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Czech president defies government decision

KosovoCompromise Staff

Czech President Vaclav Klaus received Serbian ambassador Vladimir Veres who was recalled from Prague for consultations in reaction to the Czech government's having recognised Kosovo's independence last week.

"In the talk, Klaus voiced a deep regret at the current worsening of diplomatic relations with Serbia and expressed the belief that current problems would be surmounted and very friendly relations between the two countries will be maintained in the future," Klaus's spokesman Petr Hajek said after the meeting.

Klaus made it clear earlier he was taken by surprise by the cabinet's decision.

"If Klaus were a cabinet member he would have behaved similarly to ministers for the junior government Christian Democrats (KDU-CSL) who did not support the recognition of Kosovo's independence", Hajek said.

In an article published on Saturday, Klaus wrote that he was very much embarrassed about Veres's statement that Serbs did not perceive it personally when countries such as Finland, the Netherlands and Germany recognised Kosovo, but that they were unpleasantly touched by the Czech government's move.

Ambassador Veres left for Belgrade accompanied by a group of supporters of Serbia and opponents of independent Kosovo who say the Czech government's move is a shame and a violation of international law.

They included former foreign minister Jan Kavan and Jan Foldyna, assemblyman from Usti nad Labem, north Bohemia, both members of the opposition Social Democratic Party (CSSD).

"We have a government of lackeys," said Foldyna, whose mother comes from Serbia and who organises demonstrations and petitions against Kosovo independence.

Kavan said he believes that Topolanek's government has violated the fundamental democratic principles because it ignored a resolution of the Chamber of Deputies in deciding on Kosovo.

Under the resolution the issue was to be discussed in the lower house before the government would make a decision.



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"I am afraid that the step the Czech government has taken will harm our relations with the Czech Republic. But I hope that we will succeed in rectifying the situation and in further developing both economic and political cooperation," Veres said before he left the embassy.

He said the Serbian public are disappointed at the Czech recognition of Kosovo more than in case of other states. The reason are the traditionally good relations between the two countries.

The decision of the government of Mirek Topolánek (Civic Democrats, ODS) was not supported by the junior ruling Christian Democrats (KDU-CSL). The other junior party, the Greens, voted in support of Kosovo independence recognition.

Meanwhile, Czech Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg defended the government's decision to recognise Kosovo at a regular meeting with Czech ambassadors.

Schwarzenberg admitted that the step had caused serious criticism from both the public and "the supreme posts."

Meanwhile, in Pristina, Assistant to the U.S. Secretary of State Rosemary DiCarlo said the U.S. is unsatisfied with the work of the Kosovo's institutions in the lobbying process.

DiCarlo is understood to have said during a recent visit to Kosovo that "part of the joint plan between the United States and Kosovo was to achieve 97 recognitions by September.

After that, Kosovo was supposed to apply for a membership of the UN General Assembly", an unnamed source told Television Kosovo.

According to the source, that plan might fall through owing to the relatively small number of countries that have recognized Kosovo and the inefficiency of the Kosovo government.