

VIENNA , AUG. 24 (UPI)- "WE COULD NOT CARE LESS ABOUT THE FATE OF 20 CAPITALISTIC SOCCER PLAYERS."

THE WORDS CAME FROM A SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIAL AT PRAGUE. THEY WERE ADDRESSED TO OFFICIALS OF THE AUSTRIAN SOCCER CHAMPION TEAM RAPID F.C. WHO SOUGHT SUPPORT TO GET OUT OF OCCUPIED CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

THE AUSTRIANS, WHO MEANWHILE RETURNED AFTER ENCOUNTERING DIFFICULTIES ON THEIR WAY BACK, HAVE LAUNCHED AN OFFICIAL PROTEST WITH THE SOVIET EMBASSY IN VIENNA.

"OUR MOVE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH POLITICS," RAPID MANAGER FRIEDRICH GRASSI SAID. "BUT WE WANT TO MAKE WIDELY KNOWN THAT SECURITY OF TRAVELLING SPORTSMEN IS NO LONGER ASSURED IN WARSAW PACT COUNTRIES."

GRASSI, WHO LED HIS TEAM TO PRAGUE FOR A MID-WEEK INTERTOTO GAME AGAINST DUKLA, SAID HE ASKED THE RUSSIANS FOR A TRANSPORT PERMIT HOME AFTER TANKS HAD BLOCKED THE ROADS.

THE SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICIAL TOLD HIM "GET OUT OF HERE. WE HAVE OTHER THINGS TO DO THAN TO GET YOU A TRIP THROUGH THE COUNTRY. WE COULD NOT CARE LESS THAN ABOUT THE FATE OF 20 CAITALISTIC SOCCER PLAYERS."

F.C. RAPID DECIDED NOT TO PLAY AGAINST ANY SOVIET TEAM "UNLESS WE GET A SATISFACTORY REPLY FROM THE SOVIET EMBASSY HERE."

THE AUSTRIAN SOCCER CHAMPION HAS REPEATEDLY MET SOVIET TEAMS IN INTERNATIONAL COMPETITIONS IN PREVIOUS SEASONS.

"IF WE SHOULD BE DRAWN AGAINST SOVIETS IN FUTURE EUROPEAN CUP ROUNDS, WE WILL REFUSE TO PLAY." GRASSI SAID.

F.C. RAPID ALSO SUGGESTED CANCELLATION OF THE AUSTRIA VERSUS HUNGARY SOCCER INTERNATIONAL SCHEDULED FOR SEPTEMBER 8 IN BUDAPEST.

MA/HI/CR

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