

X/13 CS - 644 APPLICANTS FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM IN AUSTRIA

(RELEADS CN-161)

VIENNA, AUG 31 (RFE SPECIAL/KOSTRBA) -- THE NUMBER OF CZECHOSLOVAK APPLICANTS FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM IN AUSTRIA HAD REACHED 500 SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE SOVIET MILITARY INTERVENTION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE AUSTRIAN INTERIOR MINISTRY ANNOUNCED ON SATURDAY.

AMONG THEM ARE THREE OFFICERS OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK ARMY WHO CAME TO AUSTRIA IN UNIFORM ILLEGALLY.

IN ADDITION, 144 FUGITIVES FROM OTHER EAST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES ASKED FOR POLITICAL ASYLUM IN AUSTRIA SINCE THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA.

AT PRESENT ARE SOME 14 000 CZECHOSLOVAK NATIONALS IN AUSTRIA AWAITING FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT TO RETURN TO THEIR HOME COUNTRY, THE AUSTRIAN INTERIOR MINISTRY SAID.

THE MAJORITY ARE TOURISTS COUGHT IN AUSTRIA BY THE CZECHOSLOVAK CRISIS ON THEIR WAY HOME FROM VACATIONS SPENT IN AUSTRIA, YUGOSLAVIA AND IN WEST EUROPEAN COUNTRIES.

CZECHOSLOVAK TOURISTS FROM YUGOSLAVIA CONTINUE TO ARRIVE IN AUSTRIA DAILY, AUSTRIAN AUTHORITIES SAID.

THOSE HESITATING TO RETURN ARE BILLETED IN PRIVATE QUARTERS, THREE AUSTRIAN TRADE UNIONS FEDERATIONS HOUSES AND IN CAMPS SET UP IN UNUSED EXHIBITION HALLS, BARRACKS, SCHOOL BUILDINGS AND MONASTERIES.

A CENTRAL "RESCUE COMMITTEE FOR CZECHOSLOVAKIA", AS WELL AS OTHER PHILANTHROPIC AND RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS ARE TAKING CARE OF THE STRANDED TOURISTS.

THE CZECHOSLOVAK LEGATION IN VIENNA ISSUED ON SATURDAY AN APPEAL TO CZECHOSLOVAK NATIONALS IN AUSTRIA, ASKING THEM TO RETURN TO THEIR HOME COUNTRY.

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