

Bonn praises Hungary's 'humanitarian' gesture

# Embassy refugees cross into West

Anna Tomforde in Bonn

**C**ONCERN grew in Bonn yesterday over the fate of East German refugees seeking asylum in the West, despite the arrival in West Germany of 103 people who had been occupying the West German embassy in Budapest.

The refugees, among them many women and children, arrived in West German camps yesterday — overjoyed and moved by the success of their three-week stay in the embassy.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl praised Hungary's decision to allow the group to travel, calling it a "constructive" move. But amid signs that East Germany, were preparing to clamp down on the exodus, the Bonn Government stressed that the solution found in Budapest was a "unique humanitarian act".

It could not serve as a precedent for the 269 East Germans still cooped up in Bonn's embassy in Prague and in the East Berlin mission. The embassies, and the Budapest one, would remain closed.

Government sources said there was not the "slightest hope" for the 170 people who had sought refuge in Prague.

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man camps yesterday — overjoyed and moved by the success of their three-week sojourn stay in the embassy.

About 200 East Germans are still camping outside Bonn's mission in Budapest, and more than 200,000 are on holiday in Hungary. Of them, an estimated 10,000 are believed to want to come to the West.

Mr Volker Rühe, a close Kohl aide, yesterday warned East Germans still in Hungary against crossing the border. While West Germany was seeking step-by-step practical solutions, the "basic problems" had to be solved inside East Germany.

It has become clear over the past few days that the Hungarian authorities are becoming increasingly irritated with the refugee flow across the border with Austria. This month alone, 3,000 East Germans fled across the frontier, where fences have virtually come down.

But in the past few days, border guards have begun stopping and picking up would-be refugees in greater numbers.

East Germany, meanwhile, angrily denied West German reports that it intended to restrict travel to Hungary from September 1. "The practice for visits to Hungary, Romania and Bulgaria will remain unchanged," the East German news agency, ADN, said.

ADN described speculation in the Western press as a "slander campaign in the cold war spirit".

The increasingly hostile tone from East Berlin suggests that it might be preparing for some form of clampdown.

To avoid raising the temperature further, Chancellor Kohl stressed after a cabinet meeting yesterday that he was not interested in destabilising East Germany. He would resume top-level contacts with Mr Erich Honecker as soon as the East German leader, who is 77 today, had recovered from a gallstone operation.

*Susan Viets adds in Budapest:* East Germans at the Hungarian-Austrian border are resorting to increasingly aggressive tactics to break through to Austria.

Frontier guards report stampedes where large groups of people charge the border.

At the weekend at least two East German families tried to race through checkpoints in their cars. These incidents will increase already strained relations between Hungary and the East Germany.

Hungary also faces diplomatic complications with Czechoslovakia, where two young Hungarians are still in prison for their part in the protest earlier this week on the 21st anniversary of the crushing of the Prague Spring.

25 August 1989

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