

C/S - CSSR TOURISTS STRANDED IN SCANDINAVIA

STOCKHOLM, AUG. 23 (RFE SPECIAL/THRANE) -- SEVERAL HUNDRED CZECHOSLOVAK TOURISTS CURRENTLY ARE STRANDED IN SCANDINAVIA.

JIRI JANCIK, FIRST SECRETARY OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK EMBASSY IN STOCKHOLM, SAID TODAY THAT "TO OUR KNOWLEDGE, ALL PERSONS CARRYING CZECHOSLOVAK PASSPORTS ARE REFUSED PERMISSION TO DISEMBARK AT SASSNITZ. WE HAVE ASKED SWEDISH POLICE AT TRELLEBORG TO TELL THE TOURISTS TO WAIT IN SWEDEN UNTIL IT IS POSSIBLE FOR THEM TO GO HOME."

SASSNITZ AND TRELLEBORG ARE THE END STATIONS OF A RAILWAY FERRY BETWEEN EAST GERMANY AND SWEDEN ON THE SHORTEST ROUTE BETWEEN SWEDEN AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

JANCIK COULD NOT SAY PRECISELY HOW MANY CZECHOSLOVAKS WERE IN SWEDEN BUT HE GUESSED THERE WERE "SEVERAL HUNDRED". VISAS OF MANY OF THEM, HE SAID, WERE EXPIRING THIS WEEKEND. HIS EMBASSY HAD ASKED THE SWEDISH GOVERNMENT TO PROLONG THE VISAS, AND GOT A POSITIVE REPLY, HE SAID. THE EMBASSY IS ALSO SEEKING TO PROVIDE THE TOURISTS WITH UPKEEP WHILE THEY ARE WAITING.

"THE SWEDISH RED CROSS PROMISED TO TAKE CARE OF THEM," JANCIK SAID. "THIS GOES MAINLY FOR STOCKHOLM, WHILE IN TRELLEBORG IT WILL BE THE SOCIAL WELFARE AUTHORITIES. WE FEEL CONFIDENT THAT THE TOURISTS WILL NOT NEED TO SUFFER ANY HARDSHIPS AND WE WILL DO FOR THEM WHATEVER IS IN OUR POWER."

JANCIK ALSO SAID A GROUP OF 16 CZECHOSLOVAK CHILDREN IN SWEDEN ON A VACATION EXCHANGE SCHEME THE PAST TWO WEEKS WERE TO LEAVE FOR HOME TODAY AND COULD NOT.

"THE ORGANIZATION THAT INVITED THEM HAS MADE ARRANGEMENTS TO PROLONG THEIR STAY AND THEY ARE IN GOOD HANDS," HE SAID.

POLICE AT TRELLEBORG SAY CZECHOSLOVAKS ARE BEGINNING TO ASSEMBLE THERE "IN CONSIDERABLE NUMBERS", HOPING TO TAKE THE FERRY HOME. MANY OF THEM KNOW NOTHING OR HAVE ONLY "A HAZY IDEA" ABOUT THE SITUATION BACK HOME, A POLICE SPOKESMAN SAID.

THEY ARE BEING LODGED IN A SUMMER CAMP AND AT HOTELS WHILE WAITING FOR THE EAST GERMAN AND CZECHOSLOVAK FRONTIERS TO OPEN.

IN DENMARK, POLICE THERE SAID ABOUT 500 CZECHOSLOVAK TOURISTS ARE SIMILARLY STRANDED. VISAS ARE BEING PROLONGED WHEN NECESSARY AND DANISH WELFARE AGENCIES ARE OFFERING ARMY RATIONS AND MONEY FOR THOSE WHO WANT IT DURING THE DURATION OF THEIR INVOLUNTARY STAY.

BMCG /HE/rr

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