

PSYCHOLOGICAL WARFARE TECHNIQUES IN THE RUS'-BYZANTINE WAR OF 970 – 971*

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Hence to fight and conquer in all your battles is not supreme excellence; supreme excellence consists in breaking the enemy's resistance without fighting.

Sun Tzu, The Art of War¹

Psychological warfare is waged before, during, and after war; it is not waged against the opposing psychological warfare operators; it is not controlled by the laws, usages, and customs of war; and it cannot be denned in terms of terrain, order of battle, or named engagements. It is a continuous process².

Abstract: *The present paper aims at tracing the implementation of various psychological warfare strategies and techniques in the Rus' – Byzantine war of 970 – 971. The conflict involved the Kievan Rus', the Bulgarian Tsardom, and the Byzantine Empire and significantly influenced the course of events in the Eastern Balkans. The review of the main byzantine accounts for Rus' – Byzantine war of 970 – 971, namely the History of Leo the Deacon, and the Synopsis of John Skylitzes shows that both warring parties considered psychological warfare as fundamental and incorporated it in their military strategy. Emperor John I Tzimiskes and the Rus' Prince Svyatoslav used similar psychological techniques such as motivating speeches, making clamor, instilling fear and panic among the enemies, inspiring and rewarding their men, tolerating acts of exceptional bravery and combat prowess. Both rulers aimed on the one hand, to stimulate and encourage their soldiers, and on the other hand to mentally subdue the enemies, destroy their morale, thus reaching the ultimate goal of every commander – to win the battle and war, respectively. The impact of those techniques depended on the way the commanders and their troops were able to implement them during the campaign.*

Keywords: *psychological warfare techniques, Rus' – Byzantine war of 970 – 971, Emperor John I Tzimiskes, Rus' Prince Svyatoslav I Igorevich, Leo the Deacon, John Skylitzes.*

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¹ Sun Tzu on the Art of War, transl. by Lionel Giles, Leicester, 2000, III, 8.

² Linebarger 1948: 1.

Psychological warfare (Linebarger 1948: 1 – 61) tries for evoking a planned psychological reaction in other people influencing their value system, beliefs, emotions, motives, reasoning, or behavior. Psychological warfare includes various methods to stimulate soldiers and reinforce attitudes and behaviors favorable to the originator's objectives, as well as to destroy the morale of enemies through tactics that aim to depress troops' psychological states. Actually, psychological warfare uses fear to break down the psychological well-being of an opponent (Szunyogh 1955: 13; Chekinov, Bogdanov 2013: 16; Różycki 2015: 23 – 29; Różycki 2015A: 459 – 473; Różycki 2021). It is the art of war, according to Sun Tzu, which consists of attacking by stratagem and playing on the opponent's weaknesses to subjugate him (Handel 1991: 39 – 42). In practice, psychological warfare often combines the effect of psychological surprise with the effect of physical shock, prepared, propagated, and amplified by propaganda. Psychological factors determine the will to act, that is to say the emotional possibility of using one's abilities, as well as the inhibitions that oppose them. Courage, confidence and camaraderie, but also hatred and contempt are perishable and limited resources that have a decisive influence on the effective power of men and weapons.

The present paper aims at tracing the implementation of various psychological warfare strategies and techniques in the Rus' – Byzantine war of 970 – 971. The conflict involved the Kievan Rus', the Bulgarian Tsardom and the Byzantine Empire and heavily affected the Eastern Balkans. In 967, the Rhomaioi incited the Rus' ruler Svyatoslav (Sphendosthlavos) I Igorevich (945 – 972) to invade Bulgaria, leading to the defeat of the Bulgarian forces and the occupation of the northern and northeastern part of Bulgaria by the Rus' for the following two years. The allies then turned against each other in 970, and the ensuing military confrontation ended with a Byzantine victory in 971. The Rus' withdrew, and eastern

Bulgaria was incorporated into the Byzantine Empire due to the successful campaign of John I Tzimiskes/Ιωάννης ὁ Τζιμισκής (969 – 976) (Schlumberger 1896: 88 – 184; Карышковский 1953: 36 – 71; Stokes 1961: 44 – 57; Stokes 1962: 466 – 496; Сахаров 1982: 93 – 200; Franklin, Shepard 1996: 139 – 151; Божилев, Гюзелев 1999: 296 – 300; Павлов 2014: 37 – 52; Atanasov 2015: 138 – 157; Leszka 2018: 416 – 429; Bonarek 2018: 430 – 441). The main byzantine sources for Rus' – Byzantine war of 970 – 971, namely the *Ἱστορία* of Leo the Deacon/Λέων ὁ Διάκονος and the *Σύνοψις Ἱστοριῶν* of John Skylitzes/Ιωάννης Σκυλίτζης³, will be studied while trying to evaluate the effect of psychological warfare on the course and outcome of the war. According to many scholars, both Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes probably have used independently of each other a now-lost source for the 971 AD campaign (Сюзюмов 1916: 106 – 166; Moravcsik 1958: 398 – 399; Каждан 1961: 106 – 128; Παναγιωτάκης 1965: 1 – 138; Hunger 1978: 367 – 371; Грацианский 2013: 68 – 83). As Anthony Kaldellis suggests, this original source was a detailed panegyric narrative, featuring heroic battles, sieges, speeches by the Emperor and the Rus' Prince, and it ended with Tzimiskes' triumph in Constantinople (Kaldellis 2013: 45). Of course, the apologetic episodes in Leo's and Skylitzes' texts, probably inspired by their potential panegyric proto source, as well as the typical for the Byzantine historiography

³ Leonis Diaconi Caloënsis historiae libri decem et Liber de velitatione bellica Nicephori Augusti. (= Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae. Bd. 3). Herausgegeben von Karl Benedikt Hase. Weber, Bonn 1828; The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century, intr., transl. and annot. Alice-Mary Talbot, Denis F. Sullivan, with the assistance of George T. Dennis, Stamatina McGrath, Washington, 2005; Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae - Series Berolinensis), ed. Hans Thurn, Berlin-New York 1973; John Skylitzes: A Synopsis of Byzantine History, 811–1057, transl. and notes John Wortley, Cambridge, 2010.

imperial glorification, propaganda clichés, and didactic and educative interpolations, mean that everything in their accounts is not to be taken literally. However, it should not be discarded a priori as an invention either. As St. McGrath argues, both Leo's History and Skylitzes' Synopsis contain enough evidence that offer "a captivating picture of Byzantine warfare and valuable details on the battles they describe." (McGrath 1995: 164). St. McGrath also points out that despite both historians used the same original source, there are differences in their presentation of the events with Leo the Deacon giving more details in depicting personal characteristic of the generals and adding "liveliness to the battle descrip-

tion with a number of psychological insights." (McGrath 1995: 153, 155) Skylitzes on his turn also tells that during the military conflict, both warring camps applied different psychological techniques while striving to gain a mental advantage over their enemies. In fact, the available primary sources on Rus' – Byzantine war of 970 – 971 reveal the decisive part played by the two commanders in chief in the implementation of various psychological warfare tactics, as both the Byzantine Emperor and the Rus' ruler mastered the war propaganda (Hanak 1995: 138 – 151; McGrath 1995: 152 – 164; Kaldellis 2013: 35 – 52.), while challenging each other in battlefield outsmarting.

Psychological warfare in negotiations



Fig. 1. John Tzimiskes converses with Svyatoslav (Tsamakda 2002: 210, Skylitzes Matritensis, Miniature 442. Fol. 172r, bottom)

The psychological outwitting or "the war of nerves" between John I Tzimiskes and Svyatoslav began even during the prewar talks, with both rulers aiming to show their power and superiority and to impose their will. The Byzantine Emperor decided to negotiate with the Rus' ruler and sent ambassadors to tell him that he should take the pay promised by the Emperor Nikephoros II Phocas for assailing the Bulgarians, and should return to his own territory, abandoning

Moesia, since it belonged to the Byzantines⁴. However, Svyatoslav, conceited by his recent victories over the Bulgarians, delivered arrogant and ultimate responses to the Byzantine envoys, showing that he was mastering the situation. The Rus' Prince insisted that the Empire had no other chance but to comply with his wishes as he refused to leave the fertile Bulgarian land, "except in return for the payment of vast sums of money and the ransom of the cities and prisoners

⁴ Leonis Diaconi, VI. 8, 103; Leo the Deacon, VI. 8, 153.

that he had taken in warfare; if the Romans were not willing to pay this, then they should quickly withdraw from Europe, which did not belong to them, and move to Asia; and they should not think that Tauroscythians would come to terms with Romans on any other conditions.”⁵

When the Emperor received such responses from the Rus’ ruler, he kept his composure and answer to him in boastful spirit, demonstrating confidence and faith in his future victory. Then Tzimiskes put much more psychological pressure on his opponent, referring to the history of Rus’ – Byzantine wars in the past and recalling the disastrous campaign of Svyatoslav’s father Prince Igor against Constantinople in particular. According to Tzimiskes, the Rus’ assault of the imperial capital was a big mistake, which ultimately cost Igor’s life. The emperor not only posed a threat but also tried to hit the Prince’s pride. The recollection of this painful example intended to crack Svyatoslav’s psyche and instill in him a fatalistic fear and a sense of impending doom that his father’s wretched fate will befall him if he opposes the Byzantines⁶.

However, the words and suggestions of the Emperor had the opposite effect. They not only did not pacify the Rus’ Prince but also made him

angrier and even more aggressive and threatening. According to Leo’s account, Svyatoslav became furious, and, “carried away by barbarian frenzy and rage”, tried to humiliate Tzimiskes, urging him not to make his efforts to come to the Bulgarian land for the Rus’ soldiers were planning to attack and besiege Constantinople. Svyatoslav then threatened the “ignorant Emperor” that they would teach him with very deeds that they were “bloodthirsty warriors who fight their enemies with weapons”⁷.

In the end, Svyatoslav’s attempt to intimidate Tzimiskes also failed. Moreover, upon hearing the insane words of the Rus’ Prince, the Emperor with no delay started preparing for war with utmost zeal, so that he might anticipate the Rus’ assault against the Rhomaioi and strike a decisive blow of his own⁸.

The Emperor used once again an ultimatum as a means of psychological pressure after his victory in the battle of Preslav. Tzimiskes selected some of the Rus’ prisoners, and sent them to Svyatoslav “to announce to him the capture of the city and the slaughter of his comrades, and to tell him not to hesitate, but to choose immediately one of two options: either to lay down his weapons and yield to a stronger force and beg forgiveness for his rash deeds, and to depart immediately from the land of the Mysians; or, if he was unwilling to do this, but was inclined rather to his customary insolence, then he should defend himself with all his might against the advancing Roman forces.”⁹

The *Tale of Bygone Years* (Повѣсть временныхъ лѣтъ, known in English-language historiography as the Russian Primary Chronicle), originally compiled in Kyiv about 1113, gives interesting details on how Svyat-

⁵ Leonis Diaconi, VI. 10, 105; Leo the Deacon, VI.10, 155.

⁶ “For we have confidence in Christ, the immortal God, that, if you do not leave the land, then willing or not you will be driven from it by us. For I think you are well aware of the mistake of your father Igor, who, making light of the sworn treaties, sailed against the imperial city with a large force and thousands of light boats, but returned to the Cimmerian Bosphoros with scarcely ten boats, himself the messenger of the disaster that had befallen him. I will pass over the wretched fate that befell him later, on his campaign against the Germans, when he was captured by them, tied to tree trunks, and torn in two. And I think that you too will fail to return to your own country, if you force the Roman army to march against you, but you will be killed there with all your troops, so that not even a fire-bearing [priest] will return to Scythia, to announce the dreadful fate that overtook you.” (Leonis Diaconi, VI. 10, 106; Leo the Deacon, VI.10, 156 – 157).

⁷ Leonis Diaconi, VI. 10, 106 – 107; Leo the Deacon, VI.10, 157.

⁸ Leonis Diaconi, VI. 11, 107; Leo the Deacon, VI. 11, 157.

⁹ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 8, 138; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 8, 183 – 184.

toslav used psychological techniques during the negotiations with Tzimiskes. The Rus' ruler sent messengers to the Byzantines, announcing his intention to march against them and capture Constantinople, as he had already taken the Bulgarian town Preslavets. The Byzantines replied that they were in no position to offer resistance, and therefore begged him to accept tribute instead for himself and his soldiery, requesting him to notify them how many Rus' there were, so that they might pay so much per head. Actually, the Byzantines were trying to find out the exact number of Svyatoslav's troops. In fact, both sides exchanged tricks trying to deceive each other. As the anonymous author of the Chronicle stated: "The Greeks made this proposition to deceive the Rus', for the Greeks are crafty even to the present day. Svyatoslav replied that his force numbered twenty thousand, adding ten thousand to the actual number, for there were really but ten thousand Russes."¹⁰

The same Chronicle offers another example of the way Svyatoslav created his image of a ferocious military leader in the eyes of the Byzantines. When the Emperor's envoys came to Svyatoslav and gave him gold and silks, he without noticing the presents bade his servants keep them. However, when the next time they conveyed to Svyatoslav a sword and other accouterments, the Prince accepted these gifts, which he praised and admired, and returned his greetings to the Emperor. The envoys went back to the Emperor and reported what had occurred. Svyatoslav's well-performed reaction on getting the Byzantine presents dismayed the Emperor's councilors who concluded that: "This man must be fierce, since he pays no heed to riches, but accepts arms". That is why they advised the Emperor to submit to tribute. The Emperor was also impressed by Svyatoslav's warrior mentality

and accordingly requested the Rus' Prince to approach no nearer but to accept tribute instead¹¹.

Psychological warfare techniques used by both Tzimiskes and Svyatoslav to raise the morale of their troops before going into battle

Speeches are a common rhetoric technique used by generals to lift the spirits of their soldiers. Svyatoslav and Ioannes I Tzimiskes both raised the morale of their troops by giving them inspiring speeches¹².

The Tale of Bygone Years gives notice of two cases when Svyatoslav heartened his men with encouraging words. After the Rus' army was initially defeated at the town of Preslavets by the Bulgarians, Svyatoslav shouted to his soldiery: "Here is where we fall. Let us fight bravely, brothers and companions!"¹³ In the hardest moment of the battle, Svyatoslav addressed his men, maintaining their pride, urging them to stand firm and courageous. At the same time, he made them feel equal to him, calling them brothers. In this way, he let them know that they all belonged to his family, to the circle of his closest relatives. Thus, Svyatoslav united his troops and mobilized their forces, making them feel they were fighting not for some distant, little-known ruler, but their brother figure and family. These words seemed to affect his troops since, toward evening, Svyatoslav finally gained the upper hand and took the town by storm.

The next case refers to Rus' expansion against the Byzantines in Thrace. Svyatoslav's soldiers were terrified at the multitude of the imperial army and got discouraged. However, their Prince gave them an inspiring speech and made them choose battle instead of disgraceful

¹¹ Russian Primary Chronicle, 88 – 89.

¹² Of course, it should be borne in mind that speeches were often used by chroniclers as a stylistic invention and were sometimes a rhetorical construction illustrating the author's suggestions.

¹³ Russian Primary Chronicle, 87.

¹⁰ The Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text, transl. and ed. by Samuel Hazzard Cross, Olgerd Sherbowitz-Wetzor, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1953, 87 – 88.

flight. In his speech, Svyatoslav pointed out that it was too late to withdraw, and they had to accept the fight. He drew attention to the fact that, for each true warrior, honor is more precious than life, and they should defend it instead of disgracing themselves and their homeland. At the same time, Svyatoslav again set a personal example, saying that he will throw himself into battle, leading them and standing at the forefront of his army. With this statement, he affirmed that he was ready to die along with his warriors, who were like brothers to him. There is another interesting element in the speech of the Rus' Prince, which shows him up as a good psychologist. Svyatoslav asserted that if he got killed in the battle, those who outlived him would be free to save their lives. In this way, he released his warriors from the stain of shame in case of defeat and eventual retreat from the battlefield. No one would have the right to accuse the surviving soldiers of cowardice and betrayal of their Prince. Thus, Svyatoslav reassured his men that even in an unfavorable outcome of the battle, they would be able to save their honor¹⁴. Excited by these words, his warriors replied: "Wherever your head falls, there we too will lay down our own." After fostering his men's fighting spirit, Svyatoslav took the momentum and went into battle, and came out as a victor, and the Byzantines fled. Then the Rus' advanced toward Constantinople¹⁵.

Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes also provide information on how Svyatoslav brilliantly used speeches as a psychological technique to boost the fighting spirit of his desperate troops during the siege of Dorystolon (ancient

Durostorum, medieval Bulgarian Dristra, present-day Silistra¹⁶). As the war was going badly for the Rus' Svyatoslav assembled a council of nobles, and addressed his people urging them to manifest the valor of their ancestors, and fight ardently for their safety. "For it is not our custom to return to our fatherland as fugitives, but either to be victorious and live or to die gloriously, after displaying deeds [worthy] of brave men." Svyatoslav manipulated them, saying that if they sought safety in flight, they would then be despised by the adjacent peoples who formerly lived in acute fear of them. The opinion of Svyatoslav won the day; everybody agreed to risk the extreme danger of [losing] their lives and all their troops. After listening to the inspiring words of their Prince, "out of love for life they decided to choose danger for the sake of their own safety and spiritedly drew up to oppose the Roman forces"¹⁷.

Skylitzes also makes known that the Rus', after being moved and excited by the frantic words of their leader, "sallied forth from the city next day in full force, closed its gates so that nobody could turn back and find refuge in the city – and charged at the Romans. A violent battle ensued in which the barbarians fought courageously."¹⁸

John I Tzimiskes did not lag behind Svyatoslav in terms of using inspiring speeches to hearten his soldiers and raise their morale before the battle. Describing the first of a series of assaults that marked the siege of Dorystolon, John Skylitzes tells that "when the armies came within sight of each other, the Emperor and Svyatoslav each encouraged his own men with heartening words, addressing them in appropriate language.

¹⁴ "Now we have no place – said Svyatoslav – whither we may flee. Whether we will or no, we must give battle. Let us not disgrace Rus', but rather sacrifice our lives, lest we be dishonored. For if we flee, we shall be disgraced. We must not take to flight, but we will resist boldly, and I will march before you. If my head falls, then look to yourselves." (Russian Primary Chronicle, 88).

¹⁵ Russian Primary Chronicle, 88.

¹⁶ A town and important military stronghold on the south bank of the river Danube in modern Bulgaria.

¹⁷ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 8, 152; Leo the Deacon, IX. 8, 195.

¹⁸ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 15, 306; John Skylitzes, XV.15, 290.



Fig. 2. *The council of the Scyths under Svyatoslav (Tsamakda 2002: 208, Skylitzes Matritensis, Miniature 436. Fol. 170r)*

Then, when the trumpets (σάλπιγγες) gave the signal for battle, the hosts charged each other with equal ardour.”¹⁹ Leo the Deacon also reveals how the Emperor during the first assault against Dorystolon bolstered his men’s spirits, shouting that, since they were Romans, they should display their prowess by means of their deeds. With his exhilarating words, he inspired his troops to press forward with an extraordinary assault. Moreover, the Rus’ were not able to withstand their attack, and turned to flight and rushed to the fortifications, losing many of their men in this battle. The Byzantines chanted the songs of victory, and acclaimed the Emperor²⁰.

Besides the battle at Dorystolon, Leo the Deacon shares another example of Tzimiskes’ ability to manipulate via his rhetoric skills. Since the Emperor’s plan to launch a sudden assault against Preslav on Easter was considered initially as an ill-timed recklessness by his commanders, the Emperor gave a speech, swollen with rage. He managed to convince them that his plan was well thought out, that to succeed they had to seize the momentum, pluck up their

courage, and prove that they were true Romans by means of their deeds: “Since I have engaged from my youth in warfare, and, as you know, have crowned myself with many triumphs and victories, I myself am well aware that to go into battle without due deliberation, but in a bold and arrogant manner, is particularly likely to result in danger and ruinous destruction. On the other hand, when the situation is, as it were, on a razor’s edge, and does not give an opportunity to act according to one’s wishes, then I think you too will agree with me that it is necessary to seize first this moment and take good care of our own affairs... For if the [Skythians] should perceive us when we were about to pass through, and should deploy themselves into ranks to oppose us in the narrow defile, the situation would not turn out well for us, but would lead to dire straits and difficulties. Therefore pluck up your courage, and, remembering that you are Romans, who have overwhelmed all your enemies by force of arms in the past, follow as quickly as possible, displaying your valor by means of your deeds.”²¹

¹⁹ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 11, 299; John Skylitzes, XV. 11, 285.

²⁰ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 10, 141; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 10, 186.

²¹ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 3, 132; Leo the Deacon, VIII.3, 178 – 179.

John I Tzimiskes raises the fighting spirit of his troops

Both Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes give details on other psychological techniques applied by John Tzymiskes to enhance his warriors' mentality and belief. Among them stands out the propaganda of the idea of supernatural divine support, which the Emperor had prayed for God's chosen Christian Roman Empire. This psychological warfare technique perfectly matched the strong orthodox faith and religious devotion of the Rhomaioi and their providential notion as the people of God. The systematic use of religious services in army camps as well as the employment of religious rhetoric and symbols on the battlefield significantly boosted the morale and motivation of the soldiers and contributed to the ideological instrumentalization of religion within the Byzantine war ethic (Koder – Stouraitis 2012; Kolia-Dermizaki 2012: 121 – 132; Stouraitis 2012: 235 – 236). In this particular case the sacralization of warfare against the Rus' started from the very beginning of the campaign as John Tzymiskes, acting like a true defender of Orthodoxy and Roman/Christian οἰκουμένη, showed inspired zeal praying for God's help. "While preparing to march against the Rus', the Emperor, demonstrating his devoutness, raised the standard of the cross, offered prayers to the Divinity, ordered that the Chapel of Christ the Savior be rebuilt from the foundations in a more splendid and sacred fashion; and he personally laid out the circumference of the walls; showed inspired zeal, and prayed in the holy and celebrated church of the Wisdom of God that he be granted an angel to go before the army and *make straight the road*; made a prayerful procession to the venerated church of the Mother of God at Blachernai and propitiating the Divinity here, too, with prayers of supplication..."²²

²² Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 1, 129; Leo the Deacon, VIII.1, 175.

John Skylitzes describes how exuberant and confident the Byzantine troops got, knowing that they had God on their side and exulted in their recent victory at Preslav, they were looking forward to a decisive battle against the Rus' while approaching Dorystolon. "Thus the Romans were eager and bold (not only the outstandingly courageous, but also the faint-hearted and timorous) – all champing at the bit to be in action."²³

During the tied battle for Dorystolon, the Emperor again started propagating the transcendent intervention on the side of the Rhomaioi. John I Tzimiskes raised the morale of his troops by spreading the rumor of the mysterious white rider who was considered to be Saint Theodore Stratelates himself. Leo the Deacon states, "...a man on a white horse appeared, who went ahead of the Romans and encouraged them to advance against the Scythians; and he broke through the enemy regiments in a wondrous fashion, and threw them into disarray. ... A definite suspicion was aroused that it was the great martyr Theodore, whom the Emperor used to beseech for help in battle, and to protect and preserve him together with all the army."²⁴ John Skylitzes confirms that the unknown man, who appeared mounted on a white horse, was one of the two gloriously victorious martyrs named Theodore²⁵. According to Anthony Kaldellis this piece of information should be regarded as "a literary elaboration of the belief that the battle was won (partly) through saintly intervention". However, as he argues, this belief went back to the battle

²³ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 11, 299; John Skylitzes, XV.11, 285.

²⁴ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 9, 154; Leo the Deacon, IX. 9, 197.

²⁵ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 17, 308; John Skylitzes, XV. 17, 292, n. 68. Skylitzes also mentions that after the battle near Dorystolon the Emperor made offerings for the victory to St. George, for it was on his feast day, that he had defeated the Rus's (Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 12, 300; John Skylitzes, XV. 12, 286).

itself and corresponded in some way with the imperial propaganda about the victory at Dorystolon (Kaldellis 2013: 40). Most probably, the Emperor brilliantly applied a psychological warfare trick, bruited about St. Theodore's miraculous involvement in the battle. The effect was really striking as the Rhomaioi, following the divine personage who led the way, came to grips with the enemy, and turned them to flight²⁶.

The Emperor's merit for this psychological invention is indisputable. The Byzantine historians directly connect the supernatural intervention of St Theodore with John Tzimiskes, for the Emperor always used the icons of this martyr as ally and protector against the enemies. Besides, the battle itself, and the white rider's appearance took place on the feast day (8 June) of Saint Theodore Stratelates. In this way, the Emperor very cleverly linked the victory with the intercession of his patron saint, thus building upon his imperial image of a victor with Divine support on his side²⁷. In order to commemorate his victory against the Rus' and "to honour the martyr and repay him for his timely aid, the Emperor tore down to the ground the church in which his sacred body lies and built a large and most beautiful new one which he endowed with splendid estates."²⁸ In addition, according to Leo the Deacon, Tzimiskes "changed the name of Dorystolon to Theodoroupolis in honor of the warrior and martyr Theodore the Stratelates."²⁹ This case is a good illustration of how a very beneficial psychological warfare technique could be im-

plemented in a particular saint cult for imperial propaganda.

John Tzimiskes successfully applied another psychological warfare method while trying to maintain his troops' fighting spirit. He regularly rewarded his soldiers during the campaign against the Rus', thus showing them how much he appreciated their efforts and dedication. The History of Leo abounds with examples of these reward mechanisms used by the Emperor to stimulate his soldiers. First, John Tzimiskes took care of the fleet and its motivation. Before sending over three hundred triremes to the Danube River to guard its passageway so that the Rus' would not be able to sail away to their own country, the Emperor rewarded all the oarsmen and marines on them with gifts of money³⁰. It was a very crafty move by the Emperor because the fleet would have been out of his sight, and he had to secure its commitment to the campaign.

It is important to remark that the soldiers themselves believed that the Emperor would reward them if they fought bravely and won. Leo the Deacon narrates how during the battle of Preslav every Byzantine soldier "fought bravely under the gaze of the Emperor, and hoped soon to receive from him rewards commensurate to their labors."³¹ The Emperor responded appropriately to his troops' actions and expectations. After the victory at Preslav, John Tzimiskes rewarded the army and let them rest, and celebrated in Preslav the Holy Resurrection of the Savior³². Then again, following the victory near Dorystolon, while the Byzantines were chanting the songs of victory, acclaiming the Emperor, he, on his turn, rewarded them with awards of dignities and with banquets, thus making them even more zealous

²⁶ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 10, 155; Leo the Deacon, IX. 10, 198.

²⁷ Skylitzes tells another rumor that was circulating the empire that the Mother of God personally urged St. Theodore to go quickly to John Tzimiskes' assistance (Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 17, 309; John Skylitzes, XV. 17, 292).

²⁸ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 17, 309; John Skylitzes, XV. 17, 293.

²⁹ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 12, 158; Leo the Deacon, IX. 12, 200.

³⁰ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 1, 129; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 1, 176.

³¹ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 5, 135; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 5, 181.

³² Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 8, 138; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 8, 183.

for battle³³. The Emperor used the same stimulating approach to his soldiers and during the siege of Dorystolon, when he rewarded them with gifts and drinking bouts, encouraging them to go into battle with robust spirits³⁴.

Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes both tell how John Tzimiskes very wily used his imperial image, authority, and charisma as a psychological technique to give vigor to the battle, hearten, and inspire his troops throughout the fight. The Emperor's bearing had a tremendous psychological effect on the morale of his soldiers. Leo portrays John Tzimiskes as a self-confident leader with his incredibly shining gold armor, mounting his proud and mettlesome horse, and masterfully commanding his numerous well-equipped and disciplined army³⁵, among which the so-called "Ἀθάνατοι"³⁶ ("Immortals") stood out.³⁷ Only with his presence, did Tzimiskes instill respect and spark courage and confidence among his soldiers. Leo the Deacon tells how during the siege of Preslav, the Emperor gave new vigor to the siege with his encouraging shouts, and his soldiers started fighting bravely and finally conquered the town³⁸. John Skylitzes describes how John Tzimiskes inspired his troops, demonstrat-

ing his bravery and determination and led his men during the crucial assault of Preslav citadel. The Emperor intervened at the most decisive moment. When he learned that his men were reluctant to attack because the location of the citadel was very well fortified and impregnable, he seized his weapons and set off on foot, ahead of everybody. "When the soldiers saw that, they all took up their weapons and every man tried to catch up with the Emperor; then, shouting and bellowing, they stormed the fortress."³⁹

John Tzimiskes acted in the same way later, during the battle near Dorystolon, when he spurred on his horse and rallied his troops with frequent shouts, leading them to a decisive victory⁴⁰. Leo the Deacon gives another example of the Emperor's psychological ability to boost the fighting spirit of his troops through his mesmerizing personality, inspiring leadership, and incredible prowess. During the decisive battle at Dorystolon, the Byzantines began to retreat at headlong speed, to avoid the extraordinary assault of the Rus'. At this point, John Tzimiskes realized that his retreating army might fall into mortal danger, so he decided to intervene decisively and prevent his troops from being defeated. The Emperor "encouraged his companions and brandished his spear mightily, and advanced against the enemy; and the drums beat, and the trumpets sounded the battle call. The Romans were put to shame by the Emperor's assault and wheeled round their horses, and fiercely attacked the Scythians."⁴¹

³³ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 10, 141; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 10, 186.

³⁴ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 2, 145; Leo the Deacon, IX. 2, 189.

³⁵ As Er. McGeer notes Leo's depiction of John Tzimiskes "displays the ideals of the military aristocracy and its attendant circles" (McGeer 1995: 221).

³⁶ More about the "Immortals", who were an elite cavalry regiment created by John Tzimiskes in 970 for his war with the Rus' see in McGeer 1995: 199, 221, 316; Negin – D'Amato 2020: 32.

³⁷ "The Emperor put on shining armor, the bright gold of the imperial insignia was gleaming incredibly; he mounted a proud and mettlesome horse and shouldered a very long spear, and set off on the road, having in the van the company of so called "Immortals", suitably sheathed in armor." (Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 4, 132; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 4, 179).

³⁸ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 5, 135; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 5, 181.

³⁹ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 10, 297; John Skylitzes, XV. 10, 283 – 284.

⁴⁰ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 11, 300; John Skylitzes, XV. 11, 285 – 286.

⁴¹ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 9, 153; Leo the Deacon, IX. 9, 196 – 197. A. Kaldellis finds all these episodes improbable. According to him the Byzantine historians made a panegyric boast that tried to give the impression that the Emperor fought in person (Kaldellis 2013: 46 – 47). However, this account cannot be ruled out entirely, considering the past of Tzimiskes and his personal engaging on battlefield as it is also attested by the Arab

Psychological warfare techniques aiming to depress the enemy's mental state

The Byzantines applied different tactics during the campaign against the Rus' to gain psychological advantage and win the war. Although these were warfare strategies, they had a considerable impact on their adversary's battlefield mentality. John Skylitzes narrates how the Byzantines gave false impression, simulating fear in order to mislead their foe before the battle of Arcadiopolis in 970. When the Rus' army invaded Thrace and set up a camp before the walls of Arcadiopolis, waiting for a battle, the Byzantine magister Bardas Skleros realized how short he was of men and decided to get the better of the enemy by military cunning. He enclosed his army inside the walls and ignored all the provocations made by the Rus' who urged him to come out of the fortress and fight. Bardas "stayed where he was, giving the impression that he was afraid and watching the enemy doing whatever they liked. This behavior earned the great contempt of the barbarians, for they thought it really was because he was afraid that he had enclosed the Roman units within the walls, and that he dare not to come out. They began to disperse without caution; they became negligent about camp security and careless as to the posting of proper guards. They passed their nights in drinking and drunkenness with flutes and cymbals in barbaric dancing with not a care for the precautions, which ought to have been taken. Bardas seized the opportune moment. When he had carefully studied the matter of how the enemy might best be attacked and had stipulated the day and hour, he set up ambushes and traps by night in some suitable places. Then he dispatched the patrician John Alakasseus with a small detachment whose orders were to advance and reconnoiter the en-

historians. Whether battled in person or not, it is without a doubt that Tzimiskes had a huge psychological impact on the morale of his army.

emy; he was to remain in frequent contact and to keep the commander informed of wherever he might be. When he encountered the enemy, he was to give battle but as soon as blows were struck, he was to turn his back and give the impression of running away. He was not to flee at full tilt, giving the horses their bridle, but gently and without breaking ranks. Then, wherever it was possible, his men were to turn about and set upon the enemy again. Their orders were to keep on repeating the operation until the enemy was well within the ambushes and traps; at that point they were to retreat in disorderly and headlong flight." Magister's plan worked perfectly as the Petchenegs fell right into the trap due to the fake retreat tactic, used by the Byzantines and were utterly surrounded as almost all of them were slain. When the other Petchenegs learnt about their misfortune, "their morale had collapsed at the unexpected nature of the disaster."⁴²

John Skylitzes tells about another interesting psychological warfare technique applied by John Tzimiskes, who tried to impress and dishearten his enemy demonstrating the power of his troops. When the Emperor came to the fortress of Raideustos, he was met by two Rus' ambassadors who gave the appearance of fulfilling an embassy, but in fact, had come to spy on the state of the Byzantine army. The Emperor quickly saw the real purpose of their mission and ordered them to pass through the entire camp and to inspect the ranks, so that they could inform their commander with what a well-organized and disciplined Byzantine army the Rus' would have to fight⁴³.

⁴² Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 5 – 6, 289 – 290; John Skylitzes, XV. 5 – 6, 276 – 277.

⁴³ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 9, 295; John Skylitzes, XV. 9, 281 – 282. According to A. Kaldellis this passage is an interpolation, since this act of John Tzimiskes went against the prescriptions of the Byzantine military manuals. Besides, "it was exactly what Scipio had done

This example is indicative of how John Tzimiskes did not hesitate to violate the prescriptions of the military manuals to gain a psychological advantage over his foe. Leo the Deacon also narrates spiritedly enough the Emperor's propensity to act unconventionally, unexpected, heterodox, and even against the Byzantine holiday tradition, so that he could catch the Rus' by surprise and defeat them. When John Tzimiskes learned from his scouts that the Rus' did not guard the difficult and narrow Haemus pass leading to Moesia, he urged for a sudden onrush although it was Holy Easter and everybody was expected to celebrate. However, the Emperor told his commanders that the Holiday was their best chance to take the enemies by surprise, "since they do not believe that we would give up the ceremonies attendant on the great festival, the splendid attire and processions and luxuries and spectacles, and become involved in the toils and tribulations of warfare. Thus, I think the best course of action is to seize the opportunity immediately, and, equipping ourselves as quickly as possible, proceed along the narrow path before the Tauroscythians become aware of our approach and rush in force to the rough terrain. For if we manage to pass through the dangerous ground first and attack them unexpectedly, I think that (with the aid of God, let it be said) we will capture at the first assault the city of Preslav itself, where the Mysians have their royal palace; and setting forth from there, we will very easily subdue the insolent Rus'."⁴⁴ John Tzimiskes successfully fulfilled his plan and managed to exploit a confused enemy force.

with the three spies sent by Hannibal before the battle of Zama in 202 BC: he had ordered them to tour his camp and report everything they saw to Hannibal". Therefore, Kaldellis considers this event as a replayed episode from Polybios' history (Kaldellis 2013: 41). However, such a claim is difficult to prove, and it seems a bit speculative to categorize every similarity with the ancient sources as unlikely and interpolative. Besides, the emperor used to act unconventionally in some cases.

⁴⁴ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 2, 130 – 131; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 2, 177 – 178.

He crossed the Haemus Mountains during the Holy Week, made an unforeseen advance into enemy territory, and pitched his camp close by the town of Preslav. This happened so unexpectedly that the Rus' were confused and reduced to inactivity. The Emperor's troops came onto the plain in front of the town and suddenly fell on the enemy, taking them completely unawares⁴⁵.

The Rus' also tried to use as a psychological warfare technique the element of surprise. During the battle of Dorystolon, they launched a sudden night assault to break the Byzantine siege. At first, they had the upper hand since the Byzantines did not expect at all to be assailed for it was night. However, the Rus' failed to take full advantage of the surprise assault and were eventually repulsed by the Rhomaioi⁴⁶.

Instilling fear and spreading panic via terror

The principal psychological warfare strategy affecting the morale of the adversaries was the deliberate instillation of fear and insecurity by using different tactics and methods.

For example, Svyatoslav strived to maintain a frightful campaign against the Byzantines as he went, and destroyed imperial towns that stand deserted even many years later⁴⁷. On his turn, John Tzimiskes a few times tolerated ruthless slaughter upon the Rus' trying to terrify them and break their resistance⁴⁸.

Besides, both the Emperor and the Rus' ruler used clamor as a psychological warfare

⁴⁵ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 9, 296; John Skylitzes, XV. 9, 282. The Byzantine army surprised eight thousand five hundred fully armed Rus' soldiers engaged in training outside the town, who resisted for a time but then, overcome, turned and fled.

⁴⁶ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 12, 301; John Skylitzes, XV. 12, 287.

⁴⁷ Russian Primary Chronicle, 87.

⁴⁸ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 7 – 9, 137 – 140; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 7 – 9; 182 – 185.

technique to encourage their men and at the same time to cause panic among the enemies, while approaching the battlefield. Advancing on Preslav, John Tzimiskes “ordered the trumpets to sound the call to battle frequently, and the cymbals to clash and the drums to roll. And thus an indescribable clamor burst forth, as the mountains there echoed the drums, and the weapons clanked in response, and the horses whinnied, and the men shouted and encouraged each other for the battle, as was fitting.”⁴⁹ The effect was noticeable since the Rus’ were seized with panic and terror. However, they quickly recovered their wits and struck back “roaring like wild beasts and uttering strange and weird howls.”⁵⁰

It is also worth mentioning how the heavily armed cavalymen of the Rhomaian tagmata, the so-called “κατάφρακτοι/kataphraktoi” (McGeer 1995: 211 – 217; Negin – D’Amato 2020: 6 – 24), instilled fear in the Rus’ army during the battle of Preslav. Leo the Deacon relates how the outcome of the fierce combat was decided only when Emperor John I Tzimiskes sent against the Rus’ the “ironclad horsemen” (πανσιδήροι ιππότες), in particular the Tagma of the Athanatoi (Immortals), who intimidated and bludgeoned the enemies forcing them to flee in disorder: “When the battle was evenly balanced on both sides, at this point the emperor ordered the Immortals to attack the left wing of the Scythians with a charge. So they held their spears before them and violently spurred on their horses, and advanced against them. Since the Scythians were on foot (for they are not accustomed to fight from horseback, since they are not trained for this), they were not able to withstand the spears of the Romans, but turned to flight and shut themselves

up within the walls of the town; the Romans pursued them and killed them mercilessly.”⁵¹

The impact created by the charge of the kataphraktoi was fundamental. On the one hand, their deployment buoyed the weary spirit of the Rhomaioi, prompting an overwhelming attack on the Svjatoslav’s troops. On the other hand, the kataphraktoi (“ἱππότες πανσιδήροι”) played a considerable part in grinding down the enemies’ morale. As Leo the Deacon attests, the Rus’ feared, after the defeat, a new confrontation with the formidable Rhomaian Immortals “for they were not able to contend with ironclad horsemen (μὴ γὰρ οἷους τε καθεστάναι ἱππότης πανσιδήροις ἀνδράσι συμπλέκεσθαι)”⁵².

Besides the intimidating Immortals, during the siege of Dorystolon, the Byzantines took another psychological advantage due to their fleet and their fire-bearing triremes in particular, which appeared sailing up the Danube. When the Byzantines saw them they were filled with joy and hope, but the Rus’ “were seized with fear since they were afraid of the liquid fire that they transported. For they had heard from the elders of their people how the immense army of Igor, the father of Sphendosthlavos, had been reduced to ashes by the Romans in the Euxine by means of this Median fire.”⁵³

⁴⁹ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 4, 134; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 4, 180.

⁵⁰ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 7, 151; Leo the Deacon, IX. 7, 195. Alice-Mary Talbot (Leo the Deacon, 180, n. 32) assume that Leo the Deacon simply exaggerated the inexperience of the Rus’ with cavalry. In this case, however, Leo speaks not about cavalry in general, but about the kataphraktoi and above all about the Immortals who were a brand new regimen of the Byzantine Tagmata, created by John Tzimiskes just before his campaign against the Rus’. For that reason, it is quite possible to consider that Svjatoslav troops were unfamiliar and therefore inexperience with what turned out to be the most formidable contingent of Byzantine heavy cavalry.

⁵¹ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 2, 144; Leo the Deacon, IX. 2, 188. For more details on greek fire and its method of deployment aboard byzantine warships see Pryor – Jeffreys 2006: 607 – 631.

⁴⁹ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 4, 133; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 4, 179.

⁵⁰ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 4, 133; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 4, 180.



Fig. 3. *The Rhomaioi pursue and defeat the Scyths at Dorystolon*
(Tsamakda 2002: 206, *Skylitzes Matritensis*, Miniature 430. Fol. 167r)

The two rulers' policy towards the Bulgarian population is especially interesting because the majority of the military actions during the conflict were conducted on Bulgarian territory. In this regard, Svyatoslav's policy turned out to be very ambiguous. On the one hand, he instilled fear on a widespread basis, thus trying to achieve his political goals through fear-based acquiescence. One of Svyatoslav's first actions on his return on the Balkans in 969 was to reduce the Bulgarians to terror on a large scale. Some 20,000 captives are said to have been impaled in the town of Philippopolis (Plovdiv), to terrify into submission those still holding out⁵⁴.

Later on, Svyatoslav was afraid that the Byzantine conquer of Preslav would unleash a general insurrection of the Bulgarians, for many towns surrendered to Tzimiskes without resistance. When he saw that the Bulgarians were rebelling against their alliance with him, and going over to the Emperor, he realized that, if they sided with the Byzantines, affairs would not turn out well for him. So he selected three hundred of the Bulgarians who were of distinguished ancestry and power, "and devised a cruel and inhuman fate for them: for he had all their throats cut and

killed them"; "and he put the rest (they numbered about twenty thousand according to Skylitzes) in chains and confined them in prison."⁵⁵ These examples reveal how Svyatoslav psychologically pressed the Bulgarians, putting them into a state of constant fear, anxiety, and terror. However, it all turned out against him, since the massacre of the Bulgarian elite made it easier for the Byzantines to try to bring Bulgarians over to their side and to isolate the Rus' (Leszka 2018: 419 – 429). On the other hand, Svyatoslav successfully propagandized himself as a liberator, striving to get the Bulgarians' support. Realizing the advantage in attaching important Bulgarians to his cause, he allowed their tsar, Boris II, to remain in Preslav and to retain his insignia, such as crowns and purple robes. Such indulgence helped gain acceptance from many Bulgarians, and their warriors were to fight obstinately by the side of the Rus'.

However, this was the case only till the battle of Preslav because after his victory there, the Emperor, on his turn, promoted and propagated the image of liberator and avenger as he wanted to break the Bulgarian-Rus' coalition. Both Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes attest, that

⁵⁴ Leonis Diaconi, VI. 10, 105; Leo the Deacon, VI. 10, 155.

⁵⁵ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 9, 139; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 9, 184; Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 12, 300; John Skylitzes, XV. 12, 286.

when the Byzantines entered within the town of Preslav, they inflicted incredible slaughter upon the Rus'. However, when the Bulgarian tsar Boris II was captured with his wife and two infant children, and brought before the Emperor, the latter received him and treated him honorably, calling him ruler of the Bulgarians, and saying that he came to avenge the Bulgarians, who had suffered terribly at the hands of the Rus'⁵⁶. In this way, the Emperor ostensibly recognized the sovereignty of the Bulgarian ruler to win over the Bulgarians to his side. Besides, John Tzymiskēs released all the Bulgarians he had captured – “leaving them free to go wherever they would, saying that he was not come to enslave the Bulgarians but rather to free them. It was only the Rus' whom he regarded as enemies and intended to treat as adversaries.”⁵⁷

Personal challenges for single combats and targeted killing of enemy's commanders as a psychological warfare technique.

Among the most impressive psychological warfare techniques on the battlefield were the personal combat challenges with both Byzantines and Rus' being involved in frenzied competition in prowess. An essential part of these manifestations of exceptional bravery was the targeted killing of enemy commanders, which turned out to be a very effective psychological warfare technique that often predetermined the outcome of the battle. On the one hand, troops were inspired and encouraged by the exceptional heroic acts and personal sacrifice of their brothers in arms. On the other hand, these acts destroyed the will and capacity of their enemies to carry on war, since they were often left grieving,

psychologically devastated, and disheartened by the death of their commanders and best warriors.

John Tzimiskēs was the one who set a personal example by launching a targeted psychological attack against Svyatoslav, challenging him to settle the war by single combat. As John Skylitzes attests, during the tied battle for Dorystolon, the Emperor “realized that the Scyths were fighting with more tenacity than before. He was concerned about how much time the action was taking; he was also moved with compassion for the wretched Romans who were faring so badly in the war, so he came up with the idea of having the matter decided by single combat. And indeed he sent a delegation to Svyatoslav challenging him to fight alone: for (he said) it was better for the decision to be made by the death of one man than to massacre and gradually wear the people down; the winner would take all. But [the Scyth] would not accept the challenge. He answered derisively that he could look after his own affairs better than his enemy; and that, if [John] was weary of life, there were ten thousand other ways of dying; let him embrace whichever one he chose. And with this effrontery he fell to preparing for action even more vigorously”⁵⁸.

Both Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes bear witness that in every pivotal battle during the Rus' – Byzantine war of 970 – 971, there were mutual attempts of targeted killing of opponent's commanders and best warriors. John Skylitzes narrates how during the battle of Arcadiopolis two very powerful and courageous Rus' soldiers tried to exterminate the Byzantine commander in chief, the magister Vardas, but instead were killed in single combats by the magister himself and his brother Constantine.

⁵⁶ Leonis Diaconi, VIII. 6, 136; Leo the Deacon, VIII. 6, 182.

⁵⁷ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 9, 287; John Skylitzes, XV. 9, 283.

⁵⁸ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 16, 307 – 308; John Skylitzes, XV. 16, 291. Anthony Kaldellis is quite skeptical about this episode and considers it as another fictional panegyric boast typical in an era when heroic ideals and single combat were increasing in popularity with the Byzantine military aristocracy (Kaldellis 2013: 47).



Fig. 4. A Scyth attacks the magistros Vardas Skleros (Tsamakda 2002:202, *Skylitzes Matritensis*, Miniature 418. Fol. 162r)



Fig. 5. The patrikios Konstantinos attacks a Scyth (Tsamakda 2002:203, *Skylitzes Matritensis*, Miniature 419. Fol. 162r, bottom)

As Skylitzes depicts, the two brothers' heroic deed "heartened the Romans and put new courage in them, while it filled the Scyths with fear and dread. They quickly lost their courage; they turned their backs and shamefully fled in grave disorder. The Romans pursued them and covered the plain with dead, but more were taken alive than fell and all but a very few of the survivors were wounded."⁵⁹

⁵⁹ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 6, 290 – 291; John Skylitzes, XV. 6, 277 – 278.

During the battle of Preslav one of the Byzantine warriors attacked and struck down Sphengelos, "a huge and vigorous man, who was ranked third after Sphendosthlavos by the Tauroscythians, and was fighting furiously at that time; and the Tauroscythians were thrown into disarray by his death, and gradually retreated from the plain and hastened back to the town."⁶⁰

At the same time, another outstanding Byzantine warrior worked miracles of courage, thus inspiring his brothers in arms.

⁶⁰ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 2, 144; Leo the Deacon, IX. 2, 189.



Fig. 6. *The magistros Ioannes Kourkouas is slain by the Scyths (Tsamakda 2002: 207 – 208, Skylitzes Matritensis, Miniature 434. Fol. 169r)*

“Theodore Lalakon, a man who was hard to withstand and invincible in the might and strength of his body, killed great numbers of the enemy with an iron mace; for he wielded it with such force in his arm that he would crush at the same time the helmet and the skull protected by it. Thus the Scythians then turned to flight and retreated to the town.”⁶¹

The Rus’ took partial revenge by killing magister Ioannes/John Kourkouas who was related to the Emperor and was keeping guard over the siege machines in front of the Dorystolon walls. According to Leo the Deacon “the Rus’ caught sight of his gleaming armor and the horse’s cheek-pieces and other trappings, which were magnificently wrought (for they were lavishly gilded), they thought that he was the Emperor, and attacked him in a body with their weapons, and cruelly cut him to pieces with swords and axes; and they stuck his head on a spear and attached it to the towers, jeering at the Romans that they had butchered their Emperor like a sheep.”⁶²

The reciprocal frenzied competition in prowess, while killing the foes’ commanders and most prominent warriors during the siege of

Dorystolon, renewed on the next two days with the murder of Ikmor, second of command after Svyatoslav, and his slayer Anemas, one of the imperial bodyguards.

Leo the Deacon and John Skylitzes both tell how Anemas saw Ikmor, a huge and vigorous man, a great celebrity among the Rus’, “who was frenziedly attacking with a company of infantry following him”⁶³, “encouraging the others to do likewise, urging them on and throwing the Roman battle lines into confusion”⁶⁴, killing large numbers of Byzantine soldiers. Anemas “was incited by his innate prowess, and drew the sword which was hanging at his side and turned his horse this way and that, and goaded it with his spurs, and headed toward Ikmor. And he overtook him and struck him in the neck; and the Scythian’s head and right arm were severed and dashed to the ground.”⁶⁵

The psychological effect of this murder was stunning, as “great shouting greeted this deed, the Romans cheering the victory, the Scyths uttering unseemly groans, their resistance weakening.

⁶³ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 6, 149; Leo the Deacon, IX. 6, 193.

⁶⁴ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 14, 304; John Skylitzes, XV. 14, 289.

⁶⁵ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 6, 149; Leo the Deacon, IX. 6, 193.



Fig. 7. The duel between Anemas and Ikmor (Tsamakda 2002:208, Skylitzes Matritensis, Miniature 435. Fol. 169v)



Fig. 8. Anemas attacks Svyatoslav (Tsamakda 2002: 209, Skylitzes Matritensis, Miniature 439. Fol. 171r, bottom)

When the Romans fell on them again, the Scyths were put to flight and ingloriously sought refuge in the city. Many of them fell that day, trodden underfoot by others in the narrow defile and slain by the Romans when they were trapped there.”⁶⁶ On the very next day, when the battle was hung in the balance for some time, Anemas recklessly assaulted Svyatoslav, who was “charging the Romans in a frenzied rage and encouraging his regiments”, and tried to kill the Rus’ Prince with his sword but did not succeed

for Svyatoslav “was protected by his coat of mail and the shield with which he was equipped, out of fear of the Roman spears. And although Anemas was surrounded by the Scythian army, and his horse was brought down by numerous spear thrusts, he killed many of the [Scythians], but then was himself killed, a man surpassed by no one his age in brave feats in battle. Therefore the Rus’ took courage at his fall, and shouted loudly and fiercely, and pushed back the Romans.”⁶⁷ However, his heroic death was not in vain. It was

⁶⁶ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 14, 305; John Skylitzes, XV. 14, 289 – 290.

⁶⁷ Leonis Diaconi, IX. 9, 153; Leo the Deacon, IX. 9, 196.

greatly admired even by the enemy⁶⁸ and was an inspirational morale boost for the Byzantine troops who won in the end.

Summa summarum

The review of the written sources made so far shows that both warring sides considered psychological warfare as fundamental and incorporated it into their war strategy. Emperor John I Tzimiskes and the Rus' Prince Svyatoslav used similar psychological techniques such as propaganda and motivating speeches, making clamor, instilling fear and panic among the enemies, inspiring and rewarding their men, tolerating acts of exceptional bravery and combat prowess. Both

rulers aimed at the one hand, to stimulate and encourage their soldiers, and on the other hand, to mentally subdue the enemies, destroy their morale, and reach the ultimate goal of every commander – to win the battle and war, subsequently. The impact of those techniques depended on the way the commanders and their troops were able to implement them during the campaign. This conclusion only came to reassure that war is an art, not a science – that each military problem has many potentially correct solutions (not just a single optimal solution), which derived from the imagination, creativity, and intuition of the military leader and relied on the dedication, courage and morale of his soldiers (Handel 1991: 6).

⁶⁸ Ioannis Scylitzae Synopsis historiarum, ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΤΖΙΜΙΣΚΗΣ. 16, 308; John Skylitzes, XV. 16, 292.

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ТЕХНИКИ НА ПСИХОЛОГИЧЕСКАТА ВОЙНА ВЪВ ВЪОРЪЖЕНИЯ КОНФЛИКТ МЕЖДУ ВИЗАНТИЯ И КИЕВСКА РУС ОТ 970 – 971 Г.

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Резюме: Статията има за цел да разкрие различните стратегии и техники на психологическата война, използвани в хода на разразилия се през 970 – 971 г. решителен сблъсък между Киевска Рус и Византия, който де факто предопределил съдбата на Източните Балкани. Анализът на основните византийски извори, а именно Историята на Лъв Дякон и Синописът на Йоан Скилица, разкрива, че двете воюващи страни са разглеждали психологическата война като основна и интегрална част от своята стратегия. Император Йоан I Цимиски (969 – 976) и князът на Киевска Рус Светослав I Игоревич (945 – 972) тактически планират и използват много ефективно различни психологически техники като: вдъхновяващи и мотивиращи речи, пропагандиране на свръхестествена божествена подкрепа, възнаграждаване на собствените воители, насърчаване на прояви на изключителна храброст и мъжество по време на битката, а така също и вдигане на оглушителен шум и всяване на страх и паника сред враговете. И двамата владетели се стремят, от една страна, да стимулират и насърчават своите войници, а от друга – да потискат враговете и да ги деморализират в преследване на крайната цел на всеки военачалник – победа в битката и войната. Въздействието на всички тези техники зависи от начина, по който командващите и техните войски успяват да ги приложат по време на кампанията.

Ключови думи: техники на психологическата война, Византия, Киевска Рус, император Йоан I Цимиски, княз Светослав I Игоревич, Лъв Дякон, Йоан Скилица.