

## CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF FOREIGN DECORATIONS FOR THE WORLD WAR I (I)

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**Rezumat:** În prezentul studiu, autorii realizează o descriere detaliată a tuturor tipurilor medaliei comemorative de război „Victoria”, în ordinea cronologică a instituirii ei de către țările aliate și asociate în Primul Război Mondial. Pe lângă datele tehnice, care includ metalul și dimensiunea fiecărei medalii, sunt oferite informații despre gravură sau gravuri, acolo unde este cazul, precum și date despre producători și mai ales tirajul pentru fiecare țară în parte. De asemenea, sunt detaliate informațiile despre panglică și sistemul de prindere al ei.

**Abstract:** In this article, the authors describe all the types of the commemorative medal „Victoria”, in the establishment’s chronological order, emitted by all the allied and associated countries in the WWI. They also give technical data about size, gravour and producer. Also, they describe the ribbon’s hanging system.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Primul Război Mondial, Medalie, „Victoria”, Panglică, Avers, Revers.

**Key-words:** World War I, Medal, Victory, Interallied, Civilization, Ribbon, Obverse, Reverse.

The decoration system was set up as a set of insignia that rewarded those who distinguished themselves by special merits in the service of a country, an essential component constituting the category of war decorations, either campaign or service, or commemorative, their evolution being an important part of the history of military history.

Marshal Ferdinand Foch, the commander of the Allied military forces in France and the armistice’s signatory on November 11, 1918, among other things, proposes in the Allied Military Council the establishment of a „*medal of commemorative wartime medals*”.

At the Paris Peace Conference, which brought together the Heads of State of all allied and victorious nations, even in the early days of the work, on January 24, 1919, Marshal Foch’s proposal was accepted, the medal being left to the care of each country, which must respect common characteristics.

The commemorative war medal has been called „**Victoria**”, as it marks the end of the first global conflagration, featuring the Greek-Roman god Nike – Victoria on the obverse, winged, except for the Asian states participating in the war that will use traditional symbols to mark a military victory, which in our chronological description will only present the peculiarities of its obverse.

The ribbon is another common element, made of ripped silk, a commonly used material, representing the colors of a double rainbow overlaid in the middle, red, atmospheric phenomenon, goodwill, peace and prosperity after a military conflict with millions of victims on the fronts fighting, but also among the civilian population.

With regard to the diameter of the medal and the width of the ribbon, other common elements of this distinction, the differences are totally insignificant, and we will present them in the right place.

We continue to present the types of the commemorative war medal „Victoria” in order of their establishment in the states established for this medal.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We mention that all these medals, except those of the United States of America, South Africa, Japan, Cuba, Brazil and Siam/Thailand, were exhibited at the „Marin Sorescu” National Theater in Craiova at the occasion of the *First National Numismatics Symposium* (1984), at that time in the beautiful and rich collection of Victor M. Zureanu, unfortunately today disappeared, and could be studied by us. We also like to thank the family Daniel and Nicoleta Buldur, from Craiova, for their kindly support in the identification of the pictures and in the drawing of the plans. This family is passionate about history in general and especially with the theme of the Centenary of World War I, which is why we assure it of all our consideration.

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (June 30, 1919)<sup>2</sup>**

**Obv.** Feminine character in flight with a sword in her right hand with the tip down, a round shield in her left hand, looking in front and a radiated crown with a long skirt to her ankles and glowing with a strap where on the left is the sheath of the sword, sitting on the Globes.

**Rv.** *THE GREAT WAR FOR CIVILIZATION*. Semi-circular written legend above a fascia on a shield with a top-right cartridge in which the letters *U (nited) – S (tates)*. Around the shield are the names of states participating in the war, written on 14 lines: *FRANCE / ITALY / SERBIA / JAPAN / MONTENEGRO / RUSSIA / GREECE / GREAT / BRITAIN / BELGIUM / BRAZIL / PORTUGAL / ROMANIA / CHINA /*. At the bottom are six stars arranged semicircularly. (Fig. no.1).

Metal: Bronze (further AE). Diam. 36 mm. Author: James Earle Fraser. Producer: Arts Medal Works Inc.; S.G. Adams Stamps & Stationary Co.; Down. Mayer Inc. Circulation: approx. 2.500.000 pcs.<sup>3</sup> The gripping system is composed of a tubular rod through which the rib fastening ring passes, which had the most beads (*ST. MIHIEL; MEUSE – ARGONNE; DEFENSIVE SECTOR*).

**BELGIUM (July 15, 1919)**

**Obv.** Idem, but with his head turned to the left, looking down over the Earth, holding a crown in the left hand, and a sword on the right, crowned above the guard. (Fig. no.2 A).

**Rv.** *LA GRANDE GUERRE POUR LA CIVILISATION – DE GROOTE OORLOG TOT DE BESCHAVING*. Bilingual legend in French and Flemish, circular, bounded by a linear circle, and in the field, inside a crown of oak leaves, shields with the steels of some allied states (France, United States of America, Japan, Greece, Brazil, Great Britain, Serbia, Portugal and Italy) surrounding the coat of arms of Belgium. (Fig. no. 2 B).

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: Paul Du Bois. Circulation: approx. 350.000 pcs. Ball grip system through which a ring passes.

**PORTUGAL (July 15, 1919)**

**Obv.** Idem, but looking in front, holding a crown in the left hand, and to the right a bunch of flowers, in the background, in the middle a sunrise. (Fig. no. 3 A).

**Rv.** *MEDALHA / DA / VITORIA*. A legend written on three rows, with a cartridge in the middle, where the coat of arms of the country, flanked by the crosses of Malta. (Fig. no. 3 B).

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: Joao Da Silva. Producer: Da Costa - Lisbon. Circulation: approx. 100.000 pcs. Ball grip system through which a ring passes. It is worth mentioning that on the ribbon of this medal, a brace, in a rectangular hollow frame inside, one or more stars, was mounted, which was granted according to the regulation implementing the decree of establishment.

**UNITED KINGDOM (September 1, 1919)**

**Obv.** Idem, but with a slight left look to the stretched arm, holding a crown in the right hand, and on the bottom right the name of the engraver: *W (illiam) MC M (illan)*. (Fig. no. 4 A).

**Rv.** In the field a circular crown inside which is the legend written on four rows: *THE GREAT / \* WAR FOR \* / CIVILISATION / 1914-1919 / \*\*\*\*\**.<sup>4</sup> (Fig. no. 4 B).

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: William McMillan. Producer: Woolwich Arsenal; Wright & Son. Circulation: 6.334.522 pcs. Rod clamping system through which a ring passes. It is worth mentioning that the number of service, degree, name and military unit of the holder is stamped on the edge of each medal, the medal being given to the combatants of the British Empire (Canada, Australia, New Zealand, India, etc.).

<sup>2</sup> Approved by the US Congress on June 30, 1919, promulgated by General Order of the War Department no. 48/1919; revoked by the General Order of the War Department no.83 / 1919. Distributed from 21 June 1920 and abolished in 1921, the United States of America did not actually sign the Treaty of Versailles.

<sup>3</sup> Laslo, 1986, pp. 33-36.

<sup>4</sup> The reverse with „1914-1919” is only on medals issued by Great Britain, South Africa and Czechoslovakia.

**FRANCE (July 20, 1922)**<sup>5</sup>

**Obv.** Idem, but looking in front of the raised arms, holding in the right hand a bouquet of flowers and on the left, a crown gives laurel and oak, and on the edge, on the right, down, the name of the engraver: *A. M(ORLON)*. (Fig. no. 5 A).

**Rv.** *LA GRANDE GUERRE / POUR LA / CIVILIZATION / 1914 – 1918*. A five-line legend, with a frigid bonnet, labeled *R (epublique) - F (rancaise)*, and under the dash under the years *1914-1918* are written, „*Paris Mint*”. (Fig. no. 5 B).

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: Pierre-Alexandre Morlon. Producer: Paris Mint<sup>6</sup>. Circulation: approx. 2.000.000 pcs. We mention that only the official issue was made at the Paris Mint, and the gripping system is a rod consisting of two trunks of large bases, through which a ring passes.

**SOUTH AFRICA (December 1, 1919)**

**Obv.** Idem (Great Britain).

**Rv.** In the field, inside a crown of laurel leaves, the bilingual legend, in English and non-Dutch or afrikaans<sup>7</sup>, written on a straight line seven times: *THE / GREAT WAR / FOR CIVILISATION / \*\*\*\*\* / DE GROTE OORLOG / VOOR DE / BESCHAVING / 1914-1919*. (Fig. no. 6).

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: William McMillan. Producer: Woolwich Arsenal. Circulation: approx. 75.000 pcs.

**CZECHOSLOVAKIA (July 27, 1920)**

**Obv.** Idem, straight ahead to the right, holding a laurel branch in her right hand above her head, and on the left a sword in the sheath, at the feet of the lime shoots, and on the right, the engraver's name: *O.(takar) SPANIEL*. (Fig. no. 7 A).

**Rv.** *SVETOVA VALKA ZA CIVILISACI*. Circularly written legend between two linear circles. In the field, the coat of arms on a shield, with a lion standing to the right with the tongue out and the double bifurcated tail in attack position, wearing an open crown, and on the chest has a small shield with a double cross. The shield with the coat of arms is on a scarf on which the years are written: *1914-1919*. The space between the shield and the first linear circle is sprinkled with lime leaves. (Fig. no. 7B).

The medal ribbon differs from that of other states, in that the middle rip is very strong, followed by white, yellow, right - left and blue as strong.

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: Otakar Spaniel. Producer: Kremnica Mint<sup>8</sup>. Circulation: approx. 89.500 pcs. The gripping system consists of a rod through which a ring passes. The Czechs have formed more legions, fighting alongside the French, Italian, Russian, and foreign armies, so some ribbons have beads „*1914-1919*” and „*1919*”.

**JAPAN (September 17, 1920)**

**Obv.** Yayoi Japanese warrior (Samurai), dressed and hairstyled traditionally, looking ahead, ready for battle, with a sword on his left hip and a long bamboo stick in his hands. (Fig. no. 8A).

**Rv.** The legend established for the allied states, written in Japanese between two linear circles, and in the field a lotus flower with five petals, in the center is the emblem of Japan, and on each petal there is a flag. (Fig. no. 8 B).

<sup>5</sup> Until the date of establishment, from October 29, 1919, only the ribbon of the „Victoria” medal was authorized.

<sup>6</sup> The unofficial broadcasts have as authors M. Pautot and Louise Octave Mattei, but they are made at companies specialized in such products.

<sup>7</sup> In South Africa, the official languages are English and Afrikaans - the language of the burrs (a term derived from the Dutch word boer, which means peasant), is based on Dutch, but enriched with French and German borrowing words, and from the languages of local populations. Afrikaans is derived from some dialects spoken in the 17th century. After the isolation, the Afrikaans gradually faded away from the Dutch, and today it has a much simplified grammar, but the two languages are still to a small extent mutually intelligible.

<sup>8</sup> Mincov a Kremnica (MK) – Kremnica Mint - the historic national mint in the Slovak town of Kremnica, in operation since 1328; today is the Kremnica State Mint.

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: Shoukichi Hata. Producer: Osaka Mint. Circulation: approx. 700.000 pcs.<sup>9</sup>

#### GREECE (*September 22, 1920*)

**Obv.** Idem, the open wings, the arms outstretched, holding an olive branch and a laurel in the right hand, and on the left a crown, many branches of laurel in the space between the folds of the dress and the circle on the edge of the medal, which has the name of the engraver on the bottom right „*Henry NOCQ*”. (Fig. no. 9 A).

**Rv.** *O ΜΕΓΑΣ ΥΠΕΡ ΤΟΥ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΟΥ ΠΟΛΕΜΟ*. The legend in Greek, circularly written, bounded by a linear circle, in the field on a postment, a mythological scene with Hercules, a child, struggling with two snakes. At the top of the base, the slogan in Greek: *ΣΥΜΜΑΧΟΙ ΚΑΙ ΕΤΑΙΡΟΙ*<sup>10</sup>, under which, in two columns, the names of the main allied states, linearly written in Greek: *England / United States of America / Belgium / France / Greece / Italy / Japan / Portugal / Russia / Romania / Serbia / Siam*. (Fig. no. 9 B).

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: Henry - Eugene Nocq. Producer: V.S. Canale - Paris. Circulation: approx. 200.000 pcs. The gripping system, an unique one, consists of three pieces, one attached to the medal metal, another semicircular, with embossed ornaments on the visible side for the ribbon, and a spiral tube connecting them.

#### ITALY (*December 16, 1920*)

**Obv.** Idem, with wide open wings, diademata, head turned to the left, on an ancient battle car fired by four lions, holding in the right hand a torch. In the exergy, written *Orsolini MOD*, and to the right in the field *F.M. Loriolli & Castelli Milano*. (Fig. no. 10 A).

**Rv.** *GRANDE GVERRA PER CIVILITA*. Semi-circular written legend at the top, and the bottom two lines: *AL \* COMBATTENTI \* DELLE \* NAZIONE / ALLEATE \* ED ASSOCIATE*. In the field a tripod that holds a sacred vessel from which pigeons fly. On both sides of the tripod of the year: *MCMXIV – MCMXVIII*, and on the bottom right, the name of the engraver: *G. VILLA*. (Fig. no. 10 B).

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: Gaetano Orsolini (Obv.) – G. Villa (Rv.). Producer: for the official ones – Sacchini – Milan; F.M. Loriolli & Castelli – Milan; S. Johnson – Milan. Circulation: aprox. 2.000.000 pcs. It is worth mentioning that they were confectioned from the captured cannons' brass, on the ribbon were beads (*VITTORIO – VENETO*), and the gripping system consisted in a rod fixed with the two ends on the medal's metal, characteristic system for the italian medals.

#### ROMANIA (*July 20, 1921*)<sup>11</sup>

**Obv.** Idem, but, looking forward and moving very confident with a sword in her right hand, this one pointing down and a palm branch on the left, and a crown of laurel leaves on his head. (Fig. no. 11 A).

**Rv.** Under the linear outer circle, a chain whose links are connected to each other by rectangular oval rectangles on which the names of some of the allied states are incised from the center up to the right: *ANGLIA – BELGIA – GRECIA – JAPONIA – SERBIA – [AME]RICA – CHINA – ROMÂNIA – ITALIA – FRANȚA*. Inside this allies „chain”, in the middle there is a two-edged battlefield, flanked by two branches of laurel and oak, in the middle half of the legend on three rows: *MARELE RĂZBOI / PENTRU / CIVILIZAȚIE*. (Fig. no. 11 B).

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: Constantin Kristescu. Producer: Arthus-Bertrand Jewellery House in Paris. Circulation: approx. 300.000 pcs. The clamping system consists of a rod through which the rib fastening ring passes.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The quoted author (Alexander J. Laslo) gives at least an exaggerated or erroneous figure, because by analyzing the Japanese and civilian forces actually participating in the war, they are even lower, even taking into account those who fought in Siberia.

<sup>10</sup> „*ALLIED AND COMRADES*”.

<sup>11</sup> Royal Decree No. 3390 of 20 July 1921 was published in the Official Gazette no. 121 of 2 September 1921.

### CUBA (*June 10, 1922*)

**Obv.** Idem, but looking up with open wings for flight, holding a blade in the right hand of the blade, and a bunch of flowers on the left. On the left between the dress and the edge, the name of the engraver **CH** (arles) **CH** (arles) **CH** (obillon), on the edge written **BRONZE** and a triangle, the manufacturer's mark. (Fig. no. 12 A).

**Rv.** **LA GRAN GUERRA POR LA CIVILIZACION**. Semi-circular written legend above the Cube's coat, the frigate bonnet being flanked by a branch of oak on the right and laurel on the left. Around the shield with the coat of arms, 15 rows from left to right are the names of some of the allied states: **FRANCIA / INGLETERRA / ESTADOS - UNIDOS / RUMANIA / BRASIL / RUSIA / GRECIA / BELGICA / ITALIA / SERVIA / MONTENEGRO / PORTUGAL / JAPON / CHINA**. (Fig. no. 12 B).

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: Charles Charles. Producer: Etablissements Chobillon Paris. Circulation: 6500 pcs.

### BRAZIL (*June 22, 1923*)

**Obv.** Idem, but expressed as an angel with the wings a little bit opened, holding in the right hand a flower bouquet, and a palm branch on the left, the head being covered with a hood and there are several rays in the back and the name of the engraver: **J (orge) S (oubre)**. (Fig. no. 13 A).

**Rv.** **GRANDE GUERRA DE LA CIVILISACAO**. Circularly written legend inside a crown with laurel leaves, caught with a ribbon at the bottom, and inside it, shields with the frames of nine of the allied states, which surrounds Brazil's coat of arms, being located in the center. (Fig. no. 13 B).

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: Jorge Soubre. Producer: Casa da Moeda do Brasil, Rio de Janeiro. Circulation: 2500 pcs.

### SIAM / THAILAND

**Obv.** The symbol of the Hindu mythology, the god Shiva, traditionally dressed, riding on a mythical bird, holding in each of the four arms an object of religious significance: a scepter, a disc, a snail's shell, and a lotus flower. (Fig. no. 14 A).

**Rv.** The set legend, written on four rows, in the field, bounded by two linear circles between which there is a geometric-floral motif. (Fig. no. 14 B).

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: Itthithepsan Kritakara. Circulation: approx. 1500 pcs. Note that the gripping system is a simple tube through which the ribbon gripping ring passes.

### POLAND

To the official commemorative medals „Victoria”, we add an unofficial type<sup>13</sup>, although the reborn Polish state was nominated (like Czechoslovakia) to issue this medal.

**Obv.** Idem, but with a slight look to the left, with a richly draped dress, girded with a cordon, with a sword in her right hand, her hair curled, wearing the crown of the Polish kings and a shield on the left, the wings different from the classic ones, being replaced with the hussar<sup>14</sup>. (Fig. no. 15 A).

**Rv.** **ZA / WOJNE / W OBRANIE / CYWILYZACJI / 1914-1918**. The coat of arms of Poland (Fig. no. 15 B), and a variant, instead of it has the letters **R (zecz) P (ospolita)**, and years **1914-1918**, semicircular written. (Fig. no. 15 C). A linear line written on five rows, or six rows in the variant, inside a crown of laurel leaves.

Metal: AE. Diam. 36 mm. Author: J. Vlaitov. Producer: Kremnica Mint. The clamping system has a simple tubular rod through which a ring passes. It should be mentioned that the medals, the first with the **R-P** and the second, with the coat of arms of the Polish state, were made

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<sup>12</sup> See more: Frunz , Hogiu, 2016, pp. 218-229.

<sup>13</sup> In addition to the types of states presented above, Serbia, Poland and China were also nominated at the Peace Conference, but due to their internal political situation there were no official programs in these countries.

<sup>14</sup> Until the last division of Poland (1795), the elite weapon was the cavalry, consisting of „winged hussars”, a model taken over by other European states. This type of wings, they were protecting the horsemen from the Tatars' lasso, and the noise made during the battles produced a shock for the opponents.

according to the stages of the Polish state, at the initiative of combat veteran officers in the battles for Poland's historic borders.

The World War I, dubbed the „Great War” or „The Great War”, immediately after its cessation, being the first industrial - era conflagration, had an overwhelming role in the liberal organization of the first global order. Its role in the life of humanity is particularly important, because it has the function of boundary between modern and contemporary history. Beyond the composition of the belligerent camps, above the targets pursued by war or, in a different perspective, without any direct link to the responsibility of triggering the terrible conflict that has ravaged about 10 million lives only among the military, there are other realities. The reasons why this war became „Great War” for the combatants, are different from case to case. „Great” through the human, technical and industrial means employed to finish it, „Great” through its devastating force, making a huge crowd of simple, civilians living a life without any commencement warriors and subsequently become soldiers, the foremost actors of a huge carnage, carnage of bodies and carnage of a civilization in which the heirs of the most beautiful values that mankind ever wore will face life and death. People attracted to countless others, in the madness of a conflict triggered by a few hotheads.

Therefore, in order to commemorate this fraternity of weapons established between the Allied armies and those associated in the World War I, this special medal was established, which was named „The Victoria Medal”.

In conclusion, we note that the present notes present a chapter of a wider work entitled *Contributions to The Knowledge of Foreign Decorations for the World War I*, presented by authors at the Oltenia Museum, within the National Conference „Oltenia. Cultural Interference”, 7th Edition, 2017.

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Fig. no. 13 A

Fig. no. 13 B



Fig.no. 14 A

Fig. no. 14 B

Fig. no. 15 A

Fig. no. 15 B

Fig. no. 15 C