World of Stamps:
Ukraine's Complicated History

By Geir Sør-Reime

The political history of Ukraine is long and complicated. If we jump to around 880 AD, the city of Kiev was founded by the Rus, Varangians who had first established Starya Ladoga, later Novgorod and then made Kiev their centre. The Rus state became probably the world's most powerful state in the 10th and 11th centuries, until the Mongol invasion in the 13th century completely crushed the flourishing Rus state, and Kiev was totally destroyed in 1240 AD.

A new principality rose from the ashes of the Kiev state already 1253 (the Kingdom of Galicia-Volkynia), whereas the area around Kiev became integrated with the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. In 1441, Muslim states were established in the southern parts of Ukraine and on Crimea. The Crimea Khanate was finally conquered by Russia in 1783.

Most of present-day Ukraine was at that time part of the Kingdom of Poland (as part of the Polish-Lithuanian Union), and with a certain degree of

Left to right: 1954 for 300th anniversary of union between Ukraine (east) and Russia Sc.1700 and Sc.1709; 1979 for 325th anniversary of union Ukraine-Russia (Sc.4730)

autonomy under the Cossack hetmanate, formally established 1648 within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, although there had been regional hetmans since around 1500. In 1648, Ukrainian Cossacks revolted against Poland.

They eventually formed an alliance with Russia, which ended 1686 with the Ukrainian lands being divided between Poland and Russia, with the Dnieper River as the border

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line. Later, the Cossacks sided with Sweden in the Great Nordic War (1700-1721), ending in a catastrophe for the Swedes and their allies at the Battle of Poltava 1709.

A single 2008 stamp (shown below in a full sheet) commemorated the Swedish-Ukrainian military and political alliances of the 17th and 18th centuries.

Political and military links with Sweden during 17th-18th centuries (Sc.743) Gutter shows portraits of Hetman Ivan Vihovsky (ruled 1657-59), Swedish king Charles X Gustaf, Swedish king Charles XII and Hetman Ivan Mazepa (ruled 1687-1708). The latter two were the two losers at the Battle of Poltava 1709.

The Cossack hetmanate of Ukraine was abolished by Russia in 1764. In recent years, Ukraine has issued a number of stamps depicting these hetmans, the first being issued 1995.

Hetmans (rulers) of Ukraine, left to right: 1995 Petro Konashevych-Sahaidachny (ruled 1616-22) (Sc.211); 1995 Ivan Mazepa (ruled 1687-1708) (Sc.215); 2010 Pavlo Polubotok (rulted 1722-24)

Coinciding with the division of Poland, the Ukrainian lands west of the Dnieper were also divided between Austria

and Russia in 1772, 1793 and 1795.

Left, Lviv as part of Austria, on 2006 Austria (Sc.2075); right, Lviv as part of Poland between the world war, Poland 1925 (Sc.235)

When Russia conquered the Crimean Khanate, the area was named New Russia by the Russians, and it was settled by Russians and Ukrainians. Immigration from Germany was also encouraged by the Russian government. Odessa became the centre of this "New Russia".

As the Ukrainian lands were divided between Austria and Russia, during World War I, Ukraine was on both sides of the conflict. With the end of the war, both the Austrian and the Russian empires collapsed, and several attempts of establishing new Ukrainian states were made 1917-20. Initially, these followed the old borders, so there were both Western and Eastern Ukrainian state attempts.

The Ukrainian People's Republic established January 22, 1918 in the former Russian parts of Ukraine issued its first distinctive stamps in July 1918. The same designs were also used as paper money tokens printed on cardboard with an inscription on the reverse. These were not valid for postage.

1918 definitives (Sc.1-5)

Russian pre-revolution stamps continued in use concurrently with the distinctive stamps, but in August 1918, such stamps were locally overprinted with a trident as a revenue protection measure. Such over-

1918 Trident overprint on Russian stamp (Sc.20)

1918 Trident overprint on Russian stamp (Sc.12)

prints were applied by typography, lithography or by handstamps. There exist numerous varieties of these, relating to different cities in Ukraine where the overprints were applied.

A distinctive high-value stamp was issued by the People's Republic in January 1919. This is inscribed Ukrainian State (in Ukrainian).

1919 "Ukrainian State" (Sc.48)

Field-post issues for the army of the Ukrainian People's Republic (August 28 – November 21, 1920), left: Sc. M8; right, Sc. M10 (with inverted surcharge)

Union of (most) of east and western Ukraine under the Ukrainian SSR: 2004 for 85th anniversary of the union of Ukraine and Western Ukraine (Sc.532)

The Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic continued to use pre-revolution stamps (and also trident overprints), but were forced to revalue many of these because of the inflation. Normally, kopek stamps were revalued to rouble stamps with a RUB overprint.

The only distinctive stamps of the Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic were a set of four semi-postal stamps for famine relief issued in June 1923. These were issued without authorization of the central Soviet Union authorities.

The People's Republic government printed a set of pictorial stamps in Vienna in 1920, but these could not be put into circulation. (See page 5)

In the former Austrian part of Ukraine, a West Ukrainian People's Republic was declared, with Lviv as capital. It issued

Above, complete set of 1920 issues prepared by Ukrainian People's Republic, but never issued; right, issue prepared by Ukrainian government-in-exile for planned invasion 1923

Issue prepared by Ukrainian government-in-exile for planned invasion 1923

a number of overprints on Austrian stamps, and the government had also two sets printed in Vienna that could not be put into circulation because of the Polish occupation of West Ukraine from July 16, 1919. (See also, page 6)

Western Ukraine People's Republic (former Austrian Ukraine): Above, 1918 Lvov issue, Sc. 1-3, overprints on Austrian stamps on cover; right, Sc. 3, with inverted overprint

Top to bottom, left to right, 1919 Stanyslaviv issue (2nd issue) (Sc.50);
1919 issue prepared by national government in Vienna, but never issued for postal purposes (1st issue);

Western Ukraine People's Republic (former Austrian Ukraine): 1918 Kolomyia issue (Sc.7);
1919 Stanyslaviv issue (2nd issue) (Sc.29);

1919 Stanyslaviv issue (3rd issue) (Sc. 82);
1919 Stanyslaviv (4th issue) (Sc.95)

A part of West Ukraine was occupied by Romanian forces from early 1919 until August 20, 1919, and they issued Austrian stamps overprinted C.M.T. and new values. C.M.T. stands for "Military Territorial Command" in Rumanian.

C.M.T. (Comandamentui Militar Territorial – Military Government) overprints on Austrian stamps (Sc.N1, N6)

After the war, the Western Ukrainian state was absorbed into Poland, whereas most areas of the east eventually were incorporated into the Soviet Union. The exceptions were Bukovina, which was annexed by Romania, and Carpathian Ruthenia, which became part of Czechoslovakia.

The civil war that eventually led to the

1977 for 60th anniversary of Soviet power in Ukraine (Sc.4625)

establishment of Soviet power in Eastern Ukraine and with it the collectivization of the farms had a devastating effect on the population, resulting in a great famine, with 10 million Ukrainian farmers starving to death.

Ukraine (east) as part of the Soviet Union: Ukrainian SSR 1923 semipostal stamps for famine relief (Sc.B1-B4)

The Ukrainian Socialist Soviet Republic became one of the founding members of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics in December 1922.

After the German-Soviet attacks on Poland in 1939, the two states divided Poland, and the eastern parts (Western Ukraine) was incorporated into the Soviet Union.

1967 for 50th anniversary of October revolution, here flag and scenes from Ukrainian SSR (Sc.3355)

The Soviet Union issued five stamps in April 1940 to celebrate this 'liberation' of western Ukraine and Belarus.

1940 for Soviet 'liberation' or annexation of Western Ukraine and Western Belarus (Sc.767//771)

After the initial co-operation between Germany and the Soviet Union, Germany attacked the Soviet Union June 22, 1941. Eventually, most of Ukraine was organized as the Reichskommissariat Ukraina until the total re-conquest of Ukraine by Soviet troops during 1944.

German occupation WWII: 1941 UKRAINA overprints on German definitives (Sc.N8)

The southern parts of Soviet Ukraine were under military administration for most of the German occupation, whereas some western areas were transferred from Ukraine to the General Government (Poland under German occupation). The Reichskommissariat Ukraina did include however, areas that are now part of Belarus.

German stamps overprinted "UKRAINA" were issued November 14, 1941 for use in the Reichskommissariat. Before that, ordinary German stamps were valid for postage, and in fact, continued to be valid for postage albeit not sold at post-offices after November 14, 1941.

In some areas of Ukraine, provisional stamps issued by local Ukrainian authorities under the authority of the German occupation authorities were made, namely in the Alexanderstadt area (valid January-May 1942), the Sarny area (valid October-December 1941) and in the Wosnessensk area (valid February-June 1942).

After the German take-over of the border areas of Czechoslovakia in 1938, an autonomous parliament for Carpatho-Ukraine was inaugurated 15 March, when a single Czecho-Slovak stamp that was only valid in Carpatho-Ukraine was issued to commemorate this event. The following day, however, Hungary occupied the area, and the stamp was withdrawn. In November 1944, a People's Council of Carpatho-Ukraine had been set up and initially issued

Left: Autonomous Carpatho-Ukraine 1939 Inauguration of Carpatho-Ukraine Diet (parliament) (Sc.254B); center & right, Liberated Carpatho-Ukraine 1944-45 (before being attached to Soviet Union), 1945, Michel 80, 88

Hungarian stamps with an overprint signifying 'Carpatho-Ukrainian Posts'. From May 1945, distinctive stamps were issued until the area was incorporated into the Soviet Union on November 15, 1945.

Romania in 1940 ceded Bukovina to the Soviet Union, This was internationally recognized by the Paris treaties of 1947, along with the incorporation of Carpatho-Ukraine in the Soviet Union.

Romania occupation WWII (Odessa): 1941 semi-postal celebrating conquest of Odessa (Sc.B178)

This led to a re-unification of Ukraine, but during the previous centuries of division, cultural differences had developed between the western and eastern parts of Ukraine, still significant today. Also, around 17% of the population of Ukraine are ethnic Russians.

After the war, the Ukrainian SSR became one of the founding members of the United Nations (as one of two constituent republics of the Soviet Union, the other being the Belarusian SSR).

Although the Ukrainian SSR also became a member of the Universal Postal Union, it did not issue any stamps during the post-war Soviet period.

On July 16, 1990, the Ukrainian parliament adopted a declaration of State Sovereignty of Ukraine, with a priority of Ukrainian laws over Soviet laws. This was commemorated on a Soviet stamp.

Left: 2014 honoring Leonid Kravchuk, first President of Ukraine 1991-94; right, 1991 Ukrainina declaration of sovereignty (Sc.6021)

The August 1991 coup of conservative communities in the Soviet Union, ended up in the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Ukrainian declaration of independence of August 24, 1991.

Ukraine issued its first post-independence stamps March 1, 1992. At around the same time, numerous trident over-

prints and surcharges on Soviet stamps were made in various cities of Ukraine. The German Michel catalog lists those made in Kiev and in Lviv, as these were valid for prepayment of mail throughout Ukraine. These stamps are also listed as ordinary Ukrainian issues by the British Gibbons and the French Yvert & Tellier catalogs.

Independent Ukraine, left to right: 1992 definitives, repeating theme of 1918 stamp (Sc.124); 1992 Declaration of Independence (Sc.138) Ukraine13: 1992 for Ukrainian Diaspora in Austria (Sc.142); 1992 trident overprints – the official Kiev issue (Michel 4, 8, 12)

Numerous other overprints exists, but these were not recognized by the Ukrainian Post, although numerous covers with these stamps exist.

1992 local issues, not authorized, although some are found on genuine letters

The presidential elections of 2004, where Victor Yanukovych was the winner, was felt by large part of the population to be rigged, and a overwhelming support of the oppo-

sition candidate, Viktor Yushchenko, resulting in the peaceful Orange Revolution which brought Yushchenko and Yulia Tymoshenko to power.

Independent Ukraine: 2005, 'Orange Revolution' (first ousting of President Yanukovych) (Sc.573); 2005 Austrian personalized stamp showing Ukrainian President Victor Yushchenko (President 2005-10), leader of the Orange Revolution

However, Yanukovych returned to power as Prime Minister in 2006-2007, and he was elected President in the 2010 elections.

New popular protests started November 2013, when President Yanukovych refused to sign an agreement that his government had negotiated with the European Union and instead signed a similar agreement with Russia. The ensuing Eromaidan protests lasted until February 22, 2014, when the Ukrainian parliament found that the President was unable to fulfill his duties as President and elected an interim President until new presidential elections in May 2014.

The flight of President Yanukovych quickly led to the events on Crimea (described in an article in *Mekeel's & STAMPS).*

Soon after the integration of Crimea and Sevastopol into the Russian Federation, pro-Russian groups started similar actions in the eastern parts of Ukraine, where Russian-speakers are in the majority, occupying public buildings, taking over police stations etc. and demanding referendums to decide whether these eastern regions should also join the Russian Federation.

During Easter 2014, some of these pro-Russians demanded direct Russian military intervention in Eastern Ukraine.

As this was being written, the future of the Ukraine and its relationships with Russia and the European Union were still unresolved.

World of Stamps:
Crimea
By Geir Sør-Reime

(Note: this article was written in April. JFD.)

The "Swallow's Nest", Crimea

The month-long demonstrations against the Ukrainian President Victor Yanukovych and his eventual flight from Kiev, causing the subsequent Russian invasion into, and later annexation of the Crimean peninsula has led the world back to a cold war situation reminiscent of the post-WWII era.

The world is still worried about possible extension of Russian territorial expansion into other areas with a Russian population, like the eastern regions of Ukraine proper, the Transdniestr area of Moldova and the areas of Georgia already under firm Russian control (Abkhazia and South Ossetia).

The Crimean Peninsula (arrow), known also as Tauris, has an area of approximately 10,000 square miles and around 2.6 million people live there, of which around 60% are ethnic Russians, 24% Ukrainians and 10% Crimean Tatars, but 77% of the population declared Russian as their native language.

It came under the influence of the Turkish Empire during the 15th Century. An independent Crimean Tatar Khanate was established in 1441 and became a Turkish tributary state with a high degree of autonomy from 1475 onwards.

From 1774 onwards, Russia started to gain influence on the peninsula, and the whole of Crimea was annexed to Russia in 1783, and a Taurida Oblast was established in 1786, with Simferopol as the capital. Between 1796 and 1802, the area was incorporated into other administrative units, but the Taurida Governorate was re-established in 1802.

Between 1853-56, Crimea was the scene of the Crimean War, a conflict between the Russian Empire on one side, and an alliance of France, Britain, Turkey, Sardinia and Nassau on the other side. This was probably the first time field post-offices used stamps, as Britain used stamps and

British "O-Star-O" cancellation on cover; and "Star-Crown-Star" cancellation on piece

Britain 2004 for 150th anniversary of Crimean War

distinctive cancels on mail originating from its troops on the peninsula. In 2004, Britain issued six stamps in commemoration of the 150th anniversary of the Crimean War (Sc. 2238-43).

Sevastopol was already at that time the home of the Russian Black Sea Fleet. The first siege of this important seaport took place during the Crimean War, between September 1854 and September 1855. This was the final episode in this war, after the allies had used a

Soviet 1989 depicting Admiral Kornilov (Sc. 5850a); and Russia 1905 semi-postal showing Admiral Kornilov Monument in Sevastopol (Sc. B1)

year to traverse 35 miles across Crimea to take the port. The Russian defense of Sevastopol was led by Admiral Kornilov, who was also killed during the siege. A monument honoring him was erected in Sevastopol and this was depicted on one of Russia's first semi-postal stamps, issued 1905.

Florence Nightingale served as a nurse for the British soldiers, and her work there made her a hero in her time, although her most lasting contribution to health was the work she did after the war, establishing the world's first nursing school and contributing to public health and hygiene.

Great Britain 1970 Florence Nightingale (Sc. 613)

Her birthday is now celebrated as the World Nursing Day throughout the world.

The Crimean War forced many of the Crimean Tatars to flee Crimea and resettle elsewhere.

Portrait of General Wrangel

During WWI and following the Russian revolution, Crimea for a time became the centre of White Russian resistance to the Bolshevik forces. In 1920, General Wrangel, commanding a White army on behalf of the Government of South Russia was unable to withstand the Red forces under Nestor Makhno. After this, an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic of Crimea (belonging to the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic) was formed. This existed 1921-1945.

During WWII, German forces conquered the whole peninsula in 1942, but it was retaken by Soviet forces in 1944.

Again, Sevastopol was besieged. The rest of Crimea had been taken by the Axis forces by fall 1941. Attacks on Sevastopol started already in October 1941, but only on July 4, 1942 were the combined German, Romanian and CroatianSev forces able to seize the port.

Above: Soviet Union 1965 for 1941-42 defense of Sevastopol (Sc. 3138); right, Croatia 1943 for battles where Croatian forces participated, including (upper right) the siege of Sevastopol (Sc. B33-36, Souvenir Sheet Sc. B37)

In early 1945 (February 4-11), the Yalta Conference between Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin took place in Yalta on Crimea. It was the second of the three conferences that would mould the post-war world, being preceded by the

Stamps showing Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at Yalta: Top, Russia 1995 for 50th anniversary of end of WWII (Sc. 6250); bottom, Belgium 2000 showing Yalta conference; right, Micronesia 2000 (Sc. 379v-x)

Teheran Conference in 1943 and the Potsdam Conference in July 1945. The partition of Germany and several other important questions were more or less finalized during the Yalta conference.

In 1945, the autonomous republic was abolished and the entire Tatar population was deported due to allegedly supporting the Germans during the war. Crimea became an oblast (county) of the Russian Socialist Federal Soviet Republic. In

Soviet 1975 pre-stamped envelope celebrating 30th anniversary of liberation of Sevastopol

1954, the oblast of Crimea was transferred from the Russian SFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.

During this time, Crimea became a favorite tourist destination for inhabitants of both the Soviet Union and other East Bloc states. At the same time, the population of Rus-

Left, from Soviet 1938 set featuring tourism scenery around the Black Sea, Sc. 667 Crimean shore; and Sc. 677: "Swallows Nest", Castle near Yalta; right, photo of Nikitsky Gardens, another tourist favorite

sians and Ukrainians in Crimea rose considerably.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Crimea became part of independent Ukraine and was upgraded to an Autonomous Republic. Tensions between Ukrainian national authorities and the regional authorities on Crimea have been more or less constant since the independence of Ukraine, and Crimea successfully secured a high degree of autonomy.

Also, tensions between Ukraine and Russia over the naval bases on Crimea were not completely settled when the recent crisis broke out in February 2014.

The status of Sevastopol was disputed by the Russian Federation, and only after a lengthy process was it declared a "city with special status" within Ukraine in a Russian-Ukrainian treaty in 1997.

From February 26 onwards, Russian troops gradually took control over Crimea, and on March 11, the Crimean parliament and the city council of Sevastopol (which had become a separate administrative entity) decided to hold a referendum to confirm their intent to join the Russian Federation. The referendum was held March 16, allegedly giving a 96% yes for joining Russia, and the following day, the Crimean parliament declared independence from Ukraine. Crimea and Sevastopol then was accepted as federal subjects ('states') of the Russian Federation on March 18.

As mentioned, British field-post offices on Crimea during

the Crimean War 1854-57 used British stamps, which were cancelled by specific cancels, one with a crown between two stars in the center, the other with a star between two O letters (page 2).

1919 surcharge on Russian stamp (South Russia Sc. 51)

The first stamps issued on Crimea were made by a short-lived regional government of Crimea in January 1919, before it was ousted by Red forces in April 1919. A force under General Denikin re-took areas of South Russia including the peninsula at the end of June 1919, and a special series of stamps inscribed 'ONE RUSSIA' was issued and was also used on Crimea.

1919 Denikin (So. Russia Sc. 69)

Portrait of General Anton Denikin

2013 Serbian cinderellas inscribed 'Kosovo I Metohija' (the official Serbian title of the former autonomous republic of Kosovo) showing portraits of General Wrangel, issued by the Association for Serbian-Russian Friendship.

Renewed Bolshevik attacks forced Denikin to give up all territories except Crimea, and there, the command was taken over by General Wrangel. Under his authority, further provisional issues were made. With one exception, all these provisional issues were overprints on pre-revolution Russian stamps. In fact, unoverprinted Tsarist stamps continued in use alongside the overprinted ones.

One of the two special stamps issued by the Crimean regional government 1919 was printed on carton paper and served a dual purpose of stamp and currency (page 8).

1919 combined stamp and emergency currency (reverse explains currency usage) (Sc. 52 under South Russia)

1920 surcharge on Russian stamps (So. Russia Sc. 53, 57)

These civil war provisional stamps of Crimea are listed under South Russia by Scott (as Scott #51-52 and 53-59, respectively).

Soviet Union 1940 for 20th anniversary of Battle of Perekop (Sc. 811-16).

General Wrangel evacuated his last stronghold on Crimea, Sevastopol, on November 15, 1920, after the Red Army won the Battle of the Isthmus of Perekop. The remains of his army and many civilians fled to Turkey and were placed in camps in that country, Serbia, Tunis and on the Aegean island of Lemnos. Special overprinted Russian, South Russian and Ukrainian stamps were prepared for use on mail from these camps, inscribed "POST OF THE RUSSIAN ARMY" or "RUSSIAN POST" in Russian and surcharged also. These are listed by Scott as Wrangel issues under Russian Offices in the Turkish Empire (right, Offices Sc. 252).

Stamp issued for the evacuated army of Wrangel for use in internment camps

After this, Russian/Soviet stamps were used on Crimea until the German occupation 1942, when German stamps overprinted "UKRAINA" were put into use. In 1944, the German troops produced a provisional stamp for home-bound parcel, a simple typeset label inscribed "1 PÄCKCHEN RICHTUNG HEIMAT" ("One parcel sent home", see cover page 9).

The use of Soviet stamps was resumed 1944 after the liberation of the peninsula.

During the Soviet period, some Soviet stamps depicted scenery of Crimea, including seven of the stamps of the 1938 tourism

November 1943 field post stamp for German troops on Crimea (Michel 15) (items with this concessionary stamp had to be additionally franked with 20p in stamps, as shown on this cover

propaganda issue of twelve values (Scott 666-677, page 6), and the 1949 set of eight depicting scenery from Crimea and the Caucasus (Scott 1310-17).

A 1940 set of six commemorated the 20th anniversary of the capture by the Red Army of Perekop on Crimea (Scott 811-16, page 8).

A 1954 set of three commemorated the centenary of the Russian defense of Sevastopol

1954: Centenary of Russian defense of Sevastopol during Crimean war (Sc. 1726-28)

during the Crimean war (Scott 1726-28).

A 1971 single commemorated the 250th anniversary of the port of Feodosiya on Crimea (Scott 3824), depicting a watch tower from when the port was under Genoese control.

When Ukraine became independent in August 1991, numerous mainly private overprints on Soviet stamps were produced all over the former Soviet Union, including

Soviet Union 1971 for 250th anniversary of founding of Feodosiya (Sc. 3824)

Private local issues for Crimea, inscribed "Republic of Crimea"

Ukraine. Groups working for autonomy and/or independence for Crimea also produced numerous private overprints on both Soviet and Ukraine stamps, as well as crudely produced labels purporting to be postage stamps.

The official Ukrainian post-office has issued some stamps relating to Crimea and Sevastopol, including two stamps of the series featuring the provinces of

2000 for Crimean Autonomous Republic (Sc. 397)

Ukraine: the 2000 single for the Crimean Autonomous Republic (Sc. 397) and the 2005 single for Sevastopol City (Sc. 578). Regional

2005 for Sevastopol City (Sc. 578)

costumes of Crimea were featured on a 2008 pair of stamps (Sc. 753a-b), and the Crimean Nature Reserve on a 2008 souve-

2008 pair with regional costumes of Crimea (Sc. 753)

nir sheet (Sc. 730). A similar 2013 souvenir sheet (page 11) featured scenery of the

2008 S/S for Crimean National Park (Sc. 730)

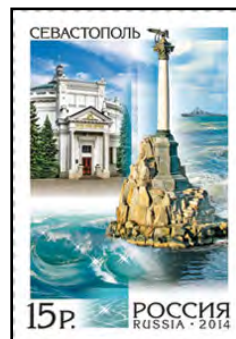*2013 S/S with scenery of Crimean Autonomous Republic*

Crimean Autonomous Republic, as did two single stamps.

According to recent press releases from Ukrposhta (the Ukrainian post-office) has asked other post-offices to stop routing mail for Crimea via Ukraine. So far, there has been no Russian

2013 single stamps with scenery of Crimea

philatelic celebration of Crimea being admitted to the Russian Federation.

On May 20, Russia issued two stamps to mark the accession to the Russian Federation of the Republic of Crimea and of the City of Sevastopol. The Russian annexation of these two entities has been condemned by most other countries, but Russia seems to ignore international protests.