

# This week in history: February 13-19

13 February 2017

25 Years Ago | 50 Years Ago | 75 Years Ago | 100 Years Ago

## 25 years ago: Pentagon prepares for new wars

Classified documents leaked by the Pentagon, reported in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* the week of February 17, 1992, revealed that the US was engaged in intensive planning for wars in Europe, Asia and Latin America. The plan, which informally became known as the Wolfowitz Doctrine, was aimed at maintaining the dominant world position of the US military.

The news reports gave details of seven scenarios for major wars which could break out in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, including a resumption of the genocidal war against Iraq. The other scenarios envisioned a US military response to a coup in the Philippines, a coup in Panama, a North Korean invasion of South Korea, and a Russian invasion of Lithuania, as well as a war against North Korea and Iraq simultaneously and a more long-term conflict with a new global enemy on the scale of the USSR.

The military actions ranged correspondingly from virtually unopposed invasions like the 1989 aggression against Panama (in the examples of Panama and the Philippines), to major wars on the scale of the Persian Gulf conflict, to full-scale world war.

The scenarios were drafted at the direction of Paul Wolfowitz, undersecretary of defense for policy, and Adm. David E. Jeremiah, vice chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, beginning the previous August, at the time of the failed Stalinist coup in the Soviet Union. They were distributed within the Pentagon bureaucracy on February 4 and found their way to the press.

The press commentaries which accompanied the publication of these scenarios largely dismissed them as concoctions of the military brass for the purpose of forestalling expected cuts in the Pentagon budget. The *New York Times* headlined the report: "Pentagon Imagines New Enemies to Fight in Post-Cold War Era, Planning for Hypothetical Wars and Big Budgets."

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## 50 years ago: CIA funding of US student and labor

### groups exposed

The February 13, 1967 admission by leaders of the liberal National Student Association (NSA) that their organization had been receiving funds from the Central Intelligence Agency since the 1950s sparked a series of exposures of the spy agency's funneling of money to other domestic and international front organizations—including ones operated by the AFL-CIO.

The statement by the NSA came in response to the announcement by the antiwar magazine *Ramparts* that its March issue, then going to press, carried a detailed exposé of the CIA role inside the US student organization, in which the US spy agency used the international activities of the NSA to recruit agents and informants and spy on foreign students.

Newly elected National Student Association President Eugene Groves admitted that CIA funds had helped to finance the organization's international activities, including participation in international conferences, where CIA agents posing as students identified radical-minded youth. Among those targeted were youth from Iran under the Shah and from apartheid South Africa, who were identified to the security forces of their murderous governments. The money, later revealed to be about \$200,000 per year, was funneled through American foundations, such as the Independence Foundation of Boston, which served as fronts for the CIA.

Subsequent media reports soon linked the CIA to a troika of international "labor" organizations run by the AFL-CIO: the American Institute for Free Labor Development, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, and the American-African Free Labor Institute. Other stories reported that the American Newspaper Guild received up to \$1 million in contributions from foundations identified as CIA fronts, and that the retail clerks union was receiving money from another CIA front organization.

The American Institute for Free Labor Development was established in 1962, with the blessings of Wall Street and the US State Department, to support the construction of anticommunist unions in Latin America. Its top man was ex-Stalinist Jay Lovestone, the director of the AFL-CIO International Affairs department. Both Lovestone and Irving Brown, head of the American-African Free Labor Institute,

were linked to the CIA.

AFL-CIO President George Meany stonewalled the charges, claiming he opposed connections between the AFL-CIO and the CIA. He brazenly denied any knowledge of affiliated unions receiving CIA funds and said he would conduct a private investigation of the allegations.

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### **75 years ago: Roosevelt orders internment of Japanese-Americans**

On February 19, 1942 US President Franklin Roosevelt, under authority of the War Powers Act, signed Executive Order 9066, which put the Army in charge of uprooting Japanese-Americans and placing them in internment camps for the duration of World War II. Roosevelt's order resulted in 110,000 Japanese-Americans, 70,000 holding US citizenship, being herded into concentration camps. Many had their land, property and houses stolen.

The act followed a hysterical anti-Japanese campaign led by the press, big business and California state politicians, including California Governor Culbert Olson and Attorney General Earl Warren, giving rise to vigilante terror against Japanese-Americans. The Democratic and Republican politicians claimed the round-up was needed to protect against Japanese fifth columnists.

Raising the loudest voice against the Japanese-Americans were the big California growers, such as the Native Sons and Daughters of the Golden West and the Grower-Shipper Vegetable Associates, who coveted the land and resented competition from Japanese truck farmers. However, in the case of Japanese-American farm laborers, agribusiness appealed to have the internments delayed until crops had been harvested.

The Pacific League, composed of Los Angeles-based capitalists, proposed that the internees be drafted into a forced labor agricultural army. Roosevelt had wanted to evacuate 140,000 Japanese-Americans from Oahu, Hawaii, but when local capitalists warned of a labor shortage he withdrew the idea.

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### **100 years ago: Food riots in Brooklyn, New York**

On February 19, 1917, food riots broke out in the Brownsville section of Brooklyn, New York, amid mounting anger among workers and the poor over the rising cost of living, including food prices. They were part of a series around the country, which coincided with mounting social upheaval and political unrest around the world, in the third year of the imperialist world war that had begun in August 1914. The riots took place on the eve of direct US entry into the conflict.

The disturbances began on Belmont Avenue. Peddlers had posted signs at 10 a.m. indicating increases of 15 to 33 percent in the price of onions and a substantial rise in potato prices. One woman protested, turning over a merchant's cart. When she was chased by the merchant, hundreds gathered to defend her. Police reserves were called from the Brownsville and Liberty Avenue stations, and the demonstration was quelled by midday.

In Williamsburg, another cart was overturned at around 4 p.m. and around a thousand working class women quickly assembled for a protest. Fires were set, and police clashed with the crowd for 40 minutes.

The following night, on February 20, as many as 10,000 women crowded into Forward Hall on the Lower East Side of Manhattan. The meeting, conducted in Yiddish, made plans for a demonstration on Wall Street in front of the offices of J.P. Morgan and a march down Fifth Avenue. Members of the audience at the meeting cried out, "We want food for our children."

Meyer London, congressman from the reformist Socialist Party, issued a warning to the ruling elite on February 21 that anger over food prices could become the catalyst for broader social upheavals and unrest. "While Congress is spending millions for armies and navies, it should devote a few hours to starving people in New York and elsewhere. You have bread riots, not in Vienna, nor in Berlin, not in Petrograd, but in New York, the richest city in the richest country in the most prosperous history of that country," London declared.

On February 21, food riots erupted in Philadelphia. Women, whose husbands were on strike at the Franklin Sugar Refinery fought with police, shouting, "We're starving!" One strike supporter died and nine were injured. The same day, Mayor Mitchell of New York called for a government inquiry into food prices, while leading politicians in the Senate and Congress voiced nervousness over the violence.

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