

Workers struggles: Europe & Africa

5 April 2001

French Eurostar workers set to strike

Eurostar services through the Channel Tunnel are to be affected by strike action by French Eurostar employees. The strike, involving several French trade unions, began yesterday evening and is expected to conclude at 5am tomorrow.

The company advised passengers that although it hopes to run most of its London to Paris and Brussels trains, tickets could be exchanged or be refunded. Eurotunnel's car and freight shuttle services through the Channel Tunnel are not expected to be affected.

Last week, Eurostar's London to Brussels services were hit by a 24-hour strike in Belgium.

Cypriot strikes disrupt airports

Flights were cancelled at Cyprus's two airports this week, after a strike of civil servants. The civil servants' and the bank employees' unions, two of the largest on the island, called the strike in protest at the government's plan to force their members to contribute to a national health scheme. The Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation reported that hospitals were accepting only emergency cases.

German pilots win pay increase

The German airline, Lufthansa, is set to make pilots an increased pay offer after a strike grounded 112 domestic flights on Wednesday morning.

The pilots' union, United Cockpit, called the strike after eight weeks of talks over demands for pay increases of between 18-30 percent broke down last Thursday. Lufthansa said about 10,000 passengers were affected by the cancellations.

The pilots claim their salaries are 30 percent below the global average, following Lufthansa's decision to abolish the 13-month salary structure paid annually in order to cut personnel costs. United Cockpit represents about 6,500 pilots from all airlines across Germany, of which 3,500 work for Lufthansa.

Wednesday's action was the second strike by Lufthansa employee's in less than a week. Warning

strikes by 9,000 ground and cabin crew last week forced management to increase a pay award to 3.5 percent and offer a bonus over a 14-month period.

In March the carrier reported a larger than expected profit increase for the year 2000—a 44 percent rise of 1.04bn euros (\$948m, £678.7m).

Mineworkers on strike in Namibia

Mineworkers employed by Roessing at Arandis, Namibia have gone on strike against a company attempt to drive up productivity by rescheduling tea breaks. Roessing Uranium employs over 800 workers.

Roessing management threatened to sack up to half of their employees, after the strike was declared illegal strike on Friday. About 400 members of the Mineworkers Union of Namibia (MUN) gathered outside the main gate at 8.00am last Friday to hand in a petition demanding the company negotiate "in good faith" for a solution.

According to a union press statement, Roessing management refused to accept the workers' petition. Workers have voted to continue their action, despite the threat of sackings, and have demanded management accept the petition.

Management was to meet with MUN on Tuesday to discuss the conflict. Roessing has said there "are no grounds for the dispute" as they had already obtained acceptance from the union for rescheduling in November last year.



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