

East Germans allowed to return for belongings

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Susan Viets in Budapest

EAST Germans who have fled to West Germany via Hungary were yesterday given permission to return over the Austro-Hungarian border to pick up belongings they left behind.

In the days before the border was opened, East Germans abandoned their cars to slip between frontier guards with few, if any, belongings.

Hungary has returned 200 abandoned cars to East Germany under an earlier bilateral agreement. Now the agreement has been suspended and the owners of the 600 remaining cars are to be allowed to collect them.

Cars not collected within a specified time will be sold and the money, after the costs of selling have been deducted, will be deposited in bank accounts for the owners.

The Szarvas Gabor (Zugliget) camp in Budapest is still open to assist East Germans crossing to the West. Last week, an average of 350 people arrived each day.

One of the camp organisers, Mr Imre Kozma, said yesterday: "People are continuing to fly in from East Germany.

"Those trying to cross from Czechoslovakia are having difficulties. Czech border guards are preventing them from crossing, even when they have the correct travel documents. Some people are trying to swim across the Danube and at least one person has drowned."

Anyone returning to Budapest might find the city changed. The government announced yesterday that the red star on the spire of Hungary's Parliament might be removed before the end of the year.

● The Hungarian Government yesterday announced that a rehabilitation decree has been drafted for the 43,000 people exiled or sent to work camps between the late 1940s and 1953. The years spent in the camps will be included in pensions which will be paid in monthly benefits of £5.

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