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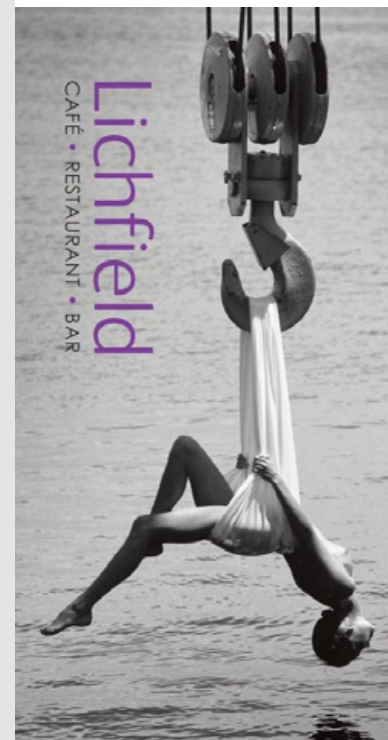
Round Two at Prague city hall

The same analysts and voters who were blindsided last year by the ODS-ČSSD grand coalition at Prague city hall will be much more cautious this time. Instead of a repeat of the wild optimism from last year about the prospects of a cleaner regime under mayoral candidate Zdeněk Tůma of TOP 09, skepticism will run rife that Boris Šťastný of ODS merely wants to squeeze out Bohuslav Svoboda as mayor and then enter into another cozy relationship with ČSSD. At the same time, if another grand coalition is created, it will go much more smoothly for ODS and ČSSD this time. Most voters will just shrug their shoulders in despair instead of traipsing down to city hall to protest, the way they did last time. Tůma will have a particularly difficult decision to make. If he takes ODS's bait and puts himself up again for mayor, he'll be setting himself up for another crushing defeat. The idea that Klaus's man (Šťastný) would allow Bakala's man (Tůma) to take control of Prague city hall at this crucial time is nearly inconceivable.



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