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As 1984 draws to a close,
we would like to wish all
readers of the ITF Newsletter
a very Happy Christmas and
a prosperous and successful
New Year.

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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

INTERNATIONAL

ITF Road Transport Workers' Section Committee meets in London

A meeting of the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section Committee was held in London on 15 and 16 November at the head office of the Transport and General Workers' Union. Some 33 delegates from 16 countries were in attendance and the meeting was chaired by the Section Vice-Chairman Johnny Grönberg (Swedish Transport Workers' Union) in the absence of the Section Chairman Kurt Haussig who was indisposed. The Section Steering Committee also held its own meeting on the morning of 15 November.

The committee discussed preparations for the 11th Session of the ILO Inland Transport Committee in January 1985 and it was decided that ITF efforts should be concentrated on pressing for a working day for drivers with an absolute limit of 11 hours. The meeting also stressed the vital importance that should be attached to adequate enforcement of regulations on driving and working hours.

In connection with the agenda item on assistance to drivers abroad, it was decided that a booklet outlining the legal and medical procedures in the different countries in Europe should be produced and that further such booklets should in due course be prepared covering Africa and Latin America.

The meeting also dealt with the difficulties encountered by international haulage drivers at border crossings, following which it was agreed to ask for nominations to a working party whose task it would be to examine proposals on possible sites for the establishment of union frontier offices.

The Committee adopted a resolution in support of the All-Japan Municipal Transport Workers' Union (TOSHIKO), condemning the Japanese government's continuing refusal to implement the recommendations of independent arbitration for public servants. (This resolution had already been adopted by the ITF Railwaymen's Section Committee at its meeting earlier in the month.)

The committee gratefully accepted an invitation from D Orlandi of the Italian Transport Workers' Federation - CGIL to hold the next full conference of the Section in Rome early in November 1985.

Closing the meeting, the chairman proposed a vote of thanks to J Ashwell and the Transport and General Workers' Union for their hospitality and help in organising the meeting.

ITF Inland Navigation Section Committee holds meeting in Strasbourg

The ITF's Inland Navigation Section Committee met in Strasbourg on 22 and 23 November 1984 and discussed questions including the preparatory work for the coming ILO Inland Transport Committee session (January 1985) and assistance to inland navigation workers abroad. The Section Committee put forward certain significant points to be made by the workers' side representatives at the ILO session, among them the question of social safeguards for inland waterway

personnel found medically unfit for their jobs. The subject of assistance to inland navigation workers abroad was raised on the initiative of the ITF Secretariat, following a similar idea to that currently being pursued by the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section. This would give transport workers travelling abroad access to all foreseeably necessary information regarding conditions in the particular foreign country and the procedures for seeking assistance in case of legal, health or other problems. This initiative was welcomed by the Section Committee and the necessary work is to begin soon. Other matters discussed were the Section's work and general conditions in the various regions, as well as the plans of the European authorities with regard to manning regulations covering the Rhine.

ITF Marine Engineer Officers attend ad hoc meeting in Portugal

An ad hoc meeting of ITF affiliates representing marine engineer officers from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, USA and the United Kingdom was held in Cascais, Portugal on 25 and 26 October 1984 under the chairmanship of Åke Selander, ITF Assistant General Secretary, to discuss the need to pay special attention to matters affecting especially this category of maritime personnel. The meeting recommended inter alia that the ITF Seafarers' Section Conference, due to be held in conjunction with the 1986 ITF Congress, should adopt a set of proposed rules of procedure governing meetings of ITF affiliates organizing engineer officers and that a further meeting of engineer officer affiliates be convened in the early part of 1985 to discuss matters of a technical nature specifically related to the work of marine engineer officers.

ARGENTINA

Human rights report is released

A book describing in horrifying detail the human rights abuses committed by agents of the Argentine military government between 1976 and 1983 was published in Buenos Aires last month.

Entitled *Nunca mas* (Never again), the 500-page paperback is a summary of the findings of the National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons appointed by President Raul Alfonsín a year ago to look into the fate of the thousands of Argentinians who disappeared during the period of military rule.*

The report contains detailed testimony from former prisoners of the military régime who survived incarceration, including gruesome descriptions of the many appalling torture methods used against political detainees by army officers, doctors and even priests who are alleged to have collaborated in the systematic mistreatment of prisoners. It reveals the existence of a vast network of secret torture and detention centres, many of which were used as extermination camps where opponents of the junta were summarily executed. The commission members recommend that abduction and torture should be declared 'crimes against humanity' and that civilian courts should use the evidence the commission has gathered to secure early sentence of those responsible for the atrocities it has catalogued.

* see ITF Newsletter No. 10, 1984, page 99 for further details

POLAND

Polish government gives notice of withdrawal from ILO

Stung by the criticisms of its handling of the Solidarity trade unions contained in the report of the ILO Commission of Inquiry published earlier this year,* the government of Poland gave formal notice last month of its decision to quit the International Labour Organisation. The government was protesting against the decision of the 228th Session of the ILO Governing Body to take note of the report of the findings of the inquiry it had itself instituted. In a letter to ILO Director-General Francis Blanchard, the Polish Ambassador in Geneva berated the ILO for failing to heed earlier government warnings about the 'anti-Polish' stance being adopted by the UN agency, which he further accused of not acting in accordance with its statutes.

Replying to the letter of withdrawal, the ILO Director-General said he deeply regretted the decision taken by the Polish government. He stressed that the ILO had faithfully observed the procedures laid down in its Constitution in its conduct of the inquiry and that in becoming a member of the organisation Poland had undertaken to abide by certain principles, particularly the solemn obligations imposed on member states under the ILO's human rights conventions. He hoped that the two years that must elapse before the withdrawal could take effect would serve to resolve the issues involved, thus permitting Poland - one of the founder members of the ILO - to remain within the organisation.

In Poland **itself**, underground leaders of the banned Solidarity trade unions have condemned the government's decision to leave the ILO.

TRANSPORT

FRANCE

Government announces measures to aid merchant fleet as union campaign gathers pace

French officers and ratings - including members of ITF affiliates - mounted a three-day campaign of action last month, affecting all sectors of the fleet, in a drive to mobilise public support for action to halt the decline in the national merchant marine and the loss of seafarers' jobs. The campaign was timed to coincide with a ministerial announcement before the Higher Merchant Navy Council on 22 November setting out the broad outlines of future government policy in this area, with the unions hoping by their action to influence the minister in favour of the expansion and modernisation of the fleet. It was argued that a situation in which six thousand jobs had been lost since 1978 as the number of ships under the national flag had shrunk by almost one third could not be allowed to continue.

* see ITF Newsletter No. 6/7 of 1984, page 64 for fuller details

The action planned for the final day of the joint union protest was called off when the minister announced that he would be reintroducing the system of grants and low-interest loans first introduced two years ago to persuade owners to acquire additional tonnage. At the same time, it was revealed that measures would be taken to enable more seafarers to take early retirement - a move that has been widely welcomed by the unions who have been campaigning vigorously for the retirement age of seafarers to be lowered for some time now.

Meanwhile, French shipowners have stressed that the government measures are unlikely to lead to a major shipbuilding programme. It is felt in shipping circles that the government has failed to appreciate the full seriousness of the crisis through which the French shipping industry is now passing.

GERMANY

OeTV condemns proposed sale of ore bulkers

The ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) has held up the proposed ship sales being embarked on by the Hamburg-based Frigga shipowning company - the company operates a fleet of ore bulkers and is jointly owned by Germany's four major steel companies Thyssen, Hösch, Krupp and Mannesmann - as a further instance of the government's misguided shipping policies.

In February of this year, Frigga sold its ore bulker Thor, subsequently chartering it back under a flag of convenience with the loss of 30 jobs for German seafarers. Now, its four remaining bulkers are up for sale, again possibly to a convenience operator, and 160 seafarers' and a further 15 land-based jobs may well be forfeited.

OeTV shipping spokesman Eike Eulen lays the blame for this sell-out to foreign interests firmly at the door of the federal government. He accuses the ruling coalition of failing to intervene earlier when the multinational oil company Esso put its German-flag ships under f-o-cs and of now standing to one side as the country's valuable ore trade looks set to pass into outside hands. Eulen regrets that this will mean yet another drop in the proportion of Germany's maritime trade - currently only ten per cent - that is carried in German-flag vessels and accuses the government of sacrificing the merchant fleet to the 'freedom of the seas' principle - a principle long since abandoned by other maritime nations.

Earlier this year, the OeTV called on the government to ensure that 40% of all West German exports and imports were carried in national flag ships in accordance with the UNCTAD code on cargo sharing to which the federal republic is a signatory. The appeal fell on deaf ears. This government inaction has led to a loss of 28 ships totalling 595,000 tons from the register in the first nine months of 1984, a situation which is causing deep concern to the unions, who are likely to renew their call to the government to take decisive steps in defence of the national merchant fleet.

GREAT BRITAIN

'Give rail a future' campaign is launched

Last month saw the launch by the Rail Union Federation of an ambitious campaign - under the slogan 'Give rail a future' - that is aimed at preserving and expanding the railway industry in Britain.

The Rail Union Federation (with the two rail unions - the National Union of Railwaymen and the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen as members) has developed an alternative strategy to British Rail's corporate plan for the next five years which - in response to government pressure - foresees a further contraction of the industry and the rundown of jobs.

As a major plank of the campaign, the Federation will be arguing for increased investment in British Rail, with a large-scale programme of main-line electrification, the acquisition of new, improved rolling stock and the building of more rail/road freight transshipment depôts. The rail unions will also be supporting a cut in fares to encourage maximum use of the railway system and the reopening to passenger traffic of at least some of the local rural lines closed in recent years. Other targets include the opening of new and the modernisation of existing rail stations and improved interchanges and cross-city connections to speed passenger travel and build up rail freight.

To help union activists get the pro-rail message over to a wider public, leaflets, posters, badges and back-up material have been produced. The Federation has also commissioned a special video film which has already been shown to an appreciative audience at the press launch, which was fronted by General Secretaries Jimmy Knapp (NUR) and Ray Buckton (ASLEF).

The Federation hopes that the campaign objectives will be taken up by the wider union movement and that trade unionists generally will help our two rail affiliates convince the British public of the importance to Britain, both economically and socially, of a modern thriving railway industry. The dedicated labour force which keeps the railways moving in Britain today faces a bleak future if the campaign is not a success. They deserve better of the government and British Rail and would respond by giving the British public a service second to none if we would only rally to them and defend this key industry against the onslaught from a government which is starving the railway of the resources it needs if it is to survive into the next century.

PANAMA

Panama to set up maritime training programme

The maritime administration in Panama - with 40 million dead weight tons registered, the country with the world's second-largest flag-of-convenience fleet - has announced that it is to set up a training programme in order to improve the qualifications of its officers and ratings and the safety record of its fleet. Until now, Panama has been obliged to accept certificates issued by third countries - a system that has led to abuses, with seafarers presenting false or forged certificates to obtain jobs. Some officers fraudulently obtaining employment in this way have been responsible for casualties, a number of them serious.

Final discussions have still to be held on the form the examinations will take and the ports where they will take place, as well as on the languages in which the questions should be set. It is possible that all officers and ratings, including those currently employed on Panamanian-flag ships, will be required to sit the new examination, although operators of Panamanian-flag tonnage are likely to resist such a move.

The government has already given the maritime administration the necessary authority to go ahead with the programme; it will cost up to US\$ 3 million and is expected to be in operation before the end of 1985.

The ITF's position is that whilst it obviously welcomes any move to improve training and safety standards, Panama's problems arise basically from its continuing involvement in the flag-of-convenience business.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

AUSTRIA

4.7% pay rise for rail and municipal workers

The four Austrian public service workers' unions - including the ITF-affiliated Railwaymen's Union and the Municipal Workers' Union - have reached agreement with the government on a new twelve-month pay agreement for 1985. This enters into effect on 1 January and provides for a 4.7% rise in wages and salaries, subject to a minimum increase of 550 schillings per month. The unions had pressed for a minimum monetary increase for the lower-paid who have been particularly hard hit by increases in indirect taxation this year.

DENMARK

Boycott of coastal shipowners registers major victory

We are pleased to be able to report that the blockade of coastal shipowners conducted by the ITF-affiliated Danish Ships' Catering Personnel Association since the beginning of the year has registered a major victory. The coastal shipowners' association has now agreed to enter into a collective agreement with our affiliate on behalf of catering staff employed by its member companies and the boycott against these ships has accordingly been called off with immediate effect. During the union drive a total of 175 coasters owned by 17 companies have been brought under agreement, with significant benefits for the crew members concerned.

However, a number of companies are still refusing to recognise the catering staff union. ITF-affiliated maritime unions are therefore being asked for continued solidarity and support in the case of the six remaining owners of a total of 38 coasters that are still holding out against our affiliate in its efforts to improve conditions on the many small vessels in the Danish coastal fleet.

GERMANY

Public sector pay talks brought to successful conclusion

Following a hard-fought contract round, the German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) and the German Railwaymen's Union (GdED) succeeded last month in negotiating substantial pay improvements and more free time for their joint memberships. Under the new agreement, wages and salaries will be increased by 3.2% from 1 January 1985, with a lump-sum payment of DM 240 being made to cover the last quarter of 1984. In response to the unions' demand for a gradual reduction in working time, the employers have offered two extra free days with pay to all public service workers over 58 from next year. The two additional free days will be extended to all workers over 50 in 1986 and from the following year all staff, including trainees, will be entitled to these days. The annual leave entitlement of public service workers aged between 30 and 40 also rises by one day to 29 days from 1986.

The duration of the agreement has been extended to 16 months, with the result that it will not come up for renewal until January 1986.

GREAT BRITAIN

Merchant navy officers accept 8.2% pay rise

Britain's 25,000 merchant navy officers - including members of ITF affiliates* - have been made an improved 8.2% pay offer by the General Council of British Shipping in a deal which matches that put to ratings in November (see page 114 of last issue) and subsequently endorsed in a membership ballot.

The pay increases, which take effect from 1 November, were formally accepted by the officers' unions towards the end of last month.

NORWAY

Officers in overseas trade call off strike

The Norwegian Navigating Officers' Association and the Ships' Engineers' Union (both ITF-affiliated) brought their members on foreign-going tankers and dry cargo vessels under 2,000 grt out on strike in late November following the breakdown of pay negotiations with the shipowners' association that had been taking place with the assistance of an official mediator. (Officers on North Sea supply boats were exempted from the action.)

The strike was called off on 25 November when the unions were made an improved offer that is to be put to a membership vote. At the same time, the owners announced that a lockout set for 24.00 on 29 November would not now go ahead. The proposed increases are of 7.6% for officers on cargo vessels below 2,000 tons gross and of 5.5% for officers on passenger ships and on larger cargo vessels. Officers on vessels over 2,000 tons on which new manning arrangements have been introduced are to receive an extra 2%. The owners have also agreed that when the 1986 pay negotiations are conducted steps will be taken to ensure

* the Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association and the Radio and Electronic Officers' Union

that the lowest-paid officer on these ships receives a salary above that of the highest-paid ship's mechanic.

On 21 November, the ITF-affiliated Norwegian Seamen's Union accepted a 6.4% mediated pay offer on behalf of its members in the overseas trade.

NEWS IN BRIEF

We extend hearty congratulations and best wishes for the future to our sister International, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions on the occasion of its 35th anniversary which is being celebrated this month. The close links between the two organisations are symbolised by the fact that it was former ITF General Secretary Jacobus Oldenbroek who became the first General Secretary of the ICFTU when it was founded in 1949.

Air France cabin crews staged a two-day strike last month in protest at the worsening of their conditions of service.

The governments of the Federal Republic of Germany and Great Britain have formally announced that they will not be signing the Law of the Sea Convention, although they will not oppose the signing of the treaty by the European Community. The overwhelming majority of UN member states have indicated their acceptance of the Convention, well in advance of the December 9 deadline. The main opponent of the treaty is the United States which is firmly opposed to the Convention's provisions on sea-bed mining rights and has refused to sign.

The ITF-affiliated Seamen's Union of Ireland has sought assurances from Irish Continental - the ferry subsidiary of the state-owned line Irish Shipping - on the future of its members on the company's two car ferries following the collapse of the parent company. Our affiliate is also seeking to persuade the Dublin government to reconsider its decision to allow Irish Shipping to go into liquidation..

Employees of Luxembourg Railways have been awarded a free half-day to mark the 125th anniversary of railways in Luxembourg.

Employees of Dutch national railways (NS) are to move to a 38½ hour week with effect from 1 January 1985.

Strikes by docker members of the ITF-affiliated Dutch Transport Workers' Union (FNV) have affected various sectors of the ports of Rotterdam and Amsterdam as well as ferry services from the channel ports in recent days. The stoppages are part of a national campaign by the FNV national centre against proposed cuts in sick pay and unemployment benefits.

Spanish rail unions staged a day of action 'in defence of the railways' on 7 December in protest against government plans to implement line closures totalling 2,484 km in January 1986. Railway workers brought the network to a standstill for two hours as part of an effort to draw public attention to union opposition to any further reductions in rail service.

Thailand: railway workers called off a three-day-old strike last month after their unions reached agreement with the government on the implementation of the five-day working week and salary increases recommended by an arbitration committee for staff recently transferred from part-time to full-time status.

United States: Provincetown-Boston Airline has resumed a limited service only two weeks after being grounded by the Federal Aviation Administration for alleged safety violations (see page 116 of last issue). The carrier's president said safety standards had been tightened up considerably in the light of the agency's criticisms.

United States: The Fred Kroll Chemotherapy Testing Center has been established at the Hahnemann University in Philadelphia, funded by contributions from labour unions and friends of the late President of the US Brotherhood of Railway, Airline and Steamship Clerks who died of leukemia in 1981.

STOP PRESS

SOUTH AFRICA

Detained trade unionists are released (see page 108 of last issue)

We have just heard that Phiroshaw Camay, General Secretary of the Council of Unions of South Africa (CUSA), Chris Dlamini, President of the Federation of South African Trade Unions (FOSATU), and Jethro Dlalisa, a Branch Chairman of the ITF-affiliated Transport and General Workers' Union, have been conditionally released by the South African authorities. They are, however, restricted to the Johannesburg area and have been told they may be required to give evidence in future court proceedings.

Any further developments will be reported in the Newsletter in due course.

PERSONALIA

A B Kristensen, former treasurer of the Danish Engineer Officers' Association, celebrated his 80th birthday on 10 December.

We extend hearty - if belated - congratulations to Victor Schiwoff, Transport Secretary of the Swiss Public Service Workers' Union (VPOD), who celebrated his 60th birthday on 22 November. Brother Schiwoff plays an active rôle within the ITF as a member of the Committee of both the Road Transport and Civil Aviation Sections. He is also Chairman of the recently-established Urban Transport Committee and represents Switzerland on the Cabin Crew and Ground Staff Technical Committees.

Christer Themnér has been appointed Deputy General Secretary of the Swedish Engineer Officers' Association in succession to Ture W Ahlqvist who is retiring.

Glen E Watts has announced that he will not seek re-election to the Presidency of the Postal, Telegraph and Telephone International (PTTI) at its World Congress in 1985.

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Executive Board - Tokyo 19-20 March 1985
Fishermen's Section Conference - Boulogne 24-25 April 1985
Civil Aviation Section Conference - Stockholm 13-15 May 1985
Travel Bureau Section Conference - San Diego 17-18 June 1985

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

EC maritime unions protest at proposals contained in draft communication on maritime policy

Community seafarers' unions have protested to the European Council of Ministers (Transport) at the contents of the draft communication on maritime policy.

In view of the importance of the objections raised by the unions, we reproduce below in full the text of a telex sent to the EC in Brussels earlier this month:

"The EC maritime unions are concerned at the undue haste shown by the European Commission in seeking an early decision on the new Community maritime policy drafted by the outgoing commissioner responsible for these matters.

"Although unions have not been officially consulted on the specific proposals outlined in the commissioner's draft communication, it has been widely publicized that the commissioner's recommended policy entails doing nothing at all to put an end to the problem of flag-of-convenience shipping and indeed the benevolent toleration shown to this form of human exploitation extends to de facto support of flagging-out by European shipowners.

"Not content with tacitly accepting the grave social abuses inherent in increasing recourse to f-o-c shipping whose crews have no assurance of any social protection under the law of those flags, the commissioner is on record as advocating acceptance of a greater proportion of non-EC nationals on EC vessels as a means of enhancing the competitive position of Community shipping. The implication that Europe's shipping needs can only be met by exploitation of cheap labour in one form or another is outrageous and runs contrary to the Community's undertaking and the Commission's obligations under Articles 117 and 118 of the EEC Treaty.

"The commissioner is understood to take the view that the decline in European-flag shipping has not yet reached crisis proportions and would not justify 'protectionism' or other forms of supportive measure for the European-flag fleet. This position seriously underestimates the inroads already made into the cargoes carried under traditional European flags as a result of cut-throat competition from f-o-c operators and unfair competition by Comecon shipping.

"Moreover the commissioner fails to take into account the threat posed to European-flag container lines by massive investment in new tonnage by Taiwan and US operators combined with growing competition under cargo-sharing arrangements in trade with developing countries.

"In view of the international tonnage surplus, the resulting distortions of competition, and increasing protectionism and subsidisation of their flags by countries outside the EC, the Council of Ministers is invited to distance itself from precipitate formulation of a European shipping policy ill-adapted to the sector's needs and to request the Commission to undertake a full consultation of the social partners with a view to establishing the need for:

- A Measures to protect the European flag-fleet against all forms of dumping and unfair competition, particularly where the competitive advantage relies on exploitation of third-world seafarers
- B Fiscal and related measures to assist the EC fleet's overall competitive position
- C Positive harmonisation of social conditions applicable to crews of EC-flag vessels
- D Cargo-sharing arrangements that guarantee European-flag vessels an adequate share of cargo in their trade with non-EC countries."