

= Ivan Vladislav of Bulgaria =

Ivan Vladislav (Bulgarian : ???????????) ruled as emperor (tsar) of Bulgaria from August or September 1015 to February 1018 . The year of his birth is unknown ; he was born at least a decade before 987 , but probably not much earlier than that .

Saved from death by his cousin Gavril Radomir , the Bulgarian Emperor , in 976 , Ivan Vladislav murdered him in October 1015 and seized the Bulgarian throne . Due to the desperate situation of the country following the decades @-@ long war with the Byzantine Empire , and in an attempt to consolidate his position , he tried to negotiate truce with the Byzantine emperor Basil II . After the failure of the negotiations he continued the resistance , attempting unsuccessfully to push the Byzantines back . During his period of rule , Ivan Vladislav tried to strengthen the Bulgarian army , reconstructed many Bulgarian fortresses and even carried out a counter @-@ offensive , but he died at the Battle of Dyrrhachium in 1018 . After his death his widow , Empress Maria , the Patriarch and most of the nobility finally surrendered to Basil II , who soon suppressed the last remnants of resistance and brought about the end of the First Bulgarian Empire .

Ivan Vladislav left a mixed heritage , varying from a reputation of being ruthless murderer to a hero defending his country as best as he could . The descendants of Ivan Vladislav entered the Byzantine nobility and rose to the highest ranks of the hierarchy . Two women of his family became empresses of the Byzantine Empire and others became military commanders or high @-@ ranking officials . He was an ancestor of the Byzantine emperor John II Komnenos .

= = Life before the accession of the throne = =

Ivan Vladislav was the son of Aron , the brother of Emperor Samuel (r . 997 ? 1014) of the Cometopuli dynasty . In 976 or 987 Samuel ordered his brother Aron executed for treason together with his entire family near Razmetanitsa . Ivan Vladislav was the only survivor , being spared through the intercession of his cousin , Samuel 's son Gavril Radomir . His life during the subsequent decades and until his accession is unknown .

= = = Assumption of power = = =

By 1015 , Bulgaria had been embroiled in almost thirty years of war with the Byzantine Empire , and Gavril Radomir had succeeded Samuel , who died on 6 October 1014 after the disastrous Battle of Kleidion . However , from the outset Radomir 's position was insecure : Ivan Vladislav , as a son of the elder of the Cometopuli brothers , could lay claim on the throne based on seniority . During that time the Byzantine king Basil II campaigned deep into Bulgarian territory . He retook the previously lost town of Voden (Edessa) and laid siege to the massive fortress of Maglen , situated to the north @-@ west . Gavril Radomir did not have enough forces and was unable to interfere and could only watch the course of the events from the nearby Lake Ostrovo . His inability to cope with the Byzantine threat aroused discontent among the nobility and Ivan Vladislav became their chosen leader . The fall of Maglen sealed Gavril Radomir 's fate ? in the late summer of 1015 , while hunting near Ostrovo (Arnissa) , he was murdered by his cousin , perhaps at the behest of Byzantine agents . Ivan Vladislav then seized the Bulgarian throne and took steps to ensure his position against potential rivals .

= = Emperor = =

= = = First months of the reign = = =

After assuming the throne , Ivan Vladislav immediately sent a delegation to Basil II , which arrived five days after the fall of Maglen . In his letter , Ivan Vladislav notified Basil that he had personally murdered Gavril Radomir and had seized all the power in the country and promised Basil deep

humility and obedience , an act of submission which some in the nobility supported . After Ivan Vladislav firmly secured his hold on the throne , however , he openly declared to be against any kind of compromise with the Byzantines and quickly began to follow the determined policy of his predecessors against the ongoing Byzantine conquest . Basil II soon understood that Ivan Vladislav 's letter was a ruse and plotted a retaliatory action , bribing the kavkhan Theodore , who was in Byzantine captivity , to murder the Bulgarian ruler . Theodore in turn paid a trusted man in Ivan Vladislav 's employ to commit the murder , but in the event the assassin actually killed Theodore himself . In the meantime Basil II continued his march , forcing the Bulgarian emperor to retreat to the Albanian mountains , and advanced into the heart of the Bulgarian state . The Byzantines took the capital Ohrid and burned the imperial palaces ; news , however , arrived that Ivan Vladislav had laid siege to Dyrrhachium and that to the south the Bulgarian general Ibatzes had defeated the Byzantine rear army near Bitola . With his supply routes cut , Basil II had to retreat back to Thessalonica leaving a small garrison in Ohrid , which was swiftly retaken by the Bulgarians . Back in his base at Mosynopolis , Basil divided the Byzantine army to harass the areas of Strumitsa and Sofia . In January 1016 the Byzantine emperor returned to Constantinople .

= = = Consolidation = = =

Meanwhile , Ivan Vladislav consolidated his positions in the mountains of Albania and Macedonia . As early as October 1015 he began the reconstruction of many strongholds destroyed during the war , including the fortress at Bitola (as testified in the Bitola inscription) . In 1016 he invited his vassal Prince Jovan Vladimir of Doclea , who was married to Gabriel Radomir 's sister Theodora Kosara , to come to his court . The emperor probably desired to seize the prince and so secure his western flank . The Prince was determined to attend the invitation of Tsar , but his wife Theodora Kosara did not trust the murderer of her brother , and fearing for her husband 's life persuaded him not to go . Ivan Vladislav however vowed not to threaten his vassal 's life , and sent him a golden cross as a proof of good will . Jovan Vladimir still hesitated , saying that God was nailed to a wooden not golden cross , but Ivan Vladislav repeated his vow and gave him a guarantee of safe @-@ conduct , also guaranteed by the Bulgarian patriarch David . Eventually Jovan Vladimir travelled to the court of the Tsar in Prespa , but upon his arrival on 22 May , he was immediately beheaded , and the emperor refused to allow the burial of his body . It was not until a number of miraculous events related to the corpse of the prince were observed that Vladislav returned the body to Kosara .

In the spring of 1016 Basil II led his armies along the Struma valley and besieged the strong fortress of Pernik . The fort 's defence was headed by the capable commander Krakra , who remained loyal to the Bulgarian cause . As all the previous attempts against Pernik , the 88 @-@ day siege was a failure , costing the Byzantines many casualties before they were forced to retreat south and regroup at Mosynopolis .

= = = Fighting in 1017 = = =

In the early days of 1017 the Byzantine emperor renewed his campaigns . He sent David Arianites and Constantine Diogenes to pillage along the River Vardar and captured the castle of Longos . After that he marched south and besieged Kastoria . Under the walls of the town Basil II received messages from Tzitzikios , the Byzantine strategos of Dorostolon (Silistra) , that Ivan Vladislav had sent Krakra to negotiate assistance from the Pechenegs and that they were crossing the Danube . The Byzantine emperor immediately abandoned the siege and hurried northwards , but in the vicinity of Lake Ostrovo he learned that the Pechenegs were unwilling to risk war . Returning south , Basil II captured Setina , where Samuel used to have a palace and acquired for himself the large amount of provisions that were stored there . Ivan Vladislav , who was closely monitoring the Byzantine movements , ambushed the troops who were under the command of Constantine Diogenes , who would have perished had not Basil II come to relieve him . According to John Skylitzes , the Emperor charged alone in front of his army to Diogenes ' rescue . When the Bulgarians saw him , they

shouted " Run , the Emperor " (" ???????? ??????? ") and retreated in panic . Contented with their victory , the Byzantines moved on to Voden and returned to Constantinople .

= = = Death = = =

In the early 1018 Ivan Vladislav besieged Dyrrhachium , but in February he was killed under the walls of the city . The accounts of his death are contradictory . According to some he became victim of a plot and was killed by his servants ; according to others , he perished in battle . The Bulgarian additions to the Skylitzes Chronicle are more detailed , saying that Ivan Vladislav dueled with the strategos of Dyrrhachium , the patrikios Niketas Pegonites , on horseback , and while fighting , two Byzantine infantrymen from the audience rushed to the emperor and wounded him mortally in the belly . A later Byzantine historian claimed that the duel was fair and Pegonites stabbed Ivan Vladislav in the chest with his spear , killing him instantly . The Chronicle of the Priest of Duklja reports an altogether different story : while having a meal in his camp , the emperor was attacked by an unknown soldier , in whom Ivan Vladislav seemed to have recognized the murdered Jovan Vladimir . Terrified , he cried for help but no one rushed to his rescue and the unknown soldier mortally wounded the Bulgarian ruler .

His death marked the effective end of the Bulgarian Empire . Ivan Vladislav 's sons were young and inexperienced , and even the strongest Bulgarian leaders doubted the advisability of further resistance . Upon learning of the death of the Tsar , Basil II left Constantinople . In Adrianople he was met by the brother of Krakra who acknowledged Byzantine authority . His example was followed by the larger part of the Bulgarian nobility who pledged loyalty to Basil II , giving up their fortresses . In Serres , Krakra along with the commanders of 35 castles met the emperor and surrendered , and in Strumitsa he received a message sent by the Empress @-@ dowager Maria to negotiate the surrender of the capital and the country . Basil II richly awarded those who surrendered , allowing them to keep their lands , wealth and titles . Short @-@ lived resistance continued under Ivan Vladislav 's eldest son Presian II and his brothers , but they also surrendered by the end of 1018 .

= = Legacy = =

Living more than one hundred years after Ivan Vladislav , the historian known as the Priest of Duklja , who wrote from a Dukljan perspective , was outraged by the murder of Jovan Vladimir , and wrote that after the Tsar died , he was " forever connected with the angels of Satan " . Many modern Bulgarian historians , including Vasil Zlatarski , also criticize the emperor , claiming that his actions hastened the fall of Bulgaria and that instead of raising the morale of the nation he turned into a murderer and was unable to cope with the intrigues and the corruption in court . Steven Runciman is also critical of the emperor , noting that his assassination of Gavril Radomir unleashed a general confusion where each noble started looking out for his own personal interests , but nevertheless credits him with " a considerable ruthless energy " . Jordan Andreev is more favourable to Ivan Vladislav , noting that he had reasons for his acts ? he had to revenge the murder of his family according to the old Bulgarian pagan beliefs , but he only killed Gavril Radomir and his wife without harming the rest of Gavril Radomir 's family . He had to cope with Jovan Vladimir who , as a husband of one of Samuel 's daughters , was a threat to his position , and had also attempted a compromise with the Byzantines . According to Andreev , Ivan Vladislav 's struggle to defend the Bulgarian state and his heroic death serve to mitigate his ill deeds . He cites a Byzantine historian who claimed that during Ivan Vladislav 's reign the Byzantine state " hanged in the balance , because that barbarian like Goliath resisted the Romans and they were all despaired by that invincible foe . " The Polish historian Kazimierz Zakrzewski also writes with sympathy for the last ruler of the First Empire , in light of the fact that Ivan Vladislav managed to sustain a guerilla war which he skilfully run until his death .

Ivan Vladislav Point on Rugged Island in the South Shetland Islands , Antarctica is named after Ivan Vladislav of Bulgaria .

= = Family = =

Ivan Vladislav married Maria , possibly the daughter of Tsar Boris II of Bulgaria and a Byzantine noblewoman , by whom he left progeny . Maria was named zoste patrikia by Basil II , and the descendants of Ivan Vladislav entered Byzantine service , becoming part of the Byzantine nobility and forming close ties with the Komnenos clan in particular . Both his daughter Catherine and an unnamed (possibly Anna) granddaughter married (future) Byzantine emperors . His second son Alusian took part in the Uprising of Petar Delyan against Byzantine rule but eventually betrayed the Bulgarian cause .

Maria and Ivan Vladislav had several children , including :

Presian , who briefly succeeded as emperor of Bulgaria 1018 , later Byzantine magistros

Aron , Byzantine general

Alusian , Byzantine patrikios in 1019 , strategos of Theodosiopolis in Anatolia , briefly emperor of Bulgaria in 1041

Trayan / Troianus , father of Maria of Bulgaria , who married Andronikos Doukas .

Catherine (Ekaterina) , who married the future Byzantine Emperor Isaac I Komnenos