

Students peacefully protest Serbian leader

Election results spur largest demonstration ever against Slobodan Milosevic.

BELGRADE, Yugoslavia (AP) — Defying a government warning, thousands of students demonstrated against Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic Monday and said they'll face down his police if necessary.

About 10,000 students marched in downtown Belgrade despite heavy snow and said they planned a larger demonstration through the capital later in the day.

The protests — the largest and most sustained ever against the Serbian leader — have become daily events since a court two weeks ago annulled opposition victories in local elections.

Although the protests started because of the elections, demands have quickly increased to include Milosevic's resignation.

Some 100,000 people turned out Sunday in a mix of rain and snow to march through the capital. A crowd of 150,000 marched Saturday.

Authorities have tolerated the demonstrations. But the speaker of the Serbian parliament said Sunday that a crackdown may be coming against the protests, which he called a "pro-fascist rampage."

Monday's protest featured students carrying signs saying "We are not fascists."

As a sign that Milosevic has plans to curb the protests, a local court sentenced five opposition activists to unspecified prison terms, said the opposition coalition Zajedno, or Together.

The coalition said the five were brought to trial for throwing eggs at government buildings. But it accused authorities of ignoring legal procedures by not informing anyone how long the jail sentences were, or where the five would be held.

Opposition leader Vuk Draskovic

said government foes should not be afraid of police warnings.

There was no visible police presence around Monday's rally. But witnesses said busloads of police apparently arriving from other parts of Serbia were being deployed in Belgrade suburbs.

They said that policemen with portable radios took up positions on house roofs or in entrances.

"If Belgrade shows that it is not afraid, the victory will be ours," Draskovic told the independent Index radio station. "We are half a step away from our victory." He said the demonstrations should be peaceful. "We'll beat violence with non-violence," Draskovic said.

The protesting students sent an open letter to the police saying "we don't want violence. Words are our only weapon."

Opposition leader Zoran Djindjic, at a rally in Nis, Serbia's second-largest city, told Index radio that the dem-

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STUDENT PROTESTORS

onstrations would spread "to another six or seven towns. The network of protest and civil disobedience is taking hold."

There were unconfirmed indications of compromise, however:

—One independent radio station reported that Western diplomats were trying to mediate between Milosevic and the opposition.

—Belgrade's independent BETA news agency quoted sources close to the leadership of Milosevic's Socialist Party as saying he was preparing to fire some party hard-liners, including the leader in Nis. The source, who was not identified, said Milosevic was in a

"blind alley" because he could not undo the election results but also recognized how much they had damaged him.

Belgrade long has been an opposition stronghold. Nis was a Milosevic bastion until it turned against him because of economic woes.

The economy is suffering from mismanagement, corruption and 3½ years of economic sanctions imposed because Milosevic instigated wars in Croatia and Bosnia as the old Yugoslav federation broke up.

About half of Serbia's workers are unemployed, and low wages have driven many into poverty.

Twin stars may have caused dinosaurs' demise

JERUSALEM (AP) — Israeli scientists have a new theory on why the dinosaurs became extinct: cosmic radiation that bombarded the Earth following the collision of two neutron stars.

Physicists from the Space Research Institute at the Technion University in Haifa theorize that the mass extinction 65 million years ago was caused by the merging of twin stars near the Earth inside the Milky Way galaxy.

This collision created a deadly wave of cosmic radiation that destroyed the protective layers of the Earth's atmosphere, frying vegetation and obliterating most animal life, the researchers say.

"The study is actually an attempt to solve the biggest murder case in the history of life on Earth," said Arnon Dar, a physics professor at the Technion, who with colleagues Nir

Shaviv and Ari Lior is submitting the theory for publication in a scientific journal.

There have been several theories that astral radiation caused mass extinctions.

David N. Schramm, an astrophysicist at the University of Chicago, suggested last year that exploding stars called supernovas could have caused another mass extinction that killed 95 percent of all life 225 million years ago.

Dar said supernovas could not have caused all six mass extinctions that swept over the Earth in the last 650 million years.

"The rate of supernova explosion is not great enough to explain the 100 million year extinctions," Dar said. "But the merging of neutron stars could be responsible."

Twin stars merge every day somewhere in the universe, producing ra-

diation in the form of gamma and cosmic rays that strike the Earth's atmosphere. Usually, the stars are too far away to do any damage and the radiation is harmlessly absorbed by the ozone layer.

Occasionally twin or binary stars collide close to Earth, producing devastating effects.

Dar's theory is "a credible idea," Schramm said. "We do know there is at least one known pair of neutron stars

(near Earth) that are spiraling closer together and will indeed collide."

That collision, he said, is at least 100,000 years away.

The dinosaurs' demise has been the subject of hot debate in scientific circles. Dar discounts the prevailing theory — supported by Schramm — that an asteroid strike in Chicxulub in Mexico's Yucatan was to blame.

Chicxulub is home to a crater more

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ARNON DAR
physics professor

than 100 miles wide that could have been formed by a blast with the explosive power of 100 to 300 megatons of TNT. The theory holds that the asteroid crash created a huge explosion that cast enough dust and rock into the atmosphere to block out the sun, turning the Earth cold and inhospitable to all but the hardiest organisms.

Dar said this theory does not explain the great leap in biodiversity fol-

lowing the mass extinctions. He contends the vast amount of radiation produced by a neutron star collision explains why the number of animal and plant species increased so quickly after mass extinctions.

Dar is now trying to determine which twin stars in the Earth's vicinity are likely to collide and potentially bring on the next mass extinction.

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Leader undergoes lung surgery Doctors remove tumor from Czech Republic president

PRAGUE, Czech Republic (AP) — Doctors removed a malignant tumor and half of President Vaclav Havel's right lung Monday and gave the chain-smoking former dissident good chances for recovery.

Havel regained consciousness soon after the operation and was in intensive care, doctors said.

Chief surgeon Pavel Pafko told reporters a malignant tumor of about 15 millimeters, or half an inch, was taken out during the 3½-hour surgery, which he described as "very radical."

"The prognosis should be good," he said.

Pafko said Havel, 60, probably would remain hospitalized for at least a week and should recover fully in about six weeks. He did not specify what treatment Havel would undergo after surgery.

Presidential spokesman Ladislav Spacek told the state-run CTK news agency that the president's condition after the operation "corresponds with the surgery he underwent."

Premier Vaclav Klaus, in Lisbon, Portugal, for a summit, also told reporters the prognosis was "positive" and that Havel likely would be back at work within weeks.

Havel stopped smoking in front of television cameras years ago but has kept up the habit in private despite a history of respiratory problems.

He was hospitalized in 1983 for a bad case of pneumonia, contracted while in jail as an anti-

Communist dissident. In October 1989, on the eve of the anti-Communist revolution that brought him to power, he was hospitalized with a bronchial infection.

Havel sought to reassure the nation ahead of the surgery, saying Sunday in his regular weekly radio address that the tumor was small and presented "no danger."

Havel made only limited concessions to his approaching operation, cutting his consumption to four cigarettes a day. Pafko said one of the last cigarettes Havel had was with Health Minister Jan Strasky.

While anti-smoking campaigns have had an effect in western Europe, they have hardly dented ingrained smoking habits in the former Soviet bloc countries.

Havel's seeming equanimity ahead of the surgery was in keeping with the courage he demonstrated as his country's most prominent anti-Communist dissident. That courage has earned him widespread affection, with about 75 percent of citizens steadily considering him first choice for president in his seven years of office.

Havel became widely known after the 1968 Soviet-led invasion that crushed the Prague Spring reforms attempted by Alexander Dubcek and other Communists in what was then Czechoslovakia.

Top British writers witness book transfer

LONDON (AP) — Playwright Harold Pinter was there. So was the mystery writer P.D. James. And they weren't just on the shelves.

Some of Britain's top literary names showed up Monday as the British Library began transferring 12 million books from their present home at the British Museum to the library's new building.

The nation's priceless collection of books, which is scattered across a score of buildings in London, includes a copy of the Magna Carta, Britain's 13th century constitutional charter, and a bible printed in the 15th century by the German Johann Gutenberg.

The largest item to be moved will be the Klencke Atlas, which is more than six feet tall;

the smallest item will be a thumb-sized edition of the New Testament.

It will take three years to move all the volumes onto 190 miles of shelves in the library's new home near London's St. Pancras Station.

"The move will take some time and is a complex process — it's not like stacking the shelves of a supermarket," said Brian Lang, the British Library's chief executive.

The new building, which will provide more reading rooms, has generated controversy over its design, expense and construction problems.

Created by architect Colin St. John Wilson, the modern red-brick building with a six-story glass tower will be fully open by June 1999 — six years behind schedule.