CZECH PM LOSES LEGAL BATTLE OVER SECRET POLICE TIES

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Andrej Babis will not be able to erase his links to the communist-era Czechoslovak secret police following a ruling by a court in Bratislava. Babis has been accused of collaborating in order to enrich himself.

A court in Slovakia on Tuesday rejected a request from Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis to have his links to communist-era secret police expunged. The decision came at the end of a longstanding legal process between Babis and the Slovak courts.

Born in what is now Slovakia, Babis has admitted that he met with secret police (StB) officers in the 1980s in former Czechoslovakia. However, the billionaire businessman has maintained that the meetings were about the country's economic interests at a time when he was involved in foreign trade.

Although the fall of the iron curtain ended communism nearly 30 years ago, the injustices suffered under Communist Party rule are still raw for many Czechs and Slovaks today. Babis was a member of the party until it fell from power, and has been accused of enriching himself handsomely from being an StB collaborator.

'Sue until death'

"We will sue until death because we are in the right," Babis told daily MF Dnes, although he admitted he did not know where he could address his case now that it had been rejected by the Constitutional Court and a regional court in Bratislava.

On top of refusing the prime minister's demand, the court also said that Babis was in no position to sue the UPN institute, as it is merely keeping the files and did not author them – the StB did that.

The ruling has few practical ramifications, as Babis will still be allowed to hold public office or from being re-appointed by President Milos Zeman, something Zeman has said he intends to do.

Babis' minority government lost a vote of confidence in the Czech parliament last month, but is trying to form a new government after being asked to by Zeman at the end of January.

Since becoming prime minister in December, Babis has been accused of illegally receiving an EU subsidy of €2 million ($2.4 million), but has parliamentary immunity from prosecution.

es/kms (AP, Reuters)

Kaynak/Source: