

Order of Merit of the Hungarian People's Republic, 3rd class, Complete Set in original fitted Case of Issue, 1949-1953.

One of only 285 sets ever awarded.

The Breast Star is in silver-plated brass and high-quality enamels (heavy patina on both the obverse and reverse create an impression of solid silver). It measures 59.3 mm at its widest point and weighs 52.1 grams. There is a poorly struck maker mark to the underside of the pin near the hinge.

There is a repaired crack in the tip of topmost arm as well as minor fracture on the upper side of the left ray (both shown in the photographs). The damage is not very significant given the overall massive size of the star. Overall, this is still a very attractive and impressive piece.

The Medal (enameled star on triangular ribbon suspension) is 42 mm at its widest point. The ribbon bears a 19-mm metal device known as the "Small Decoration", reproducing the design of the breast star.

The star medallion has had enamel repairs on three of its arms (and at five places tiny amounts of the gold plating was scraped away on either side of the star tips when the enamel was repaired). Each of the largest of the golden rays issuing from the center exhibit some degree of scuffing. As sometimes happens with Twentieth Century Hungarian-made ribbon, it has uniformly faded due to unstable dyes.

The 165mm x 127mm x 30mm presentation box is original and shows minimum wear.

The 14mm x 40mm ribbon bar was apparently made from ribbon by a different contractor since it still shows bright color. The metal device fastened to it is 20 mm in diameter. The ribbon has two internal snaps for attaching to the uniform by slipping over a loop that would have been permanently fastened to the uniform coat.

Founded 24 October 1949, the first presentation of the various degrees of the Hungarian Order of Merit appears to have been on May Day of 1950 - with a substantial share of awards going to Soviets. The various degrees of this Order were presented for less than three years. Each of the three higher classes of the award consisted of the breast star (76 mm wide for the 1st cl. and 54 mm for the 2nd and 3rd) and the medal with an additional "small decoration" badge attached to its ribbon. The 4th class came in the form of a single smaller breast star without the starburst. Lastly, the medal with a starburst (but without the "small decoration") constituted the lowest, 5th class of the order. Of the third class sets - such as the one offered here - there were only 285 ever issued.

With the exception of the fact that there was no "commander" degree (i.e. with a badge worn at the neck - which communist orders always seemed to avoid), this was a fairly traditional order of merit in its original concept, which is probably why it only existed for about three years. While it was fairly quickly phased out, its insignia was not recalled and continued to be worn by recipients.

In spite of the obvious imperfections (which have been carefully repaired), this is a very uncommon set of order insignia and it represents one of the very few times that a communist nation initiated a multi-tiered order of merit.

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\$1,300.00



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