

CN 207

X/13 C/S - CZECHOSLOVAK YOUNGSTERS RETURNING FROM BELGIUM TODAY

BRUSSELS, AUG 29 (RFE SPECIAL/DYBVIK)- EIGHTY CZECHOSLOVAK CHILDREN ARE LEAVING BRUSSELS THIS AFTERNOON TO RETURN HOME VIA VIENNA.

THEY HAD BEEN IN BELGIUM ON A FOUR-WEEK EXCHANGE PROGRAM ORGANIZED BY THE POSTAL AUTHORITIES OF BOTH BELGIUM AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

ALL THE CZECHOSLOVAK YOUNGSTERS, AGED 14-16, ARE CHILDREN OF CZECHOSLOVAK POSTAL EMPLOYEES.

A GROUP OF 80 BELGIAN CHILDREN RETURNED TO BRUSSELS FROM CZECHOSLOVAKIA YESTERDAY. THEY WERE MET AT BRUSSELS AIRPORT BY ANXIOUS PARENTS AS THEIR SPECIAL SABENA CARAVELLE JET FLIGHT FROM VIENNA ARRIVED. THE SAME SABENA PLANE IS FLYING THE CZECHOSLOVAK YOUNGSTERS BACK TO VIENNA TODAY.

THE CZECHOSLOVAK CHILDREN HAD BEEN VACATIONING AT MARIAKERKE, A BELGIAN COASTAL RESORT TOWN SINCE AUGUST 3. THEY WERE TO HAVE REMAINED HERE UNTIL TOMORROW, BUT ARE LEAVING A DAY EARLY BECAUSE BELGIAN OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO ARRANGE FOR AUSTRIAN POSTAL OFFICIALS TO CONDUCT THEM FROM VIENNA TO THE BORDER. THE AUSTRIAN POSTAL AUTHORITIES ALSO ARRANGED FOR THE RETURN HOME YESTERDAY OF THE BELGIAN CHILDREN.

THE BELGIAN YOUNGSTERS HAD BEEN SPENDING A FOUR-WEEK HOLIDAY AT A CHILDREN'S VACATION HOME IN THE TATRA MOUNTAINS OF SLOVAKIA, ACCORDING TO BELGIAN POSTAL OFFICIALS.

OFFICIALS HERE SAID THAT THEY HAD DEMANDED THE IMMEDIATE REPATRIATION OF THE BELGIAN CHILDREN WHEN THE SOVIET-LED MILITARY OCCUPATION TOOK PLACE LAST WEEK.

CZECHOSLOVAK POSTAL OFFICIALS CONDUCTED THE BELGIAN CHILDREN TO THE AUSTRIAN BORDER YESTERDAY MORNING AND AUSTRIAN OFFICIALS TOOK CHARGE OF THEM, TRANSPORTING THEM TO THE SPECIAL SABENA FLIGHT BACK TO BRUSSELS.

SOME OF THE WIDE-EYED BELGIAN CHILDREN TOLD OF WATCHING RUSSIAN TANKS ALONG THE CZECHOSLOVAK ROADS.

A MISS NELIS (NO FIRST NAME) WHO CHAPERONED THE BELGIAN CHILDREN, SAID THEY HAD LISTENED TO NEWS OF THE MILITARY OCCUPATION OVER THE BELGIAN RADIO STATIONS WHICH THEY COULD HEAR QUITE CLEARLY.

"EVERYONE THERE DISAPPROVES OF THE INVASION. I SAW MANY WOMEN CRYING AND THE CZECHOSLOVAK PEOPLE ARE FURIOUS TO SEE THEIR SO-CALLED FRIENDS BEHAVING IN THIS WAY," SAID MISS NELIS. SHE SAID SAYING GOODBYE TO HER CZECHOSLOVAK HOSTS WAS EXTREMELY TOUCHING.

THE GROUP OF 80 CZECHOSLOVAK YOUNGSTERS WAS ACCOMPANIED BY A DOCTOR, A TRANSLATOR AND SEVERAL INSTRUCTORS.

MA/E 1826/68/CR

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