

---

## **CZECH PRESIDENT ZEMAN SWATS CRITICS AT START OF SECOND TERM**

-

09.03.2018

---

EuroNews (8 March 2018)

PRAGUE (Reuters) □ Czech President Milos Zeman was sworn in on Thursday and promised to keep the style that helped him win re-election in January, including taking swipes at the Czech public broadcaster and other media outlets.

Zeman, the last prominent politician from the post-communist transition in the 1990s, took the oath of office in the medieval Prague Castle, the seat of the presidency, vowing to continue to meet ordinary Czechs during his second term.

I intend to continue doing what I have been doing in the past, because I think it is right, said Zeman, who beat a pro-European academic to edge a close run-off ballot.

Some guests left in the middle of Zemans speech, including lawmakers from TOP 09 conservative party, after he accused the public Czech Television of giving it too much news coverage.

The 73-year-old economist and former centre-left prime minister promised to unite society when taking office five years ago. Instead he has proved a polarising force, belittling his opponents and sniping at intellectual elites and the media.

He was one of the few European politicians to back Donald Trump in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.

He has also shifted further right on issues like immigration amid a refugee crisis in Europe. The Czechs have joined others in central Europe in refusing to take in refugees.

Januaries election campaign was dominated by concerns over security, despite a period of fast economic growth and rising wages.

The result also helped Prime Minister Andrej Babis, who had backed Zeman. He won October parliamentary elections but he is still searching for support after his minority government lost a confidence vote in January.

Zeman has promised Babis time for a second attempt at forming a cabinet and could exert influence over his former party the Social Democrats, who have started talks with Babiss ANO party.

Political analyst Stanislav Balik said that with Zeman unable to run again after his two terms, he may be even more forceful with his views.

He just does what he thinks is right and also what his inner circle pushes him to do, he said.

Zeman has upset many with his courtship of China and Russia. He has warm relations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and has called for an end to EU sanctions imposed on Moscow over its annexation of Ukraines Crimea province.

On Europe, he calls himself a federalist and supports membership of the European Union but also favours an in-or-out referendum on membership like the one that led to Britains impending exit from the bloc.

(Reporting by Robert Muller; Editing by Hugh Lawson)

---

Kaynak/Source: