



Czech President Bounced for Treason in Giving Amnesty to Financial Scammers

Dashiell Bennett March 4, 2013

Members of the upper house of the Czech parliament gave departing President Vaclav Klaus a going-away present on Monday—they voted to impeach him on charges of treason. Senate members voted to bring the treason charges against Klaus after a controversial amnesty decision in January that ended numerous high-profile fraud and corruption cases related to major financial scams.

The only problem for the Senate is that the worst thing they can do to Klaus is kick him out of office—a punishment that's mitigated somewhat by the fact that his term ends on Thursday. On March 7, he starts his new job as a Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank in Washington.

To mark the 20th anniversary of the Czech Republic's break away from the old communist state of Czechoslovakia, back in January, Klaus granted amnesty to more 6,000 inmates and halted the prosecutions of many more awaiting trial. However, ending the court proceedings infuriated citizens who are fed up with corruption in the government and the financial industry. One anti-corruption crusader said, "The reason to do this was to fight against evil, and to show those who have lost faith in democracy in this country that even the president is not above the law."

Similar to the system in the U.S., where the House impeaches the president and the Senate puts him on trial, in the Czech system, the Senate votes to impeach and then the president is tried in a Constitutional Court. It remains to be seen if they can hold the trial before his last day is over. Klaus has said that he doesn't regret the amnesty and would do it again.