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Schwarzenberg's gamble



Rightly or wrongly, 90% of Czechs have probably already made up their mind about ex- and future Development Minister Jiří Čunek. He's seen as being a small-time operator who got caught because he tried to go big-time. No matter what KDU and the Greens attempt to do to erase this impression, a Čunek by any other name will still smell as bad. If Foreign Minister Karel Schwarzenberg keeps his vow to leave the cabinet if Čunek returns, he'll show that at least someone in government has moral standards. But if Schwarzenberg succumbs to the pressure - which seems increasingly likely - and agrees to a compromise that makes cohabitation with Čunek possible, he'll reconfirm the view of voters that politics is a cesspool. In this case, the ultimate damage to Czech political culture will be even greater than if Schwarzenberg had never taken the high ground with regard to Čunek's return.

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