

The Order of the Three Stars

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The Order of the Three Stars is the highest state decoration in Latvia.

The Order of the Three Stars was established in 1924 in commemoration of the establishment of the independent Latvian state. It was reinstated in the wake of the Soviet occupation in 1994. The motto for the Order of the Three Stars is “Per aspera ad astra” meaning through hardships to the stars.

The Order of the Three Stars is awarded to people for meritorious service on behalf of the Fatherland. These achievements can be related to state, local government, public, cultural, educational, scientific, sports-related or economic activities.

The definition of achievements in this regard refers to outstanding individual accomplishments, to long periods of exemplary and successful activities, and to particular achievements during the period when the independence of Latvia was being restored and strengthened.

The Order of the Three Stars and its medals of honour may be awarded to individuals, including military personnel and foreigners.

The Order of the Three Stars may be awarded to foreign heads of state or government, leaders of international organisations, foreign ambassadors, and other foreign officials.

Description of the Order

The Order of the Three Stars has five classes and three levels of medals of honour:

A person receiving the Order of the Three Stars, First Class becomes a Commander of the Great Cross,

A recipient of the Order of the Three Stars, Second Class is known as a Grand Officer of the Order,

Recipients of the Order of the Three Stars, Third Class are Commanders of the Order,

A recipient of the Fourth Class is an Officer of the Order,

A recipient of the Fifth Class is a Bearer of the Order.

Recipients of the Order of the Three Stars, First Class who are of particular distinction may also be awarded the Chain of the Order of the Three Stars.

The Order of the Three Stars is a Maltese cross with white enamel and a gilded edge. At the centre of the front of the cross is a blue-enamel medallion in a stylised gilded frame. In the middle of the medallion, there are three gold stars. On the reverse of the cross, there is a gilded medallion with the motto "PER ASPERA AD ASTRA AND THE TEXT "LATVIJAS / REPUBLIKA/1918.G.18.NO/VEMBRIS/1994" ("The Republic of Latvia, 18 November 1918, 1994").

The size of the cross of the Order of the Three Stars, First Class is 54x54 mm, the size of the cross of the Order of the Three Stars, Second Class and Third Class is 49x49 mm, and the size of the cross of the Order of the Three Stars, Fourth Class and Fifth Class is 40x40 mm.

Recipients of the First Class and the Second Class also receive a five-point silver star with a blue enamel medallion with a gilded edge at its centre. In the middle of the medallion, there are three gold stars, and there is the text "PAR TĒVIJU" (FOR THE FATHERLAND) on edge. The distance from the centre of the First Class star to the tips of the points is 44 mm, while the length for the Second Class star is 41 mm.

The ribbon of the Order of the Three Stars is light blue, double-folded with golden stripes. The Order and the ribbon are linked by a gilded and silver wreath of oak leaves. The width of the ribbon for Commanders of the Great Cross is 110 mm for men and 75 mm for women. For Grand Officers and Commanders, the width is 32 mm (tied in a bow for women), for Officers, it is 32 mm with a rosette, and for Bearers, it is 32 mm.

The Chain of the Order of the Three Stars is 940 mm long with 10 gilded links. The medallion of the Order, images of a lion and a gryphon, and a double cross of fire are carved into the links.

The Medal of Honour of the Order of the Three Stars is a round medallion with a diameter of 30 mm. On the front, there is an image of the cross of the Order; there is the text "PAR TĒVIJU" and a flaming heart on the back. The medal is encircled with a wreath of oak leaves.

The Medal of Honour, First Class, is gilded, Second Class is silvered, and Third Class is bronzed.

The width of the ribbon of the Medal of Honour is 32 mm.

Miniature versions of the Order of the Three Stars are the same for all classes. These are:

- 1) A miniature Order (14x14 mm) with a 13-mm ribbon;
- 2) A rosette for the ribbon with a miniature Order (diameter 12 mm);
- 3) A piece of the ribbon of the Order (9x32 mm).

The miniature versions of the Medal of Honour are a miniature medal with a triangular ribbon, gilded for the first Class, silvered, and bronzed for the second and third Class.

The diameter of the miniature medal is 12 mm, and the width of the ribbon is 13 mm. A piece of the ribbon of the Order with a five-pointed (gilded, silvered, and bronzed respectively for the three classes).

The size of the piece of ribbon is 9x32 mm, and the diameter of the star is 8 mm.

History of the Order

The first civilian Order of the Republic of Latvia.

It was in the first half of 1921 that the Latvian Constitutional Council began to discuss the need for a civilian Order in Latvia. Delegates prepared statutes and design for an Order of the Wreath of Oak, but the Constitutional Council rejected the proposal, explaining that before the Constitution was approved, it could not be clear whether a democratic country such as Latvia should have orders in the first place.

The Saeima returned to the issue later, deciding that orders did not cause any harm. Indeed, they encouraged people to be hard working.

The first President of Latvia, Jānis Čakste proclaimed the Law on the Order of the Three Stars on 25 March 1924. The Order of the Three Stars, First Class was awarded to President Čakste and Foreign Minister Zigfrīds Anna Meierovics on 24 February 1925, as they had been the two officials most responsible for establishing the Order. Three days later, the Order of the Three Stars, First Class was awarded to Prime Minister Kārlis Ulmanis and the great poet and playwright Rainis. The motto for the Order was "Per aspera ad astra" ("Through hardships to the stars").

The Order was designed by the sculptor Gustavs Šķilters.

The Order of the Three Stars is a Maltese cross with white enamel and a gilded edge. At the centre of the front of the cross is a blue-enamel medallion in a stylised gilded frame. In the middle of the medallion, there are three gold stars to symbolise the merger of the historical regions of Kurzeme, Vidzeme, and Latgale under the flag of the Republic of Latvia. On the reverse of the cross, there is a gilded medallion with the motto "Per aspera ad astra," and the text "Latvijas Republika – 1918. gada 18. novembris".

Bestowing the Order

During the first period of Latvian independence, when money was scarce, recipients of the Order of the Three Stars had to pay for it themselves (150 Lats for First Class, and 85, 35, 22 and 20 Lats for the subsequent classes). The statutes did not speak to posthumous awarding of the Order of the Three Stars, but the issue never came up. In this, the Order of the Three Stars was different from the military Order of Lāčplēsis, which was awarded posthumously to men such as Col Oskars Kalpaks and Col Frīdrihs Briedis. The statutes of the Order of the Three Stars say that the Order is bestowed to people who have served the fatherland by engaging in government, local government, public, cultural or economic work. An achievement is an outstanding piece of work done once, as well as long-term and exemplary activities with visible results.

An achievement is also a selfless performance of one's duties under unusually difficult circumstances when the state was established and liberated, strengthened and improved. Working for the land of Latvia or in the territory of the Republic of Latvia that has lasted for less than 25 years does not grant the right to receive the Order on its own merits. Faultless service for 25 and more years can be a reason to award the Order, if at least five of those years have been the first years of the independent Republic of Latvia. Public and other workers can be rewarded for the same long-term work in society." The regulations also said that people are not allowed to nominate themselves for the Order of the Three Stars.

The rules furthermore said that people who were awarded the Order of the Three Stars had to come and pick it up in two years' time. Otherwise, the award was annulled.

Historical Data

As of May 1940, the Order of the Three Stars, First Class had been awarded to 285 persons, with 391, 1,323, 2,194 and 4,617 people respectively receiving the second, third, fourth and fifth Class of the Order. A great many people were given medals of honour as well. In 1930, the Cabinet of Ministers declared that approximately 1% of state and local government officials could be

granted the Order of the Three Stars each year. During the last 15 years before World War II, however, more people were awarded the Order each year than had been the case in the previous decade after the Order was reinstated.

The last people to receive the Order of the Three Stars before the war began were Col Andrejs Lejassaus, who was director of the Army Economic Store, and the Chairman of the Jaunroze Parish Council, P. Tilts. During the war and the subsequent Soviet occupation for 50 years, the Order of the Three Stars disappeared along with the independent Republic of Latvia.

On 25 October 1994, President of Latvia Guntis Ulmanis proclaimed a law on the reinstatement of the Order of the Three Stars. Just two weeks later, on 7 November 1994, the Order was presented to its recipients once again.

<https://www.president.lv/en/order-three-stars>