The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Ukraine Releases Coins Celebrating Victory Over Russians

By The Moscow Times

October 14, 2014



The coin is being released at a time of intensely antagonistic relations between Moscow and Kiev, with Russia accused in Ukraine and abroad of fomenting an insurgency in the country's east.

In a move bound to irritate its former Soviet big brother to the east, the National Bank of Ukraine has released a coin celebrating a historic victory over Russian forces 500 years ago.

The Battle of Orsha in 1514, in which a Lithuanian-Polish alliance halted the offensive of the grand prince of Moscow, Vasily III Ivanovich, was an event of "great international importance," the bank said in a statement this week.

The army included Polish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian and Belarussian troops, represented in an image of four intercrossed swords on one side of the coin. The other side is decorated with a stylized image of the battle.

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Thirty-thousand copies of the coin, which is worth five hryvnas ($0.40), will be released into circulation.

Launching commemorative coins with a current-event punch appears to be catching on in the region: Russia last week released two coins celebrating its annexation of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine earlier this year.

While wildly popular within Russia, the annexation infuriated Ukraine, which still considers the territory “temporarily occupied.” The move also set Russia on a collision course with the West that has culminated in a spate of economic sanctions and trade barriers.

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