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SYMBOLS OF INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY: THE EMERGENCE OF SYSTEMS OF HONOURS AND AWARDS IN EASTERN EUROPE, 1918–1920 (THE CASES OF LATVIA, LITHUANIA, ESTONIA, POLAND, AND CZECHOSLOVAKIA)

In the countries of Western Europe, honours and awards have a long-established tradition going back centuries. The picture is different in Eastern Europe, where national decorations of merit are much younger. In most countries of the region, the birth of their own systems of honours and awards dates to the period of 1918–1920 and is directly related to the course and outcomes of the First World War. This process had similarities and differences across countries. The political results of the First World War were extremely significant. The largest empires ceased to exist. On their ruins, new independent

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states emerged, mostly in Eastern Europe. Literally from the first days of their existence, the young states were involved in a series of armed conflicts, both internal and external. In the course of these wars, national armies with their own symbols and insignia emerged. In this regard, it is not surprising that military decorations were the first to appear in all countries of Eastern Europe, and it was with them that the formation of national systems of honours and awards began. For a long time, military awards remained the only decorations of merit. They were occasionally granted to civilians, as well as used for diplomatic purposes, being conferred on foreign statesmen and military leaders. Some countries (Poland, Estonia) tried to overcome the deficit of awards by dividing them into many classes and degrees. All countries in the region, except Poland, lacked their own distinct traditions of awards and decorations. As they wished to avoid copying already known patterns, and even more so imitating former empires, the new states turned to their own mythology, history, and heraldry in search of originality. So, the swastika appeared in the phaleristics of Latvia, the cross of the Jagiellonians in Lithuania, the cross of the Master of the Teutonic Order in Estonia, and linden leaves, branches, and wreaths in Czechoslovakia.

Keywords: **Eastern European countries, World War I, systems of honours and awards.**

Awards and decorations serve not only as external marks of recognition for military or civil services, but also as symbols of sovereignty and statehood. It is no coincidence that their images are placed on the coats of arms of many countries, and the highest classes of decorations, in addition, become attributes of heads of state. History of the emergence and evolution of awards and decorations is the subject of phaleristics. This field of study is relatively young; it split from numismatics in the mid-1930s and today confidently occupies an independent place among special historical disciplines.

In Western European countries, honours and awards have a long-established tradition going back centuries. The picture is different in Eastern Europe, where national decorations of merit are much younger and have repeatedy undergone serious transformations caused by the circumstances of their history. In most countries of the region, the birth of their own systems of honours and awards dates to the period of 1918–1920 and is directly related to the course and outcomes of the First World War. This process

had similarities and differences across countries. The aim of this paper is to highlight its regularities and distinctive features in several Eastern European nations.

The political results of the First World War were extremely significant. The largest empires ceased to exist: the Russian, German, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman. On their ruins, new independent states emerged, mostly in Eastern Europe. From the first days of their existence, the young states were involved in a series of armed conflicts, both internal and external. The Baltic republics went through a period of civil wars, complicated by foreign interference, which are officially referred to in these countries as wars of independence. The Latvian War of Independence lasted from 1 December 1918 to 11 August 1920, Lithuanian — from 12 December 1918 to 12 July 1920, and Estonian — from 28 November 1918 to 2 February 1920 (Boltowsky, Nigel 2019, 12, 37, 46). Poland and Czechoslovakia escaped this fate, but in trying to establish new borders for themselves entered into military conflicts with Soviet Russia, the Hungarian Soviet Republic, Germany, and Lithuania. In the course of these wars, national armies with their own symbols and insignia emerged. In this regard, it is not surprising that military decorations were the first to appear in all countries of Eastern Europe, and it was with them that the formation of national systems of honours and awards began. We will examine more closely the unfolding of this process in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.

The first decoration of the independent Republic of Latvia was the Military Order of Lāčplēsis (Lāčplēša Kara ordenis) with the motto "For Latvia", established on 11 November 1919, the day of the victorious conclusion of the defence of Riga against the "white" Western Volunteer Army of General P. Bermont-Avalov. The Statute of the Order, which appeared in 1920, after the end of the War of Independence, stipulated that the Order was to be awarded only for military merit and only to persons who had proven their loyalty to the state, performed outstanding feats of valour under extremely difficult conditions, and shown heroism in the face of danger for the glory and honour of Latvia. The Military Order of Lāčplēsis was awarded to members of the Latvian army, former Latvian riflemen, and foreigners who fought in the Latvian army during

the War of Independence or otherwise contributed to the establishment and development of the Latvian state.

The Order was named in honour of the epic hero Lāčplēsis, who was famous for vanquishing in his youth a bear that attacked his father. Its high status was emphasised by the fact that the final decision on awards was made by the Council of the Order, which included the head of state, seven elected members of parliament, and seven holders of the Order of the highest class (Ducmane 1993, 8–17).

The badge of the Military Order of Lāčplēsis was a stylised "Cross of Thunder and Fire" — swastika in white enamel with red and gold border. The obverse displayed in its centre a medallion in white enamel with a painted image of a hero defeating a bear. Through the centre of the cross ran crossed swords with hilts downwards. The reverse side of the badge had no enamel, with an inscription in the centre of the medallion reading "11 NOVEMBRIS/1919." The arms of the cross contained an engraved inscription, "PAR/ LAT —WIJU" ("For Latvia"), and a number on the lower arm. The Order ribbon bore the colours of the Latvian flag: three red and four white stripes of equal width.

The Order had three classes. The badge of the 1st class was a cross (61x57.5 mm) on a wide moiré ribbon worn over the right shoulder and a star on the left side of the chest. The Order star was made of silver and had 16 rays, with the Order cross in the centre. The diameter of the star was 68.5 mm. The width of the ribbon was 101 mm.

The badge of the Order of the 2nd class was a cross measuring 48x46 mm, worn around the neck. The badge of the Order of the 3rd class was a cross measuring 41x39 mm and worn on a narrow ribbon on the left side of the chest (Purves 1989, 142–143).

The Military Order of Lāčplēsis of the 2nd class could be awarded only to holders of the Order of the 3rd class, and the Order of the 1st class — only to holders of the two lower classes. This rule did not apply to foreigners.

Only three soldiers of the Latvian Army, one Latvian rifleman, and seven foreigners were awarded the Order of the 1st class. The foreign holders included the kings of Belgium and Italy, Polish marshals J. Piłsudski and E. Rydz-Śmigły, Italian prime minister B. Mussolini, French marshal

F. Foch, and Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian Armed Forces J. Laidoner. The Order of the 2nd class was awarded to 18 Latvians and 43 foreigners, while 3rd class was awarded to 1,600 soldiers of the national army, 202 former Latvian riflemen, and 271 foreigners (Ducmane 1993, 97).

Until 1924, the Military Order of Lāčplēsis was the only such award in Latvia, fulfilling the function of a representative honour, which raised its status. However, it did not become the beginning of the country's system of honours and awards, as from 1928 on it was no longer awarded and in fact ceased to exist.

In Lithuania, the first national decoration was also an award for military merit. The date of its creation is widely considered to be 26 November 1919. In fact, it originated somewhat earlier. The initiative came from the Minister of War and Commander-in-Chief of the Lithuanian Army, General Silvestras Žukauskas, who issued a decree on 18 May 1919 on the establishment of an award for members of the Lithuanian Army, and already on 28 June presented the ribbons of the new order to its first recipients (the insignia appeared only in 1921).

Earlier, in April, the Lithuanian Ministry of Defence announced a competition for the design of a military service award. More than 40 designs were submitted. Initially, the award was to be called "The Cross for the Fatherland," and the badge of the Polish Order of Virtuti Militari was to be taken as a model, with the addition of crossed swords passing through the centre. The State Archaeological Commission, having considered the project, proposed to change the form of the badge to the so-called Jagiellonian cross, depicted on the Lithuanian coat of arms (the Jagiellonians were a royal dynasty that ruled in Lithuania, Poland, Bohemia, and Hungary in the 14th to 16th centuries). It was a straight cross with two horizontal crossbars of equal length, and thus six ends. The proposal was ratified on 26 November 1919, which is commonly accepted as the date of the establishment of the Order. On 30 November, President A. Smetona approved the statute for the award, which from 3 February became known as the Cross of Vytis (Vyties Kryžius). Vytis is the rider with a raised sword depicted on the Lithuanian coat of arms, known as the Chase (Astrikas 1993, 48–56). The Cross of Vytis had three classes, with the third being

the highest. The classes were denoted by the corresponding number of stars vertically placed on the moiré ribbon of the Order, which was 2,4 cm wide, red in colour, with two black vertical stripes along the edges. Badges of the Order of the two higher classes were made of steel, and the 3rd class — of brass; all were of the same size, 4,2x2,6 cm. There were two variants of the Order — with swords and without. The former was awarded for military valour, and the latter honoured civilians for services rendered in wartime. In the centre of the front side of the badge was placed the state coat of arms, the Chase, in an octagonal plate, with or without crossed swords underneath the plate, depending on the variant. The inscription "UZ NARSUMA" ("for bravery"), the date 1918/XI/23 (the day of the creation of the Lithuanian army), and the serial number of the award were placed on the back (Purves 1989, 144).

The first recipients of the 1st class Cross with swords were President A. Smetona and Minister of War S. Žukauskas, and the first recipient of the 1st class Cross without swords was the first prime minister of Lithuania A. Voldemaras. During the War of Independence, 1,360 men received the Cross with swords, and 67 were awarded posthumously. The award was also granted to 57 foreigners. The Cross without swords was awarded to 118 people, 9 of them women.

Until 1928, the Cross of Vytis was the only state award of the Republic of Lithuania. Beginning in 1927, the badges were made of silver. On 1 September 1930, the Cross of Vytis was renamed the Order of the Cross of Vytis and became the country's second highest award, after the Order of Vytautas the Great. The Order was divided into five classes, the highest signified by a nine-pointed silver star with the insignia of the Order in the centre and a shoulder ribbon. The Order of the 1st class was awarded to the kings of Belgium and Italy, presidents of Czechoslovakia T. Masaryk and Germany P. Hindenburg, and Italian prime minister B. Mussolini. In 1940, the Order was abolished. In January 1991 it became the first restored decoration from pre-war Lithuania (Astrikas 1993, 55).

Estonia's first award, the Cross of Liberty (Vabadusrist), appeared earlier than similar decorations in neighbouring Latvia and Lithuania. It was established by Prime Minister K. Päts on 24 February 1919

for services during the war for Estonian independence, which had already been continuing for three months. In its name, a large number of classes, and some design elements, the Cross of Liberty clearly imitated the Finnish award of the same name, which had been established as early as March 1918 (Purves 1989, 137–139).

The Estonian Cross was divided into 3 classes, each of which had 3 degrees, differing in the colour of the enamel and the ribbon. The first class was awarded for military leadership, the second for personal courage, and the third for civilian services during the war. The form of the Cross of Liberty copied the Cross of the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order, the so-called "cross potent" — four-pointed, with T-shaped ends and slightly elongated bottom arm. The badges of the crosses of the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd class were covered respectively in white, black, and blue enamel. In the centre of the obverse was placed a medallion with the image of a stylised letter E, below which there was an arm in armour holding a sword — an element of Finnish heraldry. Badges for civilian merit featured a larger letter E but no arm and sword. The colour of the medallions of the 1st class was black, 2nd class red, and 3rd class white. The reverse was inscribed with the date of the establishment of the award. The ribbons on the badges of all classes and degrees were in the colours of the Estonian flag. The central, wider stripe corresponded to the colour of the enamel on the badge. The badges were in different sizes: 45x28 mm, 40x31 mm, and 36x30 mm, probably marking different degrees (Barac 2010, 475, 476).

The seemingly cumbersome structure of the Cross of Liberty made it a universal decoration, suitable for persons of any social background holding diverse positions in government, military, or civil service. The first awarding of the Cross of Liberty took place in August 1919, the last in July 1925. In total, 3,225 crosses of different classes and degrees were awarded, including nine triple and 76 repeat awards. Among the recipients were 2,076 Estonian citizens and 1,050 foreigners. The large number of the latter can be explained by the fact that the Cross of Liberty remained for a long time the sole honour awarded in Estonia and it was often used for diplomatic purposes. Representatives of 17 countries were awarded the Cross in various classes and degrees, including heads of state and government, military

leaders, and politicians of allied countries. The largest group of foreign recipients were Finns — 678 persons, with the British in the second place — 129 persons. It is curious that among the holders of the highest degree of the Cross, 1st class 1st degree, British citizens were more numerous than Estonians — 14 against 11. A total of 43 persons were awarded crosses of the 1st class 1st degree. No crosses of 1st class 2nd degree were ever awarded. Crosses of the 1st class 3rd degree were awarded to 111 persons (Purves 1989, 139).

After 1925, there were no further awards of the Cross of Liberty. The last recipient of the Cross died in 2000.

Among the countries of Eastern Europe, only Poland had had its own system of honours and awards in the past. Its origin dates back to the beginning of the 18th century, when the Saxon elector Frederick August I, elected King of Poland under the name of Augustus II, established the country's first honour, the Order of the White Eagle, in 1705. Its name and appearance immortalised the ancient coat of arms of the Polish state. The Order's motto was "For Faith, Law and King". For a long time, the Order of the White Eagle remained one of its kind in Poland. It was awarded to both Polish subjects and foreigners. In 1765, King Stanisław II August Poniatowski introduced one more order of merit, naming it in honour of both his personal patron and the heavenly patron of Poland, St. Stanislaus. The motto of this award was "Rewarding, Encouraging." The third Polish order of merit was established also by Stanisław II August in 1792 as a military decoration, which was indicated by its name, inscribed on the rays of the Order's badge: "Virtuti Militari" ("For Military Virtue"). Its motto was "King and Fatherland" (Oberleitner 1992, 37–41, 49–51, 57–61). The Order had three classes: Grand Cross, Commander's Cross, and Knight's Cross. The badge of the Order was a four-pointed gold cross with flared arms in black enamel, tips of the arms ending in spherules (Leopold's Cross). The name of the Order, divided into four parts, was inscribed in gold letters on the arms of the cross: "VIR — TUTI MILI — TARI." In the central medallion was placed the image of a crowned white Polish eagle. The reverse side of the cross had no enamel. On the arms were placed the letters of the royal monogram, and the medallion displayed the Chase and under

it — the year of Order's foundation, "1792." Crosses of different classes were different in size. They were worn on a ribbon of blue with two wide black stripes along the edges. The Grand Cross was to be worn on a shoulder ribbon at the left hip, the Commander's Cross around the neck, and the Knight's Cross on the chest. Recipients of the highest class of the Order were entitled to a silver star with a superimposed cross of the Order in its centre.

Gold and silver crosses without enamel were awarded to ordinary soldiers; they had the status of a medal and gave the right to a pension and exemption from corporal punishment (Oberleitner 199, 61–66).

The fate of the Polish awards was as volatile as the fate of the Polish state itself. After the third partition of Poland and its disappearance from the map of Europe, the orders ceased to exist. In 1807, Napoleon created the Duchy of Warsaw from the Polish lands held by Prussia. Its ruler was the Saxon king Frederick Augustus I, who restored all Polish orders and declared himself their grandmaster. The Virtuti Militari was particularly popular; it was widely awarded to Poles who fought in the ranks of Napoleon's army. 2,569 orders of various classes were awarded during the years of the Duchy of Warsaw's existence (1807–1812).

The defeat of Napoleon and abolition of the Duchy of Warsaw again interrupted the existence of Polish orders of merit. By the decision of the Congress of Vienna in 1815, a large share of the territory of the former duchy became part of the Russian Empire. Emperor Alexander I created a kingdom from the Polish lands and, assuming the title of King of Poland, restored all Polish orders of merit, making some changes to their statutes. During 1815–1830, these distinctions were awarded only to natives of the Kingdom of Poland, and the number of new recipients was small. After the suppression of the uprising of 1830–1831, the autonomous status of Poland within the Russian Empire was extinguished, and the Polish orders of merit were added to the Russian ones, in connection with which the appearance of the Order of the White Eagle and Order of St. Stanislaus changed significantly. Instead of the Polish, they now featured the Russian crowned double-headed eagle. After the February Revolution of 1917, the crown, as a symbol of autocracy, was removed. In this form, both orders continued to exist until the abolition of all old awards and decorations in December 1917.

The fate of the Virtuti Militari was different. The leaders of the uprising of 1830–1831 widely awarded it to officers who distinguished themselves on the battlefield. In the aftermath of the uprising, Emperor Nicholas I decided to award badges of the Order to all generals, officers, and servicemen who participated in its suppression. In accordance with the rank of those awarded, the Order was divided into five classes. On the reverse of the badge, the date 1831 replaced 1792. In total, 14 Grand Crosses, 188 Commander's Crosses, 1,105 Knight's Crosses, 5,219 gold, and about 100,000 silver crosses were awarded, after which the awarding of the Order of Virtuti Militari in Russia ceased. It can be said that the Order disappeared from use altogether (Vernon 2000, 391–393).

The restoration of the old orders of merit became possible only after the revival of the Polish state on 11 November 1918. The first among them was the War Order of Virtuti Militari. From the very beginning of its existence, the Second Polish State unleashed armed conflicts with almost all of its neighbours. Consequently, military honours were in high demand, and the Virtuti Militari was also seen as a symbol of continuity in the Polish people's armed struggle for freedom and independence.

On 12 May 1919, a group of 25 deputies of the Legislative Sejm of the Polish Republic proposed the revival of the Order of Virtuti Militari. On 1 August 1919, the Sejm restored the Order, preserving its division into five classes. Chief of State J. Piłsudski issued on 1 January 1920 a directive to create a provisional Chapter of the Order, consisting of ten members, all prominent military leaders. All members of the Chapter were awarded the insignia of the Order of the 5th class. In February 1920, the Chapter ordered the creation of special commissions to prepare recommendations for awarding the Order for services in the armed struggle for Polish independence in the period before 1920. In accordance with this decision, Józef Piłsudski was awarded the Order of the 5th class for his personal bravery and courage. The first decoration ceremony, for the members of the provisional Chapter, was held on 22 January 1920. The first awarding of the Order for military service took place in August 1920 for 36 officers and servicemen of the 18th Infantry Division (Oberleitner 1992, 119–121).

Badges of the Order issued in 1919 were similar in all respects to those issued in 1808, except for one detail: the inscription on the medallion in the centre of the reverse side was changed from "King and Fatherland" to "Honour and Fatherland." The badges of different classes were different in size: 1st class — 62 mm, 2nd — 54 mm, 3rd — 43 mm, and 4th and 5th — 37 mm.

The Statute established a clear hierarchy of decorations. The Order of the 1st class was intended for the Commander-in-Chief; Order of the 2nd class — for army commanders or their equals in military rank; Order of the 3rd class — for commanders of military units up to an army; Orders of the 4th and 5th classes (Gold and Silver Crosses) were awarded to junior officers and servicemen for skill, initiative, and personal courage shown in action. Junior classes could serve as collective awards for military units. In such cases, the insignia of the Order were attached to the unit standard (Purves 1989, 144–145).

In total, 8,389 Orders of Virtuti Militari were awarded by the Second Polish State, mainly for the events of 1918–1920. Its 1st class was awarded to only six persons: J. Piłsudski, French marshal F. Foch, and kings of Belgium, Italy, Romania, and Yugoslavia. The Order of the 2nd class was awarded to 19 persons, including J. Piłsudski, American general D. Pershing, and French general M. Weygand. The Order of the 3rd class was awarded to 14 persons, 4th class to 50, and 5th class to 8,300, 1,800 of them posthumously (Oberleitner 1992, 121, 123).

The Order did not disappear even after the defeat of Poland by Hitler's Germany. During the Second World War, it was awarded to Polish armed forces both in the West and in the USSR. The Order exists to this day and continues to be Poland's highest military award.

The Order of the White Eagle was also restored in the Second Polish State, but later — in 1921. Its insignia regained their original form and until 1939 it was considered Poland's highest award for civilian and military services.

Czechoslovakia's national system of awards and decorations was distinctive in that its development began even before the establishment of a state, and by the end of 1918 there was already an entire hierarchy

of decorations of varying importance. All awards were military and were intended for members of Czechoslovak military formations created in Russia, France, and Italy during the First World War. These forces took an active part in the fighting, seeing it as a real contribution to the struggle for national liberation.

The initiative in forming military contingents in France and Russia belonged to the Czech and Slovak diaspora, who thus wanted to achieve the establishment of their own state in the future, and in the present to demonstrate their loyalty and avoid internment and confiscation of property as subjects of enemy states.

The Union of Czechoslovak Societies in Russia, formed in August 1914, considered the creation of a "Czech Druzhina" as its main task. The government approved the idea. On 8 August, the Minister of War ordered the formation of a Czech unit. The "Druzhina" was created in Kyiv from Czech volunteers — subjects of Austria-Hungary. The command positions were staffed by Russian officers. At the end of October, the unit went to the front, where the fighting qualities of the Czech soldiers were highly valued by the command (Vojenske dejiny, 502, 503).

In France, a Czech unit appeared in 1914 as part of the Foreign Legion. By May 1915, it suffered such large losses that it virtually ceased to exist.

From the spring of 1915, the Russian command allowed volunteers from among prisoners of war. Slovaks were also recruited. In December 1915, the Czech Druzhina was reformed into the 1st Czechoslovak Rifle Regiment.

In 1915, the Czechoslovak Action Committee was established in Paris from representatives of Entente-oriented Czechoslovak emigrant circles. In 1916, it was renamed the Czechoslovak National Council (ČNS), headed by Tomáš Masaryk, the future president of the country. The ČNS assumed an active role in the creation of a Czechoslovak army. From the summer of 1916, France began to feel the shortage of manpower reserves. The French government and military command began negotiations with the Tsarist government to send Czech and Slovak prisoners of war from Russia to France as volunteers. Responding to the wishes of the Allies, the Russian government agreed to recruit Czechoslovak volunteers for the Western Front and to expand the number of Czechoslovak units. In the second half of 1916, a Czechoslovak brigade of two regiments was created.

After the February Revolution, the Provisional Government met the wishes of the Entente and the ČNS to create a Czechoslovak army and transfer it to France. On 5 May, it gave permission to the Russian branch of the Committee to start forming Czechoslovak troops, which some 30,000 prisoners of war expressed the wish to join (Vznik Cescoslovenska, 13–14).

Czechoslovak units took part in the June 1917 offensive. On 19 June, the Czechoslovak Brigade attacked the Austrians at Zborov in Galicia and captured 3,200 prisoners and 15 guns. On 6 August 1917, the brigade was reorganized as the 1st Czechoslovak Division, and the formation of a second division began. In September, authorisation was received to form the Czechoslovak Independent Corps (Vojenske dejiny, 515).

In the autumn of 1917, the ČNS successfully organised a transfer of Czechoslovak troops to France. Along with volunteers from the USA and Romania, they were formed into the first two Czechoslovak regiments in France. Subsequently, they grew into an autonomous Czechoslovak army, subordinated in military matters to the French command and in political matters to the ČNS.

At the end of 1917, the Czechoslovak Corps (also known as the Czechoslovak Legion) was stationed in Ukraine, where the Central Rada of Ukraine was negotiating peace with the Germans. On 28 January 1918, the Corps was declared part of the Czechoslovak Army in France. By agreement with the Ukrainian and Soviet authorities, the Corps was to leave Ukraine and then move through Russia to Vladivostok, from where it would sail for France. However, the Austrian and German offensive was ahead of the Corps's retreat. Its retreat routes were threatened, and the legionnaires had to fight their way through in the battles near Bakhmach on 9–13 March 1918.

At the end of March, the Corps concentrated in the vicinity of Penza, with the trains used to transport them getting strung out along the Trans-Siberian Railway all the way to Vladivostok. In May 1918, the Corps entered the Russian Civil War on the side of the anti-Soviet forces. Its participation in the war lasted until 7 February 1920, when an agreement was signed between the Corps's command and the RSFSR government, which guaranteed the evacuation of the legionnaires in exchange

for the extradition of Admiral A. Kolchak and a train carrying a cargo of gold bullion reserves. The last Czechoslovak units left Vladivostok in September 1920.

In April 1918, the ČNS signed an agreement with the Italian government to form Czechoslovak troops in Italy. Their number exceeded 30,000 and they took part in the battles of the final stage of the war. By the end of the war, there were a total of 111,572 Czechoslovak troops serving with the Entente powers (Vznik Ceskoslovenska, 96, 99).

The Czechoslovak Revolutionary Medal was established by presidential decree on 1 December 1918 to honour Czechoslovak volunteers who fought with the Entente, as well as citizens of allied and friendly nations for their contributions to the struggle for Czechoslovak independence.

The designer of the medal was the famous French sculptor Emile Antoine Bourdelle. Made of bronze, it had the form of a cross superimposed on an irregularly shaped circle. The obverse depicted the figure of a winged woman with a scroll above her head. The scroll carried the inscription "For Freedom." At the woman's feet was a tangle of snakes, representing the enemies of the Czechoslovak Republic. At the top of the circle were placed the dates of the World War: "1914–1918." The reverse pictured a naked rider on a winged horse, holding a banner in his right hand. A circular inscription around the rider read, "Up on Your Guard, Free People." The medal was worn on a ribbon in the national colours of Czechoslovakia — red, with a wide white and two narrow blue stripes in the middle. Bars were fixed by sprigs on the ribbon, with the names of the places where the recipient fought: "Alsace," "Argonne," "Piave," "Doss Alto," "Bakhmach," "Zborov," "Siberia." In addition, square buckles with regimental numbers were attached to the ribbon. The first twelve numbers referred to units formed in Russia, numbers 21–24 — those in France, and numbers 31–35 and 39 — in Italy.

The first issue of the medal was produced in Paris from 1918 to 1919, and the rest in Czechoslovakia between 1929 and 1938 (Pulec 1980, 79).

The Czechoslovak War Cross was awarded to members of Czechoslovak and Allied forces for bravery in battle and other military merits in the period from 27 July 1914 to 28 September 1918. It was established

on 7 November 1918 by a decree of the Provisional Government in Paris. The designer of the award was also E. A. Bourdelle.

The bronze cross had an unusual shape — its arms were formed by four circles with the coats of arms of the historic regions that came to comprise the new state: Bohemia, Moravia, Silesia, and Slovakia. The reverse was decorated with the image of linden leaves, over which were placed the intertwined letters CS (Czechoslovakia). Repeat awards were signified by bronze linden leaves attached to the ribbon. The medal ribbon was red with five narrow white stripes. There were three known issues of the cross: in Paris in 1918–1919 and in Czechoslovakia in 1920–1938 and 1945–1946 (Pulec 1980, 78).

On 3 October 1918, at the suggestion of Milan Rastislav Štefánik, Minister of War in the Provisional Government of Czechoslovakia, the Order of the Falcon (Řád Sokola) was created to reward military and civilian services during the establishment of independent Czechoslovakia. The Order was mainly awarded to officers of the Czechoslovak Corps in Siberia.

The Order was made of light bronze in the form of a five-pointed inverted star 40 mm in diameter, covered with white enamel, with the flared ends of the rays having a semicircular shape, so that the edges of the five rays formed a circle. The obverse of the medallion in the centre of the star carried a stylised image of four falcons soaring over three mountains, in blue enamel on white enamel background. The reverse featured the letters CS framed by laurel branches and the date of the award — 1918, also in blue enamel. The badge of the Order was crowned with a small wreath of linden leaves, through which the ribbon was threaded. Orders awarded for military distinction were marked with two swords crossing through the wreath. The ribbon of the Order was red with a narrow stripe in the middle and two narrower stripes along the edges. Additional distinctions could be denoted with a five-pointed star on the ribbon (Purves 1989, 135).

The first badges of the Order were made in Japan. More than 90 persons are known to have been awarded the Order. The Order was abolished in 1919.

The rarest among the early Czechoslovak decorations was the Medal of Jan Žižka from Trocnov for Freedom. It was established on 16 October 1918 by the decree of the Czechoslovak National Council in Russia to reward Czechoslovak soldiers for their exploits on the battlefield.

The medal, 36 mm in diameter, was made of silver-plated bronze. On its obverse was a portrait of the Czech national hero Jan Žižka, facing left. On the reverse was the motto "For Freedom," with crossed laurel and linden branches below it, the inscription "Czechoslovak Army" around it, and an engraved number at the bottom.

The medal was worn on a red ribbon with two stitched black velvet stripes. The suspension piece was made in the form of a chain broken in two, symbolising independence and liberation from fetters. The medal had three classes indicated by stars on the ribbon.

The medal was discontinued in December 1918 at the insistence of M. R. Štefánik, who denied the right of the ČNS to create honours bypassing the government. Only 22 officers and servicemen of the 6th Infantry Regiment are known to have been awarded (Purves 1989, 134).

In 1919, at the suggestion of Marshal F. Foch, like other Entente nations, Czechoslovakia established its own Victory Medal. It was made of bronze, had a diameter of 35 mm, and was worn on a ribbon of the colours of the "double rainbow," like all such medals. The obverse of the medal displayed the winged goddess of Victory with an olive branch in the right hand and a sword in the left hand. The reverse depicted a shield with the coat of arms of the Czechoslovak Republic, superimposed over a ribbon carrying the dates 1914 and 1918. Around it ran an inscription in Czech, "World War for Civilisation." The medal was designed by the renowned Czech medallist Otakar Španiel. Two variants of the medal are known: dark bronze with the designer's signature and light bronze without the signature. The total number of medals awarded was approximately 125,000 (Vernon 2000, 509, 510).

There were both similarities and differences in the process of the emergence of first awards and decorations in the newly independent states of Eastern Europe and early development of national systems

of honours and awards. First and foremost, these early decorations were military, which is explained by the similar situation for all countries of the region, where the years from 1918 to 1920 saw continuous military conflicts. For a long time, military awards remained the only insignia of honour. They were occasionally granted to civilians, as well as used for diplomatic purposes, being conferred on foreign statesmen and military leaders. Some countries (Poland, Estonia) tried to overcome the deficit of awards by dividing them into many classes and degrees. The utilitarian value of military decorations was emphasised by the fact that, after independence was won and sovereignty defended, almost all of them ceased to be used from the mid-1920s onwards, although veterans continued to wear them for much longer.

All countries in the region, except Poland, lacked their own distinct traditions of awards and decorations. As they wished to avoid copying already known models, and even more so imitating former empires, the new states turned to their own mythology, history, and heraldry in search of originality. So, the swastika appeared in the phaleristics of Latvia, the cross of the Jagiellonians in Lithuania, the cross of the Master of the Teutonic Order in Estonia, and linden leaves, branches, and wreaths in Czechoslovakia. Badge and medal ribbons bore national colours in different combinations. Yet it was not possible to avoid imitation completely. The details of the Estonian Cross of Freedom clearly show the influence of the Finnish award of the same name. The five classes of the Polish Virtuti Militari are reminiscent of the French Legion of Honour. French influence can also be traced in the design of Czechoslovak decorations.

Even though all of the countries discussed in this paper were oriented towards the Entente in their foreign policy, only Czechoslovakia created a Victory Medal of its own. The reasons for this should be sought in domestic circumstances. Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia did not participate in the First World War, while the Poles found themselves on the opposite sides of the front line. Therefore, the symbolism of the victors could not be equally acceptable to officers and soldiers who served in the German or Austro-Hungarian armies. A victory medal did appear in Poland, but not an official one. Its creation was funded by Polish emigrants who had fought

in the ranks of the Entente forces, mainly in France. The material, size, and colour of the ribbon corresponded to the patterns adopted in other countries. The obverse featured the Goddess of Victory with a sword, shield, and hussar "wings" behind her back — an element of the equipment of Polish heavy cavalry in the 16th and 17th centuries. The reverse side carried an inscription in Polish, "War in Defence of Civilisation 1914–1918," framed by laurel branches.

Considering the history of the appearance and use of the first national awards and decorations in Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, it should be noted that, in general, despite their small number and short existence, they fulfilled their main functions — to serve as badges of honour for those who fought for freedom and independence and to symbolically reaffirm the sovereignty of their nations.

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СИМВОЛИ НЕЗАЛЕЖНОСТІ ТА СУВЕРЕНІТЕТУ: ЗАРОДЖЕННЯ НАГОРОДНИХ СИСТЕМ У КРАЇНАХ СХІДНОЇ ЄВРОПИ У 1918–1920 РОКАХ (НА МАТЕРІАЛАХ ЛАТВІЇ, ЛИТВИ, ЕСТОНІЇ, ПОЛЬЩІ, ЧЕХОСЛОВАЧЧИНИ)

У країнах Західної Європи нагородні системи мають давню та сталу традицію, що сягає глибини століть. Натомість інша ситуація спостерігається в країнах Східної Європи. У більшості країн цього регіону зародження власних нагородних систем відбувалося протягом 1918–1920 рр. і було безпосередньо пов'язане з перебігом та результатами Першої світової війни. Цей процес мав як загальні для всіх країн регіону риси, так і певну специфіку. Після Першої світової війни великі імперії перестали існувати, а на їх уламках виникли нові незалежні держави — переважно у Східній Європі. З перших днів свого існування молоді держави були втягнуті в низку збройних конфліктів — як внутрішніх, так і зовнішніх. Власне під час цих війн виникли національні армії з власною символікою та відзнаками. Враховуючи це, не дивно, що в усіх країнах Східної Європи військові нагороди з'явилися першими, і саме з них почалося формування національних нагородних систем. Протягом тривалого часу військові нагороди залишалися єдиними відзнаками. В окремих випадках ними нагороджували цивільних осіб, а також їх використовували у представницьких цілях. Дефіцит нагород в окремих країнах (наприклад, Польща та Естонія) намагалися подолати, поділивши їх на низку ступенів. З середини 1920-х рр. майже всі військові нагороди втратили своє початкове призначення й вийшли з ужитку. Слід також відзначити, що в усіх країнах регіону, крім Польщі, була відсутня власна орденська символіка і традиції. Намагаючись уникнути копіювання вже відомих зразків, а також наслідувати традиції колишніх імперій, нові держави прагнули бути оригінальними, а тому звернулися до власної міфології, історії та геральдики. Через це у фалеристиці Латвії з'явилася свастика, Литви — хрест Ягеллонів, Естонії — хрест магістра Тевтонського ордену, Чехословаччини —

липове листя, гілки та вінки. Стрічки нагород цих країн містили національні кольори. Водночас повністю уникнути наслідування іноземних зразків, зокрема Фінляндії та Франції, країнам Східної Європи не вдалося.

Ключові слова: **країни Східної Європи, Перша світова війна, нагородні системи.**

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