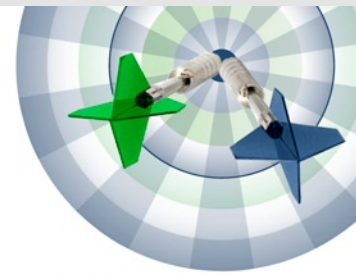


National name sovereignty

The independent CR has never had a president whose first name foreigners can properly pronounce. Czechs have had better luck with their PMs, because "Vladimír," "Stanislav" and "Josef" are doable in foreign languages. ("Miloš" and "Jiří" are pronunciation disasters, and "Mirek" is a toss-up; is it "Meerik" or "Myrik"?) Parents who want their children to enter the Western world without an identification handicap can choose from a limited number of multicultural names - such as Martina, Daniela, David and Michael - that work equally well in Czech and other tongues. Foreign names like Jessica, Esmeralda and Brendon are the rage in the CR, but they have the opposite problem of grating on the ears of many Czechs.

Parents proud of their Slavic stock who refuse to play this Western name game have a rich array of traditional names to choose from. Anyone who sends a child into the world with a name like Bořislavka, Bedřiška or Květoslav will be making a strong statement for continued Czech name sovereignty.



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