

This week in history: September 27-October 3

26 September 2021

25 years ago: Illegal Immigration Reform and Nationality Act signed by Clinton

On September 30, 1996, US President Bill Clinton signed the Illegal Immigration Reform and Nationality Act. Adopted by a huge bipartisan majority in both houses of Congress, it was one of the harshest attacks on immigrant workers in US history.

The legislation set the stage for a nationwide crackdown on immigrants—both undocumented and those with legal residence—as merciless and undemocratic as the Palmer raids of 1919. The bill mandated a massive buildup of the police apparatus used to terrorize immigrant workers. It authorized 5,000 new officers to the U.S. Border Patrol through 2001, new INS immigration inspectors, and new judges and prosecutors to handle the flood of deportation cases expected to ensue immediately afterwards. Clinton pledged to increase the number of deportations by 25 percent in 1996 and by 50 percent in 1997.

Immigrant workers would now be subject to summary deportation proceedings without any right to a lawyer or guarantees of due process. The bill also barred legal resident immigrants from bringing spouses and children into the US unless their incomes were at least 25 percent above the poverty level. The act made possible the building of a 14-mile fence/wall along the US-Mexican border between San Diego and Tijuana, one of the main crossing points for immigrants from Mexico and Central America.

Other provisions, deleted at the last minute in wrangling between the Republican-controlled Congress and the Democrat in the White House, pointed to the right-wing direction of future policy. Under legislation backed by both the House and Senate Republicans, resident immigrants, who were subject to the same taxes and military service as US citizens, would have been subject to deportation if they used state and federal social services for more than a year during their first seven years of residence. Another would have barred them from using any emergency medical services, including Medicaid and Medicare, if they tested positive for the AIDS virus.

Among the more ominous proposals made by Republicans in that year's elections was to demand denial of citizenship to children born on US soil whose parents were undocumented, which would require the repeal of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution, put in place after the Civil War to prevent anything resembling slave labor from emerging again on American soil.

By depriving immigrant workers of all rights, big business and its political representatives aimed to create a class of social

pariahs, forced to take any work for any wage. This pool of cheap labor, together with the hundreds of thousands being deprived of welfare benefits, would be used to drive down wages, benefits and working conditions for the entire working class.

50 years ago: Nguyen V?n Thi?u retains presidency of South Vietnam in fraudulent election

On October 2, 1971, presidential elections were held in the American puppet state of South Vietnam, with the bloody US war against North Vietnam and the National Liberation Front raging. The only candidate to appear on the ballot was the incumbent President Nguyen V?n Thi?u.

With no other options, Thi?u won about 94 percent of the vote. About 350,000 invalid or blank ballots were counted. These were generally considered to be a protest vote against the elections, although most Vietnamese registered their opposition by staying away from the polls.

Thi?u, who was also a general in the South Vietnamese military, had long been the US top choice to be the figurehead of the puppet government. He first came into US favor following the 1963 US-backed coup against former President Ngo Dinh Diem under the Kennedy administration. After a series of coups by rival military officers, Thi?u emerged at the head of the military junta that controlled the South Vietnamese government. In an attempt to build legitimacy, a previous election was held in 1967 in which Thi?u was victorious.

The 1971 elections were plainly corrupt. Initially, some candidates intended to oppose Thi?u, including two other military leaders, D??ng V?n Minh and Nguyen Cao K?. Exemplifying the crisis in the South Vietnamese government, K? had also served as Thi?u's vice president until August 1971. Knowing that a legitimate election would easily oust him from office, Thi?u passed several laws in the lead-up to the vote changing the requirements for candidacy that specifically disqualified the most prominent challengers from running.

The sham elections were a significant embarrassment for the US, whose president was then Richard Nixon. The war's major justification, after all, was supposedly to build a democratic government for the Vietnamese people. The one-man election further exposed the true nature of the brutal imperialist occupation by the US military. By this point South Vietnam had no semblance of any form of civilian rule and operated as a military dictatorship under Thi?u.

The day of the vote also saw protests against the election and the war within the South. Many university students and veterans of the war marched against the government and the undemocratic elections. Thi?u responded with force, ordering police to attack demonstrators and to “shoot down anyone who attempts to burn vehicles in the streets.”

75 years ago: Nazi war criminals convicted at Nuremberg

On September 30, 1946, the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal issued its ruling on charges against senior political and military leaders of the Nazi regime, finding 18 out of 21 defendants guilty of crimes against humanity.

The verdicts followed a year of trials presided over by an International Military Tribunal, composed of judges from the US, Britain, the Soviet Union and France. The hearings were the most significant of a series of court actions following the defeat of the German Third Reich and the end of World War II in Europe in May 1945.

The charges at Nuremberg included participation in a common plan or conspiracy for the accomplishment of a crime against peace; planning, initiating and waging wars of aggression and other crimes against peace; and participating in war crimes and crimes against humanity. The latter offenses included the Holocaust of six million Jews and the laying waste of vast sections of Eastern Europe and the USSR in a brutal war of conquest.

Among the 18 found guilty were Hermann Göring, the second-highest ranking Nazi, other Nazi party leaders and German government ministers, as well as top officials in the regime’s police and military apparatus. The verdicts were announced on October 1, with 12 of the guilty sentenced to death by hanging and the others given long prison sentences.

In closing arguments, prosecutors had pointed to the historic character of the crimes perpetrated by the Nazis and the broader eruption of imperialist barbarism, of which they were a part.

US Chief Counsel Robert H. Jackson stated:

These two-score years in this Twentieth Century will be recorded in the book of years as one of the most bloody in all annals. Two World Wars have left a legacy of dead which number more than all the armies engaged in any war that made ancient or medieval history. No half-century ever witnessed slaughter on such a scale, such cruelties and inhumanities, such wholesale deportations of peoples into slavery, such annihilations of minorities.

100 years ago: Soviet Republic founds state bank

On October 3, 1921, the All-Russian Central Executive

Committee of the Soviets passed a resolution founding a state bank in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic. The decision was endorsed by the Council of People’s Commissars on October 10. After the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) was founded the next year, the bank became known as the Gosbank, an abbreviation for Gosudarstvenny Bank SSSR, the State Bank of the USSR.

The bank was formed during the economic retreat of the Soviet republic, the New Economic Policy, which allowed for some capitalist enterprise and exchange to revive the Soviet economy, which was ravaged by years of world war, revolution, civil war and economic blockade. The state bank was formed to establish the control by the young workers’ state over finance and the circulation of currency. The immediate task was to stop inflation and subsidize state industry. For this purpose, a second currency was created alongside the ruble, the Chervonets. Another immediate task of the state bank, as Lenin suggested, was “to develop internal trade and take it under its own control.”

The bank was envisioned by the most farsighted Soviet economists as a powerful tool in the transformation of capitalism to socialism on a global scale. In his *From N.E.P. to Socialism: A Glimpse into the Future of Russia and Europe* (1921), a fictional forecast of the development of socialism, Yevgeny Preobrazhensky, later a leader of the Left Opposition, suggested that the role of a bank in a workers’ state in the transitional period might proceed along the following lines:

Gosbank had to be organized and to adapt capitalist relations to socialism (to some extent bringing to completion in our circumstances that which our poorly developed capitalism had not completed) and then to place the capitalist elements under the leadership of socialism—in concrete terms, under the guidance of Gosplan [State Planning Commission]. Gosbank’s task under the dictatorship of the proletariat consisted in betraying capitalism to socialism, like a provocateur, using capitalist methods. Gosplan’s task consisted in adapting socialism, which it represented, to the capitalist and commodity relations existing in the country, while endeavoring to make itself master of them.

Preobrazhensky was murdered in 1937 in the blood purges ordered by Stalin.



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