

This week in history: March 10-16

This column profiles important historical events which took place during this week, 25 years ago, 50 years ago, 75 years ago and 100 years ago

9 March 2025

25 years ago: New York City police continue rampage of violence, killing 26-year-old Patrick Dorismond

On March 15, 2000, New York City (NYC) police fired one deadly shot to the chest of Patrick Dorismond, a 26-year-old security guard. Dorismond, a father of two young children and an aspiring police officer, was unarmed and innocent of any crime.

This killing happened only a couple weeks after a state manufactured acquittal of NYC police officers in the deadly shooting of Amadou Diallo, an immigrant worker gunned down outside his apartment complex in February of 1999.

After working a security guard shift at the Business Improvement District in Manhattan, Dorismond and a friend went to a bar for drinks. They were about to hail a taxi before being confronted by an undercover officer asking to buy marijuana.

The police narrative of events claimed Dorismond became irate when asked for drugs. Backup was called. Plainclothes Detective Anthony Vasquez arrived and a fight broke out. According to Vasquez, who had a history of gun violence, abuse and misconduct, Dorismond threw the first punch. In the midst of this altercation, Vasquez claimed that his gun went off after Dorismond had attempted to grab it.

Eyewitnesses gave an opposing version of events. Some civilian bystanders said the gun fired when Vasquez was pistol-whipping the off-duty security guard. Another person said several men jumped out of a screeching van with a gunshot going off immediately after.

Under Republican Mayor Rudy Giuliani, NYC police were engaged in a frenzy law-and-order anti-drug campaign. Police battalions and undercover agents fanned out across the city engaging in racist, minority-targeting stop-and-frisk policies, beatings and humiliations on a daily basis. During the previous two months, the police had made 18,000 arrests, targeting impoverished working class people and charging them with low-level, petty drug crimes of possession and sale. The city also handed over more than \$24 million in overtime payments. Cops were earnest to meet arrest quotas no matter the legality.

The city's police department and ruling class dubbed the campaign "Operation Condor," a suggestive name. Its purpose was to evoke the violent US-government imperialist campaign during the 1970s in Latin America, with the same code name, where CIA-backed military dictatorships rounded up and executed left-wing and socialist political

opponents.

Giuliani, defending the paid foot soldiers of the filthy rich financial oligarchy, launched a shameless smear campaign against Dorismond before *rigor mortis* had even set in. The mayor unsealed juvenile criminal records indicating Dorismond had been charged with robbery and assault over a quarter (25 cents) at the age of 13.

50 years ago: Vietnamese NLF forces take control of Central Highlands region

Early in the morning of March 10, 1975 People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and National Liberation Front (NLF) forces, supported by PAVN tanks and artillery, attacked Ban Me Thuot, a city of strategic importance due to its location on key transport routes linking the Central Highlands to coastal regions. Its capture threatened the final collapse of South Vietnam, the US stooge regime in Saigon.

Heavy fighting erupted as NLF troops advanced into the city's southern sector, engaging in house-to-house combat against outnumbered Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) defenders. French journalist Paul Leandri, embedded with NLF units, reported that ethnic minority tribesmen who had been denied autonomy by the southern government, played a significant role in the assault. By nightfall, the NLF had secured the southern half of Ban Me Thuot, establishing a provisional administration to govern the city. The speed of the victory stunned Saigon's leadership, which had underestimated the NLF's ability to execute large-scale conventional warfare.

The Central Highlands had been contested for over two decades. Its dense forests and mountainous terrain provided cover for guerrilla operations, while its roads and resources were critical for control over coastal population centers. Prior to the Ban Me Thuot offensive, the NLF and PAVN had systematically isolated ARVN units in provincial capitals, cutting supply lines and weakening morale. By early 1975, Saigon's troops in the region were largely trapped in cities and reliant on air support for resupply.

On March 14, South Vietnamese President Nguyen Van Thieu ordered a full withdrawal from the Central Highlands. The decision, made without consulting military commanders, was made in the desperate hope of regrouping ARVN forces to defend coastal areas. Instead, the unclear and panicked orders triggered catastrophe for the

ARVN.

Thousands of southern forces fled eastward along Highway 7B, a dilapidated road ill-suited for mass retreat. Vehicles broke down or ran out of fuel, while abandoned tanks and artillery left by deserting ARVN soldiers blocked the route. PAVN units shelled the convoy relentlessly, turning the highway into a wasteland of destroyed tanks and other military vehicles.

The southern forces were almost entirely wiped out. Approximately 75 percent of all retreating ARVN soldiers were killed, captured, or deserted. Witnesses reported ARVN soldiers stripping off their uniforms and attempting to blend in with civilian population to flee.

With Ban Me Thuot under NLF control, the liberation forces swiftly overran the Highlands. By March 18, they had captured Kontum, Pleiku, and Phu Bon, securing the entire region. The collapse forced Saigon to abandon northern provinces, including Hue and Da Nang, which fell to PAVN forces by late March.

The fall of Ban Me Thuot and the rout on Highway 7B marked the beginning of the Saigon regime's terminal phase. Immediately following the Ban Me Thuot victory, the liberation forces began preparing for the final sweep into Saigon in April.

75 years ago: Israel establishes “Absentees’ Property Law” to expropriate homes and possessions of Palestinian refugees

On March 14, 1950, Israel's Knesset (the legislative branch of government) passed the “Absentees’ Property Law” (APL), which allowed the government to confiscate the lands and property of hundreds of thousands of former Palestinian residents of what was now claimed as Israel, in the aftermath of the 1948 Israeli-Arab war. It continues to remain in force to this day.

Passed less than two years after the founding of the State of Israel and under the government of its first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, the APL is one of the founding legislative texts of a state established on colonial violence and ethnic cleansing, providing a legal cover for the mass expropriation of Palestinian land and possessions.

The “absentee” Palestinians in question had been either forcibly expelled from their homes by Zionist militia groups or fled from the murderous violence inflicted on them by these terrorists. Some 750,000 Palestinians were made refugees from the war, filling up refugee camps in neighbouring countries such as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. The possessions they could not take with them, not only homes and land, but money and other personal assets, remained in the area seized by Israel during its founding and the subsequent war.

To facilitate the state theft of Palestinian property, the APL established a “Custodian” appointed by the government, to whom “every right an absentee had in any property shall pass automatically ... the status of the Custodian shall be the same as was that of the owner of the property.” Any Palestinian is considered an “absentee” if they left their home within the newly established borders of Israel at any point after November 29, 1947, the date that the United Nations General Assembly voted in favor for the partition of Palestine into separate Jewish and Arab states.

The APL has never been revoked, and in recent years it has been used as the legal justification for the eviction of Palestinians from their homes, including in East Jerusalem, which has been occupied by

Israel since the 1967 Six Day War.

100 years: Austrian Nazi assassinates Jewish writer

On March 10, 1925, Otto Rothstock, a young member of the Austrian Nazi party living in Germany, entered the Vienna office of the well-known Austrian-Jewish novelist and investigative journalist Hugo Bettauer and shot him five times with a pistol. Bettauer died two weeks later in a hospital from his wounds.

Bettauer was a popular novelist, with a reputation for writing socially conscious crime novels. Because of his sexual frankness in his journalism, the far right called him a purveyor of “asphalt literature,” an anticipation of Hitler's onslaught on so-called “decadent art.”

In 1924, Bettauer published the satirical novel *Die Stadt ohne Juden: Ein Roman von übermorgen* (*The City without Jews: A Novel of the Day after Tomorrow*) in which an Austrian politician orders all of Vienna's Jews expelled. The economy collapses and the ruling party has no one to blame social problems on. It falls from power, and the law is repealed with the city welcoming the Jews back in.

One historian has noted, “in scenes that are frighteningly prophetic, Austria borrows thirty stock car trains from neighboring countries to help in the expulsion (to the east) of the Jews and their belongings.”

The novel was enormously popular, selling over 250,000 copies. It enraged antisemites, however, including those in the branch of the Nazi Party in Austria. Bettauer was denounced as a “red poet” and a “corrupter of youth.” One fascist publication called for “lynch justice against all polluters of our people” and named Bettauer.

Rothstock was tried for murder but was committed to an insane asylum, where he stayed for only 20 months. He survived World War II and in 1977 boasted in an interview of Bettauer's “extinction.”



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