

### Order for Service to the Homeland in the Soviet Armed Forces, 2nd class, #1015, circa late 1980s.

Silver gilt, enamels; measures 57.3 mm in height, 57.4 mm in width; weighs 63.7 g without the screw plate. Displays characteristic "stubby" tips of the longest horizontal rays (when viewed from the reverse). This sub-variation of the order has the peculiar network of thin raised lines on various parts of the reverse (apparently from polishing of the die) that are a requisite feature of the original 2nd cl. orders. The serial number is engraved in the manner standard for the 2nd class.

In outstanding, excellent condition. The original gilt is beautifully preserved. The ridges and apex of the central star are perfectly crisp. The enamel is likewise perfect, completely free of any wear or even the microscopic contact marks that could be found under a 10x magnification. The original factory-applied dark finish on the anchor and wings is pristine. The screw post is of full length, approx. 9.5 mm measured from the retaining nut, and includes an original screw plate.

The second class of the Order for Service to the Homeland in the Soviet Armed Forces is among the rarest of all Soviet decorations. Although its serial numbers may go as high as 3500, not all of the available numbers were utilized. Far fewer awards were actually made and issued than the serial number range would suggest, only 589 in total - a tiny number by the Soviet standards. To compare, the serial numbers of the 3rd class of this order can be above 140,000. Unlike the 2nd class, a substantial quantity of unissued 3rd cl. awards remained in the inventory and eventually made it to the collectors market after the breakup of the USSR.

The rarity of the 2nd cl. and the fact that it seemingly differs from the 3rd cl. only by the gilt finish on the tips of the rockets and on the central star created an incentive to manufacture fake 2nd cl. orders by "upgrading" the 3rd cl. In most cases, fakers simply erase the serial number on an unissued piece, add gold plating, sandblast the reverse, and engrave a low number in line with what should be expected of a 2nd cl. Such fakes are relatively easy to spot because of the typically crude serial number engraving and incorrect sanded surface of the reverse. There are however harder cases, such as fake 2nd cl. made of low-numbered 3rd cl. specimens. Fortunately, there are features of the 2nd cl. die that make it different from the 3rd cl., such as the "idiosyncrasies" of the reverse and shape of the tips of the starburst. For a very detailed explanation of the differences, visit our YouTube channel CollectRussia: we have a special episode dedicated to the Order for Service to the Homeland with fake vs original comparison illustrated by close-up photos and schematic sketches.

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**\$3,950.00**

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