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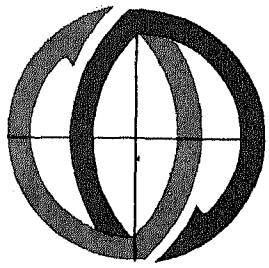

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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

INTERNATIONAL

Fishermen's Section Social Policy Sub-Committee meets in Bremerhaven

The Sub-Committee met in Bremerhaven on 13 and 14 June 1983. The agenda covered the employment situation among fishermen; international minimum standards for deep-sea fishermen (wages and working conditions); ILO and IMO activities; and the ITF Fishermen's Section working programme.

The Sub-Committee took note of, updated and corrected an international survey of fishermen's conditions and requested that the survey be distributed to all fishermen's affiliates. It also recommended that the Section Chairman and Vice-Chairman should attend those IMO meetings where matters of training and qualifications of fishermen were discussed and pinpointed clauses to be included in an ITF Collective Agreement for fishing vessels. In addition, the Sub-Committee drafted proposals relating to the Section's Working Programme for the next inter-Congress period. In conclusion, the Sub-Committee adopted a resolution on "EEC Fisheries" regretting that the Secretariat was denied access to Commission meetings on the future of the fishing industry and that workers' representatives were not granted sufficient access to negotiations with third countries on fisheries agreements. The Section was urged to protest in the strongest possible terms at this exclusion from discussions where important decisions affecting the future of its fishermen affiliates were taken.

ITF Working Group discusses case for retention of FOO licence

The second meeting of the ITF Flight Operations Officers'/ Flight Dispatchers' Working Group was held at ITF headquarters in London on 7 September, attended by representatives of unions in Canada, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Portugal, Sweden and the USA. Brian Wogan of IFALDA was also present as an observer.

The meeting examined in detail the arguments supporting the ITF case for the retention of the FOO licence in ICAO Annex 1. It was pointed out that the increased complexity of the FOO's task necessitated a high level of competence from the person performing FOO duties and that this could only be assured

through an internationally recognised licensing system. Indeed, there were a number of factors - notably the increasing use of computers and data-processing and the trend towards two-man operation of aircraft - that made the case for a highly trained and licensed flight operations officer stronger than ever before.

It was agreed that the Working Group should remain in being at least until the ICAO PEL/MED/TRG Divisional Meeting in 1986 at which a final decision on the licensing issue was expected and that the next meeting of the ITF Working Group should take place in January 1984.

D'Arcy Kennedy informed the meeting that he would not be able to continue as Chairman of the Working Group as he was due to retire as the ITF's ICAO Representative at the end of the year. A Sandziuk of the Canadian Airline Dispatchers' Association was elected to succeed him as the Group's Chairman by acclamation.

ITF Cabin Crew Technical Committee meets in London

The ITF Cabin Crew Technical Committee met in London on 8 and 9 September 1983, with representatives from twelve countries in attendance. The meeting was chaired on alternate days by E McDermott (Committee Chairman) and J F M Woltering (Vice-Chairman).

The meeting reviewed the latest developments within ICAO and the EEC on the licensing of cabin attendants. It urged the ITF to use all the means available to it to achieve licensing through both organisations and commended EEC unions in particular to continue to argue the case for licensing at the EEC. A small committee (consisting of P Stier - Canada; J-C Blachère - France; D'Arcy Kennedy - ITF ICAO representative and his successor Stuart Johns) was set up to prepare a new ITF brief for submission to the November meeting of ICAO. (This work has now been completed and the ITF's position paper circulated to Committee members.) Other items discussed by the meeting included cabin crew complement on new generation aircraft and the International Flight Attendants' Association.

The Canadian Airline Flight Attendants' Association organized a special showing of its video film illustrating the often-overlooke "unseen" (ie psychological) injuries incurred by victims of aviation crashes, accidents, hijackings etc and reported on the success of the union's Survival Panel Programme in changing the attitude of Canadian airlines on the subject. The French cabin crew representative Michel Abraham also explained the new work scheme known as "alternating time" (summarized in ITF Newsletter No. 10,1982, page 112) introduced for French cabin crew and stressed its popularity with his members.

The shooting down of the Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 overshadowed the meeting and a resolution was adopted at its close expressing revulsion and horror at the cold-blooded destruction of an unarmed commercial airliner, endorsing the energetic protests

already made by the ITF and calling for sanctions by ICAO and its member states against Russia. Also adopted was a resolution of support for Greek cabin crew in their dispute with Olympic over the introduction of a new pension scheme (see item elsewhere in this Newsletter).

The meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the British Transport and General Workers' Union for its warm hospitality.

TRANSPORT

INTERNATIONAL

IMO amends life-saving provisions of SOLAS

The recent 48th Session of the IMO's Maritime Safety Committee has almost completely revised Chapter 3 of the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea, 1974 (SOLAS) dealing with life-saving appliances. The new Chapter 3 calls for improved lifeboats and liferafts; the carriage of special lifeboats on oil and chemical tankers and gas carriers; and safer methods of stowing, boarding and launching survival craft and rescue boats. The use of totally enclosed lifeboats, davit-launched lifecraft and the wearing of immersion suits or thermal protective aids to protect survivors from the effects of hypothermia was also approved. To aid the rescue services, it was agreed that life-jackets should be fitted with lights and retro-reflective material and that there should be new rules for additional lifesaving appliances, although there are still doubts about the effectiveness of some of the detection devices currently available. Other key amendments to Chapter 7 relate to the construction and equipment of vessels carrying dangerous chemicals and liquefied gases in bulk. These vessels will be covered by two new International Codes that were finalised by the Committee and adopted during this Session.

The new amendments will come into force on 1 July 1986 unless they are specifically rejected by one-third of SOLAS Contracting Parties, the combined merchant shipping fleets of which total more than fifty per cent of world gross tonnage. All the amendments were adopted unanimously by the Committee, which included representatives of governments that have adopted the SOLAS Convention but are not members of the IMO.

EUROPE

Council of Ministers urged to allocate additional funds to transport

The EEC Commission has submitted a draft regulation to the Council of Ministers proposing the spending of £356 million on improvements in road, rail and water transport up to the end of 1987. A wide range of projects suitable for EEC support has been put before the Ministers, with the aim of eliminating traffic bottlenecks, improving links between outlying member-states and the rest of the EEC, providing better trans-shipment facilities and promoting the modernisation of the inland waterways.

GREAT BRITAIN

Prime Minister refuses aid to ailing merchant fleet

An exchange of letters between Jim Slater, General Secretary of the ITF-affiliated National Union of Seamen and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher has done little to win government support for measures to save Britain's dwindling merchant fleet. In a strongly-worded letter, the seamen's leader urged that Britain should follow the lead of other European nations in offering higher levels of government subsidy to the industry and that the coastal trade should be reserved for vessels flying the national flag - a practice known as cabotage that is widespread among Britain's competitors, not least the United States where it has been acknowledged by President Reagan as a cornerstone of maritime policy. In Britain, by contrast, one third of the coastal trade is carried in foreign-flag vessels. Mrs Thatcher, in her reply, reiterated the free-trade tenets that are relentlessly leading to the rundown of the merchant fleet and the loss of jobs that inevitably accompanies it. In the past two years, the NUS alone has lost nearly ten thousand members to the growing dole queues.

Unions oppose Trafalgar House bid for P & O

In evidence to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, which is currently investigating the proposed take-over of P & O by the Trafalgar House Group (whose shipping interests include the Cunard cruise liners), three of the ITF's affiliates likely to be the most seriously affected by the merger have been outlining their objections. The National Union of Seamen and the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association have both stated that they fear there would be fewer job opportunities for British seafarers if the merger were allowed to proceed, as it is likely that the cruise liners would be flagged out to convenience registries and manned by foreign seamen, while the ageing P & O ferry vessels on the Channel route would probably be sold off. The Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs also fears job losses among shore-based administrative staff in P & O's shipping and transport divisions. In its submission, it stated that where

there was an overlap of interests between P & O and Trafalgar House, jobs would be lost through rationalisation (notably in the cruise trade) and that redundancies could be expected in the offshore ferries sector and European freight transport.

Code mooted to improve port safety

The British Health and Safety Commission believes that the present system of local and private controls on the movement and storage of dangerous substances in ports and harbour areas should be replaced by uniform national regulations - in line with IMO recommendations - that would improve safety at the country's ports and reduce the risks to port workers and others living and working in the immediate vicinity of major ports. It has accordingly produced a consultative document, including a draft code of practice which would: impose an obligation on all harbour authorities to prepare emergency plans for dealing with possible hazards within their port area; require a system of licensing and the appointment of explosives security officers for all ports handling explosives; introduce hazard warning panels (similar to those displayed on road tankers) on barges carrying hazardous substances for use within port areas; and impose requirements covering the correct ballasting of oil tankers during discharging and loading operations. Comments are being invited from the industry on the draft regulations, which are aimed at preventing a repetition of such disastrous accidents as the Betelgeuse explosion in Bantry Bay in 1979, which killed fifty people.

UNITED STATES

Unions bid to buy Conrail

Employees of Conrail recently made an offer to buy the company. Announcing the bid, the Chairman of the Railway Labor Executives' Association, Fred Hardin, stressed that both unionised and non-unionised personnel were involved in the transaction (the overwhelming majority of the railroad's 40,000 employees are in fact union members).

Congress has obliged the government to sell Conrail which came into existence in 1976 and is made up of the former Penn Central Railroad and six other minor lines. It operates in fifteen states and has a network of some 15,000 route miles.

Under the plan put forward by the RLEA, an employee-owned Conrail would sell stock to the public which would end up owning between twenty and thirty per cent of the railroad. A leading American bank has already indicated that it is willing to help the RLEA raise the $500 million needed.

The RLEA feels that the productivity improvements and reduced operating costs essential to the company's long-term viability could best be assured if Conrail were bought by its employees. Any other purchaser would be likely to reduce freight services, divert traffic, "cherry-pick" the assets and order redundancies

on a considerable scale. The RLEA says that the railroad's workers would also be prepared to agree to wage restraint being extended to 1987 and the unions to waive tax benefits as part of their offer.

The RLEA stressed that "professional railroad men" would be brought in to manage the railroad and to serve on the Board of Directors. There would be no question of the company being run by its employees.

TRADE UNIONS

SRI LANKA

Chief flight engineer brings trade union rights case against Airlanka

In a case with important implications for trade union freedoms in Sri Lanka, the Supreme Court has ruled that Airlanka's Chief Flight Engineer Mr Jansa may proceed with his petition against the alleged denial of his rights to join a trade union. The background to the case is this: Mr Jansa was Secretary of the Flight Engineers' Union when the company demanded that he resign his union post. When he refused to do so, citing his rights as enshrined in the Constitution to freedom of association, the company suspended him from his flying duties and reorganized the flight operations department, eliminating the post of chief flight engineer. At present, Mr Jansa is still drawing his pay, but is not allowed to perform his operational or union duties or even attend his office.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

BELGIUM

Public sector workers strike over budget cuts

In the most serious industrial action seen in Belgium for over twenty years, thousands of public sector workers - including dockers, aviation workers, seafarers and urban transport workers affiliated to the ITF - began a strike on 9 September in protest against plans by the ruling coalition to reduce a serious budget deficit by cutting the public sector pay bill next year by 1.9%. At a subsequent meeting with the unions, the government agreed to tone down its original cost-cutting proposals, offering to keep manning at

January 1983 levels, to phase in gradually a plan to pay public sector salaries at the end rather than at the beginning of each month and to abandon its intention to alter pension rights and contributions. This compromise proved acceptable to the three trade union confederations that had issued the strike call and the strikers returned to work on 24 September.

CANADA

New contracts for Air Canada flight attendants and Pacific Western Airlines ground staff

The ITF-affiliated Canadian Air Line Flight Attendants' Association (CALFAA) has recently negotiated a new two-year contract for its members with Air Canada. Salaries are increased by 6 per cent backdated to 1 September 1982 and by a further 4.24 per cent from 1 September 1983, together with increases of 0.76% in certain allowances in the second contract year. This is the maximum permissible under federal pay guidelines.

The union has agreed to meet the management regularly each quarter to discuss the application of the collective agreement and proposed changes that would affect working conditions. A joint committee will also discuss ways of improving the conditions of reserve F/As.

Meanwhile, Pacific Western Airlines ground staff organized in the ITF-affiliated Canadian Air Line Employees' Association have voted to accept a 31-month contract incorporating a 7-month pay pause followed by increases of 5% for the next twelve months and 4% for the final twelve months of the agreement.

GERMANY

Long-distance lorry driver pay talks resume

Negotiations on a new basic agreement for long-distance road haulage drivers+ organized in the ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) are due to resume on 5 October on the basis of an offer put forward by the employers in the last week of September. The OeTV had earlier called a strike from 2 October when the employers refused to agree to arbitration after the fourth contract round had proved inconclusive. The strike was subsequently suspended when the owners made their offer. However, industrial action could still take place if these latest talks on the union's claims fail to produce a settlement.

The previous agreement expired at the end of December 1982 and negotiations have been continuing since early in the new year.

+ see ITF Newsletter No. 4, 1983, page 40 for earlier details

2.9% increase for inland boatmen

The ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) has negotiated a 2.9% increase in the pay and allowances of inland boatmen, effective 1 May 1983 for twelve months. The Christmas bonus has been raised from 1/2 to 2/3 of monthly pay and one extra day's leave has been granted. At the employer's suggestion, a working group is to be set up to review the existing regulations on weekend working and make appropriate recommendations on possible improvements.

GREECE

Olympic Airways cabin staff seek implementation of pension fund improvements

Most of the obstacles that have prevented implementation of pension fund improvements for Olympic Airways cabin staff seem to have been overcome and there is considerable hope that the dispute may now be resolved in the near future. The ITF-affiliated Greek Flight Hostesses' and Stewards' Association (EISF) has received valuable assistance in pursuing its claim on behalf of its members in Olympic from the Chairman of the Cabin Crew Technical Committee, Eddie McDermott, who flew to Athens last month at the ITF's request and met all the interested parties. The results of these discussions were very positive, with Olympic Airways confirming that it had agreed to fund the pension plan improvements sought by the EISF, and that it had the support of the Minister of Aviation for these improvements. Both parties said that they would press the cabin crew case before the Minister of Social Security in order to bring the question to a successful conclusion. The Greek Minister of Labour also promised to intervene personally in the dispute. He further indicated that, since the Chairman of Olympic Airways and the Aviation Minister had already agreed the funding of the cabin crew pension plan, he could foresee no problems in securing the formal approval of the Department of Social Security and of the government.

GREENLAND

Radio telegraphists win initial victory in court case for leave pay

Radio telegraphists and radio sonde personnel involved in the four-month telecommunications strike in Greenland in the summer of 1981 were refused leave pay by their employers for that year, although the leave periods of individual employees had already been agreed well before the strike began. In giving their reasons for withholding the money, the employers said that they could not be expected to help finance the strike and that, by striking, the men had forfeited their right to take their annual leave as usual. The case was subsequently taken to the Danish Maritime and Commercial Court by the ITF-affiliated Danish Radio Officers' Association, which represents the men, on behalf of one named member. The court ruled that the employee concerned had a right

to holiday pay for 1981 as the leave period had already been fixed in respect of that year some months before the strike was called and the employers were under an obligation to pay out his leave bonus. The Greenland employers are now considering whether to appeal against the Court's judgement.

+ see ITF Newsletter No. 8, 1981, page 95 and No. 11, 1981, page 130 for details of the strike

IRISH REPUBLIC

Ten per cent staged increase for Aer Lingus ground and flying staff

Some five thousand Aer Lingus ground and flying staff - including members of the ITF-affiliated Irish Transport and General Workers' Union - have accepted in a membership ballot the Labour Court's recommendation of a 4-month pay pause followed by a phased ten per cent pay rise. Under the agreement, which concludes this year's pay round, a four-month pay pause from 1 January 1983 will be followed by a 5% increase on basic rates from 1 May 1983, with a further 5% increase on 1 November for the next five months. The agreement expires at the end of March 1984.

Earlier, Aer Lingus unions had rejected an offer from the company that would have involved a six-month pay freeze followed by staged increases totalling only 6 per cent. The matter was subsequently referred to the Labour Court.

SWEDEN

13.6% increase for SAS cabin crews in Sweden

The ITF-affiliated Swedish Commercial Salaried Employees' Union (HTF) reached agreement at the beginning of September with the Commercial Employers' Organization (HAO) and SAS on new salaries for Swedish-based SAS cabin attendants. The settlement was achieved with the assistance of a mediator after a difficult contract round in which our affiliate has been attempting - with some success - to lessen the differential that currently exists between the pay of the airline's Swedish-based cabin attendants and its Danish- and Norwegian-based crews.

The agreement, which is valid from 1 March 1983 to 29 February 1984, provides for the following increases:-

- 8.7%+ on base pay, effective 1 March 1983;
- 3%+, effective 1 March 1983, in anticipation of findings of SAS survey as to whether the relative salary position of SAS c/as in the three Scandinavian countries adequately reflects the degree of responsibility they are required to exercise;

- 0.9%+, effective 1 March 1983, to prevent any further worsening in the differential between Swedish and Norwegian cabin crew;

- 1%+ on base pay, effective 1 December 1983, with the aim of stimulating productivity within SAS.

+ calculated on salaries at 31/12/82

A lump-sum payment of 7.4% of base pay at 31/12/82 will also be paid in respect of the period from 1 January - 28 February 1983.

Before the negotiations on the new 1983 agreement began, a joint study by the HTF and the HAO had shown that the pay of SAS cabin attendants based in Sweden was lagging behind that of comparable employees in Sweden as well as that of their Danish and Norwegian counterparts in SAS. As part of the new agreement, SAS has agreed to the setting up of a joint working group to consider how the differences in the pay and conditions of its employees in the three countries can eventually be evened out, and the results of this work will form the basis of next year's Swedish negotiations. A joint management/union working group will also be set up to make proposals for improving productivity within SAS.

UNITED STATES

IAM mechanics strike Continental Airlines

Continental Airlines mechanics, related stock clerks and commissary employees organized in the ITF-affiliated International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers have been on strike since 13 August following the collapse of negotiations spread over nearly two years during which the airline has been attempting to impose substandard wages and conditions on its employees and to negate contract gains won by their union over many years. Strike-breakers have been hired to perform essential maintenance work on Continental's aircraft and outside contractors using non-union labour have also been hired to offset the effects of the strike. Affiliated ground staff unions in Australia and New Zealand have been asked by the ITF to provide sympathetic assistance to the IAM at Sydney and Auckland to which Continental operates services. In Australia, a resolution of support for the striking IAM members was adopted at the ACTU Congress, deploring the anti-union tactics of Continental and calling on the airline to negotiate in good faith with the IAM and threatening that if no favourable reply were received Australian aviation unions would consider a ban on Continental's operations.

Latest position

Continental ceased domestic operations on 24 September and immediately filed for bankruptcy under Chapter 11 of US bankruptcy laws - a move that seems to have been simply a manoeuvre to enable Continental to by-pass the unions and reorganize as a low-cost carrier. For it restarted operations after only three days,

offering a rock-bottom flat fare of US $ 49 to 25 of its previous 76 US destinations (these fares were set to rise to $ 75 on 1 October - still well below standard rates). 4,200 of the airline's 12,000 employees were offered jobs on salaries that are approximately half of their previous levels and on greatly reduced terms and conditions of employment (chief pilots, for example, were asked to take a pay cut of $ 37,000 per annum and told they must fly 80 hours a month instead of 54 hours). Angered by these tactics, the unions - including the IAM - decided to contest the airline's bankruptcy petition in the courts and the pilots' and flight attendants' unions said they would refuse to fly these new services from 1 October. The latest news is that Continental is now petitioning the Civil Aeronautics Board requesting that it issue separate operating certificates for three new subsidiaries - Continental-Pacific, Continental-Mexico and Continental-Venezuela - which it hopes to be able to operate separately from its domestic operations.

The IAM, which supplied all the latest background information given here, has requested all possible assistance from unions in the countries to which Continental hopes to operate its new subsidiaries and the ITF has accordingly passed on the IAM's request for support to our affiliates in the regions concerned.

Congress acts to safeguard pensions of retired railwaymen

The US Congress has recently approved legislation that will inject billions of dollars of new revenue into the Railroad Retirement System, thus averting the possibility of drastic cutbacks in the pensions of retired railroad workers. The money will come from staged increases in employer and employee contributions to the industry's superannuation fund and also from the government which is committed to pay money into the fund in three annual instalments to make good a previous shortfall. The difficulties have arisen because of the continuing decline in the workforce at a time when the number of retired railway workers is continuing to rise.

Union campaign launched to help low-paid cruise ship crews

The ITF-affiliated National Maritime Union of America has launched a campaign aimed at improving the pay and conditions of foreign crews of cruise ships flying flags of convenience and operating out of Miami, Florida following reports that some catering concessionaire crews are earning as little as $50 per month (admittedly the worst case the union has encountered) and many are regularly working a 12- to 16-hour day. A small task force has been set up to contact individual crew members and encourage them to join the appropriate trade union as a first step towards securing decent levels of pay.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Argentinian railway workers staged a 24-hour strike in August demanding an increase in the minimum monthly wage.

Recent collective agreements renegotiated by the ITF-affiliated Austrian Transport Workers' Union (HTV) include those for airport workers, cabin attendants with Austrian Air Services and employees of foreign airline companies operating in Austria. All these groups have had their monthly salaries increased by 3.5%.

London Transport's renewed experiment with reduced fares + is proving a considerable success. Sales of the new period Travelcards permitting use of both buses and Tube trains within designated travel zones are well ahead of anticipated levels, while the number of tickets purchased for individual journeys has remained steady.

+ see ITF Newsletter No. 5, 1983, page 52

The number of vessels flying the Greek flag fell to 3,501 vessels of 38,747,779 tons gross in the year ending 30 April, according to figures released recently by the Ministry of the Merchant Marine. This compares with a total of 3,755 vessels of 40,837,143 tons in the corresponding period last year.

Employees of the Irish national transport company CIE have rejected a recent Labour Court award of a nine per cent pay increase over 15 months with a six-month pay pause.

The Dutch government has decided to privatise the country's marine pilotage service with effect from 1 July 1985.

The Nigerian government has agreed to relax the ban on imports imposed earlier this year. The ban - part of the government's austerity programme - was opposed by the ITF-affiliated Dockworkers' Union of Nigeria which claimed that it was endangering waterfront jobs.

We extend heartiest congratulations to the ITF-affiliated Norwegian Commercial Employees' Union (HK) on the occasion of its 75th anniversary celebrations.

A former chairman of the US Federal Maritime Commission - Richard Daschbach, now special assistant to the President of the ITF-affiliated Seafarers' International Union of North America - has added his voice to demands that the United States should join the UNCTAD Code of Liner Conferences. The Code enters into effect on 6 October.

OBITUARIES

Sir Denis Follows, the first Secretary of the British Airline Pilots' Association and a founder member and for many years Executive Secretary of the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations (IFALPA), died on 17 September. He was 75.

Carl Franken, General Secretary of the Public Services International from 1970 to 1981, died on 3 September, aged 65. Franken worked tirelessly for the international labour movement during a long and distinguished trade union career and will be greatly missed. The ITF has expressed deep sadness at the passing of the immediate former head of a sister-International with which we have long been closely associated.

Wilson Manana, National Organiser of the South African Transport and Allied Workers' Union, died suddenly on 22 August 1983.

Roosevelt Watts, Secretary-Treasurer of the Transport Workers' Union of America since 1974, died on 29 July, aged 68.

PERSONALIA

Ide Aukema has resigned after nineteen years as President of the Dutch Cabin Crew Association (VKC). He is succeeded by A M Hopman.

Dunstan Fontenelle has decided not to seek re-election as President of the St Lucia Seamen's and Waterfront Workers' Trade Union. He is succeeded by Peter Josie, a former President of the union.

Frode Gross, General Secretary of the Norwegian Ships' Engineers' Union, has been appointed President of the Nordic Engineer Officers' Federation. He succeeds A C Hansen, President of the Danish Engineer Officers' Association.

David Jørgensen, Treasurer of the transport group within the Danish Transport and General Workers' Union (SiD), celebrated his 60th birthday on 8 September.

Ejvind Larsen, Chief Treasurer of the Danish Metal Workers' Union, retired last month.

Russell Tuck, Senior Assistant General Secretary of the British National Union of Railwaymen since 1975, has just retired.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Executive Board - Madrid ..... 18-19 October 1983

ITF Congress - Madrid ..... 20-28 October 1983

AFFILIATED UNIONS REQUIRING FURTHER INFORMATION ON ANY ITEM IN THIS NEWSLETTER MAY OBTAIN IT ON REQUEST FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF THE ITF

STOP PRESS

Lech Walesa awarded Nobel Peace Prize

The ITF joins trade union organisations worldwide in extending heartfelt congratulations to Lech Walesa, leader of the Polish trade union Solidarity, on being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for 1983.

Continental dispute (page 86)

The Australian Council of Trade Unions has requested a total ban on handling of Continental Airlines aircraft from midnight on 11 October for 72 hours.

Supplement No. 1 to ITF Newsletter Nos. 9-10 of September/October 1983

ITF PROTEST ACTION AGAINST SHOOTING-DOWN OF KOREAN AIR LINES B747

The shooting-down of the Korean Airlines Boeing 747 with the loss of 269 lives was by any standards an atrocity. In a cable to the Soviet President Y P Andropov, the ITF expressed its horror and condemnation of the Russian government. At the same time, it called on the Secretary-General of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to conduct an immediate investigation and demanded that sanctions be invoked against the Russian government. A third message, to the ITF-affiliated Korean Air Lines Labour Union, conveyed the ITF's profound sympathy to all the bereaved.

As the Russian government in the days that followed proved totally unwilling to show even the slightest acknowledgement of the enormity of their crime, the ITF felt bound, in the interests of the community at large, and those of the hundreds of thousands of civil aviation workers which the ITF represents, to ask its affiliated organisations to register their repugnance at this action, seek compensation for the victims and ensure that the crime is never repeated.

To those ends all ITF affiliates were urged on 5 September immediately:

1 to demand of the Russian government, either directly or through its diplomatic representatives, that it accept its responsibility for the tragedy and so its full liability for its consequences;

2 to press home this demand by demonstrating immediately their abhorrence of the Russian government's action in every way open to them, including appropriate industrial action against Russian aircraft;

3 to call on their government to support the ITF's demand that ICAO should apply immediate and effective sanctions against the Russian government; and

4 to demand that their government press for the early conclusion of an international instrument which would specifically outlaw such crimes in the future and provide for the effective punishment of their perpetrators.

The meeting of the ITF Cabin Crew Technical Committee held in London on 8 and 9 September also adopted a resolution (for text see Annex 2) endorsing the protests already made by the ITF Secretariat and urging all ITF civil aviation affiliates to protest to the Soviet authorities, as well as to take whatever other measures were open to them, including appropriate industrial action.

On 12 September, civil aviation affiliates in countries to which Aeroflot operates services were contacted, as follows:

"Re shooting-down of Korean Airlines 747. Given action being taken by governments and airline pilots to ban flights to and from USSR by foreign airlines would be unacceptable if Aeroflot were able to profit from this by picking up passengers normally carried by

other airlines. Therefore urge your union to institute immediate ban on Aeroflot flights to and from your country in line with my circular of 5 September. Please inform soonest of action taken or contemplated."

The ITF's Lima Office was also asked to issue a similar call to civil aviation affiliates in the Latin American and Caribbean Region. The ITF's message was brought to the attention of both the ICFTU and the International Federation of Air Line Pilots' Associations (IFALPA).

A number of countries banned flights or overflights by the Soviet airline with effect from 15 September for a period of two weeks and ITF civil aviation affiliates supported these boycotts. Canada had already banned Aeroflot flights during the week beginning 12 September and the USA - where Aeroflot aircraft do not land - ordered a suspension of all Aeroflot activity in the country.

Action against Aeroflot aircraft had been taken by some ITF affiliates even before the governments' ban came into effect on 15 September. The first such action came in Italy where flights were delayed at Milan's Malpensa Airport on 4 September, and similar action was taken at Rome Fiumicino. On 13 September, too, the Unitary Federation of Italian Transport Workers, which represents unions affiliated to the CISL, UIL and the CGIL national centres, condemned the Russian action and called upon all its members in civil aviation to ban Alitalia flights to and from Moscow and all Aeroflot flights for a period of 15 days.

London Heathrow loaders belonging to the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union, decided not to handle Aeroflot baggage for 60 days as from 1100 hours on 13 September and as a result all Aeroflot services were suspended. An Aeroflot jet blacked by T and G members when it flew into Heathrow on 5 October eventually left for Moscow without passengers and with very little fuel - seven hours late. The aircraft also had to use reverse thrust of its jet engines to move from its confined parking space - a dangerous procedure normally banned by the airport authorities.

The Civil Aviation Section of the Nordic Transport Workers' Federation meeting in Copenhagen on 8 and 9 September, called upon its member-unions in Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland (all of which are also ITF affiliates) to boycott Aeroflot flights for one week as from 19 September. In the case of Norway and Denmark, this fell within the period of the two governments' existing ban on such flights. Members of the ITF-affiliated Norwegian Metal Workers' Union, together with other aviation unions at Fornebu Airport (Oslo), decided to boycott two flights between Oslo and Moscow for a period of 60 days beginning 12 September, with a review after 30 days to consider the effects. Two other flights via Stockholm to and from Leningrad were handled, but not freight or baggage to Moscow on them. In Sweden, however, where the government had not announced such a ban, three Swedish ITF affiliates - the Transport Workers' Union; the Commercial Workers' Union; and the Supervisors' Union - began a total boycott of all Aeroflot flights with effect from 0100 hours on 20 September for one week. Boycott action by Swedish air traffic controllers against Aeroflot flights was declared illegal by a court decision.

In France, where neither the Government nor Air France banned flights to Moscow, the ITF-affiliated French Airline Pilots' Union, which is also a member of IFALPA, decided to boycott Air France flights to and from Moscow for 60 days as part of the IFALPA action. It was hampered in this by the company's use of pilots who are either not organised or are members of a breakaway group. The ITF-affiliated French Cabin Crew Union (SNPNC) also joined the Pilots' Union in refusing to fly on all Air France services to and from Moscow with effect from midnight on 22 September to midnight on 30 September. Air traffic controller members of the ITF-affiliated Federation of Public Service, Port and Transport Workers (FO) have also held up Aeroflot flights into Paris.

In New Zealand, dock workers affiliated with the ITF have taken action against Soviet ships calling at their ports.

ITF-affiliated dockers' unions at Malaysia's Port Klang and Penang have been refusing to handle Soviet ships for two hours and one hour per day respectively for an indefinite period. Ground staff at Kuala Lumpur Airport have also refused to service Aeroflot aircraft for a period of 60 days as from 23 September.

In Australia, the Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) at its Biennial Congress on 13 September, adopted a decision, which, inter alia, alled upon appropriate affiliated unions (a) to refuse to handle documentation for any Soviet national, their baggage or cargo, on any flight after 19 September; (b) to refuse to handle any documentation or cargo on any airline, where these are later destined for or to be carried by Aeroflot, from the same date. This action will remain in force for 60 days, with a review during that period. A number of ITF civil aviation affiliates are among those who have been implementing the ACTU decision.

In Singapore, the National Trade Union Congress (NTUC) on 21 September adopted a statement in which it called upon the government to suspend Aeroflot landing rights and eventually to terminate the air service agreement between Singapore and the USSR, should the latter fail to apologize for the shooting-down of the Korean jet, pay compensation and guarantee no recurrence of such incidents. In informing us of this, the Secretary of the ITF National Coordinating Committee pointed out that the ITF affiliates making up the Committee - representing air transport workers, port workers, seamen, merchant marine officers and transport workers - had been instrumental in having this statement adopted. The ITF-affiliated Singapore Port Workers' Union has been taking action against Soviet ships, while the Air Transport Workers' Union (also affiliated) has been delaying Aeroflot flights from Changi Airport.

In Montreal, the 33-member ICAO Council on 16 September adopted a resolution deeply deploring the shooting-down of the Korean aircraft and stating that it was "incompatible with the norm of international behaviour and with elementary humanity". The resolution also called upon the Soviet Union to cooperate in a full and impartial inquiry to be carried out by ICAO experts, who are to report back within thirty days. The resolution also called for a re-examination of the 1944 Chicago Convention and of international communications systems and regulations with the aim of seeing whether they needed

to be tightened up in order to prevent further tragedies like the KAL 747 incident. Only the Soviet Union and Czechoslovakia voted against the resolution, with China, India and Algeria abstaining.

The swift reaction on the part of ICAO led the International Federation of Airline Pilots' Associations (IFALPA) to call off its ban (first imposed on 12 September and originally scheduled to be renewed after 30 days) on 3 October. IFALPA said it would review the suspension of the ban on three occasions: 15 October, when ICAO's interim report into the circumstances of the Korean Air Lines tragedy is due to be completed; in December, after the Air Navigation Commission reports on possible improvements to the Chicago Convention; and in 1984 following an Extraordinary ICAO Assembly when action will be taken by means of an international instrument to outlaw military attacks of any kind on civil aircraft. Flights to and from Russia are now slowly returning to normal in a number of countries, although a full resumption of services will not be achieved until all the bans imposed by ITF-affiliated unions - particularly the ground staff unions - have come to an end.

Annex 2
September/October 1983

Meeting of ITF Cabin Crew Technical Committee

London, 8 and 9 September 1983

RESOLUTION ON SHOOTING-DOWN OF KOREAN AIR LINES B-747

This meeting of the ITF Cabin Crew Technical Committee, held in London on 8 and 9 September 1983.

EXPRESSES its revulsion and horror at the cold-blooded destruction by Soviet fighter aircraft of an unarmed Korean Air Lines Boeing 747 during a scheduled flight between Anchorage and Seoul, resulting in the death of 240 passengers and 29 crew members and offers its heartfelt sympathy to the families and friends of all those who lost their lives in this appalling incident.

CONSIDERS this to have been an intolerable act of barbarism which can in no circumstances be excused by the international civil aviation community and least of all by the workers employed in civil aviation, a number of whom were the innocent victims of this calculated and inhuman attack on a commercial aircraft.

This meeting further WHOLLY ENDORSES the energetic protests made by the ITF to both the Soviet President and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), of which the USSR is a member, concerning this inhuman attack.

It BELIEVES that, by its action in shooting down an unarmed commercial airliner, the Soviet Union has now forfeited the right to be considered as a fully legitimate member of the international civil aviation community and that ICAO should therefore forthwith initiate the necessary steps to apply sanctions against that country by ICAO and its Member States.

It further URGES all civil aviation unions affiliated with the ITF to send messages of protest to the Soviet Authorities, and to take whatever other measures are open to them to register their disgust at this appalling act of violence against a civil aircraft, its passengers and crew members, including appropriate industrial action.

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Whilst the Committee believes that nothing can undo the consequences for the victims involved, it IS OF THE OPINION that the Soviet Authorities should ensure that the families are given generous assistance in their distress and ASKS the ITF to press the Soviet government to this end.