

ITF CONDEMNS NIGERIAN VIOLATION OF LABOUR RIGHTS

The adoption of a decree by the Military Government of Nigeria forcing transport unions in the country to withdraw from the ITF has been condemned by the ITF Executive Board as a "flagrant violation of basic trade union rights".

The Board, meeting in London on 20-21 March heard that under the terms of Decree no. 35 of the seventh of December 1989 any trade union leader who does not immediately sever all formal links with the ITF and other international trade secretariats faces a term of imprisonment of up to five years and a fine of 5000 Naira. The Board expressed grave concern at the decision, which is a clear violation of Convention 87 of the International Labour Organisation (ratified by Nigeria), which states clearly that all trade unions should have the right freely to decide on international affiliation. It urged the Nigerian government to repeal the decree immediately both in the interests of trade union members and of Nigeria's international reputation as a democratic country and called on all ITF affiliates to protest to Nigerian diplomatic representatives and to the government in Lagos about the decision.

Since the decree was passed the ITF has received a steady stream of letters from its Nigerian affiliates, some of whom have been members of the international for more than 30 years, expressing their profound regret at being forced to disaffiliate by the government's action. Since the entire international trade union movement is affected

by the decision, ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis wrote, immediately after the meeting, to all ITSS and the ICFTU asking them to associate themselves with a formal complaint against Nigeria which the ITF will be submitting to the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association.

Several other important resolutions were adopted by the two day Board meeting. One, dealing with Japanese railwaymen, called for immediate talks between the Japan National Railways Settlement Corporation and the unions about the employment of 1600 former JNR employees, most of them members of the ITF's affiliate KOKURO, who are without new jobs following the breakup of JNR. Without action by the Japanese government or the railway companies, these workers faced dismissal on April the first. ITF railwaymen's unions were therefore asked to take this matter up with Japanese diplomats as a matter of extreme urgency.

Another motion, dealing with South Africa, welcomed recent positive developments such as the release of Nelson Mandela and the unbanning of the ANC but called on unions and governments to maintain and if possible to intensify sanctions on the regime until genuine

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Transnationals and unions conference

The building of effective trade union responses to the growing internationalisation of the world economy was the focus of a major conference organised by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in Elsinor, Denmark from 25-28 March. The conference, which brought together 120 trade unionists from all regions of the world examined a series of case studies of successful and unsuccessful attempts to come to grips with the increasing power of transnational corporations (TNCs). The steady growth in foreign investment, mergers and joint ventures

between companies in different countries has moved TNCs to the centre of the trade union stage in most countries, exposing the weakness of existing international rules governing their behaviour, the conference heard.

The conclusions of the conference were clear, although they are not easy to implement. International solidarity and international information, consultation and negotiation must be integrated into the daily work of trade unions and unions themselves will have to devote far more time and money to international questions. More infor-

mation on TNCs has to be collected and distributed to trade unions and all the various international trade union organisations have to work much more closely together to maximise the impact of their work. Particular efforts will focus on the countries of the European Community where the creation of joint information and consultation bodies for European companies is a priority, and the emerging democratic unions in Eastern Europe will need advice on countering the bargaining power of the Western TNCs who are moving into that area at a dramatic pace.

The ITF was represented at the meeting by Research & Publications Secretary David Cockroft.

...Hungarian seafarers join ITF

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negotiations have begun on the ending of Apartheid. The motion also condemned the murders of striking railwaymen at Germiston railway station on January ninth (see ITF News Jan 1990) and called on the South African government to bring those responsible to justice as quickly as possible. On a personal note, the Board paid a special tribute to Jane Barrett who stepped down as General Secretary of the TGWU at its December 1989 Congress.

The Board discussed a special report by the General Secretary on the situation in Central and Eastern Europe and adopted a resolution on trade union developments in the region. It noted the enormous changes which had taken place since the Board last met in October 1989 and welcomed the emergence of genuine free and democratic trade unions as a result of the removal of the repressive regimes which had ruled those countries. The Board welcomed the approaches which have already been made to the ITF by many of the new democratic union organisations in those countries and asked the General Secretary to establish close fraternal relations with and extend all possible practical, financial and other assistance to them with a view to their affiliation to the ITF in the future.

The Board added action to words by accepting into affiliation its first new affiliate from an Eastern European country, the Hungarian Seafarers' Union (Magyar Tengerész Szakszervezet). This 450 strong union, which is affiliated to the Democratic League of Trade Unions, organises ratings and officers in Hungary's state shipping line. The Board deferred acceptance of an application from the Yugoslav Transport Workers' Union until its next meeting, so that discussions could take place with the union on the status of its non-maritime members. An application from FETCOMAR, the Spanish transport workers' union affiliated to the Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO) national centre was also deferred at the request of the Spanish UGT transport union.

At the request of the ITF's Asia/Pacific Regional Committee the Board gave its full support for a motion urging the Chinese authorities to release all trade union and political prisoners and to respect international standards on human and trade union rights. The Board also devoted a substantial amount of time to discussing preparations for the ITF's 36th Congress which will open in Florence, Italy, on 2 August. The next meeting of the Board will take place in Florence immediately before the Congress.

Democracy returns to Chile

The international trade union movement has joined with the people of Chile in celebrating the installation of a democratic government after 17 years of the bloody Pinochet dictatorship.

In welcoming the return to democracy, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions pledged continued support for the labour and democratic movements in Chile.

Despite the presence in office of a new government based on a popular mandate, however, serious obstacles to the functioning of a fully democratic system remain. The country's Senate has been packed with Pinochet supporters who can block any reform legislation, and the similarly hard-line members of the Constitutional Tribunal are preventing the Congress from investigating human rights violations in the years of the dictatorship. The military régime also recently privatised a number of key parts of the public sector in order to remove them from government control.

ICFTU women's committee meeting

The 61st meeting of the International Confederation of Free Trades Unions Women's Committee was held in Brussels on 22 and 23 March.

Thirty-five women from trade union national centres and international trade secretariats attended the two day meeting. The ITF was represented by Administrative Officer Eva Leigh.

The meeting welcomed the production of the first edition of the ICFTU Womens' Newsletter, which will now appear once every two months.

The Committee heard disturbing reports from Canada and Sweden that could be the start of a new, negative trend in the developed countries. Attempts are being made, on the advice of pension actuaries, to lower women's pensions because they live longer. Women make up, in these countries, over two-thirds of the population aged 75 and over.

A special guest at the meeting was Malgorzata Tarasiewicz from Solidarity in Poland. She gave a bleak report about the position of women in Polish society. Nominal equality granted to women in the 1950s "allowed" them to do hard work, but this was never fol-

lowed up with training or adequate access to education. Polish women lack self-confidence, and they fear the future. No contraception is available, abortion has traditionally had to be used as the only available means of birth control. Now with a revival of religion, abortion may well be made illegal (and punishable by imprison-

ment).

The Committee discussed the forthcoming fifth ICFTU Women's Conference which will be held in Ottawa from 22 to 25 April 1991. The Conference theme will be "Women and Society, Economy and Trade Unions". The ITF will be entitled to send two delegates.

ITF Bulgarian message

The ITF has sent a message of congratulations to the first conference of the Independent Federation of Labour Podkrepa in Bulgaria.

General Secretary Harold Lewis sent the ITF's best wishes to the conference, which was held in Sofia on 17-18 March. His letter expressed the ITF's wish to develop "close fraternal relations" with Podkrepa's transport sections, with the possibility that they may in due course affiliate to the ITF.

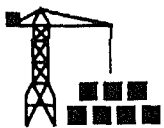
The ITF has already been in contact with the Seafarers' Section of Podkrepa, and has offered to render assistance to the Bulgarian federation's transport sections.

The ITF's message to Podkrepa was conveyed by Luc Demaret of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, who attended the conference.

Mongolia...

Trade unions in the Mongolian People's Republic have followed the example of many of their counterparts in Eastern Europe and declared themselves to be independent of the Party and the State.

The Central Council of Mongolian Trade Unions announced on March 14 that it would establish a "new, independent, united and free movement".



DOCKERS

German union rejects pay offer

West German dockers are set for a major trial of strength with port employers over an 8.5 per cent pay claim.

The ITF-affiliated transport workers' union (ÖTV) is basing the claim

on the erosion of dockers' wage levels compared to other industrial sectors and on the buoyant state of the ports industry. The port of Hamburg in particular is expected to benefit from the

opening of Eastern European markets and the closer relations between the two German states.

The union has already rejected a 3.3 per cent offer from the port employers.

International port safety conference

Safety in the Port Environment is the theme of an international conference to be held in Bremen, West Germany, in September this year.

The conference, which is being hosted by the City's Senator of Ports, Shipping and Transport in cooperation with a number of international indus-

trial and regulatory organisations, will examine a wide range of issues relevant to state of the art port safety.

Both marine and shore-side aspects of safety regulations, training and operational procedures will be discussed, along with the role of international organisations.

Further details and registration forms can be obtained from:

Mrs. B. Mühlbrandt,
Port and Transport Consulting
Bremen GmbH,
PO Box 10 79 65,
2800 Bremen 1,
Federal Republic of Germany.



INLAND TRANSPORT

ITF proposals for new European road rules

The improvement of road safety and the protection of drivers' health are the keynotes of the ITF's proposals for the revision of the European Carriage of Goods by Road regulations (AETR).

ITF Assistant General Secretary Graham Brothers was invited by the French Ministry of Transport in January to submit the Federation's views on the revision of the AETR and the European Community's Regulations 3820/85 and 3821/85 (see ITF News, January 1990).

After consultation with road transport affiliates and discussions at the meeting of the Steering Committee of the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section in London on April 3, Brothers informed the United Nations' Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) of the Federation's positive view of the need for a simultaneous revision of the AETR and the EC regulations so that there can be unified European rules for the carriage of goods and passengers by road.

The ITF's submission includes a number of key recommendations for provisions on drivers' working hours. Proposing limitations on duty times instead of, as at present, driving hours, the Federation calls for a maximum of ten hours' duty time per day, 50 hours per week and 90 hours in two consecutive weeks.

The ITF proposes a minimum daily rest period of twelve consecutive hours, a minimum weekly rest period of 36 consecutive hours and a minimum of 96 hours in two consecutive weeks. All weeks should be calculated as calendar weeks. There is also a suggested minimum period of 30 minutes for meal breaks.

All time which is neither daily rest nor a meal break — i.e. driving, loading and unloading, vehicle servicing, frontier formalities, waiting time, etc. — should count 100 per cent as duty time.

Given the volume of evidence on the additional risks of accidents involved in night-time driving, the ITF calls for the new regulations to give special consideration to regulating duty times during the night hours.

The regulations should include provisions such as the numbering of tachograph discs to eliminate the fraudulent use of recording devices.

The ITF also suggests that the new regulations should be simplified "in

the interest of comprehension and enforcement" and should clearly define the employer's / transport operator's responsibilities for compliance with their provisions.

The ECE is to hold an extraordinary session in July at which the revision of the regulations will be discussed, and ITF road transport affiliates are pressing their governments to include trade union representatives in the national delegations to the meeting.

Hazard officers for German companies

West German companies involved in the transport of hazardous cargoes will be required to appoint specially-trained Dangerous Goods Officers to supervise the implementation of safety regulations, according to a new government ordinance.

The move owes much to an initiative by the country's ITF-affiliated transport workers' union (ÖTV), following public alarm over dangerous goods transport, particularly the accident involving a road tanker at Herborn in 1987, which killed six people and injured some 40 others.

Companies will have to appoint one or more Dangerous Goods Officers, management posts which are entirely different from trade union health and safety representatives, by October first 1991. The requirement applies to companies which dispatch, transport or package at least 50 tonnes of dangerous cargo a year, or lesser quantities of certain particularly high-risk materials.

The ordinance sets out a framework for the standardised training of the Dangerous Goods Officers. Companies must ensure that the individuals nominated undergo the necessary training, have access to senior management and can carry out their duties without fear of disadvantage.

The Officers will be responsible for ensuring that safety regulations are applied in the company and that any shortcomings are immediately notified to the senior management. They are also required to produce annual reports on their activities, giving details of all dangerous cargoes handled by the firm which will be accessible to the authorities.

The ordinance formed one of the main discussion points of a dangerous goods seminar organised by the West German Technical Inspectorate's (TÜV) Rhineland Academy in March, which provided an opportunity to assess the progress made towards effective implementation of safety regulations since the Herborn disaster.

The seminar was attended by chemical manufacturing and road transport managers from throughout the country, as well as by representatives of employers' federations and the regulatory authorities. Wolfgang Baars of the ÖTV and Chris Pate of the ITF Secretariat provided trade union viewpoints on the topic.

Spurred on by the authorities and worker representatives, a number of the country's major road transport concerns are giving serious attention to training employees who handle dangerous goods.

Small haulage firms exploit workers

European Community road haulage trade unions have condemned the negative influence on social conditions of the many small and medium-sized undertakings in their industry.

These small and medium-sized undertakings (known in Euro-Jargon as PME's) were the subject of a special, European Community (EC) organized trade union seminar held in Luxembourg on March fifth and sixth. The trade union representation was coordinated by Clive Iddon, Secretary of the ITF-associated Committee of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Community (the "Brussels Committee").

PME's account for most of the firms operating in all EC Road Transport.

PME's are defined as firms employing up to fifty workers. They vary, in the EC's definition, from owner-drivers to small sized companies. Since most of the drivers in the EC work in PME's the many problems and shortcomings of the sector affect the entire profession.

The Commission of the EC has set up a directorate (DGXXIII — who called this meeting) to look after the special needs of PME's, which are said to require, by the Treaty of Rome, protection against "administrative, financial and legal constraints".

Workers in this sector are, in fact, very vulnerable and at risk with respect to working hours and rest periods and health and safety rules. Few have adequate collective agreement protection.

Furthermore, where national legislation calls for formal workers' representation on works councils or health and safety issues, smaller companies are often excluded from these laws because they don't employ more than fifty workers. Some companies can artificially limit their size by sub-contracting, in order to evade their legal requirements.

The participants argued that where small undertakings do not reach the legal thresholds for worker representation rights, they should be compelled by law to enter into associations with

other firms so that the larger groups can fulfil their social obligations.

The seminar participants all felt that too many PME's frequently breach national Community regulations. Employees' interests are not safeguarded because of employers obstruction of trade union activities in many of these concerns.

But, as the representative for DG

XXIII said at the seminar, member states are under a general obligation to deregulate in the area of small firms, so as to alleviate the administrative "burden" of paperwork and regulations.

The meeting disagreed strongly and called for PME's to be required to meet their obligations towards their employees under terms comparable to those laid down for large firms.

European truck satellites

European haulage companies and road transport unions are facing a major new technological challenge with the arrival of satellite-based communication systems for truck management.

The new systems make it possible for companies to monitor the position of each truck within the nearest 20 metres and to exchange information with the crew about orders, routes and cargoes throughout the continent.

The receiver equipment produced by the West German company SEL entered production at the beginning of the year. The receivers will connect trucks with their company offices via the Eutelsat satellite which was launched in 1989, as part of the Globos F 2000 communication system.

The truck-based equipment is the size of a car radio and can be installed

in the vehicle's instrument panel. Back at the office, staff can monitor the truck's progress on personal computers using special map software packages. Information can be exchanged between truck and office in a number of different ways in order to avoid situations where the driver's attention is diverted from the road by an incoming message.

West German haulage companies are showing particular interest in the new system, which would give them a competitive advantage in the run-up to the creation of the Single European Market in 1992. It is likely to prove particularly attractive to companies which regularly transport high-value or dangerous cargoes, and will also have important applications for multi-modal transport.

UK abandons London road schemes

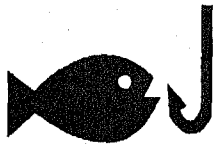
The British government has abandoned plans for a massive road building programme in the nation's capital city.

Transport Minister Cecil Parkinson announced the decision to reject the recommendations of the four "London Assessment Studies" (LAS) in Parliament on March 20. The LAS were separate studies drawn up by consultants and published last December.

The eight year process that led to the production of these studies cost the British government £8.5 million. Proposals for major road building drew such hostile reactions from ordinary

citizens, that the Conservative government — already deeply in trouble for a variety of other reasons — decided to abandon the schemes.

The opposition to the road building proposals called for greater expenditure on public transport and traffic restraint policies to ameliorate the overcrowding on London's roads — as John Prescott, Labour Opposition Transport spokesperson pointed out in Parliament on the day of the announcement, the £8.5 million would have been better spent on bus lanes than commissioning studies.



FISHERIES

Strike victory for Greenland union

Industrial action by officers on Greenland's trawler fleet has won a new contract of employment and a new, unified wage scale for all vessels.

Fishing was brought to a halt for several days in February as engineers, navigators and pilots stopped work in support of the union demands. With their trawlers idle and losing hundreds of thousands of Danish crowns every

day, the owners were forced to negotiate seriously with the ITF-affiliated Danish Ships' Engineers' Union. The negotiations, which were led on the union side by Ships' Engineers' President Leif Dolleris, took place on "neutral" territory in Iceland.

Lengthy negotiations produced an agreement that the method of pay calculation used on the majority of trawl-

ers would be extended to the rest of the fleet. This bases officers' pay on 28 per cent of the catch value after the deduction of carriage costs, profit and licence fees.

In a compromise between the union's and the owners' positions, it was agreed that there would be a two month period of notice on the agreement.

Spanish blockade protest against Morocco

Angry Spanish fishing workers blockaded the port of Algercias for ten days last month in protest against what they say are unjust changes in the Moroccan-European Community fishing agreement's implementation.

The Fishing Agreement, concluded in February 1988 (see *ITF News*, February 1988) after the lapsing of the previous Spanish/Portuguese-Morocco deal, should be renegotiated say the fishermen.

The Moroccan coastal fishing waters are some of the richest in the world. The 1988 deal, where the EC took over the earlier treaty (which dated from before the Iberians had joined the EC), reduced access to the fishing waters for the over 10,000 Spanish and Portuguese fishing workers who had tradi-

tionally fished these waters. A package of EC aid was granted to disenfranchised workers. The EC paid the Moroccans ECU281 million for the right to fish in their waters.

The present dispute centres on the fact that the Moroccans have begun to take drastic measures against what they term illegal fishing by unauthorised boats. Fines levied against such ships have been increased by 1,000 per cent from this January. On a few occasions, Moroccan vessels are said to have opened fire on Spanish trawlers.

The Spanish government managed to convince the fishermen to call off their blockade by arranging for a meeting of the EC joint fishing commission, which is responsible for monitoring the fishing pact. But the

agreement leaves enforcement and penalties for illegal fishing entirely up to Morocco. The EC arranged a meeting on March 19 with Moroccan officials in Rabat and reached an agreement — but the question of fines wasn't even raised.

The Moroccans have agreed, however, to stop confiscating Spanish boats caught fishing illegally until fines are paid and have agreed to establish strict judicial procedures under which offenders will be allowed to pay the fine, give bank guarantees that it will be paid or pay a deposit. Morocco also agreed to provide Spanish translations of its new regulations.

The deal is, however, unlikely to satisfy the Spanish fisheries workers.



FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

30 May	Dockers' Meeting	London
31 May - 1 June	Fair Practices Committee	London
13-14 June	Fishermen's Section Conference	London
31 July - 1 August	Executive Board	Florence
2 - 9 August	ITF Congress	Florence
3-7 September	Foc Inspectors' Meeting	Eastbourne, England



CIVIL AVIATION

ILO backs ITF complaint against Vayudoot

An ITF complaint against the Indian domestic airline Vayudoot charging that the company victimised employees for engaging in legitimate trade union activity has been upheld by the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association. The complaint was submitted in September 1988 (see ITF News September 1988) following the dismissal by the airline of two pilots Captains Sharma and Blaggana who had been active in trying to form the Vayudoot Pilots' Association.

The Committee's report, which was endorsed by the February/March meeting of the ILO Governing Body, rejected the Indian government's claim

that the men had been dismissed for 'poor performance' and found that it was part of a campaign of intimidation against trade union organisation in the airline. Noting that Vayudoot is 100% government owned, the Committee stated that "in the case of national public enterprises, national authorities have a dual responsibility in preventing acts of anti-union discrimination."

The Committee requested the Indian government, as a matter of priority, to take steps to secure a full and fair enquiry into the circumstances of the dismissal of Captains Sharma and Blaggana; to review existing legal provision relating to complaints of anti-

union discrimination; to provide the ILO with a copy of the High Court decision in Capt. Sharma's (three year old) court action against his dismissal as soon as it becomes available; and to adopt "appropriate measures to prevent the occurrence of anti-union discrimination in Vayudoot.

The decision of the Committee was not affected by the fact that the government of India has not ratified the ILO's two basic trade union rights Conventions (87 and 98). All member states of the ILO are bound when they join, to uphold the principles of freedom of association.

Workers shocked at Uganda Airlines' closure

Employees of Uganda Airlines Corporation heard the Transport Minister announce on national radio that their airline was being closed immediately and they were all being sent home on compulsory leave.

This sudden pronouncement, on February 12, came as quite a surprise. Acting General Secretary of the ITF-affiliated Amalgamated Transport and General Workers' Union (ATGWU) Mugeni Ouma N. says that no-one was given any prior notification of this sudden step.

The Minister said that a skeleton staff of about 100 employees were to be left on duty to facilitate the handling of other operations and carry out essential services within the corporation. The airline's weekly service to London was to be retained using leased aircraft.

Those workers on "compulsory leave" are to be paid their basic salaries, cost of living allowances and are allowed to stay in corporation houses or will continue to receive housing allowances if they are housed else-

where. The Minister announced that the airline will now be "restructured" over the next two or three months.

Within minutes of the announcement, the headquarters of the corporation were cordoned off by armed Military Police and staffed by government security personnel. All staff were evicted from their offices. The Military Police left later, but the security staff are still in the building.

Four days later, the ATGWU branch officials in the corporation managed to meet with the managing Director to discuss the closure. The Managing Director said he didn't know much and referred them to the Minister.

The Minister was out of the country — he had conveniently left (by air) on the day of the announcement. The union managed to meet with him on March sixth.

"During the meeting the union expressed its disapproval and disappointment about the way the move was taken. The Minister agreed with us that the whole issue could have been handled in a better way. However, the

Minister contended that the closure had been necessary since the corporation was ill-managed, overstaffed and under-utilised." said Ouma.

A strike by the airlines pilots for higher wages was also cited by the Minister as a reason for shutting down.

The Minister said that the government had appointed consultants to study the airline. There will now be a restructuring based on these recommendations, implemented by the same consultants. The union, however, was refused any details of the report, and they were told that a contract for the implementation of it had yet to be signed.

The union demanded involvement in the exercise once it begins and the government has promised that the union will be informed once the contract is signed and "involvement was expected since the exercise was not aimed at punishing workers but at putting the corporation's operations in good order" said Ouma.

The union is now awaiting further details of the government's plans for the future of the airline.

Financial moves could aid Eastern strikers

On March 4th, thousands rallied throughout the United States to mark the anniversary of the ITF-affiliated International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers' (IAM) strike to save Eastern Airlines. 2,500 gathered in Miami, 2,000 in New York, 2,000 in Kansas City, and 1,000 in St. Louis and rallies were held in many other places. One year into a tough strike against notorious union buster Frank Lorenzo, IAM strikers are still determined to win.

They face powerful opposition — Lorenzo's supporters include President Bush and David Shapiro, the examiner appointed by the bankruptcy court — but there are signs that Lorenzo will not be able to hold out much longer.

Shapiro published a 300-page report on March 1st confirming what the unions have been saying all along — that the transactions used by Frank Lorenzo to syphon off money and assets from Eastern to Continental Airlines and Texas Air were fraudulent. But in what the IAM has described as "a classic case of double talk", he blamed the unions for their intransigence in order to justify letting Lorenzo off the hook.

Although Shapiro estimated that the fraudulent transactions were worth between \$285 and \$403 million, he negotiated a deal whereby Eastern is to receive just \$133 million in cash from Texas Air. Altogether, the deal is worth "in excess of \$280 million" — barely enough to compensate Eastern for all its losses. Shapiro also recommended that no formal charges should be brought and urged the court not to appoint an independent trustee. Support has been gathering for the appointment of a trustee since it is being recognised that control of Eastern must be taken away from the management of Texas Air who have no interest in the company's future.

Moreover Shapiro sent a letter to Congressional leaders opposing a vote to override President Bush's veto of the Blue Ribbon Commission bill. The bill, supported by the IAM, was to set

up an independent, bipartisan Commission to investigate events which led up to the strike at Eastern. Obviously Lorenzo and his supporters do not want the risk of further scrutiny by an impartial body. Shapiro's intervention was enough to persuade wavering representatives to vote against the override. The vote was 261 to 160 in favour — just short of the two thirds majority needed.

Lorenzo's problems continue to mount. He proposed a fifth reorganisation plan making a mockery of his earlier promises that Eastern would repay its \$1 billion in unsecured debts in full — creditors were to be paid just 50 cents for every dollar Eastern owes, resulting in a loss of \$500 million. \$300 million of the \$490 million package was to come from the \$349 million sale of Eastern's Latin American routes to American Airlines which received government clearance on 7 March.

Major concessions from Eastern's pilots were an important condition for the implementation of the plan. Lorenzo turned down an offer of concessions by the Air Line Pilots' Association valued at \$40 million. He tried to gain \$80 million from pilots and flight attendants and threatened to abrogate pilots' contracts if these concessions were

not forthcoming. The pilots decided to call a strike ballot if he chose this course.

Now Eastern has admitted that it cannot even meet the terms of this latest package. It expects to report a loss of \$330 million from operations this year — up from the \$185 million shortfall forecast in January. It has offered the unsecured creditors a repayment offer worth about 25 cents in the dollar. The unsecured creditors, angered by the breakdown of the agreement, are asking the bankruptcy court to appoint a trustee to run the business and possibly to sell its assets.

Eastern has asked the bankruptcy court to approve a \$80 million quarterly withdrawal from its escrow funds — its biggest single withdrawal so far. The company's preferred shareholders have put forward a plan to reorganise Eastern as an independent airline which would be owned by the unsecured creditors and preferred shareholders and which would be operated by a new management team. The IAM would welcome moves to take control of the company away from Lorenzo who has done his best to destroy Eastern and to transfer its assets to his cheap, non-union subsidiary Continental.

Radiation warning issued to pregnant cabin crew

The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is to issue a warning to pregnant flight crew members about the risks from radiation caused by regular flying on certain long-haul flights.

The hazards of direct radiation from the sun on high-flying aircraft were revealed in a report by the country's Department of Transportation (see *ITF News*, March 1990).

Now the FAA is to couple its warning to pilots and flight attendants about the particular risks posed to pregnant

employees with a special computer programme designed to enable the individual to calculate her own exposure to radiation doses.

The measures come after the ITF-affiliated Association of Flight Attendants and Air Line Pilots' Association lobbied the FAA for more detailed information to be made available to employees on the risks involved.

The FAA is still undecided as to what further action it should take to protect air crews against radiation exposure.

European liberalisation moves closer

A few more tentative steps down the road towards civil aviation liberalisation were taken at the meeting of the European Community Council of Transport Ministers on March 29.

The Council held a "general discussion" on the detailed implementation of the "second package" of liberalisation measures which was agreed in principle at their meeting last December.

They concentrated attention on three key areas: access to the market, fares, and capacity sharing. They authorised a small study group of national offi-

cial to continue work with the objective of adopting final texts at the Council's June 1990 meeting. The same session also made some progress towards formulating a common position on authorising the Commission to open negotiations on air traffic rights between the EC and the EFTA countries (Austria, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland).

The Council also discussed the question of personnel licensing — something in which ITF affiliates have a keen interest. Although no final decision was taken, there was an agree-

ment in principle on a two stage process. Stage one will be a provisional agreement on the mutual recognition of existing licenses.

This will be limited exclusively to categories of flying staff currently covered by ICAO regulations (pilots and flight engineers). The second stage of the process will be the establishment of a system laying down harmonised rules on licensing and training programmes. This stage, says the communiqué issued by the Council, will also extend to other categories of civil aviation personnel.

Lufthansa takes stake in Interflug

The West German airline Lufthansa has announced plans to take a 26 per cent stake in Interflug, its counterpart in the German Democratic Republic.

The idea was backed by a 91 per cent majority in a ballot of Interflug employees, who are also keen for Lufthansa employment standards to be extended to their company.

The two airlines are already stepping up cooperation as the easing of politi-

cal restrictions allow more direct flights between cities in West Germany and the GDR. With a considerable need for capital for investment and modernisation in Interflug, Lufthansa's bid is likely to receive a sympathetic response.

The ITF-affiliated West German transport workers' union (ÖTV), which is represented on Lufthansa's supervisory board, has been pressing for a

harmonisation of employment conditions among civil aviation employees in the two countries, and has secured Lufthansa's agreement for Interflug employees to be represented on the supervisory board. This will set an encouraging precedent for the extension of co-determination to companies in the GDR, in line with the ÖTV's demand that "social" union should accompany economic and political union of the two Germanys.

The ÖTV is cooperating closely with Interflug employees in the newly-formed GDR transport workers' union to protect and improve employment conditions in the restructured civil aviation industry.

Independent Hungarian aviation union formed

Workers at the Hungarian airline Malév have formed new, independent trade unions which are keen to establish links with their colleagues in other countries.

The Aircraft Technicians' Independent Union, representing technical ground staff, was established only two months ago and is affiliated to Hungary's Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions. Separate unions have been formed for flight crew and air traffic controllers, and all three organisations have been gaining members rapidly at the expense of the largely discredited existing unions that were formerly under state control. The new unions have already achieved recognition from the company for col-

lective bargaining purposes.

While the Hungarian government has already decided to privatise Malév, the company's employees are being kept in the dark about the details of the plans. It is also unclear as to which foreign companies may become involved in joint ventures with the carrier. Union activists at Malév recognise that the airline needs capital injections and managerial experience from other companies, but are anxious to hold discussions with civil aviation unions in other countries that have experience of privatisation and deregulation.

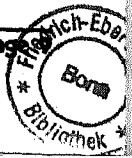
A conference of the aircraft technicians' union in May is set to discuss applying for affiliation to the ITF.

UK to limit working hours

The British authorities are preparing measures to limit the working hours of the country's air traffic controllers.

A committee of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), the national regulatory body for the industry, is recommending a maximum ten-hour working day for air traffic controllers, whose hours are not at present subject to any formal restrictions.

The recommendation comes in the light of growing public concern about the pressures on air traffic controllers with a continual growth in air traffic and increasingly complex airspace regulations.





SEAFARERS

Scandinavian Star tragedy exposes dangers of Foc passenger ferries

ITF Scandinavian affiliates are calling for the banning of flag of convenience (Foc) passenger carrying ferry services following the massive loss of life in the *Scandinavian Star* fire on the weekend of April 7 & 8.

As many as 200 people may have been killed in one of the worst passenger vessel accidents in maritime history.

The fire on the Danish Da-No Line operated, Bahamian flag ferry started in the early hours of Saturday 7 April when the ship was 40 nautical miles south of Faerder in the Skagerrak. The Foc was travelling from Oslo, Norway to the Danish port of Fredrikshavn. The blazing ship was then taken to the Swedish port of Lysekil.

Norwegian Captain Hugo Laresen said that two fires broke out consecutively on the ship and he claimed that he was "99 per cent sure that arson was the cause" of the blaze which continued to burn ferociously until early Monday morning.

There were 493 adult passengers and crew on board the ship, but the total number is unknown because children under the age of seven were, unusually, not included in the manifest. Investigators claim it may take as long as two weeks to recover all the bodies and account for all missing passengers.

Reports from survivors indicate that the situation on board the ship was chaotic and confused. This chaos would appear to have been a major factor in the terribly high loss of life.

The mainly Portuguese and Spanish ratings on the ship apparently had a major problem communicating with passengers. Several passengers claimed that no alarm was issued from the public address system and that life jackets were not handed out. Some said that it

took a very long time to prepare lifeboats and little help was given to help passengers into them.

Portuguese seafarers spoken to by Lloyds List newspaper after the accident said they had never taken part in any fire-fighting exercises or been given instructions and they said they were not familiar with the vessel.

Anders Lindström, President of the 300,000-strong Nordic Transport Workers' Federation and President of the ITF-affiliated Swedish Seamen's Union (SSU) has revealed that a formal request was made before the accident to all Nordic governments to ban Foc passenger services in the region.

It has been apparent to maritime unions in the region for some time that the growth of Foc ferry operations poses a direct threat to the safety of passengers — now, tragically, the rest of the world is listening.

The *Scandinavian Star* did not have an ITF acceptable collective agreement, and had been targeted for action by the Nordic unions.

The ship had only just changed ownership from a Miami-based company (SeaEscape), and had only appeared in Oslo a week before the accident. According to Lindström, the crew received no proper training whatsoever.

This accident comes at a time when shipowners believe that they have the upper hand in Scandinavia. Following last year's *JSS Britannia* ruling in the Swedish Labour Court, which has severely restricted the rights of Swedish dock workers to take boycott action against substandard shipping, many owners have been shifting to Foc or second register operations because they believe they can get away with it.

Fred Olsen's *Black Prince* (see sepa-

rate story) which is registered under the Norwegian NIS Second Register is planning to breach an agreement and start trading from Gothenburg in Swedish waters. Olsen's belief that he can ignore the Nordic trade unions is typical of a growing arrogance on the part of certain shipowners operating in the area.

This terrible loss of life can have no justification, but it must be hoped that it will force governments to think again about the standards of passenger ships and the wisdom of giving Focs a free hand in carrying passengers. It's not just that Foc registers have poor records in terms of ratifying international safety standards, this case also reminds us that they can often be incapable of implementing those standards they do adhere to.

There can be no excuse for any vessel's managers not providing proper training for their crew. Reports also indicate that international regulations were blatantly ignored in allowing passengers to remain with their cars in the vehicle deck.

ITF Assistant General Secretary Åke Selander says the ITF views the fire with "grave concern."

"We want to know whether life-saving, fire and other safety precautions were contributory factors in the disaster. The ITF reiterates its opposition to the Foc system in general and is particularly concerned about the growing use of Focs in the European ferry sector."

The *Scandinavian Star* has a chequered history. Built in 1971, the ship has worked in US coastal cruising in recent years. The ship had only just passed into the hands of Denmark's Da-No

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Stark contrast with two other ferry fires

Two other fires on passenger ferries that occurred within 48 hours of the *Scandinavian Star* tragedy graphically illustrate the difference a well-trained crew can make in saving lives.

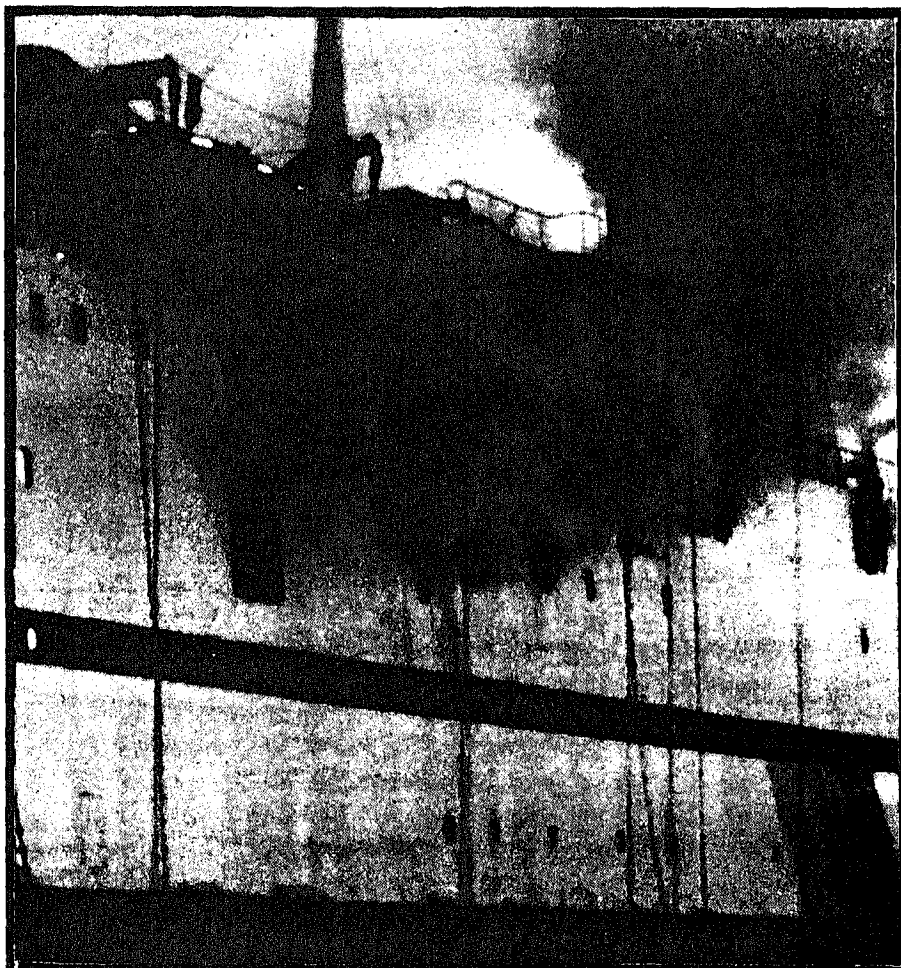
A fire broke out on the Irish *Norrøna* ferry on Monday April 9, which was on its way from Wales to Ireland with 219 passengers and 78 crew on board. Shortly after midnight, fire was discovered in two unoccupied cabins. The crew, with the help of 14 firefighters who were airlifted in, put the fire out in little over an hour. One man died in his cabin from smoke inhalation, but there were no other fatalities. As with the *Scandinavian Star*, arson is suspected as the cause.

Unlike the *Scandinavian Star*, passengers were full of praise for the exemplary and professional actions of the crew, who knocked on cabin doors, helped passengers to the decks and maintained calm throughout the emergency. It's clear that the crew's prompt and efficient action ensured that the accident didn't involve a massive loss of life.

The next day, on Tuesday April 10, yet another fire broke out on a ferry. This time it was the French-owned *Reine Mathilde*, bound from France to England. Thirteen miles south of Eng-

land, a fire broke out in the engine room. One member of the crew was injured fighting the fire, while in an unrelated incident a man died from as

heart attack prior to the fire. The crew, once again, were able to put out the fire and maintain calm amongst the passengers.



The *Scandinavian Star*

...Previous incident highlighted similar faults

Continued from page 10

Line (in fact the formal final transfer of ownership was due to take place on April 9).

Two years ago there was a serious engine room fire on board. No lives were lost, but the subsequent enquiry by the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) raised some disturbing questions.

A small fire began in the engine room on March 14, 1988 during a short cruise from St. Petersburg, Florida to Mexico. The fire became a major blaze, the enquiry found, because of the inadequate response of the crew who

were unable to communicate with each other.

There were problems with the alarms, and with communications between crew and with passengers. The enquiry found that many of the crew were unable to understand operating and emergency procedures. This case, along with others, has prompted the NTSB to call for tighter rules on foreign flag cruise ships calling in US ports — something which has been strongly opposed by cruise ship owners.

The nature of the enquiry into the present fire is very important. The Bahamian register has an appalling record on holding enquiries. The ITF

has no knowledge whatsoever of the register ever holding a public enquiry into a casualty. In this case, the Bahamians have offered to hold a joint enquiry with Sweden, Norway and Denmark. They must be made to stick to their promise, and it must be held in public.

"Recent experiences lead us to question the ability of the Bahamian register to shoulder important responsibilities as a flag state," said Selander. "The ITF intends to raise the case of the *Scandinavian Star* in particular and ferry safety in general with the European Community and the International Maritime Organisation."

Campaign against Olsen's slave wages

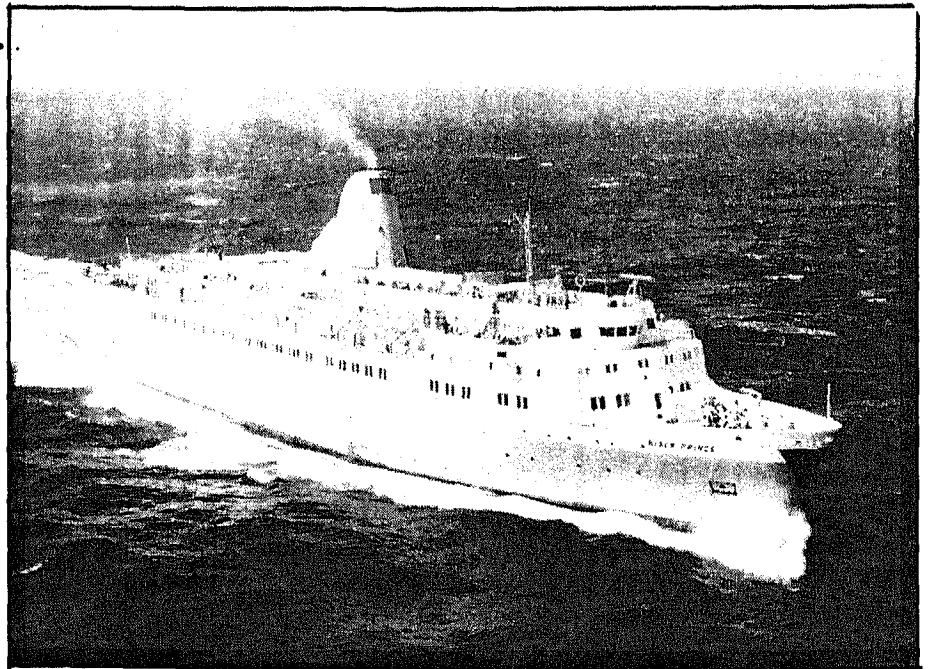
Seafarers' unions in Sweden have launched a hard-hitting public campaign against the exploitation of Filipino crews by the Norwegian Fred Olsen Lines.

Olsen intends to sail the ferry *Black Prince*, which is registered with the Norwegian Second Register (NIS) and 70 per cent crewed by Filipinos, between Gothenburg in Sweden and the Danish capital Copenhagen. This is despite a previous agreement that NIS-registered cruise ships would not sail in Scandinavian waters.

The *Black Prince* achieved notoriety last summer when the vessel slipped out of an ITF blockade in Helsinki, leaving over a hundred Filipino crew members stranded there. An agreement between Olsen Lines and the Norwegian unions subsequently secured compensation for the Filipinos (see ITF News, July 1989).

The ITF-affiliated Swedish Seafarers' Union (SSU), Swedish Ships' Officers' Union and Swedish Ships' Engineers' Union are asking potential customers to think again before booking a cheap cruise on what their advertisements describe as a "slave ship".

The Filipino crew members on the *Black Prince* work at least ten hours a day, day in day out for ten months of the year, only after which they are



allowed home leave. They are forced by Filipino law to send 80 per cent of their pay back home to the Philippines, which does not leave much over from a wage of Skr. 8 (US\$1.3) an hour including overtime and holiday bonuses. They have no welfare entitlements or security of employment.

Olsen are also seeking to undercut Swedish cruise ship lines by using cheaper fuel oil with a heavy sulphur content, which is no longer in use by the Swedish companies.

While Swedish ships plying the same route collect their waste fluid in special tanks, the *Black Prince* will flush its toilets and waste pipes into the sea, a practice which is unlikely to endear it to an environmentally conscious public.

The seafaring unions are urging members of the public to send in protest coupons to the Swedish and Norwegian authorities and to the management of Fred Olsen Lines, and not to book cruises on the *Black Prince*.

Union attack on German second register

The West German Second Register (GIS) is coming under serious attack in the courts by the country's ITF-affiliated transport workers' union (ÖTV).

The ÖTV lodged a complaint against the GIS legislation with the Constitutional Court in March, charging that the Register represented a breach of the articles on freedom of association and equality of treatment in the Federal Constitution. The complaint is being supported by social-democratic governments in the regional *Länder*.

The union is fighting for equal pay for seafarers of all nationalities on West German ships. At present shipowners can use the GIS to employ Third World crews at the wage rates of their home countries.

In a second prong of the ÖTV's attack on the Register, the union has taken a number of shipping lines to court over employment practices they have introduced under the GIS.

Despite an initial setback in a case against shipowners C.T. Ahrenkiel, the ÖTV is pressing ahead with an action

against the Olau Line ferry company before the Labour Court in Hamburg. Olau is employing Chinese seafarers on lower wage rates than their German colleagues, in contravention of a decision by the company's Works Council.

Since it was established in March 1989, the GIS has attracted some 40 per cent of West German-flagged merchant vessels, representing 60 per cent of total tonnage. Over 500 German seafarers have lost their jobs in the process.

Klaus Oldendorff supports attempt to cheat disabled seafarer

Prominent German shipowner Klaus Oldendorff is involved in an attempt to cheat a permanently disabled South Pacific seafarer of adequate compensation for an injury he suffered on board the Singapore flag *Nordmark*.

Thirty-five year old Kiribati fitter Bakeau Betero, who is married and has four children, suffered a cerebral haemorrhage on board the Oldendorff-owned *Nordmark* on January first, 1989. He fell down the stairway connecting the bridge to the captains deck.

He had a cerebral haemorrhage. But, despite the fact that the ship was berthed in the Dutch port of Ijmuiden, Betero was taken to his cabin and left for 36 hours. Only then was he transferred to hospital, where his serious condition was identified.

He remained in Dutch medical care, first at hospital and then at a rehabilitation centre, until March 16 when he returned to Kiribati.

The effects of his injury were debilitating. He lost strength and control in much of his left side, had difficulty in walking unaided, and was clearly unable to continue in his profession as a seafarer — a fact confirmed by independent medical examination.

Betero is a member of the ITF-affiliated Kiribati and Tuvalu Overseas Seamen's Union. The *Nordmark* was not covered by an ITF acceptable collective agreement, and Betero's individual contract of employment left much to be desired.

Along with a rate of pay under the International Labour Organisation's Recommended Minimum (many hundreds of dollars below ITF-acceptable rates) Betero was forced to pay half the costs of the companies' insurance premiums himself.

Additionally, the local agents in Kiribati, a company called South Pacific Marine Services (SPMS — a partnership of nine German shipowners, including Oldendorff), who had been responsible for engaging the

Kiribati crew on the *Nordmark* and appear to operate as local owners' representatives for their German owners, appear to operate a bizarre method for assessing insurance claims by injured Kiribati seafarers.

Under Betero's contract of employment it is stated that "Insurance against accidents shall be provided by the company so as to give benefits not less favourable, than those provided by the Workmen's Compensation Ordinance of Kiribati and Tuvalu."

SPMS interpretation (which is supported, personally, by Klaus Oldendorff in correspondence with the ITF) is that this means that the compensation payable to seafarers should be no more and no less than that paid under the Kiribati Workmen's Compensation Act.

The Kiribati Act does not cover seafarers serving in foreign flag ships, nor any other Kiribati national working overseas. The levels of compensation are based on Kiribati's national conditions and rates of wages. The maximum compensation figure of 12,500 Australian dollars may be a fair level for a national wage earner, but it is a derisory amount for an overseas worker, even one receiving sub-ILO wages rates like Betero. The Kiribati government accept this fact, and hence do not apply the scheme to overseas workers.

Oldendorff does... SPMS have incorrectly claimed that "No insurance company will pay for compensation unless we are able to provide a claim that has been processed by the authorities here in Kiribati."

The ITF were granted Mr Betero's formal power of attorney and calculated his claim in US dollars. Since he will never work again, the claim is based on his lost earnings potential — more than \$100,000

According to the P&I premium rate which the company should have been paying all of, Betero should have been

covered for much, much more than Aus\$12,500.

Receiving no positive response from Betero's claim, the ITF, acting for Betero, secured the arrest of the *Nordmark* on 19 March 1990 in Flushing Roads, the Netherlands. The vessel was released when the company posted a bond for US150,000 against Betero's claim.

Oldendorff's response to this has been to attempt to cheat the seafarer of his claim by tricking him into accepting A\$12,500 in final settlement of his claim. While it is always disgraceful for a shipowner to cheat crew, it is even more perverse that this company appears to be intent on cheating a crew-member out of insurance money that they have made him pay premiums for.

According to a sworn affidavit from Mr Betero, on March 19 Radio Kiribati announced that the SPMS manager wanted to see him at the SPMS office. The next day he telephoned the office and was asked to come in and talk to the manager in person. He went the next day (March 21). They were alone and met for 30 minutes.

The Manager informed him that the company which owned the *Nordmark* "was aware that I could not do any work to earn a living and in fact I was not entitled to receive \$12,500 however the company had generously agreed to pay me Aus\$12,500 - as compensation."

Betero said that the ITF had told him not to sign any document. The SPMS Manager said the ITF was "confusing things" "and he pulled out \$12,500 in \$100 and \$50 notes and placed it in front of me and said that the money was mine if I signed the agreement."

Betero said he should go and seek advice from the union. The manager told him "that I should not bother about the Seamen's Union on the footing that everything had been settled. I verily

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The USSR starts flagging out

One of the less agreeable features of Perestroika appears to be that Soviet shipowners are joining their capitalist comrades in re-registering their ships under Flags of Convenience.

Recent moves in this direction confirm ITF maritime unions' impression that their own shipowners believe they have uncovered a new and almost inexhaustible source of cheap, docile labour amongst the erstwhile "socialist" countries.

Shipping analysts believe that the motive behind the sudden desire by Soviet shipowning bodies to flag out their vessels is linked to the desperate shortage of hard currency. The slow pace of economic reform, particularly in the shipping sector, has led newly liberalised shipping concerns to seek a "quick fix". The strategy appears to work like this:

A fleet of Soviet ships is "sold" to a Western banking concern for hard currency. The ships are then leased-back to the original Soviet shipowner, nominally managed by an agent approved by the banks and placed under the flag of a country whose financial regulations satisfy the bank (in terms of mortgage and maritime lien rules). The shipowner continues to operate as before, hoping to generate more hard

currency through trading operations than the costs of the payments due to the banks. So, in theory, the company is transformed into a standard capitalist concern, with hard cash assets and profits.

None of this is presently technically possible under the flag of the USSR. For a start the banks are not satisfied with the financial rules which apply in the USSR but even more importantly the Soviet register imposes stringent crewing working hours and rest period regulations (for example, seafarers must have a seven hour rest period before shipping out of port). Observing these rules would stand in the way of generating enough profit to pay the banks, so a way has to be found round them. It all starts to sound very familiar, doesn't it?

This strategy for transformation appears to have been carefully worked out within Soviet shipping circles. A politically neutral open registry with "banker-friendly" mortgage rules and sympathetic banks were needed. The winner of the beauty contest was Cyprus, nominally neutral and with acceptable financial rules. Some months ago, in what we now realise was the first step in this process, the Soviet government concluded a bilat-

eral agreement with Cyprus allowing for the recognition of Soviet seafarers' certificates.

Leading Soviet shipping group Sovcomflot, which has a fleet of 120 vessels, appears to have been in the vanguard of this scheme. 18 months ago it was "reorganised" with a brief to "operate in the manner of a Western shipowner". It reflagged 18 of its gas carriers to Cyprus at the end of February.

But this initial reflagging was only the first step. After being turned down by a number of international banks, Sovcomflot have now stitched up a deal with a consortium of banks, led by Christiana of Norway and Banque Indosuez of France.

The deal puts forty Sovcomflot ships under Cyprus flag nominally under the control of the Geneva based ship management company Acomarit. The idea is that this will enable the vessels to be treated as Swiss and that the crews can therefore be "covered" by the existing ITF-acceptable agreement negotiated by its Swiss affiliate VHHL.

The banks give Sovcomflot hard currency for the financing of their new ship building program, and the Soviets lease back the ships from the banks. Essentially, the Soviets have used their ships as collateral for a hard currency loan.

The deal appears to hinge on the acceptability of the VHHL agreement by the ITF but this can't be taken for granted. Acceptance of a Total Crew Cost (TCC) agreement like the VHHL one requires not just that the level of the agreement is acceptable but also that there are no objections from the seafaring union in the country of beneficial ownership. Where that country doesn't have an ITF affiliate (like the USSR - at present at least) the policy requires the crew to be covered by the Standard ITF Worldwide Collective Agreement and to be enrolled in the ITF Special Seafarers' Department. Approval of the Soviet deal in its present form would require a change in

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... Serious unethical behaviour

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believed him then but I have found out that it is not the true position.

"Thereafter I told him that I should go home first and think about the matter - ie whether to accept and sign the document or not - and would return the following day."

The SPMS Manager told him that if he did not accept the Aus \$12,500 and sign the agreement there and then "he would send the money back."

Betero was told that the ITF court claim against the *Nordmark* was bound to be lost and so he accepted and signed the document. He accepted the money

because "I was in financial difficulty as I had no money". He signed the Release and Indemnity agreement, and the manager signed. Two "witnesses" signed later the same day, not in Betero's presence.

The ITF is appalled at this sort of action on the part of a major shipowner and is going to challenge, in the Dutch Courts, the submission of this "Release". In the light of this abhorrent behaviour by SPMS (and Oldendorff) we have chosen to publicise this case before the court hearing because of the serious unethical behaviour on the part of SPMS that it reveals.

WFTU to issue 'Pink Certificates'?

The ITF Blue Certificate, the document which is issued to FOC ships with ITF acceptable collective agreements, may soon face competition — if a motion submitted to the forthcoming Congress of the TUI Transport Workers is adopted. The TUI, the transport wing of the fast disappearing Stalinist dominated World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), is being asked to issue its own "Pink (not quite red) Certificate" which will certify that a ships' crew is receiving not ITF wages

but the vastly inferior standards laid down by the International Labour Organisation.

If it does produce such a certificate the TUI, which has always pretended to be a militant workers' organisation, will be in some very dubious company. Unscrupulous shipowners and fake "sweetheart" unions have long tried either to forge or to imitate the ITF's certificate in a whole rainbow of colours in the hope of escaping the attention of dockers' and seafarers' unions

in the ports visited by their ships. The ITF Standard Agreement, which is designed to raise the cost to shipowners of operating under fake flags as well as to benefit the crews, provides a basic monthly wage to an Able Seaman of \$821. The TUI sanctioned ILO minimum is a pathetic \$286. The Pink Certificate proposal comes from the "Concerned Seamen of the Philippines" — a small organisation affiliated to the

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... Crews complain of no union protection

Continued from page 14
policy, something which can only be decided by the Fair Practices Committee which meets in June.

The ITF has been informally contacted about this deal and told that the crews on these ships will leave the official Soviet seafarers' union and join the VHTL for the period of the agreement. Despite requests for full details of the agreement, these have not yet been forthcoming.

Meanwhile disturbing rumours have been received from various sources about the practical implementation of the deal. It is still not entirely clear, for example, that the greatly reduced crews of USSR seafarers on board the ships are actually being paid in US dollars. Nor, it seems, have they left the official union as promised and joined the VHTL, such a move apparently being against Soviet law.

The ITF has already begun to receive reports from Soviet crews on Cyprus flag ships who are angry and frustrated at the deterioration in their working conditions (from the reflagging). They are also angry that they have no say in their conditions because their trade union is, effectively, still a government agency. It is clear that these crews need the representation and protection of a genuine trade union, and, in the absence of that, there is a strong possibility that independent rank and file industrial action may be taken by frus-

trated crews.

It was precisely this kind of rank and file anger that led to the overthrow of the official leadership of the USSR Fish Industry Workers' Union. Meanwhile it is unclear what is going on inside the official Sea and River Workers' Union. Informal approaches by the union to some ITF European affiliates for "help" in their present crisis have been rebuffed, and the recent confusion over a deal with the Union of Greek Shipowners points to some internal crisis.

At the beginning of March, the Union of Greek Shipowners announced that they had just signed a deal with the Sea and River Workers' Union to supply low-cost USSR seafarers for Greek flag ships.

Not surprisingly, the ITF-affiliated Greek Seafarers' Federation PNO were outraged at this news. General Secretary Michael Zenzefyllis sent a message of protest to the USSR union stating that any such agreement "undermines not only the unity but also the very existence of International Union Movement."

Zenzefyllis stated that "the least we should expect" in such circumstances would be that "before moving onto signing an agreement of such great importance, to come in contact with us, listen to our point of view on the matter and become familiar with our problems."

Zenzefyllis called for the agreement to be terminated. He sent a copy of the message to the ITF, and has asked for the Fair Practices Committee meeting in June to discuss this move and necessary action.

ITF Assistant General Secretary Åke Selander then received a telex from a Kasimeras Matzkiavichus, who describes himself as the President of the Central Committee USSR Sea and River Workers Union, saying that "the central committee of the sea and river workers' union was not advised on the deal as far as we know the memorandum is a preliminary stage and does not have validity." It further states that the "union's" policy is that agreements must be signed "with the participation of the union and with its consent provided acting standards of ITF Collective Agreement are observed."

What is incredible about this statement is that it reveals one of two things. Either the "Central Committee" knew nothing at all about major union negotiations or it was lying. Our real sympathies must go, in the final analysis, to the USSR seafarers. Faced with companies who are keen to raise foreign capital and cut operating costs in every way, they have no-one to defend their rights, only a union that knows nothing and that they are forced, by law, to belong to. It is to be hoped that their anger will be translated into action soon.

...Sub-standard ILO rates would be acceptable to TUI unions

Continued from page 15

WFTU, which has always maintained its opposition to the Foc system but which now seems to be more interested in undercutting the wages of other Filipino seafarers. The TUI Congress itself is shrouded in mystery including some confusion about where it will actually be held. Originally it was scheduled to be in Sofia, Bulgaria, but it now appears to have been moved to Budapest, Hungary, where a number of unions have already pulled out of the WFTU's structures and more are planning to. It appears that the TUI, like its parent the WFTU, is finding it increasingly difficult to find a place to

pitch its tent as the "transmission-belt unions" of Eastern Europe which made up the vast bulk of its membership and provided virtually all its funds give way to democratic workers' organisations which want nothing whatsoever to do with it. The handful of independ-

ent unions from Western countries which have belonged to it for purely ideological reasons are now feeling increasingly isolated and uncomfortable. Proposals such as the "Pink Certificate" will do nothing to calm their worries.



PEOPLE

Johnny Grönberg, President of the Swedish Transport Workers' Union and Chairman of the ITF Road Transport Workers' Section, is leaving his position in the union as from the end of May. His successor as President is **Ingvar Åsén**.

Xabier Murua resigned as General Secretary of the transport federation of the ITF-affiliated Basque Garraio Federakundea (ELA-STV) for health reasons. The union's Federal Council has elected **Juan Crus López** to succeed him.

OBITUARIES

Toshio Nishimaki, former member of the Central Committee of the All-Japan Seamen's Union (JSU) and member of the ITF Executive Board from 1958 to 1962, died at the age of 90 on March 6. Nishimaki joined the All-Japan Seamen's Union (ratings organisation) in 1927 and became Director of the union's Education Department until 1940 when the union was disbanded by the military regime. After the war, the JSU was reorganised again as a union covering ratings and officers. Nishimaki joined the new union in 1947. Since then he represented the JSU in many international bodies, including the ITF Executive Board and the International Confederation of Free Trades Unions (ICFTU) Executive Board from 1951 to 1962.

(ILWU), on March 30 at the age of 88. Bridges, born in Australia, jumped ship in San Francisco in 1920 at the age of 19 after serving three years on Australian ships. In 1921 he joined the radical Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and was heavily involved in the failed national strike of seamen and marine engineers. In 1922 he went to work on the docks as a longshoreman in San Francisco and became active in the International Longshoremen's Association (ILA). In 1924 he was black-listed but continued to organise dock workers. In the summer of 1934, Bridges helped to lead a West Coast strike of maritime workers which was joined by warehouse workers. Employers responded by calling in strike-breakers backed up by armed police, which led on July 5, 1934 to the notorious "Bloody Thursday" shootings of strikers. This led to a four day General Strike starting on July 16. The strike succeeded. Longshoremen won a contract, received a union hiring hall, shorter hours and increased pay.

Bridges subsequently led a breakaway from the ILA which became the ILWU with Bridges as its founding President. In 1936 the US government launched the first of many efforts to deport Bridges, as an "undesirable alien" and a member of the Communist Party. To this day, ILWU members receive a paid holiday on Bridges' birthday in their collective agreement. In 1970, he was appointed to the San Francisco Port Commission by Mayor Joseph Alioto. He served on the Board for ten years. He retired, at the age of 76, from the ILWU in 1977. He leaves behind four children, five grandchildren and four great grandchildren. In a message to Jim Herman, President of the ILWU, ITF General Secretary Harold Lewis paid tribute to Harry Bridges: "His services to the West Coast longshoremen have won him an honoured place in the history of the labour movement. We know that his passing will be deeply mourned, far beyond any political or ideological divides."

The ITF has learnt with great regret of the death of **Harry Bridges**, founder of the US International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union

GENERAL SECRETARY: **HAROLD LEWIS**

PUBLICATIONS OFFICER: **DAVID COCKROFT**

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