

# Workers Struggles: Europe & Africa

15 February 2001

## **Taxi drivers in Dagestan strike over certification scheme**

On February 14, "bus route" taxi drivers in the city of Mahachkala in the Caucasus, began strike action to protest the imposition of a new driver certification scheme. The new certificates are to cost each driver 800 RUR. The drivers argue that the scheme is unnecessary as they have already been examined by a technical commission and given authorisation to carry passengers.

The strike caused severe congestion in the city, as the taxis are the main means of public transportation.

## **Rolls Royce workers in England strike against proposed job losses**

Rolls Royce workers based at the company's Ansty plant near Coventry, England took strike action on February 9. The strike involved hundreds of workers who picketed in front of the main gates at the plant in protest at proposed redundancies and the transfer of work to Canada and another site in Bristol.

The Manufacturing Science and Finance union reported that 600 compulsory redundancy notices have already been sent out after Rolls Royce stated there would be no compulsory redundancies. The union has threatened further strike action.

## **Vauxhall workers in England vote to strike against closure of plant**

On February 9, Vauxhall auto workers in the Transport and General Workers Union voted by 58 percent to take strike action against the company's decision to end production at its Luton plant in Bedfordshire, England. The TGWU is the largest union in Vauxhall, representing almost four out of five employees.

Vauxhall is to end car production at Luton in 12 months time with the loss of 2,000 jobs. Last week the company announced plans to invest £200 million at its factory at Ellesmere Port, Cheshire.

Members of two other unions at the plant voted

against strike action. The Amalgamated Engineering and Electrical Union announced that its members voted by 1,363 to 1,074 against a strike but said there was a majority among members for industrial action short of a strike. The Manufacturing Science and Finance union, representing white-collar workers at the plant, reported that its members had voted against all forms of industrial action.

## **Europe wide support for Hungarian airline maintenance workers strike**

An attempt by the Hungarian airline Malev to break a strike of aircraft maintenance workers over the last week by sending the work abroad has failed due to joint cross-border action by transport workers.

The conflict began on February 5, when the RMFSz union (representing 800 aircraft maintenance workers at Malev subsidiary, Aeroplex) struck for a 15 percent pay rise, prompting the company to announce it would transfer maintenance of its Fokker fleet to Vienna and of its Boeing aircraft to Warsaw.

But after an appeal by the Aeroplex strikers, workers in Austria, Germany and Poland refused to undertake the maintenance work, preventing the airline from operating its flights. On February 6, the Austrian HTV union persuaded Austrian Airlines not to handle Malev aircraft, two of which were turned away from Vienna. Since then the OeTV in Germany and the ZZNPL and LOT NSZZ 'Solidarnosc' in Poland have pledged not to handle any work rejected by the RMFSz as part of its strike. Malev is currently believed to be attempting to have some aircraft serviced by non-union workers at Warsaw Airport.

On February 12, members of the Hungarian Free Trade Union of Railway Employees scheduled a 30-minute solidarity stoppage in support of the maintenance strike. There are reports that in the last days Aeroplex has offered an immediate seven percent pay increase, plus a two percent increase later this year. The unions are keen to accept the new proposals.

## **Irish airline cabin crew staff to continue dispute over pay**

Cabin crew staff employed by the Irish airline Aer Lingus are set to strike again for 24 hours on February 16 in their dispute over pay. On February 14, the IMPACT trade union representing the workers was set to announce two further strike dates if agreement had not been reached with management.

During the dispute the 1,400 striking cabin crew have grounded the entire Aer Lingus fleet by holding two 24-hour stoppages—one before Christmas and the other last week.

The Irish Labour Court has called on the workers to accept the pay proposals put forward by Aer Lingus, despite these having been already rejected by a 98 percent majority. IMPACT say that the Labour Court proposals would mean staff still having to reach 35 years of service before earning an annual salary of £25,000.

Another 650 cabin crew staff employed by Aer Lingus in the SIPTU trade union have also rejected the Labour Court recommendations by a large majority. However, the union announced that they would not strike pending the outcome of renewed talks with management at the Labour Court.

### **Nigerian strikers threatened with sack**

Some 22,000 government employees have been on strike for more than a week over demands for a higher minimum wage in Cross River State, Nigeria. In the last days, Cross River State Governor Donald Duke had ordered them to report to work or be sacked. Duke insisted a pay rise would not be forthcoming, arguing that no commitment had been made to pay above the nationally-imposed minimum wage of N5, 500 per month (N1, 000 = \$9.30). An agreement with unions last December to pay N6, 500 was on the basis that of an improvement in state finances. "This has not happened", Duke said.

### **Teachers' on strike in Guinea-Bissau**

Schools throughout Guinea-Bissau have been paralyzed since February 5 when teachers began a nationwide strike to pressure the government for payment of the salary arrears.

Pupils from schools in Gabou and Canchungo near the nation's capital Bissau staged demonstrations Friday and Monday in solidarity with their teachers. Police used teargas to disperse the demonstrations, causing



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