

VISITS - 1ST ADD - STEWART LEAVES (CN 26) XXX SITUATION

IN AN AIRPORT STATEMENT BEFORE HE LEFT FOR BUCHAREST, MR STEWART SAID RUMANIA OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO COUNT ON INDEPENDENCE AND BE ABLE TO PURSUE HER OWN POLICY.

"THE COUNTRY SHOULD NOT BE IN ANY DANGER FROM SOVIET ACTION -- BUT I THINK THE WHOLE WORLD IS BOUND TO WATCH HER WITH SOME ANXIETY," HE SAID.

THE SEARCH FOR BETTER EAST-WEST UNDERSTANDING HAD BEEN SET BACK BY LAST MONTHS INVASION OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE FOREIGN SECRETARY SAID, BUT IT WAS IMPORTANT WHEREVER POSSIBLE TO CONTINUE CONTACTS BETWEEN THE TWO SIDES.

ASKED WHAT MORAL SUPPORT HE THOUGHT THE WEST COULD GIVE TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA, MR STEWART SAID: "NATO COUNTRIES MUST CONTINUE, PERHAPS MORE FIRMLY THAN BEFORE, WHAT HAS BEEN OUR POLICY -- TO SEE THAT OUR OWN DEFENCES ARE READY, AND AT THE SAME TIME TO MAKE IT CLEAR THAT IF THE SOVIET UNION AND HER ALLIES WANT BETTER UNDERSTANDING WITH THE WESTON REASONABLE TERMS, THEN IT IS AVAILABLE."

MR STEWART SAID HE WAS GOING TO BUCHAREST TO GET FIRST HAND THE VIEW ON EVENTS IN EUROPE.

AS WELL AS TALKING ABOUT THE EAST EUROPEAN SITUATION, HE HOPED THERE WOULD BE PROGRESS IN BILATERAL FIELDS, INCLUDING TRADE, AND A MOVE TOWARDS SIGNING THE CONSULAR CONVENTION.

MR STEWART IS TO HAVE TALKS WITH THE RUMANIAN PRESIDENT NICOLAE CEAUSESCU, THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. MR ION GHEORGHE MAURER, AND THE FOREIGN MINISTER, MR CORNELIU MANESCU, WHO IS PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY.

ASB/A 1123/68 SEPT 8 H