

Red Cross opens new camp for flood of East German refugees

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**Susan Viets in Budapest
and Reuter in Bonn**

THE International Red Cross has opened its fourth refugee camp in Hungary in the expectation of a mass exodus later this week of East Germans heading for West Germany.

The flow of emigrants is expected to quicken following Austria's decision to waive visa requirements.

Mr Wolfgang Wagner, a West German Red Cross official at the new camp, said yesterday the East Germans would start leaving Hungary "some time next week. We are waiting word from the West German embassy."

In Bonn, the US Ambassador to West Germany, Mr Vernon Walters, said the exodus of East Germans showed that it was abnormal to have two Germanys and said he believed they could be reunited in the near future.

"President Bush has said that we are for such a development if it were to be achieved peace-

fully and through free elections by the population," Mr Walters said.

With the virtual abandonment of borders by the Hungarian authorities, East Germans, despairing of Polish or Hungarian-type changes reaching their own country (at least while the ailing hardline Communist leader, Mr Erich Honecker, remains alive) have been flooding into refugee camps in and around Budapest.

The latest has been established at a youth centre in Hungary's eastern resort area of Lake Balaton. Word has spread among the transient East German community that Nansen passports — travel documents issued by the Red Cross — will be distributed at the camps.

East Germans are entitled to West German passports. While these have been distributed to many of the East German visitors now in Budapest, they are unable to leave Hungary without an exit visa from the Hungarian Government, which cannot provide these visas without antagonising East Germany.

The Nansen passports were used last month to ferry 101 East Germans from the West German embassy in Budapest to West Germany.

It is not known how many of the estimated 150,000 to 200,000 East Germans in Hungary will stay. Last week, the Hungarian Foreign Minister, Mr Gyula Horn, said 10 per cent are expected not to return home.

The West Germans recently asked Austrian railways to provide seats for 3,500 to bring East Germans from Hungary to West Germany.

East Germans have also been told by the Hungarian Government that they may either sell their cars or take them across the border.

This will undoubtedly help to ease transport problems and put an end to car dumping. The lanes and fields near the Austrian border have become a repository for East German Trabants abandoned by their owners in border crossings.

East Germans flowed into the Balaton camp this weekend. One couple, in their early twen-

ties, had just come from Dresden with their 18-month-old daughter. "We heard about the camps on West German television," the wife said.

When they decided to leave late last week, they were called in to the security police for a 20-minute interview. There they were told they should return from their holiday and that an emigration application which they had submitted two years earlier might be reconsidered.

"But everyone knew what was going on and that we would not come back. We were very surprised that they let us go," said the husband.

The gates at the camp were firmly shut to the press but a West German Red Cross official announced that 300 people had arrived the first afternoon, that the camp could accommodate 3,000 and that it has access to a railway station.

● East Germany's huge Leipzig Trade Fair opened yesterday with the usual pomp but overshadowed by the refugee crisis and doubts about the health of Mr Honecker.

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