

The Polish September Campaign Cross 1939

On 1st September 1939 without an official declaration of war, Germany and allied Slovakia attacked Poland. Soon after, on 17th September 1939, the Soviet Union invaded the eastern borders of Poland. In this way one of the bloodiest conflicts of humanity began. The Poles were the first to begin armed resistance against the Third Reich and communist Russia. Despite the occupation of Polish territory, the Poles did not lay down their arms and continued to fight on many fronts of the Second World War. The Polish Government crossed the Hungarian and Romanian border and went to France, where the Polish Army was recreated, and then to Great Britain. The Government of the Republic of Poland lived in hope along with the entire Polish Armed Forces that they would return to their beloved homeland after winning the war. However, the war ended in a tragic way. On 6th July 1945, less than two months after the end of the war, the Allies in the form of Great Britain and the United States withdrew their recognition of the Polish Government in London, and in return recognized the puppet Provisional Government of National Unity subordinated to the USSR. The London Victory Parade in 1946 is symbolic of the treason of the Allies, where there was no place for the Polish Army representation. With the territorial loss of Wilno and Lwów, Poland after the German occupation came under Soviet occupation behind the Iron Curtain.



The September Campaign Cross - what for?

Many participants of the September Campaign remained in the West, waiting for a free Poland. Meanwhile, the communist Government of the People's Republic of Poland conducted persistent propaganda, slandering the government of the Second Polish Republic and the participants of the Defensive War of 1939. Communist propaganda sought to hide the fact that the USSR was an ally of Nazi Germany in 1939-1941 on the basis of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, defining the armed aggression on Poland on 17th September 1939 on the eastern borders as "the liberation of the territories of Belarus and Ukraine". After a political thawing in 1981, the government of the Polish People's Republic introduced the "Medal for participation in the Defensive War". However, the Medal Act was skillfully drawn up so that awarding the medal strengthened the communist historical narrative.

Act:

84 The Act of July 3, 1981 established the medal "For participation in the 1939 Defensive War"

Expressing the national remembrance of all the soldiers of the Polish Army and civilians who united in the love of their homeland, selflessly and bravely faced German aggression in 1939, initiating the national liberation struggle fought in the anti-Hitler coalition ended with a joint victory against the German invader, the following:

Art. 1 The medal "For participation in the 1939 Defensive War" is established as an expression of appreciation for persons who took an active part in the defensive war waged by Poland with the German invader from September 1 to October 6, 1939.

Art.2.1. The medal "For participating in the Defensive War of 1939" is awarded to:

- 1) soldiers of regular units and units of the Polish Army, Frontier Protection Corps and Border Guard, National Defence formations as well as works and areas of active anti-aircraft defence units;*
- 2) members of irregular volunteer units and other defence units and groups;*
- 3) members of militarized auxiliary formations;*
- 4) members of school organizations, scout teams and other youth defence organizations and groups;*
- 5) employees of public services, public utilities and other workplaces as well as other persons who actively joined the defensive struggle.*

2. The medal is awarded to Polish citizens. It may also be granted to persons who, while participating in the defensive war as Polish citizens, held citizenship of another country at the time of granting them the Medal.

3. The medal may also be awarded to citizens of other countries who have made a significant contribution to the defensive war.

4. The medal may also be awarded posthumously.

Art.3.1 will establish that the medal "For participating in the defensive war of 1939" is awarded by the State Council upon request.

1) the Minister of National Defence - in relation to persons performing active military service and civil employees employed in organizational units reporting to the Minister of National Defence;

2) the Minister of Foreign Affairs - in relation to Polish citizens residing abroad and citizens of other countries;

3) the Minister for War Veterans and local state administration organs of voivodship level - in relation to persons other than those mentioned in items 1.2 and 4.

4) Union of Fighters for Freedom and Democracy (ZBOWiD) - in relation to the members of this Union.

Art. 4.1 The badge of the medal "For participating in the 1939 defensive war" is round with a diameter of 40mm, made of silver plated - oxidized alloy; on the obverse of the medal there is an eagle according to the pattern in force in the Polish Army in 1939 and the inscription "1939"; on the reverse of the medal is the inscription: "For participating in the defensive war - Homeland", separated by crossed swords.

2. The medal is worn on a 40 mm wide ribbon in white and magenta on a grey background.

3. The Medal's template contains an attachment to the Act.

Article 1 of the Act at the beginning provides for the award only for those fighting with the "German invaders". Thus, all units that fought with the Red Army after 17th September 1939 are not eligible for this decoration. Thousands of soldiers from the Frontier Protection Corps, Defenders of Grodno and Lwów and other units at the eastern border were not eligible. The next point is Article 2.2 stating that "*The medal is awarded to Polish citizens*" and that "*it may also be awarded to persons who participated in the defence war as Polish citizens have, at the time of granting them the citizenship of another country.*" The point mainly refers to members of the Polish Armed Forces in the West, veterans of the Defensive War who were deprived of Polish citizenship by the government of the Polish People's Republic, which was common. Although the law provides for the possibility of awarding the medal, in practice most of the soldiers in the West did not receive the medal of the defensive war during the Polish People's Republic. Meanwhile in Communist Poland veterans received their distinction, with the exception of politically suspect (e.g. were not members of the communist party) and those fighting with the Soviet troops in 1939.



Załącznik do Dekretu Prezydenta
Rzeczypospolitej z dnia 1 września 1984
/Dz. U. R.P. Nr.1 poz. 1 z 1985 r./

The September Campaign Cross - Idea

The idea of an award for the Defensive War, which would also reward soldiers fighting the German *and* Soviet invaders, probably began after the establishment of the Medal for the Defensive War, which was unfair to veterans. Specific action was taken in 1984, when the design of the cross was created and the President of the Republic in Exile, Edward Raczyński established the commemorative "Cross of the September Campaign of 1939". The decree of the President of the Republic of Poland in Exile was confirmed by the Government of the Republic of Poland in Exile on January 9, 1985.¹

The Decree:

Art. 1 On the 45th anniversary of the struggle to defend the unity and independence of the Polish Republic during the war campaign with Germany and the Soviet Union in 1939, a commemorative badge is established under the name "Cross of the September Campaign of 1939".

Art. 2 Badge model as in Annex 1 to this decree.

Art. 3 Right to receive the "Cross of the September Campaign 1939" badge. Is given to all persons who took part in hostilities against Germany and the Soviet Union in September and October 1939, both as mobilized soldiers of the Polish Armed Forces and civilians.

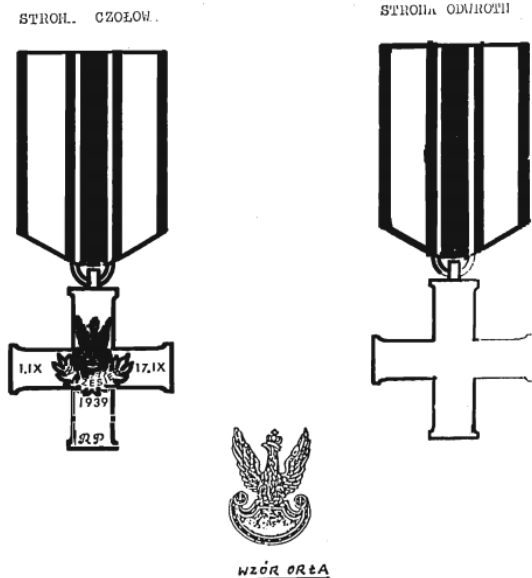
Art. 4 Badge "Cross of the September Campaign 1939" in the order of Polish orders and decorations takes its place after the "Commemorative Medal for the war of 1918-1921".

Art. 5 Badge "Cross of the September Campaign 1939" is awarded by the Minister of Military Affairs.

Art. 6. The implementation of this decree is entrusted to the Minister of Military Affairs

Art.7 The decree enters into force on the day of its publication.

W z ó r
odznaki pamiątkowej
"Krzyż Kampanii Wrześniowej 1939 r."



The September Campaign Cross completed the historical truth of the September campaign, emphasizing the fact that it was awarded for fighting both of the invaders - the Third Reich and the Soviet Union. Thus, giving the heroes of the Defensive War a proper award. The design of the cross highlights the dates 1st September (German Invasion) and 17th September (Soviet Invasion). The awarding of the medal began only in August 1985 and the matter of its production was even more complicated.

Attention should be paid to Art.6 of the Act, which obliged the execution of the decree by the Minister of Military Affairs. At the time the function was held by Bohdan Wroński, Navy Commander, a distinguished officer decorated, among others, with the Virtuti Militari Cross for participating in the Battle of Narvik. However, this function was not held by him for

¹The Decree Of The President Of The Republic Of Poland In Exile, 2020,
http://eprints.hist.pl/374/1/1985-01-09_nr1.pdf.

a long time (less than a year) as on March 1, 1985, the President of the Republic of Poland granted Wroński's request and dismissed the minister from his office and that same year Commander Wronski died. For unknown reasons Wroński did not cope with the task of implementing the decree on the Cross of the September Campaign of 1939.

It was only the new minister Ppłk Jerzy Morawicz, a former member of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade who took office and pushed the case forward, commissioning its supervision to the Head of the Ministry of Interior, Major Władysław Łapiński.

Władysław Łapiński directed a letter on April 27, 1985 to Mr. Jerzy Imielin asking for help in the production of the September Campaign Cross.

"London" Cross from Hamburg

September Campaign Cross = SCC

For many years, collectors have distinguished two main types of this cross: the "London" version with a patterned reverse and later ones made in Poland. The belief that the "London" version was made in Great Britain, is not correct.

Documentation found in the collection of the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (A.XII.89.122C) sheds new light on the production of the September Campaign Cross. The aforementioned Jerzy Imielin was President of the Union of Eastern Borderland Soldiers in Germany and lived in Norderstedt near Hamburg. He was asked to arrange the production of the September Campaign Cross.

Below: Veterans of the Warsaw Uprising, visible on the medal bar the SCC. Source: Photo of Jakub Szymczuk KPRP



Probably it is he who chose the German company Fahnen Fleck in Hamburg (Pinneberg), known for the production of German decorations during the First World War and for the Third Reich. Jerzy Imielin was authorized by the Ministry of Military Affairs of the Government of the Republic of Poland in Exile to place an order.

On June 28, 1985, a cost estimate was issued by Fahnen Fleck. This provides for "Werkzeugkosten" the tooling costs for 750 DM (Deutsche Mark), 5000 full-size crosses for 8.15 DM each, 5000 ribbons for 1.70 DM each.

On July 1, 1985, Jerzy Imielin sent the advance payment invoice to Major Łapiński. In correspondence he informed him that:

"As to the sample of SCC, it will be in lead and I will send it to Mr. Major for evaluation and approval as soon as I receive it from FF."

Shortly afterwards on July 15, 1985, Jerzy Imielin sent a SCC sample to Major Łapiński, saying that he considered the sample a hundred percent successful. The Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum did not retain the response of Major Łapiński, but it can be assumed that it was equally positive due to the fact that by 15 August 1985 the completed order was received in London and awarded.

However, the history of the SCC did not end in one order of 5000 crosses. There are bills for orders of 500 crosses up to July 1986, which were probably the crosses ordered for the needs of the families of those murdered in the Katyn Massacre of 1940. This would seem to be the case because on January 1, 1986, the Minister of Military Affairs, Lieutenant Colonel Jerzy Morawicz, issued all Poles who were victims of the Katyn massacre with the SCC posthumously.

The total number of issued SCC is estimated at about 13,000. Including around 6,000 for victims of the Katyn massacre. The production of SSC by Fahnen Fleck is estimated at less than 8,000 examples.

This is a much smaller number of issues than the communist Medal for participating in the Defense War which was issued in the amount of 276,268 pieces.²

Miniature crosses of the SCC were not made at the same time as the full-size crosses. A letter from November 24, 1985 from Jerzy Imielin to Major Łapiński informed him about the cost of 300 or 500 miniatures of the SCC. The number of miniatures made by Fahnen Fleck is unknown, but they are available on the collectors market.



Miniature of the September Campaign Cross
20.5mm x 18mm, by Fahnen & Fleck, Hamburg,
(1985-86)

² Zbigniew Puchalski, *Dzieje Polskich Znaków Zaszczytnych* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2000) 267.



The September Campaign Cross 1939

Fahnen Fleck, Hamburg Germany.

(1985-86). 44mm x 40mm

Note the high quality image of the wz.39 eagle and
the patterned reverse.





a



b



c

Each one different, everyone the same

The SCC cross made by Fahnen Fleck is of excellent quality. The obverse corresponds to the design given in the Decree of the President of the Republic of Poland, but with a somewhat inexplicable change - the eagle on the obverse, instead of being modelled on the pre-WW2 Polish eagle wz.19, is modeled on the Polish eagle wz.39 from the West. The change was probably made by the probable designer Mr.Siemicki.

Despite extensive documentation regarding this medal in the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum, there are no technical drawings or photographs held in its archives. The Fahnen Fleck company itself no longer has documentation from this period in its records. Therefore the following information is based on observations carried out by the author. A characteristic feature of the Fahnen Fleck crosses is the uneven surface of the reverse decoration with three variants. a) pearl b) corrugated c) shell. In a. and b. the ribbons are glued (which stains the ribbon) and finished with a brass safety pin that allows the cross to be attached to a uniform or jacket. All crosses, irrespective of their reverse finishes, have the same square joining ring, and identical high quality obverse. This suggests that they were all made by Fahnen Fleck with the different finishes perhaps being from various batches that had been ordered.

For those who needed medals in Poland, production was started in Warsaw by Andrzej Panasiuk's workshop and certainly by other less known producers. All these are of poorer quality and with a smooth reverse. They should be treated in a collecting sense as a budget alternative to the official versions.



Polish wz.19 Eagle Cap Badge
Made by H.Skarnik & F.Fiszbein of Warsaw



Polish wz.39 Eagle Cap Badge
Made by J.R Gaunt of London

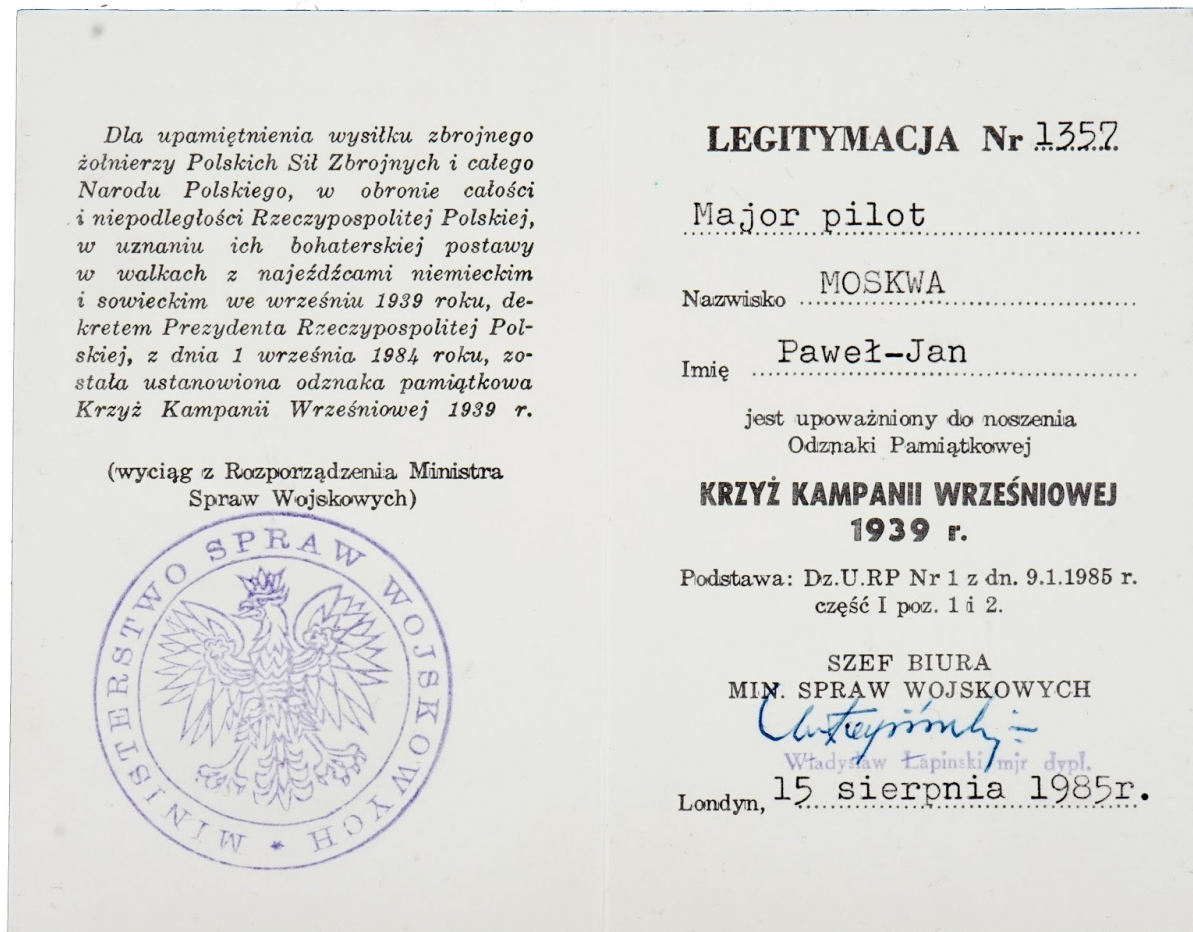


The September Campaign Cross 1939

Production attributed to A.Panasiuk of Warsaw.
(post 1986), 44.5mm x 40mm

Note the loss of quality in the image of the wz.39
eagle and the flat reverse.





Legitimation Card (Legitymacja) for the September Campaign Cross to Major pilot Paweł Jan Moskwa.



"Paweł Jan Moskwa was born on December 5, 1909 in Zurich. He graduated from elementary and high school in Warsaw. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, and then at the Warsaw University of Technology where he studied architecture. In the autumn of 1929, he enrolled at the Air Force Officer Cadets School in

Dęblin. He spent three months recruiting at the heavy machine gun company in Zambrów. In 1932 he graduated from the school as a cadet officer and received the title and observer badge No. 905. He was promoted to the rank of

second lieutenant and entered the reserve of the 1st Air Regiment in Warsaw. Mobilized in August 1939, he took part in the Defensive War of 1939 as part of the Staff Squadron commanded by Capt. pil. Henryk Wirszyło. In September 1939 he made reconnaissance flights and flights with orders. On September 8, 1939, at RWD-14, he delivered the Commander-in-Chief's orders to the command of besieged Warsaw. On September 17, 1939, he crossed the Romanian border. He got to France, and after its fall to Great Britain. After training, he received combat assignment to 300 Bomber Squadron. After completing a full tour of operational flights, he went on a pilot course in Newton. After completing the course, he served as a pilot at a school for navigators. Demobilized as a captain, he remained in exile in Great Britain. Decorated with Silver Cross of Virtuti Militari No. 9696, four times the Cross of Valour, the Gold Cross of Merit, three awards of the Air Force Medal and others"³

³" Blue Squadron - Tombs, Cemeteries, Monuments, Polish Pilots Sites of Remembrance Polskich Lotników.", Niebieskaeskadra.Pl, 2020, <https://niebieskaeskadra.pl/?control=8&id=4328&title=pawel-jan-moskwa>.

Dla upamiętnienia wysiłku zbrojnego żołnierzy Polskich Sił Zbrojnych i całego Narodu Polskiego, w obronie całości i niepodległości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, w uznaniu ich bohaterskiej postawy w walkach z najeźdźcami niemieckimi i sowieckimi we wrześniu 1939 roku, dekretem Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, z dnia 1 września 1984 roku, została ustanowiona odznaka pamiątkowa Krzyż Kampanii Wrześniowej 1939 r.

(wyciąg z Rozporządzenia Ministra Spraw Wojskowych)



LEGITYMACJA Nr. 11446

.....Policjant.....

NazwiskoWójcicki.....

ImięLeonard.....
Nadanie pośmiertne "Katyń"
~~jest upoważniony do noszenia~~

Odznaki Pamiątkowej

**KRZYŻ KAMPANII WRZEŚNIOWEJ
1939**

Podstawa: Dz. U.RP Nr 1 z dn. 9.1. 1985 r.
Część I poz. 1 i 2.

SZEF BIURA
MIN. SPRAW WOJSKOWYCH

Władysław Łapiński
Władysław Łapiński plk. dypl.

Londyn 15 sierpnia 1985

Legitimation Card (Legitymacja) for the September Campaign Cross to constable Leonard Wójcicki (posthumously).



"Constable of Polish Police Leonard Wójcicki, son of Antoni and Maria Kalenniki, born on November 31, 1894 in Warsaw. He was admitted to the police on May 1, 1924. He served on post in Jeżyki, area Kobryński (from 1 May 1924), Iwacewiczach district Kosowski (from July 8, 1926) and Kosów Poleski (from October 29, 1927), from December 5, 1935 in the First Commission in Brest Litovsk and there still in September 1939. Awarded the 10 years of Restoration of Independence Medal and 10 Years Long Service Medal.⁴ Murdered in April 1940 in the Katyń Massacre by the Soviets by a shot in the back of the head. Buried in a mass grave in Miednoje.

⁴"Polish Police Officers From Brześć – Ostaszkowska List | Echa Polesia", Polesie.Org, 2020, <http://polesie.org/172/funkcjonariusze-policji-panstwowej-z-brzescia-nad-bugiem-lis-ta-ostaszkowska/>.

What did it look like in practice?

For many veterans, the SCC was the only distinction for participating in the Defensive War unlike some of their colleagues, who often did not manage to take part in the September Campaign due to their age. Those veterans who were not awarded the "Medal for Participation in the Defensive War 1939" by the Polish People's Republic authorities appreciated having a decoration from the Polish Government in Exile in London.



Second Lieutenant Mieczysław Garścia on his horse "Warta" in August 1939, 2nd Medium Artillery Regiment

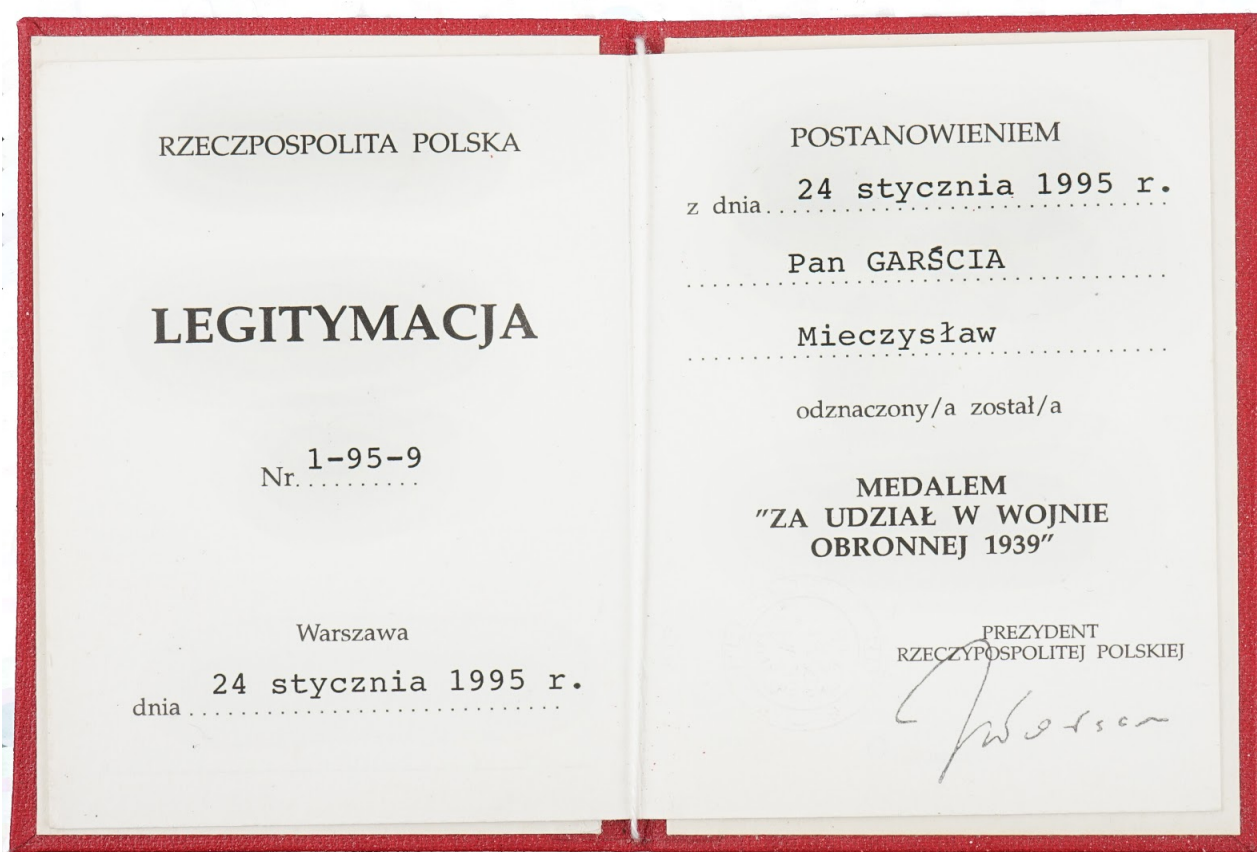
An excellent example of a group including the September Campaign Cross is one to Mieczysław Garścia, a member of the Home Army, Warsaw Uprising insurgent and officer of the 2nd Polish Corps. In 1939, as an artillery lieutenant, he was assigned to the 2nd Medium Artillery Regiment in Chełmno Lubelskie. In August 1939 he became an adjutant in the 13th Medium Artillery Battery (13th Infantry Division), his commander Major K. Siekierzyński was murdered in the Katyn

Massacre. He participated in the Defensive War of 1939, and was captured by the Soviets. He escaped in Łuck in October 1939 and then hid in Lwów. In 1985, on August 15, he was awarded the Cross of the September Campaign 1939 with legitimization card number 4553.



The medal group and related items of Mieczysław Garścia. (Authors Collection)

After the war, he became a dental technician and settled in London. His wife Maria Garścia was deprived of Polish citizenship by the Polish People's Republic, probably along with her husband Mieczysław Garścia. Despite the establishment of the Medal for the Defensive War and the Warsaw Uprising Cross, he did not receive any of them. It was not until 1995, after Poland regained independence and the transfer of the insignia of pre-war power by President Ryszard Kaczorowski, that Mieczysław Garścia was awarded a Medal for the Defensive War, the Warsaw Uprising Cross and the Auschwitz Cross in a special ceremony at the Polish Embassy in London.



Legitimation Card (Legitymacja) for the medal in the "Participation in the Defensive War of 1939" to Mieczysław Garścia. Issued in the Polish Embassy in London on July 28th 1995.

Note that it is addressed "Pan" (meaning Mr.) not Obywatel, (Citizen) as it used to be during the communist period. Also note the eagle with a crudely added crown.



*Dla upamiętnienia wysiłku zbrojnego
żołnierzy Polskich Sił Zbrojnych i całego
Narodu Polskiego, w obronie całości
i niepodległości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej,
w uznaniu ich bohaterskiej postawy
w walkach z najeźdźcami niemieckim
i sowieckim we wrześniu 1939 roku, de-
kretem Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej Pol-
skiej, z dnia 1 września 1984 roku, zo-
stała ustanowiona odznaka pamiątkowa
Krzyż Kampanii Wrześniowej 1939 r.*

(wyciąg z Rozporządzenia Ministra
Spraw Wojskowych)



LEGITYMACJA Nr 4553

Porucznik

Nazwisko **GARSCIA**

Imię **Mieczysław**

jest upoważniony do noszenia
Odznaki Pamiątkowej

**KRZYŻ KAMPANII WRZEŚNIOWEJ
1939 r.**

Podstawa: Dz.U.RP Nr 1 z dn. 9.1.1985 r.
część I poz. 1 i 2.

SZEF BIURA
MIN. SPRAW WOJSKOWYCH

Władysław Łapiński mjr dypl.
Londyn, 15 sierpnia 1985

Legitimation Card (Legitymacja) for the
September Campaign Cross issued to Mieczysław
Garścia.

Ministerstwo Spraw Wojskowych



LEGITYMACJA
nadania Odznaki Pamiątkowej
**KRZYŻ KAMPANII WRZEŚNIOWEJ
1939 r.**

Collector's perspective

The Medal for participation in the Defensive War is one of the most common on the collector's market. Finding an example of the State Mint version is not a challenge in the internet age. However, there are two collector's trends that apply two different values to items. Some evaluate it on the basis of rarity of production. Rarity of legitimation cards is determined by the year of issue and the issuer's signature. Others attach value to the subject as a witness to history and a symbol of homage to the fight to defend Poland.

Can a "Medal for participation in the Defensive War" given to an accidentally mobilized soldier who did not fire a single bullet, be treated as having the same value as the same medal given to one of the defenders of Westerplatte, the Siege of Warsaw Warsaw or a participant in the Battle of Bzura?

The September Campaign Cross, apart from its much smaller minting, is notably more valued by collectors compared to the "Medal for participation in the Defensive War". It is more appreciated by both collector trends due to the small quantity that was produced and the quality of its workmanship. Moreover the awarding of the cross was not censored by the People's Poland communist party rigor.

This year we will be celebrating the 81st anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. Although the decoration discussed in this article is seen at the grey end of the collector's market, it is a symbol of the historical and heroic battle fought by Poland against two invaders. Moreover it provides evidence of political repression by the communist authorities of Poland against those who dared to stand against the Red Plague from the East.

by

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Sarmatia Antiques

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Definitions:

Frontier Protection Corps ----- Korpus Ochrony Pogranicza
Border Guard ----- Straż Graniczna
Air Force Officer Cadets School ----- Szkoła Podchorążych Rezerwy Lotnictwa
Legitimation Card ----- Legitymacja
Medium Artillery Regiment ----- Pułk Artylerii Ciężkiej
Heavy Artillery Regiment ----- Pułk Artylerii Najcięższej

Translation Note:

The word Legitymacja has been called in English in various terms by the intentional collectors. Terms as "document of issue", "authorisation card", "issue document", "certificate" and even "diploma". After much debate and the authors consultation with Tony Leszczuk and Antoni Zawadzki a term Legitimation Card has been chosen. This repeats the Latin prefix "Legit", prominent in the Polish word Legitymacja. From "Latin legitimus. legitimate (v.) "establish the legitimacy of, make lawful," 1590s, from Medieval Latin legitimatus, past participle of legitimare "make lawful".