

M 1955 Service / Field Visor Hat of an Air Force General, circa 1955-57.

The crown is in napped olive-green wool; sky-blue band and piping. Features characteristically early, smaller crown and visor. Gold embroidered wreath around the hat badge and gold embroidered Air Force wings on the crown, the latter indicating a general officer with flight qualification. The hat badge is a high-quality early model correct for this hat: in gilded brass with "hot-baked" enamel (unlike the later version in gilded aluminum and paint). The chin cord is in gold metallic filigree.

Early side buttons with a solid brass backing display the Soviet state emblem. Interestingly, one of the buttons shows the early emblem with 16 scrolls representing the number of republics in the USSR, while the other has the 15-republic version introduced in 1955. Judging by the thread attaching the buttons, the former one is original to the hat, while the latter is a replacement that dates from the second half of the 50s; both are of the same construction and show matching patina. Considering the presence of the pre-1955 button, the hat was likely made within a few years from the 1955 change: it was typical for Soviet factories to utilize all the remaining buttons that were already in the pipeline.

The diamond-shaped sweat shield shows the early version of the logo of Moscow's TsEP military uniform factory. The abbreviation УБОС ГИ МО at the bottom of the logo stands for Directorate for Clothes and Convoy Supplies of the Main Quartermaster (Agency) of the Ministry of Defense. The sweat diamond is marked Size 58 (approx. US size 7 1/4 / Large).

Notably, the sweat band, albeit in leather as appropriate for a general's hat, does not have the typical perforation with a silk tape for customized fit and thus resembles a regular officer's sweat band. This may be due to the abrupt 1955 change to a new-model service hat for AF generals which immediately made the old version conspicuously non-regulation. The rush to produce new hats apparently made it necessary for the factory to "cut corners" - even when it applied to headgear of higher-ranking officers.

The hat is in very good condition. Both the exterior and interior are perfectly clean. The napped wool of the crown shows far less moth damage than usual, having only a single small moth bite near the top under the piping and a tiny nip just above the piping, as well as a couple of minuscule tracks to the nap that are visible only at very close inspection. The piping is perfect, while the band shows some mothing to the nap near the right temple area that does not penetrate to the liner and is completely hidden under the chin cord.

The leather sweatband is still fairly pliable and shows only minimal wear. The sweat diamond is well-preserved, and the lettering of the maker mark is completely legible. The visor is perfect. The hat has held its shape beautifully, not flabby as is often the case with early models.

A very interesting Air Force general's hat from the early Cold-War era. Although this model remained in use until 1968, it is quite uncommon - especially a very early issue in nice condition.

Item# 46920

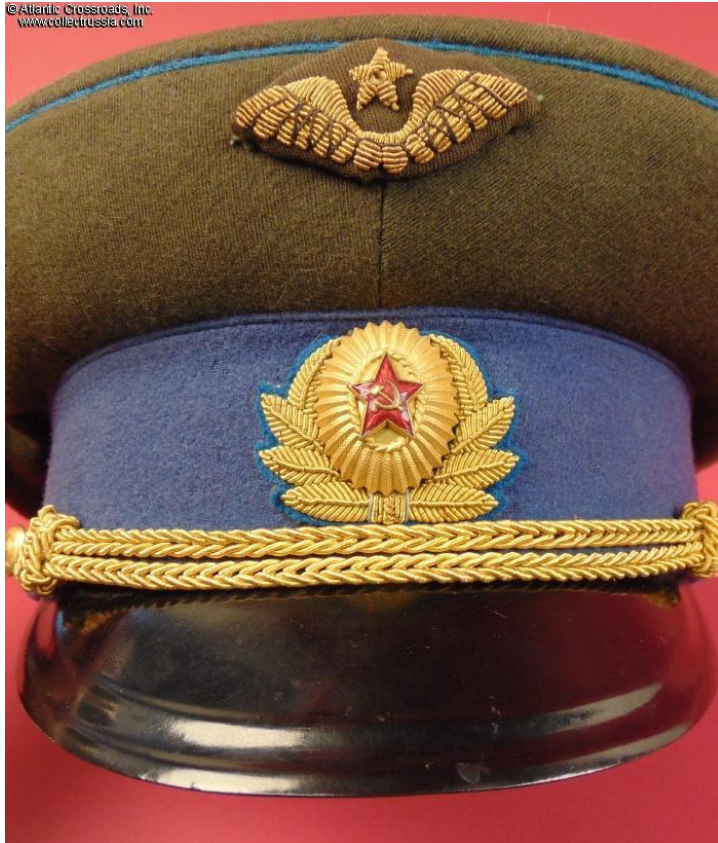
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