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ZENA HARRIS AND NONNA RYAN

The Inconsistencies of History: Vikings And Rurik

Some years ago, Zena Harris had stumbled upon an incredible discovery, which suggested that the history of Rus and the Slav people, as it has been known and handed down for centuries, was in fact radically different. The generally accepted concept is of Slavs being little more than animals wearing furs and living in forests until the Vikings civilized them and the Greeks completed that civilization when they brought them Christianity. The discovery of the *Book of Veles*, a ninth century Slav chronicle written by shamans in Slavic Runes, combined with the fourth century *Hymn of Boyan*, show this to be far from the truth. In reality, the Slavs were widely spread around the known world, were literate from at least 1800 BC, had a written history, sophisticated laws, a democratic system of government and an well-organized religion.

During a visit to her father's brother in New York, Zena came across the Book of Veles in a Russian magazine – *Zhar Ptitsa (Firebird)*. To eke out a living in his new country, her uncle found his niche in a budding Russian newspaper where he remained until late into his eighties. The pay was small, but the intellectual stimulation was enormous.

He was a most interesting man – not only was he very artistic and articulate, but he was also a Great Russian patriot and monarchist, a decorated Cavalier of St George and a scion of the noble Dolgorukov line. He was soon contributing numerous articles and illustrations not only to his newspaper, but also to other publications as the Russian colony swelled and the demand for Russian language literary works grew.

During that time *Zhar Ptitsa* magazine published the first extracts from the Book of Veles and browsing through some back copies of the magazine at

her uncle's house, Zena read about the discovery of some runic tablets, incised on wood with some unusual runic script. Her uncle's contacts enabled her to obtain some copies of the runes and material pertaining to the manuscript. This material was subsequently supplemented by Professor Lesnoy, one of the first people to have worked on the Book of Veles and who very generously shared his material with anyone who was interested. There were not many people then that did not consider the Book of Veles to be a hoax.

Professor Lesnoy was an associate of Zena's close friend, the Russian Orthodox Archpriest Aleksis Godyaev in New Zealand. Father Alexis was a great intellectual and one of the world's most eminent authorities on the Scythians. He encouraged her interest in the Book of Veles and obtained for her a lot of material from Professor Lesnoy.

Over the years Zena has taught herself to read the runes and due to her knowledge of Russian, Church Slavonic and Polish languages she was able to decipher and translate the original texts. Recent publications in Ukraine, Serbia and those of A. Asov in Russia have allowed her to compare, correct and edit her own translations in readiness for an English-language publication, which she is readying.

The Book of Veles tablets were found quite by chance during the Russian Civil War, by a White army Colonel, Ali Izenbek who was in charge of the Makarov artillery division near Kharkov. Close to the railway station of Great Burluk, was the estate of Prince Donskoy-Zakharzevsky, which had been pillaged by the Red army prior to being re-taken by the Whites. The wife of the owner, Princess Catherine Donskoy-Zakharzevsky (nee Nekludova 1834-1919) had amassed a magnificent library, the basis of which had been her grandfather's collection during the reign of Catherine the Great.

The Red army soldiers hacked both the prince and princess to pieces, pillaging their home. Sakharov's troops then occupied the area, followed by Dinikin's armies and Makarov's division, headed by Colonel Izenbek was billeted in the ruined estate. Walking through the pillaged rooms, Izenbek felt something crunching under his feet. He lifted a badly damaged wooden tablet, with strange writing. Looking around the debris, he saw several more of these. An amateur historian, Izenbek suspected that these might be of great antiquity

and value. He collected all he could find and hid them in a canvas sack, which he carried all through the White army's retreat.

Izenbek eventually came to Brussels where in 1924 he opened a workshop in art and fabric design. Shortly after, he met a fellow Russian émigré, a historian U.P.Mirolubov (1892–1970) and allowed him to examine the contents of his canvas sack. The fate of the Book of Veles is now known only due to the efforts of Y.P.Mirolubov, who laboriously copied the text from the wooden tablets over a period of 15 years. The writing was carved on both sides of the boards and he restored and glued together the ancient crumbling tablets. Sadly, being a poor émigré supported by his wife who worked as a nurse, he had no money to make photographs of all the tablets. He was able to photograph only three of the tablets.

On the 13th of August 1941, after Germany declared war on the Soviet Union, Izenbek had a fatal stroke. According to Mirolubov, when the Nazis occupied Belgium, the Gestapo confiscated the tablets with some 600 of Izenbek's paintings and designs from his studio. Mirolubov in his letters made a reference to a German émigré from Russia by the name of Scheffel, who was an assistant to professor Ekke in the Byzantium department of Brussels University and who showed a great interest in the tablets, offering his assistance in translating the texts. Izenbek was very possessive of them and would not allow anyone except Mirolubov near them.

Scheffel joined the fascist organization 'Einsatzstab', which was part of 'Himmler's Ahnenerbe' (Ancestral Heritage). This organization was involved in research of the mystical and occult in the Nazi spirit. They organized expeditions to Tibet and collected ethnic and cultural relics and antiquities in occupied territories. It is highly probable that Scheffel, knowing the historical value of the tablets, was the instigator of their confiscation. If that is so, then there is hope that they were preserved in the archives of that organization and may come to light one day.

In 1948, seven years after the disappearance of the tablets, Mirolubov wrote to the Russian Museum in San Francisco, advising them of their loss. There was no reaction until 1953 when an article appeared in the magazine 'Fire-Bird' published by the White Émigré Society in San Francisco. It advised that "...Some ancient fifth century wooden tablets, with priceless

historical writings about ancient Rus, have been found In Europe with the help of U.P.Mirolubov ...”

In 1953, Mirolubov immigrated to USA and settled in San Francisco where he began sorting his archives, which consisted of two tons of paper. He proceeded to type his manuscripts, to photocopy the typewritten pages and to send these copies to the secretary of the Russian Museum in San Francisco, an erstwhile White Russian general A. Kurenkov (Kur as he became known). He also sent them to a Russian Orthodox priest, Father S. Lashevsky in Baltimore. They both visited Mirolubov to compare the copies with the original and to correct some errors.

Between 1953 and 1959 there have been a number of articles about the Book of Veles published by Kur in the 'Fire-Bird' magazine, as well as fragments of transliterated texts, one photograph of the actual tablets and some attempted translations.

Following the harrowing times of the twentieth century, the thoughts of many contemporary Russians turn to ancient times. History is remembered through legends, sagas, songs, dances, fairytales, proverbs and customs. As a nineteenth century Russian historian I. Zabelin so aptly put it, "History is not an exact science like mathematics. It is movable and alterable, like life itself."¹

That 'the Vikings had established Russian culture' is still believed by many people, including even some Russians. It seems that a large nation, spread over an immense area, had suddenly appeared from nowhere in the tenth century and was then 'civilized' by Vikings. Although some lonely voices have been raised against this illogical conclusion since Lomonosov's time, it is only in the last few decades of the twentieth century that historians and archeologists have seriously begun to question the authenticity of the 'Norsemen' theory².

A small example of a distorted history book used in many schools in Australia is by Jonathan Wooding: *The Vikings*, published in Australia by Lansdowne in 1997. The book is well illustrated, but the content illustrates the misconceptions still taught to children. On page 18 the author states such incorrect facts as "Russia was mostly colonized by Swedish Vikings, although Norwegian king Harald Hardrada was active there in the eleventh century." The facts were

that Harald took refuge at the court of Yaroslav the Wise to escape the power struggles in Norway. He asked for Yelizaveta Yaroslavna's hand in marriage, but was refused until he made his fortune in Byzantium and elsewhere, legally and illegally and obtained the crown of Norway. He was not 'king' at the time, nor was he active in any way except to write fourteen love stanzas to Yelizaveta.

Wooding writes further nonsense on p 21:

In Russia the Vikings have been depicted as the founders of the modern state – Rus or Rhos was indeed originally a term for 'Scandinavia' in Russia... The Vikings founded and controlled trading towns such as Novgorod and Kiev....As the Varangians proceeded southwards along the rivers Western Dvina and Dnieper, they passed through the heartland of the Russian Slavs and gradually brought it under their domination. Typically, a Varangian prince would establish himself and his retinue of warriors in one of the major Slavic towns and take tribute from the surrounding territory, extracting portion of **the goods that the Slavs had been exporting to the south...** “ [our emphasis]

If the Vikings opened up the trade routes to the south, why did Slav merchants pay them tribute for trade that had obviously already existed before the Vikings? It is a fact that Russian trade was flourishing long before the Vikings came to trade. There were very large and well organized towns in Russia long before 862 such as – Kiev, Chernigov, Smolensk, Lubech, Novgorod, Pskov, Polotzk, Vitebsk and Rostov, to name but a few of the major ones.

The creation of an appropriate history has always been part of the arsenal of political manipulation. Ideally, the motivation is to explain historical evidence and come to an accurate understanding of how the present has been formed by the past. All too often, however, it is simply to glorify and justify the status quo. Such histories conceal as much as they reveal and they are not simply related, but are created. That Slav history has become distorted over the last millenium is hardly surprising in the light of who was writing it and in what circumstances it was written. The first historians were Christian monks who endeavored to obliterate all signs of Paganism when recording events in the chronicles. Successive rulers had employed scribes to add or subtract from the manuscripts, as circumstances altered and sometimes for their personal glorification.

Further obliteration and alteration occurred due to Peter the Great's obsessive desire for modernization, which resulted in 'en masse' importation of foreigners, mainly Germans, to head all businesses, government departments and cultural and academic institutions. This situation continued for over three hundred years of the Romanov rule, during which times the influx of royal German brides and grooms, made all things German greatly admired. In fact, the last Emperor, Nicholas II, had only an infinitesimal amount of Russian blood.

The misconceptions of Russian history and, in some cases, falsifications of historical facts by foreign academics, were partly due to language difficulties and partly to a natural and understandable desire to glorify one's own origins and culture. These historical falsifications were subsequently repeated from one generation to the next until finally they became fact and myth became history.

The archeologist Gordon Childe very appropriately stated, "It's just no good demanding that history shall be unbiased",³ Engels said – "Men make their own history," and Hitler pronounced that "There is no such thing as truth. History is a social phenomenon and like every other social phenomenon is limited by the benefit or injury it confers on the community." It is very important to consider any new evidence and offer it as an alternative to the 'Norseman theory' that propagated the hypothesis of a Germanic tribe from Scandinavia called *Ruotsi* – from which name was established Rus and its culture.

The Norsemen theory of Germanic and Scandinavian settlements on the Rivers Volga, Dnieper and Kama and their dominance of Russia may now be challenged in the light of strong archeological evidence⁴. It only persists due to insufficient new books published in languages other than Russian regarding any new discoveries. Therefore, large numbers of people remain unaware of the true history and culture of ancient Slavs.

It is about three hundred years since the Norseman theory was born and its author was a German,⁵ August-Ludwig Schlötzer (1735–1809), who came to Russia in 1761 to study Russian History. According to most historian

sources, Schlötzer had a little knowledge of the Russian language and none at all of Church Slavonic, but he came to his conclusions after allegedly studying some Russian chronicles written in Church Slavonic. His theory was adopted by following generations of historians and became so entrenched that until the last few decades of the twentieth century, nobody has bothered to deny it. Yet now, each year, more and more historians, archeologists and academics are beginning to speak against such a grossly misinterpreted history of the Slavs.

The incorrect interpretations of the Primary Chronicle for the years 859 and 862 gave rise to the Norseman theory that “the Varangian-Rus came from a Germanic tribe in Scandinavia.”⁶ The Danish language expert Thomsen ⁷ was rather highhanded when he stated, “Those who read Nestor without preconceived ideas, will have no doubts that the term 'Varangians' denotes Scandinavian inhabitants and that 'Rus' is the name of a separate tribe there.”

The cornerstone of Russian history is the Primary Chronicle compiled by the monk Nestor in circa 1114 AD and evidently based on some older documents that have been lost to us. Regarding the invitation to the Varangians he writes:

The Varangians came from beyond the sea and imposed tribute on the Slovens (Slavs) of Novgorod. They said to the Novgorodians and to the people of Meshchera⁸ and to the Krivichy, that every man should pay tribute of one hare skin and one squirrel fur...' and '...In the year 6367/859 the Slovens, who were called Novgorodians, the Meryans and the Krivichy rebelled against the Varangians and drove them beyond the sea, refusing to pay them any tribute. They began to rule themselves and to build a fortress but there was no justice among them. One clan fought another, and they warred and captured, and there was endless bloodshed. Thereafter they assembled and decided: “let us find a prince who would justly rule and judge us. Let us look for such a one and establish him either from among us or from the Khazars or from the Polyans or from the people of the Danube or from Varangians.” And there was a great discussion about it. Some wanted one; others wanted another. And so, after taking counsel, they sent to the Varangians, to Rus. Those Varangians were called Rus, just as others were called Swei (Swedes), others Urmans (Norwegians), Anglyans (Angles), Goths

(Gotlanders)– so with these... And from those Varangians our land began to be called Russian. Novgorodians are people of Varangian roots who were previously Slovyeny...⁹

Some of those western Slavs had established and settled Novgorod in replacement of their lost Stargorod on the Varangian (Baltic) Sea and were therefore often called Varangians. Viking was a profession and not an ethnic group or a nationality. Although Scandinavians were predominant among the Vikings, there were also large numbers of Danes, Engels, Slavs and others among them. Therefore, to establish which Varangians the delegation went to, the chronicler had added the words 'to Rus'. There is no evidence of any tribe called 'Rus' with German, Scandinavian or any other roots apart from Slav.

There was a Slav tribe 'Rugi' in the Northwest, on the Island of Rugin, or Rügen as it is now called, that was known as early as 98 AD. Rugi and Rusiny were one and the same as can be found in the writings of Adam von Bremen,¹⁰ Thietmar of Merensburg,¹¹ Saxo Grammaticus¹² X.Marmier¹³ and other western chroniclers, who also refer to Princess Olga as Regina Rugorum rather than Rusorum.

Marmier, during his visit to Mecklenburg, noted among the folklore, which he was collecting, a legend about a local prince of Slav/Obodrity Godlav and an invitation of his three sons to Rus. Thus, even an independent source in 1840, has discovered the story still alive among the now German population. It is obvious that Nestor stated that Rus were not Swedish, Norwegian, Angles or Goths – in other words not Scandinavian. There is no reason for Nestor to have denied the Slav origin of Rurik as he even called the Novgorodians – Varangians due to their proximity to the Varangian Sea and immediately stated that they were Slavs.

It is evident from the chronicles that the Novgorodians and elders of other tribes discussed the matter of a new leader at great length, but could not agree on any unbiased person amongst them. The only way that they all could be satisfied was to obtain a neutral person who would be impartial. If it were only a matter of a prince of high authority and prestige, then it would have been simpler to apply to Rome or Byzantium. The question did not even arise because they did not need a foreigner who would have been unfamiliar with

local conditions, but needed a Slav who understood their beliefs, language, laws and customs and “who would justly rule and judge us”.

Further errors have occurred probably during the translation and subsequent copies of the available chronicles. The classic line, which reads “Our land is vast and fertile, but there is no order...” The chronicles use *nariada v nei niet*. This has been translated as “there is no order,” meaning disharmony and chaos, but in fact it can just as likely mean “there is no government, command.” To this day there is an expression in the Russian language *nariad na drova* or *nariad na kvartiru*, meaning an order for the issue of (firewood or an apartment). The word *order* has a different meaning – that of command and not that of chaos. Thus the sentence in translation could actually read, “Our land is vast and fertile, but we have no ruler.”

Although the primary function of a prince was to defend the territory over which he ruled, his other important function was to be a judge. At that point in time the Slavs needed a smart and clever governor and a just adjudicator who knew the local laws. These attributes could only be found in one of their own – a Slav. There were four candidates for this position:¹⁴

1. 'From Polyany' in other words from Kiev. Obviously Kievan Rus was already known and worthy of consideration.
2. 'From Danube', which had very large Slav settlements;
3. 'From Khazars' where large pockets of Slav population played an important role along the Don and lower Volga rivers. There was no question of them inviting a Khazar, as they would have been foolish to seek a worse yoke than that of the recently deposed Vikings. The trade contacts between Novgorod and Khazaria were long established and therefore they would have been aware of the harsh rule of that tribe. They were looking for a ruler, not a despot and no doubt some suitable Slav candidate from that region must have been available.
4. From the Western regions of the Baltic coast there were sizeable Slav settlements at that time. To Novgorodians this was the most familiar territory.

Finally, if the first three candidates were Slav, why would the fourth one be otherwise? All evidence points to Rurik being a Slav and therefore suitable. He was also the grandson of their last ruler, the popular Gostomysl. Thus he was twice as suitable as anyone else.

According to the Book of Veles, there was probably another reason why the Novgorodians' choice fell on Rurik. He had two brothers, all legitimate heirs to Gostomysl. This was a lucky break as they obtained three rulers for the three major provinces from one family, without having to search for anyone else. After the death of Sineus and Truvor, Rurik "took all the power for himself". From this we can deduce that all three brothers had equal rights to govern, although Rurik, as the oldest, had the choicest area.

The Yakimov Chronicle has been lost to us, but fortunately it was still available to Tatishchev¹⁵ who used it as a basis for his history book and thus it is still available for study today. There are also the Novgorod chronicles in existence, which have more or less the same content. Neither contained anything legendary or improbable but confirmed the events surrounding Gostomysl and his existence as the ninth generation of Slav rulers. The Novgorod Chronicles have never been fully published, probably due to the fact that in some ways they contradict the Primary Chronicles. Nestor became the 'bible' of all historians and until the sixteenth century the ensuing chroniclers continued to quote them.

It must be kept in mind that Nestor was writing in Kiev and therefore, quite understandably, had ignored the Novgorod chronicles. He did not consider Rurik to be a Rus because Rus was Kiev. Novgorod people were Slovenye – Slavs and not Rus. Ethnically they were one people, but politically – two.

During the sixteenth century Grand Prince Basil III who, motivated by political goals, ordered Metropolitan Spiridon to compile a new genealogy of the Moscow princes. Rurik was created a direct descendant of a mythical Prince Pruss,¹⁶ supposedly a brother of Emperor Augustus. Ivan the Terrible, also desiring a royal status and a crown, continued to strengthen this myth. Because Prussia by then was German territory, he underlined his 'German'

descent at every opportunity. The young monks, who were writing the chronicles at the time of Ivan IV, would never have gone against the Tzar's version, particularly when such an eminent scholar as Metropolitan Spiridon had confirmed it. Therefore the Nikon chronicles, written at that period, repeated almost word for word Nestor's Primary Chronicle, but for the first time with some additions and alterations:

And there came from Germans three brothers with all their clans, Rurik, Sineus and Truvor. And Rurik became the ruler of Novgorod, and Sineus the ruler of Byeloozyero and Truvor of Izborsk. From those Varangian founders the land was called Rus, because those Varangians were called Rus.

The words 'Germans' and 'founders' had been added and had not appeared in the original Primary Chronicle. This altered version was propagated in subsequent writings and two hundred years later was the basis of the 'Norseman' theory.

All the three major academics in St Petersburg at that time were Germans – Beier, Miller and Schlötzer, who propagated the theory that Rurik belonged to a Germanic tribe of Scandinavia and that Rus as a country and Slav culture were created by Germans. All the evidence shows that Beier and Miller spoke no Russian, Polish or any other Slav language and Schlötzer had a little Russian but no Church Slavonic, in which the chronicles were written.¹⁷ Nevertheless he was so confident of the superiority and greatness of the German race, that he published a book entitled *Nestor – Russische Annalen in ihrer Slawonischen Grundsprache*. The following passage from that work clearly illustrates his attitude towards the Slavs:

Of course there were people there, God knows for how long and from where they came, but they were people without any leadership, living like wild beasts and birds in their vast forests. They were unremarkable in any way and had no contact with the peoples of the South. No enlightened European had noticed them or had written about them. There was not a single real town in the whole of the North. It is just an old wife's tale that before Rurik there had been rulers and princes in

Novgorod. Wild, boorish and isolated Slavs began to be socially acceptable only thanks to the Germans, whose mission, decreed by fate, was to sow the first seeds of civilization among them.¹⁸

The 'enlightened European' Schlötzer, states that Russia's North had not a single real town, ignoring the fact that the Norsemen themselves called Novgorod Rus – 'Gardariki', which meant the 'Land of Towns'. He also makes no mention of the nature of these 'civilizing Germans' who at that time practiced human sacrifices, murdered unwanted children and traded in slaves. The ancient Slavs "who lived like wild beasts", according to Schlötzer, had a thriving trade inside and outside their borders and did not believe in capital punishment or slavery.¹⁹ During their raids they were so vicious, that in western European churches special prayers were said: "*A furore normannorum libera nos, Domine*" which translated from Latin means "Deliver us God from the ferocity of the Norsemen."²⁰ Schlötzer also ignored the numerous Arab and Byzantine writings describing a well-advanced and ordered Slav culture and worship as early as the eighth century.²¹

In 1854 the eminent Russian historian – E.I. Klassin, published his work *History of Rus before the Birth of Christ*, in which on page 33 he writes:

The 'so called' historians, men with no conscience, were Beier, Miller, Schlötzer, Gebrandi, Parrot, Galling and Georgy, all foreigners, who have falsified the Slav-Rus history. They have taken away the glory, might, wealth, trade and even the name of Rus, which had been familiar to all Asian tribes and Israelites as Slavic, from times immemorial...Slavic Rus, as a nation, was literate before the Greeks and Romans. They left evidence of their literacy, art and culture in all the corners of the ancient world and an indisputable fact of their widespread travel. These monuments describe the deeds of Slav ancestors using a prototype of all Slav languages.²²

No doubt, Klassin referred to Slav Runes found on monuments and inscriptions and in works such as the fourth century AD *Hymn of Boyan* and the ninth century *Book of Veles* inscribed on forty-six wooden tablets by Novgorod Shamans.²³

In 1929 A.M. Volkonsky wrote, "Historians have all stumbled when confronted with these monuments in Nubia, Cathay and Egypt, when they have used Greek, Latin and even Hebrew Alphabets. The key lies in the ancient Slav language."²⁴ Even the Phaistos Disk, found in Crete and believed to be at least 3,500 years old, unreadable until recently when Slav language was used.²⁵

It is essential to keep in mind the lifestyle of peoples at that time. The concept of a single state did not exist and people lived in tribal family clans. The land was so vast, that there was no necessity to have strong ties to it. Migrations were frequent with no strong roots formed. Fires frequently destroyed the wooden settlements, which also created a different approach to the land. The necessity for a unified country grew slowly. Just as there was no concept of a single state, so there was no concept of a race. Different tribes called themselves by different names – Krivichy, Slovyenye, Dregovichy, Polanye, Severanye, Buzhanye, Rusyanye and so on.

The first understanding of their nation was the name 'Rus', yet throughout the Book of Veles, the name Rus appears describing the peoples as a whole and mentions the different tribes within Rus. This is strong evidence that the chronicler also used this term to show that the invited rulers were not Germanic Vikings but Slav Vikings. He wrote "...to Varangians, to Rus" (which can also mean 'in Rus'). It is entirely possible that the subsequent editors of the chronicles, who followed years later and were from the South, coming across the novel expression 'to Rus', decided that it was a name of an individual clan and made their explanations accordingly. Just a few simple facts clearly illustrate that neither Scandinavians nor Germans had colonized Eastern Slavonic lands because –

- The people of Novgorod having chased out the thieving Scandinavian Norsemen then invited Slav Norsemen. They instantly assimilated into the Slav society because they were Slavs and one language united them. The Varangians (Baltic Slavs) must have spoken a similar language to be able to understand each other. There is no mention of any interpreters when the delegation went to invite Rurik to Russia. He and his brothers were able to issue orders and instantly take part in the life of and the governing of the country.

- Unlike Britain and other areas that had been overrun by Norsemen, there are only five words in the Russian language that could possibly be of Scandinavian origin and absolutely no Scandinavian place names, even along the Dnieper trade route.
- The Book of Veles and the Hymn of Boyan were written in Slav runes and not in Scandinavian Futhark or German runes.
- Russia continued to be governed by its own Slav laws, the Veche and not by Germanic or Scandinavian laws and institutions.

During the time of the Varangians' invitation to rule, the northern part of Russia consisted of tribal family clans. The frequent Viking raids and pillaging, as well as the heavy tributes that they demanded speeded up the necessity of an internal army and a single ruler to administer it. It did not create the state of Russia, but was a reason for its emergence.

Writing a distorted Russian History helped to confirm the primacy of the German race and therefore Rurik became a German and the Germanic tribes that emigrated with him from Scandinavia, were called Rus. Even a cursory examination of the circumstances shows quite clearly that Rurik and his two brothers could not possibly have emigrated with their entire tribes. The logistics of such an enormous migration would have been all but impossible and if it had happened, it would have been such a major event, that every chronicle in every country would have made mention of it. There is none. What is more likely to have happened is that the three brothers came with their families and their personal army the Druzhyna as the Primary Chronicles indicate, '...and they took with them a druzhyna large and wondrous.'

As far as a Scandinavian or Germanic tribe called Rus is concerned, there is absolutely no trace of it in any chronicle of the world. Some historians saw a possibility in the name of an area in Sweden called Roslagen, failing to note that it had not come into existence until the sixteenth century. There has never been a Germanic tribe called Rus in Sweden, or anywhere else for that matter. There is however a long list of Arab and central Asian authors, nine of which lived and wrote before and during the times of Rurik. They all mention that Rus were a Slav people, who occupied the territories between the Rivers Volga and Dnieper, from at least the fifth century AD.

It is a well-known fact that the Arabs were more cultured than any other European nation of that time. They wrote about the Slavs in some detail, describing their character, customs, dwellings, clothes, weapons, religious beliefs and worship, musical instruments and even literacy.²⁶ Many of these authors mention the fact that the land of Rus was rich and had many well-constructed towns – the ancient name for Rus was ‘Gardariki’: ‘the land of many towns’. From much evidence it can be concluded that –

- That Rurik and his brothers were Slavs
- That they came to Rus with their families and their *druzhy*
- That the Scandinavian content of the *druzhy* was so insignificant that they left no trace such as names, artifacts, place names, customs, writing or language

The three hundred years of mass movements of the Scandinavian peoples between the years AD 750 and 1050 began as plunder-raids and ended as conquest and settlement. They colonized the British Isles, Northern France (which became Normandy), the Faroes, Iceland, Greenland and the coast of Labrador.²⁷

Collectively, these peoples are referred to as the Vikings, a name which is thought to come either from the Norse *vik*– meaning a bay, or ‘one who frequents inlets of the sea’, or from Old English *wic*, *wicca* – a camp. The formation of temporary encampments was a prominent feature of Viking raids. The Slav word for Viking is *Varyag*. Its root in the ancient Slav language was the verb *varyati*, which had a specific functional meaning ‘to walk in front’ or ‘to precede’. Varyagi or the Anglicized *Varangians* were special advance units of warriors who were used to break the enemy front lines. Peoples of the North were renowned for their height and strength and the young men from poor areas, or seekers of adventure, hired themselves out as mercenaries in those advance units of wealthier peoples. Varangians or Vikings were not a nationality, but a profession. Because Rus was the supplier of Varangian units to Byzantium, both Scandinavians and Greeks adopted the Slav terminology.

There were many nationalities among these Varangian pillagers. Byzantine sources refer to Germans, Slavs, Scandinavians and almost all the Baltic peoples who were in their service, also under the name of Varangians.

It was not an ethnic description, but one of occupation. There is an excellent analogy with the Swiss Guard. Poor youth from mountainous Switzerland hired themselves out as a special guard all over Europe and they exist to this day in the Vatican.

In all the areas that the Vikings had colonized, they have left long lasting effects on the language and customs. Unlike the Anglo-Saxons' racial war against the Celts, which left virtually no trace of Celtic in the English language, the Vikings had a profound influence on the development of Old English. There are more than 900²⁸ true Scandinavian words in the English language – *get, leg, hit, low, root, skin, same, want, wrong, etc.* Words beginning with *sk* like *skein* and *sky* are also Norse. In the North of England there are several hundred of Norse borrowings such as *beck* (stream), *laihthe* (barn), *garth* (yard), etc. that survive in regional use. *Riding*, derived from the Norse word meaning 'a third part', was until recently used to indicate the division of an English county. To this day, many place-names such as the Isle of Man, Orkney, Shetlands and Northern England in particular bear Viking influence. All the names ending in *by, wick, thorpe, thwaite, toft and scale* are characteristically Scandinavian – Grimsby, Derby, Keswick, Chiswick, Woolsthorpe, Longthorpe, Toftwood, Thwaite Head, Thwaite, Toftrees, Scaleselugh, Scaleby, etc.

The Primary Chronicle states that – '*...Slovyensk language and Russian is one and the same: the Varangians have called it such...*' If the invited Varangians had been Germanic Norsemen called Rus, why would they have called the Slav language by their own name and what would they have then called their own tongue? The answer is that the Varangians have called their subjects Rus and therefore their language was called Russian, but the inhabitants themselves had called it Slavic because the Novgorodians called themselves 'Slovyenye', just as the Kievlyans called themselves Rus.

To prove any Scandinavian influence on Russia, one must first examine its influence on the Russian language. Yet even such eminent philologists as Thomsen²⁹ and Grot³⁰ had found only 16 words reminiscent of Scandinavian in the entire Russian language – *yakor', stul, lavka, knut, skiba, ryuzha, luda, kerb', shneka, sud, laretz, styag, yashchik, tivun, gridz and yabednik.* Further examination of the sixteen 'Scandinavian' words show eleven anomalies with only five possibilities.

There are no Scandinavian place names in Russia, even around Novgorod or on any of the river trade routes 'from Vikings to Greeks'. In comparison, the Scandinavian 'colonization' left a legacy of more than 900 place names in Britain. The style of houses and settlements also differed in their construction, location and appearance. From circa sixth century Slav settlements began to be enclosed by high walls for protection. Apart from individual dwellings, there was always at least one site set aside for worship, an open area for meetings and a cemetery on the lower reaches. Unlike the Scandinavians, Slavs usually built their settlements in a circle, which they called *niezdo* meaning a 'nest' and were usually built on natural elevations and most frequently on the headland at the confluence of two rivers. The paramount consideration in the choice of site was its height and this is true of most of the ancient Rus cities – Kiev, Chernigov, Polotzk, Galich, Pskov, Vladimir, to name but a few. In the absence of rivers, the site was chosen on some steep ravine or hill. In Russian language *gorod* (town, city) is from the root *gorodit'* meaning 'to defend' and *ogorazhivat'*, *ograda* meaning 'to enclose' or 'enclosure'.

The names of all major Rus rivers were all Slav – Berezinka, Vinogoshka, Volkhov, Volga, Vop', Dnieper, Dvina, Don, Donyetz, Drut, Yessa, Kun'ya, Kasplya, Lukoml, Lukhesa, Lovat', Obsha, Oka, Pola, Rutavyech, Sarguta, Toropa, Usvyat, Yulla.

The names of Rus towns along the trade routes were also only Slav – Belgorod, Beloozero, Bousegrad, Vyshgorod, Vitichev, Voin, Vitebsk, Vasilev, Vrchy, Gnezdovo, Galich, Izborsk, Iskorosten, Kiev, Kukonos, Lubech (old Tzeluza), Ladoga, Murom, Novgorod, Obol', Pereyaslavl, Peresechen, Peremyshl, Polotzk, Pskov, Podol', Rodnya, Rostov, Smolensk, Trubezh, Turov, Toropyetz, Trepol', Usvyat, Chernogov, Cherven. Rus towns, which existed prior to the eighth century were – Kiev, Chernigov, Smolensk, Lubech, Novgorod, Pskov, Polotzk, Vitebsk, Rostov.³¹

The names of the three brothers who were invited to rule Rus also require some attention. One of the brothers was called 'Sineus' – without a doubt a Slav name meaning 'Bluebeard'. There were many analogies among the Slavs – Byelousov = Whitebeard, Chernousov = Blackbeard, Strizhius =

Beardless, names that exist to this day in the form of surnames. There are also surnames – Sineus and Strizhius, which have retained their original form and don't have the 'ov' as one might expect. There are no Scandinavian names remotely like it. The closest are – Signiutr or Signiôtr, far removed from Sineus, which grammatically and through meaning is without a doubt Slav.

The second brother Truvor is known only from the chronicles with no other counterparts anywhere. The only Scandinavian name that has been put forward by Thomsen³² was a far removed 'Torvadr'. It is probable that the name was an occupational handle – Trubor from 'trubach' meaning horn-blower. This is a likely supposition in the light of the fact that no other Truvor is found anywhere before or after the original one. If the other two brothers had Slav names than one must examine the name of the third brother – Rurik.

The complete dictionary of Lindt *Norsk-Islanska Dopnamu ock Finderate Namn Fran Medeltiden* lists all the numerous variations of Rurik – 'Rorik, Roric, Rorih, Roricus'. One must note that in each case the name begins with 'Ro' and has no *Re, Ru* or *Ri*. The ancient Scandinavian Sagas speak of *Hrôrekr, Hroerik, Hroerekr* and *Rorekr*. There is no Rurik anywhere. The Pskov Chronicles under the year 1536 note: "That winter, on 27th of February, 20,000 were in Lithuania near the town of Sebez... and Ririk had slain the warrior Latzky." It is important to note that in 1536, long after the Vikings had disappeared from the map, Poland had the name 'Ririk'. The phonetic similarity of *Ririk* and *Rerik* is clearly evident. There is a minor variation in the pronunciation of one letter. This letter imparted a sound somewhere between an 'r' and an 'u' and this duality of sound also gave the rise to 'Skifia' and 'Skufia' (Scythia) in the chronicles.

In the Ipatiev Chronicle under the year 1194, alongside Rurik, there is also 'Kirul'. If Kirill was transcribed as Kirul, then Rurik could also have been Ririk. There are many examples in the chronicles of this variance in transcriptions between two letters. Clearly there was a Pole, a Slav called Ririk, which after all is much closer to Rurik than the Scandinavian *Hrôrekr*. If Rurik and his brothers were Slav, or at least half Slav, than their Slav names would be quite natural. Interesting to note that the Book of Veles refers to Rurik as *Yeryek*, which is also Slav.

According to Yakimov Chronicle, Rurik and his brothers on his mother's side belonged to an ancient ruling Slav dynasty of Novgorod and thus were the grandsons of Gostomysl. Their mother Umila was married to a Varangian (Baltic) ruler, but it is unknown what nationality he was. He is mentioned as Dion, a prince of the Slav tribe of Rugi who at that time inhabited the Island of Ruyan (present Rügen). It is possible that this was the Island that Boyan had mentioned in his sagas having become known through Rurik if he had originated from there.

There is no historical evidence that Dion existed, but what is more likely, is that 'Dion' was actually a title of ruler – *tion* (ancient Norwegian) or *tiun* (ancient Swedish), *tivun* (ancient Slav). The more likely scenario is that Umila's husband was Tion Godlav, a prince of the tribe of Obodrity in the region of the River Elba (ancient Slav Laba). In Gostomysl's dream it is said that all his three daughters were married to neighboring kings and Obodrity were neighbors at that time. Some ancient Mecklenburg manuscripts, studied by a French traveler Xavier Marmier during the nineteenth century, revealed that Obodrity had a prince called Godlav, who had three sons – Rurik, Sineus and Truvor. According to these manuscripts,

The people of Rus were suffering under a foreign yoke, which they were unable to free themselves from. The brothers Rurik, Sineus and Truvor freed them, but when they wanted to return home, the Russian people persuaded them to stay and take the place of their former Tzars.³³

Of course it is evident that the above was written much later than the events, but there is no doubt that it contains more than a grain of truth. Gostomysl's father was Prince Burivoy, who lived at the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth centuries. During his rule Vikings had captured Novgorod, killed Burevoy and the people of Novgorod were forced to pay a heavy tribute of 300 grivnas per year to the Vikings. If they had invited another lot of foreigners to rule over them, what guarantee was there that they would not extract an even greater tribute?

A different scenario opens up if the three brothers were at least half Slavs and the grandsons of the popular Novgorod ruler Gostomysl, the son of

Burevoy. They would then have been known to the Novgorodians and that in turn would explain why they had so quickly and easily adapted into the Slav society. They had Slav names and required no interpreters because they already spoke a Slav language. There is little doubt that by profession they were Vikings, but ethnically they were Western Slavs. The Western Slavs had been under the Scandinavian influence and brought to Rus foreign customs among which was a new Paganism of the harsh Scandinavian variety, with blood sacrifices, slavery and the custom of multiple wives and concubines. The Book of Veles states:

... Glory be to our Gods! We have the true faith, which requires **no** human sacrifices. This is done by the Varangians, who bring such sacrifices to Perun whom they call Perkun... The Rus Gods do not accept human sacrifices, nor animal, but only vegetables, fruit, flowers, grains, milk, Surya³⁴ and honey, but never live birds or fish. This is done by Greek³⁵ Varangians who bring to the Gods different and horrible sacrifices – human...

Human sacrifices were carried out by Scandinavians as part of religious observances. They were mainly conducted at Uppsala, the most important religious center in Sweden, at regular intervals. Everyone, from kings to commoners was required to send gifts to be sacrificed to Thor, Odin and Freya. Nine heads from every available kind of male beast were offered, with the bodies hung in a sacred grove adjoining the temple. Dogs, horses and men hung side by side. 'Blood-eagling', in Anglo-Saxon called 'Rüsta-orn', was a ritual when human bodies were split and the chest was pulled inside out. There is no evidence that the Slavs were ever involved in such horrific practices.³⁶

The Book of Veles also speaks against multiple marriages. A man was allowed only one wife at a time and a limit of only three wives in a lifetime. It is known that Rurik himself had multiple wives – Rucina, a redhead, who became a Christian, olive-skinned Celt Ghytta and his favorite Efanda, whose father was Vertzyn and her mother was Unzha. It is unknown what nationality they were, but their names suggest possible Slav background.

The controversial events as described in the chronicles occurred during the second half of the ninth century (862–879) when the noble line of Novgorod Slav rulers died out and bloody power struggles followed. To put

an end to this, the Novgorod Veche invited a Varangian prince with his two brothers to become their ruler and defender (Scandinavians had no princes at that time). None of the chronicles say exactly who Rurik was except that he was a Varangian prince. It was most likely that his identity was common knowledge and therefore there was no need to waste precious writing materials and space in the manuscripts to state the obvious.

The position regarding the dynastic inheritance of rulers in Rus was clear – if the male line died out, then the dynasty could be re-established through the female line. Gostomysl had a major difficulty facing him, because by rights, the rule should have passed on to his eldest grandson, the eldest son of his eldest daughter, Vadim Khrabry, who was extremely unpopular with the people and this may have contributed to her son's unsuitability as a candidate. Gostomysl bypassed this difficult situation by inventing a prophetic dream –

When the old Prince of Novgorod Gostomysl felt his death near, he began to worry whom to hand over the rule to? All his four sons had died with no issue and his three daughters were given in marriage to neighboring kings. During one of these reflections he fell asleep and dreamt that from the womb of his middle daughter Umila, there grew a gigantic fruit tree that covered the entire great city. All the peoples of the world were able to eat their fill of its fruit. When he awoke he sent for the soothsayers to interpret his dream. They decided: “That from her sons there would be heirs and the land would prosper under their rule.” And all rejoiced that this would not be the son of the eldest daughter, as he was unsuitable.³⁷ Gostomysl saw his end near and called together all the elders of the land –Slovyeny, Russy, Chudzi, Vyesi, Myeri, Krivichy and Dregovichy. He told them of his dream and sent a representative to the Varangians, to invite a prince. And after Gostomysl's death, there came Rurik with his two brothers and their families.

Tatishchev, in the first half of the eighteenth century was the first historian with a plausible theory regarding Gostomysl's dream.³⁸ In ancient times, dreams have been considered an important omen and a prophecy of the gods. There were special people, such as shamans, dedicated to interpreting these dreams and omens. It is evident that Gostomysl's dream is an exact copy

of that which the Scythian King Astiag had about his daughter who gave birth to the future conqueror of near Asia, King Kir (VI BC). This coincidence speaks of the fact that in ancient Novgorod, people knew the history of Scythians and Persians. It is not inconceivable that Rurik may even have been named after the great Kir. If one reads the name from right to left, as the Persians did, one can see how it may have been read mistakenly from left to right and altered it for easy pronunciation.

Aside from Tatishchev based on the Yakimov chronicle, there is another source of information regarding Rurik's identity. There is a legend in Meklenburg stating that Rurik was the son of Godoslav (Godlav), the prince of a Slav tribe Bodrichy (Obodrity), who lived in Rarog (Neisterlitz near Meklenburg) and along the Varangian (Baltic) Sea.³⁹ Danish Gotfried killed Rurik's father Godoslav and therefore Rurik and his brothers had to leave their home. They spent many years 'a-viking' and eventually Rurik, as the eldest of the three brothers, collected his own 'Druzhina'. The royal Slav line through his mother went back for three thousand years and continued until the seventeenth century when the dynasty changed to that of the Romanovs.

Unfortunately Gostomysl died before Rurik and his brothers arrived and during the interval there was a power struggle, which was referred to in the chronicles. It becomes clear why the selection of succession fell to Rurik, Sineus and Truvor. Not only was it the wish of the popular and respected Prince Gostomysl but also a prophecy from the Gods regarding Umila's progeny. This is a logical conclusion that negates the supposition that representatives were sent to invite *foreigners* to rule them. They went to invite the grandsons of their prince – Western Slavs on their mother's side and possibly also their father's. The official beginning of Rurik dynasty is from the year 862 when he began ruling Novgorod. This makes his dynasty the oldest in Europe according to the Gotland Almanac –

- **Rurik – Russia** **862**
- Hapsburg – Austria 866
- Wittelsbach – Bavaria 907
- Vicovaro – Italy 914
- Zeringen – Baden 917
- Vetti – Saxony 919

- Norfolk – Britain 950
- Osuna – Spain 1032
- Anhalt – Germany 1039
- Höhenzollern – Prussia 1061

When all the above information is compared with the legacy that has been left by Viking invasions in Britain and elsewhere, it is safe to say that in the light of such evidence that the Vikings could not possibly have ‘civilized’ Rus and had left no influence there. The Slavs had a democratic/constitutional type government consisting of princes and Veche as well as a well-organized religion, literacy and an oral and written history – in fact, all the signs of civilization long before either Scandinavia or Germany had theirs.

Notes

¹ Zabelin I.E., *Domashnii Byt Russkikh Tzarej*, Moscow, 1990, p 42.

² A.I.Asov, Moscow 2000; S.Lesnoy, Melbourne 1956; O.E.Tvorogov, St Petersburg 1994; G.N.Averyanova, Moscow 2000; S.V.Perevezentzev, V.Ivanov, Moscow 1988; G.Lovmyansky, St Petersburg 2003; V.Bazalev, Moscow 2000; M.Karatayev, Buenos Ayres 1968; N.Ilina, Paris 1955; V.E.Shambarov, Moscow 1998; U.D.Petukhov, Moscow 2001; L.E.Bocharov, Moscow, 1998; E.I. Klassin , St Petersburg 1854 – this is by no means a complete list.

³ Childe G. (1947), p.20.

⁴ Mongate, A.L., *Archeology in the U.S.S.R.*, London: Pelican Books, 1955, p75–102; Burov, V.A., *Ocherki Istorii i Arkheologii*, Academy of Archeology, Moscow, 1994, p 101–117; Sagajdak, M.A., *Velikij Gorod Yaroslava*, Kiev, 1982, p 42–81.

⁵ Schlötzer A. (1861), p22.

⁶ Niederlé Prof. (1923), p198–207.

⁷ Thomsen (1891), p68.

⁸ Finnish tribes. There was some chronological confusion in the Chronicles and more correctly the date should be 6370 / 862.

⁹ Primary Chronicles.

¹⁰ Adam von Bremen (1959), p67.

- ¹¹ Thietmar von Merseburg, (1889), p 92.
- ¹² Danish chronicler to Archbishop von Roskilde 1150–1206, *Saxo Grammaticus*. Denmark, 1950, p56–9.
- ¹³ X. Marmier (1840), p80.
- ¹⁴ Karamzin N.M.(1815), p83.
- ¹⁵ Tatishchev V. (1768–1784), p177.
- ¹⁶ Pruss from Prussia, which at one time was Slav territory.
- ¹⁷ Lesnoy S (1956), p99.
- ¹⁸ A. Schlötzer (1861), p22.
- ¹⁹ According to the Book of Veles, both the pre-Slav Scythians and Slavs believed that slavery during one's life continued after death. It was therefore essential to die a free person rather than a slave. They therefore did not inflict slavery on any other human being. Slavery crept in slowly with Rurik and the Scandinavian ideas he had absorbed in his travels and life as a Viking. The first and only human sacrifice recorded in Rus was by Vladimir I only ten years before he became a Christian. He also brought this 'seed of civilization' back from Scandinavia where he had spent two years.
- ²⁰ Adam von Bremen (1890), p 29.
- ²¹ *Puteshestviye Ibn Fadlana na Volgu*, translated by I Krachkovsky, Moscow, 1939, p 78.
- ²² Klassin E.I., 1999 edition *History of Rus before the Birth of Christ*, St Petersburg p 33.
- ²³ Copies of the Original tables have been published in Russian, Serb and Ukrainian and form the basis of Zena Harris' PhD Thesis at Macquarie University, Sydney.
- ²⁴ Volkonsky A.M. (1929), p21
- ²⁵ Grinevich G.S. (1999), p 48
- ²⁶ Ibn Al Nedim – Bartold V., *Arabskiye Izvestiya o Russakh*, Moscow, 1940, p36.
- ²⁷ Ouspensky F. (2002), p113.
- ²⁸ Smith, Logan Pearsall. (1966) p293
- ²⁹ Thomsen V. (1891), p430–432
- ³⁰ Grot, K.Y. (1881), p321
- ³¹ Braichevskii M.U. (1951), p32–33
- ³² Thomsen V.(1891), p430–432
- ³³ Marnier X. (1841), p569
- ³⁴ A fermented herbal type of mead

- ³⁵ The Book of Veles often refers to foreigners as Greeks
- ³⁶ Kirkby M., 1977. *The Vikings* Oxford p 154
- ³⁷ This was a reference to Vadim the Brave (Khrabry) who subsequently was killed by Rurik during an uprising
- ³⁸ Tatishchev V. (1768–1784), p172
- ³⁹ Marmier X. (1840), p80.

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