

III

Miroslaw J. Leszka
Kiril Marinow

Peace



1. Negotiations

The first and most important task faced by Peter after his rise to power was to establish peace with Byzantium. However, he and George Sursuvul, his guardian and advisor, did not decide to enter (continue?) the peace talks right away. Quite on the contrary, they renewed hostilities against Byzantium, with the purpose of strengthening their negotiating position during the future peace talks¹. Both sides of the conflict soon realized that the cost of continuing the war would be too high. Peter, taking advantage of his first victories, sent monk Kalokir² to present Romanos I Lekapenos

¹ In the summer, perhaps at the beginning of August, Bulgarian forces entered eastern Thrace. Cf. *Continuator of Theophanes*, p. 412; Т. Тодоров, *България през втората и третата четвърт на X век: политическа история*, София 2006 [unpublished PhD thesis], p. 123.

² *Continuator of Theophanes*, p. 412; John Skylitzes, p. 228. It is quite remarkable that his mission was to be carried out in secret; this may suggest that Peter and George were wary of how their troops might react to their plan. Kalokir carried a chrysobull, which must have contained the conditions upon which Bulgaria was prepared to conclude peace. On Kalokir's mission see: Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 123; П. Ангелов, *Духовници-дипломати в средновековна България*, SB 27, 2009, p. 145.

with the proposal of opening peace negotiations³; the emperor accepted the offer⁴. There is no reason to doubt that the peace talks were initiated by the Bulgarian ruler. Nor should we call into question that his move was well-prepared and carefully thought out⁵. The Bulgarian society was exhausted by the long period of wars waged by his father – sources record a severe famine suffered by the people and the threat posed by the country's neighbors⁶.

³ According to Byzantine chroniclers, one of the reasons which led the Bulgarian authorities to embrace a conciliatory approach towards Byzantium in 927 was the danger of invasion from Bulgaria's neighbors – the Croats, Turks (Hungarians) and others (Symeon Logothete, 136.46–47; Continuator of Theophanes, p. 412; John Skylitzes, p. 222). However these opinions do not bear scrutiny. The essential argument against them lies in the anti-Byzantine military operation itself: it could not have taken place if Bulgaria's other borders had not been secure. More to the point, the information about the simultaneous invasion by Bulgaria's neighbors would suggest the existence of a coalition created, in all probability, by the Byzantines, from whom the Bulgarians should also fear hostile actions. The existence of any agreement with the empire seems to be at odds with the Hungarians' rejection of the Byzantine proposal to form an alliance with the Pechenegs, which happened in the same year (G. Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, Budapest 1970, p. 54). Perhaps the only real move which the Byzantines did make was to spread rumors inside the Bulgarian court regarding Byzantium's military action against Bulgaria. Based on this interpretation, the Bulgarian operation against Byzantium could be interpreted in terms of a reaction to the news of the formation of an anti-Bulgarian coalition, that is, in terms of a demonstration of force and a proof that Symeon's ancestor was not afraid of Byzantium's intrigues. However, the Byzantine authorities' swift assent to the peace proposal, coupled with the absence of any anti-Bulgarian action by Bulgaria's neighbors both in that year and in the years that followed, prove that Bulgaria was not facing any external threat (И. Божилков, В. Гюзелев, *История на средновековна България VII–XIV в.*, София 2006, pp. 272–273; Х. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения през средновековието*, София 1998, pp. 71–72; Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 119; M.J. Leszka, K. Marín, *Carstwo bulgarskie. Polityka – społeczeństwo – gospodarka – kultura, 866–971*, Warszawa 2015, pp. 155–156, 167).

⁴ Continuator of Theophanes, p. 412.

⁵ However, it should be noted that this view is not universally accepted. Plamen Pavlov (П. Павлов, *Векът на цар Самуил*, София 2014, pp. 16–17), for example, claims that the relevant sources are tendentious, blowing things out of proportion. Thus, the theory holds that it was the Bulgarians who positively responded to the peace proposals put forward by the Byzantines. However, Pavlov seems to be going too far in his interpretation of the events.

⁶ Assuming that the sources do not draw on the topos referring to the circumstances of the peace concluded by khan Boris in the 860s, connected with his baptism

Peter knew he was left with no other option but to make peace – his father, who had not escalated the conflict with Byzantium for a few years, must have made him understand the need to end the war – but wanted its terms to be the most favorable for Bulgaria. As a way of suggesting his readiness to renew the war on a large scale, he decided to launch an attack upon Byzantine territory. The action he took was intended to force the Byzantines into concessions; besides, Peter may have wanted to strengthen his position within his own country, especially in view of the possible opposition from his brothers, whom he had removed from power. The conclusion of peace with Byzantium would have given him more freedom of action in Bulgaria, in addition to enabling him to secure Byzantine military support⁷. Romanos I Lekapenos, too, neither wanted to nor was able to continue this long war and was prepared to make the concessions that he had refused when dealing with Peter's father. It was certainly easier for the Byzantines to make peace with Peter than with his father, from whom they had suffered numerous defeats: Peter was a blank slate for them. It is hardly surprising that the author of the oration *On the Treaty with the Bulgarians* claimed that God had removed Symeon and replaced him with Peter to enable the latter to establish peace. In this way, Peter became a tool in God's hands⁸.

In response to Peter's peace proposal, Romanos I Lekapenos sent two envoys, the monk Theodosios Abukes and the court priest Constantine of Rhodes, to Mesembria, where peace talks were to be held. It was agreed that the final settlement would be negotiated in Constantinople. The Bulgarian delegation headed by George Sursuvul arrived in the Byzantine capital⁹;

(M.J. Leszka, K. Marinow, *Carstwo...*, p. 155, fn. 26). Cf. the reservations of И. Божилов, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, pp. 272–273; П. Павлов, *Векът...*, pp. 16–17.

⁷ M.J. Leszka, K. Marinow, *Carstwo...*, p. 155.

⁸ *On the Treaty with the Bulgarians*, 7, p. 264.159–177; 16–17, pp. 276.362–278.390; R.J.H. Jenkins, *The Peace with Bulgaria (927) Celebrated by Theodore Daphnopates*, [in:] *Polychronion. Festschrift F. Dölger*, ed. P. Wirth, Heidelberg 1966, pp. 293, 297; K. Marinow, *Not David but Salomon: Tsar Peter I (927–969) according to the Oration 'On the Treaty with the Bulgarians'* (in press).

⁹ Symeon Logothete, 136.46–47; Continuator of Theophanes, p. 412; John Skylitzes, p. 222. The Bulgarian delegation also included Symeon, *kalutarkan* and *sampsis* (κουλού τερκανός, καλού τερκάνος), who may have been husband

the envoys negotiated the preliminary terms of the prospective peace and informed Peter of the decisions taken during their negotiations.

2. Peace Treaty

Once it was given its final form, the peace treaty was signed. What were its provisions? Unfortunately, the text of the agreement itself is not extant; for this reason, we must rely on its approximate reconstruction¹⁰. The only thing we know for certain is that it provided for the marriage between the Bulgarian monarch and Maria, daughter of Christopher, Romanos I Lekapenos's son and co-ruler¹¹. It is also likely that the Byzantines would have recognized Peter's right to bear the title

of Symeon I the Great's sister, Anna; Stephen the Bulgarian (probably *kavkhan*), perhaps a nephew of the late tsar; as well as three dignitaries whose names remain unknown, namely the *kron* (κρόνος), *magotin* (μαγοτίνος) and *minik* (μηνικός). On the Bulgarian delegation see: В.Н. Златарски, *История...*, pp. 523–524. It should be stressed that the delegation consisted of men who were Peter's close collaborators, comprising the ruler's council (known as the *great bolyars*). On the course of the peace negotiations see: J. Shepard, *A marriage too far? Maria Lekapena and Peter of Bulgaria*, [in:] *The Empress Theophano. Byzantium and the West at the turn of the first millennium*, ed. A. Davids, Cambridge 1995, p. 122sq; И. Божилков, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, pp. 273–274; Т. Тодоров, *България...*, pp. 123–134.

¹⁰ The terms of the Bulgarian-Byzantine agreement of 927 are analyzed by: S. Penkov, *Bulgaro-Byzantine Treaties during the Early Middle Ages*, Pbg 5.3, 1981, pp. 48–49; В.Д. Николаев, *Значение договора 927 г. в истории болгаро-византийских отношений*, [in:] *Проблемы истории античности и средних веков*, ed. Ю.М. Сапрыкин, Москва 1982, pp. 89–105; J.V.A. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans: a Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century*, Ann Arbor 1983, pp. 160–162, 214–216; Е. Александров, *The International Treaties of Medieval Bulgaria (Legal Aspects)*, BHR 17.4, 1989, pp. 41, 42, 44, 48; Т. Тодоров, *България...*, pp. 127–133; S. Pirivatrić, *Some Notes on the Byzantine-Bulgarian Peace Treaty of 927*, *Bslov 2*, 2008, pp. 40–49; С. Звездов, *Договорът от 927 година между България и Византия*, *Н.ВЖЕ* 23.3, 2015, pp. 264–277.

¹¹ More on this event see in Part One, chapter IV, point 2 of the book.

of *basileus* (emperor of the Bulgarians)¹². Both sides agreed on the exchange of war prisoners – in particular, the Byzantine captives were to be allowed to return home¹³. The treaty must have addressed the issue of the border between the two states, although scholars are not in agreement as to how this issue was resolved. Most subscribe to the view that the border was redrawn along the same line that had separated the two states before 913, which means that the empire regained the lands it had lost as a result of the defeats following the battle of Anchialos in 917¹⁴. It can also be assumed that the agreement contained provisions regarding the tribute to be paid to the Bulgarians (a point traditionally addressed in Bulgarian-Byzantine treaties)¹⁵,

¹² βασιλεὺς Βουλγάρων/Βουλγαρίας – cf. Г. Б а к а л о в, *Средновековният български владетел. Титулатура и инсигнии*, ²София 1995, pp. 169–172; Г. А т а н а с о в, *Инсигниите на средновековните български владетели. Корони, скиптри, сфери, оръжия, костюми, накити*, Плевен 1999, pp. 96–99; А. Н и к о л о в, *Политическа мисъл в ранносредновековна България (средата на IX–края на X в.)*, София 2006, p. 234; Т. Т о д о р о в, *Владетелският статут и титла на цар Петър I след октомври 927 г.: писмени сведения и сфрагистични данни (сравнителен анализ)*, [in:] *Юбилеен сборник. Сто години от рождението на д-р Васил Хараланов (1907–2007)*, Шумен 2008, pp. 93–108.

¹³ Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *On the Governance of the Empire*, 13, p. 74 (159–160): *so many Christian prisoners were ransomed* (transl. p. 75). Such a provision is alluded to in the oration *On the Treaty with the Bulgarians*, 5, p. 260.105–110. See also: Т. Т о д о р о в, *България...*, pp. 128, 139; M.J. L e s z k a, K. M a r i n o w, *Carstwo...*, p. 155; K. M a r i n o w, *Византийската имперска идея и претенциите на цар Симеон според словото “За мира с българите”* КМС 25, 2016, p. 347, fn. 25.

¹⁴ The issue is discussed in detail by Petar Koledarov (П. К о л е д а р о в, *Политическа география на средновековната българска държава*, vol. I, *От 681 до 1018 г.*, София 1979, pp. 50–51). A different opinion is expressed by Plamen Pavlov (П. П а в л о в, *Векът...*, p. 20), according to whom the Bulgarians returned to the Byzantines only those territories that formed something of a temporary military zone (for example, the fortress of Vize), while the empire preserved the areas extending from the Strandzha mountains in the east to Ras (today's Novi Pazar in Serbia) in the west, including such centers as Vodena, Moglena, Kastoria and others; Byzantium also retained parts of the so-called Thessalonike Plain, northern Epiros, as well as today's Albania and Kosovo. See also: Т. Т о д о р о в, *България...*, pp. 127–128; M.J. L e s z k a, K. M a r i n o w, *Carstwo...*, p. 155, fn. 33.

¹⁵ A hint of such an obligation is to be found in a passage from the work by Leo the Deacon, where the author mentions that the Bulgarians called for Nikephoros II Phokas to pay *the customary tribute* (IV, 5; transl. p. 109). Some scholars (S. R u n c i m a n,

principles regulating trade relations between the two countries¹⁶ as well as Bulgaria's (and perhaps also Byzantium's) obligation to provide the ally with military assistance¹⁷.

In addition, the 927 treaty is believed to have covered a number of religious issues. The Bulgarian church was granted full autonomy and the archbishop who stood at its head was given the right to bear the title of patriarch¹⁸.

Furthermore, Todor Todorov recently formulated an interesting view concerning the Byzantine-Bulgarian negotiations held in Constantinople in October 927. The scholar is of the opinion that two distinct documents were signed during that time: the peace treaty, resolving the political conflicts between the Empire and Bulgaria, as well as a distinct marriage arrangement. What issues were addressed in the latter? Todorov is inclined to believe that the provisions regarding the marriage introduced a fundamental change in the status of the Bulgarian ruler in relation to

The Emperor..., p. 99; J.A.V. Fine, *The Early...*, p. 181) claimed that under the 927 treaty, Byzantium, instead of paying an annual tribute, agreed to transfer a certain amount of money for Maria, Peter's wife, each year. It seems that Todor Todorov (Т. Тодоров, *България...*, pp. 129–130) is right in claiming that until Maria's death, the Byzantines' commitment to pay her a certain amount of money existed side by side with their obligation regarding the annual tribute.

¹⁶ There is no overt evidence to confirm that trade issues were dealt with in the agreement in question, but bearing in mind the fact that these issues were under dispute at the beginning of Symeon's reign, and that they were also responsible for the outbreak of the war in 894–896 to some extent, their omission from the treaty would be unexpected. Cf. Т. Тодоров, *България...*, pp. 130–131.

¹⁷ Д. Стоименов, *Към договора между България и Византия от 927 г.*, Век 17.6, 1988, pp. 19–22. According to this author, the existence of the military alliance is attested to by the Bulgarians' participation in the campaigns carried out by the Byzantines against the Arabs in the years 954–955 and 958. Doubts as to the Bulgarians' participation in these campaigns have been raised by Todorov (Т. Тодоров, *България...*, pp. 131–132). The fact mentioned in support of the existence of the alliance is that Nikephoros II Phokas called for the Bulgarians to stop the Hungarian invasions of the lands of the empire (John Zonaras, XVI, 27, 14–15, p. 513) This argument, too, is open to debate, cf. Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 132. Although the arguments in favor of the view that the 927 treaty involved provisions regarding military assistance are insecure, the inclusion of this issue in the treaty cannot be entirely excluded.

¹⁸ More about this aspect of the peace treaty see in Part Two, chapter VII, point 1 of the book.

the emperors in Constantinople and determined the rank of the envoys sent to the Bosphoros from Preslav. In addition, the document may have resolved the issue of Maria Lekapene's dowry, which was given the form of an annual financial subsidy to be paid by Constantinople to the Bulgarian tsaritsa throughout her life¹⁹.

* * *

Concluding considerations regarding the terms of the treaty of 927, one may say that the resolutions agreed at the time must have been satisfactory to both sides, as evidenced by the fact that they became the foundation of a lasting peace.



¹⁹ Т. Тодоров, *България...*, р. 133.