

Cross of Bravery (aka Cross of the Brave) of General Bulak-Balakhovich, 2nd class, by a private maker, circa 1930s.

In silver-plated brass and enamel; measures 43.6 mm in height (incl. eyelet) x 37.0 mm wide. Characteristically crude die-cast construction. The enamel however is of fairly nice quality.

In good to fine condition. There are chips and flaking near the upper edge of the upper arm as well as a smaller chip to the left corner of the lower arm. The enamel also has minor contact marks, rubbing and a few hairlines but appears to be sound. The center medallion is practically pristine. The silver plating is well-preserved throughout. The badge comes on the original jump ring. The regulation ribbon is correct for the award albeit possibly of a later vintage.

The Cross of Bravery (often somewhat incorrectly referred to as the Cross of the Brave in various sources) was established by General Bulak-Balakhovich. A former Cavalry Captain in the Imperial Army, he started his combat career in the Civil War fighting against the Germans at Riga, paradoxically, under the command of the Reds. At the head of a partisan cavalry group, he found an opportune moment to defect to the White Northern (later, Northwestern) Army; was promoted to Captain and later, Maj. General by General Yudenich; and took part in the latter's unsuccessful attempt to capture Petrograd. He then broke up with the regular White Army leadership and organized his own unit of ethnic Russians fighting the Reds under the newly created Estonian national army.

Later, Bulak-Balakhovich commanded a semi-independent Belorussian Partisan Cavalry Division within the Polish Army in the Soviet-Polish War of 1918-1921 and organized a polyglot Russian National Volunteer Army (referred to as Allied Volunteer Army in official Polish sources) which fought to the bitter end even after hostilities between Poland and Soviet Russia had largely seized. After the formal armistice in 1921, his army was disbanded and most of its surviving veterans settled in Poland. The Cross of Bravery was initially established in 1920-21; in 1931, the award was expanded to include a star and a cross, both in two classes. The awards were manufactured by various Polish workshops, typically by a private order of their recipients. Some of the crosses had a serial number or a maker mark, while others - such as the example offered here - did not. Because Bulak-Balakhovich's force was closely affiliated with the Polish Army, many collectors consider it one of the Polish national awards even though it never officially acquired this status.

/Similar to Awards and Badges of the White Armies and Governments of the Russian Civil War, 1917-1922, A. Rudichenko, 2008, Page 286, Fig. 2.7.11/

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