

3-30-1994

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Pilots Suspend Strike After Management Admits to Violations of Collective Bargaining Agreement

by LADB Staff

Category/Department: Mexico

Published: 1994-03-30

On March 24, the Pilots Union (Asociacion de Pilotos Aviadores, ASPA) called off a planned strike against Aerovias de Mexico after the company admitted that recent policies had violated a collective bargaining agreement with the union and agreed to take steps to rectify the violations.

The strike, scheduled to begin on March 25, was also averted on the basis of mediation efforts by the Federal Conciliation and Arbitration Committee (Junta Federal de Conciliacion y Arbitraje), which brought representatives from the two sides together at the headquarters of the Labor Secretariat (Secretaria de Trabajo y Prevision Social, STPS).

Still, several issues remain to be resolved, such as differences over salary and benefits. The mediation did succeed in removing the main obstacle separating the two sides when Aerovias promised to discontinue the practice of hiring non-union employees to fill slots on regional airlines such as Aeromonterrey, Aerocaribe and Aerocozumel. ASPA had also previously complained about the Aerovias practice of hiring non-ASPA pilots for charter flights on Aerolitoral.

A strike against Mexicana and Aeromexico would have virtually paralyzed domestic flights during Holy Week, traditionally one of the busiest periods for travel in Mexico. For example, officials at Mexico City's Benito Juarez International Airport were expecting a total of 770 daily departures and arrivals during that week, compared with an average of 700 flights per day the rest of the year. According to La Jornada, because of the threat of a strike, more tickets than usual were sold on buses, railroads and alternate airlines such as such as Transportes Aereos Ejecutivos (Taesa) during the two weeks before the start of Holy Week.

A few weeks before the strike was settled, ASPA received a strong endorsement from the Canadian Air Line Pilots Association, which took out full-page advertisements on March 7 in several Mexican newspapers. "Such anti-democratic, anti- union practices are outside the recognized norms of a developed, free-market society and can only bring disrepute to any nation or company that permits them," the advertisement said. "Further, such practices invite boycotts that will be damaging to the financial well-being of Mexico's airlines and its tourist industry."

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