

Karel the Mumbler



In this era of political correctness, when it's taboo to denigrate a person due to race, sexual orientation or physical handicap, the Czech presidential election showed that there's one idiosyncrasy that is still fair game for the fault-finders. Those with a speech impediment involving lisping, rhotacism (mispronunciation of "r") or dysarthric mumbling must prepare for being the butt of jokes upon entering public life. Criticism of Karel Schwarzenberg reached such a level that he vowed to start seeing a speech therapist if he won (but, alas, not if he lost). Singer Petr Rezek told [Karel Šíp](#) in impeccable Czech that his early days as a DJ were tough because he couldn't pronounce "ř". It took just one day for an expert to correct this by having him say "hreiben" with his front teeth together. He can't understand why someone in public life doesn't see a doctor, he said without mentioning any particular presidential candidate by name. Will Schwarzenberg be remembered as "Karel the Mumbler," or perhaps as a trailblazer for the rights of the speech-impaired?

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