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NEWS AND VIEWS FROM THE ITF

ITF rail unions plan Euro Train protest

Representatives of ITF rail unions meeting in Rome on January 15 decided to organise a multinational 'Euro Train' in April in order to bring to public attention the savage attacks being launched by governments on Europe's railways. The train is planned to leave Vienna in the week commencing April 14 and will travel through Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Germany, France, Luxembourg and Belgium for two weeks. Carriages displaying publicity and information material from each of these countries will make up the train. During its journey demonstrations will be organised to coincide with the train's arrival in a number of cities including Rome, Milan, Berne, Freiburg, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. A final demonstration and rally of European rail unions will then take place in Brussels with the added participation of rail unions from other European countries, where a list of demands will be handed over to the (Italian) chairman of the Council of EC Transport Ministers and to the European Commissioner for Transport. The detailed itinerary of the train will be published following a second preparatory meeting scheduled for 13 February in Frankfurt.

INTERNATIONAL

Urban Transport Committee holds first full meeting in Luxembourg

The first full meeting of the ITF Urban Transport Committee - set up during the 1983 Madrid Congress and with members from the Rail and Road Transport Workers' Sections - was held in Luxembourg on 4 and 5 December 1984 under the chairmanship of Victor Schiwoff (Swiss Public Service Workers' Union - VPOD) and with an attendance of 25 delegates from 11 countries. Also present was C Humphries, Project Secretary of the Public Services International, as well as three observers from PSI-affiliated unions.

One of the main decisions taken by the meeting was to build on the success of the Urban Transport Day in September 1983 by once again focusing attention on urban transport during a campaign week from 14 to 20 October 1985. Individual unions will be free to choose for themselves the number of days on which to campaign during the Week which will have a common manifesto. This year's campaign is being planned in close cooperation with the Public Services International, which has a substantial membership in the sector. It is hoped this will help secure the maximum impact for the many events and activities in support of the campaign objectives that will be organised during those seven days.

The meeting also had before it a set of draft guidelines intended to assist unions facing the introduction of new technology in the sector. It was agreed that this draft should be revised to take account of the views expressed by the committee members and that an urban transport working group should be set up, one of whose tasks would be to draw up a final policy document on the subject in time for the next meeting of the committee. It was further agreed that this working group should forward proposals for the revision of existing ITF policy on short-distance passenger transport to the 1985 full conferences of the rail and road transport sections, and that the working group should also have responsibility for making preparations for the aforementioned Urban Transport Week.

Two resolutions were adopted by the meeting: one setting out the basic position of ITF urban transport unions in respect of the right of citizens to the provision of public transport services and expressing opposition to moves in a number of countries to privatise urban transport services; the other emphasising the environmental advantages and energy-saving benefits accruing from increased use of public transport in cities.

W Morris (British Transport and General Workers' Union) was unanimously elected as the Committee's first Vice-Chairman.

Finally, the meeting expressed its gratitude to the Luxembourg host union, the Federation of Railway and Transport Workers, for its warm and generous hospitality during what had been by common consent a most productive meeting.

AFRICA

African civil aviation unions hold third regional conference

Representatives of ITF-affiliated civil aviation unions in Africa recently took part in an extremely successful conference - the third of its kind - in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi. The event had been organised by the ITF's African Representative, Ben Udogwu, and was sponsored by the US International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers (IAM). The various agenda items were introduced by ITF Civil Aviation Secretary Hans-Bernhardt Beyertt and Frank Waldner of the IAM. Opening the conference, the Kenyan Minister of Transport and Communications, the Honourable Peter Okondo, expressed his appreciation that the ITF had once again chosen Kenya as the venue for a regional conference.

Delegates, while aware of the operational problems facing African airlines, stressed that these airlines must not be permitted to use their current economic difficulties as a pretext for undermining job security and curtailing union rights, especially the right to strike. With regard to the introduction of new technology, the participants underlined the importance of unions being given advance notice of the introduction of such plans, together with full details of the likely effect on workers. Emphasis was also placed by the meeting on the desirability of African nation states ratifying and observing the pertinent ILO Conventions and Recommendations. The conference dealt further with the special problems of women workers in the aviation industry and declared its opposition to all discrimination in employment based on grounds of sex. It also received detailed reports on the current activities and problems of the various countries represented, as well as examining collective bargaining trends.

The meeting passed a resolution expressing its concern at the continuing strike of Air Afrique pilots and technical staff and calling for an intensification of negotiations with a view to achieving a speedy settlement of the issues involved. The resolution further proposed that the trade unions representing Air Afrique personnel should establish a central organisation to coordinate contract demands and engage in central negotiations on behalf of all categories of staff. Also adopted was a second resolution expressing solidarity with the members of the IAM in a long-standing dispute with the Israeli airline El Al in the United States.

At the close of the conference, delegates thanked their Kenyan hosts for their warm hospitality and urged the ITF to hold further regional conferences so that African trade unionists could review their common problems and exchange experiences.

ICFTU appeals for contributions from its affiliates for the relief of famine in Africa

As part of a programme of humanitarian assistance, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions recently allocated US\$ 10,000 for the emergency relief of famine in Africa and is now inviting its affiliated organisations to make voluntary contributions which it plans to channel to the worst-hit areas such as Ethiopia, Chad and the Sahelian region in general. Coupled with this request, the ICFTU is again asking its affiliates to ensure that their governments continue with their emergency famine relief efforts and that they implement longer-term aid programmes that would help remove the root causes of famine and poverty in that continent.

PACIFIC

Pacific Island seminars could lead to increase in ITF membership

Following up the recommendation of the 1st ITF seminar for unions in the Pacific Island nations held in Fiji in May 1983, ITF Asia/Pacific Regional Secretary Mohammad Hoda conducted three separate transport workers' seminars during two very busy weeks in December on the islands of Vanuatu (formerly the New Hebrides), Kiribati (formerly the Gilbert Islands) and the Solomon Islands. The overall aim of the seminars was to strengthen trade union organisation in these three island countries and to encourage more unions in the area to seek affiliation to the ITF.

Unions with memberships in many different sectors of the transport industry were represented at the seminars, although only one of them, the Kiribati and Tuvalu Overseas Seamen's Union, was already a member of the ITF. All showed a keen interest in the work of the ITF as described by the Regional Secretary and by the close of each seminar a sizeable number of the organisations attending had declared their intention to affiliate to the Federation.

SOUTH AFRICA

SAS brochure listing tourist attractions of Sun City is withdrawn following international protests

A storm of international outrage was unleashed last year when it became widely known - through reports in the Scandinavian press - that the Scandinavian airline SAS, in a brochure advertising holidays in South Africa, had for some time been encouraging tourists to visit Sun City, capital of the 'homeland' of Bophuthatswana. The attractions of Sun City were lavishly described, it being referred to variously as 'one of South Africa's fabulous playgrounds' and 'the jewel in Bophuthatswana crown'.

It was abundantly clear that would-be tourists were being gravely misled by the airline's holiday advertising which, however unwittingly, reflected the official South African line. For the South African government has quite deliberately and at great expense developed Sun City into a tourist centre in the hope that if it could attract sufficiently large numbers of visitors from overseas this would give some semblance of legitimacy to the official government policy of systematically resettling black South Africans in the so-called 'homelands'. Already many top international entertainers have been lured to perform in Sun City's numerous

nightclubs, despite protests from anti-apartheid groups worldwide, and the luxury hotels, casinos, bars and other tourist facilities - which stand in stark contrast to the surrounding areas where black South Africans living in shanty towns eke out a meagre living on marginal land set aside for their use - have become very popular with white South Africans.

It should perhaps be pointed out here that governments are not so easily deceived by South African propaganda: no country has ever recognised any of the 'homelands' as being independent - a fact that SAS, in referring to Bophuthatswana as an 'independent state' seems not to have been aware, even though the airline is jointly owned by the governments of Denmark, Norway and Sweden!

The ITF has become increasingly concerned of late at the repressive fashion in which those living in the 'homelands' have been dealt with by the authorities and by the fact that the independent unions and their members are if anything treated more harshly in the "bantustans" than in South Africa itself. We were therefore among the first to urge our Scandinavian affiliates to lodge vigorous protests with SAS demanding that the brochure be withdrawn forthwith. Many other organisations similarly opposed to apartheid also made their distaste at the brochure's contents known to the management of SAS.

These protests proved extremely effective: on the day after the newspaper articles appeared, SAS managing director Jan Carlsson distanced himself from the claims being made in the brochure and announced that the entire stock was being recalled for pulping.

TRANSPORT

GERMANY

Union holds platform debate with owners and politicians on future of national merchant fleet

The ITF-affiliated German Transport and Public Service Workers' Union (OeTV) invited shipowners and politicians to take part with union officials late last year in a major public debate on the future of German shipping. Held in Hamburg on 23 November, the debate formed part of the union's action campaign under the slogan 'SOS - save the German shipping industry' launched last spring.

The discussions were chaired by OeTV shipping spokesman and ITF Executive Board member Eike Eulen. Other platform speakers included a representative of the Association of German Shipowners, the Social and Christian Democrat party spokesmen on shipping and coastal affairs, an official from the Bremen Maritime Economics Institute, and Dieter Benze, head of the OeTV's department of fishing and ocean transport. Hundreds of German seafarers who understandably share their union's concern at the loss of ships from the national flag and the prospect of an ever-shrinking job market also made an important contribution to the debate.

From the chair, Eulen accused the politicians of failing to respond to union demands for effective measures to revitalise shipping and warned that if the federal government did not intervene decisively soon Germany could quite well be left without a national merchant fleet before the end of the century.

Eulen gave as one of the main reasons for the present state of the fleet the easy access to West German cargoes permitted to foreign owners offering rock bottom rates; open registry ships which ruthlessly exploited cheap third world labour and eastern bloc vessels with their dumping rates were, he said, largely responsible for forcing down rates to the point where the fleets of traditional maritime nations such as Germany were finding it increasingly difficult to hold their own. Fierce competition from the heavily subsidized container fleets of the other western nations in a sector in which there was already considerable overcapacity was a second major factor with a bearing on the diminishing share of the country's import and export cargo carried in national-flag ships and the loss of some 25,000 seafarers' jobs over the past decade.

Eulen called on the politicians to take immediate steps to halt the decline in line with the demands contained in the OeTV's SOS campaign which urges West German implementation of the UNCTAD liner code, thereby effectively securing at least 40 per cent of all the country's maritime import and export cargoes for vessels flying the national flag. (At present only ten per cent of import and twenty per cent of export cargoes are carried in national flag ships.) The SOS campaign further urges the government to support an EEC initiative aimed at protecting European shipping against unfair competition from third countries.

SOCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL NEWS

HONG KONG

Cathay Pacific cabin crew strike settled

Last month, Cathay Pacific Airlines threatened disciplinary action against cabin attendants who refused to crew a flight from Hong Kong via Bahrain to London after the collapse of 'end of year' bargaining. At the same time, it also warned the ITF-affiliated Cathay Pacific Airways Flight Attendants' Union (FAU) that it was considering a claim for compensation from the union for loss of revenue. This led the FAU to instruct its members to refuse to operate all flights, whereupon Cathay Pacific announced its intention to charter in aircraft and cabin staff from other airlines to enable it to continue normal operations.

The ITF protested vigorously to the airline's chief executive at the company's treatment of its staff and the flight attendants' union and urged a resumption of negotiations. The FAU agreed to call off its strike immediately the airline offered renewed talks on its demands, the most important of which was a claim for a guaranteed four days off between consecutive long-haul flights.

We have been informed by our affiliate that these talks were soon brought to a satisfactory conclusion. Details are, however, not yet available.

KIRIBATI

Record pay rates agreed for Kiribati seafarers on German-flag vessels

Following recent negotiations between the ITF and representatives of South Pacific Marine Services - a consortium of twelve West German shipowners - record rates of pay have been achieved for the approximately 1,000 Kiribati seafarers serving

on German-flag vessels belonging to the member companies of the group. Basic and overtime rates of these non-domiciled seafarers are set to rise to 88% of the West German rates this year. SPMS has further agreed to pay the Kiribati seafarers 90% of the national rate in force for German seafarers for 1986 and 93% of the then prevailing rate in 1987.

The seafarers are represented by the ITF-affiliated Kiribati and Tuvalu Overseas Seamen's Union.

The ITF is well satisfied with the outcome of negotiations on this occasion as the deal struck represents a significant move in the direction of pay parity for an important group of non-domiciled seafarers.

UNITED STATES

Former Northwest Orient Airlines stewardesses win sex discrimination case after fifteen-year fight

Over three thousand stewardesses who worked for Northwest Orient Airlines between the years of 1967 and 1976 have won a total victory following a fifteen-year battle for compensation in a sex discrimination suit that has become a noted test case in the United States.

The Supreme Court has turned down the airline's request for a review of an appeal court decision last year* which upheld an award of \$52.2 million originally made by a federal judge in November 1982. The stewardesses had alleged discrimination in the areas of pay and conditions of service.

* see ITF Newsletter No. 8, 1984, page 81 for earlier details

Continental Airlines bid to set up Pacific subsidiary is foiled

In one of its last acts before being disbanded, the US Civil Aeronautics Board (CAB) last month foiled an attempt by the bankrupt Continental Airlines to transfer its profitable southern Pacific routes to a new subsidiary Continental Pacific Corporation (COPAC). The original application (along with two others to set up subsidiaries to operate routes to Mexico and Venezuela which were subsequently withdrawn) was made the day before Continental filed for bankruptcy in the autumn of 1983.

In rejecting Continental's application for route authority for COPAC, the CAB said it would be in a better position to evaluate COPAC's fitness to take over these routes when the parent company had emerged from bankruptcy as it was exceedingly difficult to assess the fitness of a subsidiary while the parent company's assets were subject to the court's jurisdiction and its future direction was still unknown.

NEWS IN BRIEF

French air traffic controllers were called out on strike twice last month while the national assembly was debating a bill that would give them a limited right of strike action. The controllers' union objects strongly to a requirement in the bill that controllers should maintain a minimum level of service during strikes and is

proposing that the union should be obliged by law to give one month's notice of strike action to allow adequate time for mediation before any stoppage of work takes place. The support of President Mitterrand has been sought for the union's position.

The ITF-affiliated British Transport and General Workers' Union has successfully negotiated a £5.50 across the board increase for drivers working for private road hauliers in London and the South East. The new rates took effect at the beginning of this month.

Great Britain: BP oil tanker drivers have won increases of 9% effective from 21 November 1984 for 2 years in the first agreement of this length ever negotiated in the oil industry. Elsewhere Esso drivers have accepted an offer of 6 per cent on basic rates.

India: Goan bargemen have won pay increases of 20% (equivalent to an increase of between Rs 190 and 310 per month) under a new collective agreement that also provides for higher rent and other allowances.

Italy's fishing limits have been extended from six to twelve miles.

Marine and harbour pilots in the Netherlands have reached agreement with the Transport Minister on compensation for the requirement to work irregular hours following a go-slow earlier this month that disrupted traffic at all major ports. New entrants will be paid an extra 1,400 guilders a month to make up for night and weekend work, while serving pilots will get an increase of 1,000 guilders. There is also an increase of 500 guilders for senior pilots.

New Zealand's overseas container trade was brought to a standstill for two weeks last month when a local Auckland dispute over extra manpower for unloading breakbulk cargo spread to all four main container terminals. The strike was called off on 16 December when the waterside employers conceded the men's demands.

Norwegian navigating officers have endorsed in a membership ballot the owners' pay offer that ended last November's strike in the overseas trade (see also ITF Newsletter No. 12, 1984, page 125).

Pilots with the Spanish national airline Iberia cancelled plans for a 48-hour strike this month after the airline management agreed to their demands for an increase in pilot strength and the reinstatement of 10 pilots dismissed after a strike last summer*. The airline pilots' union has now agreed to withdraw its appeal against the arbitration award which ended that earlier strike.

* see also ITF Newsletter No. 8, 1984, page 83 and No. 11, 1984, page 116

The US Federal Aviation Administration has substantially increased the number of inspectors on its staff following a three-month investigation into airline safety prompted by allegations of falling standards.

OBITUARY

Lord Allen of Fallowfield, who was General Secretary of the British Union of Shop, Distributive and Allied Workers (USDAW) from 1962 to 1979, died on 14 January, aged 70. A leading British trade unionist, Allen played a prominent role within the various committees of the Trades Union Congress and was a former Chairman of its influential Economic Committee. He was created a life peer in 1974 in recognition of his outstanding services to the labour movement. Internationally, he was a well-known figure and served as President of the International Federation of Commercial, Professional and Technical Employees (FIET) from 1970 to 1976.

PERSONALIA

Jean-Jacques Carmentran has been elected the new General Secretary of the French Railwaymen's Federation FO. He succeeds Daniel Larovay, who has returned to full-time service with the SNCF.

Joseph O Ansa has been elected the new General Secretary of the Nigerian Union of Seamen and Water Transport Workers.

Captain Bill Lucas, General Secretary of the Mercantile Marine Services Association (shortly to merge with the British Merchant Navy and Airline Officers' Association) was awarded an OBE in the New Year Honours List.

John Nelson, Acting Assistant National Secretary of the British National Union of Seamen, retires this month. John will be well known to affiliates involved in the ITF's f-o-c campaign for which he acted as Coordinator in the UK. We take this opportunity of wishing him a long and happy retirement.

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
Fair Practices Committee - London 10-11 June 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

Australian seminar on flags of convenience and sub-standard shipping

Australia has long been one of the countries at the forefront of the ITF's campaign against the abuses of the flag of convenience system and it was partly to thank the seafarers and dockers there for their active involvement and also to spur them on to yet greater efforts that an ITF seminar on flags of convenience and sub-standard shipping was held in Sydney late last year. Attending from ITF headquarters to confer with the trade unionists - both senior officials and rank-and-file members - who have contributed to the Australian effort were Assistant General Secretary Ake Selander and Brian Laughton, Secretary to the Special Seafarers' Department.

The seminar, which lasted for two days, was opened by Tas Bull, Acting General Secretary of the Waterside Workers' Federation, who is a member of the ITF Executive Board, as well as Vice-Chairman of the ITF Dockers' Section and a prominent member of the ITF Fair Practices Committee. In his speech of welcome, Bull expressed the hope that the seminar would serve to strengthen the ITF campaign whose aims lay close to the hearts of the country's maritime workers as Australian national shipping was under serious threat from f-o-c operators and their sub-standard operations. Les Symes, a long-time ITF Inspector in Australia, chaired the individual seminar sessions.

Attendance at the seminar was excellent, with 78 delegates and observers from seven ITF seafarer and docker affiliates in Australia and from three non-affiliated unions, who have worked closely with the ITF to ensure that f-o-c vessels putting into Australian ports are regularly inspected with a view to tightening up the safety standards on board and securing proper rates of pay and improved conditions for the crews.

Participants were briefed on ITF policy and the campaign objectives, it being pointed out that the phasing out of f-o-cs over the shortest possible period was the only effective way to curb the twin evils of the system: the abysmal safety record of vessels under convenience registers and the exploitation of seafarers, many of whom came from the poorer third world nations, not least those in the Asian region.

Addressing the seminar, Ake Selander said that he was standing on what could be termed sacred ground for the ITF as far as its campaign against bad payers and keepers of unsafe and unhealthy ships were concerned. Sydney was but one of many ports in Australia where sub-standard operators should fear to tread but foolishly enough call at in the hope that their ships will not have occasion to call there again. He pointed to the recent changes in the general direction of ITF policy on f-o-c shipping and the effect these would have on the inspectors routines and stressed the need for a full appraisal by all inspectors of these changes in order to prevent the shipowners from taking full advantage of every opportunity to level criticism against the ITF camp and to bring the ITF and its protagonists before the courts of law. The changes in policy were favourable to the good operators but would make life much more difficult for the bad operators as the inspectors would be able to tighten their ropes with assistance from both the crews and their bona fide unions. He went on to talk about ITF policy on joint ventures, the Greek bilateral crewing agreements, port state control, Arab flag shipping and the results of the 1984 session of the Joint Maritime Commission (JMC).

Brian Laughton reviewed the campaign activities of ITF unions in other regions and countries, the successes and the setbacks. He reminded participants that, despite the legal problems some affiliates were having to contend with, the Campaign continued to gain support from among those unions which had not played a very active part in the past. The most dramatic recent example of this was the campaign carried

out by the Japanese seamen's and dockers' unions during the autumn of 1984 which had shocked the f-o-c shipowners out of their complacency and disregard of the Japanese unions' warnings and their continued assessment of Japanese ports as 'safe from ITF activity'. During their three separate 'concentrated weeks of action' in August, September and October, the JSU and docker teams had visited dozens of ships to check standards and compliance with agreements, boycotted four ships and signed nineteen agreements. In Africa, Asia and Latin America, the ITF's Regional Representatives, in response to the unions' demands for more information on the subject, were regularly including the topic of the ITF Campaign against f-o-c and sub-standard ships in the seminars they organized. This increasing awareness among the transport workers in the newly developing countries of the adverse effects and exploitation inherent in the f-o-c system complemented the current efforts of their governments to put an end to it through the establishment of an international convention on the registration of ships under the auspices of UNCTAD, where the ITF fully supported them against the vested interests of most OECD member countries.