

Badge of the ODVF (Society of Friends of the Air Fleet), Northwestern Chapter, 1923-25.

Silver, enamels. Measures 30.3 mm in height, 37.5 mm in width; weighs 5.7 grams without screw plate. Extremely elegant and well-made badge of multi-piece construction. Its design is an epitome of the Constructivist style prevalent in Soviet art of the mid-20s (by the end of the decade, it would fall out of favor with the Kremlin masters and get largely replaced with the burgeoning Socialist Realism). Unlike the more common badges of the Northwestern ODVF, this badge features a very detailed depiction of a biplane flying almost directly toward the viewer and a vertically oriented blue scroll with the name of the organization ending in a stylized hammer & sickle emblem at the top.

The obverse on the upper wing on the left (to the viewer) has an 84 silver hallmark, the old "Kokoshnik" model used only until 1926, with a Greek character Alpha designating the Petrograd (after 1924, Leningrad) assay inspection. The fuselage of the airplane has a Cyrillic maker mark, apparently ЛЗ ("LZ"); the first letter of the maker mark can only be guessed, as there is an additional round assay inspection hallmark with "Kokoshnik" struck over it.

The badge is in very fine condition, very uncommon and far above the average for a Soviet award from the period. The blue enamel on the scroll has small chips, but they are almost unnoticeable to the naked eye and do not really detract from the appearance of the badge when viewed without a magnifying glass. The red enamel on the stars is essentially perfect, although an examination under 10x loupe reveals some microscopic contact marks. To reiterate, the enamel on this piece is preserved far better than usual: the enamel on the exposed blue scroll is typically very heavily damaged or replaced on surviving original examples of this badge.

The details of the airplane are essentially pristine and beautifully crisp. Both the obverse and revers show very attractive toning to silver. The three overlaying parts of the badge are soundly attached and tight. The screw post measures over 10 mm long, has not been reduced. The badge comes with original silver screw plate showing a "Kokoshnik" hallmark.

This badge was awarded for donations or active participation in the Northwestern Chapter of the society which included Petrograd (later Leningrad) region. Its production started in 1923, when Lenin was still alive. Very few of these badges survived to our days in anything like decent condition.

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