

*SUMMARY***THE WORLD WAR I VICTORY MEDAL**

In 1904 France and the United Kingdom signed an alliance called the *Entente cordiale*. In it they agreed on the division of zones of influence, mostly in Africa, and on a common policy against Germany. When World War I broke out, the *Entente* gathered around it the following countries: Serbia, Montenegro, Russia, the United Kingdom and France, Belgium, Egypt and Japan. In 1915 they were joined by Italy. Next year, 1916, Portugal, Hijaz and Romania joined, and in 1917 the USA, Panama, Cuba, Greece, Siam, Liberia, China and Brazil. By the end of the war the *Entente* had been joined by about ten more states from Latin America.

On 11 November 1918 the representatives of the new German government signed a declaration on capitulation to French and British officers. This was the end of World War I. In this terrible and bloody war 16,543,185 soldiers and civilians were killed, and 21,228,813 people were wounded.

At the proposal of the Supreme Commander of the *Entente* French Marshal Ferdinand Foch (1851-1929), at the Paris Peace Conference, a common medal of the countries which participated in World War I as allies was founded on 24 January 1919. Fifteen nations – *Entente* members – designed their medals: France, Belgium, United Kingdom, Portugal, Italy, Czechoslovakia, Poland, Romania, Greece, South-African Union, Cuba, Brazil, United States of America, Japan and Siam. All the medals share a common design, but have typical symbols of each of the nations. The medals are made of bronze, diameter of about 36 mm, and are worn on a ribbon in mirroring (double) colours of the rainbow. Countries of the Christian tradition adopted the proposal to show an allegoric figure of the goddess of Victory (Greek Nike or Roman Victoria) on the obverse. This image meant nothing to Japan and Siam, so they sought different solutions.

After the October Revolution, Russia signed a separate peace treaty with Germany (3 March 1918) and stepped out of the war. The newly-formed Soviet Union became a diplomatically isolated society hostile to the *Entente*. Thus the Soviet leaders did not even think of designing a memorial medal. Serbia and Montenegro, although they suffered terrible losses in World War I as *Entente* members, also did not take part in the project of designing the medal, which we will further in the text call the Victory Medal. However, the newly-formed Czechoslovak Republic joined the project of designing the medal, although its citizens fought against the *Entente* during World War I on the side of the Central Powers (as part of Austria-Hungary).

The official name of the allies' medal was **Médaille interallié de la victoire**.