



The Koucky brothers,
František (left) and Josef
(right) with their
ZKK 600 rifle



From
ZKK

to **CZ 557**

Half a century of developing and manufacturing **hunting rifles** in **Česká zbrojovka a.s. (CZ)**, Uherský Brod.

AS the heart of the majority of Czech hunting rifles is the Mauser bolt-action, it is fitting to mention the fact that factory-made hunting rifles were initially based directly on military guns. Any significant development of the military repeater ended in the late 19th century, when on 9 September 1895 the renowned German designer Paul Mauser patented the cylindrical turn-bolt for repeating rifles which he subsequently used for the military repeater Gewehr 98. From this was gradually deve-

As anyone who is at all interested in hunting knows that Česká zbrojovka (CZ) in Uherský Brod has long been one of the leading global manufacturers of high-quality yet cost-friendly rifles, offered in a wide variety of calibers and versions. But when you ask how old their tradition of developing and manufacturing rifles actually is, you will probably meet with some hesitation even from hunting veterans. The answer is given in the subheading to this article, in which we will recollect the whole remarkable story of Czech repeating rifles of the medium and magnum categories from their very beginnings to the present day.

loped the Karabiner 98k, a weapon used by the Wehrmacht throughout World War II. Mauser's bolt-action can be considered

one of the peaks of the construction of the cylindrical bolt, and even today is still in use worldwide. Its main features are:

))) A locking mechanism with two symmetrical lugs immediately behind the bolt head. Thanks to this, when the gun is fired, the distribution of forces is symmetrical, which prevents the receiver from warping. The

the bolt is unlocked with a lift of the handle and then is moved slightly backwards (due to the helix on the rear surface of the rear receiver bridge). In this way, the cartridge case 'unsticks' from the wall of

))) On the bolt's rear end there is a bolt sleeve that seals the cavity of the bolt with the striker and the main spring. On its end there is a safety in the shape of a wing, rotating around an axis parallel to the barrel axis. Lifting the wing safety to the vertical position directly blocks the movement of the striker, but allows safe manipulation with the bolt during the loading and



overwhelming majority of forces act only between the rear part of the barrel, the lockable (supporting) surfaces of the receiver and the bolt. From the rear end of the front receiver bridge, the receiver is stressed further only by inertial forces. There is a third locking lug at the rear of the bolt body. It does not participate directly in locking the bolt, but it serves as a safety in the event that, for some reason, the locking lugs on the bolt head fail.

))) The striker performs a linear movement, the main spring is wound around its body and the whole mechanism is encased in the bolt body. The bolt is cocked on opening via a curve-shaped guide track on the bolt body.

))) The extractor consists of a rather long leaf spring with a claw at the end. It does not change its position during the loading cycle; it is placed on the bolt body and revolves around it. While the gun is being loaded, the lower edge of the bolt face strips the cartridge from the internal magazine (or detachable magazine); the cartridge then slips with its head groove under the extractor claw and is held against the bolt face. The cartridge is pushed into the chamber, and the bolt is locked by turning the bolt handle down. After firing,

the cartridge chamber. At the same time, the striking mechanism is cocked. Further pull of the bolt handle extracts the empty cartridge case out of the chamber. The extractor claw holds it on the bolt face until the bottom of the cartridge case hits the edge of the ejector fixed in the receiver. The ejector pulls the cartridge case from under the claw and propels it out through the ejection port. This type of cycle is called controlled feed. It works in any position of the gun; all cartridge movements are forced by springs or forces operated by the bolt. It is not surprising that it is still considered one of the most reliable ways of loading repeaters.

unloading of the rifle. It also covers the rear sight notch and indicates the safe mode of the rifle. With the wing turned right (from the shooter's perspective), the bolt and the striker are blocked. With the wing turned left, the safety is off, while the safety can be engaged or disengaged only with a cocked striker. While cocking the striker, its cocking piece is raised slightly above the rear surface of the bolt sleeve and serves as an optical and tactile cocking indicator. The typical Mauser wing is not exactly ideal in terms of manipulation, especially when there is a telescopic sight installed on the rifle. It is no wonder, then, that the safety is usually the first thing that is omitted from the purely Mauser-type bolt-action and replaced with another, more user-friendly mechanism.

MAUSER RIFLES FROM BRNO

The Austro-Hungarian Empire chose another repeating rifle for its soldiers - the



'Galaš gun' ZG 47



Mannlicher system. After the foundation of the independent Czechoslovak state, the Czechoslovak armed forces found themselves facing the problem of what rifle to choose and where to manufacture it. When the Treaty of Versailles ordered the liquidation of German weapons production facilities, the Czechoslovak government managed to buy a significant part of the manufacturing equipment for Mauser-type repeaters from the Mauser company and others, and from 1922 the Mauser rifle – for example, versions 98, 98/22, 24 and other models – became a standard weapon for Czechoslovak soldiers.

The ZKK rifles with bolt forged integral with handle are extremely reliable and durable rifles.

Production took place in Zbrojovka Brno (under numerous names) with various modifications and for various customers until the end of World War II. Zbrojovka Brno soon began to produce a civilian, hunting version of the rifle. They had big plans, but the production of hunting rifles was only hundreds of pieces a year. Production continued even during the War, although to a limited extent.

After the War, production in Brno continued. The rifle, at first designated as Vz. 21 or 22 and after the War just Z (called Zet)

was, in reality, nothing else than the army Mauser rifle mounted in a civilian stock and outfitted with a double-set trigger. The shape of the bolt handle corresponded with the civilian purposes of the rifle: in its flat shape, it followed the Mannlicher tradition, and with its curve it enabled the trouble-free usage of a telescopic sight. As army rifles, the Zet has an internal magazine with a double-stack ammunition storage and a side-by-side feed, but it is not possible to use stripper clips for filling the magazine.

In 1946, Zbrojovka Brno started to develop an entirely new repeating rifle, the later series designation ZG 47 – known as the 'Galaš gun'. The designer, Otakar Galaš, based his gun on the Zet, but he redesigned the bolt sleeve and the safety. Although the safety still blocked the striker, it was placed on the right side of the bolt sleeve and consisted of cylindrical segment controlled by a grip rotated forwards and rearwards, the rotation axis being perpendicular to the axis of the barrel. The bolt handle was cylindrical, ending in a ball, and strongly tilted, so that it did not get in the way of the telescopic sight. The bottom floorplate of the internal magazine was hinged, controlled by a latch on the inner side of the front trigger guard housing.

However, it was the completely new trigger mechanism that was most important. Its trigger travel and overtravel are adjustable. Instead of a first-class lever of the trigger, the

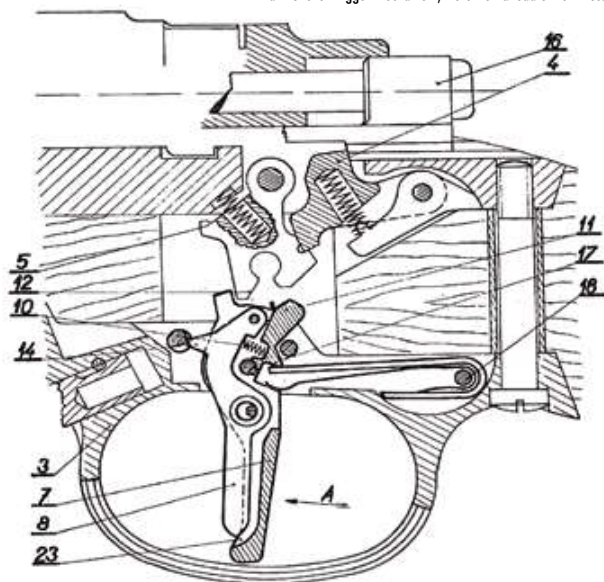
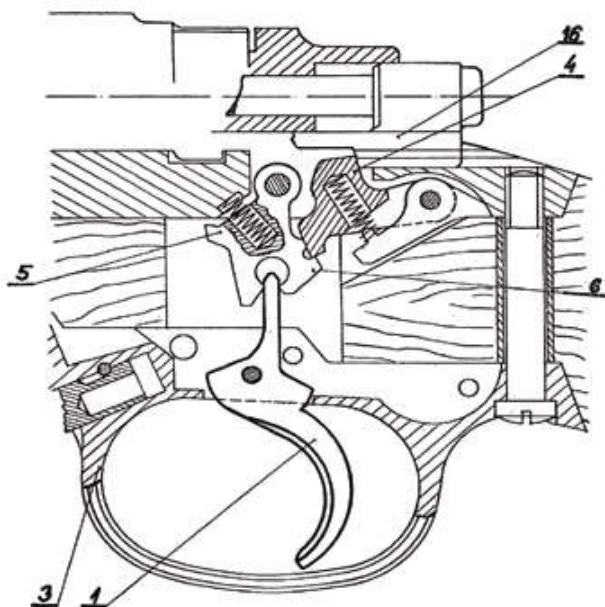
designer used a second-class lever, which pushes the striker nose out of engagement with the trigger blade. When the trigger is pulled, the sear is not pushed out of engagement with the striker but it loses support and falls under the nose of the striker. The result is extremely sophisticated trigger travel. Galaš spoke of a 'flash trigger'.

Due to the complicated political and economical situation in post-war Czechoslovakia, production of the ZG 47 test series started only after 1955, and real serial production started only in 1956. By that time, however, the sales network had fallen apart and the newly founded foreign trade companies had no idea how to sell hunting rifles. Also, the market which had offered considerable opportunities for export in the late 1940s was already occupied by the mid 1950s. Therefore,



ZKK 600

The trigger mechanism of a ZKK with the simple trigger in cocked state, and the trigger mechanism of a ZKK with the set in the set state. Both cross-sections from the patent file no. 104865 of Koucký brothers of 15th March 1962. One cannot marvel enough at the genius of the designers who, using a two-lever trigger mechanism, were well ahead of its times.





The ZKK 601 rifle (top) and the ZKK 602. Both sport an American stock, a standard fit for these weapons. The ZKK 602 has a single trigger, without set, with curved trigger blade.

despite expectations, the Galaš rifle was not a very successful export.

Yet these were really good rifles. The trigger mechanism together with the excellent barrel profiles and quality bedding of the barrelled action in stock provided the Galaš rifle with a great advantage. It is not surprising that they are still highly regarded among hunters and often become the subject of various modifications and reconstructions. Designing this rifle, Galaš was far ahead of his time; the conservative European hunting community is only now starting to lean towards the concept of

striker which, propelled by the mainspring, starts forward and strikes the primer. The mechanism is fast and reliable. Although the trigger cannot be adjusted to such a large extent as with the Galaš rifle, there have never been any complaints about ZKK trigger mechanisms. The set trigger is of a single-set type, i.e. with one trigger blade; it is pulled by pushing the trigger blade

TO UHERSKÝ BROD

The construction of a new rifle designated ZKK (standing for Zbrojovka – Koucký Brothers – Centrefire Rifles) according to the system established for the Brno models, was finished in 1963, and so in 2013 we could celebrate the 50-year anniversary of the creation of this exceptional and popular rifle. Unfortunately, its story soon got complicated. Originally it was developed for Zbrojovka Brno, but in the second half of the 1950s, due to a temporary decline in demand for civilian arms, the factory redirected the production of many other engineering products; and after another increase in armament orders at the beginning of the 1960s, the



a rifle without a set-trigger but with a precise trigger.

Nevertheless, in terms of user (hunting) preferences at the time of the creation of the rifle, the absence of a set trigger was a disadvantage, despite it not being necessary. Also, the Galaš rifle could not be produced in the powerful 'African' calibers.

THE LEGENDARY ZKK

The construction of the replacement for the ZG 47 in the early 1960s was taken up by the brothers Josef and František Koucký. The basis for the new hunting rifle had to be a new trigger mechanism that would incorporate a set-trigger option. The Koucký brothers dealt with this task brilliantly. They designed replaceable parts which enabled the production of a unified trigger mechanism; the user would choose whether the gun was mounted with a set-trigger or without it.

This was a double-lever mechanism: it consists of a trigger, a sear release and a sear. When the mechanism is cocked, the nose of the striker is caught by the sear, which is supported by the sear release. After the trigger is pulled, the sear release is tipped down, the functional edge is disengaged from the sear and the sear swings downwards. In this way, the functional side of the sear will fall under the nose of the

forward. This well-executed mechanism is protected by Czechoslovak patent no. 104865 submitted on 6 July 1961.

The bolt keeps to the Mauser concept, in a way similar to the Galaš rifle. Unlike with the Galaš rifle, the two-position safety is not on the bolt sleeve. It was moved to the receiver tang, on its right side behind the bolt handle. It is not a safety directly for the striker anymore, but for the sear. The safety on position is with the thumbpiece forward, and at the same time the safety blocks the opening of the bolt. The bolt sleeve was redesigned, too. On its left side, a button for disassembly was added. If the user presses the button while the striker is released and the bolt opened, it is possible to unscrew the striker mechanism off the bolt body, for cleaning, for example. The rifle also has an internal magazine with a hinged floorplate, and its latch has been moved from the inner side of the front trigger guard housing to the outer side, immediately under the floorplate of the internal magazine. The cartridges in the internal magazine are again placed in two rows, with a side-by-side feed.

The ZKK hunting rifle exists in three model series – the 600 model is designed for cartridges with an overall length of 80mm, the 601 model for 70mm-long cartridges and the heavy tropical model 602 for the 95mm-long cartridges.

factory could not fulfill them all. Therefore, in 1963 the central Czechoslovak authorities decided to shift the main production of civilian arms from Brno to another factory with corresponding experience and available capacity – today's Česká zbrojovka a.s. And so it was done: by 1966, all production of handguns and long guns was transferred from Zbrojovka Brno to Uherský Brod, and the Brno factory further concentrated only on the development and manufacture of shotguns and combination guns. For the Uherský Brod factory this was, in many ways, a milestone: among other things, it allowed them to establish direct cooperation with the Koucký brothers, out of which another legend was soon born – the CZ 75 pistol...

But let's go back to ZKK rifles. Their serial production in Česká zbrojovka Uherský Brod (at that time called Přesné strojírenství – Precision Engineering) started in 1966 – which means that another anniversary is quickly approaching. However, few end users have any idea that they are not holding a rifle from Brno (and despite all improvements in information technology, it is still the case today). Until 1976, for commercial reasons, a license contract ensured that the globally renowned mark was used in the form of the letter Z in stylized rifling, and that on the receiver the distinctive sign BRNO was still emblazoned. Nevertheless, the ZKK rifles were made exclusively in today's Česká zbrojovka Uherský Brod.



	ZKK 600	ZKK 601	ZKK 602
Caliber	30-06 Sprg, 9.3x62, 8x64 S, 7x64, 10.75x68, 7x57, 8x57 S, 270 Win	308 Win, 243 Win, 222 Rem, 222 Rem Mag	375 H&H Mag, 358 Mag, 458 Mag
Overall length (mm)	1110	1095	1150
Barrel length (mm)	600	600	635
Weight unloaded (kg)	3.25	3.1	4.2
Internal magazine (cartridges)	5 or 4	5 or 6	5

In the case of the basic model ZKK 600, it remained so until 1996, while the total production volume exceeded 112 000 pieces. These rifles were available in calibers 30-06 Springfield, 9.3x62, 7x64, 7x57, 8x57S, 270 Win, in very limited numbers also in 8x64S, 10.75x68 and towards the end of their production also in 6.5x55 SE. Concurrently with the production of the 600 model, the production of ZKKs with a short action – the model ZKK 601 in calibers 308 Win, 243 Win, 222 Rem and 222 RemMag – began in 1966. In this case, the production was not continuous; it was already interrupted in 1968. Nevertheless, in 1970, it started running again and lasted until 1996. Altogether, 60 000 pieces were manufactured.

To this day, probably the most famous is the heavy model ZKK 602. It was produced in the calibers 375 H&H Mag, 358 Magnum and 458 WinMag, and later also in 300 WinMag and 7 mm RemMag. Production of 602s began a bit later, in 1967; there were several short intermissions and the total production volume was lower than in the cases of its weaker sisters. Nevertheless, by the end of serial production, in 1997, well over 26,000 pieces had been manufactured, which is a respectable number.

MANY ADVANTAGES, MINOR NIGGLES

The ZKK rifle was supplied in various designs, which differed mostly in the stock.



In addition to the simple American-style Standard stock, the 'better' Monte Carlo was offered. This and all the stocks of the heavy 602 model were equipped with a rubber recoil pad. The arms in the 602 series differed – with regard to the performance of the calibers used – also in the usage of a reinforcement cross-bolt on the stock in front of the front edge of the internal magazine. The classic 600 and 601 models were mounted with the rear sight

having one blade on a dovetail groove; the tropical 602 models had the sight with one fixed and two foldable blades. Some export rifles had a pop-up aperture sight on the rear bridge of the receiver.

The receiver bridges were angular. On the top, on the sides of the receiver bridge, there was a dovetail for mounting a tele-

scopic sight. There were a number of minor modifications during production, but these never interfered with the quality of the gun.

The ZKK rifles with bolt forged integral with handle are extremely reliable and



Some of the ZKK rifles, (reportedly the early export versions) have in the rear breech bridge a folding dioptic sight. The safety of the 'zee-kaykay' is moved back to 'arm' and forward to 'safe'. In the 'safe' position the bolt could not be opened. The noisy safety was the most often criticised feature of these otherwise highly valued weapons.

One of the variants of marking of the ZKK rifles. Despite using the logo of the Zbrojovka Brno the weapon was manufactured in Uherský Brod.

durable rifles; they are accurate and met with singular success right from the start. In the 1970s, it was considered the best Mauser-type rifle on the market. It gained popularity on all continents, but the best testimonial is the fact that it was favoured by African professional hunters. To this day, ZKKs are perceived as cult rifles.





Forward section of the CZ 531 (right) and the ZKK 600. The CZ 531 inherited two locking lugs, the ejector in the receiver, but the long Mauser-type extractor was replaced with a short, crosswise-sprung claw.

CZ 531 had the tang safety on the top of the stock, which is the place that is most advantageous, according to users. The receiver bridges were rounded and there were threaded holes in them to enable the fitting of a telescopic sight. In 1985 there were prototype tests for the calibers 30-06 Springfield and 308 Win, but real serial production never started. By 1988,

was that Česká zbrojovka – in concrete terms, the team of designers led by J. Pitner – was preparing a new rifle which was right from the start designed for manufacture on numerically controlled machines. For this rifle, the designers returned to the classic Mauser-type long extractor with fixed ejector. At first glance, the bolt is similar to the ZKK bolt, but the profile of the bolt sleeve is new, possibly inspired by the round shape of the CZ 531 bolt sleeve. However, the safety on the top of the stock was not adopted; it was returned to its former position on the right side of the receiver, alongside the bolt sleeve.



CZ 537

However, ZKKs also had their shortcomings. They were criticized mostly for the relatively noisy operation of the safety. The problem was solved individually, by shortening the safety spring and possibly with nylon inserts. Sometimes the safety-on maneuver was criticized, too – releasing by the backwards movement of the thumbpiece was considered clumsy, but this complaint was not so significant. Further, the ZKK was criticized because apparently, in some calibers (mostly ZKK 600), the bolt tended to get stuck while inserting a cartridge into the chamber. To remove this problem, the bolt guide was lapped, and possibly the bolt handle inclination was adjusted. Indeed, the curving of the bolt handle slightly backwards was eventually adopted by CZ as standard.

CZ 537

Caliber	6.5x55 SE, 30-06 Sprg, 7x57, 7x64, 270 Win, 243 Win, 308 Win
Overall length	1135 mm
Barrel length	460 mm
Weight unloaded	3.3 kg
Detachable magazine capacity / internal magazine	5/4 cartridges

The safety movement direction was opposite to that in the ZKK, i.e. the safety was disengaged by forward movement. In comparison with the ZKK, the safety is much quieter. The trigger mechanism was also designed anew. It enables the usage of set trigger; this time, however, the single-set again.

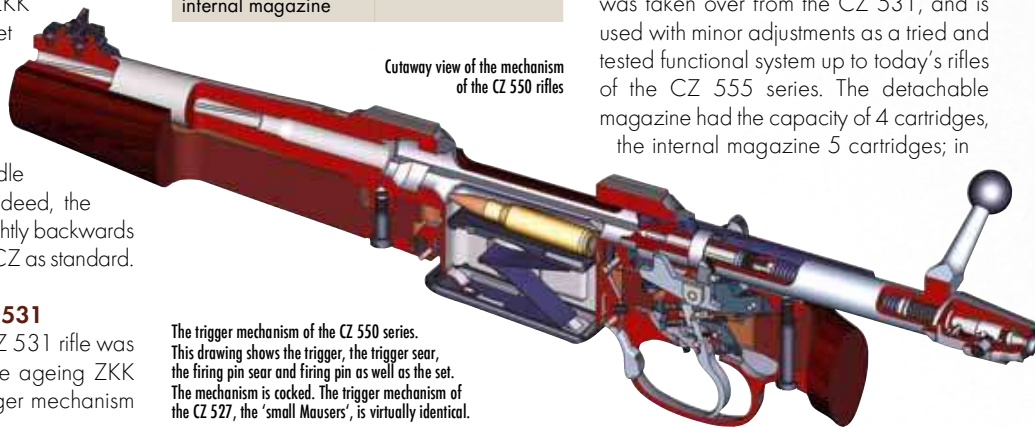
FIVE-THREE-SEVEN: PROGRESSIVE, BUT NOT VERY POPULAR

The CZ 537 was the first repeating rifle from Uherský Brod which could be fitted with either a detachable magazine or an internal magazine. The magazine was taken over from the CZ 531, and is used with minor adjustments as a tried and tested functional system up to today's rifles of the CZ 555 series. The detachable magazine had the capacity of 4 cartridges, the internal magazine 5 cartridges; in

INTERLUDE NAMED CZ 531

In the early 1980s, the CZ 531 rifle was to be a replacement for the ageing ZKK rifles. In this model, the trigger mechanism

The trigger mechanism of the CZ 550 series. This drawing shows the trigger, the trigger sear, the firing pin sear and firing pin as well as the set. The mechanism is cocked. The trigger mechanism of the CZ 527, the 'small Mausers', is virtually identical.



Cutaway view of the mechanism of the CZ 550 rifles

was reconstructed. It still allowed the usage set trigger, but this time of the double-set trigger. The bolt sleeve was also changed, and it seems that there were at least two shapes of bolt handle – with the classic ball, or in a flat, Mannlicher-style shape. In the CZ 531, Česká zbrojovka abandoned the concept of a long, flexible extractor and replaced it with a short spring-loaded claw with a transverse helical spring. The rifle was fed from the internal magazine, but there was a detachable magazine, too.

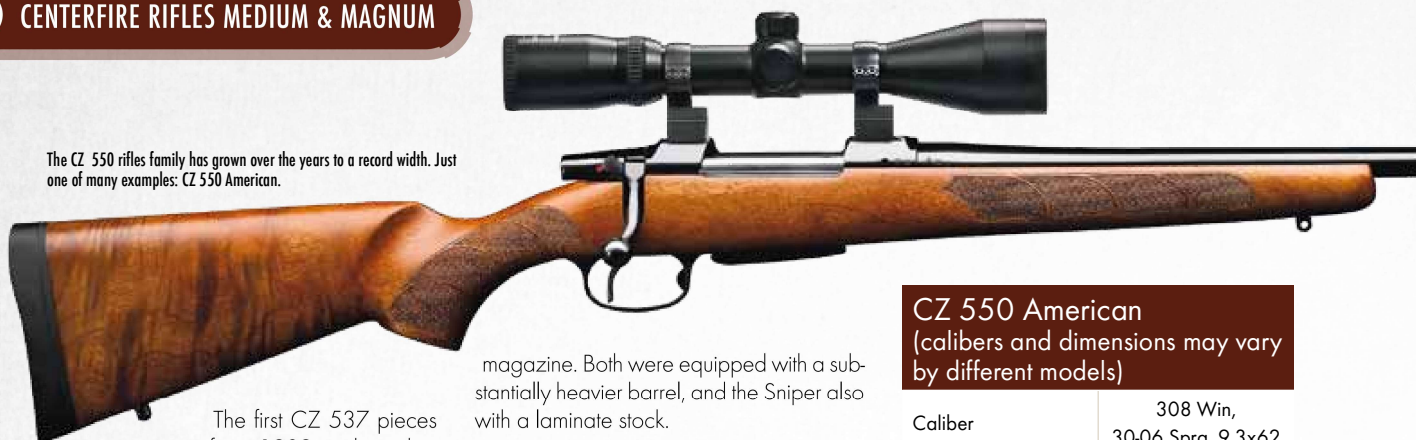
only 766 pieces had been manufactured. It is interesting that although the CZ 531 was never made in heavy tropical calibers, their stocks even have two reinforcing cross bolts. The stocks are either the Bavarian type or Monte Carlo. The cause of the abrupt end of the CZ 531

both cases, the cartridges were stored in two rows. The CZ 537 was fed in the calibers 6.5x55 SE, 7x57, 7x64, 270 Win and 30-06 Springfield, all designed with an internal magazine, and in addition in calibers 308 Win and 243 Win with a detachable magazine. The rifle had a single-blade mechanical rear sight in a dovetail groove; both bridges were again squared and had the standard CZ dovetail for mounting a telescopic sight. The standard stock was in the popular Bavarian style with a rubber recoil pad.





The CZ 550 rifles family has grown over the years to a record width. Just one of many examples: CZ 550 American.



The first CZ 537 pieces are from 1989 and production continued until 1995, with production of the 'finishing pieces' running until 1999. And yet the CZ 537 has never achieved the popularity of its predecessor. Some consider the main reason to be the lighter barrel profile, which, although providing sufficient accuracy for hunt shooting at short and medium distances, causes shot dispersion to widen dramatically at distances of over 200 metres. Another possible cause of the problems with accuracy could have been the changes in material and the manufacturing method used for the rifling during production; from the classic cut rifling it was changed to a combination of pull-button and push-button broaching and finally to cold hammer forging. A total of 15,000 CZ 537 rifles were made. Let's also add that until 1990, the 537 Sport and CZ 537 Sniper were also manufactured in small-scale, with a high proportion of manual work, both in calibers 308 Win and with a detachable

magazine. Both were equipped with a substantially heavier barrel, and the Sniper also with a laminate stock.

FIVE-HUNDRED-FIFTY: THE NEW FLAGSHIP

With hindsight, the CZ 537 is a transitional type of a rifle, with which Česká zbrojovka tested the possibilities of modern NC machine production. As early as 1995, the factory launched a new rifle – CZ 550. For this gun, a trigger mechanism was adopted that enabled the usage of single set trigger and adjust the pull weight and trigger travel. This is also a double-lever mechanism; the sear release supports the sear. Although the number of levers and functions are the same as in the ZKK, the design solution is completely different. As in the case of CZ 537, the CZ 550 can be fed either from the internal or the detachable magazine. The safety on the right side of the receiver is either two-position (safety on – safety off), or three-position (safety on – safety on, but bolt free – safety off). The safety is disengaged by moving the lever forward. On the bolt,

CZ 550 American (calibers and dimensions may vary by different models)

Caliber	308 Win, 30-06 Sprg, 9.3x62
Overall length	1135 mm
Barrel length	600 mm
Height	195 mm
Max. width	80 mm
Weight unloaded	3.4 kg
Internal magazine	5 cartridges



CZ 555

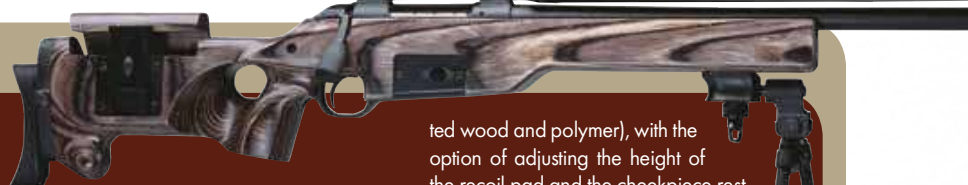


CZ 700 Sniper

MODULAR SEVEN-HUNDRED

When, in the 1990s Česká zbrojovka started developing the CZ 550 series, a decision was made not to put the emphasis only on the time-proven but technologically demanding Mauser action. Simultaneously, a completely new modular design for a hunting, sports and service rifle was being worked on, whose production was simpler. The production title of the new rifle was CZ 538, but it was changed to CZ 700.

The principal author of the seven-hundred was the designer Vítězslav Guryča, known today for his involvement in the CZ 805 BREN project. A number of progressive features and differences were utilized, differing from the existing direction in the construction of rifles. The most significant change was the usage of a modified Weatherby boltaction with a dual trio of axial locking lugs on the rear of the bolt. The mounting of the barrel in the receiver was solved within the modular concept by screwing on a headspace, and the assembly could be carried out using parts which had already received a finish. The bolt was equipped with



a short extractor and spring-loaded ejector with a pin. For serial production, polymer parts were to be used; for example, the detachable single-row magazine was to be mostly plastic. The designs of the trigger and striking mechanisms were completely new. The option of versatile control of the trigger mechanism was noteworthy. Another characteristic feature was the down and backward bent bolt handle with a massive plastic knob, which, together with a very quiet bolt movement, contributed to the comfortable control of the rifle. The development of the CZ 700 rifle was essentially finished as early as 1995. After the completion of the basic model, work began on the sporting special CZ 700 Sport, with an original-shaped stock. After that, the version CZ 700 Sniper followed, in 7.62x51 mm NATO (308 Win) caliber with a ten-shot magazine, for which a newly designed stock was used (there were slightly different versions of lamina-

ted wood and polymer), with the option of adjusting the height of the recoil pad and the cheekpiece rest.

The CZ 700 rifles were a structurally imaginative, user-friendly and very accurate rifles, and it would be interesting to know how they would fair on the market.

Unfortunately, their fate was sealed by the economic problems CZ had to deal with in the challenging period of the second half of the 1990s, which prevented the company making the large investment needed to commence serial production. Of course, a crucial part was played by the outstanding properties of the CZ 550 series, which Česká zbrojovka could offer in excellent quality for a very reasonable price. This also corresponded with the warm acceptance by customers.

The money saved was used to systematically expand the range of the CZ 550 rifle series, which, thanks to this, is still available in a wide range of designs and calibers.

there is a Mauser-type extractor with a long spring; and in comparison with the CZ 537, the changes in the shape of the bolt sleeve are only cosmetic. The receiver bridges are square and carry dovetail grooves for mounting a telescopic sight. The sights consist of the rear sight adjustable for elevation and windage.

Česká zbrojovka developed a range of the CZ 550 to an extent so far unprecedented in any other rifle from Uherský Brod. The basic model Standard has a simple American-style stock without a cheekpiece and with a plastic recoil pad. There are, however, many other 'better' versions: with Bavarian stock, a full-stock version, a version with laminated stock,



In Africa, the CZ 550 Magnum rifles carry on with dignity in the glorious traditions of the ZKK 602 model



and several versions with a plastic stock. Variations are not limited to the shape and material of the stock, but also to the length and profile of the barrel: heavy, so-called Varmint barrel, but also a barrel with the barley twist profile – a characteristic of the cold hammer forged barrel.

As for calibers, this model also historically offers the widest range. Just before the arrival of the new

generation of the CZ 557 rifles, the five-hundred-fifty was

available in calibers 22-250 Rem, 243 Win, 6.5x55 SE, 270 Win, 7x64, 7 mm RemMag, 308 Win, 300 WinMag, 30-06 Springfield, 8x57 IS and 9.3x62. The CZ 550 Magnum series were chambered in the traditional African heavy calibres 375 H&H Magnum, 416 Rigby, 458 WinMag and 458 Lott. The CZ 550 Safari Classic was a royalty though – the luxurious African caliber rifle with the American-style stock, which was in the case of the tropical Magnum calibers reinforced by two cross bolts and with the traditional African rear sight with three blades.

And we are not even counting the offer of the subsidiary CZ-USA, in which the CZ 550 rifle plays a role in other calibers and designs.

Overall, there is no doubt that as far as world-wide popularity is concerned, the CZ 550 does not hang behind the legendary ZKK. This is best attested to by the production volumes, which de facto equal the sales: by the end of 2010 alone, i.e. within 15 years, approximately 178 000 pieces were manufactured, and despite

the emergence of the new model CZ 557, this gun still remains the 'flagship' of Česká zbrojovka in the field of long hunting guns. It is no coincidence that the five-five-sevens were originally designed with the intention of implementing a relatively limited modernization of the five-hundred-fifty – the company and the customers did not require anything else, but everything was changed by the exceptional ingenuity of the designer. But more on this topic on page 40.

For completeness, let's also mention that the CZ 550 rifle became the construction solution for sniper and sporting special CZ 750 of the 308 Winchester caliber, for which a barrel elongated to 660 mm and a sophisticated buttstock are characteristic.

A SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT CZ 555

In many respects, the CZ 555 from 2004 represents a special addition to the CZ 550 series. It differs from the five-hundred-fifty in the re-designed bolt. It is still locked by two symmetrical lugs, but instead of a long extractor, it has a long one spring-loaded by

a transverse helical spring, similar to the CZ 531 in its time. The ejector is in the shape of a spring-loaded pin placed on the bolt face. On the whole, this kind of bolt is a little different, and the question is whether this gun can still be seen as a Mauser type. This system is called *push feed*. It strips the cartridge from the magazine, and the extractor claw snaps or rather slides behind the rim of the cartridge only at the closing of the bolt. After a shot, on unlocking the bolt and moving it backwards, the spring-loaded ejector pushes at the bottom of the cartridge case and pries it from the bolt face. At the moment when the whole cartridge case arrives on the level of the ejection port, the ejector spring propels the cartridge case from the rifle.

This is a proven solution. Bolts with a push feed were first used to a larger extent in the Remington 700 rifle (in 1962) and Winchester 70 (versions after 1964). They are better in terms of strength. The extractor is less stressed and there is a smaller risk of breakage. On the other hand, the movement of the cartridge in the rifle during insertion into the chamber is no longer controlled so precisely as in the Mauser type bolt-action. In practice, both designs have their own strong supporters and opponents, and it is up to the user to which one they give preference.

Indeed, more choice was also the reason why this rifle was created in Uherský Brod. With regard to the qualities of the basic CZ 550 series, the demand for the CZ 555 rifle was never very high, but it has found its fans. However, CZ does not supply these rifles anymore. The reason is the new model series CZ 557, which uses a similar bolt system.

CZ 555

Caliber	7x64, 30-06 Sprg, 9.3x62
Overall length	1135 mm
Barrel length	600 mm
Height	190 mm
Max. width	70 mm
Weight unloaded	3.3 kg
Detachable magazine capacity	3 cartridges