

## Primer on Crimea

3-18-14

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*Russia and the Crimea: Locate Crimea on a map. It is a peninsula located on the north shore of the Black Sea. Sevastopol is the name of the seaport in Crimea.*

**Ivan I, 1530-1584** was the first Russian ruler to call himself Czar (tsar). Although he was known as Ivan the Terrible because of his ruthless ways, he succeeded in unifying the Russians in the area around Moscow. To celebrate his defeat of the Tartars who lived in the Crimean region, he built the iconic Russian Orthodox Church, St. Basil's, in what is now Red Square.

(<http://www.guidetorussia.com/ivan-the-terrible.asp>)

### **Cyril and Methodius –**

([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saints\\_Cyril\\_and\\_Methodius#Invention\\_of\\_the\\_Glagolitic\\_and\\_Cyrillic\\_alphabets](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saints_Cyril_and_Methodius#Invention_of_the_Glagolitic_and_Cyrillic_alphabets)) were brothers and monks who brought the Cyrillic alphabet to Russia in order to translate the Christian *Bible* for the Russians, and in the **year 988**, Russian Orthodoxy became the official Russian Church. (<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/513815/Russian-Orthodox-church>) At the time, Russian was a spoken language only. Cyril and Methodius created an alphabet so the Russian language could be written. The Greek brothers started the Russian Orthodox Christian Church and brought written literacy to Russia.

**Peter the Great – 1682-1725** - “Born in Moscow, Russia on June 9, 1672, Peter the Great was a Russian czar in the late 17th century. He is best known for his extensive reforms in an attempt to establish Russia as a modern nation. He created a strong navy, reorganized his army according to Western (European) standards, secularized schools, administered greater control over the reactionary Orthodox Church, and introduced new administrative and territorial divisions of the country.” (<http://www.biography.com/people/peter-the-great-9542228>)

Peter was ‘Great’ in two ways (1) he moved the capital from Moscow to St. Petersburg, building the city on the Neva River Swamp in order to have a seaport access to the modern culture of Western Europe. (2) Peter stood 6’ 7” tall and thus he commanded great respect for both his size as well as his modern thinking. He visited Holland and England to learn about their navies, as both countries were strong naval powers. As a consequence, he built a Russian Orthodox Church with a steeple on top instead of the traditional domed roof typical of Russian Orthodox churches of the times. Peter’s seaport on the Neva River linked Russia to the world during warm weather. Until Peter’s time, Russia was an isolated country and culture.

Peter’s port on the Neva was a step forward, but it was not a warm water port because it was frozen over during the winters.

### **Catherine the Great - 1729-1796**

([http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Catherine\\_the\\_Great.aspx](http://www.encyclopedia.com/topic/Catherine_the_Great.aspx))

Catherine, like Peter before her, expanded the Russian Empire. In 1774 after a war with Turkey, Russia took possession of a port on the Black Sea thereby getting its first port that did not freeze during winter, and now Russia had access to world trade year round. The port was in Crimea thereby providing a warm port connection to the Mediterranean Sea through the Black Sea and its connection to the world's oceans.

In the **1850s**, when **Czar Nicholas I** was in power, Russian and Britain were competitors in world trade. Russia had taken over the Crimea, a peninsula that juts into the Black Sea, and was Russia's only outlet to the Mediterranean Sea and thus to the world's oceans. Britain wanted to control trade/business in the east (India, *etc.*) and Russia wanted to enlarge its influence in the same areas. Britain wanted to attack and control all of Russia's naval bases, the most important of which was in Crimea.

**The Crimean War (1853-1856)** was fought between Russia and Britain/France/Turkey with input from several other countries that supported the British/French alliance. The war was a disaster for the Russians. Two positive outcomes came from the war: (1) the contributions of **Florence Nightingale** to military nursing, and (2) the poetry of **Alfred Lloyd Tennyson's** "The Charge of the Light Brigade," which reports a British tragedy. His poem caused Tennyson to become the first 'war correspondent' for his coverage of the Crimean War. In the end, however, the Russians were defeated in the Crimea and lost their warm water port, Sevastopol.

The Crimea has been torn by war off and on throughout history. It was a stronghold for the Whites, (the supporters of the Czar) during the Russian Revolution in 1917. Later, Crimea was invaded by Germany during WWII.

In **1954** the Crimea was given to Ukraine by Khrushchev who was the leader of the Soviet Union (Russia was known as the Soviet Union between 1917 – 1991). In 1991 the Soviet Union dissolved due to economic problems associated with the implementation of communism. Today's Russia is the largest country on earth.

In 2014, Russia, under the leadership of Putin, has 'retaken' Crimea, claiming it has always been 'Russian' and he is 'protecting' the speakers of the Russian language who live in Crimea. Debate continues in and outside of Ukraine for Russia's taking Crimea.

IN summary, Russia has always wanted/needed Crimea and its warm water port city of Sevastopol. Crimea voted to become a part of Russia on **3/16/14**.

AS of **3/18/14** - The 'taking of Crimea' and its warm water port has increased tension between Russia and the United States and other western nations.

**Use the News:**

Read stories in today's newspaper about Crimea, Ukraine and Russia and responses to Russia taking back Crimea by the U.S. and other western nations. Also, collect maps of the region.

### **What do you learn?**

About Crimea

About Ukraine

About Russia

About U.S. responses and actions taken by other western nations

Search newspaper archives, using Crimea and/or Ukraine as key words. E-editions archive stories and "advanced search" makes all stories available to readers with accounts.

What stories did you find in the newspaper's archive? List by dates and key events. Use the stories to create a timeline and/or a cause/effect chain.

**Follow-Up:** Collect editorials, letters to the editor, columns and political cartoons that comment on what's happening in Crimea and actions taken about the Russian take-over. Choose opposing viewpoints and reasons given to support each viewpoint.