

VIII

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The Year 971



After tsar Peter's death (on 30th of January 969), Nikephoros Phokas decided to send the late ruler's sons, Boris and Roman, back to Bulgaria, likely counting on them becoming guarantors of stability in Bulgaria, and of improved relations with Byzantium¹. Boris took the reins of power after

¹ В. Тъпкова-Займова, *Падане на Североизточна България*, [in:] *История на България*, vol. II, *Първа българска държава*, ed. Д. Ангелов, София 1981, p. 390; П. Павлов, *Борби за оцеляване. Упадък на българската държавност, 927–1018*, [in:] *История на българите*, vol. I, *От древността до края на XVI век*, ed. Г. Бакалов, София 2003, pp. 283–284 (scholars date Peter's death to January of 970, thus Boris' ascension to the throne would have also taken place during this year); cf. В.Н. Златарски, *История на българската държава през средните векове*, vol. I/2, *Първо българско Царство. От славянизацията на държавата до падането на Първото царство (852–1018)*, София 1927, p. 589; И. Божилов, В. Гюзелев, *История на средновековна България VII–XIV в.*, ²София 2006, p. 297 (these works date Peter's death to 30th of January 969). One needs to remember, however, that we cannot be certain whether the sons of Peter were in the hands of Nikephoros II Phokas. It cannot be ruled out that Boris was in Preslav at the time his father passed away, and may have taken the reins of power even before his death. On Boris II – П. Павлов, *Борис II (опит за ново тълкуване на семейно-династичните проблеми в Преславския двор при цар Петър)*, Пр.Сб 5, София 1993, pp. 46–51; Г.Н. Николов, *Българският цар Самуил*, София 2014, pp. 17–20; П. Павлов, *Векът на цар Самуил*, София 2014, pp. 37–52.

his father. Taking advantage of Svyatoslav's absence from Bulgaria (who departed the previous year to relieve Kiev, besieged by the Pechenegs), the new tsar regained part, or perhaps even all, of the lands lost to the Kievan prince². There was also a clear rapprochement with Byzantium. Nikephoros Phokas sent envoys, as was discussed before, the patrician Nikephoros Erotikos and Philotheos, bishop of Euchaita³. They were received well in Preslav. The renewed alliance was to be further strengthened by marriages of the Bulgarian tsarinas (?) with Basil and Constantine, sons of Romanos II and Theophano⁴. The candidates for wives of the young princes arrived in Constantinople in November/December 969⁵. The union, however, was not finalised. On the night of 10th to 11th of December Nikephoros II Phokas was murdered, and his successor, John I Tzimiskes, did not see a need to create ties with the Preslav court.

Boris II was not able to stabilise the situation in Bulgaria, as in the meantime Svyatoslav returned to the scene. He arrived on the shores of Danube during the summer of 969⁶. The first, and it seems decisive, clash with the Bulgarian forces took place by the Pereyaslavets. Svyatoslav

² В. Тъпкова-Займова, *Падане...*, p. 390.

³ Some of the scholars date this diplomatic mission to 968, and the reign of Peter (e.g.: A.D. Stokes, *The Background and Chronology of the Balkan Campaigns of Svyatoslav Igorevich*, SEER 40/94, 1961, p. 54; J. Bonarek, *Przyczyny i cele bułgarskich wypraw Światosława a polityka Bizancjum w latach sześćdziesiątych X w.*, SH 39, 1996, p. 298). It would seem, however, that those who point to year 969 are correct (М.Я. Сюзюмов, С.А. Иванов, *Комментарий*, [in:] Лев Диакон, *История*, transl. М.М. Копыленко, ed. Г.Г. Литаврин, Москва 1988, p. 190, fn. 21). What is relevant here is the temporal proximity of the mission and the arrival in Constantinople of the prospective Bulgarian brides-to-be of Constantine and Basil. Their arrival closely preceded the death of Nikephoros Phokas (December 969). Euchaita's chief priest also appears during the negotiations with the Pechengs in 971 after the battle of Dristra, although in John Skylitzes and in the *Russian Primary Chronicle* his name is given as Theophilus. On this subject, see: М. Раев, *The Russian-Byzantine Treaty of 971. Theophilus and Sveneld*, REB 64/65, 2006/2007, pp. 329–340.

⁴ Леоthe Deacon, V, 3. We do not know whose daughters they were, nor what names bore the prospective brides of Basil and Constantine.

⁵ И. Божилков, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, p. 297.

⁶ On the question of the date of Svyatoslav's return – С.А. Иванов, *Византийско-болгарские отношения в 966–969 гг.*, ВВ 42, 1981, p. 98; J. Bonarek, *Przyczyny...*, pp. 298–300; И. Божилков, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, p. 297.

emerged victorious⁷. The sources make no mention of him encountering further resistance from the Bulgarians. Skylitzes only related that *the Russian people occupied Bulgaria* (τὴν Βουλγαρίαν χειρωσαμένῳ), and that Boris and Roman, sons of Peter, were taken captive⁸. Svyatoslav himself, as the Byzantine chronicler recorded, intended to remain in Bulgaria permanently⁹. We do not know exactly which part of the Bulgarian territory has gone under Rus' control, nor how complete it was; one might assume that they held Dobrudzha once again. Their influence reached Preslav¹⁰, and they have certainly held Dristra¹¹, one of the most important, if not the most important, centre of the contemporary Bulgaria. The way in which Svyatoslav arranged his relations with the Bulgarians isn't clear.

⁷ *Russian Primary Chronicle*, AM 6479: *Svyatoslav arrived before Pereyaslavets, and the Bulgarians fortified themselves in the city. They made one sally against Svyatoslav; there was great carnage, and the Bulgarians came off victors. But Svyatoslav cried to his soldiery, "Here is where we fall. Let us fight bravely, brothers and companions!" Toward evening, Svyatoslav finally gained the upper hand, and took the city by storm* (transl. p. 87); cf. John Skylitzes, p. 277. More on this event and Pereyaslavets – И. Божанов, В. Гюзелев, *История на Добруджа*, vol. II, *Средновековие*, Велико Търново 2004, pp. 67–68; М. Раев, *Преслав или Переяславец на Дунае? (Предварительные замечания об одном из возможных источников ПВЛ и его трансформации)*, НЗУИЗНС 20, 2008, pp. 37–40.

⁸ John Skylitzes, pp. 287–288 (transl. p. 275).

⁹ Certain role in arriving at this decision was played by Kalokiros, who intended, with Rus' support, to proclaim himself emperor and promised to give Bulgarian lands to Svyatoslav, once John Tzymiskes was defeated. Andrzej Poppe (*Svyatoslav The Glorious and the Byzantine Empire*, [in:] *Byzantium, New Peoples, New Powers: the Byzantino-Slav Contact Zone, from the Ninth to the Fifteenth Century*, ed. M. Kamakova, M. Salamon, M. Smorąg Różycka, Cracow 2007, pp. 133–137), correctly, considers the thread of imperial ambitions of Kalokiros as Leo the Deacon's (himself a supporter of the Phokas family) invention, and who thus wanted to disguise the co-operation between Bardas Phokas and Svyatoslav.

¹⁰ A Rus' garrison was present here, but it seems it resided in the so-called Outer City. The Rus's access to the Inner City, where the tsar's palace and the treasure were located (this is stressed by Leo the Deacon, which could suggest that it was not touched by Svyatoslav) was in some way limited (Leo the Deacon, VIII, 6; John Skylitzes, p. 297).

¹¹ On Dristra's significance in the Bulgarian state, see: Г. Атанасов, *Християнският Доросторум–Дръстър. Доростолската епархия през Късната античност и Средновековието IV–XIV в. История, археология, култура и изкуство*, Варна 2007.

This matter has been debated on many occasions, with no decisive conclusions. Some scholars think that an alliance, aimed against Byzantium, was made between the two peoples; others reject the possibility of such an alliance outright¹². The latter position seems closer to the truth. While Svyatoslav had to reach some form of an agreement with the Bulgarians, it does not mean that the relations between the two sides were those of allies. Boris II was controlled by Svyatoslav, and maintained his formal position¹³, becoming a guarantor of the loyalty of his subjects to the Rus'. The forced arrangement resulted in Bulgarians' presence in Svyatoslav's army, which was mentioned by the sources as early as those for the period of the campaign of 970¹⁴. During that year Svyatoslav's army, strengthened by Bulgarians, Pechenegs and Hungarians, moved across Thrace, occupied Philippopolis and reached Arkadioupolis. Here, it clashed with the troops from Asia Minor, deployed to the Balkan front by John Tzymiskes. They were led by magister Bardas Skleros. The latter turned out to be an adroit commander and, despite the enemy's numerical advantage, emerged victorious from the struggle¹⁵. He was not, however, able to deal the enemy

¹² Supporting the idea of an existence of such an alliance is П. Мутафчиев, *Русско-болгарские отношения при Святославе*, [in:] *идеи, Избрани произведения*, vol. II, ed. Д. Ангелов, София 1973, pp. 240–254; against it, in turn, is П. Павлов, *Борби...*, pp. 286–287.

¹³ This is supported by the fact that at the time of Preslav's conquest by John Tzymiskes, he appeared in front of the emperor dressed in tsar's robes (John Skylitzez, p. 297).

¹⁴ Leo the Deacon, VI, 12; John Skylitzez, p. 289.

¹⁵ On the campaign of 970: Д. Ангелов, Б. Чолпанов, *Българска военна история от втората четвърт на X до втората половина на XV в.*, София 1989, pp. 15–18; И. Божилов, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, p. 298; А. Рагоń, *Pieczynogowie. Koczownicy w krajobrazie politycznym i kulturowym średniowiecznej Europy*, Wrocław 2015, p. 335. More on the events that took place in Philippoupolis: А. Данчева-Василева, *Пловдив през Средновековието IV–XIV в.* София 2009, pp. 40–41. Having captured the city, Svyatoslav supposedly committed mass atrocities (there is a mention of twenty thousand impaled Bulgarians; the number is likely exaggerated), the repressions aimed at breaking the spirit of resistance among the Bulgarians (М.Я. Сюзюмов, С.А. Иванов, *Комментарий...*, p. 199, fn. 62). This indicates, one can assume, also the fact that few Bulgarians marched in Svyatoslav's army, if the prince did not hesitate to thus treat their kinsmen. The memory of deeds committed

a finishing blow, as he was recalled by the emperor and sent back to the East, to quash the usurpation attempt of Bardas Phokas. Meanwhile, Svyatoslav's army, having suffered substantial losses, withdrew. Diplomatic negotiations did not lead to a solution that would have been satisfactory to the Byzantines, that is, withdrawal of the Rus' army from the Bulgarian lands. In this situation, John Tzymiskes decided to prepare a military expedition. It started in the spring of 971.

It is worth noting that Svyatoslav had to be aware that he did not subjugate the entirety of Bulgaria. He was under a constant threat of a hostile action from the Bulgarians inhabiting the lands free of the Rus' rule, and thus of a threat of a war on two fronts. This could, at least to some extent, explain a certain degree of freedom he allowed Boris, given to prevent such situation from arising. What influence Boris II had on the lands free from the Rus' presence is a different question.

From the information presented above it is clear that the position of the Bulgarians on the eve of the Byzantine expedition was complicated. They were certainly burdened by the Rus' occupation, and at least for the time being they were unable to take effective steps to free themselves of Svyatoslav. Perhaps they were counting on Byzantine intervention that would result in his expulsion, however they could not have lost sight of the fact that the latter appeared on their lands on Byzantine instigation. Although the Byzantine policy towards Bulgaria has changed since that time, the mistrust towards the Byzantines must have been nonetheless present among the Bulgarian nobles. This feeling would have been shared by Boris II himself. It may have been further fuelled by his personal experiences and a good awareness of the contemporary political situation in Byzantium. After all, Boris resided for some time in Constantinople as a hostage, his mother was a Byzantine, and he received a classical education. It cannot be ruled out that he knew of the anti-Bulgarian

by Rus' in Philippoupolis may have influenced the behaviour of Bulgarians during John Tzymiskes' expedition, at least until the point when the Byzantines besieged the Rus' in Dristra. It is notable that we do not know whether Philippoupolis was in Byzantine or Bulgarian hands at the time when it was captured by Svyatoslav. It seems likely that it held at the time by the Byzantines (А. Д а н ч е в а-В а с и л и е в а, *Пловдив...*, p. 41).

attitudes among the Byzantine Empire's elites, and that he kept in mind that Bulgarian lands used to belong to the Byzantine Empire¹⁶.

Bulgarians appear in the narrative of Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes only at the point when the Byzantine army breached Preslav's walls. The two authors recorded that Boris II and the Byzantine emperor met at that time. Leo the Deacon wrote:

And it is said that then Boris, the king of the Mysians, whose face was thickly covered with reddish [hair], was captured with his wife and two infant children, and brought before the emperor. The latter received him and treated him honourably, calling him ruler of the Bulgarians, and saying that he came to avenge the Mysians, who had suffered terribly at the hands of the Scythians.¹⁷

While John Skylitzes stated:

Boris the king of the Bulgarians was taken still wearing the royal insignia, together with his wife and children. They were brought to the emperor who received them graciously, calling [Boris] emperor of the Bulgarians. He released all the Bulgarians they had captured – leaving them free to go wherever they would, saying that he was not come to enslave the Bulgarians but rather to free them. It was only the Russians whom he regarded as enemies and intended to treat as adversaries.¹⁸

The undertone of both of these relations is in essence the same¹⁹. The victorious emperor of the Byzantines treated Boris graciously,

¹⁶ Г.Г. Литаврин, *Константин Багрянородный о Болгарии и Болгарах*, [in:] *Сборник в чест на акад. Димитър Ангелов*, ed. В. Велков, София 1994, pp. 32–36.

¹⁷ Leo the Deacon, VIII, 6 (transl. p. 182).

¹⁸ John Skylitzes, p. 297 (transl. p. 283; with minor change – M.J.L., K.M.).

¹⁹ Cf. Н.П. Благоев, *Критичен поглед върху известията на Лев Дякон за българите*, МПр 6.2, 1930, pp. 25–26; С.А. Иванов, *Κοίρανός τῶν Βουλγάρων. Йоанн Цимисхий и Борис II в 971 г.*, [in:] *Общество и государство на Балканах в средние века*, Калинин 1982, pp. 47–58; Л. Симонова, *Образът на българския владетел във византийската книжнина (средата на IX – началото на XI в.)*, [in:] *Представата за*

acknowledged him as the ruler of the Bulgarians and clearly identified himself as an ally of the latter, indicating that his only enemy were the Rus' (Scythians). His assurances were intended, even before the war has ended, to gain Bulgarians' co-operation in the fight against Svyatoslav. It is notable that the Bulgarians of Preslav did not act as Byzantines' allies, and did not take any steps to enable them to enter the city. Perhaps their behaviour was dictated by the fear of the Rus' garrison in Preslav, but it is more likely that they were either hostile towards the Byzantines, or did not know what to expect of them, nor what treatment to expect at their hands. That the Byzantines themselves did not consider Bulgarians their allies can be attested by the fact that the Byzantine chroniclers clearly speak of the capturing of Boris II and the Bulgarians in Preslav²⁰. Such behaviour of both sides makes it clear that neither before the expedition, nor while it was underway, no action was taken to reach an accord, and no subsequent joint action against Svyatoslav took place.

Leo the Deacon's relation on the next stage of the fighting for Preslav may attest to the hostility of the Bulgarians towards the Byzantines. The Byzantine historian stated that some of the Bulgarians locked themselves in, along with a small force of the Rus', within the fortifications of the tsar's palace, and fought alongside them until the very end. The reason for this is that they: *were hostile to the Romans, because they were the cause of the Scythians' coming to them*²¹. Although John Skylitzes does not mention this episode, it seems that one may trust the Deacon on this,

"Другия" на Балканите, ed. Н. Д а н о в а, В. Д и м о в а, М. К а л и ц и н, София 1995, p. 21; J. B o n a r e k, *Romajowie i obcy w kronice Jana Skylitzesa. Identyfikacja etniczna Bizantyńczyków i ich stosunek do obcych w świetle kroniki Jana Skylitzesa*, Toruń 2003, p. 148; M. J. L e s z k a, *Wizerunek władców pierwszego państwa bułgarskiego w bizantyńskich źródłach pisanych (VIII – pierwsza połowa XII wieku)*, Łódź 2003, pp. 139–140.

²⁰ It cannot, however, be ruled out that both Boris II, as well as some of the Bulgarians, have been not so much captured, as willingly submitted themselves to the Byzantines. The fact that despite the opportunity to take shelter in the fortified palace and to offer further resistance (as the Rus' and the other Bulgarians have done) they have decided to refrain from taking such steps attests to this. Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes wanted to underscore the significance of the victory by claiming that Boris II and some of his supporters and retinue were captured by the Byzantines.

²¹ L e o t h e D e a c o n, VIII, 7 (transl. p. 183).

not only because he was writing soon after the described events, but also because he had no reasons to portray the Byzantine-Bulgarian relations in a better light which, at the time he was writing, were at the stage of an open military conflict. John Skylitzes, meanwhile, was writing at a time when the Bulgarian lands have already been a part of the Empire for several decades, and highlighting such episodes would not have helped with their integration.

As indicated above, the stance that John Tzymiskēs adopted towards the Bulgarians (attitude to Boris II, release of the Bulgarian hostages, making it clear that the Byzantine expedition was directed against the Rus' in aid of the Bulgarians) was clearly aimed at winning them over for the fight against Svyatoslav. This creates a question of whether the Byzantine emperor accomplished his goal. To answer it, one has to go back to the narratives of Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes on the fate of the campaign of 971.

According to Leo the Deacon, when the Bulgarians heard that Preslav was captured, they started coming over to the Byzantines' side. It is likely that when the Byzantine emperor was moving out towards Dristra (Dorostolon), he took Boris II with him; tsar's presence may have made gaining the support of Bulgarians through whose lands the Byzantine army was marching easier. Leo the Deacon mentioned that on the way to Dorostolon the Byzantines gained assistance from the inhabitants of Pliska, of otherwise unknown Dineia, as well as of others, not mentioned by name, Bulgarian settlements²². Voluntary shift of Bulgarians

²² Leo the Deacon, VIII, 8; cf. A. Madgearu, *Byzantine Military Organization on the Danube 10th–12th Century*, Leiden–Boston 2013, p. 31. John Skylitzes (p. 298) presents the matter differently, claiming that the emperor appointed a strategos after capturing each centre, and was also to have: *plundered many fortress and buildings* (transl., p. 285), and left them for the soldiers to plunder. It is difficult to reconcile this relation with Leo's information. It is doubtful that John would have allowed his soldiers to loot Bulgarian cities prior to the confrontation with Svyatoslav, although during the war looting could have occasionally occurred nonetheless. Such treatment may have been given to those settlements that resisted the Byzantines (perhaps because of the presence of Rus' warriors). There is another possible explanation of John Skylitzes' description. The passage may have related to the situation after Svyatoslav was defeated, when Tzymiskēs decided to incorporate Bulgarian lands into the empire. In those

to the Byzantine side may attest to associating their presence with the hope of removing the Rus' from their lands, and that they have not perceived the Byzantines as a threat. It seems that at that time John Tzymiskes has not yet taken steps that could have indicated that he intended to subordinate Bulgarian lands to Constantinople. It would also seem that this attitude may be considered a confirmation of the fact that the Bulgarians were not allied with Svyatoslav. If that were to have been the case, then such an alliance was forced, and Bulgarians used the first opportunity they got to break it. It cannot be ruled out that to some extent the decision to join the Byzantine side was a result of realisation that an effective defence was impossible. Svyatoslav's lack of trust towards the Bulgarians can be attested by the fact that before the battle with Tzymiskes he ordered execution of three hundred of them; those executed were influential and of high birth²³. Leo the Deacon mentioned that this was a reaction to: the Mysians were rebelling against their alliance with him, and going over to the emperor"²⁴. It is possible that these were Bulgarian mercenaries, and not an allied contingent²⁵ or, what is perhaps even more likely, hostages. Their execution would have been a logical step at a time when their presence in Svyatoslav's camp was no longer guaranteeing the loyalty of their kinsmen. John Skylitzes also mentioned twenty thousand Bulgarians, hostages of Svyatoslav, whom the latter ordered shackled or tied up before the battle with the Byzantines, so that they would not support his enemy²⁶. Leo the Deacon also made a note of this event; however he did not specify the number of Bulgarians who

circumstances both the Bulgarians' resistance, and the Byzantine attitude, would have been logical.

²³ Leo the Deacon, VIII, 9; John Skylitzes, p. 298 (also mentioned the three hundred executed Bulgarians, although without indicating as clearly that their deaths came as a response to Bulgarians coming over to the Byzantine side).

²⁴ Leo the Deacon, VIII, 9 (transl. 184).

²⁵ П. П а в л о в, *Борбу...*, p. 287.

²⁶ John Skylitzes, p. 300. Regarding the credibility of the number given by the Byzantine author, one should, I think, remain sceptical. It is worth noting that the same number is given by him in the context of the events in Philippoupolis in 970 where, as I mentioned before, twenty thousand Bulgarians were to have been impaled on Svyatoslav's orders.

were subject to this treatment²⁷. This move also emphatically showed that the latter were considered to be hostile.

The above remarks clearly indicate that the Rus' dominion over Bulgarian lands was rather illusory and based on coercion rather than on a mutually beneficial accord.

Rejecting the perspective of the sources (let us once again stress, of Byzantine provenance), according to which Bulgarians flocked to Byzantine side after the events at Preslav, allows us to form a view that they have not so much abandoned Svyatoslav and joined the Byzantine side, but rather by their own reckoning they were simply retaking freedom and regaining power over their own lands. They have been very quickly disappointed, as the Byzantines, having defeated Svyatoslav, instead of leaving decided to impose their own authority over the Bulgarian territories.

In the description of the clashes by Dristra, which lasted for several months²⁸ and were described by both of the authors, we do not find any references to Bulgarians' participation therein. While such participation cannot, of course, be ruled out²⁹, the fighting that took place occurred only between the *Rhomaioi* and the Rus'. As such, the victory over the latter was exclusively due to the emperor and his army. Acknowledging any participation of the Bulgarians in this success would have only diminished it, as after the victory the Byzantines moved in turn against the Bulgarians, occupying most of their country. The *Rhomaioi* – traitors moving against their allies, to whom in some part they owed victory. This would certainly not have been a cause for pride.

It cannot be ruled out that the Byzantines have taken early steps to subordinate Bulgaria even during the siege of Dorostolon. However, if we were to treat Skylitzes' relation about placing garrisons in Bulgarian

²⁷ Leo the Deacon, VIII, 9.

²⁸ On events by Dristra, see e.g.: S. McGrath, *The Battles of Dorostolon (971). Rhetoric and Reality*, [in:] *Peace and War in Byzantium. Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis*, S.J., ed. T.S. Miller, J. Nesbitt, Washington 1995, pp. 152–164; D.P. Hupchick, *The Bulgarian-Byzantine Wars for Early Medieval Balkan Hegemony. Silver-Lined Skulls and Blinded Armies*, [s.l.] 2017, pp. 238–240.

²⁹ For arguments for the Bulgarians' participation on the Byzantine side, see: Д. Ангелов, Б. Чолпанов, *Българска...*, pp. 25–26.

cities with reserve, then aside from garrisoning Preslav, we find no traces of such activities. On the other hand, we can indeed find hints of certain tensions in the Bulgarian-Byzantine relations during this period, visible in pillaging of Bulgarian lands by the Byzantines. Aside from Skylitzes' relation, this can be attested by Leo the Deacon, writing about desecration and looting by Magister John Kourkouas: *for he is said to have plundered many of the [churches] in Mysia and to have refashioned their furnishings and holy vessels into personal valuables*³⁰. He was punished for his deeds, and suffered death at the hands of the Rus'. Leo treats this information with caution, preceding it with 'for he is said', however since he mentioned it at all, he must have considered it at least somewhat credible.

Having defeated Svyatoslav, the *Rhomaioi* took steps to incorporate Bulgarian lands into the Empire³¹. It is notable that both the historians relate this process very briefly. Its description by Leo the Deacon is limited to the statement that John Tzymiskes subordinated (καθυποτάξας) Mysia to the *Rhomaioi*³², while in John Skylitzes, a remark that the emperor has provided adequate protection for the strongholds and cities on both sides of the river (Danube)³³. Each of the authors, on the other hand, devoted considerable attention to the triumph that the emperor celebrated after his return to Constantinople. Neither of them said a word about the attitude of Bulgarians towards the Byzantine aggression, creating an impression that it was not met with any resistance. This is difficult to imagine, although it is likely that any resistance would have been weak, a consequence on the one hand of the great losses Bulgarians took in their wars against the Rus', and on the other of being surprised by the Byzantines, who unexpectedly turned from allies to invaders.

John Tzymiskes returned to the Byzantine capital and celebrated his victory over the Rus' and Bulgarians with a triumph. The city's inhabitants welcomed him with gifts of crowns and insignia made of gold

³⁰ Leo the Deacon, IX, 5 (transl. p. 192).

³¹ On the subject of the organisation of Bulgarian lands under Byzantine rule, see: M.J. Leszka, K. Marín, *Carstwo bułgarskie. Polityka – społeczeństwo – gospodarka – kultura, 866–971*, Warszawa 2015, pp. 197–199 (there further bibliography).

³² Leo the Deacon, IX, 12.

³³ John Skylitzes, p. 310.

and precious stones, and asked him to board a specially prepared wagon, decorated with gold and pulled by white horses. The emperor accepted the crowns and sceptres, and in return bestowed numerous gifts on the capital's inhabitants, but did not want to ride on the wagon. Instead, he placed upon the gilt throne located on the vehicle an icon of the Mother of God holding Christ on her hands, carried away from Preslav, and put before it the imperial robes and crowns of the Bulgarian rulers. Wearing a diadem, he followed the wagon on horseback, holding the received crowns and diadems in his hands. The procession went through the entire city, all the way to the Church of the Holy Wisdom, where after prayers of thanksgiving Tzymiskes offered the finest of the Bulgarian crowns to God, as a token offering of the plunder. He then made his way to the imperial palace, where tsar Boris was officially deprived of the insignia of imperial power, instead being honoured with the dignity of a *magister*³⁴. The official triumph of the Byzantine ruler put an end to the existence of an independent Bulgarian Tsardom in a highly symbolic fashion, in accordance with the Byzantine political ideology and a Divine blessing. The emperor's actions perfectly fit with the moves taken previously, such as renaming of the older Bulgarian centres, including the capital Preslav, or placing of his own *stratego*i in the strongholds in north-eastern Bulgaria. The steps taken in the capital were their continuation and complementation, and indeed their climax. Even the presence of the Preslavian icon of the Mother of God in Constantine's capital was intended to attest to the fundamental changes in the Byzantine-Bulgarian relations. The image had likely been the protector of the Bulgarian capital (following the Constantinopolitan model), and was taken as a result of the emperor's successful campaign.



³⁴ Leo the Deacon, IX, 12. According to John Skylitzes (p. 310) Boris was deprived of the insignia on the Forum of Constantine.