

Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

16 November 2000

Thousands march against poverty and unemployment in Bulgaria

On November 11, 10,000 people marched through the capital Sofia to protest against poverty and the “widespread corruption” of the present UDF government.

The protesters, who included many elderly, carried placards declaring “Enough misery, enough humiliation”, “We want jobs”, and “Bread, Work and Security” and called on the government to resign. The demonstration was organised by a new coalition group called New Left that consists of the Socialist Party and three small social-democratic parties.

Protest rally against the Hungarian government

Over 5,000 workers staged a mass protest on November 11, in the National Sports Hall in Budapest. The demonstration called by six trade union federations, appealed to Prime Minister Victor Orban and the parliament to revoke recent amendments made to the labour code.

Among the demands at the demonstration were better conditions in the health service, in education, in research, in administration and for public security workers.

Several speakers at the rally accused the government of building a “social iron curtain” between Hungary and the EU and refusing to engage in dialogue with the trade unions. The protesters declared that they were prepared to go on strike to defend their interests.

Aer Lingus catering staff in 24-hour stoppage

On November 15, catering staff employed by the Irish airline Aer Lingus began a 24-hour strike at Dublin airport. The staff, who are members of the SIPTU trade union, are in dispute with the company over pay.

The action led to reduced catering services on Aer Lingus flights. The strike has not affected flights, but some taxi drivers have refused to cross the picket line at the entrances to the airport, causing general disruption and delays. The stoppage follows recent industrial

action over pay against Aer Lingus by cabin crew, baggage handlers and clerical staff.

Irish rail staff and teachers strike

Railway signalling staff in Ireland struck for 24 hours on November 15, after more than three years of negotiations between the NBRU and SIPTU trade unions and rail management over the restructuring of the railway system. The strike brought the rail network to a close as all scheduled trains services were cancelled. The workers have threatened to continue the dispute, with a two-day strike next week and a further three days the following week.

The same day, 16,000 secondary school teachers in Ireland also struck for 24 hours to demand a pay increase of 30 percent. More than 600 secondary schools were picketed. The teachers, members of the ASTI trade union, stated that they would withdraw supervision on six days over the next three weeks. Many schools have indicated they will close on those days. Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern has opposed the strike and said that the teachers' pay claim cannot be met.

Strike at Sierra Leone post service

Hundreds of angry workers at the Sierra Leone Postal Services (SALPOST) went on strike last Thursday. They are protesting non-payment of salaries for eight months and are demanding a pay rise. Protestors closed all access routes leading into SALPOST and placards were put up on the office building. They have given the government 21 days notice within which to meet their demands.

In an emergency meeting, the Permanent Secretary for the Transport and Communication, Andrew Bangalie, disclosed that his ministry owes SALPOST 350 million Leones (about \$180,000). He admitted that the money was taken out of SALPOST's savings and put into the government's coffers. Speaking to the angry workers, Bangalie unsuccessfully tried to convince them that his ministry was trying to raise the money

needed to pay them before the 21 days was up.

Sudanese postal strike against non-payment of wages

Sudanese postal workers went on strike Monday to press their demand for unpaid wages, affecting the deliveries of many countries in the region.

The Sudanese Post and Telegraph trade union declared a three-day strike to press demands for the payment of salary arrears and increments. Both outgoing and incoming mail was halted, affecting many other countries whose international mail passes through Sudan.



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