

CN 115

X/13 VISITS--STEWART ADVISES MPS N O T TO VISIT COUNTRIES INVOLVED IN INVASION.

LONDON, AUGUST 27--(RFE SPECIAL/HOOD)--BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY MICHAEL STEWART LAST NIGHT ADVISED MPS N O T TO VISIT THE FIVE COUNTRIES TAKING PART IN THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

STEWART WAS WINDING UP THE EMERGENCY DEBATE IN THE HOUSE IN WHICH BOTH THE PRIME MINISTER AND THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID THEY DID N O T BELIEVE THERE SHOULD BE A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN IN CULTURAL CONTACTS WITH EASTERN EUROPE.

HOWEVER, STEWART SAID "IT WOULD BE TOTALLY WRONG FOR THE RED ARMY CHOIR TO COME TO THIS COUNTRY, AND THIS HAS BEEN MADE CLEAR TO THE IMPRESSARIO CONCERNED."

THE ENSEMBLE HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO MAKE AN EIGHT-WEEK TOUR OF BRITAIN STARTING NEXT MONTH.

STEWART ANNOUNCED CANCELLATION OF THE SCHEDULED ANGLO-SOVIET HISTORICAL EXHIBITION IN MOSCOW, WHICH WAS TO HAVE DEPICTED BILATERAL RELATIONS SINCE THE MIDDLE AGES.

"UNLESS WE CAN PUT INTO THAT EXHIBITION A SPECIAL SECTION DEALING WITH ANGLO-SOVIET RELATIONS IN THE LAST FIVE DAYS," HE SAID, "I DO N O T THINK THAT IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE TO HOLD IT."

AND THEN STEWART SAID:

"I ALSO THINK THAT WE SHOULD AVOID POLITICAL CONTACTS WITH CLEAR POLITICAL OVERTONES, AND WHICH ARE OF SUCH A NATURE THAT THE VERY FACT ONE HAS SUCH A CONTACT COULD BE QUOTED AS EVIDENCE THAT BRITAIN DID N O T CARE WHAT HAPPENED.

"I HAVE THEREFORE CANCELLED MY PROJECTED VISITS TO HUNGARY AND BULGARIA. NOR FOR THE PRESENT WILL OTHER MINISTERIAL VISITS TAKE PLACE.

"I THINK ALSO THAT FOR THE PRESENT IT WOULD N O T BE APPROPRIATE FOR MEMBERS OF THIS HOUSE TO VISIT THE COUNTRIES WHICH HAVE TAKEN PART IN THE INVASION."

EARLIER, THE PRIME MINISTER HAD SAID IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO IMPOSE A COMPLETE BAN ON CULTURAL EXCHANGES, ADDING:

"INDIVIDUAL CITIZENS ARE FREE TO DECIDE HOW FAR THEY WANT TO SUPPORT THESE VISITS. WE BELIEVE THAT THE REACTION OF INDIVIDUALS CAN BE MUCH MORE ELOQUENT IN THIS CONTEXT."

BMCG/EM1145/68