

CN 225

X/13 CURT -- E. EUROPE TOURS NOW UNPOPULAR IN NORTH

STOCKHOLM, AUG. 23 (RFE SPECIAL/THRANE) -- THE SOVIET TRAVEL AGENCY IN STOCKHOLM, FOLKTOURIST, HAS HAD TO CANCEL ALL TOURS TO THE SOVIET UNION FOR THE TIME BEING, ITS SPOKESMAN SAID TODAY.

THE AGENCY SPECIALIZES IN GROUP TRIPS TO LENINGRAD, MOSCOW AND YALTA WITH ONE TRIP PER WEEK ON THE AVERAGE DURING THE SUMMER. BUT IT HAS HAD SO MANY CANCELLATIONS THE PAST THREE DAYS THAT ALL TOURS HAVE BEEN CANCELLED UNTIL THE END OF SEPTEMBER.

FOLKTOURISTS SPOKESMAN SAID THAT THE TRIPS WERE CALLED OFF "NOT FOR POLITICAL REASONS, BUT ONLY BECAUSE PEOPLE DO NOT SEEM TO WISH TO GO."

OTHER LARGE TRAVEL AGENCIES IN SCANDINAVIA WITH EASTERN DESTINATIONS EITHER HAVE CANCELLED OR ARE PUBLICLY ADMITTING TO DOUBTS ABOUT CONTINUING TRIPS TO THE SOVIET UNION AS A RESULT OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK INVASION.

SOME OF THE LARGEST AGENCIES, SWEDENS NYMAN OCH SCHULTZ AND DENMARKS TJAEREBORG WILL CARRY THROUGH AS PLANNED FOR PASSENGERS WHO WISH TO FULFILL BOOKINGS, BUT THOSE WHO WANT TO CANCEL A BOOKED TRIP MAY DO SO AND HAVE THEIR DEPOSITS RETURNED.

ALL SCANDINAVIAN TRAVEL AGENCIES REQUESTIONED TODAY REPORTED THE SAME STORY. THEIR MAIN TARGETS IN EASTERN EUROPE THIS YEAR HAVE BEEN RUMANIA, BULGARIA AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA. THEY SAID ALL TRAVEL TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA HAS NOW BEEN STOPPED, TRIPS CONTINUE TO RUMANIA AS BEFORE WITH NO SIGNIFICANT CANCELLATIONS, AND TRIPS ARE GOING TO BULGARIA BUT WITH CONSIDERABLE CANCELLATIONS.

THE GENERAL DECISION AMONG THE TOUR AGENCIES HAS BEEN THAT PEOPLE WHO DO NOT WISH TO GO TO AN EASTERN DESTINATION BECAUSE OF THIS WEEKS DEVELOPMENTS MAY HAVE ALL THEIR MONEY REFUNDED, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE CANCELLING UNDER THE CUSTOMARY TWO-WEEK DEADLINE FOR FULL RETURN OF DEPOSITS.

MA / 0 / pp 1720/68