

# Workers Struggles: Europe and Africa

13 September 2001

## **Deutsche BA threatened by strike**

Pilots at Deutsche BA, the loss-making German subsidiary of British Airways, are gearing up for strike action next week to support their wage demands.

Germany's pilots trade union Cockpit have said that if Deutsche BA does not present "a negotiable offer" in current wage negotiations, strike action would be taken next week. The trade union is asking for salary increases of more than 20 percent but the company has so far offered only a three- percent increase.

Deutsche BA is the closest competitor to Germany's national carrier, Lufthansa, which was hit by a pilots' strike earlier in the year.

Aviation experts are warning of dire consequences. "Massive strikes could encourage British Airways to take radical action at Deutsche BA and possibly even close down the airline," said Jürgen Pieper, analyst at Bankhaus Metzler. Deutsche BA has failed to make a profit since it was founded in 1992. Deutsche BA's losses last year totalled just under DM50 million, but they are expected to rise dramatically this year as a result of the slump in the economy.

## **72 hour strike at Air Littoral**

Trade Unions at Littoral Air in Montpellier, France decided Saturday to prolong a strike started the day before by 72 hours. The announcement was made after talks between the airline and the unions, ongoing since last June, broke up.

The strike against deteriorating pay, conditions and unfair dismissals led to the cancellation of 70 percent of flights through Montpellier and 85 percent of the flights through Nice, Italy.

## **Public service workers in Newcastle, England to strike**

Employees at Newcastle City Council have voted to strike against privatisation.

A ballot of 550 IT staff returned a 65 percent majority for industrial action. Public service union UNISON has said it will expect all its 6,000 members working for the council, except those employed in schools and nurseries,

not to cross picket lines.

The action is directed against the Labour-run council's plans to bring in a private company to run parts of its IT and housing services.

## **Bulgarian Football Referees strike over violence**

Bulgarian football referees have gone on strike after one was beaten up outside his home in the Black Sea port of Bourgas last week.

Dimiter Kostov was one of a number of referees who signed a declaration the previous day highlighting the increasing number of violent attacks against referees before matches. Kostov was attacked by two people, who hit him with metal pipes as he went to buy newspapers. He is the second referee to be beaten up this season.

In the declaration sent to the presidents of the Bulgarian Football Union and the Professional Football League, as well as the management and fans of professional football clubs, the referees voiced their alarm over the "growing number of instances of psychological pressure and physical violence against them, before, during and after matches".

The referees claim they have been accused of corruption, bias and "acting as criminals" and the situation is exacerbated by football club presidents, coaches and reporters who "blame them for everything". The referees said that they would not attend matches until the football authorities guaranteed their safety.

## **Lagos petrol pump attendants strike for higher pay**

Pump attendants at several Mobil petrol stations in the Lagos area of Nigeria were on strike for two days last week in support of their demand for higher wages. Sales of petrol, kerosene, gas and other petroleum products were suspended.

P.M. News in Lagos spoke to one striker, who gave his name as Kayode, who confirmed the workers were pressing for improvements in their wages and working conditions. He said that attempts to speak with the Group Public Affairs Officer of Mobil Oil in Lagos had proved abortive.

## **South African Platinum miners continue their strike**

The strike at Northam Platinum mine in Rustenburg, South Africa, in support of a demand for a 15 percent pay rise, has entered its fifth week. Negotiations between the company management and the National Union of Miners (NUM) have been abandoned.

Outside the mine the daily pickets have taken up the chant, “We will not budge until our demands are met. We are fighting for our rights.” One of the strikers, John Msimang, said he had a wife and three children to feed and had no alternative but to fight for the increase. “We have continued with the strike for too long to give up now,” he said.

General manager Glen Lewis maintains that the mine cannot afford to pay the increase, because the prices of palladium and platinum have fallen significantly. He claims that since July the price has dropped by more than \$150 per ounce to \$441.

### **Zimbabwean engineering workers threatened with court action**

Managers at Craster International (Pvt) Ltd in Zimbabwe have applied for a peace order against 421 engineering workers who were suspended pending dismissal. The workers were threatened with the sack because they supported a two-day strike for higher wages, called by the National Engineering Workers’ Union (NEWU) on August 22 and 23.

Management is claiming that the strikers have threatened to kill them. They have applied for an order restraining the workers from approaching within 500 metres of their homes and the company’s premises in New Ardbennie, Belgravia and Willowvale. The order authorises the police to arrest and detain any worker who disobeys the directive, charging them with contempt of court. A representative of the workers dismisses the allegations as complete fabrications and accuses the management of attempting to avoid paying “retrenchment packages” by seeking the peace order.



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