Germany to Repatriate Thousands From Romania

By Tamara Jones

LONDON TIMES

BOTTOMLINE

Germany announced plans Thursday to repatriate thousands of illegal aliens from Romania in the first step toward controlling a flood of asylum-seekers.

A statement released by the Interior Ministry in Bonn said the Romanian government had agreed "after months of negotiation" to begin taking back Gypsies and Romanians who do not qualify for asylum under German law.

The influx of foreigners seeking a better life in relatively prosperous Germany but a country nonetheless beset with the high cost of trying to provide the benefits of an advanced welfare state has fed deep resentment among many Germans. Many of these seeking asylum have become the target of almost nightly fire-bombings by jingoistic right-wing extremists.

"The Ministry statement noted that about 43,000 Romanians, about 60 percent of them Gypsies, had entered Germany as of Aug. 31. The statement referred to the "flagrant abuse of asylum by the Romanians," and added that only 0.2 percent of those had tried to go to asylum here.

"Only applicants who can prove they suffer political persecution at home qualify for asylum in Germany, but the processing of such claims often takes years (the backlog is currently around 300,000 cases) and all applicants collect welfare benefits until their claim is decided.

"Germany's main political parties are currently squabbling over various proposals to tighten the country's liberal asylum law. That would require changing the constitution.

"The Bundestag, or lower house of Parliament, is expected to debate asylum this year. The issue is at the forefront of public concern, especially in the eastern states, where unemployment is high and decent housing is scarce, both factors feeding resentment of the foreigners.

"Everyone claiming asylum is guaranteed food and shelter under German law, and some cities hand out pocket money or living stipends as well. At times, this has caused caravans of Gypsies to mass in a single community.

"Gypsies have been the principal target of the neo-Nazis, skinheads and other right-wing extremists who have been storing storm shelters on a regular basis for the past month. The latest spate of violence began three weeks ago in the Baltic seaport of Rostock, where hundreds of Gypsies had been camped out all summer in front of an overcrowded police precinct.

"The center was located in a complex of Communist-era high-rises where about 20,000 eastern Germans live. After local authorities failed to respond to neighbors' complaints of unsanitary conditions, theft and rowdiness among the Gypsies, right-wing radicals started the ground and drove the unwelcome foreigners out as local residents cheered from their balconies.

"Officials estimate that only 5 percent of the 50,000 asylum-seekers expected to pour across Germany's borders this year will eventually be granted asylum. Romanian are outnumbered only by applicants from what was used to be Yugoslavia among asylum-seekers, according to the Interior Ministry.

"The number of economic refugees from the Third World and Eastern Europe has grown dramatically since the Berlin Wall fell nearly six years ago, and the figure could reach 1 million by the end of 1993.

"Interior Minister Rudolf Seilers said that he expected to sign next week in Bucharest that about 43,000 Romanians, about 60 percent of them Gypsies, will leave Germany, according to a statement, which did not specify which nations are involved.

There was no mention of additional financial credits or other aid being offered to those countries in exchange for signing such agreements, which the ministry said are necessary in order to turn back fraudulent asylum-seekers.

U.S. Trade Gap Surges to 20-Month Record in July

By Stuart Ausebach

WASHINGTON POST

The United States merchandise trade deficit surged to its highest level in 20 months in July, largely due to a decline in sales by U.S. companies in key Western European markets that are suffering from slow economic growth.

Imports rose 4.9 percent to $102.1 billion, while exports fell 2.3 percent, to $73.7 billion, from June, leaving the trade gap at $28.4 billion. That was 6.3 percent higher than the previous monthly record set in October at $26.6 billion.

The deficit in our trading partners, especially in Europe, "is reflecting the economic difficulties faced by our trading partners, especially in Europe," said Willard A. Workman, international vice president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

"The U.S. economy has lost momentum in... reducing its trade deficit," said Stanley Coen, director of international investment at the National Association of Manufacturers (NAM).

President Bush has been pushing export growth as a campaign theme, citing the United States an export superpower and citing the job-creating power of exports.

Commerce Secretary Barbara A.arkin, who recently returned from an economic slowdown overseas and the relative strength of the U.S. economy over the past three years, is responsible for 70 percent of the nation's slow growth during that period, and moderating the rate of recession. One economist said that life jacket, now is threatened by slow growth in the third quarter, said Workman, president of that generating half a trillion dollars in sales.

"The real growth in exports is in services and declines since he became president," said House Majority Leader Richard A. Gephardt, D-Mo.

"Exports have been the one shining light in the U.S. economy over the past three years, responsible for the job-creating power of exports.

"The Bush record on international economic performance in two years with that type of assistance is much more impressive than his record on the domestic front," said Sen. Paul S. Sarbanes, D-Md., chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

"George Bush's export engine is coming to a halt," said House Majority Leader Richard A. Gephardt, D-Mo. "The real growth in exports is in services and declines since he became president.,"

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