

1914 Illustration of Cossack Hero Kuzma Firsovich Kryuchkov, winning the first St George Cross awarded in World War I.

A dramatic stone lithograph image printed in Grodno.

Measures 19 5/8" x 13 1/2". A battle scene printed in vibrant colors complete with a patriotic poem printed across the bottom. Printed in Grodno, a city now located in Belarus close to its border with Poland.

Very good condition. Several tears or weak spots in the paper have been corrected with acid-free archival paper tape and are not noticeable.

Kryuchkov, an almost stereotypical Don Cossack cavalryman from the town of Kalmykov in the district of Ust-Khopersk, was the first Russian hero of the Great War. He and only two comrades impetuously took on a patrol of twenty-seven German cavalrymen in August of 1914 and soundly defeated it.

Depending upon which version of the tale you read, he personally dispatched almost half of the Germans himself, receiving 16 wounds in the process! He was awarded the first St. George Cross of the war, was introduced personally to the Tsar (who, in keeping with his beliefs about the true nature of the Russian peasantry, was probably pleased to discover that Kuzma could neither read nor write), and became the closest thing to a certifiable "super star" that pre-Revolutionary Russia ever knew. (His feat actually earned him international renown: a few paragraphs about his bravery appeared half way around the world in an August, 1914 morning edition of the New York Times!)

For over a year, his face was appeared everywhere: on posters, on packaging, in newspaper cartoons. After about 1916, however, he seems to have slipped off the pages of history, his fifteen minutes of fame expired - although we have seen a Soviet-era "Cossack" toy soldier that bear an uncanny resemblance to him, with his visor cap perched at an insane angle on top of a bushy head of hair!

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\$190.00



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