

## VI

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# Foreign Policy



Peter's foreign policy, calculated to maintain Bulgarian territories without the need for involvement in armed conflicts, was for the most part successful until the mid-960s, that is, throughout the entirety of Maria Lekapene's presence at the court in Preslav. The Serbian issue is considered to be its only more serious failure. For chronological reasons, it is from this question that we will begin the analysis of the international standing of Bulgaria during the era of Peter's reign.

### 1. The Serbian Question

During the beginnings of tsar Peter's reign there was a change in the nature of the Bulgarian-Serbian relations. In order to better understand what happened during that time, we will devote some attention to the relations between the two southern Slavic states during the final phase of the reign of Symeon I the Great, who during that time had undertaken certain steps to subjugate the Serbs.

A Bulgarian intervention in Serbia took place in most likely 923. It was a consequence of changing of sides by Pavle of Serbia, son of Bran, who was until then a Bulgarian ally. For reasons unknown, and in unclear circumstances, he has sided with the Byzantines. In this situation, Symeon decided to remove him from the throne and replace him with yet another nominee of his choosing. Zacharias, son of Pribislav, having been held by the Bulgarian ruler for several years, became this candidate. Thanks to Bulgarian support he was able to remove Pavle. Having attained power, however, the new ruler of Serbia rejected his alliance with Bulgarians and approached the Empire instead. A few years earlier Zacharias was Romanos Lekapenos' candidate for the ruler of Rashka<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps this change of loyalties that Symeon had not anticipated was due to personal reasons (Zacharias' long stay in Constantinople could have resulted in strong ties with the imperial court; it was the Bulgarian ruler who previously prevented him from taking the Serbian throne and kept him prisoner in Preslav). Perhaps it was an attempt of gaining independence with Byzantine aid. However, we do not have any sources that would allow us to verify these hypotheses. Regardless of what motives were behind Zacharias' decision, he must have expected Symeon's reaction to his protege's betrayal. The Bulgarian ruler sent against him an army led by Marmais and Theodore Sigritzes. Their expedition ended in complete fiasco, the clearest proof of which was the death of both Marmais and Sigritzes. Their heads, as Constantine Porphyrogennetos informs, were sent along with weapons to Constantinople as proof of victory<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *On the Governance of the Empire*, 32, p. 158. On the subject of this event cf. also: Константин VII Порфирогенит, *Спис о народима*, [in:] FBHPJS, vol. II, p. 55, fn. 184–185; И. Божилов, *Цар Симеон Велики (893–927). Златният век на Средновековна България*, София 1983, p. 138; J.A.V. Fine, *The Early Medieval Balkans. A Critical Survey from the Sixth to the Late Twelfth Century*, Ann Arbor 1983, p. 152; Т. Живковић, *Јужни Словени под византијском влашћу 600–1025*, Београд 2002, p. 416. On Zacharias – Т. Живковић, *Портрети владара раног средњег века. Од Властимира до Борића*, Београд 2006, pp. 57–63.

<sup>2</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *On the Governance of the Empire*, 32, p. 158.

In response to the events in Serbia Symeon decided to organise another expedition against Zacharias (924?)<sup>3</sup>, accompanied by another candidate to the Serbian throne. This time it was Chaslav, son of Klonimir and a Bulgarian woman whose name we do not know<sup>4</sup>. Hearing the news of the approaching Bulgarian army, Zacharias abandoned Rashka and fled to Croatia. Bulgarians took control of Serbia and, what is noteworthy, did not place Chaslav on the throne<sup>5</sup>, but subjected it to their own governance. Part of the Serbian populace was relocated into Bulgaria. It is clear, then, that Symeon drew conclusions from his previous policy towards Serbia. Maintaining an alliance by placing his own candidate on its throne did not work; in this situation the only way of maintaining influence in Rashka was to incorporate it into Bulgarian state. Perhaps this move was partially influenced by the tense relations with Croatia<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Also in this case the dating of the Bulgarian expedition can be argued either way. It may have taken place in 924 or 925, perhaps even in 926 (thus e.g. Т. Ж и в к о в и ђ, *Јужни Словени...*, p. 419, fn. 1423). The Bulgarian troops were led according to Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos by (C o n s t a n t i n e V I I P o r p h y r o g e n n e t o s, *On the Governance of the Empire*, 32, p. 158): Kninos (Κνήνος), Himnikos (Ημνῆκος), Itzboklias (Ητζβόκλιας). Constantine's relation suggests that these were the names of Bulgarian commanders. Most likely, however, these were names of positions or dignities – В.Н. З л а т а р с к и, *История на българската държава през средните векове*, vol. I/2, *Първо българско царство. От славянизацията на държавата до падането на Първото царство*, София 1927, pp. 475–476, fn. 1. On the subject of Ημνῆκος cf. also Т. С л а в о в а, *Владетел и администрация в ранносредновековна България. Филологически аспекти*, София 2010, pp. 105–109.

<sup>4</sup> About this Serbian ruler – Т. Ж и в к о в и ђ, *Портрети...*, pp. 49–57.

<sup>5</sup> It seems Chaslav was used in order to neutralise any stronger opposition from the Serbian notables, who may have given up their support for their current ruler Zacharias more easily knowing that he will be replaced with their compatriot. C o n s t a n t i n e V I I P o r p h y r o g e n n e t o s (*On the Governance of the Empire*, 32, p. 158) writes that Serbian *zhupans* were summoned under the pretext of acknowledging a new ruler, only to be subsequently imprisoned by the Bulgarians. Chaslav, meanwhile, was transported to Bulgaria, where he remained until the end of Symeon's reign and throughout the beginning of Peter's.

<sup>6</sup> Т. Т о д о р о в, *България през втората и третата четвърт на Х в. Политическа история*, София 2006 [unpublished PhD thesis], p. 196.

In the beginning of tsar Peter's reign Chaslav left Bulgaria and journeyed to the Serbian lands. The only author to mention this was Constantine Porphyrogenetos. Due to its unique nature, we will quote the account in full:

Seven years afterwards Tzeëslav escaped from Bulgarians with four others, and entered Serbia from Preslav, and found in the country no more than fifty men only, without wives or children, who supported themselves by hunting. With these he took possession of the country and sent message to the emperor of the Romans asking for his support and succour, and promising to serve him and be obedient to his command, as had been the princes before him. And thenceforward the emperor of the Romans continually benefit him, so that the Serbs living in Croatia and Bulgaria and the rest of the countries, whom Symeon had scattered, rallied to him when they heard of it. Moreover many had escaped from Bulgaria and entered Constantinople, and these the emperor of Romans clad and comforted and sent to Tzeëslav.<sup>7</sup>

This passage was examined many times already, however not all the questions it raises have been settled. The first of these is the dating of Chaslav's departure from Preslav. Scholarly works place it between 928 and 933/934<sup>8</sup>. This chronological quandary is a consequence of two uncertainties. Firstly, it is unclear from which point one should count the seven years (even leaving aside the question of how accurate that information is). Secondly, the dating of the events marking the opening point of this situation is ambiguous as well. George Ostrogorsky dated Chaslav's departure from Bulgaria to 928, thinking that Constantine Porphyrogenetos counted the seven years from Zacharias' bid for power

<sup>7</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *On the Governance of the Empire*, 32, pp. 158, 160 (transl. – pp. 159, 161).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Г. Острогорски, *Порфиrogenитова хроника српских владара и њени хронолошки подаци*, [in:] *иде м, Сабране дела Георгија Острогорског*, vol. IV, *Византија и словени*, Београд 1970, pp. 84–86; И. Божилов, В. Гюзелев, *История на средновековна България. VII–XIV в.*, София 2006, p. 279; Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 194.

in Serbia (920/921)<sup>9</sup>. Other scholars saw the beginning of the seven year period in the transferring of the Serbian lands under direct Bulgarian rule and imprisonment of Chaslav in Preslav. Due to differences in dating of this event (between 924 and 926) scholars pointed to years between 931 and 933<sup>10</sup> as the moment during which Chaslav left Bulgaria. This question cannot be resolved, although we are leaning towards the dating which takes as its starting point the imposition of direct control over Serbia by Symeon (most likely in 924), because of the logic of Constantine Porphyrogenetos's argument<sup>11</sup>. It needs to be pointed out, however, that from the perspective of Chaslav's actions and their results, the significance of when exactly he left Preslav is secondary. It will suffice to say that it happened during the first years of tsar Peter's reign.

Constantine Porphyrogenetos presented Chaslav's actions, which ultimately resulted in regaining of independence by Serbs, albeit with the acknowledgement of Byzantium's authority. According to the learned emperor, the Serbian prince acted against the will and interests of the Bulgarian ruler, whose oversight he managed to evade, and achieved success thanks to the Byzantine emperor's support. Modern scholars fairly universally accept this version of events as true, stressing that the loss of Serbian lands during the early years of Peter's reign was a major

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<sup>9</sup> Г. Острогорски, *Порфиrogenитова...*, pp. 84–86. G. Ostrogorsky's supposition was accepted by, i.a.: И. Дуичев, *Отношенията между южните славяни и Византия през X–XII в.*, [in:] *idem*, *Избрани произведения*, vol. I, *Византия и славянския свят*, София 1998, pp. 64–65; P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's Balkan Frontier. A Political Study of the Northern Balkans, 900–1204*, Cambridge 2000, p. 27; Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 194. Criticism of this view – Т. Живковић, *Јужни...*, p. 421, fn. 1428.

<sup>10</sup> И. Божилков, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, p. 279; Т. Живковић, *Јужни...*, p. 421. A compromise solution was recently proposed by Plamen Pavlov (П. Павлов, *Години на мир и "ратни беди" (927–1018)*, [in:] Г. Атанасов, В. Вачкова, П. Павлов, *Българска национална история*, vol. III, *Първо българско царство (680–1018)*, Велико Търново 2015, p. 422) according to whom Chaslav's flight took place in 928, and the Byzantines extended help to him in 931.

<sup>11</sup> It would seem the learned emperor is writing about the seven years in the context of Chaslav. The latter most recently appeared in Constantine Porphyrogenetos's narrative in a passage devoted to occupation of Serbian lands by Bulgarians.

setback for the tsar<sup>12</sup>. It would seem, however, that one may have certain doubts as to the veracity of this account. Caution is advised due to the clear hostility of Constantine Porphyrogennetos towards Bulgarians. The issue was discussed some time ago by Gennadiy G. Litavrin<sup>13</sup>. The emperor, it would seem, negatively evaluated the 927 peace treaty between Bulgaria and Byzantium. He expressed it through criticism of the marriage, arranged as a result of the conclusion of peace, between tsar Peter and Maria, daughter of Christopher and granddaughter of Romanos Lekapenos<sup>14</sup>.

Constantine Porphyrogennetos formulated a view, *nota bene* contrary to some of the facts he presented, that the Serbian ruler was never subject to the prince of Bulgaria, and always accepted the authority of the Byzantine emperor<sup>15</sup>. With such attitude of the emperor one might

<sup>12</sup> M.J. Leszka, K. Marín, *Carstwo bułgarskie. Polityka – społeczeństwo – gospodarka – kultura. 866–971*, Warszawa 2015, p. 154.

<sup>13</sup> Г. Литаврин, *Константин Багрянородный о Болгарии и Болгарах*, [in:] *Сборник в чест на акад. Димитър Ангелов*, ed. В. Велков, София 1994, pp. 30–37; cf. Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 195.

<sup>14</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *On the Governance of the Empire*, 13, p. 72. Cf. 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, pp. 121–149; Т. Тодоров, *Константин Багренородни и династичният брак между владетелските домове на Преслав и Константинопол от 927 г.*, ПКШ 7, 2003, pp. 391–398; А. Парон, “Trzeba, abyś tymi oto słowami odparł i to niedorzeczne żądanie” – wokół *De administrando imperio* Konstantyna VII, [in:] *Causa creandi. O pragmatyce źródła historycznego*, ed. S. Rosik, P. Wiśniewski, Wrocław 2005, pp. 345–361; В. Гузев, *Значението на брака на цар Петър (927–969) с ромейката Мария-Ирина Лакапина (911–962)*, [in:] *Културните текстове на миналото – носители, символи, идеи*, vol. I, *Текстовете на историята, история на текстовете. Материали от Юбилейната международна конференция в чест на 60-годишнината на проф. д.и.н. Казимир Попконстантинов, Велико Търново, 29–31 октомври 2003 г.*, София 2005, pp. 27–33; Z. A. Brzozowska, *Rola caruzy Marii-Ireny Lekapeny w recepcji elementów bizantyńskiego modelu władzy w państwie bułgarskim*, VP 66, 2016, pp. 443–458; eadem, *Cesarzowa Bułgarów, Augusta i Bazylisa – Maria-Irena Lekapena i transfer bizantyńskiej idei kobiecy-władczyni (imperial feminine) w średniowiecznej Bułgarii*, SMer 17, 2017, pp. 1–28.

<sup>15</sup> T. Živković (*De conversion...*, p. 178) thinks that this passage *had originally belonged to the Constantine's primary source on the Serbs*. Even if this was so, the learned emperor fully shared the view about the Serbs being subject to Byzantium. The topic

expect that he presented the story of Chaslav's departure from Preslav and his return to Serbian lands in a manner unfavourable to Bulgarians and highlighting the prince's subordination to Byzantium, thanks to which he was able to take over Serbia.

Todor Todorov<sup>16</sup> also pointed out that the learned emperor's narrative about the Serbs ended with this event. It is doubtful indeed that no further information concerning the Serbian ruler in the following two decades would have reached the emperor, particularly when the ruler in question acknowledged the emperor's authority. This may indicate (a thought that the Bulgarian scholar did not state clearly) that the subsequent fate of the Serbs (until the time when *On the Governance of the Empire* was written) was omitted by the emperor as it would have starkly clashed with the statement about Serbs' subordination to Byzantium. Nonetheless, it cannot be ruled out that the reason for the narrative's sudden end was not intentional, and that chapter 32 was simply not finished, like the vast majority of chapters in the work of Constantine Porphyrogenetos<sup>17</sup>.

Aside from the story's timbre, our doubts may be raised by some of its particular details. It is difficult, in our opinion, to imagine that Bulgarians would have allowed Chaslav, with a group of his companions, to flee Preslav. The story is strikingly similar to an implausible account according to which Byzantines have taken John, Peter's brother, away from Preslav, without the latter's agreement<sup>18</sup>. The Serbian prince was, one might presume, too important and potentially dangerous to Bulgarian interests in Serbia to have been left without adequate guard.

It would also be difficult to accept as truth that the Byzantines, soon after concluding peace that put an end to a lengthy armed struggle with Bulgaria, would have taken the risk of entering a new conflict with tsar Peter – which, after all, could have led to renewed military operations. The

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appeared several times in the earlier parts of chapter 32, although without the Bulgarian context (Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *On the Governance of the Empire*, 32, pp. 152, 154, 158).

<sup>16</sup> Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 195.

<sup>17</sup> T. Živković, *De conversione...*, pp. 23–24.

<sup>18</sup> Symeon Magister, 136.60; Continuator of Theophanes, p. 419; John Skylitzes, p. 225.



description of taking control of Serbian lands by Chaslav likewise appears far from truth and heavily manipulated in order to highlight Byzantium's role. The text states that after arriving on Serbian lands Chaslav encountered no more than *fifty men only, without wives or children, who supported themselves by hunting*<sup>19</sup>, and it was only thanks to the Byzantine emperor's support that he managed to encourage Serbs to return to their country.

The doubts presented above allow, one might think, to view Chaslav's departure from the Bulgarian capital in a different light. It cannot be ruled out that he returned to Serbian lands with an agreement, or perhaps even at the behest of tsar Peter, with Byzantine aid. At the time when a permanent Bulgarian-Byzantine alliance was in effect, Serbian lands ceased to be an area of rivalry between the two states. One might add that the Croatian threat has been neutralised<sup>20</sup>, that threat having been one of the reasons why in the past Symeon decided to introduce direct

<sup>19</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *On the Governance of the Empire*, 32, p. 158 (transl. p. 159). This fragment is in accord with an earlier passage of *On the Governance of the Empire*, stating that after the Bulgarian expedition of 924 *the country was left deserted* (trans. p. 159). One has to agree with Evgeniy P. Naumov (Е.П. Наумов, *Становление и развитие сербской раннефеодальной государственности*, [in:] *Раннефеодальные государства на Балканах. VI–XII вв.*, ed. Г.Г. Литаврин, Москва 1985, pp. 201–208; cf. Константин Багрянородный, *Об управлении империей*, ed. Г.Г. Литаврин, А.П. Новосельцев, Москва 1991, p. 382, fn. 48), that this is most certainly an exaggeration. Constantine Porphyrogenetos thus deprecated the subjugation of Serbia to Bulgaria. On the Serbian prisoners of war in Bulgaria – Y.M. Hristov, *Prisoners of War in Early Medieval Bulgaria (Preliminary reports)*, SCer. 5, 2015, pp. 90–91; idem, *Военнопленниците в българо-сръбските отношения през ранно средновековие*, Епо 23.1, 2015, pp. 86–98. Cf. also remarks about the lack of Bulgarian garrisons in Serbia – П. Коматина, *О сръско-бугарској граници у IX и X в.*, ЗРВИ 52, 2015, p. 36.

<sup>20</sup> The sources lack information about Bulgarian-Croatian fighting at the beginning of Peter's reign, there is only information about anti-Bulgarian coalition which also included Croatia, which, as is known, did not take any action (Continuator of Theophanes, p. 412; John Skylitzes, p. 221; John Zonaras, p. 473). It is thought that a peace treaty was concluded between Bulgaria and Croatia, as a result of activity of the papal legates Madalbert and John. Cf. И. Дуйчев, *Отношенията...*, p. 63; D. Mandić, *Croatian King Tomislav defeated Bulgarian Emperor Symeon the Great on May 27, 927*, JCrS 1, 1960, pp. 32–43; Т. Живковић, *Јужни...*, p. 419, fn. 1423; M.J. Leszka, *Symeon I Wielki a Bizancjum. Z dziejów stosunków bulgarsko-bizantyńskich w latach 893–927*, Łódź 2013, pp. 223–224; Т. Тодоров, *България...*, pp. 116, 196.



Bulgarian rule over Serbian lands. It could be said that tsar Peter returned to the policy of enthroning rulers friendly to Bulgaria in Serbia. Chaslav, a half-Bulgarian, may have given hope that he would act according to Bulgarian interests which were not contrary to those of the Byzantines<sup>21</sup>.

Our knowledge of Chaslav's reign is practically non-existent, aside perhaps for its finale. In the work of the so-called Priest of Duklja we find a Serbian ruler named Chaslav<sup>22</sup> who is identified with Chaslav from *On the Governance of the Empire*. It is known that he fought with Hungarians and, after initial successes, he was defeated and imprisoned in Srem<sup>23</sup>. He was then to have been drowned by them in the river Sava. The Serbian-Hungarian conflict is considered by some scholars to be a consequence of the Serbian alliance with Byzantium against a Bulgarian-Hungarian coalition<sup>24</sup>. The very existence of the latter, however, is far from obvious. On the contrary, it seems that at least until the early 940s Bulgaria and Byzantium had a common policy towards the Hungarians, who threatened both of the states<sup>25</sup>. In fighting Hungarians, the Serbs were promoting not only Byzantine, but also Bulgarian interests<sup>26</sup>. Chaslav's death occurred ca. 943/944<sup>27</sup> and one might think that at least until that time (and possibly until the end of tsar Peter's reign) Serbia maintained ties with both Bulgaria and Byzantium<sup>28</sup>.

<sup>21</sup> Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 196.

<sup>22</sup> Priest of Duklja. Analysis of the Priest of Duklja's relation about Chaslav – vol. II, pp. 204–209.

<sup>23</sup> It is not certain whether the cited author had in mind the Srem settlement, or the region. Cf. *Historia Królestwa Słowian czyli Latopis Popa Duklanina*, transl., ed. J. Leśny, Warszawa 1988, p. 152, fn. 135.

<sup>24</sup> Х. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения (927–1019)*, ИПр 50/51.2, 1994/1995, pp. 6–7; idem, *Българо-унгарски отношения през средновековието*, София 1998, pp. 73–74.

<sup>25</sup> This view is presented by Todorov (Т. Тодоров, *България...*, pp. 197–201), supporting it with strong arguments.

<sup>26</sup> Е.П. Наумов, [in:] Константин Бягрянородный, *Об управлении империей...*, p. 382, fn. 53; Т. Живковић, *Јужни...*, p. 422; Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 199; П. Павлов, *Година на мир...*, p. 428.

<sup>27</sup> Т. Живковић, *Јужни...*, pp. 422; 423; idem, *Портрети...*, p. 72. Other dates of Chaslav's death are also present in the scholarly works – e.g. Х. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения през средновековието*, София 1998, p. 74 (between 950 and 960).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. remarks of Т. Živković (*On the Northern Borders of Serbia in Early Middle Ages*, [in:] idem, *The South Slavs between East and West. 550–1150*, Belgrade

## 2. Hungarians

According to the Byzantine chroniclers, one of the reasons which caused the Bulgarian government to adopt an amicable policy towards Byzantium was to have been the threat of an invasion by the neighbouring peoples. The sources mention by name primarily the Croats, the Turks (Hungarians), and the Serbs<sup>29</sup>. However, the claims of these authors (who were dependent on one another) do not stand up to scrutiny. The main argument against them is the anti-Byzantine military action undertaken by Peter and George Sursuvul, which would not have happened if the borders of the Bulgarian states had not been secure. This is particularly the case when one considers that the information of a concerted military action by Bulgaria's neighbours would have indicated the existence of some form of a coalition that would have likely been organised by the Byzantines – as it was also their actions that the Bulgarians supposedly feared. The idea of any kind of such an agreement with the Empire seems to be countered by the Hungarians' rejection, in the same year, of the Byzantine proposal to enter into an agreement with the Pechenegs<sup>30</sup>. Perhaps, then, the only real move on the part of Constantinople was the spreading of some rumours at the Bulgarian court about a possible anti-Bulgarian military action that was, supposedly, being planned. In such case, the Bulgarian ruler's armed expedition could be seen as a reaction to the information about this alleged coalition. A show of force on the

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2008, p. 255) on the subject of Belo, the legendary successor to Chaslav (Priest of Duklja, LXXII).

<sup>29</sup> Symeon Magister, 136.46–47 (Croats); Continuator of Theophanes, p. 412 (Croats, Turks); John Skylitzes, p. 228 (Croats, Turks, Serbs). As can be seen from the above, the Serbs only appear in Skylitzes, a source that is much later than the other two. In the context of the considerations presented above regarding Chaslav, one should cast doubt on Skylitzes' relation regarding the possible participation of Serbs in this coalition. It is worth remembering that at the time of Symeon's death they were subordinated to Bulgarians. It would seem that this is another argument in favour of the view that the anti-Bulgarian coalition from 927 is merely an invention of Byzantine sources.

<sup>30</sup> G. Moravcsik, *Byzantium and the Magyars*, Budapest 1970, p. 54.

part of Symeon's descendant would have indicated that he did not fear the Roman scheming. However, a quick and decisive agreement of the Byzantine government to the proposed peace treaty, combined with the lack of information about any kind of raid of foreign peoples on Bulgaria during that year, and the next few to follow, clearly attests to the lack of any real external threat<sup>31</sup>.

The matter of relations between Bulgaria and Hungary during Peter's reign is far from being settled for good, the main difficulty stemming from the problem of establishing the relations of the latter with Byzantium. It is known that the Hungarians from time to time organised looting expeditions into the Byzantine Empire's territories. The earliest such undertakings recorded in the sources date to April of 934, when the raiders were said to have plundered eastern Thrace and reached Constantinople<sup>32</sup>, and taken numerous hostages. Romanos Lekapenos did not undertake a military action against the raiders, and instead decided to negotiate the release of the Byzantine captives from the Hungarians. The negotiations were handled by the *protovestiarios* and *patrician* Theophanes, who arranged for an exchange of captives, while supposedly gaining the Hungarians' respect in the process<sup>33</sup>. The next raid took place in 943. At that time the Hungarians most likely also reached Attica and the Corinthian Isthmus. As previously, the matter of their withdrawal from the Byzantine lands was not resolved on a battlefield, but through negotiation, once again conducted by patrician Theophanes<sup>34</sup>. This period of somewhat arbitral resolution of the Hungarian raids came to an end during the late 950s, just prior to Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos's

<sup>31</sup> И. Божил ов, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, pp. 272–273; Х. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения...*, pp. 71–72.

<sup>32</sup> G. Moravcsik, *Byzantium...*, pp. 55–56; В. Тъпкова-Займова, *Цар Петър. Вътрешно- и външнополитическа дейност*, [in:] *История на България в четиринадесет тома*, vol. II, *Първо българска държава*, ed. Д. Ангелов, София 1981, p. 372; И. Божил ов, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, p. 290; Х. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения...*, pp. 72–73.

<sup>33</sup> Continuator of Theophanes, pp. 422–423.

<sup>34</sup> Continuator of Theophanes, pp. 430–431. G. Moravcsik, *Byzantium...*, p. 56; T. Antonopoulos, *Byzantium, the Magyar Raids and Their Consequences*, Bsl 54, 1993, p. 260.

death. The 959 expedition of the Hungarians ended in their defeat at the hands of the Byzantine army commanded by Pothos Argyros<sup>35</sup>. The following Hungarian raid, in 960, ended in a similar fashion. This time the Hungarians were stopped by the *domestikos of the West*, Leo Phokas (the Younger)<sup>36</sup>. The year 961 brought another Hungarian raid on Thrace. *Continuation of Theophanes* states that the Hungarians were defeated by patrician Marianos Argyros<sup>37</sup>. It would seem that the Hungarians became active once more only near the end of Nikephoros Phokas's reign. While we do not have information about specific expeditions, even if one were to ignore Nikephoros's accusations laid at Peter's door – that he allowed the Hungarian troops to pass through his lands on the way to Byzantium<sup>38</sup>, the same is attested in a relation by Liudprand of Cremona, who was staying in Constantinople in 968. The bishop mentioned that during Nikephoros's reign, Hungarians have taken captive 500 Byzantines from the area of Thessalonike, and carried them away into their lands. He also mentioned the activity of a 200 strong Hungarian troop in the vicinity of Constantinople. Forty of the warriors from this unit were taken into captivity by the Byzantines; they were subsequently incorporated into the emperor's guard<sup>39</sup>. Liudprand also related that the Byzantines did not allow him to leave Constantinople, claiming that Arabs held dominion over the sea, while Hungarians – over the land. While the author of the *Legatio* claimed that this was not true<sup>40</sup>, the fact that such a pretext was used attests that it must have been at least plausible.

<sup>35</sup> Continuator of Theophanes, pp. 462–463; T. Antonopoulos, *Byzantium...*, p. 261; cf. X. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения...*, pp. 75, 86 (fn. 27).

<sup>36</sup> Leo the Deacon, pp. 18–19; *Life of Athanasios of Athos*, p. 74; cf. П. Мутафчиев, *Маджарите и българо-византийските отношения през третата четвърт на X в.*, [in:] *idem*, *Избрани произведения*, vol. II, София 1973, pp. 457–458; X. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения...*, pp. 75, 87 (fn. 29–31). On Leo Phokas – I. Burić, *Porodica Foka*, ЗРВИ 17, 1976, pp. 253–254.

<sup>37</sup> Continuator of Theophanes, p. 480. Cf. В.Н. Златарски, *История...*, p. 568; П. Мутафчиев, *Маджарите...*, p. 458; X. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения...*, pp. 75, 87 (fn. 33).

<sup>38</sup> John Zonaras, XVI, 27, p. 513.

<sup>39</sup> Liudprand of Cremona, *Embassy*, 45; cf. G. Moravcsik, *Byzantium...*, p. 59.

<sup>40</sup> Liudprand of Cremona, *Embassy*, 46.

How the looting raids mentioned above are linked to Bulgaria? Hungarians, to reach Byzantine lands from their homeland, after crossing the Danube, were most likely to have moved along the *via militaris* (along the Belgrade–Naissos–Sredets–Philippoupolis route), and therefore through Bulgarian territory, over ca. 600 km.

The route taken by the Magyars through the Bulgarian territory was rather specific. First, between Belgrade and Naissos, it cut through a densely forested area, the so-called *Silva Bulgarica*. Soon after passing Naissos, it entered a mountainous region, and run along small ravines, all the way until the Sofia Valley, the central point of which was Sredets (the ancient Serdica). Following from there it entered a mountainous region several tens of kilometres long and, having crossed the Ihtiman Pass, it finally entered the lowland areas of the northern Thrace, with its main centre in Plovdiv. From here, it was not far to the Byzantine border and the more densely populated Aegean areas<sup>41</sup>.

It should be noted that the central areas of the Bulgarian state, with the highest population density and the capital Preslav, were located at a considerable distance from this route, and were furthermore protected from the south and south-west by the mountain ranges – Stara Planina and Sredna Gora.

The attitude of the Bulgarian ruler appears to suggest that either along the entirety of the discussed part of the famed military road, with the exception of the larger urban centres, the network of settlements was poorly developed, or the Preslav's ruler, not feeling strong enough to stop the hostile raids, was prepared to sacrifice the small local settlements for the price of not having to engage in military action, which could result in even greater losses. He likely counted on the larger strongholds' ability to withstand the raid, or was aware that the Hungarians were not interested in besieging them.

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<sup>41</sup> On the subject of this route, see i.a.: K.J. Jirěček, *Die Heerstrasse von Belgrad nach Constantinopel und die Balkanpässe. Eine Historisch-Geographische Studie*, Prag 1877; П. Мутафчиев, *Старият друм през "Траянови врата"*, СБАН.КИФ 55, 27, 1937, pp. 19–148; F. Dall'Aglia, "In ipsa silva longissima Bulgariae": *Western chroniclers of the Crusades and the Bulgarian forest*, BMd 1, 2010, pp. 403–416.

The situation along the aforementioned route during the eleventh–twelfth centuries appears to confirm the first of the above hypotheses – while the road was exceptionally convenient, the human habitation along its length was not particularly prominent, and perhaps it was even – because of those using it – purposefully neglected to a degree at some stages<sup>42</sup>.

In considering the above question we may be, however, submitting ourselves to the dictate of the Byzantine authors, who after all only noted those of the Hungarian expeditions that reached the empire's territories, while ignoring the raids that only affected Bulgarian lands<sup>43</sup>. Besides, this is also indicated by the Bulgarian reply to the accusation that the raiders were let through the Tsardom's territory, which resulted in them reaching the Byzantine areas – the Bulgarians, on many occasions, unsuccessfully asked the Byzantines for military aid to fight the Magyars. This may be an indication that Bulgaria was raided more frequently than Byzantium.

Hungarians were a factor that Peter needed to somehow account for throughout the entirety of his reign. What was Peter's attitude towards them? The answer to this question, for the lack of sufficient light that would be shed on this issue by the sources, is formulated in a variety of ways. One may distinguish three main positions<sup>44</sup>. According to some of the scholars, the movements of the Hungarians, who entered Bulgarian lands as invaders, were possible because of the weakness of Peter's rule<sup>45</sup>. Others think that the Magyars crossed Bulgaria maintaining 'armed

<sup>42</sup> Cf. for the period of Byzantine rule over this area – K. J. Jireček, *Die Heerstrasse...*, pp. 86, 116; К. Гагова, *Кръстоносните походи и средновековна България*, София 2004, p. 39; Е. Койчева, *Първите кръстоносни походи и Балканите*, София 2004, pp. 140, 143–144.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. S. Runciman, *The History of the First Bulgarian Empire*, London 1930, p. 186.

<sup>44</sup> Т. Тодоров, *България през втората и третата четвърт на X век: политическа история*, София 2006 [unpublished PhD thesis], p. 197; Х. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения...*, pp. 72–73.

<sup>45</sup> П. Мутафчиев, *Маджарите...*, p. 460; В. Тъпкова-Займова, *Цар Петър...*, p. 372; Д. Ангелов, Б. Чолпанов, *Българска военна история през средновековието (X–XV в.)*, София 1994, p. 14; T. Antonopoulos, *Byzantium...*, p. 258.

neutrality', with the silent (forced) consent of the tsar<sup>46</sup>. The third view assumes that the Hungarians appeared in Bulgaria as allies, after both sides came to an appropriate agreement. How this could have been reconciled with the peace treaty with Byzantium? Simply enough: the Bulgarian-Hungarian alliance would have been made in secrecy. Those supporting the latter view think that the potential Bulgarian-Hungarian co-operation would have been a consequence of the Byzantium's support for the Serbs, who became independent from Bulgaria at the beginning of Peter's reign<sup>47</sup>.

On the basis of the existing sources it would be very difficult to take an unequivocal position regarding tsar Peter's attitude towards the Hungarians, however it does not mean that one cannot formulate some remarks and indicate one's own position on the matter.

Hungarian expeditions were organised, with some pauses, over the course of over thirty years, and involved varying forces. In this situation it would appear logical to conclude that the Bulgarian attitude towards the particular raids would have differed<sup>48</sup>. The sources' lack of information about the behaviour of the Hungarians while they were marching through Bulgarian lands may mean that they did not pose a particular threat to the Bulgarians, and their outcomes had no significant impact, therefore it cannot be ruled out that tsar Peter, being aware that Hungarians wanted to reach Byzantine lands, did not see a reason to engage in a military action to stop them<sup>49</sup>. The silence of the Byzantine sources could however be deceptive, especially as we lack native Bulgarian sources on

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<sup>46</sup> В.Н. Златарски, *История...*, pp. 541–542; И. Божилев, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, p. 291.

<sup>47</sup> В. Гюзелев, *Добруджанският надпис и събитията в България през 943 г.*, ИП 25.6, 1969, pp. 43–45; П. Коледаров, *Цар Петър I*, ВС 51, 1982, p. 200; J.A.V. Fine, *The Early...*, s. 162–163; P. Stephenson, *Byzantium's...*, p. 39; Х. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения...*, p. 73sq.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. П. Павлов, *Векът на цар Самуил*, София 2014, pp. 24–25.

<sup>49</sup> It cannot be ruled out, however, that the Bulgarians informed the Byzantines about the Hungarians moving through their lands – much like they did in case of the Rus' expeditions (*Russian Primary Chronicle*, AM 6449, 6452, pp. 45, 46). On the latter subject, see: А.Н. Сахаров, *Дипломатията на древна Русия, IX – първата половина на X в.*, София 1984, p. 204sq.



this matter. In this context it might be worth reminding Peter's reply to Nikephoros Phokas's demand regarding stopping of the Hungarian raids venturing towards Byzantine lands by Bulgarians. The Bulgarian tsar supposedly accused the Byzantines that, despite their demands that Bulgarians stop the Hungarian raids, they themselves did not provide any assistance in this regard<sup>50</sup>.

It cannot be therefore ruled out that the Bulgarians were only observing, monitoring as we would say nowadays, the behaviour of the Hungarians moving through their lands, with the awareness that it was the Byzantines who were being targeted. It is also worth noting here that, in the light of the preserved sources, the first two raids (in 934 and 943) were evidently incidental in nature, and therefore likely came as a surprise to the Bulgarian ruler. It is notable that they were not met with a vigorous resistance on the part of Byzantium, either. It cannot be ruled out that Todorov was right when he claimed that at the time Bulgaria and Byzantium had a common policy towards the Hungarians, aimed at neutralising the threat by buying the peace<sup>51</sup>. The Bulgarian scholar pointed out that the main figure representing the Byzantine side in solving the problems that arose from the Hungarian raids in 934 and 943 was *protovestiarios* Theophanes, the man who also participated in the negotiations that led to the conclusion of the Bulgarian-Byzantine treaty in 927. Of particular significance here are the two seals of Theophanes (from the time when he was a *protovestiarios* and a *patrician*) found in Preslav, and therefore from the period between 934 and 941<sup>52</sup>. This indicates at the very least that during the time of Hungarian raids an important person from the imperial court remained in touch with the Preslav court, which may have created a chance for developing a common policy towards the Hungarian threat. That Byzantium and Bulgaria were implementing such a policy towards the Hungarians at that time can be attested, according to Todorov, by the relation of Liudprand of Cremona, who stayed in Constantinople for the first time relatively soon after the second Hungarian raid and who

<sup>50</sup> John Zonaras, XVI, 27, 14–15, p. 513.

<sup>51</sup> Т. Тодоров, *България...*, pp. 197–201.

<sup>52</sup> On Theophanes' career, Т. Тодоров, *България...*, pp. 200, 222. Cf. И. Йорданов, *Печатите от стратегията в Преслав*, София 1993, pp. 37–38.

wrote that the Hungarians: *had made the nations of the Bulgarians and the Greeks tributary*<sup>53</sup>.

The subsequent raids of the Magyars, those from the second half of the 950s and from the 960s, were a result of the change of direction of their expansion, which occurred after their defeat in battle against Otto I at the Lechfeld in 955<sup>54</sup>. The German victory freed Western Europe from the Hungarians looting raids, redirecting them towards the Balkan Peninsula. Only when faced with these tsar Peter had to specify his attitude towards the intruders.

As was mentioned above, from the late 950s the Byzantines abandoned the previous practice of neutralising Hungarian threat through diplomatic means in favour of military solutions, taking decisive steps to defend their territory. The change in the Byzantine attitude towards the Hungarian looting expeditions are associated on the one hand with the Hungarian defeat at the Lechfeld, which undermined the myth of their invincibility, and on the other with the changes on the imperial throne. The first military reaction to the Hungarian incursion into Byzantine lands is recorded to have happened during the final months of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos's reign<sup>55</sup>. His successors, Romanos II and Nikephoros Phokas, followed the same path.

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<sup>53</sup> Liudprand of Cremona, *Retribution*, II, [7], p. 39: *Bulgariorum gentem atque Graecorum tributariam fecerant*; transl. p. 79; Liudprand stayed in Constantinople in 949. The remark mentioned above appeared in the context of the events from the close of the ninth century, however it did not match the realities of the period at all, and it should be associated with the times preceding Liudprand's first visit to Constantinople (П. М у т а ф ч и е в, *Маджарите...*, p. 455, fn. 31; *contra*, although without providing arguments, Х. Д и м и т р о в, *Българо-унгарски отношения...*, p. 74). It would seem that – if one were to accept Petar Mutaftchiev's conclusion – Liudprand's relation could indicate no more than the fact that Bulgarians and Byzantines decided against organising a joint resistance against the Hungarians, and for some reasons preferred to pay them tribute.

<sup>54</sup> On the subject of the battle of Lechfeld, see i.a.: J.K. K u n d e r t, *Der Kaser auf dem Lechfeld*, CMAe 1, 1998, pp. 77–97; R.Ch. B o w l u s, *Die Schlacht auf dem Lechfeld*, Ostfildern 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Practically throughout nearly the entirety of the autonomous reign of Constantine Porphyrogennetos Hungarians abstained from taking hostile actions against Byzantium, which has led some scholars to the conclusion that he concluded with

Perhaps the Byzantines attempted to convince the Bulgarians to undertake similar actions, which potentially could have made it impossible for the Hungarians to reach Byzantine lands, or at least would have made the journey more difficult. Tsar Peter, as we may surmise, either could not or did not want to take such course of action, and maintained his policy of concessions towards the Hungarians. Perhaps in some cases Hungarian troops entered Bulgarians lands with the tsar's silent permission, in others – without it. It would however be unlikely that this was happening as a result of an active and lasting Bulgarian-Hungarian alliance<sup>56</sup>. It would be difficult to imagine that the existence of such an agreement could be kept hidden from the Byzantines. Had that been

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them a peace agreement (eg.: Х. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения...*, p. 75; G. Moravcsik, *Byzantium...* p. 56). This view is based on the relation from *Continuation of Theophanes*, in which it is said that following the raid of 943 there was a five-year period of peace in the Hungarian-Byzantine relations. The source does not however state that this peace was a result of a concluded peace treaty. It is also notable that the next recorded Hungarian action is as late as 959.

<sup>56</sup> The chief proponent of this view is Hristo Dimitrov (Х. Димитров, *Българо-унгарски отношения...*, pp. 73–80). The arguments he raised, however, do not seem convincing. They are based on a loose interpretation of the remarks found in the sources of unclear chronology and undertones (the third Greek edition of the *Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius*, pp. 98–99; a poem of an anonymous author *For the Strategos Katakalon* – FGHB, vol. V, p. 306; *De re militari liber* (18, 24–28, pp. 292–293), associating of tsar Peter's attitude towards Hungarians with the question of Byzantine policy towards Serbia – which we have put into doubt while discussing Bulgarian-Serbian relations – or drawing conclusions purely on the basis of coincidence of events (e.g. activity of Hungarians on Byzantine lands in 968, mentioned by Liudprand of Cremona, *Embassy*, 45 (he speaks here of the activity near Thessalonike and Constantinople, involving units of 300 and 200 men, and therefore small in number, which was already mentioned earlier) as fulfilling commitments of the alliance with Bulgaria, threatened at the time by Byzantium, p. 78). The views of Dimitrov regarding the functioning of a Bulgarian-Hungarian alliance since the time when Constantine VII started ruling on his own are accepted by Todorov (Т. Тодоров, *България...*, pp. 202–203). Cf. remarks by И. Божилов, В. Гюзелев, *История...*, pp. 290–291; V. Gjuzelev, *Bulgaria a państwa i narody Europy Środkowej w X w.*, transl. K. Marín, [in:] *Byzantina Europaea. Księga jubileuszowa ofiarowana Profesorowi Waldemarowi Ceranowi*, ed. M. Kokoszko, M. J. Leszka, Łódź 2007, pp. 134–135 (the author clearly articulated the view that the Hungarian expeditions would not have been possible without Peter's favourable attitude); П. Павлов, *Векът...*, p. 25.

the case, then they certainly would have had to react to such an attitude of the Bulgarians, which would after all have been contrary to the letter of the treaty of 927. We find no trace of such a course of action in the sources, which is all the more telling because of the distance that the Byzantine authors maintained towards the Bulgarians, and as such they would have likely commented on the Bulgarian disloyalty, and Byzantines' own reaction to it. It seems clear that the Bulgarian-Hungarian relations were characterised by a considerable dynamism, resulting from both the Byzantine reluctance to provide military support for Bulgarians to counter the possible lightning-fast Magyar incursions, as well as from the autonomy of the individual Hungarian chiefs<sup>57</sup>.

There is a view in scholarship that after 963 the Hungarians started to take action against the Bulgarians, which in some way was associated with the renewed Bulgarian-Byzantine treaty, supposedly of a clearly anti-Hungarian nature<sup>58</sup>. It should be noted however that this view lacks a strong basis in the source material. Not only do we not have a certainty that such a treaty existed, we even more so do not know on what conditions it would then have been renewed. It is difficult to say whether the Hungarian raids described by John Zonaras<sup>59</sup> – the ones that supposedly forced Bulgarians to reach an agreement with Hungarians – really referred to this period, rather than being a reference to the aforementioned Hungarian expeditions into Byzantine lands.

### 3. Relations with Otto I

Peter's policy towards the Hungarians is associated in modern scholarship with the issue of the relations between Bulgaria and the German state ruled by Otto I. Our knowledge about the attitude of tsar Peter

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<sup>57</sup> П. ПАВЛОВ, *Безсм...*, pp. 24–25.

<sup>58</sup> V. Gjuzeleв, *Bulgaria...*, p. 135.

<sup>59</sup> John Zonaras, XVI, 27, 13, pp. 512–513.

towards the increasingly more powerful state of Otto I – who in 955 defeated the Hungarians at Lechfeld, successfully discouraging them from further raids, and in 962 accepted an imperial crown, which was a visible reflection of his exceptional role in Europe<sup>60</sup> – is, to put it mildly, sparse. It is practically limited to a single episode, captured by Ibrahim ibn Yaquḥ. This traveller, merchant and diplomat writes that during his stay in Magdeburg (965/966)<sup>61</sup> he encountered representatives of the tsar of Bulgarians, who acted as envoys to Otto I (called Hōtto here). To our disappointment, Ibrahim ibn Yaquḥ did not write a single word on the reason for their arrival to the imperial court<sup>62</sup>. In this situation the scholars may only guess that either Peter wanted to gain German assistance against the Hungarians, when he was not able to obtain it from Byzantium, or the potential agreement with Otto was intended to strengthen Bulgaria's position *vis a vis* Constantinople<sup>63</sup>. Perhaps the Bulgarian ruler wanted to secure the position of his state, in the context of both the growing German power and the intensifying German-Byzantine conflict; in particular since the political situation in which the Bulgarians have found themselves has changed considerably. Firstly, as was already mentioned, Otto was elevated to an imperial dignity in 962 and undertook efforts to have his title recognised at the Constantinopolitan court. This may have troubled Peter, whose own imperial title had been, after all, received

<sup>60</sup> On the imperial coronation of Otto I – G. Althoff, *Ottonowie. Władza królewska bez państwa*, transl. M. Tyrcner-Wolicka, Warszawa 2009, pp. 84–91.

<sup>61</sup> J. Widajewicz, *Studia nad relacją Ibrahima ibn Jakuba*, Kraków 1946, p. 11; Ibrahim ibn Jakub, p. XLI (Otto I remained in Magdeburg prior to 26 of May 965; and subsequently during the March–August period of 966); cf. P. Engels, *Der Reisebericht des Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub (961/966)*, [in:] *Kaiserin Theophanu. Begegnung des Ostens und Westens um die Wende des ersten Jahrtausends. Gedenkschrift des Kölner Schnütgen – Museums zum 1000 Todesjahr der Kaiserin*, ed. A. von Euw, P. Schreiner, vol. I, Köln 1991, p. 417.

<sup>62</sup> Ibrahim ibn Jakub, p. 148.

<sup>63</sup> С.А. Иванов, *Византийско-болгарские отношения в 966–969 гг.*, ВВ 42, 1981, p. 98; В. Гюзелев, *Българските пратеничества при германския император Отон I в Магдебург (965 г.) и в Кведлинбург (973 г.)*, [in:] *Civitas Divino-Humana. In honorem Annorum LX Georgii Bakalov*, ed. Ц. Степанов, В. Вачкова, София 2004, pp. 386–387; idem, *Bulgaria a państwa...*, pp. 135–136.

from the Byzantines and who, being aware of the increased significance of the German ruler, may have feared his own position being negated by Otto. It was therefore advisable for Peter to establish peaceful relations with Otto and obtain the confirmation of the status (title) also from him. Let us add that in the context of the German-Bulgarian relations, the attitude of Liudprand, the envoy of Otto I, was rather telling. During his stay at the Byzantine court in 968, he was clearly surprised and outraged by the fact that the representative of the Bulgarian ruler was shown greater respect than he – a bishop, and an imperial envoy<sup>64</sup>. In 963, the power in Byzantium was seized by Nikephoros II Phokas, an outstanding military commander, who was realising an expansionist external policy, aimed at retaking the lands formerly belonging to the empire. In this situation it was good to find a strong ally in case of a confrontation with the southern neighbour, or at least ensure their own neutrality in a Byzantine-German conflict. It cannot be also ruled out that the arrival of the Bulgarian envoys to Magdeburg had the character of an ordinary diplomatic visit, with the usual goal of maintaining mutual relations. It would seem that their presence at the imperial court did not bear any specific fruit, and was not important for either of the sides (certainly not for the Germans, which may be seen from the scornful towards Bulgarians narration by Liudprand of Cremona, who was after all an imperial envoy), for beside Ibrahim ibn Yaquub it has not been recorded by any other source (neither Latin, nor Bulgarian). It would appear in turn that the visit may have unsettled Nikephoros Phokas in the context of the conflict that was developing

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<sup>64</sup> Liudprand of Cremona, *Embassy*, 19. The Byzantines supposedly had to explain to him that the special position of the Bulgarian envoy has been reserved for him in the 927 peace treaty. From the above it can be surmised that the bishop of Cremona was not well versed in the Byzantine-Bulgarian relations. It would seem however, that this may be put in doubt. Firstly, because Liudprand, in his earlier work *Antapodosis*, written after a visit in Constantinople in 949, showed good knowledge of the Bulgarian-Byzantine treaty of 927 (III, 29, III, 38), and he also referred to this even in *Embassy* (16, 19) and calls Peter by the Greek title *vasileus* (19). Secondly, what is perhaps even more important, in 968, by pretending he knows nothing about the status of the Bulgarian envoy who was after all representing a ruler bearing an imperial title, Liudprand indicated that beside the Byzantine ruler only his own master could be referred to as an emperor.

between him and Otto I<sup>65</sup>. It needs to be emphasised however that we will not find a confirmation of this hypothesis in any of the Byzantine sources.

#### 4. The Rus' and the Pechenegs

On their north-western border, Bulgarians interacted with Rus' and Pechenegs. Little is known on the subject of the relations between Bulgaria and Kievan Rus' until the military expeditions of Svyatoslav in the late 960s. The sources took note of the attitude of the Bulgarians towards the expeditions of prince Igor to Constantinople in 941 and 943<sup>66</sup>. In both cases Bulgarians were said to have given an advance warning to the Byzantines about the Rus' movements<sup>67</sup>. This clearly attests that they maintained a loyal attitude towards the Empire. Igor's second expedition is associated with the question of the Bulgarian-Pecheneg relations. It would seem that these have generally been peaceful during Peter's reign<sup>68</sup>.

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<sup>65</sup> On the Byzantine-German relations during Nikephoros II Phokas's reign – J. Shepard, *Western approaches (900–1025)*, [in:] *The Cambridge History of the Byzantine Empire, c. 500–1492*, ed. idem, Cambridge 2008, pp. 542–549.

<sup>66</sup> On the subject of these raids, see i.a.: Н.Я. Половой, *О дате второго похода Игоря на греков и похода русских на Бердаа*, ВВ 14, 1958, pp. 138–147; idem, *К вопросу о первом походе Игоря против Византии. (Сравнительный анализ русских и византийских источников)*, ВВ 18, 1962, pp. 85–104; C. Zuckerman, *On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor. A Study of the Anonymous Khazar Letter from the Genizah of Cairo*, REB 53, 1995, p. 264–267; J.-P. Arrignon, *Le traite byzantino-russe de 944, acte fondateur de l'Etat de la Kievskaja Rus'?*, ВВ 100, 2016, pp. 93–105.

<sup>67</sup> The Rus' expedition of 941 ended in failure. After initial successes, the Rus' were crushed on land, in several skirmishes, by John Kourkouas, while their fleet was destroyed by the aforementioned Theophanes who, in recognition of this victory, was given the title of *parakoimomenos*. Continuator of Theophanes, pp. 423–426. Cf. Н.Я. Половой, *К вопросу о первом...*; Т. Тодоров, *България...*, pp. 204–205.

<sup>68</sup> И. Божилов, *България и печензите (896–1018 г.)*, 29.2, 1973, pp. 53–62; Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 204; Х. Димитров, *България и номадите до*



Bulgarians – aware of the threat that these nomads posed to the north-eastern regions of the Bulgarian state, and in particular taking into account how politically unstable a partner they have been – made effort to maintain peaceful relations with them<sup>69</sup>. At the same time Bulgarians fortified the most threatened territory, open from the north to Pecheneg raids – i.a. by building strongholds in Vetrena (in the Silistra province) and in Dinogentia (near the village of Garvan, in northern Dobrudzha)<sup>70</sup>.

The only trace indicating the possible worsening of the Bulgarian-Pecheneg relations is information from the *Russian Primary Chronicle*, regarding the aforementioned expedition of Igor on Constantinople in 943<sup>71</sup>. According to this source, Igor, after reaching an agreement with the Byzantines, supposedly sent Pechenegs that were accompanying him to loot Bulgarian lands<sup>72</sup>. It is difficult to say how credible this relation is, and why Igor would have acted in this manner. The view that he would have repaid the Pechenegs in this way for their participation in the expedition is not particularly convincing. A more plausible explanation for Igor using the Pechenegs against Bulgarians is the desire for revenge on the latter for warning the Byzantines about the Rus' expedition, or perhaps an attempt at neutralising a possible Bulgarian military threat to the Rus'<sup>73</sup>.

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началото на XI век, Пловдив 2011, pp. 224–232; A. P a r o Ń, *Koczownicy w krajoznazie politycznym i kulturowym średniowiecznej Europy*, Wrocław 2015, p. 320.

<sup>69</sup> Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *On the Governance of the Empire*, 5, p. 52: *And so the Bulgarians also continually struggle and strive to maintain peace and harmony with the Pechenegs. For from having frequently been crushing defeated and plundered by them, they have learned by experience the value and advantage of being always at peace with them* (transl. p. 53). To some degree this was a continuation of Symeon I the Great's policy.

<sup>70</sup> П. П а в л о в, *Години...*, p. 431.

<sup>71</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*, AM 6452, p. 46.

<sup>72</sup> *Russian Primary Chronicle*, AM 6452, p. 46: *Igor' heeded them, and bade the Pechenegs ravage Bulgaria. He himself, after receiving from the Greeks gold and palls sufficient for his whole army, returned again and came to Kiev* (transl. p. 73). The lack of clarity of this relation even led some scholars to indicate that the target of the Pecheneg attack was not the Danubian Bulgaria, but the abodes of the so-called Black Bulgarians in Priazov. Cf. П. П а в л о в, *Години...*, p. 430.

<sup>73</sup> В. Д. Н и к о л а е в, *К истории болгаро-русских отношений в начале 40-ых годов X в.*, ССЛ 1982, 6, pp. 53–54; cf. Г. Г. Л и т а в р и н, *Древняя Русь, Болгария и Византия в IX–X вв.* [in:] *История, культура, этнография и фольклор славянских*

For fulfilling Igor's wish the Pechenegs would have likely received payment that they could supplement with the loot taken from Bulgarians. This interpretation is, of course, purely hypothetical, especially since we cannot be certain that the Pechenegs had, in fact, acted in accordance with Igor's will.

To support the view that this had indeed been the case some of the scholars bring forward an inscription, discovered in 1950 in the village of Mircea Vodă, located in Dobrudzha (in modern-day Romania). The inscription, unfortunately, is very poorly preserved. Only a few words can be deciphered: the date 6451 (943/944), the name of *zhupan* Dimitar, and probably 'Greece', or 'Greeks'<sup>74</sup>. According to Vassil Gyuzelev, the *zhupan* Dimitar mentioned in the inscription halted the Pechenegs, allies of Igor, near the mouth of Danube, after they entered Bulgarian lands encouraged by the Byzantine emperor, who with their aid wanted to take revenge on Bulgarians for allowing the Hungarian expedition to pass through into the lands of the Empire<sup>75</sup>. Even if one were to accept that the inscription from Mircea Vodă was a confirmation of the information from the *Russian Primary Chronicle* about the Pecheneg incursion into Bulgarian lands, then in the context of the above considerations regarding the contemporary attitude of Bulgarians and Byzantines towards Hungarians one has to reject with full conviction the idea that the Pechenegs acted at the instigation of Romanos Lekapenos<sup>76</sup>.

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народов, IX международный съезд славистов, Киев, сентябрь 1983. Докладъ советской делегации, Москва 1983, p. 72; Х. Димитров, *България...*, p. 225.

<sup>74</sup> Text of the inscription – M. Wójtowicz, *Najstarsze datowane inskrypcje słowiańskie X–XIII wiek*, Poznań 2005, pp. 21–23; cf. Б. Джонов, *Още за Добруджанския надпис от 943 година*, [in:] *Лингвистични и етнолингвистични изследвания в памет на акад. Вл. Георгиев (1908–1986)*, ed. Ж. Бояджиев, И. Дуриданов, София 1993, pp. 159–165.

<sup>75</sup> В. Гюзелев, *Добруджанският...*, pp. 45–47. Cf. I. Božilov, *L'inscription du jupan Dimitre de l'an 943 (théories et faits)*, ЕНi 1973.6, pp. 11–28; idem, В. Гюзелев, *История на Добруджа*, vol. II, *Средновековие*, Велико Търново 2004, s. 63; S. Mihailov, *Über die Dobrudza-Inschrift von 943*, BHR 33, 2005, pp. 3–5; Х. Димитров, *България...*, pp. 228–230.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Т. Тодоров, *България...*, p. 206.

It would seem however that the inscription from Mircea Vodă, due to its fragmentary nature, cannot be treated as a source of knowledge for the Bulgarian-Pecheneg relations during Peter's times. On the basis of the temporal coincidence with Igor's expedition, and of the place in which it was found, it is not possible to conclude to what it actually pertained. In this situation, for elucidating this matter we are left with only the laconic and unclear relation from the *Russian Primary Chronicle* and Constantine Porphyrogenetos's unspecific opinion about the Bulgarians' pursuance of peaceful relations with the Pechenegs.

