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## THE EURASIAN NOMADS AND THE BALKANS IN THE EARLY 1000'S

**Abstract:** In the beginning of 11th century the Balkan Peninsula was an area of conflict of epic proportions — the war between the First Bulgarian Empire and Byzantium. This conflict began more than 30 years ago with two consequent invasions to the Balkans coming from the north — a Hungarian (aimed against Byzantium and supported by silent Bulgarian permission) and a Russian one. The latter involved the nomadic tribe of the Pechenegs who lived in the steppes north of the Danube and east of the Carpathians. Both the Hungarians and the Pechenegs were among the most famous Eurasian nomadic tribal confederations at this time and one can conclude that the Eurasian nomads played a significant role in the fate of the Balkans at the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. The same statement was still in power in the beginning of the next millennium, when the long and bitter war between Bulgaria and Byzantium had already been approaching its end. The warlike Pechenegs seemed the last hope for the new Bulgarian Tsar John Vladislav (1015–1018 AD) to turn the situation in Bulgarian favor. His warlord Krakra managed to obtain the Pechenegs' promise to attack the Byzantines. The latter were valuable Bulgarian allies in many wars but finally proved unfaithful. When the Byzantines learnt about the agreement, it was thwarted by their diplomacy. Constantinople had been aware for a long time that the alliance with the Pechenegs was among the most important pre-conditions for gaining the political supremacy over the Balkans. Logically, the skillful Byzantine rulers took plenty of measures to secure the Pechenegs' loyalty. A few other circumstances prevented completely the receiving of Eurasian nomads' help for the First Bulgarian state until it completely disappeared under the heavy blows of the army of Emperor Basil II, later nicknamed "Bulgaroktonos" ("Bulgar-Slayer").

If a bystander was asked to describe with one word the political situation in the Balkans in the very beginning of the second millennium (or, more precisely, the period of the first two decades after 1000 AD); the word would probably be "a battlefield". Indisputably, during these years, the whole Balkans' territory, with the sole exception of the western half's inlands (the today's con-

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tinental territories of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the medieval district of Rashka), presented an area of the long, bitter and, often, extremely violent military actions between the First Bulgarian Empire and Byzantium (the East Roman Empire). Almost forgotten today, this conflict had almost epic proportions and, by its geographical dimensions, was probably unmatched in the whole written history of the Balkans. Indeed, the war had been continuing un-stopped since the end of the 60's of X century, involving warlords and armies from the further north of Kievan' Rus and Scandinavia to Anatolia and Eurasian steppes. Battles were fought from Adriatic to the Black Sea coasts and from Dnieper to Peloponessos Peninsula and, if we believe at least to a portion of the numbers of the victims mentioned by the sources, the Balkans' population suffered heavy losses.

The symbolic meaning of the war was also great. After 300 years of existence and relative prosperity of their state, it was a struggle of life and death for the Bulgarians. Byzantium, on the other side, was at the absolute zenith of its military power and greatness as a medieval polity. At the end of X and the beginning of XI century the Bulgarian Empire fought desperately for its survival, probably mobilizing all of its hidden power. It was the same power that seemed completely destroyed after the events in 967–971 AD, when the invasions of the Nordic nations' hordes, led by the Russian prince Sviatoslav I Igorovich (942–972)<sup>1</sup>, and the Byzantines' immediate military response turned the previous nucleus of the Bulgarian statehood (identical with today's Northeastern Bulgaria) into a huge battleground and then left it in ruins. In this conflict the Byzantine Empire fought not only to regain these lands that the imperial political ideology still regarded as only temporarily lost (the former Roman Empire provinces in the Northern Balkans, such as Moesia or Illyricum)<sup>2</sup>, but also for its prestige. The latter should not be underestimated, as the East Ro-

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<sup>1</sup> According to the Byzantine chronicler Skylitzes, Sviatoslav's forces included "Russians, Turks (= Magyars, Hungarians) and Patzinaks (= Pechenegs)", see Georgii Cedreni — Ioannis Skylitzae, *Historiarum Compendium*, quoted in: *Гръцки извори за българската история*, Т. VI, София, 1965 (= ГИБИ VI), с. 260; John Skylitzes, *A Synopsis of Byzantine History (811–1057)* (tr. John Wortley). Cambridge, 2010, p. 277. The Russian Prince main forces were comprised of his "Varyag" *druzhina* (group); the Varyags being mainly Scandinavian Vikings who fought for wage and booty. Sviatoslav had already become famous as a great conqueror before his invasion in Bulgaria as he had destroyed the mighty Khazar Khaganate in the steppes among the Black and Caspian Seas. The latter was probably the main reason for his prestige among the Hungarians and the Pechenegs who chose to join the Russian army under Prince's command.

<sup>2</sup> See e. g. Leonis Diaconi *Historiae*, quoted in: *Гръцки извори за българската история*, Т. V, София, 1964 (= ГИБИ V), с. 252.

man Empire (the “Roman Empire” was the official name of the Byzantine Empire until its very end in XV century) had always maintained and propagated the idea of its political supremacy over the other states in the whole world and especially in the Balkans. Moreover, the Bulgarian political leaders (the so called “Cometopuli”<sup>3</sup> dynasty) at the end of X and beginning of XI century were seen as rebels and illegitimate rulers by Constantinople even if they tried to demonstrate their connection and loyalty to the previous Bulgarian dynasty in every possible way<sup>4</sup>.

The epic conflict had its two rival leaders who were worthy of its proportions. The Byzantine one was no one else but the Emperor Basil II (976–1025), a skillful commander who had devoted all his life to the paths of war. Despite his many victories achieved on various battlefields against other nations, he was remembered by the next generations with the nickname “The Bulgar-Slayer”. Basil II is praised for his military glory up to this day when, for example, a main street in the Greek capital Athens bears his name “Basil the “Bulgar-Slayer”. His archenemy, Samuel of the so called “Cometopuli” dynasty, was also remembered as a hero by the Bulgarian descendants. He was a decent rival to the talented Basil and his capabilities and energy contributed a lot to the initial military successes of the Bulgarians against the overwhelming forces of the East Roman Empire. Till the moment of Samuel’s death on 6 October 1014 AD, the war, perceived as a personal conflict between him and Basil II, had already been continuing for 38 years. Someone else would probably gave up after all these years but not Basil II. He gradually increased the military pressure against the few territories still remaining in Bulgarians’ hands after Samuel’s death, probably sensing that the final victory was close.

Despite Samuel’s death, Bulgarian resistance at first continued as firm as before 1014 AD. Again, Basil II was driven to besiege the separate Bulgarian strongholds and to capture them one by one, and the Bulgarians often took them back after the Byzantines had already withdrawn. Therefore, one could not be a hundred percent sure about the exact outline of the Byzantine-Bulgarian borders and the range of the territories recognizing the supremacy of the

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<sup>3</sup> Byzantine Greek: Κομητόπουλοι, meaning “The Comes’ Sons”. “Komit/Comet” (= western “Count”, “Comte”) was a title of high-ranking Bulgarian commander ruling one of the districts of the First Bulgarian Empire. The “Cometopuli” dynasty originated from the family of Komit Nicholas who governed the Southwestern Bulgarian territories, probably from Prespa or Ohrid, in the name of the Bulgarian Tsars (=Emperors) residing in Preslav.

<sup>4</sup> The most striking example was the acceptance of Roman, a son of the last Bulgarian Tsar Peter I (927–969) who had escaped from Byzantine captivity in 977 AD, by the “Cometopuli” as their supreme and lawful ruler.

former or the latter power during the years between 1014 and 1018 AD. Judging by the scarce information of the sources, we can conclude that the former Bulgarian lands situated eastern of the line Vidin-Solun<sup>5</sup> were almost completely lost to the Byzantines. The territories, recognizing as their suzerains the Tsars Gavril Radomir (1014–1015) and John Vladislav (1015–1018), were placed mostly to the west of that line, probably with the exception of some of the Sofia Valley and, more importantly, the district around Pernik. In the fall of 1016 AD Basil II headed his army from Constantinople directly towards Pernik. He besieged the fortress for 88 days but finally realized “he had started something impossible” and returned to Byzantine territory, in Mosinopolis<sup>6</sup> (in today’s West Thrace). It was not a small victory for the already exhausted Bulgarians, especially at this stage of the war. The warlord who achieved this spectacular success was named Krakras, the supreme ruler of thirty-six Bulgarian fortresses<sup>7</sup>, who was called by John Skylitzes “the famous Krakras”<sup>8</sup>. Krakras himself was at the centre of the next events that managed to inconvenience even the “Bulgar-Slayer”.

The Bulgarian state territory at the end of 1016 AD looked much like a very long and thin line, probably stretching from the distant Sirmium<sup>9</sup> at the river Sava in the north to Kastoria<sup>10</sup> in the south. The new Tsar John Vladislav was trying desperately to stabilize his political positions. In fact, the Vladislav’s rule was compromised since its very beginning as he came on the Bulgarian throne with murder (of his cousin Gavril-Radomir, the Samuel’s first-born son). At first, he tried to show fictitious obedience to Basil II, while was just playing for time, indeed. Vladislav’s difficulties became even more obvious a little bit later, when he treacherously murdered the Prince of Duklja John (Jovan) Vladimir (on 22 May 1016), married to the Samuel’s daughter Kosara<sup>11</sup>. The most probable possibility for the performing of this ugly act<sup>12</sup> was that Vladislav had been afraid of the conclusion of military alliance “behind his back” between

<sup>5</sup> „Solun” is the traditional Bulgarian name of today’s Greek city of Thessaloniki.

<sup>6</sup> ГИБИ VI, 288–289.

<sup>7</sup> See ГИБИ VI, с. 290.

<sup>8</sup> Ibidem; John Skylitzes, Op. cit., p. 338.

<sup>9</sup> Bulgarian Srem (Срем).

<sup>10</sup> Bulgarian Kostur (Костур) in today’s Greek Macedonia.

<sup>11</sup> Алексеев, С. В. (пер. и ком.), *Летопись попа Дуклянина*. Санкт-Петербург, 2015, 66–69.

<sup>12</sup> What makes it particularly “ugly” was the fact that John Vladislav had given to Prince Vladimir numerous guarantees to keep his life safe before summoned him to visit in the capital Prespa.

Vladimir and the Byzantine ruler (strategos) of the theme of Dyrrhachium<sup>13</sup> (Drach). The theme of Dyrrhachium and the principality of Duklja bordered the Vladislav's territories from the west, therefore cutting him from the Adriatic Sea, and, as thin as Bulgaria became in east-west direction, they could present a significant threat for the very existence of the Bulgarian state at this time. For instance, a simultaneous attack of the Byzantines from east and west; the latter performed by the Roman army of Dyrrhachium combined with the Dukljan forces<sup>14</sup>, could easily struck the last blow over the shaken Bulgarian pillar. The events that happened in 1018 AD demonstrated that the mountainous region bordering with the theme of Dyrrhachium (in today's Albania) had had a particular significance for Vladislav's descendants and probably also for him (and perhaps it was there, where his personal lordship had been before he became Tsar)<sup>15</sup>. That could serve as a possible explanation to his "obsession" with conquering Dyrrhachium, mentioned repeatedly by John Skylitzes. Still, with Jovan Vladimir's murder, John Vladislav had seemingly lost his last possible strategic ally, since in all other directions Bulgaria bordered either with Byzantium or Byzantine allies' territories. But was it totally true?

The next Byzantine military expedition after the unsuccessful siege of Pernik was pursued again in direction to the theme of Dyrrhachium, probably trying to achieve the threatened by Vladislav important Adriatic town and to conquer the last sector of Via Egnatia that was still under Bulgarian control<sup>16</sup>. According to our main source for these events, Skylitzes/Cedrenus, in the spring of 1017 AD, the Emperor received striking news from one of his commanders in the far

<sup>13</sup> Bulgarian Drach (Драч).

<sup>14</sup> The particular political significance of the relations of the theme of Dyrrhachium with Duklja for almost the whole period of the latter's existence is clearly emphasized in *Летопись пона Дуклянина*, see *ibidem*. Byzantine chroniclers also mentioned the interrelationship, cf. Skylitzes/Cedrenus: „Basil II...was about to advance further by taking the road to Dyrrhachium where the situation demanded his presence. As long as Vladimir, the husband of Samuel's daughter, was ruling Tribalia („Trumalia”, today's Monte Negro?) and the nearer parts of Serbia, things were calm at Dyrrhachium, for he was a man of integrity, peace and virtue. But when Gabriel was slain by John, Vladimir was also betrayed.” (ГИБИ VI, 287–288). The Bulgarian intervention in the region in the reigns of Samuel and John Vladislav (980–1018) was probably seen by the Byzantines as a dangerous change in the political status quo we see before and after that.

<sup>15</sup> See ГИБИ VI, с. 292.

<sup>16</sup> The previous expediton aimed at Dyrrhachium failed in 1015 AD, as the Bulgarian commander Ivatz („Ivatzes”) had ambushed and defeated a large Byzantine army led by the strategos Georgi Gonitziates and protospatharios Orestes somewhere ar. Bitolia (Pelagonian plain), cf. ГИБИ VI, с. 288.

northeast — the Iberian<sup>17</sup> governor of Dorostolon<sup>18</sup> Tzotzikios who informed him that “Krakras had assembled a very huge army and had joined with John (Vladislav): they both had called up the Pechenegs and intended to attack the Romans”<sup>19</sup>. The Emperor, who at that time besieged the important Bulgarian stronghold of Kostur (Kastoria in today’s Greek Macedonia), was obviously worried by the news as he ordered immediate retreat and abandonment of the siege.

The analyses of the brief text of Skylitzes/Cedrenus can show us a few things. Firstly, the remark that Krakras “had united himself with John” probably shows he had previously not been “united with John”. Therefore, if the aforementioned was true, Krakras did not acknowledge the supremacy of John Vladislav until the spring of 1017 AD. The obvious reason for such insubordination could have been the Vladislav’s coup-d’état in late 1015 AD. The latter killed not only the legitimate Bulgarian ruler but also John Vladimir and these acts had probably diverted from him some of the remaining Bulgarian aristocracy. Some details of the Skylitzes/Cedrenus’ description of probably the most northern Bulgarian lord at the time — Sermon of Sirmium<sup>20</sup>, which lands maybe bordered that of Krakras from the north, makes me think that the former also did not recognize Vladislav as his lawful suzerain. Thus, we can assume that he began to rule over the lands around Sirmium as an independent lord after 1015 AD<sup>21</sup>. The political situation for Krakras was probably similar in 1015–16 AD. However, after Krakras beat off Basil II under the Pernik’s walls, he could have decided to unite the “very huge army” he had assembled (for defense of his lands against Byzantium?) with Vladislav. There was a very simple logic for such action: Krakras just did not have any other option for a stronger (and closer) ally in the war against the Byzantines. The latter’s and Sermon’s possessions cut him off the Croats or the Magyars, and the Serbs were probably weakened by John Vladimir’s murder and the subsequent internecine conflicts<sup>22</sup>.

Actually, both Krakras and John Vladislav were in desperate need for military support indeed, as they were facing the superior Byzantine army led by the

<sup>17</sup> Medieval Iberia was predecessor to modern state of Georgia. Tzotzikios was „son of the patrician Theudathos the Iberian” (John Skylitzes, *Op. cit.*, p. 337), a powerful Georgian magnate, who had come over to Byzantine side during the conquest wars of the Empire in the Caucasus area.

<sup>18</sup> Medieval Bulgarian Drastar (Дръстър), today’s Silistra.

<sup>19</sup> ГИБИ VI, с. 289.

<sup>20</sup> ГИБИ VI, 296–297.

<sup>21</sup> Another possibility is that Sermon accepted the suzerainty of the Croats, see the text *ibidem*.

<sup>22</sup> See *Летопись попа Дуклянина*, 69–70.

Basil II, so fanatically determined to destroy Bulgaria. As it soon became clear, the Bulgarians still hoped to turn the military fate in their favor. Their last hope was in the steppes northern of the Danube, the homeland of the Pechenegs.

In 1016–1017 AD the Turkish nomadic tribe of the Pechenegs<sup>23</sup> was already well known in the whole Balkans. At the end of IX century, allied with the Bulgarian Tsar Symeon the Great, they had inflicted a major defeat on the rival tribe of Magyars. That was the main reason for the latter to migrate to Pannonia in the west and laid the foundations for what was to become the medieval state of Hungary. Afterwards, the Pechenegs, whom, according to Skylitzes/Cedrenus, in 1048 AD numbered not less than 800 000 people divided in thirteen clans<sup>24</sup>, became the supreme lords of the steppes between Russia, Don, Black Sea and Danube, i. e. the steppe zone bordering the territories of the First Bulgarian Empire. In the middle of X century, the Emperor Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos chose to begin his famous book *De Administrando Imperii* (“About the Rule of the Empire”) with description of the Pechenegs and their relations with the surrounding states<sup>25</sup>. The wise Constantine Porphyrogenetos regarded the Pechenegs as one of the most important political factors not only in the Balkans but in the whole Eastern Europe. Their military strength and fighting skills overwhelmed these of the most sedentary societies of the time, even if we speak about the infamous Vikings. Indeed, one of the most warlike and victorious Viking military leader of the Middle Ages — the aforementioned Russian Prince Sviatoslav — found his death exactly in a battle against the Pechenegs<sup>26</sup>. These people, who lived in the typical lifestyle of the Eurasian nomads, usually called by the Byzantine chroniclers “Scythians”, represented such a threat to startle even a mighty warlord like the “Bulgar-Slayer”. That was the reason for the reaction when he received the news about their possible attack together with the armies of Krakras and John Vladislav: Basil II ordered immediate retreat. A Pecheneg’s intervention on Bulgarian side could be, at least, a very unpleasant for the Emperor’s plans, and would significantly postpone the so prolonging yet final subjugation of Bulgaria.

However, despite the strong words used in the description of Skylitzes/Cedrenus, the Emperor retreat from Kostur was obviously not “in panic”. The author

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<sup>23</sup> Called „Patzinaks” by the Byzantines.

<sup>24</sup> ГИБИ VI, 312–314.

<sup>25</sup> See e. g. Константин Багрянородный. *Об управлении империей* (ред. Г. Г. Литаврин). Москва, 1991, 36–53.

<sup>26</sup> Porphyrogenetos wrote that „Russians always have special care about the Pechenegs, so as to not be harmed by them”, Константин Багрянородный, *Op. cit.*, 38–39.

had not indicated exactly how long the retreat continued but gave the information that on his way back (to the then Empire's borders) Basil II "captured the castle of "Vosograd" and burned it; rebuilt Veroia, and devastated everything around Ostrovo and Molisk"<sup>27</sup>, i. e. he didn't haste so much. The distance from Kostur to the final destination of his retreat, Voden (today's Edessa,) was not much more than 50 km's long. The reason for such a slow withdrawal was probably that Basil had waited for the uncertain news coming from the north to be confirmed.

If we can speculate a little bit, a contemporary observer could hardly say that a Pecheneg's attack against Byzantium would be highly expected at that time. The fierce Eurasian nomads had not been seen invading imperial lands since 971 AD that was nearly half a century ago. The root cause for the calmness was hidden in the exodus of the aforementioned massive Nordic warriors' invasion against the Empire led by the fierce Viking — the Russian Prince Sviatoslav Igorevich in 970–971 AD. Sviatoslav's numerous forces were ultimately defeated by the brilliant commander Emperor John I Tzimiskes (969–976), and the military actions left the eastern half of Bulgaria ruined and depopulated. The final etude of the campaign occurred when Tzimiskes' army besieged Sviatoslav's forces in Dorostolon. Before allowing the Russian Prince to leave for Kiev with the remnants of his defeated army, the Byzantine Emperor concluded a peace treaty with him. At the same time, a separate treaty was concluded between the Byzantines and the former Sviatoslav's allies, the Pechenegs<sup>28</sup>. The peace was about to make "the Patzinaks allies and friends to the Romans"<sup>29</sup>; allies who would not cross the Danube to prey on the Bulgars"<sup>30</sup>, i. e. who would not attack the newly conquered Byzantine province of Moesia (Paristrion). The source continued with the information that the Pechenegs "were so angry with Sviatoslav for having made a treaty with the Romans...that he and the entire host that accompanied him were completely annihilated"<sup>31</sup>. The steppe nomads killed the prince a year after the sign of the Treaty of Dorostolon while he had still been trying to reach his capital Kiev.

<sup>27</sup> ГИБИ VI, с. 289.

<sup>28</sup> If we have to believe to Skylitzes/Cedrenus (ГИБИ VI, с. 274), it was made at the request of Sviatoslav himself which don't seem very credible to me. Unfortunately, we have no other source information about these events. However, I don't see much logic in the assumption that Sviatoslav would want to anger the Pechenegs who could cut off his way back to Kiev, and that is the very reason the chronicle pointed out for the later annihilation of the Russian forces and their Prince (on their way home) by the same steppe nomads (Ibidem).

<sup>29</sup> The citizens of the East Roman Empire, the Byzantines.

<sup>30</sup> ГИБИ VI, с. 274.

<sup>31</sup> Ibidem.



The sources' lack of mentioning the Pecheneg's raids southern of Danube confirmed the assumption that the peace between the East Roman Empire and the nomads had lasted (unviolated) since 971 AD up to 1017 AD. Anyway, if we put a trust in Skylitzes/Cedrenus (and there is no obvious reason for not doing that), the Pechenegs (or, at least, some of them) had the real intention to invade the lands of the Empire in 1017 AD. However, while the Emperor had still been camping in the recently captured from the Bulgarians territory on Via Egnatia (situated very close to the borders of his theme of Thessaloniki)<sup>32</sup>, he received another message from the Dorostolon commander Tsitsikios. This time the letter informed him that the plans of Krakras and Vladislav were ruined because the Pechenegs eventually declined their proposal and refused to send their forces southern of Danube. Then Basil stopped his slow retreat to Thessaloniki and advanced back into Bulgarian territory.

Why did that happen? The danger for a Nomadic invasion and conclusion of union between the Bulgarians and the Pechenegs obviously seemed real enough possibility for the Byzantines at that time. In the next lines I will try to summarize my opinions and conclusions about the reasons for such a reversal. Firstly: the Pechenegs had probably estimated the chances of Krakras and John Vladislav's plans for success as not very good. Historically, Byzantium was at the very height of its renaissance as a great world military power. Never in the following decades and centuries would the East Roman Empire borders cover so vast territories as at the end of Emperor Basil II's rule. Some of the Nomads surely still remembered the blows they suffered in the war of 970–971 AD when they had fought at the side of Sviatoslav against the Empire. There, opposite the might which had known no defeat since the times of Nikephoros II Phokas (963–969), stood only two petty lords (in reality, Vladislav did not possess many more fortresses than Krakras) with decimated and probably demoralized armies. So, the union with them did not seem very encouraging. Secondly: the Byzantines obviously had learnt about the Pechenegs' negotiations with the Bulgarians before they were finalized. Then, even if Skylitzes/Cedrenus did not mention such a thing, the Byzantine diplomacy could have meanwhile intervened, and the imperial gold was always highly esteemed in the lands north of Danube at that age<sup>33</sup>. Thirdly: by the sources' information we can judge that the Pechenegs' main attention in these years was attracted by the events that had been happening not southern but northern of Danube. Since 1013 AD

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<sup>32</sup> Probably somewhere in the area ar. today's Lake of Vegoritits (Bulgarian: Lake of Ostrovo).

<sup>33</sup> See Константин Багрянородный, *Op. cit.*, 41–45.

one of the sons of the Great Prince of Kiev Vladimir I (978–1015), Sviatopolk I, had begun internal war in Russia, counting largely on the support of the Polish king Boleslaw I and none other but the Pechenegs. The nomads provided Sviatopolk with his most numerous fighting forces. They were deeply involved in the grand internecine war for the throne in Kiev (1015–1019) between the many sons of Prince Vladimir who died in the summer of 1015 AD. The Pechenegs' favorite Sviatopolk suffered a major defeat by his brother Yaroslav exactly in 1016 or 1017 AD. Yaroslav, on his side, associated himself more with the Scandinavian mercenaries, the so called Varyags, as the Vikings were known in Russia, and many Viking warriors also fought in the army of Basil II. During the same campaign in Bulgaria in 1017 AD when Basil II received the message from Tsitsikios, for instance, the "Ros" (as Skylitzes/Cedrenus called the Viking mercenaries of the Emperor) probably represented a third of the whole imperial army<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, for all three of the aforementioned reasons, the Pechenegs' alliance with the Bulgarians was too problematic and the fact it eventually proved futile, should not leave anyone too surprised...

The only positive result for the Bulgarians out of the "Pecheneg affair" probably was the achieving of a certain delay in Basil II's moves. The final end of the epic struggle for political supremacy over the Balkans was closer than ever. Although described only by few words, the campaign in 1017 AD had continued for most of the year as the Emperor returned in Constantinople on 9 January 1018 AD<sup>35</sup>. The "huge army", assembled by John Vladislav and Krakras maybe did play its role in the Bulgarian resistance because, as it seems, most of their previous lands still remained in their hands by the winter of 1018 AD. However, John Vladislav tried a quick and unsuccessful assault on Dyrrhachium soon after the retreat of the "Bulgar-Slayer" to Constantinople. The attack against the well-defended town was actually so unsuccessful that it cost him his head<sup>36</sup>. Following John Vladislav's death, most of the remaining Bulgarian lords laid down their arms. The first to surrender was the previously heroic Krakras who sent to the emperor his son and his brother to submit the keys of Pernik and the 35 other fortresses under his commandment at that time. Basil II was pleased and honored him with patrician dignity<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>34</sup> ГИБИ VI, с. 289.

<sup>35</sup> ГИБИ VI, 289–290.

<sup>36</sup> ГИБИ VI, с. 290. The siege of Dyrrhachium and John Vladislav's death occurred in February 1018 AD.

<sup>37</sup> ГИБИ VI, с. 290.

