# This week in history: September 7-13

## 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

**6 September 2026**

**25 years ago: Al-Qaeda attack on World Trade Center and Pentagon**

On September 11, 2001, a coordinated terrorist attack, the worst in US history, killed 2,977 people, injured 25,000, with many suffering from lifelong disabilities. Property and infrastructure damage totaled around $10 billion. The suicide attacks, planned under the direction of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, were reactionary and barbaric. They were allowed to happen through a deliberate stand-down by US security agencies, which ignored the open preparations, including known Al-Qaeda members training at US flight schools.

Four groups of Al-Qaeda operatives—15 of the 19 being Saudi nationals like bin Laden—hijacked commercial airliners departing from Boston and Washington DC. The two from Boston were redirected to the twin towers of the World Trade Center in Manhattan. The two from Washington were redirected towards the US capital, one hitting the Pentagon, the other brought down in a southwestern Pennsylvania field when passengers courageously attacked the cockpit where the hijackers had taken control.

The 9/11 attacks provided a pretext for already developed plans of American imperialism to wage war in Central Asia and the Middle East, as well as unprecedented domestic attacks on the democratic rights of the American people, including passage of the Patriot Act, creation of the Department of Homeland Security, and establishment of secret CIA prisons and torture centers, as well as the main prison at Guantanamo Bay.

Bipartisan howls for war across the corporate-controlled media drowned out any serious accounting for the attacks. US intelligence agents had sponsored Al-Qaeda operations in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union, and had armed, trained and funded bin Laden and his organization for decades. Several of the hijackers were under active surveillance and two were even living with an FBI informant. The official story of a catastrophic “intelligence failure” was belied by government intelligence reports. No official was ever held accountable, a fact which points to state complicity and cover-up.

On national television, President George W. Bush immediately threatened to make “no distinction between the terrorists... and those who harbor them.” US imperialism, backed by its European counterparts, launched wars in the Middle East and Central Asia. Afghanistan became the first objective, despite the fact none of the hijackers were Afghan and the Taliban had no involvement in the attack. They even offered to hand bin Laden over to US authorities. Iraq was the next victim, based on fabricated accusations of ties to Al-Qaeda and building weapons of mass destruction.

**50 years ago: Chinese Stalinist leader Mao Zedong dies**

Mao Zedong, the central leader of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) since 1935, died in Beijing on September 9, 1976, at the age of 82. He had been ill for several years and had stepped back from major political activity, with Hua Guofeng acting as his designated successor.

Mao first became active in revolutionary politics during the May Fourth student movement of 1919 and was a founding member of the CCP in 1921. He rose to leadership in the party in the aftermath of the catastrophic defeat of the 1925–27 revolution, when Stalin, then leading the Comintern, ordered the subordination of the CCP to the bourgeois Kuomintang. KMT leader Chiang Kai-shek would use the opportunity of a disarmed working class to carry out a massacre of Shanghai workers and socialists in April 1927. The CCP was forced out of the cities and into the countryside.

From these betrayals, Mao drew the anti-Marxist conclusion that the peasantry, not the proletariat, was the principal revolutionary force in China, and began organizing a peasant-based Chinese Red Army. During the Second World War Mao maintained an uneasy alliance with the KMT against the Japanese invaders. But immediately after the Japanese surrender, civil war between the CCP and KMT broke out. Mao’s forces ultimately drove the nationalists from the mainland and established the People’s Republic of China in October 1949.

It is undeniable that there was a social revolution in China that expropriated the bourgeoisie and landlords and laid the foundations of a workers state. But that state was deformed from the outset by Maoism, the Chinese variant of the Stalinist perspective of “socialism in one country.”

The result was one political crime after another—the persecution and mass arrests of the Chinese Trotskyist movement in 1952–53, the betrayal of the Vietnamese revolution at Geneva in 1954, the catastrophic Great Leap Forward in the late 1950s which resulted in mass famine, and the murderous repressions of the Cultural Revolution (1966-69).

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The conflicts between the rival national interests of the Soviet Union and China led to the Sino-Soviet split, with Mao denouncing Nikita Khrushchev and his successors as “revisionists.” After initially providing military support to Vietnam against the US invasion, the rival Stalinist regimes eventually began to compete for the favor of American imperialism.

Mao’s final major political act was his 1972 meeting with US President Richard Nixon. The meeting was a major accommodation with US imperialism that laid the basis for China's reintegration into global capitalism and its transformation into a source of cheap labor for Western capital.

Mao’s death left the bureaucracy in a profound crisis. The right-wing faction around Deng Xiaoping, who had been stripped of all party positions in April 1976, eventually consolidated power. Deng would oversee the dismantling of the gains of the Chinese revolution, a massive influx of foreign capital and the transformation of the Stalinist bureaucracy into a Chinese capitalist ruling class.

**75 years ago: Treaties signed in San Francisco end US military rule of Japan**

On September 8, 1951, at the War Memorial Opera House in San Francisco, Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida signed two treaties with the United States. The first, the Treaty of Peace with Japan (also referred to as the Treaty of San Francisco), officially ended the state of war between Japan and 48 Allied nations. The second, the US-Japan Security Treaty, signed by Yoshida and US Secretary of State Dean Acheson, allowed American armed forces to remain stationed in Japan after the US occupation ended. Both treaties came into effect on April 28, 1952.

The war that was formally concluded by the Treaty of San Francisco had begun with Japan's imperialist expansion across Asia and the Pacific, and ended with the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the occupation of Japan by US forces. The Treaty of San Francisco formally restored Japanese sovereignty, ended the US occupation, and required Japan to renounce its claims to Korea, Taiwan, the Kuril Islands and South Sakhalin, and to accept the judgments of the wartime tribunals.

Along with Japan and the United States, 47 other nations signed the Treaty of San Francisco. Three nations participating in the talks–the Soviet Union, Poland and Czechoslovakia—refused to sign. China—the principal victim of Japanese aggression during the Second World War—was not even invited.

But the more significant document was the accompanying security treaty. It granted Washington the right to station land, air and sea forces “in and about Japan” with no expiration date and no obligation to defend Japan if attacked. US forces could act without consulting Tokyo, and Article I even authorized their use “to put down large-scale internal riots and disturbances”—a clause aimed squarely at the Japanese working class. At the time, 260,000 American troops occupied 2,824 facilities across the country.

The treaties did not ultimately end Japan's subjugation but reorganized it in the context of Cold War geostrategic interests for American imperialism. The talks concluded while the Korean War had just entered its second year. Japan was to serve as a staging ground for the US campaign to roll back the Chinese Revolution of 1949 and the wider anti-colonial upheavals in Asia.

**100 years ago: Germany admitted into League of Nations**

On September 8, 1926, the imperialist-dominated Assembly of the League of Nations voted to give Germany a permanent seat in the organization.

The entry of Germany, defeated in World War I and the only major European power not in the League, was made in exchange for Germany’s participation in the Locarno Treaties with France, Britain, Belgium, Italy, Poland and Czechoslovakia in late 1925. The treaties made the borders between Germany and France and Germany and Belgium “inviolable” and demilitarized Germany’s industrial Rhineland. Germany had agreed to the peaceful settlement of disputes with Czechoslovakia and Poland but notably had not agreed on permanent boarders with these two countries.

At the time, the imperialist powers needed to restabilize Germany by bringing it into the international framework established after the war. Germany, like much of central Europe, had been rocked by revolutionary struggles in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1917, including a threatened overthrow of capitalism in 1923 that failed because of the weakness of the German Communist Party leadership and the misdirection by the Stalinist-led Comintern. American banks had helped to prop up the country economically and better terms were negotiated for Germany’s reparations payments under the 1919 Treaty of Versailles.

The essential purpose of Germany’s admission to the League, however, was anti-Soviet. The goal was not “peace” but the consolidation of the post-war order and the need by the European powers to use German capitalism against the Soviet Union. The German ruling class had other plans, however, seeking to regain its dominant position in Europe against both the USSR and its imperialist rivals. Only seven years later, in November 1933, Hitler would take Germany out of the League of Nations, sending troops into the Rhineland in 1936, annexing Austria, invading Czechoslovakia in 1938, and beginning World War II with the invasion of Poland in 1939. Two years later, he would invade the Soviet Union.

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