

This week in history: July 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 July 2025

25 years ago: Concorde plane crash near Paris kills 113, injures 6

On July 25, 2000 the Concorde jet designated as Air France Flight 4590 crashed two minutes after takeoff from Paris' Charles de Gaulle Airport on its scheduled flight to New York City. The plane's engine caught fire after it ran over debris leftover from a previous flight. The plane's tires immediately exploded, with the velocity of the plane sending tire shrapnel into the engine. The pilot attempted to make an emergency landing but the plane collided into the Hotelissimo hotel in Gonesse. All 109 passengers and crew died, along with another four people killed at the crash site.

Eyewitnesses said the collision sounded like an enormous bomb detonation. People rushed to the crash site to find survivors, but the fire and billowing smoke prevented initial rescue efforts. People interviewed after the tragedy said the pilot saved hundreds of lives by steering the plane away from the town's center. A Shell store manager told the media, "The pilot knew what was going on. He was a pilot who saved the lives of the people of Gonesse."

The trip from Paris to New York was chartered by a German cruise company named Deilmann. Ninety-six passengers from Germany, one from Australia, two from Denmark, and one American died on board. The four who died on the ground were immigrant hotel workers from Algeria, Mauritius and Poland.

The Concorde series was an Anglo-French supersonic airliner built by the British Aircraft Corporation and Sud Aviation. The first commercial flights began in 1976. Three years later, the manufacturers performed a design modification after a tire burst. Over its 27 years of operation, Concorde experienced approximately 70 incidents involving tires or wheels, seven of which resulted in significant aircraft damage or posed a serious safety risk. Several days before the crash, British Airways uncovered several small cracks in the wings of all seven Concorde in its fleet. On July 24, British Airways grounded a Concorde that had a growing number of cracks.

For the ruling classes in London and Paris, the plane had been a source of national pride as the only supersonic commercial jet in existence. Attempts by the United States and the USSR to manufacture their own supersonic commercial planes had been abandoned. The plane was used mostly by the wealthy, who could afford the much more costly tickets for the speedy flight—typically 10 times more expensive than a regular transatlantic ticket. Concorde could make the Paris-to-New York trip in just 3.5 hours, as opposed to

the 8 hours required for a typical commercial jet.

50 years ago: Military triumvirate takes power in Portugal

On July 25, 1975, executive power in Portugal was consolidated into a three-man military directorate. This triumvirate consisted of President Francisco da Costa Gomes, Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves and chief of the special military forces Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho. The decision was the frantic and reactionary response of the Stalinist-oriented military leaders to block the period of the Carnation Revolution known as the *Verão Quente*, or "Hot Summer," from developing into a movement for workers' power.

In the months following the end of the fascist Estado Novo government, throughout Portugal workers' committees were established in many major factories, workplaces and in some areas of the countryside. By the summer of 1975 the committees had developed into powerful organizations and had begun putting forward the demand for the nationalization of the major industries and the large agrarian estates.

In several instances the workers began setting this into motion by throwing out factory and estate owners and taking direct control over industries. Rádio Renascença, a Catholic Church-run radio station that encouraged anti-communist thugs to attack workers, was seized by workers' committees and shut down.

The conditions and demands for a socialist revolution were well advanced. However the committee leadership, under the influence of the Stalinist Portuguese Communist Party (PCP), kept the workers' organizations subordinated to the provisional government. But the revolutionary strivings of the working class set the committees and the provisional government on a direct collision course.

The immediate trigger for the provisional government's collapse was the "*República* affair." *República* was a prominent Lisbon newspaper financially backed by the middle class Socialist Party (PS). In May 1975, the paper's workers' committee seized control of the newsroom, throwing out the PS-aligned editorial staff.

The Socialist Party demanded that the military-led provisional government act against the committee and restore the editors to their posts. However, the majority of the military leadership in the government belonged to the Armed Forces Movement (MFA), which

was itself aligned with the PCP. Fearing the revolutionary explosion brewing, the MFA allowed the committee to remain in control of the paper so long as it, and other committees, remained subordinate to the military government and did not take up an independent struggle for state power.

In response, on July 17, Socialist Party leader Mário Soares officially withdrew the PS from the provisional government. Soares claimed that since the PS won the largest vote in the April constituent assembly election, his party was given a mandate to rule and the ousting of its editors from *República* could not be tolerated by the government.

The logic of the revolutionary situation called for the seizure of state power by the workers' committees themselves and the establishment of a workers' government. The decision to form the triumvirate was a desperate maneuver to block any such move. This was backed by the Stalinists of the PCP, whose line was that the MFA, not the workers' committees, was the revolutionary force.

75 years ago: US forces massacre up to 400 civilians in No Gun Ri, Korea

On July 26, 1950, soldiers from the United States Army's 1st Cavalry Division murdered hundreds of South Korean civilians near the village of No Gun Ri (Nogun-ri), in one of the earliest large-scale massacres of the Korean War.

Eyewitness testimonies of the attack describe indiscriminate killing of unarmed civilians, who posed no threat to the US troops and were seeking cover underneath a tunnel beneath a railroad bridge. Chung Koo-Hak, who was seven years old at the time, told journalists in 1999 that American soldiers kept shooting at "babies, women and disabled people" for three days. US veterans from the Korean War reported that their superior officers ordered them to open fire upon the refugees, with one captain reportedly saying, "let's get rid of all of them."

The estimated number of victims varies by source. A 2005 South Korean government inquest officially certified 163 named victims who were killed, acknowledging that many more unnamed people were likely killed. Survivors of the massacre, however, estimate that the true death toll is up to 400 civilians.

For decades afterwards, United States and South Korean governments systematically covered up the massacre, rejecting compensation claims and petitions filed by the survivors. The story received international attention in 1999, when several US veterans gave interviews to the Associated Press testifying that they had either participated in or witnessed the mass killing. The subsequent "investigation" by the US Army was a whitewash that did not even bother to try to count the number of people killed and maintained that there were no orders given by officers to fire on civilians.

Far from an aberration, the No Gun Ri massacre was the first of many war crimes which the US military carried out during the Korean War. The US Air Force commander at the time, General Curtis LeMay, later proudly claimed that US warplanes during the three-year war "burned down every town in North Korea" and killed approximately "twenty percent of the population of Korea as direct casualties of war, or from starvation and exposure."

100 years ago: British imperialism defines Palestinian citizenship

On July 24, 1925, the British government, acting under the Mandate for Palestine granted to it in 1920 by the League of Nations, issued the Palestinian Citizenship Order 1925, which defined who was a citizen of Palestine, and, according to British imperialism, who was a Palestinian. Palestinian citizenship applied to "Turkish subjects habitually resident in the territory of Palestine upon the 1st day of August, 1925," to children of a Palestinian father, and to some categories of residents living abroad. Residents could opt to keep Turkish citizenship or apply for citizenship in another country.

The vast majority of Turkish citizens in Palestine were culturally Arab and spoke Arabic, whether they were Christians, Druze or Muslims or belonged to other confessions. The order did not refer to religion or ethnicity and did not apply to residents of the Emirate of Transjordan (modern Jordan,) which was a British protectorate.

Since Zionist settlers in Palestine were not necessarily Turkish citizens and often remained citizens of the countries from which they had emigrated, the order did provide for the naturalization of immigrants as long as they met certain criteria: that they had lived for period in Palestine for at least two years, that they were of good character, that they had knowledge of English, Arabic, or Hebrew and that they showed an intention to reside in Palestine.

In this way, the order accommodated Zionist immigration that had been accepted by British imperialism in the 1917 Balfour Declaration. Over the following decades, with the growth of the Palestinian nationalist movement and opposition to Zionist colonization, the British put restrictions on Jewish immigration, although it continued illegally, particularly during and after the Nazi Holocaust.

The British had come into possession of Palestine as a result of the defeat of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I in 1918 and an arrangement to divide up the Middle Eastern Ottoman provinces with French imperialism in the secret 1917 Sykes-Picot agreement. The League of Nations rubber-stamped British rule with the mandate.



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