

NEW 1991 LONG TRAVEL CZ

*We ride a hot new
prototype with over
3 feet of suspension
travel*

*By Rick Sieman,
who certainly ought to know*

CZ's ultra-long-travel dirt bike was originally created to clear the Berlin Wall by a secret team of freedom riders within the CZ factory. Unfortunately, they were from CZ's shipping, rather than engineering, department. With over 36" of wheel travel, it flattens the deepest whoops effortlessly and rolls across a starting gate like it's a cigarette butt.

Once they were the giants of the motocross world. Great names rode these pure-bred motorcycles: Roger DeCoster, Joel Robert . . . the list reads like an honor roll of MX history. These bikes were made for one purpose only: to win motocross races. The transmission was close-ratio, the levers were welded into the correct attack position for your hands, the engine was a marvel of reliability and the frame was near-unbreakable.

They came to America and found a following. American riders started winning races with them.

The bike?

CZ. Pronounce it Chay-Zed, if you want to sound knowledgeable. Built in beautiful downtown Praha, Czechoslovakia, the CZs developed a cult following.

Then the mid-'70s happened and the dirt bike revolution hit like a thunderstorm. Good bikes started coming out of Japan. The European bikes charged into the long-travel era feet-first.

Maicos got fast. KTM's appeared. The Elsinore stunned the world. Things were happening fast and furious everywhere.

Everywhere except beautiful downtown Praha at the Motokov factory.

There, they stayed firmly locked into 1971, refusing to change. Everybody started building long-travel bikes. In 1975, CZ finally moved the rear shocks forward a little bit. The 1975 Falta model ripped into the space age with a whopping 5-1/2 inches of travel when everyone else was experimenting with 8-1/2 inches or more.

By 1976-'77 bikes with ten inches of travel were on the tracks of America (and the world). CZ added another inch. The rest is history. Sales fell off and CZ, for all intents and purposes, was out of business in the United States, and a mere shell of its former self in Europe.

During the last two years they made a half-hearted attempt at trying to recapture some of the dirt bike market with a bike that was no different from their 1982 models. Still, the bike was cheap and many riders bought one out of a sense of pure nostalgia. In fact, this writer bought one, too.

WALLS COME DOWN & IT'S UP WITH CZ!

It's no secret that much of the lackadaisical approach of CZ was due to the fact that all of the profits from building and selling CZs were sent to Russia. Now that the Communist party has been booted out of power in Czechoslovakia and the Berlin Wall is crumbling, word has come to us that Motokov is ready to get right back into the thick of things. They're tired of people saying that CZs are old-fashioned, out-of-date antiques. So, with the aid of some "sources" in Praha, *Dirt Bike* was able to secure some super-duper spy photos of the new-generation CZs.

As you can see from the photos, long travel is the name of the game. The bikes are so tall, in fact, that test rider Jim Holley was forced to use a full-sized stepladder to get on the bike.

Clearly there are benefits and drawbacks to this new design. It will probably not be as nimble through the turns as, say, a CR250, and getting back on after a crash will require a stepladder or a trampoline.

However, the benefits are clear. You won't have to worry about whoops anymore, because the cases are so high off the ground that both wheels simply ride through the bumps and stay on the ground. Long travel does have its pluses.

Jumps? Hah! The travel is so long the bike never leaves the ground. The high clearance also makes passing a snap. You don't have to find a good line to go around bikes; you merely ride over them without touching the bikes or riders!

MIXING SOME OLD WITH THE NEW

Chay-Zed has not abandoned some of the proven things that have worked throughout the years, though. With the fade-prone drum brakes you're less likely to stall the engine.



Reservoirs are all the rage, so CZ has put them everywhere they possibly can, including three on the float bowl of the carb. This is one thing you won't find on your new 1991 KX lineup.

Water cooling?

"No," says Petr Dzonbonznedzilickiski-ovitch, one of the top engineers. "Water can rust metal. Anyone knows that. Air does not rust; therefore we use air to cool the cylinder and the head. We consider this design revolutionary. However, we are considering a foam air filter instead of the usual paper one. More research will be required first."

When asked about a strong international team, Petr was a bit vague. "We contacted John DeSoto and he told us he would rather eat worms. I do not understand

his liking for worms. Then we asked Peter Lamppu, but he wanted to be *paid* to race, and we had to drop him from the potential list of riders. We plan to contact Rex Staten and Brad Lackey in the near future."

Who would run the new-generation CZ race team? Petr was firm on this: "We would like to have DeCoster run the team, since he started with us and became world champion on the marque. Unfortunately, he is now employed by a small Japanese company and is under contract. Hopefully, he will have the common sense to break that contract and accept our offer, which will not only include a salary but will also give him the use of a Skoda sedan on alternate weekends. The prestige, of course, is priceless."

Who would be the mechanics? "Why, that would also be part of DeCoster's job. We cannot have people standing around in the pits doing nothing but talking with riders. He could give the riders advice while servicing air filters, for example."

How will the new CZ work in the actual heat of competition? Time, naturally, will be the ultimate judge of that, but for now the bike looks hot, high and ready to go!

One question remains, though: are you man enough to sling a leg over the new CZ? □

