

Badge for Excellence in Socialist Competition of Craft Cooperatives (Promkooperatsiya), Vsekopromsovet issue, #0693, circa 1938-39.

In brass and enamels; measures 36.0 mm in height, 35.9 mm in width; weighs 17.1 g without the screw plate. Three-piece construction: the banner and star are separate superimposed parts attached by rivets. A very massive and impressive badge of trademark pre-war Soviet quality. Note the 3-digit serial number, very low even for a scarce pre-war Vsekopromsovet issue.

In excellent condition, outstanding for this badge. The enamel is extremely well preserved and shows magnificent luster throughout. Its only flaws are a couple of darker areas in the upper left corner of the banner and on the left side of the star, neither of them really detractive. The enamel has only a couple of microscopic contact marks elsewhere and looks perfect to the unaided eye, free of rubbing or significant wear of any kind. The rivets are intact and tight. The gilt finish on the reverse is still bright. The screw post is full length, over 10.5 mm, and includes original screw plate maker-marked "Lenemalyer Factory".

The badge was awarded for excellent work in small semi-private workshops such as photo studios, tailor and cobbler shops, laundries etc. Enterprises of this kind were combined under the single term Promyslovaya Kooperatsiya which can be loosely translated as Cooperatives of Cottage Industries. Starting from 1933, its central governing body was called Vsekopromsovet, a typically unwieldy Newspeak-style abbreviation for All-Union Council of Craft Cooperatives. Albeit heavily regulated, cooperatives were the only rudiment of capitalism and the last vestige of Lenin's New Economic Policy allowed to survive all throughout the Stalin's reign. The Vsekopromsovet was disbanded in 1941 with the beginning of the Patriotic War, but cooperatives continued to exist under the watchful eye of Soviet authorities that arbitrarily relaxed or tightened their control depending on the situation. The Promkooperatsiya was officially abolished in 1955 when all small cooperatives came under the direct control of the state like the rest of the Soviet economy (with predictably ruinous results for the living standards in the USSR in general and mainland Russia in particular).

/Avers 8, p. 200, fig. 997; note that the book incorrectly states the period of issue of the badge./

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