

Merkel and bank secrets

Ask a few random Germans (we did) if Chancellor Angela Merkel has an undisclosed foreign bank account, and chances are you'll get "probably not" as the usual answer. Ask a few random Czechs the same question about Mirek Topolánek or Jiří Paroubek, and, well, you know what kind of answer you'll get. Because of this distinction, stolen bank-account information isn't just a Swiss-German issue. Merkel is significantly raising the ante for Czechs too by indirectly encouraging bank employees to sell stolen data. Even tight-lipped bankers must now weigh their options. Imagine the turmoil at the headquarters of Czech political parties or at Prague city hall if this got out of control. What if someone at J&T Banka or at the Czech National Bank decided to dish up the dirt on politicians and lobbyists who thought they were covered? Perhaps the biggest risk would be to all those secret beneficial owners of Haguess, Viamont and other anonymous companies. A banker somewhere has copies of all the pertinent documents.

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