

INTERNATIONAL VIEWPOINT

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EDWIN MADUNAGU



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AROUND THE WORLD

HONG KONG

Strike at Cathay Pacific

SINCE January 13, Cathay Pacific Airways (CPA) flight attendants, represented by the Flight Attendants Union (FAU), have been on strike.

On January 24, thirty-six feminist, labour, student, religious, community and pro-democracy organizations in Hong Kong formed the Coalition in Support of the FAU Strike.

According to the FAU, crew members of CPA have often been required to overwork and operate out of their position. The situation has been deteriorating since August 1992, when for cost-cutting reasons management stopped recruitment. The FAU repeatedly pointed out that this problem would both lower crew morale and create safety problems due to staff shortages.

In November 1992, the FAU said that if the CPA management did not agree to improve the staffing situation, the over 3500 FAU members would start limited industrial action — by working only in their positions — from December 1. The CPA management reacted by selectively suspending three crew members who refused to work out of their positions on December 12 and then dismissed them on December 14.

Subsequently, management announced a 6% pay raise for 1993, falling well behind the 9-11% rate of inflation.

Since the beginning of the strike, management has refused to hold any negotiations while the workers were still out. When the Chinese New Year drew near, in the interest of the travelling public, the FAU agreed to call off the strike immediately if management agreed to reinstate the three dismissed workers and continue to negotiate on the salary and staffing questions.

Management's response was to send warning letters to crew members and refuse to deliver pay cheques. Union noticeboards at the CPA headquarters were torn down.

Yet Cathay Pacific is making money and is one of the most productive long-haul airlines: its profits for the first half of 1992 were US\$1.26b, up 13.3% from the same period in 1991. Union spokespeople say that, in the run up to the 1997 reversion of Hong Kong to Chinese rule, the company is trying to maximize profits before selling a majority share to a mainland concern.

Since January 21, the flight attendants have staged overnight sit-ins outside Governor House and have begun a series of activities



which include demonstrations at the airport, public petition-signing and international outreach.

For the first time in the company's history, its three unions are standing together — with the 1,100 pilots and engineers (AOA) and the 3,800 ground crew (LSU) also involved in a pay dispute.

Those interested in the strike support coalition should contact the Trade Union Education Centre/Apo Leung, 2/F, 101-107 Portland Street, Kowloon HONG KONG; Fax (852) 770-7388. Fax messages of support and information about solidarity actions (for example, pickets outside Cathay Pacific offices) to the FAU at (852) 764-6593. Protest letters should be sent to: D.A. Gledhill, CPA Building, HK International Airport, Hong Kong. ★

SRI LANKA

Lock-out in Colombo

ON December 27, 1992, in a dispute over a union request for a loan, the Sri Lankan Associated Battery Manufacturers (ABM) management locked out their work force, represented by the Commercial and Industrial Workers Union (CIWU).

In addition, a local union leader has been barred from the site and three employees have been dismissed. ABM has a monopoly on battery production in Sri Lanka. The major share in the company, previously held by the British Chloride Company, now belongs to the Indian Birla Company.

The ABM work force has a long history of militancy and enjoys the best terms and conditions in the private sector. According to the CIWU, the ABM Board of Directors, represented by the Employers Federation of Ceylon, has used the loan dispute as a pretext to launch a union-busting operation. Letters of protest can be sent to: The Secretary General, Employers Federation of Ceylon, 30 Sulaiman Terrace, Off Jawata Road, Colombo-5, Sri Lanka. Messages of solidarity to: CIWU, 17 Barracks Lane, Colombo-2, Sri Lanka. ★

N. IRELAND

Casement Park Trial

OVER 41 Irish nationalists have been accused of offences related to the killing of two British soldiers in March 1988. Already, five men have received life sentences for abetting murder.

None of the accused were involved in actually killing the soldiers; their conviction rests on an interpretation of the legal doctrine of common purpose, hitherto only previously used in South Africa.

The tragic sequence of events began when three unarmed Republicans were shot dead in Gibraltar by a British "anti-terrorist" unit. The concern and anger that these shootings provoked was demonstrated by the huge turnout at their funeral. At this funeral, the Loyalist Michael Stone launched a hand grenade and gun assault on the mourners; three men were shot dead and over 30 were injured.

The night before the funeral for one of Stone's victims, Kevin Brady, there was yet another murder of an Irish Catholic by a UDA squad. Thus, the cortege set off in a mood of high tension.

At one point, a car drove into the funeral at high speed; as frightened mourners surrounded the vehicle, its two occupants produced revolvers and a shot was discharged.

A group of mourners (all unarmed) advanced and disarmed the two men. The car was searched for bombs and the men were taken to the nearby Casement Park, whereupon it was discovered that they were soldiers.

Sometime later an armed unit from the IRA arrived, took the two men into their own custody and shot them. The members of this unit have never been identified or arrested but many others have.

The burden of the State's case against the Casement Accused is that they had a common purpose with those who actually did carry out the killings. This is particularly absurd in that three of those currently serving life for "aiding and abetting murder" — Pat Kane, Sean Kelly and Michael Timmons — were not even present at Casement Park and could not possibly share a common purpose with an IRA unit of whose existence they were unaware.

Like all the accused, they are only guilty of attending a Republican funeral and defending themselves. Two soldiers were killed and the State is looking for vengeance.

For more information, contact the Justice for the Casement Park Accused Campaign, c/o Green Ink Bookshop, 8 Archway Mall, London N19 5RG, Great Britain. — **Steven Hepburn** ★