

Road Switcher Named Bumblebee

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Piko HO-scale
Czech Class T669 Diesel
#59780, MSRP: \$178.99

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WHAT do you call a single locomotive going from Prague to Budweis? A Czech engine light! All joking aside, this new HO-scale T669 diesel from Piko is anything but a lightweight. The new model is a well-executed rendition of the most-produced diesel locomotive in the world.

The T669 diesel locomotive came about from a 1960s-era plan to replace steam traction in Czechoslovakia and the USSR. Czech-Moravian-Kolben-Danek (CKD) Machine Works built more than 8,000 examples of T669s between 1963 and 1994, with the bulk of those going to the former Soviet Union. CKD's Prague, and Dubnica, Slovakia, factories produced the T669 for not only Czechoslovakia and the USSR, but Poland, Albania, India, Iraq, and Syria. The T669

gained the nickname of "Cmeliak" or "Bumblebee," in Slovakian; a reference to the engine's noise while in service.

The carbody of the T669 followed a North American roadswitcher style,

with a single cab, long and short hood, and end- and side-

handrails. All units produced were high-short hood versions, with none rebuilt to a low-nose style. The Cmeliaks were six-axle locomotives, with six-cylinder engines and electric transmissions, generating a maximum 1,332 hp and reaching a top speed of 56 mph (90kph). They were used mostly in freight service and heavy switching, but occasionally in passenger service as well. Over the course of their lifespans, the T669s and variants have worn many color schemes, which

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will surely be reflected in future Piko releases. Although the Czech and Slovak T669s have been retired since the mid-2000s, the Cmeliaks continue to run in Russia and Albania, and a number of the ex-Czechoslovakian State

Railroads (CSD) units now work for private rail contractors in Central Europe.

Model Railroad News' T669 sample is decorated for the Era IV color scheme of the CSD. The bluish green base contrasts wonderfully with the cream and red striping, causing the cream-colored handrails to stand out. All lettering is in white and is easily readable with a magnifying glass. The body of the model features separately applied plastic grab irons and metal handrails, which guard walkways with true-to-scale tread surfaces.

Looking at the cab, you'll find thin-wall cab glass that reveals a full cab interior. The interior cab floor is raised up considerably higher than the prototype due to mechanism space demands. For modelers wanting to install figures, this high floor will necessitate modifying crew figures. Like a North American roadswitcher, the T669 has illuminated number boards, but curiously enough they are only found on the end of the long hood. The number boards are constant-intensity LEDs, like the model's directional headlights that feature a large single headlight and two ditch lights (recessed into the hood), which are



The lettering on Czechoslovakian rolling stock was never big or flashy. CSD stands for Československé státní dráhy, or *Czechoslovakian State Railroads*. The T669's North American inspiration is unmistakable. They were loosely based on units Alco exported to the USSR during World War II.



By-The-Numbers

T669

Piko

HO 1:87 • Type: Diesel

Pull Power (Ozs @ Full Slip)

Pull	÷	Loco Wt	=	Efficiency
3.8		11.6		32.8

Analog DC

Start Volts = 2.2

Volts	Amps	Scale MPH
2.2	.05	4
6.0	.07	35
12.0	.10	83

illuminated depending on direction of travel. When in reverse mode, the ditch lights turn red and the central headlight is shut off. NEM close-coupler sockets on both ends of the T669 allow the modeler to retain the factory hook-and-loop European-style couplers or exchange them for Kadee NEM shank couplers.

The quality of Piko's design does not stop with the body of the Cmeliak. The 11½-ounce locomotive ran quietly and smoothly during *MRN's* testing. All 12 wheels pick up power and deliver it to the model's five-pole can motor with dual flywheels. Four of the model's six axles are powered; the center axles of each truck are just along for the ride. The locomotive's 83 scale mph was a bit high compared to the prototype's 56 top mph, but the model will likely not reach such a high speed when pulling a train. It is also worth mentioning the deeper European flanges of the T669; necessitating Code 80 or higher track for operation. Accessing the mechanism of the Cmeliak is as simple as unscrewing two screws on the underside of the cab, and a single screw located under the radiator hatch on the long hood. Then, you simply remove the body shell and circuit board. Piko has made provision for a PluX 16 decoder (#46121; MSRP: \$59.99) on the circuit board and a LokSound sound module (#56342; MSRP: \$144.99) in the fuel tank.

Look for Piko to release this model in more color schemes in the future —



Note the red star applied to the Cmeliak. Nearly all Czechoslovakian locomotives wore the red star during the Cold War years. After the Czech and Slovak nations split in 1993, the red stars disappeared from former CSD locomotives.



T669s employed frame-mounted truck stabilizers, somewhat like North American passenger equipment. Piko has reproduced this design by providing detailed truck side frames on its HO-scale T669 Cmeliak with stabilizers mounted from the frame and not included on the actual truck side frame.

the prototype ran in so many different countries and is now running for a number of private railroads in Europe. The CSD T669 could be used on any

Central or Eastern European-themed layouts from the 1960s to the present since they crossed borders on international freight trains.