

*SUMMARY***DECORATIONS OF IMPERIAL RUSSIA – FROM THE COLLECTION OF DECORATIONS OF THE CROATIAN HISTORY MUSEUM**

The Russian Emperor Peter I (1682-1725) founded modern decorations for merit in Imperial Russia. In 1698 he founded the Order of St Andrew the First-Called. Peter I planned the foundation of another order, but this was realised by his widow Empress Catherine I, who founded the Order of St Alexander Nevsky in honour of victory over the Swedes in 1725.

Commemorative medals were usual in Russia at the beginning of the 18th century. In the first two decades of the 18th century Russia waged the difficult Northern War against Sweden (1700-1721), and the numerous awards of medals from Peter's time is connected with events from this war.

The third very highly valued military order of the Russian Empire was the Order of St George, which was founded in 1869 by Empress Catherine II the Great (1762-1796). It was awarded for military merit only. In 1782, Empress Catherine II founded the Order of St Vladimir for merit in the civil service and for socially meritorious activities, to mark the twentieth jubilee of her rule. It was awarded to military and civil persons.

The King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania, Stanislas Augustus Poniatowski, founded the Order of St Stanislas on 8 May 1765, in honour of the patron saint of Poland. In the following decades Poland gradually lost independence and from 1831 had the status of a province of the Russian Empire. The Order of St Stanislas was included on the list of orders of the Russian Empire. Also of Polish origin is the Order *Virtuti militari*.

Duke Karl Friedrich von Schleswig-Holstein-Gottorp founded the Order of St Anna in 1735. In 1762 his son was crowned as Russian Emperor Peter III, and he transferred the Order of St Anna to Russia. At that time it did not yet have the status of a Russian imperial decoration but was considered an order of the Holstein-Gottorp dynasty. It was not until 1797, under Emperor Paul, that the Order of St Anna was included among Russian imperial orders.

Imperial Russia had other high-ranking orders, as well, which are, unlike the Order of St Andrew the First-Called, Order of Alexander Nevsky and Order of St George, not included in this article. These are the Order of the White Eagle, also of Polish origin, and the

Order of St Catherine, reserved for ladies.

Russian imperial orders were awarded to outstanding army officers and prominent citizens in the civil service. Non-commissioned officers, soldiers and lower ranking civil servants received the Cross of St George, Medal of St George, Medal for Zeal and other numerous commemorative medals for wars and social events.