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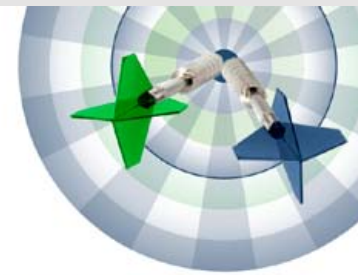
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Schwarzenberg: The best of the bad

We were wrong when we wrote on Dec. 18 that only four candidates have a realistic chance of making it into the second round ("[Delay hurts Fischer the most](#)"). Only three do. The last-minute surge to find an alternative to Miloš Zeman and Jan Fischer has benefited Karel Schwarzenberg much more than Jiří Dienstbier. Schwarzenberg is still a lousy candidate. Even if voters overlook his age and speech problem, there is no getting around his link to Miroslav Kalousek and all that this represents. But Zeman, as the candidate of the criminal elite, is even worse. So is Fischer, mainly because of his reliance on Jaromír Soukup, who is single-handedly destroying the Czech media market through the "[non-tunneling](#)" of state agencies and companies to cross-subsidize his expansion into print and digital media ... and into politics. Schwarzenberg's main redeeming quality is that he has occasionally defied Kalousek. Our endorsement of Schwarzenberg is a gamble that once he arrives at the Castle, this quality will be bolstered and not squandered.

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