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CS - CSSR HOPES TO SEND 124 ATHLETES TO OLYMPICS

PRAGUE, SEPT 4, REUTER - CZECHOSLOVAKIA HOPES TO SEND A TEAM OF 124 ATHLETES TO THE MEXICO CITY OLYMPICS DESPITE THE HAVOC THE WARSAW PACT INVASION HAS WREAKED ON THEIR TRAINING PROGRAMMES.

MR ALOIS SOKOL, SECRETARY OF THE CZECHOSLOVAK NATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE, SAID TODAY THAT THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT OF THE EVENTS OF THE PAST FORTNIGHT HAD MADE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE ATHLETES TO CONTINUE THEIR TRAINING.

SPORTS FACILITIES HAD BEEN DAMAGED, 30 MILLION CROWNS HAD BEEN LOST TO SPORTS FUNDS BECAUSE THE NATIONAL LOTTERY HAD NOT BEEN HELD FOR TWO WEEKS, GATE MONEY FROM CANCELLED ATHLETICS MATCHES HAD BEEN LOST--AND SOVIET TANKS WERE PARKED ON SOME SPORTS GROUNDS.

TANKS HAVE ALSO BEEN CHURNING UP SOME FOOTBALL FIELDS, THREATENING THE SCHEDULED START OF THE SOCCER SEASON ON SEPTEMBER 15.

MR SOKOL TOLD REUTER THAT FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES MIGHT FORCE THE COMMITTEE TO CUT THE NUMBER OF ATHLETES BELOW 124. BUT OTHERWISE "WE ARE DOING ALL WE CAN TO ENABLE US TO TAKE PART IN THE OLYMPIC GAMES."

THERE WOULD BE NO DIFFICULTIES ABOUT EXIT VISAS OR FOREIGN EXCHANGE FOR THE TEAM, HE ADDED.

MR SOKOL EMPHASISED THAT HE WAS NOT MENTIONING HIS TEAMS DIFFICULTIES IN ORDER TO MAKE EXCUSES IN ADVANCE FOR ITS PERFORMANCES. "WE WILL DO OUR BEST AND IT WILL ALL BE SPORTSMANLIKE AND FAIR -- AND THATS THAT", HE SAID.

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