

X/13 CS - EAST EUROPE PROTESTS OVER NEW SOCCER DRAW

GENEVA, SEPT. 2 (RFE SPECIAL/MAHONEY)-- THREE EAST EUROPEAN NATIONS HAVE PROTESTED AGAINST THE EUROPEAN FOOTBALL UNIONS DECISION TO RE-DRAW THE FIRST ROUND MATCHES FOR THE EUROPEAN CUP TO INSURE THAT EAST AND WEST EUROPEAN TEAMS DO NOT MEET HEAD-ON.

THE DECISION WAS TAKEN, ACCORDING TO THE UNION, BECAUSE OF A THREATENED BOYCOTT BY CERTAIN WESTERN TEAMS FOLLOWING THE INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA BY WARSAW PACT FORCES.

TEAMS THREATENING BOYCOTTS INCLUDED MILAN, CELTIC OF GLASGOW, AND THE ZURICH FOOTBALL CLUB, WHICH WAS INFORMED BY THE CITY COUNCIL THAT IT WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED TO USE THE CITY STADIUM TO PLAY ITS FIRST ROUND GAME AGAINST KIEV.

IN THE FACE OF SUCH THREATS, THE UNION ACTED. A UNION SPOKESMAN STATED THAT ITS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TOOK THE STEP BECAUSE OF THE BOYCOTT THREAT AND SAID THAT THE ACTION WAS COMPLETELY LEGAL UNDER THE BY-LAWS GOVERNING THE EUROPEAN CUP COMPETITION.

THE BULGARIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION PROTESTED TO THE UNION, HEADQUARTERED IN BERN, THAT THE DECISION WAS ""A FLAGRANT VIOLATION OF THE RULES COVERING EUROPEAN TOURNAMENTS AND OF THE STATUTES OF THE EUROPEAN FEDERATION.""

HUNGARY ALSO PROTESTED. SANDOR BARCS, VICE PRESIDENT OF THE HUNGARIAN FEDERATION, SAID THAT THE DECISION TO DIVIDE THE COMPETITION INTO SEPARATE EAST AND WEST EUROPEAN GROUPS WAS ""SERIOUS DISCRIMINATION."" HE CHARGED THAT THE EUROPEAN FOOTBALL UNION WAS PERMITTING ITSELF TO BE GOVERNED BY POLITICAL MOTIVES, ""AN ATTITUDE WHICH CARRIES WITHIN IT THE SEED OF THE DISSOLUTION OF THE UNION.""