

# *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 Yanukovich 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 Transdnestr 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" 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. Her birthday is now celebrated as the World Nursing Day throughout the world.



*Great Britain 1970 Florence Nightingale (Sc. 613)*

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



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

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 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).



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



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

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



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.



*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

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



*2005 for Sevastopol City (Sc. 578)*



*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)*



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

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

Crimean Autonomous Republic, as did two single stamps.

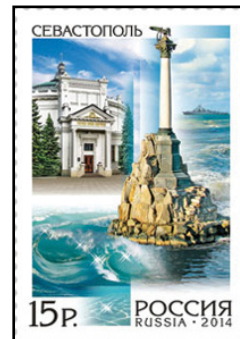
According to recent press releases from Ukrposhta (the Ukrainian post-office) has asked other post-offices to stop routing mail for Crimea via Ukraine. So far, there has been no Russian

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.



*2013 single stamps with scenery of Crimea*



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