a remote airstrip outside of Zarqa, Jordan. One additional hijacking was attempted but had failed. The Palestinian guerrillas sought to use the passengers taken hostage to bargain for the release of a number of Palestinian prisoners who were being held by Israel.

The passengers on the plane included citizens from the United States, Israel, the United Kingdom, and various other European countries. By September 13, 257 of the 312 hostages had been released, with the remaining, who were all Israeli citizens, continuing to be held as they were considered to be more valuable in negotiations.

There was a mix of responses to the hijackings from different imperialist countries. US President Richard Nixon considered ordering a military bombardment of PFLP positions in Jordan and put nearby forces on alert. British Prime Minister Edward Heath opened negotiations with the PFLP and agreed to release Leila Khaled, who was involved in the failed hijacking, in exchange for the UK hostages. Ultimately, the imperialist nations would leave it to the Arab bourgeois regimes to crush the Palestinians on their behalf.

The hijackings were only a short-term disruption to the political aspirations of the ruling stratum in the Middle East, like King Hussein bin Talal of Jordan, who hoped to come to a peace agreement with the United States and Israel by undermining the struggle of Palestinians for national self-determination. Hussein determined he could no longer permit the existence of armed Palestinian nationalists in his territory after they had been forced out of the West Bank by Israel. Hussein ordered the military to begin attacking Palestinian refugee camps and cities where the Palestine Liberation Organization was known to operate.

The hijackings, and Hussein's crackdown, known as "Black September," ignited a brief war between Jordan, on one side, and the Palestine Liberation Organization and Syria on the other. Syria launched an invasion of Jordan to assist the Palestinians. By the end of September, the Syrian forces had suffered a major defeat and retreated from Jordan's territory, while the majority of PLO-aligned forces were forced to flee to Lebanon.

Though the majority of the fighting was concluded with the retreat of the Syrians on September 27, smaller groups of Palestinian fighters attempted to hold Jordanian cities where they had a strong presence. The holdouts were finally surrounded and captured by the Jordanian army in July of 1971.

50 years ago: Palestinian guerrillas hijack airplanes to Jordan

75 years ago: Chinese Communist Party wins victories in renewed civil war

This week in September 1945, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) secured several military victories over the country's right-wing nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) government, even as negotiations continued for a truce between the leaders of the two organizations, Mao Zedong and Chiang Kai-shek.

On September 8, CCP partisans took Taixing in central Jiangsu province from nationalist forces who had functioned as puppets of the Japanese during World War II, but who had quickly realigned with the KMT following Tokyo's surrender in August. Some 4,000 right-wing fighters were captured along with substantial artillery. Days later, CCP forces ousted nationalist troops from Dazhongji, also in Jiangsu. A host of similar small-scale battles took place in the weeks preceding and afterwards.

The CCP and KMT had previously been in an uneasy military alliance against the Japanese, whose attempt to subjugate China lasted from 1937 to 1945. The struggle against Japanese imperialism mobilized millions of peasants and workers and was part of a wave of struggles against colonialism during the course of the global conflict.

The CCP's alignment with the KMT, with which it had previously been at war, reflected the Stalinist party's perspective of seeking an alliance with sections of the national bourgeoisie. It reprised the CCP's backing of the KMT during the first Chinese Revolution of 1925-27, which resulted in a catastrophe in which a disarmed working class was drowned in blood by the nationalists. The CCP's efforts to maintain the partnership with the KMT was also in line with the alliance of the Stalinist bureaucracy with the Allied imperialist powers after the Nazi invasion of Russia in 1941. The KMT was heavily backed by the US.

Clashes between the KMT and CCP forces nevertheless continued during the Japanese occupation, reflecting to a great extent the class forces that gravitated to each—behind the KMT, the landlords and capitalists, and behind the CCP, the poor peasantry and workers. These clashes rapidly escalated at the conclusion of the global conflagration, as the question of which force would rule the country was sharply posed. The US insisted that Japan surrender to the KMT.

Chiang and Mao held peace talks in Chongqing from 28 August to 10 October 1945. They produced a document calling for a "peaceful reconstruction," which left the details hazy. Over the following years, as battles took place between the KMT and the CCP's peasant armies, Mao and his colleagues would continue to seek to come to an accommodation with Chiang, a warlord with close ties to the imperialist powers and a vicious opponent of the social and democratic strivings of the Chinese masses. This proved impossible as the US dispensed with its previous World War II alignment with the Soviet Union and launched the Cold War.

100 years: Communist Party of Turkey founded

On September 10, 1920, the Communist Party of Turkey was founded in Baku, the capital of the recently established Soviet Azerbaijan, as the Turkish section of the Communist International.

There were 74 delegates, comprised of former members of the Turkish Workers and Peasants Socialist Party, the Green Army—a leftist element of the national liberation struggle against British and French imperialism—as well as a group of former Turkish POWs in Soviet Russia.

In 1920, Turkey was in the throes of a struggle to repulse British, French, and Greek armies from its territory and abolish the centuries-old rule of the Ottoman regime, which had participated in World War I on the side of Germany, and laid its empire open to despoilment by the victorious Allied powers. This War of Independence was led by a section of the Turkish bourgeoisie, whose most prominent figure was Kemal Atatürk.

The communist congress elected Mustafa Suphi as its first chairman and Ethem Nejat as its first general secretary. Suphi had joined the Bolshevik party in 1915 as an imprisoned foreign national in the Urals and Nejat had joined the 1918 German Revolution while he was living in Germany and associated himself with the German Spartakusbund of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg.

After the congress, party members, including Suphi and Nejat, returned to Turkey but were unable to speak publicly. As they returned from Turkey by boat to Baku, Suphi, Nejat and 13 other Communists were murdered, most likely at the orders of the government in Ankara headed by Atatürk.



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