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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT

New ITF Headquarters

The ITF will be moving into its new headquarters towards the end of this month. The move will begin on Wednesday 25 October and is expected to take about three days. Our new address will be:

133 - 135 Great Suffolk Street,
LONDON SE1 1PD

The new telephone number, which will come into use from 09.00 hours on Monday 30 October, is 01-403 2733. The cooperation of affiliates in not contacting us on anything but the most urgent business during the period of the move would be greatly appreciated.

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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

INTERNATIONAL

Seminar for Asian railwaymen held in Germany

During the period 2 to 23 September the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, in collaboration with the ITF and its affiliate the German Railwaymen's Union, organized a trade union seminar for railwaymen's representatives from a number of countries in the Asian region. Unions from the following countries participated in the seminar, which included visits to several German cities and contacts with national and local trade union officials: Malaysia, Singapore, India, Taiwan, Korea, the Philippines, and Thailand. During its early stages, Ken Golding, Secretary of the ITF Research and Publications Department, lectured on the international tasks of the ITF.

TUNISIA

ITF denounces Tunisian gaol sentences

The Court of State Security in Tunis brought in its verdicts on 10 October following an eight-day trial involving thirty trade unionists arrested and subsequently charged with subversion following the general strike staged by members of the General Workers' Union (UGTT) on 26 January 1978.^x Among the defendants were two prominent figures in the international trade union movement: Abderrazak Ayoub, first assistant general secretary of the Tunisian Railwaymen's Federation and a member of the ITF Executive Board, who was sentenced to five years with hard labour, and Habib Achour, UGTT general secretary and vice-president of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, who received a ten-year term, again with hard labour. Both men had been held in custody in the intervening months awaiting trial and had suffered considerably under the harsh conditions of imprisonment.

Trade unionists throughout the world have been deeply shocked at the severity with which legitimate trade union action has been punished. The ITF immediately issued a strongly-worded press release, which read as follows:

"The International Transport Workers' Federation has roundly condemned the prison sentences imposed by a special Tunis court on leading Tunisian trades unionists for their part in the general strike at the beginning of this year.

^x see ITF Newsletter No. 2, 1978, page 15

"The ITF's General Secretary, Harold Lewis, intends to raise the matter at the ITF Executive Board meeting on 17 and 18 October and he anticipates a particularly strong reaction to the sentence of five years' imprisonment with hard labour that was handed out to Abderrazak Ayoub, Assistant General Secretary of the Tunisian Railwaymen's Federation and a member of the Board. The ITF was represented at the trial by an observer, Executive Board member Louis Buonaccorsi of the French Railwaymen's Federation, and his first-hand account of the proceedings has confirmed that by any objective assessment of the so-called evidence, the judgment and sentences are a travesty of natural justice."

TRANSPORT

EUROPE

EEC adopts tougher line on terrorism

EEC Ministers of Justice reached agreement earlier this month on tough new legal procedures for combatting international terrorism under which the nine member states undertake to extradite or prosecute in their own courts "without undue delay" persons accused of a specified list of violent acts, including the hijacking of aircraft and the taking of hostages, as well as kidnappings, attacks on the life of internationally protected persons (such as diplomats), grenade, letter and parcel bomb attacks and offences involving the use of automatic weapons. The agreement will have the effect of enabling the Nine to implement the central provisions of the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism, although rather more discretion will be allowed in the matter of deciding whether an offence should be classified as "political".

UNITED STATES

Airline strike payments outlawed

Members of the House of Representatives voted last month in favour of an amendment to the airline regulatory reform bill, which will effectively outlaw the industry's mutual aid pact under which participating airlines have made substantial assistance payments to struck carriers in recent years, witness those made most recently to Northwest Airlines (Newsletter No. 9, page 115). The AFL-CIO and its member aviation unions have consistently argued that if the pact were abolished there would be fewer strikes in the industry and that those which did go ahead would be shorter-lived as carriers would be obliged to engage in good-faith bargaining earlier.

TRADE UNIONS

ARGENTINA

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Crumbs for the workers

Argentinian workers have not only had to suffer the horrors of assassinations, torture, detentions, "disappearances" and "intervention" of their trade unions under the military dictatorship headed by General Videla. A combination of staggering inflation in the price of basic necessities and inadequate cost of living compensation over the last two years has subjected them to a massive government-induced reduction in their purchasing power.

For example, in March 1976 the basic pay of a Locomotive Driver on Argentinian State Railways was 19,676 Pesos per month; by April 1978 the Driver's basic pay had increased to 117,297 Pesos per month. To most people this would seem to be a handsome increase. But the reality in Argentina is different.

Between March 1976 and May 1978 the cost of living increase was 940%, even according to the official index. However, over the same period the price of bread increased by 1,900%.

Whereas in March 1976 (when Videla's Junta launched its reign of terror) a Locomotive Driver could buy 4 kilogrammes of bread with his pay for an hour's work, after two years of military oppression he could buy only 1.3kg of bread with an hour's pay.

Small surprise that recent months have seen increasing industrial action by Argentinian workers, despite the frightening repression to which they are subject. Their fight now is not only against the barbarity of the régime, but against starvation itself.

BRAZIL

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New Decree bans industrial action in activities essential to national security

On 4 August 1978, General Giesel, President of Brazil, handed down Decree No. 1,632 which prohibits, with immediate effect, strikes in activities essential in the interests of national security.

A strike is considered to be any action by all or part of the work force which leads to a cessation of work or reduction in the normal level of activity, thereby covering an overtime ban, work-to-rule, go slow, etc. in addition to strike action.

The activities which are considered essential to national security are the following:-

water supply and sewerage; electricity, oil, gas and other fuels; banking; transport; communications; loading and unloading; hospitals and clinics; maternity services; pharmacy; and any other industry the President decrees to be essential.

The prohibition covers production, distribution and selling operations.

Also considered to be essential are all activities carried out directly or indirectly by federal, state and municipal bodies or activities performed on behalf of these public bodies by contractors or concessionaires.

A strike is any of the actions described above declared to be a strike by the Minister of Labour.

In addition to any penal sanction which may be imposed, a worker who takes part or attempts to take part in a strike is liable to disciplinary action ranging from a warning to summary dismissal. The Minister of Labour may impose a range of sanctions from a warning to dismissal from office or withdrawal of mandate on any trade union official who directly or indirectly supports or promotes strike action in any essential industry or service, in addition to any penal sanction which may be imposed.

Voting compulsory in union elections

By provisions contained in Act No. 6,512 of 19 December 1977, voting was made compulsory in Brazilian trade union elections. 60 days after the close of an election, a union is required to send to the Regional Office of the Ministry of Labour a list of members who did not vote, together with their reasons for failing to do so. The Ministry of Labour will then instruct the recalcitrants to pay a fine to their union.

FRANCE

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Cabin staff union wins court case

Regular readers of our Newsletter may remember that we reported in 1976^x on a series of strikes staged by the ITF-affiliated French Cabin Staff Union (SNPNC) against the French private airline UTA in protest against the latter's intention to end the posting of staff from metropolitan France to the Pacific to crew flights between Noumea (New Caledonia) and Sydney, Australia and Papeete (Tahiti) and Honolulu and Los Angeles. The dispute was eventually settled to the union's satisfaction in 1977, although certain animosities between the two sides remained and were then in the process of being settled in the courts.

^x see ITF Newsletter No. 8, 1976, page 82 and No. 10, 1976, page 107 also ITF Newsletter No. 8, 1977, page 78

The first court decision handed down by the County Court in April 1977 was somewhat two-edged. The company claim for damages against the union was rejected, as was the counter union claim for damages from UTA arising from its conduct during and immediately after the strikes staged by UTA cabin crews. Indeed, the court even expressed the opinion that the strikes did constitute an abuse of the right to strike, as had been alleged by UTA, although it felt unable to condemn the SNPNC outright.

Both sides, not unnaturally, appealed against the court decision and the Paris Appeal Court gave its decision in the matter earlier this year. The previous judgement was annulled and the court's findings, which completely vindicated the SNPNC, were published. The 1976 strikes were adjudged to have been perfectly legal as they were in pursuit of a purely professional objective. The fact that they had been staged without prior warning in no way impinged on this legality as the law did not require strike notice to be given to private companies. The financial penalties suffered by the airline were not of such an order as to render the union's action an abuse of the right to strike. For these reasons, the court dismissed the airline case for damages and instead awarded 1,000 Francs damages to the Union for contraventions of the collective agreement by the airline.

In a comment on the judgement, our affiliate pointed to its importance to all French unions as it upheld certain essential principles relating to the exercise of the right to strike and confirmed the binding nature of undertakings entered into as part of a collective agreement. The SNPNC said that it was also greatly encouraged by the court's decision to uphold the "legality" of the union's actions as it had always striven to remain within the law in the conduct of its affairs.

NETHERLANDS

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Trade union centres to merge

Plans are being drawn up for the merger of two of Holland's largest trade union centres, which together group some 300,000 workers, after separate Congresses of the Socialist Industriebond NVV and the Catholic Industriebond NKV formally approved the setting up by 1 July 1979, pending a complete merger in 1981, of a new federation to be known as the Industriebond FNV. Closer links will strengthen the bargaining position of the two federations, which already cooperate closely on pay claims and industrial action.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

FINLAND

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Higher rates of pay for engineer officers

Effective 1 September 1978, the rates of pay of Finnish engineer officers in the overseas trade were raised by 75.60 Fmk plus 0.83% per month and a lump-sum payment of 133 Fmk was also made to all officers in service on that date.

The new monthly salary ranges (which are based on vessel tonnage) are as follows: chief engineers: 3,493 - 4,190 Fmk; non watch-keeping chief engineers on vessels of at least 1,000 dwt: 4,821 - 5,778 Fmk; 1st engineer: 3,065 - 3,668 Fmk; 2nd engineer: 2,632 - 3,053 Fmk; 3rd engineer: 2,515 - 2,940 Fmk. The various additional allowances have also been improved.

FRANCE

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Air France cabin staff strike for bigger crews

Air France cabin staff, who belong to the ITF-affiliated French Cabin Staff Union (SNPNC) staged a 48-hour strike last month in support of demands for improved manning on long-haul flights. The union has been urging Air France to recruit more cabin staff to relieve the excessive burden of work imposed on its members following recent cutbacks in manning levels.

National rail protest strike

French railwaymen, including members of ITF affiliates, staged a three-day national strike at the beginning of this month following the introduction of new winter work schedules. The strike was limited to operating grades, with federations representing 95 per cent of workers in this category participating in the action.

GERMANY

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Bavaria: Germanair flying staff call off threatened strike

Flying staff with Bavaria Germanair voted solidly last month in favour of industrial action and only agreed to withdraw their strike threat after Hapag-Lloyd Flug GmbH, which acquired the charter airline last year, agreed to accept a mediated settlement, which offers employees greater job security and a more equitable promotion system. The agreement has been welcomed by the union representing the airline personnel, the ITF-affiliated Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV), which had feared for its members' jobs.

GREAT BRITAIN

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Merchant navy officers accept ten per cent pay offer

Leaders of Britain's 44,000 merchant navy officers have successfully negotiated a ten per cent phase three pay increase, effective from the beginning of November, and the General Council of British Shipping has agreed to hold further talks on other parts of the officers' claim, notably on improvements to leave arrangements and medical, severance and redundancy payments.

The ITF-affiliated Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association and the Radio and Electronic Officers' Union were among the unions represented in the negotiations and both have since formally accepted the offer.

Marconi Marine radio technicians stage protest strike

Marconi Marine radio technicians in ports throughout the United Kingdom staged a three-day token strike, beginning 21 September, after rejecting the company's "final" five per cent pay offer. Further industrial action called by the ITF-affiliated Radio and Electronic Officers' Union for 13 October was postponed to allow Marconi Marine to put forward new proposals for a settlement of the dispute.

The 250 technicians service radar and other navigation equipment which they have installed in merchant navy and fishing vessels.

GREECE

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New agreement for ocean-going crews

A new collective agreement has been negotiated for the crews of Greek ocean-going vessels of 4,500 tons and above by the ITF-affiliated Pan-Hellenic Seamen's Union (PNO) after negotiations lasting several weeks. The contract, which runs for 15 months from 1 July 1978, gives officers an 18 per cent increase on basic rates in the first year, followed by a further 5 per cent for the remaining three months. Ratings are divided into two groups: certificated ratings receive a 22 per cent basic pay increase this year plus an additional 5 per cent for the period 1 July to 30 September 1979, while unqualified ratings and those with less than two years' sea-going service get 18 per cent now with the promise of an additional 3 per cent next year. Overtime and sickness pay have also been improved and annual leave increased by 5 days to 50 days per calendar year. An important feature of the new agreement is the reduction in working hours: to 43 hours from the beginning of 1979 and to 42 hours on the expiry of the agreement.

JAPAN

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Seafarers strike over jobs threat

Ferry and passenger vessel services in the Japanese inland sea were seriously disrupted for four days last month when members of the ITF-affiliated All-Japan Seamen's Union struck in support of demands for compensation payments to be made to the 6,000 seafarers which the AJSU estimates will lose their jobs over the next ten years following the completion of the proposed bridges linking the main island of Honshu with Shikoku in the inland sea.

MEXICO

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Air traffic controllers strike over employment contracts

Mexican air traffic controller members of the ITF-affiliated Mexican Aeronautical Radio Employees' Union (SERAM) staged a 48-hour stoppage last month and then came out on strike again on 5 October after a 15-day cooling-off period ordered by the Labour Ministry expired. The dispute centres on the question of the controllers' employment status following the nationalization of their company. They have been offered the option of either accepting severance pay from the old, privately-owned company and then being rehired by the new one or of transferring to the new company whilst retaining their fringe benefits but forfeiting their seniority rights. Both options have been turned down by SERAM and as yet no satisfactory settlement has been reached.

Domestic flights by the country's two national airlines, the privately-owned Mexicana Airlines, and the governmental carrier Aeromexico, have been worst hit by the controllers' action, and only restricted international services have been possible.

PORTUGAL

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Merchant seamen lift overtime ban

Officials of the Portuguese Seafarers' Federation decided on 20 September to call off the 84-day-old overtime ban that had tied up the entire merchant fleet when it became apparent that a settlement was imminent in the long-running dispute, which had given rise to the ban. The federation warned that sanctions would be reimposed if the talks should fail.

Full details of the origins of the dispute were carried in ITF Newsletter No. 8, 1978, page 99.

SWEDEN

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More leave for ships' officers

The ITF-affiliated Swedish Ships' Officers' Association has signed a new leave agreement, effective 1 January 1978, which gives its members between two and seven extra days' leave in addition to the statutory five weeks' annual leave enjoyed by Swedish workers.

Negotiations between the union and the shipowners' association on the renewal of the agreement for officers on ferry vessels begin shortly and are expected to reach a conclusion by the beginning of November.

UNITED STATES

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Norfolk and Western Clerks return to work

Norfolk and Western Clerks^X resumed normal working on 29 September following a bitter 82-day stoppage, which culminated in a four-day national strike when railwaymen on 40 US railroads with interchanges with N&W honoured BRAC picket lines established in a "public protest" designed to bring the N&W management to the negotiating table. The strike was called off in response to a back-to-work order imposing a 60-day cooling-off period granted by a federal court following an application from President Carter. The order also guarantees N&W employees total protection against further job layoffs and disciplinary measures during its currency.

The Brotherhood obviously regrets that a negotiated settlement could not be achieved directly with Norfolk and Western. But it is confident that the findings of the presidential emergency board investigating the dispute, which are expected within 30 days, will be favourable to it and that they will help promote a just settlement.

During the strike, the ITF cabled its affiliate wishing it every success and offering fraternal assistance should this prove necessary.

^Xsee ITF Newsletter No. 8, 1978 page 104 and No. 9, 1978, page 112.

NEWS IN BRIEF

The Australian national dock strike ended as expected on 15 September when waterside employers agreed to pay the dockers in the port of Melbourne for the period they had been laid off as the result of a fitters' and electricians' strike (see ITF Newsletter No. 9, 1978, page 112).

French air traffic controllers resumed their intermittent work to rule on 22 September (see under News in Brief -- ITF Newsletters Nos. 7,8 and 9 for earlier details).

France: the ITF-affiliated Federation of Railway Technical and Supervisory Personnel has asked us to point out that the FMC was also a signatory to the collective agreement signed between the French National Railways SNCF and the unions on 11 July 1978 (see ITF Newsletter No. 9, 1978, page 112).

Allitalia cabin staff staged a 24-hour strike on 22 September and then struck again, on this occasion for nine hours only, one week later after the Italian airline rejected their claim for increased pay and shorter hours.

Italian trade unions are currently putting final touches to a "code of conduct" for strikes which seeks to minimize inconvenience to the public during strikes by public service employees. These would not be permitted during certain hours and essential services would be safeguarded, with a given proportion of employees being required to remain at work whenever a strike was called in one of these areas.

Italian dockers staged a 24-hour boycott of Tunisian vessels last month in solidarity with Tunisian trade unionists arrested following January's general strike. The boycott was timed to coincide with the opening of the trial (see item elsewhere in this Newsletter).

The principality of Liechtenstein has been admitted as the twenty-second member of the Council of Europe.

Pilots and cabin crews working for the Portuguese national airline TAP have begun an indefinite strike in sympathy with their striking opposite numbers in the Azores, employed by the local airline company, who are seeking parity of pay and conditions with their colleagues on the Portuguese mainland. The strike has already lasted for three weeks and the management has as yet shown no sign of willingness to enter into negotiations with the staff.

Portuguese maritime pilots are threatening strike action from 12 October at all the nation's ports unless the government takes steps to introduce regulatory legislation for the profession. The pilots staged a three-day walkout in mid-July in pursuit of their demands.

PERSONALIA

Svend Fónskov, president of the Danish Engine Crew Union, has been elected to the executive of the Danish trade union centre, LO.

Alexandre Gonçalves, President of the Portuguese Dockers' Federation (a recent ITF affiliate), has been appointed to the Board of Directors of the newly-created Portuguese Dock Work Institute.

Josef Larsson, former president of the Norwegian Metal Workers' Union, celebrated his 85th birthday on 12 October.

Douglas MacMahon, former secretary-treasurer of the Transport Workers' Union of America, died on 1 October, aged 71, following a long illness.

Ernst Müller, secretary of the Swiss Railwaymen's Union (SEV), died on 8 September, aged 57.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

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Travel Bureau Section
Committee

- London, 31 October - 1 November 1978

AFFILIATED UNIONS REQUIRING FURTHER
INFORMATION ON ANY ITEM IN THIS
NEWSLETTER MAY OBTAIN IT ON REQUEST
FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF THE I.T.F.