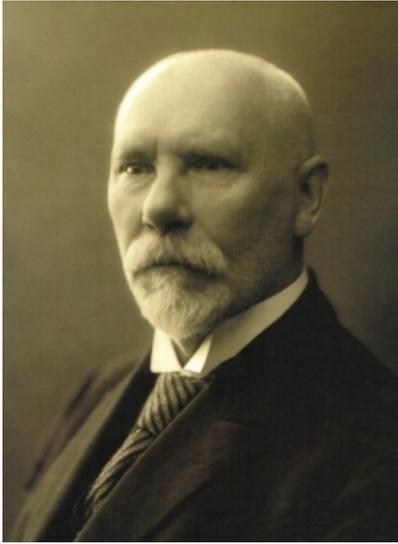


# Jānis Čakste

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Jānis Čakste was the President of the Republic of Latvia within a period from 1922 to 1927. He was the first President of the Republic of Latvia and his task was to represent the new Latvian state. Čakste was aware that the president of the democratic and small state must not play up the ceremony with a pretentious theatrics in order not to become a comedian and also should not represent own Republic with the lowered head, simple manners and the lack of self-confidence, because then he and his state would not be respected either by fellow countrymen or foreign representatives, and the contemporaries gave evidence to the fact that he had managed to find the golden mean.

Born on 14 September 1859 in Čakstu-Zirņu house of Lielsesava parish, Jelgava district. Received the basic education in Anna Elementary School, continued his education in Kurzeme province grammar school in Jelgava and graduated it in 1882. Just the same year he entered the Moscow University, Law Department, which he graduated from in 1886. During a period of studies, he established Latvian Students Association in Moscow and arranged Moscow Latvians' parties.

He worked as the secretary of Kurzeme province public prosecutor' office, in 1888 – as an advocate in Jelgava. In 1887 he became the Head of Jelgava Latvian Society, took an active part working at the Committee of Jelgava Agriculture Academy, Kurzeme Bee-keepers Association and the Latvian Red Cross, drawing up the articles of association of new associations as the lawyer. Since 1889, he held the office of editor the most popular newspaper in Kurzeme "Tēvija" ("Motherland"). In 1895, he was one of the main organizers of IV All-Latvian Song Festival in Jelgava. He partially financed this event as well. In 1905, he took part in the development of the Latvia's autonomy project.

In 1906, he was elected at the Russian Lower Chamber (State Duma). After its dissolution J.Čakste signed the so-called Vyborg Manifesto in Finland together with other 166 deputies, calling the citizens not to pay taxes and ignore the existing conscription procedure until the City Council was convened, for which he was imprisoned for three months. In 1915, J.Čakste moved to Tartu, where he took part in establishing the Central committee of Latvian refugees, in 1917 he became the Chairman of the committee. In 1917 he set out to the USA in order to propagate the idea of independence of Latvia; he wrote the pamphlet in Stockholm "Die Letten und ihre Latvia: Eine lettische Stimme" ("The Latvians and Their Latvia: What is the Latvian's Voice ").

In 1918, J.Čakste was elected as the Chairman of the Presidium of People' Council, organized the Latvian Diplomatic corps, headed the Latvian delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, which requested to recognize the independence of Latvia. In 1919, he returned to Latvia. Pursuant to the resolution of the Constituent Assembly and the Latvian State System Transitional Provisions (Provisional Regulations) J.Čakste was entrusted to perform the obligations of the State President and the Supreme Commander-

in-Chief of the Army. From 1920 to 1921, he was a Professor of the International law of the University of Latvia.

On 7 November 1922 after the adoption of the Constitution, the first meeting of Parliament (Saeima) took place and official elections of the State President of the Republic of Latvia took place on 14 November 1922. Jānis Čakste was elected at the second round by 92 votes and 6 votes abstained. At this time, Čakste had been already the head of the Democratic centre. At the age of 63, Čakste was elected to hold the post of the State President. His task was representation of the new Latvian state. Čakste was aware that a president of the democratic and small state should not play up the ceremony with pretentious theatrics in order not to become a comedian and also should not represent own Republic with the lowered head, simple manners and the lack of self-confidence, because then he and his state would not be respected either by fellow countrymen or foreign representatives, and the contemporaries gave evidence to the fact that he had managed to find the golden mean.

On 6 November 1925, at the next presidency elections, three candidates were nominated already: the social democrat Rainis, K.Ulmanis from the Farmers' Union, and Jānis Čakste from the Democratic centre. At the first voting with one vote abstained, they received 33, 32 and 29 votes respectively. Then the Social democratic fraction withdrew Rainis from the candidate pool. At the second round with three votes abstained, Čakste got 60 votes, but Ulmanis got 31 vote.

During a period of his presidency, from 14 November 1922 to 14 March 1927, Jānis Čakste signed and promulgated 402 laws adopted by Saeima, he returned three laws for reconsideration. Pursuant to the rights granted by the Constitution, he pardoned 549 inmates and only once he received the public censure, when he had amnestied and released from jail Andrievs Niedre convicted for high treason, although banished him to live in exile, in April 1926. During the presidency of Čakste, the Latvian government changed seven times and it was he, who nominated the most appropriate politicians to compile the Cabinet of Ministers.

Čakste paid very much attention to foreign affairs. He requested that Latvian ambassadors first of all would come with their reports to him after returning from abroad rather than to the Minister for foreign affairs; he carefully studied the information received himself and even suggested particular candidates to hold the office of ambassador sometimes, as well as tried to achieve that the most appropriate and enabling officials would work at the diplomatic corps.

During the period of presidency, he paid two state visits. On 23-25 February 1925, Jānis Čakste met with the State President of Estonia Juri Jaakson in Tallinn. The same year in Maya visit was repaid to Riga, although the two states did not sign any agreement at the end of negotiations; the visits noticeably dissipated the issue on the borders by the reason of tension arisen between the two nations. On 15-16 May 1926, Čakste paid the state visit to Finland, where he met with the State President of Finland Lauri Relander in Helsinki. The return visit in Latvia was paid in the same year on 21-24 June.

Čakste's contemporaries characterized him to be an extremely active, loyal, and patriotic politician, a distinguished diplomat, peaceful, erudite and a caring human being. Čakste paid much attention to the youth, especially supported Boy Scout organization, actually took care of the welfare of warriors, followed the structure and needs of the army. Jānis Čakste was not a partisan; he considered corruption and the introduction of the ethos of clique in the social life to be the biggest challenge of the society.

Čakste still lively accepted the New Year wishes on 1 January 1927, and he died at the age of 68 on 14 March 1927. Around 150 thousand persons attended Jānis Čakste's funeral; his grave in Meža Cemetery became the symbolic Latvian link with the past and the area of patriotic demonstration.

<https://www.president.lv/en/janis-cakste>