World of Stamps:
Ukraine's Complicated History
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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 Pol-ish-Lith-u a n i a n U n i o n), 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

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.

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.

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

The civil war that eventually led to the

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 semi-postal 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.