

Yalta and Caffa (now Feodosija) – Ukraine or Russia?

Have you connected the dots? Yalta is a port on the Black Sea. At the end of World War II, Churchill met there with Roosevelt and Stalin. I learned in school that this was in “Russia”. But it is in Crimea to be exact, which some now say belongs to Ukraine. Who moved the goal posts?

OK, I know that as a result of the peace accord that ended WWII there were many changes in Eastern Europe. Stalin himself was not Russian, he was Georgian. Georgia was one of the Soviet Republics in the USSR. So was Ukraine. So was Russia. All three were in fact founding members of the USSR. So if they were already distinct in the Soviet era, since when is Ukraine part of Russia?

I know that Eastern European history goes FAR back. For example, Genghis Khan reached Ukraine and decimated Kyiv. This was a savage blow to the Slavs. When the “Rus” culture re-emerged several centuries later, it was in Moscow not Kyiv.

Neither is biological warfare anything new. Genghis Khan’s army was being devastated by the bubonic plague. Turns out that it originated in Mongolia, on a certain flea that prefers rats as their hosts. But when the rats die, the fleas will settle for humans as second best. This micro-biology was only discovered centuries later – by a Russian scientist.

Meanwhile, back at Caffa, Genghis Khan was laying siege to this city, just along the Crimean coast from Yalta. Today the port is called Feodosija. Khan’s army took the dead bodies from this plague and used catapults to fling them over the city walls into Caffa. That is how the Plague reached this Genoan colony (as it was at that time).

The Europeans fled on their ships from this port carrying the fleas with them. That is how the Black Death reached various European ports, from ships that sailed out of Caffa.

Let’s go even further back. Jesus commissioned his disciples to go to the ends of the earth to carry his message. This gave rise to the “apostolic comity agreement” soon after his death. His disciples organized this campaign. Some went west to Spain and Britannia. Others went south into Egypt and Ethiopia. Others went east to Babylon and India.

Lo and behold, some also ventured north. Some sailed up through the Dardenelles into the Black Sea (in Roman times it was called the Hospitable Sea. St Phillip relocated from Caesarea Maritima to a resort hot springs in Phrygia called Hieropolis. That is in present-day Turkey. From there he did further outreach, and rivers like the Danube and the Dnieper would have made a great way to reach the interior of Eastern Europe for a fisherman from Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee!

In those days not much of the north shore of the Black Sea was colonized by Rome. The people there were known as the Scythians. Is it any wonder that the patron saint of Russia is St Andrew, who is believed to have preached to the Scythians. A fisherman from Galilee.

Other disciples circumvented the Black Sea on the mountainous east side. In fact, Armenia was one of the first ethnic areas to convert en masse to Christianity. In those days Armenia was much bigger than the small state today. It included part of what we would call northern Syria and Iraq, eastern Turkey and north-western Iran. This was a kind of land bridge to reach the “far north” above the greater Caucasus mountains. The lesser Caucasus include areas we now call Georgia and Azerbaijan.

A number of disciples travelled through those mountains and even north-east of Babylon into present-day Iran. That is where they met the Magi, the three wise kings who had travelled to Bethlehem following a significant star. But I digress...

Is it any wonder that the patron saints of Armenia are Jude Thaddeus and Nathaniel bar Ptolemy? Jude is also the patron saint of youth and bar Ptolemy was probably an African (from Egypt).

The Slavs are not descendents of the Scythians, whose language was a derivative on Persian. In fact, the Slavs already co-habitated, but they were dominated and even enslaved by the Scythians. The Slavic language is Baltic, with origins even further north.

But the history of this region goes much further back. At the time of Solomon, in the golden age of Israel, there was an economic alliance with the Phoenecians. They occupied what is now Lebanon, and were great sea-farers. Their prowess on the seven seas was never matched until Brittania ruled the waves 2800 years later. Certainly the Geeks and the Romans put up great armadas, but these were only Mediterranean-sized vessels.

Tarshish, outside the gates of Hercules (now Gibraltar) on the south coast of Spain, was a Phoenician colony. When the Bible mentions the "ships of Tarshish" it is not referring to that centre of trade. It refers to a model of ship that exceeded anything the Mediterranean ever saw. These were ocean going vessels and they sailed to South and Central America – 2500 years before Columbus.

The Phoenecians had another outpost on the Gulf of Aqaba. From that port they could sail right across the Indian Ocean and beyond. Once again they sailed "ships of Tarshish" meaning ocean-going vessels. How else did Solomon have peacock feathers in his palace? They are indigenous to Java.

Christian Australian archaeologist Jonathan Gray reckons that these ships traded as far as Australia, New Zealand, and even some of the Pacific Islands. He outlines this in his book *Ark of the Covenant* in chapter 11. Listen to Gray!

"Here are startling facts, pointing to the presence together of four races — Hebrew, Phoenician, Scythian and Thracian — in the mid-Pacific in the remote past.

"How can this be explained, if not through the instrumentality of the historic expeditions of Hiram and Solomon?"

"The Encyclopaedia Britannica notes concerning the Polynesians that, while their facial features sometimes suggest Mongoloid affinities, their light skin, wavy hair and full beards, as well as their blood types, suggest European ties.

"This is certainly consistent with the planting of outposts in the Pacific by European members of Solomon's and Hiram's crews, such as Scythians and Thracians."

The reference to Thracians is to another people-group that occupied spaces around the Black Sea in ancient times – on its north shore and also in what we now call the Balkans and Turkey. My point is simply that the history of this region goes FAR into the past. We should not be too quick to take sides in a conflict that is very complex and far-reaching. A stable Slavic homeland and culture must be a fact of future history. They cannot be taken for granted.