



Black prince - Libre Belgique on outgoing Czech President Klaus

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Good-bye to the black prince, the daily La Libre Belgique writes about Czech President Vaclav Klaus's last day in office, stressing that due to the high treason charges against him, Klaus is experiencing a difficult end of his term in office.

Klaus has caused some damage to the image of the Czech Republic during the ten years in office, the paper writes.

Klaus did his best to hamper European integration and only signed the Lisbon Treaty at the cost of the opt-out from the Charter of Fundamental Rights, it adds.

Klaus has called himself a liberal politician, but in social affairs, he certainly was not any, La Libre Belgique writes.

Speaking on behalf of rejection of "homosexuality," he tried to prevent registered partnership, it adds.

He questioned the global warming theory, saying about its opponents that their "green fanaticism is as dangerous as Communism," La Libre Belgique writes.

Klaus denied the participation of Czech wardens in the war-time genocide of Romanians, calling their camp in Lety a "place in which people who shunned work were closed," it adds.

He was able to organise a dignified funeral of Vaclav Havel, but in the past weeks, he relapsed to the obsession with which he approached his predecessor, La Libre Belgique writes.

When saying in an interview for a Polish paper that Havel was "an extreme leftist," a sort of Jacobin from the French Revolution, he lost the last remnant of the sympathies he enjoyed in his country, it adds.

Vaclav Klaus ends a decade as Czech head of state on Thursday facing charges of treason, British Financial Times (FT) writes.

"The amnesty, which released almost 7,000 from prison and halted hundreds of corruption trials has stained the reputation of a man who has been one of the giants of post-communist Czech politics, along with dissident playwright Vaclav Havel, Mr Klaus is polar opposite and his leading ideological foe even after Havel's death in 2011," it adds.

"Until the velvet revolution of 1989 brought Mr Klaus to the fore, he had been a fairly obscure economist who steered clear of politics - as had the vast majority of Czechs with the exception of the brave band of dissidents gathered round Mr Havel," FT writes.

"A gifted natural politician, Mr Klaus became finance minister in the national unity government that took power after the collapse of communism and later served as premier from 1992 to 1997. He launched economic reforms that helped transform Czechoslovakia, and after 1993 the Czech Republic, into a market economy but at the price of creating oligarchs who took advantage of loopholes in the privatisation programme to become rich," it adds.

"As president, Mr Klaus often stretched the limited powers of his office to maximum effect, becoming the last EU leader to ratify the Lisbon treaty in 2009 after holding out for protection against possible claims filed by descendants of ethnic Germans expelled from the country after the war," FT writes.

"The amnesty is likely to overshadow Mr Klaus's long record in politics. Opinion polls showed a steep drop in his public support and hundreds of government offices have removed his official portrait from their walls," it adds.

"But Mr Klaus is unlikely to fade away. He will become a fellow at the Cato Institute, the US libertarian think-tank, where he is being welcomed for his iconoclastic views," FT writes.

Klaus's second and last five-year term ends today. He will be replaced with leftist candidate Milos Zeman.