

## The German Order of the Greater German Empire *Der Deutsche Orden des Großdeutschen Reiches*



### **Instituted by Adolf Hitler in 1939**

This decoration was planned by Adolf Hitler in 1939 just after the institution of the Service Decorations of the NSDAP (*Dienstauszeichnungen der NSDAP*). Drawings of this decoration, which Hitler stated would be the “highest decoration” of the Third Reich, had been prepared in the same year but the outbreak of the war delayed any further activity in the establishment of this decoration, although Hitler stated that there would be a medal for the medal bar, a breast cross and a neck decoration. The first years of the war occupied Hitler’s attention and the Order again surfaced with the death of Dr. Fritz Todt in a questionable plane crash just outside of Hitler’s military headquarters in East Prussia on February 8, 1942. At the memorial service for Todt on February 12, 1942, Hitler announced his *post mortem* presentation of this order to Todt and on the medal pillow at the funeral, the Order

was seen, without the neck ribbon, above the National Prize for Arts and Science (*Nationalpreises für Kunst und Wissenschaft*)

The second presentation of this decoration, *post mortem*, was for SS-*Obergruppenführer* Reinhard Heydrich who had been murdered by British agents. The decoration was presented by Hitler on June 9, 1942.

The third presentation of this decoration, *post mortem*, was for Adolf Hühnlein head of the N.S.K.K. (*Nationalsozialistischen Kraftfahrkorps*) also on June 9, 1942.

The fourth presentation of this decoration, *post mortem*, was for *the Stabschef der SA* (Chief of Staff of the SA) Viktor Lutze, killed in a car crash. This was presented by Hitler on May 8, 1943.

The fifth presentation of this decoration, this time with Swords, was made, *post mortem*, to Gauleiter Josef Bürkel, who had committed suicide. This presentation was made on October 3, 1944.

The sixth presentation of this decoration, with Swords, was made, *post mortem*. To *General der Infanterie* Rudolf Schmudt *Chef Adjutant der Wehrmacht* who died in hospital on October 1, 1944, after the failed Stauffenberg murder attempt at Hitler's Headquarters on July 20<sup>th</sup> of that year.

The seventh presentation of this decoration was made to *Reichsarbeitsführer* Konstantin Hierl on February 24, 1945 and this time, the decoration was given *mit Eichenlaub und Schwertern* (with Oakleaves and Swords)

The eighth presentation of this decoration was to the *Gauleiter* Karl Hanke on April 12, 1945.

The ninth presentation of this decoration was to *Gauleiter* Karl Holz on April 19, 1945, and

The tenth, and final, presentation of this decoration to *Reichsjugendführer* (Reichs' Youth Leader) Arthur Axmann on April 29, 1945.

## **Description of the Order**

This decoration was *only* made by the metal works factory of Wilhelm Deumer in Lüdenschied (Westfalen).(LDO 3)

The crosses of all the classes of this Order were of the same size: 49 mm

The decoration consisted of a black-enameled cross with a gold rim, in the shape of the Iron Cross. The arms of the cross had a thin border of gold oak leaves on the face and a thin gold border on the reverse. The center piece was identical to the gold party decoration (*Goldenes Ehrenzeichen der NSDAP*) In the arms of the cross were four gold Party eagles, looking over their left shoulders. These insignia were also detailed on the reverse. In a round, black enameled circle on the reverse was a gold facsimile of Hitler's signature.

The Third Class, planned but never issued, was smooth, polished gold with a vertical pin. There were no maker marks on any of the original orders.

The Second Class had a gold fitting consisting of a suspension ring with two oak leaves, one over the other, smooth on the reverse and with a gold National Emblem below. This emblem was also flat on the reverse.

The First Class was identical to the Second but there was no loop on the top of the cross. Instead there was a slightly elliptical laurel wreath with two crossed antique-style swords and at the top of the wreath was the National Emblem and a ribbon ring identical with the Second Class. All of these fittings were gilded

The Todt decoration was in gold and all subsequent issues were in gilded silver.

The suspension ribbon for the First and Second classes was 45 mm wide and watered with a red center band the color of the Iron Cross 2<sup>nd</sup> Class ribbon, and with two 2 mm wide stripes, white on the inner side and black on the outer. This ribbon was manufactured by the firm of Karl Loy in Munich.

## **Copies**

The Vienna firm of Rudolf Souval made copies of this decoration after the war but they have neither the weight nor the excellent finish of the originals. The Deumer firm made twelve copies of the First Class, twelve of the Second Class and twelve copies of the Third Class. Recently, a firm in Hungary has made all three classes and photos are included to show the detail on face and reverse of this production.. Note that the pin on the Hungarian copy of the Third Class is maker-marked, something not found on any original. Of the ten presented decorations, nine have been accounted for but there are no figures for the fate of the remaining original decorations.