

CN 248

X/13 BERLIN -- CSSR YOUTH GROUPS TO RETURN HOME AS PLANNED

BERLIN, AUG 23 (RFE SPECIAL/BELLER) -- TWO CZECHOSLOVAK YOUTH GROUPS WHO ARE VISITING WEST BERLIN ON INVITATION OF LOCAL CITY AUTHORITIES AND STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS HAVE DECIDED TO RETURN TO THEIR COUNTRY NEXT WEEK AS SCHEDULED.

ONE GROUP, COMPRISING 7 STUDENTS AND 3 ASSISTANT PROFESSORS OF THE PRAGUE INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (TECHNISCHE HOCHSCHULE), ARRIVED IN WEST BERLIN VIA EAST GERMANY AUG. 20.

THE STUDENTS HAD BEEN INVITED BY THE STUDENT GOVERNMENT (ASTA) OF THE BERLIN TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY FOR A ONE-WEEK STAY AT THE SIEGMUNDSTADT STUDENT CENTER.

ACCORDING TO SPOKESMEN FOR THE WEST BERLIN CITY GOVERNMENT AND THE TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY, THE GROUP INTENDS TO CONTINUE WITH ITS REGULAR VISITING PROGRAM AND TO LEAVE THE CITY NEXT MONDAY.

THE STUDENTS' ITINERARY IS STILL UNCERTAIN, SINCE THE EAST GERMAN RAILWAY LINK BETWEEN DRESDEN AND PRAGUE HAS BEEN CUT OFF.

ANOTHER CZECHOSLOVAK GROUP OF 17 YOUTHS AGED BETWEEN 16 AND 22 YEARS IS PARTICIPATING IN AN INTERNATIONAL YOUTH CAMP HELD HERE FROM AUG 11 TO 24 ON THE ISLAND OF SCHWANENWERDER IN WEST BERLIN'S HAVEL RIVER.

THE CAMP, THIS YEAR WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM ISRAEL, NORWAY, BRITAIN, HOLLAND, BELGIUM, WEST GERMANY AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA IS CONDUCTED ANNUALLY BY AUTHORITIES OF WEST BERLIN'S TEMPELHOF DISTRICT.

IT IS THE FIRST TIME THIS YEAR THAT YOUNG CZECHOSLOVAKS HAVE ATTENDED.

THE GROUP, WHICH ARRIVED HERE VIA DRESDEN, IS EXPECTED TO LEAVE WEST BERLIN BY AIR FOR NUREMBERG AND TO CROSS INTO CZECHOSLOVAKIA FROM BAVARIA OR AUSTRIA BECAUSE THE EAST GERMAN TRAVEL VISAS OF ITS MEMBERS WILL EXPIRE AUG. 24.

TRAVEL EXPENSES FOR THE RETURN TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA WILL BE BORNE BY THE WEST BERLIN SENATE.

THE GROUP LEADER TOLD A WEST BERLIN NEWSMAN TODAY THAT THE YOUNG CZECHOSLOVAK VISITORS WERE LISTENING TO RADIO NEWS FROM THEIR COUNTRY AROUND THE CLOCK AND THAT ALL OF THEM WERE VERY SHOCKED AND DEPRESSED. HE WOULD NOT COMMENT ON THE SITUATION, IN ORDER NOT TO ENDANGER THE YOUTHS ON THEIR RETURN TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA. HE SAID THEY HAD NO CONTACT WITH RELATIVES IN THE CSSR AT PRESENT.

OTHER CZECHOSLOVAKS WHO ARE IN WEST BERLIN ON PRIVATE VISITS AND WERE INTERVIEWED BY A LOCAL RADIO STATION TODAY SAID THEY WERE NOT SURE WHETHER THEY WOULD RETURN TO THEIR COUNTRY BUT WANTED TO WATCH FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS FIRST.

THE NUMBER OF CZECHOSLOVAK CITIZENS CURRENTLY IN WEST BERLIN IS ESTIMATED AT 500 TO 550. THEY WILL BE GRANTED FINANCIAL AND OTHER ASSISTANCE BY LOCAL CITY AUTHORITIES IF THEY ARE UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO RETURN TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA AT THIS TIME.

BG/0/RT 1825/68

H.J.