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## **The All-Rus' Congresses in Kievan Rus' between 1054 and 1236**

This article examines the four All-Rus' congresses held by the princes of Rus' between the years 1054 and 1236. They were in the main of two types: military congresses held to organize a campaign against the Polovtsy or Tatars, and organizational congresses held to reestablish order in Kievan Rus'. They were attended by members of all the princely families of Rus'. Even the dynasty of Polotsk, which was descended from Izyaslav, the elder brother of Yaroslav the Wise, sent delegates to at least some of the congresses.

During their history, the Yaroslavichi led many campaigns against the nomads. In some of these the Polovtsy were the allies of the princes and in others their enemies. Vladimir Monomakh, for example, led campaigns against the horsemen in 1103, 1107 and 1111 on which he scored resounding victories. His son Mstislav Vladimirovich campaigned in 1129 and, although his father Monomakh had driven the enemy beyond the Don River, Mstislav did better by driving them even further east, beyond the Volga River. After 1166 the nomadic attacks on the east and west banks of the Dnepr would escalate until they reached their climax in the mid 1180s. During those years, the co-rulers Svyatoslav Vsevolodovich and Rurik Rostislavich conducted a number of successful campaigns against the nomads. Nevertheless, in 1148, the princes also used Polovtsy as their allies in their battles with each other. For example, Yury Dolgorukiy used the "Wild Polovtsy" in the 1150s in his conflict with Izyaslav Mstislavich, and Mikhail Vsevolodovich of Chernigov used them in 1235 to defeat Daniil Romanovich. These were campaigns led by individual princes with their allies. The All-Rus' campaigns were organized when the nomads became excessively aggressive and successful in their raids. These campaigns numbered four and were initiated with a congress of all the princes.

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### **The Congress of Lyubech in 1097**

The first and most important of the congresses was held in 1097 at Lyubech, located east of the Dnepr River west of Chernigov. It was called by Svyatopolk Izyaslavich the grand prince of Kiev and his cousin Vladimir Vsevolodovich

Monomakh to lead a joint campaign against the warring Polovtsy. Oleg Svyatoslavich of Chernigov, a third cousin, was also invited but went on his own. The campaign was an overwhelming success but disagreements between the families led to strife and delayed its realization for some fourteen years, until 1111. Let us examine the details.

Following a protracted war in 1096, and despite his cousins' assurances of safety and Mstislav Vladimirovich's entreaties to Oleg Svyatoslavich to be reconciled with his father Vladimir Monomakh, Oleg found it impossible to trust Svyatopolk Izyaslavich and Vladimir Monomakh. It was only after Mstislav deprived him of his domain, his troops, and evidently even his will to fight that Oleg capitulated. He agreed to accept their terms so long as he would be allowed to remain in his patrimony of Chernigov. In 1097, therefore, some seven months after his unconditional surrender to Mstislav, he came to a congress (*snem*) of princes held at Lyubech. This was a town located on the stream Uzhika, a tributary of the Dnepr some fifty miles northwest of Chernigov<sup>1</sup>. It had been the birthplace of Vladimir, their great-grandfather and Christianizer of Rus<sup>2</sup>.

All the surviving senior members of the Yaroslavichi, except for Volodar' one of the sons of Rostislav Vladimirovich of Galich, came. Before, however, the princes could discuss the main topic on their agenda, namely, a unified attack on the Polovtsy, the question of territories became the major subject of discussion. Although Svyatopolk's and Monomakh's primary objective was to secure peace in the land so that they could lead a unified attack against the Polovtsy, they realized that this could be attained only after they provided each family with a permanent territorial base.

Fortunately for Oleg and the other malcontents who were unhappy with their territorial allotments, Svyatopolk and Monomakh admitted that a settlement acceptable to every family must be reached on the question of domains. At Lyubech, therefore, they confirmed the allocations that Yaroslav the Wise had made to his three eldest surviving sons and the ones Vsevolod Yaroslavich had later made to his nephews the Rostislavichi and the Igorevichi. All present agreed that the only princes with the right of succession to a particular domain were the descendants of the Yaroslavich who had originally received that patrimony. Consequently, all the princes of Rus', but in particular Svyatopolk and Vladimir, promised to abide by the spirit of Yaroslav's so-called "testament", and honour the rights of the other Yaroslavichi to their domains<sup>3</sup>.

1 G.A. Miloradovich, "Lyubech, Chernigovskoy gubernii, Gorodnitskago uezda," *Chteniya v Obshchestve istorii i drevnostei Rossiiskikh* (Moscow, 1871), bk. 2, II materiyali otechestvennye, 1–103; A.V. Kuza, *Malye goroda Drevney Rusi* (M, 1989), 79–81.

2 Ipatevkaya letopis' [Ipat.], *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisey* [PSRL], volume [vol.] 2, second edition (St. Petersburg, 1908), column [col.] 57; Lavrentevskaya letopis' [Lav.], *PSRL* 1, second edition (Leningrad, 1926), col. 69.

3 It has been suggested that the legal codes, Yaroslav's *Russkaya Pravda* and, *Pravda Yaroslavichyey*, were also revised at the congress (L.V. Cherepnin, "Obshchestvenno-politicheskie otnosheniya v drevney

Whereas Svyatopolk and Monomakh's main objective was to bring Oleg on side against the Polovtsy, Oleg's primary goal was to regain possession of his patrimony of Chernigov. To judge from the chronicler's report, not just Oleg but other princes attending the *snem*, especially the Rostislavichi in Galicia and David Igorevich in Vladimir in Volyn', also sought guarantees for their domains. Their patrimonies had been appropriated by the triumvirate — Svyatopolk, Oleg, and Vsevolod - and their possession of their domains was now dependent on the goodwill of the grand prince of Kiev. They therefore demanded assurance from Svyatopolk that he would honour the allocation of domains made by Vsevolod Yaroslavich, his predecessor in Kiev. Svyatopolk and Monomakh's willingness to guarantee all the princes territorial security reveals that they realized that the best way to promote peace and unity among the princes was to provide them with permanent domains. The chronicler's report leads us to believe that the participants at the congress were content with the guarantees endorsed by all the princes present. Most importantly, Svyatopolk and Monomakh would have promised to honour the rights of the other princes to keep their domains. They also promised that they would not, like the triumvirate had done, confiscate the domains of politically weaker Yaroslavichi<sup>4</sup>. Although all the princes formally sealed on oath their agreement to respect the permanence of their newly confirmed domains, the chronicler fails to tell us that they made any statement concerning the order of succession to Kiev.

Although the chronicler identified the patrimonies of Svyatopolk, Monomakh, and the three Svyatoslavichi only by the names of their fathers, the patrimonies are readily identifiable. In addition to Kiev, Svyatopolk would keep his father Iziaslav's Turov. Monomakh would rule his father Vsevolod's patrimony of Peryaslavl', Rostov, Suzdal', and Beloozero. He also resumed direct control over Smolensk where David Svyatoslavich, an Ol'govich, had been prince up to the congress<sup>5</sup>. The Svyatoslavichi, David, Oleg, and Yaroslav, were given back their patrimonial domains of Chernigov and Murom. David Igorevich, whom Vsevolod had reinstated in his father's patrimony of Vladimir in Volyn' in 1087, was confirmed in that domain. Finally, Volodar' and Vasil'ko's rule was approved in Peremyshl' and Terebovl', the territories in Galicia that Vsevolod had given them not long before his death.

Significantly, the two Rostislavichi, members of the most senior family descended from Yaroslav the Wise, were once again debarred from ruling their patrimonial domain of Novgorod that Yaroslav had given to their grandfather Vladimir. Svyatopolk and Monomakh, like their fathers Iziaslav and Vsevolod, were unwilling to lose control of the town that was second in importance to Kiev.

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Rusi i Russkaya Pravda," *Drevnerusskoe gosudarstvo i ego mezhdunarodnoe znachenie*, eds. V.T. Pashuto and L.V. Cherepnin (M., 1965), 201–203).

4 See also, D. Bagaley, *Istoriya Severskoy zemli do poloviny XIV stoletiya* (Kiev, 1882), 270.

5 The chronicler testifies to Monomakh's repossession of Smolensk when he reports that, in 1101, he built a stone church in the town (*Ipat.*, col. 250).

Moreover, the prince of Kiev had by this time lost effective control over Novgorod because its citizens insisted that it was their prerogative to select their own prince. They had exercised this right by choosing Monomakh's son Mstislav as their prince. Designating the two Rostislavichi to Galicia was therefore a happy solution. On the one hand, Volodar' and Vasil'ko were content to remain in Peremyshl' and Terebovl' and, on the other hand, by not giving them Novgorod, the princes at the congress avoided antagonizing the Novgorodians by sending them princes not of their choosing.

The princes at the congress were seemingly appeased by the allocation of domains. Nevertheless, Svyatopolk and especially Monomakh exacted a heavy price from Oleg for his stubbornness in refusing to assist them against the Polovtsy. To judge from chronicle evidence, he was demoted in the political hierarchy below his younger brother David. This can be inferred from the manner in which the chronicler presents the brothers' names in his report. He writes that "David and Oleg, Yaroslav [will rule] Svyatoslav's [patrimony]." In a list of princes, it is customary for the chronicler to give the names in the order of the princes' genealogical seniority which determined a prince's political seniority. In this instance, since David is placed ahead of Oleg this suggests that Oleg, who was the genealogically the eldest Svyatoslavich, was demoted in political seniority. This meant that David replaced him as the political head of the Svyatoslavichi<sup>6</sup>.

Although Svyatopolk and Monomakh punished Oleg for his intransigence, they nevertheless demonstrated their goodwill towards him and his brothers by reinstating them in their patrimonial domain. Indeed, in light of Oleg's campaigns against Monomakh and his sons, Monomakh might have demanded more severe penalties. For example, he and Svyatopolk could have consigned him to an inconsequential provincial town just as they would do, as we shall see, to David Igorevich. Although Oleg's punishment appears to be relatively lenient, additional indirect evidence strongly suggests that Svyatopolk and Monomakh, acting from their position of power, also imposed a penalty on the Svyatoslavichi as a dynasty. That penalty would be solely for Monomakh's benefit and the benefit of his descendants. It will be relevant to give a summary of our original observations here.

It appears that the princes at the congress, most likely prompted by Monomakh, approved changing the political order of the three families descended from the triumvirs: Izyaslav, Svyatoslav, and Vsevolod. As has been noted above, the chroniclers normally listed the names of princes in the order of their genealogical seniority: a prince's seniority determined his political status. Consequently, it is noteworthy that in listing the names of the princes who arrived at the *snem* before any agreement was reached, the chronicler did not follow this genealogical order.

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6 For a more detailed examination concerning Oleg's demotion, see M. Dimnik, "Who was the Elder Svyatoslavich, Oleg (d. 1115) or David (d. 1123)?" *Zberezhenia istoriko-kul'turnykh nadban' Siverschyny* (Hlukhiv, 2005), 24–35.

Instead, he listed the names of the princes as follows: Svyatopolk, Vladimir Monomakh, David Igorevich, Vasil'ko Rostislavich, and last of all the Svyatoslavichi, David and Oleg. The latter two, who according to their genealogical seniority should have been listed after Svyatopolk, are placed out of genealogical sequence at the end of the list. The chronicler placed them there it appears, because, prior to the congress, they had fallen in political status. They were the only two who were not in possession of a domain. David, at best, ruled Smolensk at the goodwill of Monomakh. Oleg had lost both Chernigov and Murom.

After the congress ratified each prince's domain, and Monomakh and Svyatopolk returned their patrimony of Chernigov to the Svyatoslavichi, the chronicler listed the princes' names in a revised order. He placed the Svyatoslavichi after Svyatopolk and Monomakh. Thus, in addition to being given back their patrimony, the change in the order of names indicates that Oleg and his brothers were upgraded from the bottom of the hierarchical ladder up to the third rung. Nevertheless, they were not returned to their proper genealogical position, the second rung, between Svyatopolk and Monomakh. This suggests that, in 1097, the assembled princes, notably Svyatopolk and Monomakh, seemingly decreed a new political order: Svyatopolk, Monomakh, and the Svyatoslavichi. It was to replace the traditional genealogical order: Svyatopolk, the Svyatoslavichi, and Monomakh. We may assume that Monomakh used his position of power to advance himself in political seniority.

Promoting Monomakh to the rung immediately after Svyatopolk did not give him additional domains, but it had other very important political consequences for him and his descendants. Although the chronicler fails to explain the obvious result of Monomakh's political advancement, the inference is that he became next in the line for succession to Kiev after Svyatopolk. Had he remained in the political rung below the Svyatoslavichi, there was a very good chance that he would not live long enough to take his turn at occupying Kiev via peaceful succession. There were three Svyatoslavichi ahead of him in precedence, and the youngest Yaroslav would most likely outlive him<sup>7</sup>. By being promoted in the political order, however, Monomakh would bypass all the Svyatoslavichi. The chronicles indirectly confirm that Monomakh's advancement in the political order made him next in line for Kiev after Svyatopolk. As we shall see, in 1113, he would indeed succeed Svyatopolk and, significantly, Oleg would not challenge his succession. This suggests that Oleg, who was his political senior according to genealogical seniority, saw no violation of the system of succession in Monomakh's occupation of Kiev and conceded that office to him. Although the chronicler fails to tell us that the princes at the congress made changes to the system of succession to Kiev, the order in which he places the names of the princes reveals that they modified it significantly. That change was exclusively for Monomakh's benefit.

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<sup>7</sup> Monomakh would die in 1125; Yaroslav would die in 1129 and outlive Monomakh by four years (*Ipat.*, cols. 289, 293).

The princes at the congress resolved three important issues for Svyatopolk, Monomakh, and the Svyatoslavichi. As we have seen, Svyatopolk and Monomakh's alleged main concern was to secure a united defence of Rus' against the Polovtsy; they achieved this by pacifying Monomakh with Oleg. The latter's main objective was to regain possession of his patrimonial domain of Chernigov; the princes at the congress guaranteed him possession of his patrimony. In addition, circumstantial evidence suggests that Monomakh's unpublicized personal aim was to secure his succession and that of his descendants to Kiev. Thus he seemingly returned Chernigov to Oleg as a trade off in return for their patrimony. Oleg and the Svyatoslavichi relinquished to him their turn in the genealogical order of succession to Kiev that had been stipulated by Yaroslav the Wise. We will accept this explanation of the succession changes to Kiev that were introduced at the Congress of Lyubech as valid. We will base on it our further examination of the rivalries between Monomakh's dynasty and the princes of Chernigov.

Before the princes departed from Lyubech, they pledged that should any prince attack another they would all join forces against the offender and punish him. The territorial agreement reached in 1097 was, therefore, to be enforced differently from the directive that Yaroslav the Wise had given to his sons. He had designated his eldest surviving son as prince of Kiev and given him the responsibility of protecting the patrimonies of all his brothers. His directive was broken by each of the triumvirs in turn. The princes at the Congress of Lyubech, above all no doubt the debarred princes who had lost their patrimonies through such transgressions, attempted to obviate any future violations. They bypassed the authority of the prince of Kiev by agreeing to strike as a united force against any offender. Their pledge seemed to offer a greater guarantee for the security of princely patrimonies than Yaroslav's directive to his eldest son had done. This was so because in the past, on almost every occasion, the main violator of Yaroslav's directive had been the prince of Kiev himself<sup>8</sup>.

The chronicler would have us believe that the princes left Lyubech filled with great brotherly love. Subsequent developments would reveal otherwise. A number of them were secretly dissatisfied with the allocations imposed on them at the congress<sup>9</sup>. On a later occasion, David Igorevich would complain to Volodar' that at the *snem* he had been coerced into abiding by the princes' allocations against his will in light of their united power<sup>10</sup>. The disputed territories were located in Galicia and Volyn'. As we have seen, David was allowed to retain possession of Vladimir in Volyn' and the two Rostislavichi, Volodar' and Vasil'ko, remained in Peremyshl' and Terebovl'. Nevertheless, David's secret

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8 For a somewhat different interpretation of the Lyubech accord and its implications see also S. Franklin and J. Shepard, *The Emergence of Rus 750–1200* (London and New York, 1996), 265–277.

9 *Ipat.*, col. 231; *Lav.*, col. 257.

10 *Ipat.*, col. 241; *Lav.*, col. 267.

desire was to annex Terebovl' to Vladimir. To achieve his end he resorted to the use of deception and force.

On their way from Lyubech to their domains David and Vasil'ko visited Kiev. While there, David persuaded Svyatopolk to believe that Vasil'ko was responsible for the murder of Svyatopolk's elder brother Yaropolk<sup>11</sup>. Moreover, David claimed that Vasil'ko was planning to kill Svyatopolk, seize his domains of Turov, Pinsk, Berest'e, and Pogorina, and rule them from Vladimir. He also maintained that Monomakh was conniving to occupy Kiev<sup>12</sup>. Svyatopolk believed, or pretended to believe, David's accusations. Therefore, on 5 November, he invited Vasil'ko to his court where he allowed David's men to seize him. They carted him off to Belgorod where a Turk named Berendi blinded him. After that David took Vasil'ko with him to his town of Vladimir in Volyn<sup>13</sup>. Thus the fraternal love professed by the princes at the *snem* was violated even before two of the main participants returned to their domains.

Although the chronicler claims that David deceived Svyatopolk with his false accusation, the prince of Kiev may have been only too eager to believe the deceit for personal motives. We are led to believe that his official reason for taking action against Vasil'ko was his desire to avenge his brother's death and to avert a plot against himself. At a later date he revealed that he also had secret designs on Vasil'ko's domain. The outcome of the deception was the sordid episode of David's blinding of Vasil'ko, taking him captive to Vladimir, and the ensuing internecine strife.

Svyatopolk and David's mistreatment of Vasil'ko shocked their cousins. On receiving the news, Monomakh exclaimed in disbelief: "never has such an evil deed been perpetrated in the land of Rus'." When he informed the Svyatoslavichi they were also flabbergasted by the news. Taking the initiative, Monomakh invited them to march with him against Svyatopolk to right the wrong<sup>14</sup>. Acting as a tribunal, they sent messengers to Svyatopolk demanding that he justify his conduct. He explained that after David informed him of Vasil'ko's plot, he had merely taken prudent precautionary measures. He placed the blame for his action on David. The messengers, however, pointed out that ultimate responsibility for

11 According to the chronicles Neradets the assassin fled to Vasil'ko's elder brother Ryurik in Peremyshl' suggesting that he was Ryurik's henchman (*Ipat.*, cols 197–198; *Lav.*, col. 206).

12 *Ipat.*, col. 237; *Lav.*, col. 263; P. F. Lysenko, "Kiev i Turovskaya zemlya," *Kiev i zapadnye zemli Rusi v IX–XIII vv.*, eds. L. L. Pobel' et al. (Minsk, 1982), 85–86; compare, A. N. Nasonov, "Russkaya zemlya" i obrazovanie territorii drevnerusskogo gosudarstva (Moscow, 1951), 129.

13 *Ipat.*, cols 231–236; *Lav.*, cols 257–262. C. Raffensperger observes correctly that Vasil'ko's blinding "does not conform to the [Byzantine] pattern of blinding potential rivals for a throne". However, he adds incorrectly that it "is the only example of a blinding in Kievan Rus'..." in his *Reimagining Europe: Kievan Rus' in the Medieval World* (Cambridge, Mass., 2012), 26–27. It is noteworthy that in 1177 Vsevolod Bol'shoe Gnezdo would have his Rostislavichi nephews Mstislav and Yaropolk blinded and expelled from Suzdalia (M. Dimnik, *The Dynasty of Chernigov, 1146–1246* (Cambridge, 2003), 138–139). For a more detailed examination of the Vasil'ko affair, see M. Dimnik, *The Dynasty of Chernigov, 1054–1146* (Toronto, 1994), 224–233.

14 *Ipat.*, col. 236; *Lav.*, col. 262.

the crime lay with Svyatopolk, because Vasil'ko was captured and blinded in his towns over which David had no jurisdiction. Before Monomakh and the Svyatoslavichi attacked Svyatopolk, however, the Kievans intervened. They sent a delegation to the three princes pointing out that if the princes went to war the Polovtsy would attack Rus'. The townspeople beseeched the princes to come to terms and direct their aggression against the nomads instead of against each other. Monomakh and the Svyatoslavichi acknowledged the wisdom of their request. They were pacified with Svyatopolk but demanded that he punish David. Svyatopolk agreed to do as they insisted<sup>15</sup>.

Svyatopolk, however, tarried for almost a year and a half, until Lent of 1099, before taking punitive action against David. He seemingly delayed for two reasons. In the winter or early spring of 1098 David waged war against the Rostislavichi. He attempted to capture Vasil'ko's town of Terebovl', therewith violating the oath that he had taken at the congress not to trespass on another prince's domain. Vasil'ko's elder brother Volodar' repelled David's attack, forced him to sue for peace, and to release Vasil'ko. Later in the spring the two Rostislavichi razed territories belonging to David. Svyatopolk monitored these hostilities hoping that the Rostislavichi would do his task of bringing David to justice. Unfortunately for him, the warring princes were pacified and David remained in his patrimonial domain of Vladimir in Volyn'<sup>16</sup>. Consequently, it still remained for Svyatopolk to evict him.

A second reason why Svyatopolk delayed in punishing David was his inability to find military allies. Monomakh and the Svyatoslavichi refused to send reinforcements to assist him for fear that the Polovtsy might attack their domains while their forces were fighting elsewhere. Svyatopolk therefore turned to the Poles for help. On learning this David also asked them for assistance. Both princes paid for the services of the Poles with gold, but the Poles deceived them and helped neither one. Finally, Svyatopolk besieged Vladimir in Volyn' and David fled to the Poles. Svyatopolk entered the town on Holy Saturday, in 1099, and appointed his son Mstislav as its prince<sup>17</sup>. He therewith fulfilled his pledge to Monomakh and the Svyatoslavichi, but this was not the end of the affair. After capturing Vladimir in Volyn' Svyatopolk revealed his true colors.

He set out to sequester the Galician domains of the two Rostislavichi. In doing so he not only violated the oath that he had made at Lyubech, but also the pledge that he had made to the Rostislavichi when he had attacked David, namely, that he would remain at peace with them. He justified his aggression by claiming that, since their towns of Peremyshl' and Terebovl' had belonged to his father Izyaslav and to his brother Yaropolk, they rightfully belonged to him. That is, he referred back to the days when Izyaslav was prince of Kiev, and in that capacity controlled Volyn' and

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<sup>15</sup> *Ipat.*, cols 236–239; *Lav.*, cols 262–265.

<sup>16</sup> *Ipat.*, cols 239–243; *Lav.*, cols 265–269.

<sup>17</sup> *Ipat.*, cols 243–244; *Lav.*, col. 269.



Galicia. At that time Yaropolk as prince of Vladimir also had authority over the towns of Galicia. Nevertheless, following the patrimonial allocations made by the princes at the Congress of Lyubech, Svyatopolk's argument lacked strength. Perhaps Svyatopolk believed that he was unfairly treated at Lyubech because the princes did not give him control of Novgorod but left it under Monomakh's rule. Svyatopolk argued that it rightfully fell under his jurisdiction as prince of Kiev. Gaining possession of the Galician towns would compensate him for his loss of Novgorod. Unfortunately for Svyatopolk, he failed in his quest. The Rostislavichi confronted him with their forces and won the day forcing him to flee<sup>18</sup>.

Meanwhile, David Igorevich solicited the military aid of the Kipchak Khan Bonyak and his tribesmen. They besieged Vladimir and during the fighting Svyatopolk's son Mstislav was killed defending the town. David therefore regained possession of his patrimony with the help of the Polovtsy whom he used contrary to the anti-Polovtsian spirit expressed at the Congress of Lyubech<sup>19</sup>. Thus we see that at the end of the day Svyatopolk accomplished nothing. He failed to punish David according to the directive given to him by Monomakh and the Svyatoslavichi, and the Rostislavichi remained in possession of their domains. Consequently, in 1099, the state of affairs in the western domains remained unchanged just as it had existed at the time of the congress. Significantly, however, the *snem* had disrupted princely relations by creating new malcontents who, after some two years of fighting, remained unappeased. David remained determined to appropriate Vasil'ko's domain. Svyatopolk was intent on seizing David's Vladimir in Volyn', the Galician towns of the Rostislavichi, and control of Novgorod from Monomakh. And Monomakh and the Svyatoslavichi were incensed at Svyatopolk for failing to punish David. This was a formula for future rivalries.

In early August of 1100, almost four years after the Congress of Lyubech, a number of princes from the so-called inner circle held another council and concluded peace at a place identified as Uvetichi. Those in attendance were Svyatopolk of Kiev, Vladimir Monomakh of Pereyaslavl', and David and Oleg of Chernigov<sup>20</sup>. The chronicler's statement that the princes concluded peace is puzzling since they had not been at war. Perhaps he is referring to the tension that existed among them over Svyatopolk's violation of the Lyubech agreement, when he attempted to seize the domains of the Rostislavichi. Monomakh and the Svyatoslavichi no doubt demanded that he pledge not to attempt seizing the domains again. After they were reconciled they summoned David Igorevich to Uvetichi. Their purpose in calling him from Vladimir in Volyn', we learn, was finally to

18 *Ipat.*, cols 244–245; *Lav.*, cols 269–270.

19 *Ipat.*, cols 245–248; *Lav.*, cols 270–273.

20 According to one source they met on 14 August (*Ipat.*, cols 248–249), while another gives the date of 10 August (*Lav.*, col. 273). It has been suggested that Uvetichi was located across the Dnepr from Vyshgorod, see M. Hrushevsky, *Ocherk istorii Kievskoy zemli ot smerti Yaroslava do kontsa XIV stoletiya* (K., 1891), 21–22.

punish him for blinding Vasil'ko. David arrived on 30 August and demanded to know why they had sent for him.

After dispensing with the usual initial formalities, the princes proceeded with David's trial. They and their retinues assembled in family groups on horseback and adjudicated on David's crime. On reaching their verdicts they sent messengers to David, who sat apart. To judge from the chronicler's report, Monomakh served as the spokesman for the assembled princes. Indeed, if the chronicler's account is accurate, it appears that Monomakh rather than Svyatopolk acted as the moving force for the tribunal. The princes declared that David was to be evicted from Vladimir in Volyn', and his heirs were to be denied the right to sit on the throne of their father in that town. Thus, the princes overrode the ruling that they had reached at Lyubech recognizing Vladimir in Volyn' as David's patrimonial domain. It is noteworthy that David was not penalized for breaking the Lyubech agreement but for "drawing his sword against them [the princes]" by maiming their "brother". Thus, at Uvetichi the princes seemed to put to rest the Vasil'ko affair in punishing David by depriving him of his patrimonial domain. After evicting him from Vladimir, Svyatopolk as prince of Kiev took possession of the town and gave it to his son Yaroslav. He compensated David with a number of minor towns in Volyn', namely, Buzhsk, Duben, and Chertoryysk. David was therewith made politically ineffectual. After some time had elapsed, Svyatopolk gave him the more important town of Dorogobuzh on the eastern frontier of Volyn'<sup>21</sup>.

Finally, four years after the Congress of Lyubech, Monomakh's main objective was achieved. Peace among the princes was realized as all the malcontents were mollified or restrained. Oleg and his brothers were happy to have regained control of Chernigov, albeit at the cost of being relegated below Monomakh in the ladder of succession to Kiev. David resigned himself to ruling Dorogobuzh and a number of lesser towns in Volyn'. The Rostislavichi, in addition to avenging themselves against David, successfully retained possession of Peremyshl' and Terebovl'. Svyatopolk alone remained unappeased because he had failed to seize the towns of the Rostislavichi. At Uvetichi Monomakh and the Svyatoslavichi had evidently forced him to drop his claim to those Galician towns. They would have pointed out that it was time for all the princes to unite against the Polovtsy who had once again renewed their incursions into the lands of Rus'.

Up to 1097 one of the main stumbling blocks towards a rapprochement between Oleg and his cousins Svyatopolk and Monomakh was his refusal to stop fraternizing with the Polovtsy. Since the princes were reconciled at Lyubech we may assume that he agreed to some form of compromise concerning his relations with the Polovtsy. The demonstration of princely unity apparently persuaded the

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21 *Ipat.*, cols 248–250; *Lav.*, cols 273–274. On 25 May 1112 David died in Dorogobuzh (*Ipat.*, col. 273). His descendants would not be allowed to succeed him to that town. Instead, they were relegated to the less important town of Gorodno in Volyn'.

Polovtsy to adopt a more cautious policy towards the princes of Rus'. For the next few years they stopped their pillaging. Then, in 1101 they resumed their attacks with a vengeance. In that year Svyatopolk, Monomakh, David, Oleg, and Yaroslav met at Zolot'cha, a small inlet of the river Chertoryya on the east bank of the Dnepr opposite Kiev. When the chieftains learnt of the assembly, they all sent envoys to the princes requesting peace. On 15 September they met at Sakov, a town located on the east bank below Kiev, concluded peace and, after taking hostages from each other, departed<sup>22</sup>. Just as the organizers of the Lyubech congress had hoped, by rattling their sabers the united *druzhiny* of the three princely families intimidated the Polovtsy into submission for an additional two years.

Two years later and six years after Lyubech, in 1103, Svyatopolk and Monomakh launched a major offensive against the Polovtsy. Such a military operation was probably one of Svyatopolk and Monomakh's longstanding objectives. Indeed, it was perhaps for that very purpose that the princes had met at Zolot'cha two years earlier when the Polovtsy had sent their emissaries with offers of peace. After that peace treaty expired, Monomakh, who evidently assumed the role of commander-in-chief, convinced Svyatopolk that a spring attack was the most advantageous<sup>23</sup>. They marshaled their troops and summoned all the princes of Rus' to join them on a major campaign. The important consideration was that, at long last, the three families marched as one albeit without Oleg who absented himself for some unexplained reason.

On 4 April Svyatopolk, Monomakh, David, and all the other princes of Rus' set out into the eastern steppes in search of the enemy. After a four-day march they encountered an "innumerable" force. Even so, they inflicted a crushing defeat on the Polovtsy and killed twenty of their chieftains. The princes seized much booty and returned to Rus' in glory<sup>24</sup>. Monomakh evidently assumed the role of commander-in-chief. This is confirmed by the information that Svyatopolk accepted his proposal for a spring campaign, and by the news that after their victory Svyatopolk handed over the captured khans to Monomakh for sentencing. Following their crushing defeat the Polovtsy remained at peace for a number of years, except for occasional forays that small raiding parties made into Kievan and Pereyasavl' lands<sup>25</sup>.

In May of 1107, that is, four years after the campaign of 1103, the Polovtsy renewed their forays on the eastern bank. Khan Bonyak raided the surrounding

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22 *Ipat.*, col. 250; *Lav.*, col. 275.

23 The fact that Monomakh assumed the role of commander-in-chief is suggested both by the news that his proposal for the spring attack was accepted and by the information that after the campaign Svyatopolk sent the captured Polovtsian chieftains to him for punishment.

24 *Ipat.*, cols. 252–255; *Lav.*, cols. 277–279; for Monomakh's campaigns against the Polovtsy, see I.U. Budovnits, "Vladimir Monomakh i ego voennaya doktrina," *Istoricheskie zapiski*, 22 (1947), 42–100.

25 In 1106, for example, a small party of horsemen attacked the neighbourhood of Zarech'sk in the western regions of the Kievan principality. Svyatopolk sent boyars in pursuit of the raiders and they retrieved the stolen goods. (*Ipat.*, col. 257; *Lav.*, col. 281.)

regions of Pereyasavl'<sup>26</sup>. Evidently, his primary objective was to capture horses, probably the very ones Monomakh had seized from the Polovtsy four years earlier. However, when he returned later in the summer of 1107, he was accompanied by many other khans. They besieged Lubno, a town located east of Pereyasavl' on the river Sula. Monomakh called the other princes to his aid. According to the account, his forces constituted the retinues of the following princes: Svyatopolk, Monomakh, Oleg, Svyatoslav (Oleg's son?), Monomakh's sons Vyacheslav and Yaropolk, as well as Igor's grandson Mstislav<sup>27</sup>. After crossing the river Sula the forces of Rus' came upon the Polovtsy by surprise. They let out such a clamor that the terrified enemy fled in disarray. The princes cut down many of the panic-stricken tribesmen and killed a number of their chieftains. They captured the Polovtsian camp on 12 August and returned home in glory<sup>28</sup>.

Nevertheless, Monomakh's patrimony of Pereyasavl' remained the most vulnerable to nomadic attacks. One chronicle reports that, in 1110, the Polovtsy made three separate incursions into his territories. They ravaged Voin', a town some eight miles south of Pereyasavl', and also plundered other settlements such as Chyuchin from where they took captives<sup>29</sup>. To judge from reports of these attacks, the nomads seemingly continued concentrating their lightning strikes on Monomakh's possessions.

Following the devastation that the Polovtsy inflicted on the inhabitants of his lands, Monomakh was determined to deliver a *coup de grâce* on the warring tribesmen. The chronicler reports that, early in 1111, he had an apparition in which he was advised by angels to lead the princes of Rus' against the Polovtsy<sup>30</sup>. The chronicle gives a long account of a pillar of fire which appeared on 11 February over the Caves Monastery. During the course of his description he notes that the celestial manifestation was a foreshadowing of the magnificent event that occurred in the following year when angels came to fight on the side of the princes against the Polovtsy<sup>31</sup>. What is more, as the pillar of fire hovered over Gorodno where Monomakh was staying at that time, he was angelically inspired to lead the princes of Rus' against the Polovtsy<sup>32</sup>. As his campaign had divine backing, it would be difficult for princes to reject his invitation to join him since victory was guaranteed. He therefore marshaled an impressive array of princes with their troops.

26 He was last mentioned under the year 1099 when he helped David Igorevich regain Vladimir from Svyatopolk's contingents (*Ipat.*, cols 247–248).

27 For Mstislav, see N. de Baumgarten, *Généalogies et mariages occidentaux des Rurikides Russes du Xe au XIIIe siècle (Orientalia Christiana)*, vol. 9, nr. 35 (Rome, 1927), I, 35. Svyatoslav's identity is difficult to determine. Both Oleg and Monomakh had a son with that name. However, the order of the names in the account (viz. Svyatoslav immediately following Oleg, and Vyacheslav and Yaropolk together without Svyatoslav) suggests that Svyatoslav was Oleg's son.

28 *Lav.*, cols. 281–282; compare *Ipat.*, col. 258 which has an incomplete account.

29 *Ipat.*, col. 260.

30 *Ipat.*, col. 268.

31 *Ipat.*, cols. 260–264.

32 *Ipat.*, col. 268.

In 1111, fourteen years after Lyubech, Monomakh persuaded Svyatopolk to join him on a campaign. The list of princes was as follows: Svyatopolk and his son Yaroslav; Monomakh and his sons Mstislav and Yaropolk; David of the Ol'govichi and his son Rostislav; Oleg's sons Vsevolod and Svyatoslav; and David Igorevich. Placing their hope in God, the most pure Mother of God and His holy angels, the princes set off in the winter<sup>33</sup>. After crossing many rivers they came to the Don or, perhaps, the Severskiy Donets which the chronicler also calls the Don. In the sixth week of Lent they reached the Polovtsian town of Sharukan<sup>34</sup>. Its inhabitants were allies and brought out "fish and wine" (variant, "fish and honey") as a token of peace. On Wednesday, the princes marched on the town of Sugrov and set fire to it. On learning this, the Polovtsy quickly rallied and, on Friday 24 March, attacked. The chronicler takes pains to remind the reader that the campaign was conducted under divine protection. The princes placed all their hope in God who, we are told, vented His anger against the enemy by helping them defeat the Polovtsy near the stream called Degeya.

On the Monday of Holy Week, however, the tribesmen regrouped and assembled in a great multitude. Then the Lord God sent an angel to help the princes. At first, many soldiers from both sides fell in the fierce fighting but when Monomakh advanced with his troops and David with his, the Polovtsy took fright and fled. In this way, a great number of Polovtsy was killed on the river Salnitsa, a tributary of the Don. Svyatopolk, Monomakh, and David gave praise to God for the victory. Later, they asked their captives why they fled after barely initiating battle. They replied: "How could we fight when others, riding above your heads dressed in shining armour and looking most terrifying, were assisting you." These, we are told, were the angels sent by God to help the Christians. The princes then returned to their domains with great honour and their renown spread to the lands of the Greeks, the Hungarians, the Poles, the Czechs, and even to Rome<sup>35</sup>. The victory was extremely successful. Chronicle silence concerning Polovtsian raids for the next fourteen years suggests that the tribesmen remained peaceful until 1125, that is, until after Monomakh's death.

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### **The Defeat of the Polovtsy in 1168 and the Sack of Kiev in 1169**

The second major amalgamation of princes assembled in 1168, some 71 years after Lyubech. With a few exceptions, it was an assembly of princes from all the dynastic families of southern Rus'. It also included the princes of northeast

33 The date of the Second Sunday of the Great Fast was 26 February (Bagaley, *Istoriya Severskoy zemli*, 181).

34 For a description of the route followed by the troops see, Bagaley, *Istoriya Severskoy zemli*, 181–183.

35 *Ipat.*, cols. 264–273; s.a. 1111, Moskovskiy letopisnyy svod kontsa XV veka [*Mosk.*], *PSRL* 25 (M.-L., 1949), p. 389 and continued s.a. 1105, p. 26; compare s.a. 1112, *Lav.*, col. 289.

Suzdalia who gathered for the common purpose that they had been anticipating, namely, to march against the Polovtsy. Consequently although the chronicler does not call this an official congress, it had all the makings of a general assembly. Mstislav Izyaslavich the grand prince of Kiev summoned the princes of Rus' to join him on the campaign. The Monomashichi were represented by Ryurik Rostislavich from Vruchiy (Ovruch), Yaroslav Izyaslavich from Lutsk, Gleb Yur'evich from Pereyaslavl', and many others. The Ol'govichi sent the two Vsevolodovichi, Svyatoslav and Yaroslav, as well as Oleg Svyatoslavich and his youngest brother, Vsevolod. They set out on 2 March.

Mstislav's decision to lead an all-Rus' campaign against the nomads shows that their raids had intensified. He accused them of two offenses. First, despite their pacts with the princes, they had carried off Christians into captivity. Mstislav's main objective, therefore, was to stop the loss of vital human resources. Second, the tribesmen cut off trade on the southern route to Kiev, that is, the route from the Greeks along the Dnepr. This was the route along which salt was brought overland from Crimea, and the overland route from the Caspian region, the so-called Zalzoznyy put'. Mstislav's secondary objective, therefore, was to restore the uninterrupted flow of trade to Rus'<sup>36</sup>.

On 11 March the princes reached the Polovtsian camps on the river Uгла (Orel') and Snoporod (Samara)<sup>37</sup>, but the tribesmen had fled abandoning their wives, children, and possessions. Mstislav led the main force in pursuit, routed the enemy at a location known as the Black Forest (*Chernyy les*), and sent troops after the nomads who had fled east beyond the river Oskol<sup>38</sup>. Mstislav's all-Rus' campaign against the Polovtsy was the first since 1129, when his grandfather Mstislav Vladimirovich had driven the tribesmen beyond the Volga River<sup>39</sup>. Unlike in that year, although princes from both sides of the Dnepr participated in the campaign, they attacked tribes only on the east bank. According to the few entries which have reported nomadic raids to date, these occurred in the Pereyaslavl' and Chernigov lands. After their victory, the men of Rus' set free the captive Christians and seized much booty. On this occasion, the princes scored an overwhelming victory, but their success led to dissension. Mstislav's surreptitious conduct, namely, allowing his men to plunder at night without telling his allies, antagonized his princely relatives. The princes returned home on Easter Day, 31 March<sup>40</sup>.

36 It has been suggested that the periodic disruptions to trade along these routes did little permanent damage to the economy of Rus' (see P.B. Golden, "Aspects of the Nomadic Factor in the Economic Development of Kievan Rus'," *Ukrainian Economic History: Interpretive Essays*, ed. I.S. Koropec'kyj (Cambridge, Mass., 1991), 97–99).

37 The rivers, both tributaries of the Dnepr, are located south of the Vorskla, southeast of the Pereyaslavl' lands (L.Ie. Makhnovets', (trans.), *Litopys rus'kyi za Ipats'kym spyskom* (Kiev, 1989), 293).

38 The chronicle calls the river Vskol' (Vorskol) (*Ipat.*, col. 540).

39 *Mosk.*, p. 31.

40 See s.a. 1170: *Ipat.*, cols. 538–540; compare s.a. 1168: *Mosk.*, p. 77–78; and s.a. 1167: *NPL*, pp. 32–33, 220. Concerning the date, see N.G. Berez'kov, *Khronologiya russkogo letopisaniya* (Moscow, 1963), 180.

During the remainder of the year animosity towards Mstislav grew and disaffected boyars levied allegedly false accusations against him. For example, they told David Rostislavich that Mstislav was planning to take him and his brother Ryurik captive. Soon after, Mstislav offended Vladimir Andreyevich of Dorogobuzh by refusing to give him additional domains. Meanwhile, the Novgorodians expelled Svyatoslav thereby angering not only his brothers, the Rostislavichi, but also Andrey Bogolyubskiy, who supported his rule. When, on 14 April, Mstislav sent his son Roman to Novgorod most of the princes condemned his action. They spent the rest of the year conspiring and forming alliances against him<sup>41</sup>.

That winter, Andrey Bogolyubskiy sent his son Mstislav with troops from Suzdal' to attack Mstislav Izyaslavich in Kiev. Andrey's alliance was made up of eleven princes including five of his relatives (a son, two of his brothers, one of his nephews, and a cousin from Dorogobuzh), four Rostislavichi, and two Ol'govichi. Additional reinforcements evidently came from Polotsk, Murom, Ryazan', and Beloozero<sup>42</sup>. At the eleventh hour, the alliance also received assistance from the Torki and the Berendei, who deserted Mstislav Izyaslavich. Despite the large number of princes who wished to evict Mstislav from Kiev, not all deserted him. Andrey's brother Mikhalko remained loyal<sup>43</sup>, as did Mstislav's brother Yaroslav and the Kievans. Also numbered among his friends was Yaroslav Osmomysl, his uncle Vladimir Mstislavich, Svyatopolk Yur'evich of Turov, and Svyatoslav of Chernigov with his brother Yaroslav. Unfortunately for Mstislav, however, aside from his brother Yaroslav and the traitorous tribesmen, no allies came to his aid when Andrey's alliance attacked.

To judge from later information, we may assume that they agreed on the following issues: their willingness to conduct the campaign under Andrey's command and their acceptance of his younger brother Gleb as Mstislav's replacement in Kiev. They agreed no doubt because of Andrey's military might and because he was the genealogically eldest prince of the coalition and a rightful claimant to Kiev. More importantly, hoping to turn Vladimir on the Klyaz'ma into a Kiev of the north, Andrey refused to occupy the capital of Rus' and appointed his younger brother Gleb to rule it in his stead. As the next in precedence, Gleb also had the right to sit on the throne of his father. Indeed, all of Yury's sons had a prior claim to Mstislav Izyaslavich. In this way the capital of Rus' once again became the bone

41 See s.a. 1170: *Ipat.*, cols. 540–543; s.a. 1168: *Mosk.*, p. 78; s.a. 1167 and 1168: *Novgorodskaya pervaya letopis' starshego i mladshego izvodov*, ed. A.N. Nasonov, (*NPL*) (Moscow and Leningrad, 1950), 32–33, 219–220.

42 See s.a. 1171: *Ipat.*, cols. 544–546; compare Makhnovets', pp. 294–296; s.a. 1168: *Lav.*, cols. 354–355; *Mosk.*, pp. 78–79. Concerning troops from Polotsk, Murom, and Ryazan', see s.a. 1168: *NPL*, pp. 33, 220–221. Concerning troops from Beloozero, see s.a. 1169: *L'vovskaya letopis'*, [*L'vov*] *PSRL* 20 (Spb., 1910), p. 124; *Ermolinskaya letopis'*, [*Erm.*] *PSRL* 23 (Spb., 1910), p. 47.

43 On his march south, Mstislav took captive Andrey's younger brother Mikhalko, whom Mstislav Izyaslavich had sent to assist his son in Novgorod (s.a. 1170: *Ipat.*, cols. 543–544).

of contention between two families in the House of Monomakh, the Yur'evichi of Suzdalia and the Mstislavichi of Volyn'.

Although the main stated objective of the coalition was to evict Mstislav from Kiev, the two-day rampage shows that the troops from Suzdal', Smolensk, Chernigov, and Oleg's *druzhina* had a deep-seated resentment of the Kievans. Their ill will was undoubtedly motivated by their jealousy of Kiev's commercial prosperity, cultural ties, and ecclesiastical splendor. Moreover, Yury's son probably exacted compensation from the Kievans for their complicity in his death. As for Oleg and Igor', princes of the cadet branch of Svyatoslavichi, they avenged the murder of their uncle Igor'.

The victors plundered the *podol'* and the citadel including St. Sofia, the Tithe Church, and the monasteries. The pagans set fire to the Caves Monastery and desecrated the churches before putting them to the torch. Sparing no one, they led into captivity those Christians who survived the slaughter. The chronicler concludes by reporting that the catastrophe befell Kiev "because of our sins". On 8 March 1169<sup>44</sup>, Andrey's son Mstislav appointed his uncle Gleb of Pereyaslavl' to Kiev and returned to his father in Suzdalia with great glory and honour<sup>45</sup>. As for the Kievans, they were left to bury their dead and to lick their wounds. But they were made of sturdy stock and would recover.

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### The Congress held in 1223

In the spring of 1223, some 126 years after Lyubech, the Tatars arrived on the frontiers of Rus'<sup>46</sup>. We are told that an unknown enemy, "the godless Moabites called the Tatars," attacked the Polovtsy. Unable to withstand the onslaught the nomads fled to Rus' warning the princes that if they refused to send aid the same fate would befall them. According to the Novgorod account, Khan Kotyan, the father-in-law of Mstislav Udaloy, came to Galich bearing gifts of "horses and camels and buffaloes and girls" for his son-in-law and the other princes of Rus' hoping to persuade them to help the Polovtsy against the Tatars<sup>47</sup>. Khan Kotyan

44 According to Berezkhov, the date was March 12, 1169 (N.G. Berezkhov, *Khronologiya russkogo letopisaniya*, 181).

45 Concerning the campaign, see s.a. 1171: *Ipat.*, cols. 544–546; compare Makhnovets', 294–296; s.a. 1168: *Lav.*, cols. 354–355; *Mosk.*, pp. 78–79. See also J. Pelenski, "The Sack of Kiev in 1169: Its Significance for the Succession of Kievan Rus'," *The Contest for the Legacy of Kievan Rus'* [East European Monographs 377] (Boulder, 1998), 46–48.

46 Four extant accounts reflect the original descriptions of the invasion. *The Laurentian Chronicle* is the most removed from the event. *The Novgorod First chronicle* is more accurate and uses a Kievan source. *The Hypatian Chronicle* uses Chernigov and Volynian-Galician sources. The *Softyskiy First Chronicle* draws from all the above but also from a non-extant chronicle from Smolensk. (J. Fennell, "The Tatar Invasion of 1223: Source Problems," *Forschungen zur osteuropäischen Geschichte*, Band 27 (Berlin, 1980), 18–31, and J. Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia 1200–1304* (London and New York, 1983), 64–65).

47 See s.a. 1224: *NPL.*, pp. 62, 265.



succeeded. All the princes assembled in Kiev after being summoned by Mstislav Mstislavich Udaloj and agreed that it was better to confront the Tatars on foreign soil than to wait for them to attack.

At that time Mstislav Romanovich ruled Kiev, Mstislav Svyatoslavich had Kozel'sk and Chernigov, and Mstislav Mstislavich Udaloj was in Galich. They were the main elders in Rus'. The only elder who failed to come was Yury Vsevolodovich of Suzdalia. The junior princes were as follows: Daniil Romanovich of Volyn', Mikhail the son of Vsevolod Svyatoslavich Chermnyy, Vsevolod the son of Mstislav Romanovich of Kiev, and others. In 1097 all the princes of Rus' had met in council to consolidate their defence against an earlier threat from the steppe, the Polovtsy. In 1223, an all-Rus' assembly of princes once again bespoke their unity of purpose.

The princes of Rus' set out against the Tatars in April. At the Varangian Island (that is, Zarub) on the right bank of the Dnepr, the Polovtsy met them. According to the Novgorod account, when the princes arrived at Zarub they met Tatar envoys who attempted to convince them that the Polovtsy were their common enemies. The princes refused to believe them and killed the envoys. The Tatars allegedly sent a second delegation repeating their peaceful intent. On this occasion, the princes let the envoys depart<sup>48</sup>.

Rus' troops from Kiev, Smolensk, Galicia, Volyn' and Chernigov came. After crossing the Dnepr, Mstislav of Kiev, Mstislav of Chernigov, and the other princes encountered a band of Tatars. Their bowmen routed the enemy and, after pursuing them deeper into the prairie, cut them down and captured their herds. The princes rode further, and on the eighth day some of their men confronted a Tatar vanguard at the river Kalka<sup>49</sup>. They engaged the enemy in battle, but the latter crossed the river to fight on the other side. Mstislav Udaloj ordered Daniil to cross the river as the vanguard and he followed to reconnoiter. On spotting the Tatars, he returned post-haste to his troops and ordered them to prepare for battle. Mstislav of Kiev and Mstislav of Chernigov, however, were unaware of his actions. Mstislav Udaloj, we are told, refused to inform them out of envy because there was a great rivalry between them. Despite individual feats of bravery and a few initial successes, the princes were overcome. "Never before had they suffered such a devastating defeat"<sup>50</sup>. Thus we learn that the outward show of unanimity among the princes hid discord. Mstislav Udaloj refused to coordinate his attack with the other two Mstislavs and this contributed to their defeat. We are told neither the nature of the dispute nor when it arose.

48 *NPL*, pp. 62, 265–266; *Mosk.*, p. 119.

49 The river Kalka was probably a tributary of the Kalmius that flows in the Sea of Azov west of the Don (Makhnovets', 553; J. Fennell, *The Crisis of Medieval Russia*, 66).

50 See s.a. 1224: *Ipat.*, cols. 740–745; *The Hypatian Codex II: The Galician-Volynian Chronicle*, ed. G.A. Perfecky (München, 1973), 28–30.

A number of sources report that, even though Mstislav of Kiev witnessed the calamity that befell his comrades-in-arms, he held his ground. He had taken up a position on a rocky knoll overlooking the river Kalka and, having fortified himself with a stockade, continued fighting a hopeless rearguard action for three days. His son-in-law Andrew and a certain Aleksandr, an unidentified prince of Dubrovitsa, remained at his side. Unfortunately for Mstislav, a band of his allies from the steppe betrayed him. The Tatars therefore broke through the stockade and took the three princes captive. Covering them with boards, the victors feasted on top of the princes until they expired<sup>51</sup>. Six other unidentified princes fell in the battle: Svyatoslav of Kanev, Izyaslav Ingvarevich, Svyatoslav of Shumsk, and a certain Yury Nesvezhskiy. The Tatars inflicted this evil, we are told, on 31 May<sup>52</sup>.

The death of Mstislav Romanovich of Kiev brought about a change of leadership among the Rostislavichi. Around 16 June, Vladimir Ryurikovich of Smolensk who escaped from the battle occupied the throne of Kiev<sup>53</sup>. This change in leadership affected the very summit of power in Rus'. The chronicles do not tell us that Mikhail Vsevolodovich replaced Mstislav as prince of Chernigov. Nevertheless, later evidence reveals that after his uncle's demise he sat on the throne of his father and grandfather in the St. Saviour Cathedral. Fortunately for Rus', this was one of those periods in inter-dynastic history when the princes were living at peace and the process of succession was functioning smoothly.

The losses of manpower were great. The chronicler states that the Tatars killed more fighting men than had ever before been slaughtered at one fell swoop. We have no way of establishing the number of casualties because the chronicles give only conventional estimates. One says 10,000 Kievans perished while another claims that one in ten escaped with his life<sup>54</sup>. The Polovtsy were less fortunate. The Tatars destroyed them as a military power<sup>55</sup>. After that they no longer posed a serious threat to Rus'. On the few occasions when the chroniclers mention them again, they are allies of the princes<sup>56</sup>.

The congress of 1223 in Kiev was summoned by Mstislav Mstislavich Udaloy for the purpose of campaigning against the Tatars. The princes however were disunited. They failed to attack the enemy in unison and the encounter was a dismal failure. They underestimated the invincible power of the new enemy and the

51 According to Mongol tradition, the blood of a prince could be shed only in battle. Otherwise, he was to be killed without shedding blood as, for example, by suffocation, by strangulation, or by having his back broken (D. Ostrowski, *Muscovy and the Mongols: Cross-Cultural Influence on the Steppe Frontier, 1304–1589* (Cambridge, 1998), 24–25.)

52 See s.a. 1224: *NPL*, pp. 63, 267; s.a. 1223: *Mosk.*, pp. 120–121. Concerning the date, see N.G. Berezkhov, *Khronologiya russkogo letopisaniya*, 106–107, 317–318.

53 *Tverskaya letopis' [Tver.]*, *PSRL* 15 (Spb., 1863), col. 343.

54 *Lav.*, cols. 446–447; *NPL*, pp. 63, 267.

55 V.G. Tizengausen, *Sbornik materialov, otnosyashchikhsya k istorii Zolotoy Ordy*, vol. 1 (Saint Petersburg, 1884), 26–27.

56 For example, under the years 1225 and 1228 Khan Kotyan is mentioned (*Ipat.*, cols. 746, 753), and in 1235, the Polovtsy came to help the princes (*Ipat.*, cols. 772–774).

catastrophe that awaited them. After the defeat they returned to their old ways as if the scourge of God, having cleansed the Christians of Rus' for their offences, had vanished never to return. Even the chroniclers, after expressing their initial shock over the unprecedented massacre at the river Kalka, slowly forgot the Tatars. Life continued as before.

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### The Last Congress in 1231

On 25 March 1231, some 134 years after Lyubech, Vasil'ko Konstantinovich of Rostov sent his spiritual father Kirill to Kiev. On 6 April Metropolitan Kirill, Porfiry of Chernigov and other bishops consecrated Kirill as bishop. In addition to Vladimir and his son Rostislav in whose presence the consecration took place, we are told that many princes were in Kiev attending a *snem*. Evidently, Vladimir had organized the meeting to coincide with the religious ceremony. The chronicler gives the names of only the most important attendees: Mikhail of Chernigov and his son Rostislav; Rostislav Mstislavich the prince of Smolensk; Mstislav Glebovich the next in seniority after Mikhail among the Ol'govichi; Yaroslav Ingvarevich of Lutsk in Volyn'; Izyaslav Vladimirovich, who was now probably the senior prince of the cadet branch; and Rostislav Borisovich of Polotsk<sup>57</sup>.

The fourth and last congress was held in Kiev eight years after 1223 and was summoned by the prince of Kiev, Vladimir Ryurikovich, for an unexplained reason. The list of names contains a heavy concentration of Rostislavichi and Ol'govichi. Yaroslav of Lutsk and Rostislav of Polotsk are the exceptions. The chronicler concedes, however, that he did not mention by name many of the attendees, presumably, because they were less important. Among the dynasties that sent no princes were those from distant Suzdalia and Ryazan'. Surprisingly, even though Vasil'ko Konstantinovich of Rostov sent his spiritual father Kirill to Kiev, no princes of Suzdalia are reported as accompanying him. Remarkably, however, the Romanovichi of Volyn' were also absent. Since Daniil was the head of his dynasty, the chronicler did not omit him because he was insignificant. We may conclude that his name was excluded from the list because Vladimir had not invited him or he was otherwise preoccupied.

Vladimir's reasons for convoking the council are not given. We have seen that princes were summoned by the grand prince of Kiev to meet at irregular intervals to address a crisis. Eight years earlier, for example, they had assembled to march against the Tatars. In 1231, however, there is no evidence to suggest that they debated how to confront the invaders should they return. If the Tatars had been a

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57 See M. Dimnik, *Mikhail, Prince of Chernigov and Grand Prince of Kiev 1224–1246* (Toronto, 1981), 66–67. For a detailed examination of the prince who attended the *snem*, see M. Dimnik, "Russian Princes and their Identities in the First Half of the Thirteenth Century," *Mediaeval Studies*, XL (Toronto, 1978), 165–180.

concern, Daniil Romanovich would surely have come to the deliberations. Consequently the crisis must have been internal.

Daniil's absence from the *snem* is an important clue. In 1228, Vladimir and Mikhail had challenged his expansionism. In that year they had attacked Daniil's Kamenets<sup>58</sup>. Yaroslav of Lutsk had echoed their anxiety. In 1227 Daniil had seized Yaroslav's domain and in exchange had given him Peremil' and Mezhibozh'e<sup>59</sup>. Three years later, Daniil captured Galich<sup>60</sup>. His growing strength was of grave concern to the Rostislavichi, the Ol'govichi, and the princes of Volyn'. Formulating a joint strategy against him, therefore, must have been high on their agenda. It would explain why Vladimir refused, if that is what it was, to invite him to the council.

Vladimir also had personal reasons for convoking the *snem*, to be sure, they may have been the real reasons. Some two months earlier, Mstislav Davidovich the prince of Smolensk had died<sup>61</sup>. Since he had been the senior prince of the Rostislavichi his mantle fell on Vladimir's shoulders. In light of his promotion, Vladimir would have insisted that all the princes form alliances with him in his new capacity as the senior prince. He may also have considered such reassurance necessary because the power of the Rostislavichi had waned significantly since 1223, when he had occupied Kiev. At the Kalka battle the Rostislavichi had suffered great losses of manpower. Four years later, they had lost their renowned commander, Mstislav Udaloy. After Kalka, the Lithuanians had also pillaged the lands of the Rostislavichi on at least four occasions<sup>62</sup>. Moreover, at the beginning of 1231 a famine killed over 30,000 citizens of Smolensk. Finally, a succession crisis split the dynasty asunder. After the death of Mstislav Davidovich, his son Rostislav usurped power from his cousins, the sons of Mstislav Romanovich<sup>63</sup>. As the senior prince, Vladimir had to set his house in order. More importantly, as prince of Kiev he had to convince the other princes that the Rostislavichi remained a powerful force and that his control of Kiev remained secure. Accordingly, he would have asked all the princes at the *snem* to confirm their oaths of allegiance to him.

We are not told whether the princes reached a consensus of opinion concerning Daniil or renewed their pledges of loyalty to Vladimir. The chronicler reports that

58 Concerning the attack on Kamenets, see *Ipat.*, cols 753–754; Perfecky, p. 34; M. Dimnik, *Mikhail, Prince of Chernigov*, 59–63.

59 *Ipat.*, cols. 751, 753; Perfecky, pp. 33–34.

60 *Ipat.*, col. 758–761; Perfecky, pp. 36–38.

61 Most chronicles place this information as the last entry under 1230 suggesting the prince died around February of 1231 (*Mosk.*, p. 125; Suzdal'skaya letopis': *Prodolzhenie po Akademicheskomu spisku [Ak. sp.]*, *PSRL* I, second edition (L., 1928), col. 512.

62 *NPL*, s.a. 1223: pp. 61, 263; s.a. 1224: pp. 61, 264; s.a. 1225: pp. 64, 269; s.a. 1229: pp. 68, 275.

63 The chronicles do not record the dynastic rivalry, however, P.V. Golubovsky is undoubtedly correct in asserting that the conflict, which arose between the descendants of Mstislav Romanovich and Mstislav Davidovich, split the dynasty into two camps (*Istoriya Smolenskoy zemli do nachala XV st.* (Kiev, 1895), 171). Concerning the two Mstislavs, see N. de Baumgarten, *Généalogies et mariages occidentaux des Rurikides*, IX, 11, 16. Concerning Rostislav the son of Mstislav Davidovich, see N. de Baumgarten, *Genealogies des branches regnantes des Rurikides du XIIIe au XVIe siecle (Orientalia Christiana)*, vol. 35, nr. 94 (Rome, 1934), XVII, 2.

after the ceremony in St. Sophia, all the princes went to the Caves Monastery for a feast<sup>64</sup>. He thereby implies that they parted amicably. Nevertheless, in the past, public manifestations of amity had been illusory. In 1072, at the translation of the relics of SS Boris and Gleb, Izyaslav, Svyatoslav, and Vsevolod had declared their brotherly love. The following year, however, Svyatoslav and Vsevolod evicted Izyaslav from Kiev<sup>65</sup>. In 1231, therefore, the genuineness of the brotherly love that the princes expressed in Kiev remained to be tested<sup>66</sup>.

Indeed, that brotherly love was short-lived. In the same year, Vladimir and Mikhail, who had lived in harmony for some seven years after the Kalka battle, came to blows for unexplained reasons. We are simply told that Vladimir sent an appeal for help to his brother Daniil because Mikhail was waging war against him. Perhaps Mikhail learnt that the other princes were wavering in their loyalties to Vladimir. Perhaps he decided that the crisis among the Rostislavichi seriously weakened Vladimir's power in Kiev. Or, perhaps, the latter antagonized Mikhail. The chronicler reports that, in asking Daniil for help, Vladimir called him brother, a term connoting ally. This suggests that Vladimir had also asked Daniil to pledge allegiance to him and that Daniil had done so probably after the *snem*. Mikhail would have treated Vladimir's reconciliation with Daniil as treachery. Whatever his reasons for waging war, Mikhail was the first to challenge his wife's uncle as prince of Kiev.

His initiative paid no dividends. We are told that Daniil came and pacified the two princes<sup>67</sup>. Nevertheless, Mikhail had declared his hand. After the *snem*, he decided that the time for temporizing had ended. He believed that the Ol'govichi were once again powerful enough to make a bid for Kiev. By repudiating his alliance with Vladimir, he revived the struggle for supremacy between the Ol'govichi and the Rostislavichi that had lain dormant since 1212, when the latter had driven out his father Vsevolod Chermnyy from Kiev. Moreover, in waging war against Vladimir, Mikhail forced him to throw in his lot with Daniil. Mikhail's change of policy therefore made him the odd man out. The ensuing rivalry between the princes of Chernigov and Volyn' would continue unabated until the arrival of the Tatars. They would terminate it in 1246 by executing Mikhail.

64 Concerning the consecration and the *snem*, see *Lav.*, cols. 456–457. Concerning the date, see N.G. Bereztkov, *Khronologiya russkogo letopisaniya*, 108.

65 M. Dimnik, *The Dynasty of Chernigov, 1054–1146*, 81.

66 See also M. Dimnik, *Mikhail, Prince of Chernigov*, 66–69.

67 *Ipat.*, col. 766. Although the chronicler does not give the exact date, Mikhail must have declared war on Vladimir in the summer or autumn of 1231, after the *snem*. We are told that, after Daniil pacified the two rivals, he was still with Vladimir in Kiev when he learnt that Prince Andrew of Hungary was attacking his lands. Daniil went out to confront Andrew and after the battle went to Torchesk, where he spent Holy Saturday in the spring of 1232 (*Ipat.*, col. 770; see also *Mikhail*, pp. 69–70). Others suggest that Mikhail attacked Vladimir in the winter of 1232 (Perfecky, p. 40; Makhnovets', pp. 388–389).

\* \* \*

### Conclusions

We have seen that all the Yaroslavichi families attended the first council in 1097 at Lyubech. Its purpose was to unite all the princes, but in particular the three warring eldest cousins Svyatopolk, Oleg, and Monomakh, against the Polovtsy who were ravaging the lands of Rus'. Although the princes departed from the congress in peace, rivalry over lands erupted on their way home. David blinded Vasil'ko and threw the land into turmoil. Vladimir Monomakh convoked a second council to pacify all the princes in 1100 at Uvetichi. There they penalized David, deprived him of his domains, and the princes were pacified. Three years later, in 1103, Svyatopolk, Monomakh and the Svyatoslavichi launched a major offensive against the Polovtsy. The important consideration was that, at long last, the three families marched as one unit albeit without Oleg, who absented himself for an unexplained reason. The outcome of this campaign was inconclusive. In May of 1107, the Polovtsy renewed their forays on the eastern bank of the Dnepr. The princes joined ranks and captured the Polovtsian camp on 12 August and returned home in glory. Nevertheless, the Polovtsy refused to desist. Finally, in 1111 all the princes of Rus' united against the nomads. The Yaroslavichi waged a joint war against the enemy and defeated them decisively. Thus the Svyatoslavichi cooperation with Svyatopolk and Monomakh after the congress of Lyubech enabled the princes of Rus' to effectively curtail the incursions of the Polovtsy for almost a decade and a half. The nomads remained at peace for the remainder of Monomakh's life until 1125 the year of his death.

In 1168 Mstislav Izyaslavichi of Kiev summoned all the families of the Yaroslavichi dynasty to march against the nomads. Mstislav's decision to lead an all-Rus' campaign against the nomads shows that their raids had intensified. He accused them of two offenses. First, despite their pacts with the princes, they had carried off Christians into captivity. Mstislav's main objective, therefore, was to stop the loss of vital human resources. Second, the tribesmen cut off trade on the southern route to Kiev, that is, the route from the Greeks along the Dnepr. Mstislav's secondary objective, therefore, was to restore the uninterrupted flow of trade to Rus'. They confronted the Polovtsy and on this occasion, the princes scored an overwhelming victory. Their success however led to dissension. Mstislav's surreptitious conduct, namely, allowing his men to plunder the camps of the vanquished at night without telling his allies, antagonized his princely relatives. They spent the rest of the year conspiring and forming alliances against him. During the prevailing unrest Andrey Bogolyubskiy organized an attack on Mstislav in Kiev. The 1169 campaign was conducted by the majority of princes with a few notable exceptions. Its purpose was to establish internal peace and to place Kiev into the hands of Andrey Bogolyubskiy. According to genealogy, he was the rightful heir to Kiev. Some 72 years after Lyubech, the razing of Kiev was the result of internal dissension against Mstislav Izyaslavich of Volyn'

by the Yur'evichi of Suzdalia, and the Rostislavichi of Smolensk. This was the first public manifestation of the family's disunity.

In the spring of 1223 the Tatars arrived on the frontiers of Rus'. All the princes of southern Rus' and the Polovtsy assembled in Kiev after being summoned by Mstislav Mstislavich Udaloy. They agreed that it was better to confront the enemy on foreign soil than to wait for them to attack Rus'. At that time Mstislav Romanovich ruled Kiev, Mstislav Svyatoslavich had Kozel'sk and Chernigov, and Mstislav Mstislavich Udaloy was in Galich. The only elder who failed to come for an unexplained reason was Yury Vsevolodovich of Suzdalia. Nevertheless, in 1223, an all-Rus' assembly of princes, albeit of southern Rus', once again bespoke their unity of purpose. But they did not fight as a united force against the enemy. Due to internal rivalries, Mstislav Udaloy refused to inform the other two Mstislavs of his impending attack on the Tatars. Consequently, the princes were defeated. Significantly, the princes of Suzdalia were absent from the foray. They were the first absentees albeit they had sent a notional force that arrived after the battle. The losses of manpower were great. The chronicler states that the Tatars killed more fighting men than had ever before been slaughtered at one fell swoop. The disunity of the princes was further testimony to the breakup of dynastic unity among the princes of Rus'.

In 1231, some 134 years after the *snem* at Lyubech, all the Yaroslavichi of Rus' were summoned to an organizational meeting in Kiev, except for Daniil. This was meant to secure promises of allegiance to Vladimir Ryurikovich of Kiev. It seemingly achieved little. He was a lame duck who was scrambling to secure his hold on Kiev because his power base, Smolensk, was in decline. As the senior prince, Vladimir had to set his house in order. More importantly, as prince of Kiev he had to convince the other princes that the Rostislavichi remained a powerful force and that his control of Kiev remained secure. Accordingly, he would have asked all the princes at the *snem* to confirm their oaths of allegiance to him. This was a necessary precaution. After the *snem* Mikhail, recognizing Vladimir's weakness, decided that the time for temporizing had ended. He believed that the Ol'govichi were once again powerful enough to make a bid for Kiev. By repudiating his alliance with Vladimir, he revived the struggle for supremacy between the Ol'govichi and the Rostislavichi. This had lain dormant since 1212, when the latter had driven out his father Vsevolod Chermnyy from Kiev. Moreover, in waging war against Vladimir, Mikhail forced him to throw in his lot with Daniil. Mikhail's change of policy therefore made him the odd man out. Later, Daniil Romanovich joined Yury Vsevolodovich of Suzdalia against Mikhail. The Monomashichi of southwest Rus' and northeast Rus' now united against the Ol'govichi. This meant that at the time of the arrival the greatest danger to Rus' in 1238, the princes were unable to present a united front against the Tatars.

The chronicles normally inform us who convoked a congress. Most often, this was the prince of Kiev, notionally the most powerful prince in the land. If, how-

ever, he had been implicated in the troubles like Svyatopolk had been, then the second most powerful prince assumed command. Thus we have seen that the prince of Kiev was in charge when the congresses were held in Lyubech and Kiev, but Vladimir Monomakh summoned the princes to Uvetichi. In 1169 Andrey Bogolyubskiy of Suzdalia called on the princes of Rus' to march against the grand prince of Kiev, Mstislav Izyaslavich.

There did not seem to be any form of punishment meted out to princes who were truant. In 1097 Volodar' was absent from Galich, in 1231 Daniil was absent from the congress in Kiev, and the absences of minor princes are merely noted in passing but not explained or punished. Similarly, in 1223, when the princes from Suzdalia came late to fight the Tatars, no excuse was offered to justify their tardiness. Their presence was voluntary necessitated by the needs of the day.

The location for the assembly was normally Kiev. In 1097 however it was Lyubech, and in 1100 it was seemingly the convenient location of Uvetichi. There the princes proposed to finish off the business with David. In 1169 the princes met in an unidentified location before attacking Kiev. That is, the princes were summoned to a campaign by Andrey Bogolyubskiy but they did not assemble in Suzdalia. They probably joined the attacking force along the way. Their objective was to evict a common enemy, the prince of Kiev, from their midst.

It appears that the princes were expected to meet only on an *ad hoc* basis in emergency situations to face a crisis. Such occasions arose in 1097 and 1168 for a campaign to fight the Polovtsy, and in 1223 to confront the Tatars. These congresses were called to face a powerful foreign enemy. Organizational gatherings were also summoned in 1097, 1169 and 1231 to acquire patrimonial domains, to confirm alliances and to secure pledges of loyalty. These were called to meet strictly internal concerns. It appears that the princes did not distinguish between an external and domestic crisis.

How effective were these congresses? In 1097 the decisions reached by the princes at Lyubech were eventually successful. Although the initial domains given to princes in Volyn' were controversial, in 1100 the princes met once again in a minor council at Uvetichi to punish David Igorevich for his transgressions. Finally, in 1111 the princes united their forces and defeated the nomads. In 1168 the military campaign against the Polovtsy was successful and so was the subsequent sack of Kiev in the following year. However, the fortunes of the princes changed during the thirteenth century. It witnessed the last two congresses. The first was a military congress and the second was organizational. The first in 1223 was a harbinger of the fate that awaited the people of Rus' at the hands of the enemy. It witnessed the first defeat of the Rus' at the hands of the Tatars. The second in 1231 was an omen for the people of Rus' of the disintegration of the land from its capital of Kiev. By that year Rus' had begun to fall apart and had no unified central government. The princely rivalries made it ripe for conquest fifteen years later.



The congresses were meant to demonstrate the power of the Yaroslavichi through the unity of the dynasty. Although the first congress against the Polovtsy in 1097 was attended by representatives of all the princely families, each succeeding congress seemingly had absentees from various families owing to their lack of unanimity. This signified a breakdown in dynastic cohesion despite the growth in the number of members in each family. Thus, by the time of the Tatar onslaught the princes were in disarray. The east side of the Dnepr had been devastated by the enemy so that there was no point in organizing another congress. Nevertheless, the notion of holding a congress had remained alive throughout the history of Kievan Rus' until the arrival of the Mongols. Their conquest terminated all efforts of the princes of Rus' to form a united opposition.

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