

THE ULRICIANUM TIMES

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The French Dilemma

Chirac reacts to student protests

By Simon Schmid

The new law on youth employment contracts that the government introduced to combat the high level of unemployed youths sparked new student protests. Protests on Wednesday affected two thirds of the French universi-

ties. In response, French president Jaques Chirac called on the French prime minister Dominique de Villepin to start a constructive dialogue with the labour relations to improve the law on youth employment contracts. The youth unemployment rate, peaking at over 50% in the banlieues, is a chronic problem in France. Additionally, the laws on youth employment contracts were the French government's first serious legislative reaction to the riots that broke out last autumn in most of the major cities of France. The new law states that the employer of youths, under the age of 26 years, can break up the working contract at any time without explanation within the



French students protesting

mand the abolition of the law. This is where the government gets pushed into a corner. They have to create opportunities for unqualified young people, especially immigrants in the banlieues and at the same time they have to keep the jobs of the qualified young people safe and permanent.

The French Prime Minister, Dominique de Villepin, addressed the nation through a television appearance on Sunday. He vowed to stick with this controversial law, even though he promised to consult labour groups, the unions and students decided to keep the pressure up. Bruno Juliard, of the UNEF student union, is sure that de Villepin's troubled situation will help his cause: "The prime minister has been weakened, and if we push a bit more he will give way." After Chirac's push, the protesters could gain momentum.

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Milosevic to be Buried in his Hometown

Russian experts: Death could have been prevented

By Simon Schmid/AP

Belgrade. Slobodan Milosevic's body was flown from the Netherlands to Serbia on Wednesday for the funeral, which will take place in his hometown, Porzarevac, ending the debate about where he should be buried. While Serbia had a hard time giving his family the permission to bury him in Serbia, Milosevic's body will be flown out of the Netherlands to Serbia today. Milosevic's widow, Mirjana Markovic, coordinated the transportation of the body from their home in Moscow. His son Marko, from Moscow, has travelled to The Hague to accompany the body. The corpus lay overnight in the morgue at Schiphol airport, Amsterdam.

Due to fears that the event could trigger an outpouring of nationalist emotions, the body will go on display in Belgrade on Thursday but the funeral will take place in Milosevic's hometown. The funeral was made possible by a Belgrade County court, which annihilated an arrest warrant for Milosevic's widow to allow her to attend the funeral.

The court has, however, said that she must surrender her passport on arrival and appear before a judge in connection with the fraud

charges on 23 March. Lawyers have posted a bond worth \$18,000 (£10,000) to guarantee her appearance in court to face relatively minor corruption charges. Police also want to question her about the assassination in 2000 of former Serbian President Ivan Stambolic - a political rival of her late husband.

The decision to hold the funeral in Serbia ends days of wrangling over Mr Milosevic's final resting place. Marko Milosevic had been pushing for a burial in Serbia and had accused the authorities of trying to prevent it.

The reason of the heart attack that caused Milosevic's death is still controversial. Traces of Rifampicin, a powerful antibiotic that used to treat leprosy and tuberculosis were found in his blood. Rifampicin could have neutralised the effects of the heart drugs Milosevic had been taking.

Earlier, a Russian doctor reviewing the results of an official autopsy agreed with Dutch doctors that Mr Milosevic had died of a heart attack. Russian heart specialists criticise major errors in the administration of Milosevic's treatment. "That's my opinion, that his death was preventable. Absolutely. Because he had a pathology which is treated at any place in the world at the moment," Leo

Bokeria, director of Russia's Bakulev Cardio-Vascular Centre, told reporters in The Hague before returning to Moscow.

A claim that serves Milosevic's families allegations that the UN war crimes tribunal is to blame for his death, since they refused to allow him to travel to Russia for medical treatment.

Shortly after the Jat Airways plane from Amsterdam's Schiphol airport touched down in Belgrade, the luggage hold was opened and prams, pushchairs and luggage could be seen being unloaded before Mr Milosevic's coffin. The coffin, wrapped in black plastic, lay alone on a loading ramp for some minutes before a delegation from Mr Milosevic's party, the Socialist Party walked out to meet it.

As snow fell, a Serbian flag was draped over the casket and a large wreath of red roses placed on top. The coffin was then lifted into a dark blue van and driven from the runway at a walking pace.

Once the van was off the runway Milosevic supporters lined up to take turns in kissing the coffin. The van was then driven out of the airport, through a street packed with crowds of onlookers.

Milosevic was on trial for orchestrating the Balkan wars to create a "Greater Serbia" by linking the Serb Republic



Even after his death still controversial – Slobodan Milosevic

with Serb-dominated areas of Bosnia and Croatia, which could be achieved only after the "ethnic cleansing" of non-Serbs in those areas. During his presidency he

committed 66 war crimes, including crimes against humanity, murder, forcible transfer, deportation and "persecution on political, racial or religious grounds".

Saddam: "I am the head of state"

Public excluded – Trial adjourned for three weeks

By Julia Hemmers

Saddam Hussein, the former Iraqi leader, formally took the stand in his trial for crimes against humanity for the first time. The public was excluded from the trial, which is held in Iraq, after Saddam had called on the Iraqi people to "resist invaders."

The former Iraqi leader and seven co-defendants, including former top aides, are charged with the killing of 148 people from the mostly Shi'ite Muslim town of Dujail after a bid to assassinate him there in 1982. Earlier, his former spy chief denied any involvement in the deaths, but now Saddam had acknowledged in court that he gave orders which led to the killing of 148 Shi'ite men in the 1980's.

When Saddam tried to hold a political speech in court, the judge urged him to concentrate on the issues of the accused. Saddam responded by claiming he was still the head of state. The judge had to remind him that he is the defendant and not head of state anymore, but that didn't stop him from holding his speech. He euphemised the insurgencies taking place in Iraq by saying they were just a resistance to the American invasion. He even called the court a "comedy against Saddam Hussein and his comrades." The judge's reaction to Sad-

dam's speech was to expell the public from the trial.

The reporters were called back into the court room after nearly two hours. They saw Saddam sitting alone in the defendants' pen before the judge.

The former Iraqi leader then refused to answer questions from the chief prosecu-

tor, demanding to see a copy of his testimony given to investigators before the trial began. Prosecutors agreed and said they would question Saddam in the next session.

Therefore the judge, Abdel-Rahman, adjourned the trial until April 5. Up to 18 people have been killed in violence in the central Iraqi cities of

Balad, Baquba and Baghdad, including as many as 11 in a US raid.

Iraqi police said 11 people, including several women and children, died in the raid. The US said only four died, though photos showed seven bodies.

Meanwhile a suicide bomber on a bike killed two



Saddam Hussein denounces "comedy" court

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Editor's comment

by Lasse Loose

So Slobodan Milosevic has at last found a way to escape his trial in front of the UN Tribunal over his crimes against humanity in The Hague. His death, self-inflicted or not, sure saved him from spending the rest of his life in prison and standing in the international spotlight anymore. As much as people have hated him, Milosevic's death is unsatisfactory for those, who expected open questions to be answered and a just verdict on the accusations to be returned. His death put an end to the hope of the victims of his crimes to see the initiator of mass-murder and mass-rapes in course of the ethnic cleansings in Bosnia and Croatia to be convictable. Still, even after his death, Milosevic keeps the world busy, as debates about his death and the place and matter of his burial have been a prominent topic in the news.

It is somewhat troubling that Milosevic's Socialist Party still has enough influence in the country to plan to put his body on display in front of the federal parliament building in Belgrad - the same Belgrad that had been filled with hundreds of thousands of protesters against Milosevic's election fraud in autumn 2000. Deputy leader of the party, Zoran Andjelkovic, even went as far as to provoke the opponents of this idea, by telling the Associated Press

"Let them dare remove the tent."

It is also interesting, how open Milosevic's family voices their opinion about the topic and promotes their plans with the body. In particular his wife and son, who both live in self-imposed exile in Russia, as they are sought-after with an international arrest warrant have been the first to ask for a state funeral in Belgrad, a demand unthinkable to be fulfilled in the eyes of those, who see Milosevic as the mass-murder. A former communist who by his action provoked NATO to start the Kosovo War in 1999. Had Milosevic been sentenced for his crime by the judges in The Hague, the question of a state burial would have been dismissed much earlier, as a convicted war criminal does not deserve a celebratory inhumation in such an official frame - but because many Serbs still do not see him as being a criminal after all, his death gave Slobodan Milosevic also the chance to remain a great former president for his fellow countrymen.

It gave him the chance to sneak out of taking the responsibilities for his terrible actions, and it has yet to be shown if this escape could have been prevented - in any case injustice has been imposed on the victims of Milosevic, a fact some still seem to not understand.



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