

This week in history: April 21-27

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

20 April 2025

25 years ago: Florida raid reunites Elian Gonzalez, 6, with Cuban father

On April 22, 2000 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) raided the Miami home of Lazaro Gonzalez, the great-uncle of 6-year-old boy Elian Gonzalez. Lazaro had defied a court order in a custody case granting parental rights to the child's biological father, Juan Gonzalez, a Cuban citizen and resident.

The INS raid lasted only three minutes. No one was injured and only one person was detained, a member of the Cuban-American National Foundation, an organization linked to terrorist attacks on Cuban targets. The same day, the boy was reunited with his father at Andrews Air Force base outside Washington D.C.

Elian had been taken from Cuba by his mother and her partner the previous year, without the permission or knowledge of Elian's father, who had primary custody of the child. They departed on the 90-minute crossing for Florida in a small, under-equipped boat that capsized in US waters. The mother drowned, but two fishermen found Elian floating in an intertube and handed him over to the United States Coast Guard.

Contrary to international law, which clearly affirmed that the child had to be returned to his father, the far-right Cuban émigré community in Florida demanded that Elian stay with his great uncle.

Both Republicans and Democrats condemned the INS raid. In typical fashion, the Republicans assailed the Bill Clinton administration for allowing the raid to happen while the Democrats responded meekly to the harshest accusations and supported the thrust of the attacks on INS. Republican politicians equated the raid to "storm trooper tactics," called it "un-American" and compared it to "Fidel Castro's Cuba." Presidential candidates George W. Bush and Al Gore, the presumptive presidential nominees for the Republican and Democratic parties in the upcoming 2000 election, both sought to win support from anticommunist Cuban elements in Florida by criticizing the raid.

The hysterical media and political denunciations made for a spectacle of galling hypocrisy. When real cases of INS atrocities were committed on workers and immigrants from Latin America, Asia, the Middle East and Africa, the Democrats and Republicans

uttered not a single sentence nor a word of disapproval. In fact, Clinton and Congress provided unlimited funds to construct immigrant prisons, upgrade the size of the Border Patrol and INS and erect fortifications along the US-Mexico border.

Opinion polls showed that the majority of Americans endorsed the INS action and blamed Lazaro Gonzalez and his right-wing Cuban émigré backers for the temporary standoff. Even in Florida, a poll by the *Miami Herald* found that a sizable majority supported the reunification.

50 years ago: Workers run Democrats, union bureaucrats off stage at DC rally

On April 26, 1975, leading Democratic Party politicians and trade union officials were shouted down and chased from the stage at a rally against unemployment in Washington D.C. Originally organized by the AFL-CIO at RFK Stadium, the event drew over 70,000 workers and unemployed laborers demanding action on job cuts and the worsening economic crisis. Instead of a series of scripted speeches by officials, the rally became a spontaneous revolt against the political and union establishment.

The eruption began when Senator Hubert Humphrey, a prominent Democrat tied to pro-corporate policies and the Vietnam War, attempted to address the crowd. His mere introduction triggered widespread booing. Workers stormed the field with union banners, drowning out his speech. Despite appeals from union officials and liberal Democratic Congresswoman Bella Abzug—who urged the crowd to "show unity"—the workers refused to relent. "Hey, Bella, this is the people talking!" one shouted. Union leaders fled the rally, with several prominent union presidents abandoning their own speeches. Instead, rank-and-file workers seized the microphone for nearly an hour.

The ruling class was determined to impose the costs of imperialism's defeat in Vietnam onto the working class. Estimates put the number of industrial jobs lost in the recession of 1973-1975 at 2.2 million. Over the previous few years a seething anger had developed in the working class over unemployment, which at the

time of the rally exceeded 9 percent. As corporations slashed jobs, unions officials refused to organize coordinated strikes or other actions to defend living standards.

Under these conditions workers demanded a serious fight back. The AFL-CIO had been compelled by this anger to call the rally. But it was designed to simply vent frustration harmlessly. The workers who showed up rejected this plan and demonstrated their willingness for a struggle.

A New York City worker from Local 372 captured the mood, in comments given to a reporter for the *Bulletin*, the US forerunner of the *World Socialist Web Site*: “The real rally took place on this field. What took place on the stand was a picnic. The march should have been from here to the Capitol. The workers got victory when the so-called dignitaries couldn’t talk.”

Aaron, a rubber worker from Boston, said, “This was a very important rally and that’s why I came down. Something has got to be done about these conditions. If you’re laid off, you get unemployment and then all you’re left with is welfare if you can get that. A man with a family is definitely not able to make it. ... The only people who can determine what’s best for a worker is not the employers or the politicians, but the workers themselves.”

The Workers League, the US predecessor to the Socialist Equality Party, held a 250-person meeting post-rally. National Secretary Fred Mazelis stated. “In struggles such as this, millions will be learning the real nature of this bureaucracy. They will go through the experience of rejecting the old leaders and building a revolutionary leadership.”

75 years ago: Kingdom of Jordan formally annexes the West Bank

On April 24, 1950, the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan formally annexed the West Bank and incorporated the territory into its kingdom. The annexation followed the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and the mass expulsion of Palestinians from their homes, which saw around 750,000 Palestinians made refugees by Zionist forces after the state of Israel was founded in May 1948. By 1950, roughly 280,000 of these refugees were living in the West Bank, unable to return to their homes, which were now under Israeli occupation.

In the lead-up to formal annexation, King Abdullah of Jordan had taken steps to consolidate and entrench Jordanian control over the region. Palestinian municipal governments were stripped of their authority to collect taxes or issue licenses, while Jordanian administration and policing were imposed on the population. In December 1948, Abdullah convened notable Palestinian leaders at the Jericho Conference, where the assembled delegates voted in favour of incorporating Arab Palestine “immediately” into Jordan (then called Transjordan). In February 1949, Jordan extended citizenship to the West Bank’s Palestinian population.

The annexation, legally formalized on April 24, 1950, was part of the Jordanian expansionist policy of “Greater Syria” under Abdullah, aimed at extending the rule of the Hashemite royal family over historic Palestine and other parts of the former

Ottoman Empire. The Jordanian regime itself had been established after World War I as a client state of the British Empire to advance British imperialist interests in the oil-rich region. Although Jordan was granted formal independence from Britain in 1946, it remained heavily dependent on British, and later American, military and financial support.

Jordan controlled the West Bank until the 1967 Six-Day War in June, during which Israel had seized the Jordanian-controlled West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula, part of Egypt. The illegal occupation marked a further development in Israel’s imperialist-backed expansion, with over 300,000 more Palestinian refugees fleeing to Jordan or Syria.

100 years: Franz Kafka’s *The Trial* published in Berlin

On April 26, 1925, Czech author Franz Kafka’s German-language novel, *Der Prozess*, later translated into English as *The Trial*, was published by Verlag Die Schmiede in Berlin. Max Brod, Kafka’s friend and literary executor, edited the text for publication after Kafka died in 1924, defying Kafka’s wishes to have his unfinished works destroyed.

The Trial tells the story of Josef K., a bank clerk who is inexplicably arrested one morning for a crime. Never told what he is accused of, he is drawn into a bewildering and nightmarish legal system. His attempts to understand the charges against him and to navigate the bureaucratic apparatus that governs his case become more and more futile, leading to a tragic and unresolved end.

The work, written in 1914-15 during the First World War, although it defies simple and straightforward interpretations, reflects the irrationality of the imperial Austro-Hungarian bureaucracy that dominated life until the collapse of the Empire in 1918. The work is influenced by Russian 19th century writer Fyodor Dostoevsky’s *Crime and Punishment*.

The Trial did not sell in large numbers at first and only became widely known, along with its author, after the Second World War, especially in France and the United States, partly due to the rise among the postwar literary intellectuals of outlooks such as existentialism and absurdism.

The absurdity of the situation in which Josef K. finds himself is responsible for the term kafkaesque, which denotes a situation that is disorienting, threatening and seemingly senseless.



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