New “Alternative” Russian Medals: Part 4 - Kuznetsov Navy Veterans Medal and the 80th Anniversary of the Soviet Border Guards Medal

Professor Igor V. Victorov-Orlov, OMSA No. 2815

Parts 1 through 3 of Professor Victorov-Orlov’s series on alternative Russian medals covered the four medals instituted by the Congress of People’s Deputies (CPD) from 1995 to 1998. This article introduces the two medals that were instituted by the CPD during 1998. The CPD was the highest legislative body of the former Soviet Union, but it continues to exist today as a legitimate institution.

Kuznetsov Navy Veterans Medal

The Kuznetsov Navy Veterans Medal was instituted by the CPD on 7 April 1998. It is intended to recognize all veterans of the Soviet Navy regardless of the period of service, although the first awards were primarily to veterans of the Great Patriotic War (World War II).

The medal is named after Nikoli G. Kuznetsov, Fleet Admiral and Hero of the Soviet Union. Kuznetsov was born in northwest Russia in a small village near Archangel. All of his ancestors had been sailors, and this heritage is perhaps the reason he became a sailor in the Northern Dvina Flotilla at the age of seventeen. As a reward for his service during the Bolshevik Revolution, Kuznetsov was sent to the Naval School, and later he graduated from the Higher Naval Academy in Leningrad (St. Petersburg). When civil war erupted in Spain in 1936, he was sent to act as a naval advisor to the Spanish Republican government. In 1939, Kuznetsov was appointed Navy Commissar (Minister) of the Soviet Union, a position that he held until 1953. By this time, he had served in all four fleets of the Soviet Union - the Baltic, North, Black Sea, and Pacific. During the Great Patriotic War, he headed all Soviet naval operations, and after the war he was Chief Supervisor of all naval schools and academies. Admiral Kuznetsov died in 1974.

The circular badge of the medal is made of bronze and is 35.5mm in diameter. In the center of the obverse is a medallion containing the profile bust of Kuznetsov on a background of blue-green enamel. Encircling the bust is the Russian language inscription FLEET ADMIRAL OF THE SOVIET UNION in Cyrillic letters. In the bronze space around the medallion is a chain with an anchor at the bottom.
The reverse contains the Russian, Cyrillic letter inscription THE SOVIET UNION NAVY CHIEF COMMANDER 1939-1953 in three lines slightly above center and the inscription AN EXAMPLE FOR DESCENDANTS in two lines at the bottom. Between the two inscriptions is a side view of the Soviet aircraft carrier the Admiral Kuznetsov, and above the top inscription is a replica of the Golden Star of the Hero of the Soviet Union. A laurel branch flanks the top inscription.

The badge is suspended from standard Soviet-style pentagonal ribbon. The ribbon is 24mm in width and is blue-green in color with three white stripes 3mm in width on the left half of the ribbon.

80th Anniversary of the Soviet Border Guards Medal

On 6 May 1998, just one month after the establishment of the Kuznetsov Navy Veterans Medal, the CPD instituted the 80th Anniversary Medal of the Soviet Border Guards. This medal is to be awarded to all members of the former Soviet Border Guards who served on the borders of the Soviet Union at any time from 1918 until 1991. The Soviet Border Guards, which was part of the Red Army, was founded by Lenin on 28 May 1918.

The medal has a bronze, circular badge 35mm in diameter. The obverse depicts the heads of two border guards facing to the left framed by a map of the Soviet Union in red enamel. Encircling the map is the Russian language inscription 80 YEARS OF THE USSR BORDER GUARDS in Cyrillic letters. The space above the map contains the USSR state arms.

In the center of the reverse is frontier pole with the USSR state arms at the top. The state arms are flanked by the year 1918 on the left and 1998 on the right. The background is a hilly landscape with trees. Near the edge of the reverse is the circular inscription THE USSR FRONTIER IS SACRED AND INVIOLABLE in Cyrillic letters.

The pentagonal ribbon of the medal is 24mm in width and is green with red edge stripes 2mm in width. In the center of the ribbon are two stripes 2mm in width - a yellow stripe on the left and a white stripe on the right.

Award Booklets

The award booklets for both medals, which are a piece of heavy paper of a specified size that has been folded in half, follow the same format as the booklets for the earlier alternative medals. Inside each booklet is a depiction of the medal awarded. Authenticated booklets are stamped with the USSR state arms and bear the facsimile signature of the Chairman of the Presidium of the CPD. To date, all booklets have the signature of Mrs. Sazhi Umalatova.

Inside front cover and inside back cover of the award booklet for the 80th Anniversary of the Soviet Border Guards Medal. When folded, the booklet measures approximately 7.9cm by 10.9cm.
Identification requests and inquiries may be submitted by OMSA members free of charge directly to me. Include all available information about the subject of the request or inquiry, such as size, metallic content, ribbon and enamel colors, and the obverse and reverse inscriptions. Also include, if possible, the best illustration of the subject, but do not bend illustrations, especially photographs. Forward the description and illustration to me at P.O. Box 777, Millbrae, CA, 94030, together with a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Nonmembers are requested to include a $5.00 check made payable to OMSA. I look forward to your inquiries, but please be patient.

Identification requests are given a designation for future reference that consists of the Journal year and Journal number in which it appears and its sequence in the issue. Thus “IDENTIFICATION REQUEST 99/1/1” appeared in the 1999, Number 1 issue of the Journal, and it was the first of requests listed. The same method is used to designate inquires except that its sequence in the issue is indicated by a capital letter instead of a number.


Fantasy “Nazi German” Air Force (Luftwaffe) Badge. This is likely one of a large number of pseudo-Nazi badges and insignia suddenly appearing in the market that I believe originated in Poland. I recently examined a lot of twelve similarly made badges with Nazi German mottos, swastikas, and eagles - all fantasy pieces without any official standing. Typically, these pieces have a newly minted look about them, and they are somewhat crudely made in copper-bronze and have crude red, black, orange, yellow, and white enameling. All pieces also have a screw-back attachment with a bronze nut. The nut is plain, round, and has a milled edge. Caveat emptor!

IDENTIFICATION REQUEST 98/V/4 (September-October 1998) - Nazi German National Food Estate Medal of Kumark

Additional Information from Ed Bennett:

Ed reports that he has three examples of the Kumark Medal in his collection - a bronze medal with a light blue ribbon, a silver medal with a green ribbon, and a solid gold medal with a green ribbon. None of the ribbons have a brooch. To my knowledge, the gold specimen in Ed’s collection is a variety of the medal that has not been published before.

IDENTIFICATION REQUEST 99/5/1 from Bobby C. Dyer.

Veteran Corps Illinois Infantry Medal. The badge of this medal and its pinback brooch are made of bronze. The brooch is engraved with the name CHAS J. SYKES. The badge has an irregular seal shape and a fob-like lug suspender. On the obverse is a circular border that is inscribed VETERAN CORPS above and ILLINOIS INFANTRY below. The bottom words are separated by a distinctive unit emblem with the motto EVER-READY.