

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

6 July 2000

Polish rail workers to strike over pay and restructuring of industry

On June 29, Polish rail unions announced an indefinite strike by their members would begin on July 7. The strike follows a breakdown in negotiations with management of Polish State Railways (PKP) over pay and restructuring.

The strike was originally planned for June 15, but union leaders postponed it in order to continue negotiations with the PKP. On June 30 the PKP announced that three of the largest unions had withdrawn their support for the strike and that it would not have a large-scale impact as just 10 percent of the workforce would participate. Management said that the unions—Solidarity, the Federation of PKP Workers and the Engine Drivers Union—had accepted their pledge that the state-owned company would receive a substantial government bailout. Management have stated that workers laid off would be given higher social security benefits than first proposed.

The government still proposes to privatise the PKP and has refused to increase the pay of rail workers.

French airline workers end strike

On July 2, staff ended their two-day strike against Air Littoral, Air Liberte, AOM and Swissair France. The action was held on the first official weekend of summer holidays and resulted in delays and cancellations.

Unions had called the strike following workers' fears of job losses if SAir Group, which owns Swissair, buys each of the airlines as is proposed. The airline unions are proposing the setting up of a new single company.

Public sector workers to strike in South Africa

Public sector workers from 12 different unions in South Africa are set to strike over pay. Most of them are claiming a rise of 10 percent for the next financial year. The ANC government said it was willing to negotiate over benefits, but would not back down from its offer of a 6 percent pay rise across the board. Public Service and Administration Minister Geraldine Fraser-

Moleketi said government negotiators were still locked in informal discussions with the union leaders, though formal negotiations broke down on June 30.

Municipal workers protest in Johannesburg

Members of the South African Municipal Workers Union (Samwu) protested in central Johannesburg on Monday, using refuse trucks to block traffic during the rush hour. They were opposing iGoli 2002, a plan to privatise Johannesburg municipal services. Four companies are due to run the Johannesburg Zoo, the Civic Theatre, the Metro Bus Company and the Fresh Produce Market from July 1. The plan is backed by the ANC, but has provoked widespread opposition from an alliance of ratepayer organisations, disaffected ANC councillors, the South African Students Congress (Sasco) and the South African Council of Churches. Samwu are planning indefinite strike action against the privatisation from next week.



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