

X/13 CS - BRITAIN EASES GRANTING OF VISAS TO CZECHOSLOVAKS

LONDON SEPTEMBER 1--(RFE SPECIAL/HOOD)--THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT HAS ANNOUNCED THAT THE EMBASSY IN PRAGUE IS REMAINING OPEN SEVEN DAYS A WEEK TO GRANT VISAS TO CZECHOSLOVAKS WISHING TO COME TO BRITAIN AND ORDERS HAVE BEEN ISSUED TO BE MORE LIBERAL IN THEIR ISSUANCE.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE HOME OFFICE (INTERIOR MINISTRY) SAID YESTERDAY THAT HOME SECRETARY JAMES CALLAGHAN HAS INSTRUCTED THAT VISAS WILL BE GRANTED "READILY" ON RELAXED GROUNDS.

ANYONE CONVINCING EMBASSY OFFICIALS THAT HE IS IN DANGER WILL GET A VISA. AS THE SPOKESMAN PHRASED IT:

"VISA OFFICERS IN PRAGUE HAVE BEEN ASKED TO HELP WITH THOSE CASES WHICH PRESENT URGENT AND COMPELLING CONSIDERATION."

VISAS WILL ALSO BE GRANTED TO CZECHOSLOVAK NATIONS WITH NEAR RELATIVES LIVING IN BRITAIN, OR WITH ANY PARTICULARLY CLOSE TIES WITH BRITAIN. THE LATTER REFERS TO SUCH THINGS AS BUSINESS CONNECTIONS OR FORMER UNIVERSITY LINKS.

THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT BETWEEN 500 AND 600 CZECHOSLOVAKS NOW IN BRITAIN HAVE ALREADY HAD THEIR VISAS EXTENDED. HE ESTIMATED THAT THERE ARE UP TO 3,000 IN BRITAIN.

THERE ARE SOME 2,000 CZECHOSLOVAK STUDENTS HERE, OF WHOM 1,000 CAME FOR SUMMER EMPLOYMENT IN HOLIDAY CAMPS, HOTELS AND RESTAURANTS.

(MORE)            JON/HE            1102/68