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THE DISCOURSE OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN (SLOVO O POLKU IGOREVE)

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THE DISCOURSE OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

Part One

a) The Exordium

1. Might it not become us, brothers, to start in an ancient style of speech the stern tale of Igor's campaign?
2. Let us, however, start our song in a strain that would match the actual events of these times and not Bojan's artful fancies.
3. He was a wizard, so when he devised a song of praise, he would range far in thought (as the nightingale does) over the trees; as the grey wolf does across land; as the smoky eagle does up to the clouds.
4. Indeed, as he recalled the feuds of an earlier age, he would – he said – “Set ten peregrines upon a flock of swans and the swan that was first overtaken sang first.”
5. Of course, brothers, Bojan did not really set ten peregrines upon a flock of swans: his own wizard's fingers he set upon the live strings, and they sang in plangent praise of the princes: Jaroslav of old, and Mstislav the Brave – who knifed Rededja to death in front of the Cherkes army – and Roman the Fair, the son of Svjatoslav.
6. Let us start, then, brothers, this tale..... from Vladimir of old to our Igor' who steeled his mind with fortitude, whetted his heart with manliness.
7. Thus filled with martial fervor, he led his valiant troops against the Kuman Land in the name of the Russian Land.

b) The Omen (the eclipse of Wednesday, May 1, 1185)

8. Igor' gazed up at the clear sun and presently saw darkness come from it and enshroud all his men.
9. And he spoke to his retinue, saying:

10. “Brothers and knights! Since to be slain is better than to be enslaved,
11. come, let us mount our swift steeds and feast our eyes on the blue river Don.”
12. For the prince’s mind was aflame with desire, and between him and the omen stood that craving of his to taste the Greater Don.
13. “I wish”, he said, “with you, Russians, to break lance on the edge of the Kuman plain; I wish either to lay down my head or scoop up and drink a helmetful of the Don.”

c) Imitation – and Exposition

14. O Bojan, nightingale of long ago! If you were to trill your praise of these troops while ranging, O nightingale, over the trees of your thought; if, weaving your paean around these times, you were to soar in your mind (like the eagle) up to the clouds if you were to rove (like the wolf) the Trojan Trail, to the hills across the grassland;
15. then the song a grandson is destined to sing in praise of Igor’ would have gone:
16. “This is no storm sweeping falcons across the wide plains; and lo, grackles flock in haste toward the Greater Don...”
17. Or, perhaps, thus should the song go, O wizard Bojan, descendant of Veles:
18. Steeds are neighing beyond the Sula – songs of victory ring out in Kiev; trumpets blare in Novgorod – banners are raised in Putivl’: Igor’ awaits his dear brother Vsevolod.

d) Vsevolod’s Speech

19. Thus did Vsevolod, the Bold Aurochs, speak (from afar):
20. “You, my one brother, my one bright brightness, you whom my father Svjatoslav fathered too;
21. saddle, brother, your swift steeds;
22. for mine are ready, all saddled ahead, near Kursk.
23. And as for my men of Kursk, they are famous warriors; swaddled under the war-horn, nursed under the helmet, fed from the tip of the spear.
24. They know the trails; they are at home in the prairie ravines; their bow strings are tight, their quivers agape, their swords sharpened.
25. Akin to gray wolves they lope in the plain, seeking honor for themselves and glory for their prince.”

e) Omens Continued

26. Then Igor' set foot in his golden stirrup and rode out in the open prairie.
27. The sun occluded his way.
28. The night that moaned ominously over him awakened the birds; and the whistling of beasts caused them to huddle in hundreds.
29. Div shrieked from a tree crest, bidding strange regions take heed: the Volga and Azov lands, those on the Sula, Sugdaea and Chersonesus, and you, idol of Tmutorokan'!
30. And lo! by untrodden road the Kumans flee toward the Greater Don: wagon wheels cry in the night – one might say – disturbed swans: Igor' leads Don-ward his warriors.
31. Ahead of his misfortune, the birds seek shelter under the clouds; wolves in the hollows conjure the storm with their howling; harsh-squalling eagles call the beasts to the bones; foxes yelp at the vermilion shields.
32. O Russian Land, you are already behind the skyline!

f) The First Engagement (Friday, May 3)

33. The sunset lingered far into the night.
34. Day broke, mists covered the plains.
35. Stilled was the trilling of nightingales; the chatter of grackles took over.
36. With their vermilion shields Russia's sons barred the great prairie where they sought honor for themselves and glory for their prince.
37. Early that Friday morning they trampled the troops of the infidel Kumans and like a flight of arrows spread over the prairie, whereupon they took captive some comely Kuman maidens and also bore off a booty of gold and gossamers, and precious samites.
38. With (captured) sheepskins, light mantles, fur cloaks and various other Kuman weaves they set to carpet for themselves causeways across marsh and mire;
39. (Whereas) a vermilion staff with a white banner and a silver-hilted pennon of horsehair dyed red – these go to the valiant son of Svjatoslav.

g) The Main Battle is Due (Saturday, May 4)

40. The valiant aerie of Oleg sleeps in the field; far has it flown!
41. It was not born to be prayed upon by falcon or hawk – or by you, black raven, infidel Kuman!

42. (In the meantime) Gza runs like a gray wolf: Konchak makes a trail for him, guiding him to the Don.
43. The next day very early a blood red glow heralds the morning light.
44. Black clouds close in from the sea: they strive to mask the four radiant orbs (Igor', Vsevolod, Vladimir and Svjatoslav) and within those clouds blue lightning throbs.
45. Mighty thunder is due; and, from the Don, it shall rain arrows.
46. Lances shall crack, swords shall be blunted against the foe's helmets, on the river Kajaly by the Great Don.
47. O Russian Land, you are already behind the skyline!

h) The Main Battle Begins

48. Now the winds, Stribog's brood, blow from the sea in a flurry of arrows against Igor's brave troops.
49. The earth is a-rumble, the rivers run sludgily, dust amply powders the plains.
50. "Hark", say the banners, "the Kumans come! they come from the Don and the Sea!"
51. From all sides they surround the Russians.
52. The fiends bar the field with their war cries; the brave Russians bar it with their red shields.

i) Vsevolod in Battle

53. Vsevolod, Bold Aurochs! You stand your ground, your arrows spurt at the foe; your swords of Frankish steel resound as they smite the foe's helmets.
54. Wherever the Bold Aurochs rushes, with that glancing light on his golden helmet, pagan heads lie in his wake.
55. With tempered swords their Avar-forged neckguards are cloven – owing to you, Bold Aurochs!
56. Ah, brothers, he dealt out wounds, forgetting honor and riches; his own father's principdom and that of the Father Prince; and his beloved, the fair daughter of Gleb and all her endearing ways.

j) Ancient Discords Recalled (Oleg, Boris, Izjaslav)

57. Gone are the Troyan affrays, flown is Jaroslav's age, over are Oleg's campaigns.
58. That Oleg forged feuds with his sword and sowed the land with his arrows.

59. Going off from his town of Tmutorokan', he set foot in his (clinking) stirrup of gold.
60. A similar clinking had been hearkened and heeded by the great Jaroslav of old.
61. But Vladimir, son of Svjatoslav, in Chernigov, every morn that he heard it, would stop his ears (in fear).
62. And there was Boris whom a boast brought to Judgement and laid him, palled, on the feather grass of the green prairie for a grievous offence against Oleg the brave, the young (who had tried to restrain him).
63. And from that very same feather grass field, to St. Sophia in Kiev, Sjavopolk had his (dead) father (Izjaslav) conveyed, gently cradled between two Hungarian pacers.
64. Thus, in the days of Oleg, child of Malglory, dissension was being sown – and kept sprouting; thus the sons of Dazhbog were going to ruin; thus human lives dwindled among princely feuds.
65. In those days, across Russian fields, seldom did plowmen hail one another but often did ravens croak as they shared a mess of cadavers, while grackles chattered in their own tongue as they gathered to fly to the feed.
66. Thus it was in those combats and in those campaigns – but such a battle had never been heard of before: from daybreak to dusk and from dusk to dawn, steel arrows flew, swords showered loud blows upon helmets, Frankish lances raspily cracked.
67. On a strange field, in Kuman country, the sod turned black under (harrowing) hooves, and was sown with bones and irrigated with gore; whereupon a crop of grief came up throughout Russia.

k) Igor's Defeat (Sunday, May 5)

68. What is that din reaching me, what is that ringing?
69. Today before dawn Igor' faces his troops about: his heart bleeds for his brother Vsevolod.
70. They fought one day, they fought another; and on the third, toward noon, Igor's banners fell.
71. The two brothers parted on the bank of the rapid Kajaly.
72. There was a shortage in the wine of blood.
73. The valiant sons of Russia finished the (wedding) feast, got their in-laws drunk and laid down their own selves for the Russian soil.
74. Woe wilts the grass, dolor bows the trees to the ground.
75. For, brothers, a cheerless tide has set in: the wild has taken the doughty.

76. Wrong has risen among the strong grandsons of Dazhbog; in the guise of a maiden she has entered the Troyan land; she has caused a clapping of swan wings on the blue sea by the Don: clapping she roused times bitter with strife.
77. Dead are the victories formerly gained by the princes over the pagans; for brother now says to brother; “This is mine, and that is mine too”; the princes now make great ado about trifles and thus they forge strife that comes back at them.
78. And in the meantime, reaping their victories, the pagans invade Russia from all sides.

l) Lamentations

79. O far has (Igor’) the bird-slaying falcon flown: to the very sea!
80. But Igor’'s brave host cannot be brought back to life.
81. Keeners wail in its wake; lamentation spreads over the Russian land.
82. Agitating the embers in their (funeral) inglehorns, the women of Russia weep and clamor:
83. “No more are our dear ones to be thought about in our thoughts, or mused about in our musings, or beheld with our eyes; as to gold or silver, none shall we ever handle.”
84. And, brothers, Kiev woefully groaned, and so did Chernigov, beset with calamities.
85. Anguish overran the Russian Land; the bans of sorrow poured into her.
86. And the princes still forged discord against themselves.
87. And the infidels, as they prowled in triumph over the Russian Land, took the cost of a skin from each homestead as tribute.
88. All because Igor’ and Vsevolod stirred up again the virulence of those who had been all but curbed and kept in trepidation by the princes’ foster sire – the great, grim Prince of Kiev, Svjatoslav (III).
89. With his mighty troops, armed with Frankish swords, he had trod on the Kuman Land; levelled underfoot its hills and ravines, muddied rivers and lakes, drained springs and marshes, and, like a tornado, plucked up the pagan Kobjak – out of the Inlet (of the Azov sea), out of his great Kuman army of iron – whereupon that Kobjak was dropped in Kiev, right in Svjatoslav’s council-hall.
90. So now the Germans and the Venetians, the Greeks and the Moravians laud Svjatoslav but condemn Igor’, for Igor’s has sunk fat wealth to the bottom of the Kajaly: he has filled up Kuman rivers with Russian gold.

91. He has switched from his saddle of gold to the saddle of thralldom.
92. Woebegone are the ramparts of towns, and merriment droops (within them).

m) The Prophetic Dream

93. And on the heights of Kiev Svjatoslav dreamed a passing troubled dream.
94. "Throughout the night", he said, "I saw myself being covered with a black pall on a bedstead of larch.
95. I was given a beaker of purple wine mixed with bane.
96. Out of the arrow-less quivers of infidel Patzinaks big pearls were rolled on my breast.
97. And gentle hands cared for me, and lo! from the traves of my gold-crested tower the master-girder was missing.
98. Throughout the night dusky ravens kept croaking.
99. In the lowland at Plesensk there appeared a timber sleigh which was carried thence toward the blue sea."
100. And the boyars said to the Prince:
101. "Sir, quick is grief to enthrall the mind;
102. For two falcons have flown off the golden paternal throne to obtain the town of Tmutorokan' – or at least to drink a helmetful of the Don's water – and already the falcon's wings have been clipped by the infidel's sabers, and the birds themselves entangled in iron meshes."
103. Indeed, darkness came on the third day (of battle): two radiant orbs were dimmed, two red pillars of light followed suit and sank in the sea; and with them two young moons were overcast.
104. Thus on the river Kajaly gloom veiled radiance.
105. Over the Russian Land the infidels roamed like a brood of pards; and from them a great turbulence spread as far as the Hun.
106. Already disgrace had overcome glory.
107. Already thralldom had fallen on freedom.
108. Already Div had swooped down on the land.
109. And the fair maids of the Goths had burst into song on the shore of the blue sea: as they chinked Russian gold, they sang dark times; liltily they celebrated Sharokan's vengeance.
110. And we, knights, hankered after old mirth.

Part II.

a) Svjatoslav's Message

111. Then the great Svjatoslav let fall a word of gold mingled with tears; he said:
112. "My foster children, Igor' and Vsevolod! Your attempt to invade, sword in hand, the Kuman Land, and reap personal glory came too early; no honor could victory yield since (in previous feuds) you dishonorably shed the blood of righteous men.
113. Your hearts may be valiant enough, forged as they are of strong Frankish steel and proved in turbulence:
114. But what have you done to my time-silvered head?
115. Nor do I see any longer my brother in charge (of your enterprise) – great, wealthy Jaroslav, rich in warriors, with his Chernigov boyars, his stout knights, and his Tatrans and Shelbirs, his Topchaks, his Revugs and his Olbers, who without bucklers, carrying nothing but knives in the legs of their boots and whooping, would vanquish armies amid the resounding echoes of ancestral renown.
116. Whereas you said to yourselves: let us be heroes on our own, let us grasp the glory to come and divide among ourselves the glory that has gone.
117. Now mark, cousins: (had you confided in me) would it have been such a wonder for an old man to become young again?
118. For when a falcon has moulted, he smites birds on high and does not allow any harm to befall his nest.
119. But, alas, of no help are the princes to me."

b) The Author Apostrophies Contemporaneous
Princes Volodimir of Perejaslavl'

120. The times have turned inside out.
121. The people of Rim cry out under Kuman sabers, and blows fall on Volodimir.
122. Woe and anguish are, Volodimir, your lot.

Vsevolod of Suzdal'.

123. And you, great Vsevolod, are you not thinking of flying here from afar to safeguard the golden throne of Kiev?
124. For with your oars you could scatter the Volga in drops and drink up the Don with your helmets.

125. Had you been here, the Kuman would fetch on the (crowded) slave market a mere nogata for a female and half that price for a male.
126. For even on land you can sling burning oil – live fire: the valiant princes of Rjazan'.

Rjurik and David, sons of the Smolensk prince Rostislav

127. Bold Rjurik and you, David! Was it not your men that sailed on blood with their burnished helmets afloat?
128. Were it not your knights that roared like aurochs, by steel sabers wounded in the unknown field?
129. Set your feet, my lords, in your stirrups of gold to avenge the wrong done in our time – to avenge the Russian Land and the wounds of turbulent Igor'.

Jaroslav of Galich

130. Jaroslav of the Eight Tenets! You sitting high on a throne of gold in Galich; you bracing the Hungarian mountains with your troops of iron; you barring the path of the (Hungarian) king; you closing the gates of the Danube; you hurling stone missiles over the clouds; you spreading your courts as far as the Danube;
131. You whose thunderous threats range over contries around; you who open the gates on the Kievan side; you who shoot arrows from the throne of your fathers at sultans many a country away;
132. Shoot your arrows, Lord, at Konchak, the vile infidel, to avenge the Russian Land and the wounds of turbulent Igor'.

Princes of Volyn'

133. And you, bold Roman and Mstislav! On the wings of valiant thought your mind soars to deeds.
134. To high deeds you soar in your ardent might, akin to the falcon that rides the wind as he ardently tries to overcome the bird he pursues.
135. Ah, what iron breastplates under those Latin gorgets! Your arms have made the earth tremble, and many nations – Huns, Lithuanians, Jatvingians, Prussians, Kumans – have dropped their lances and bowed their heads beneath those swords of Frankish steel!
136. But, prince (Roman), the light has dimmed for Igor', and the trees have shed their leafage in evil omen.

137. Along the rivers Ros' and Sula the towns have been distributed (among the Kumans); and Igor''s valiant troops cannot be brought back to life.
138. Prince (Roman)! The Don calls you; it summons the princes (Vladimir's grandsons) to victory.
139. The valiant grandsons of Oleg are ready for battle.
140. Ingvar' and Vsevolod (sons of Jaroslav of Luck) and you, all three sons of Mstislav, six-winged (hawks) of no mean brood! By the fortune of war you obtained your patrimonies;
141. Where, then, are you golden helmets and Polish lances and shields?
142. Bar the gates of the prairie with your sharp arrows to avenge the Russian Land and the wounds of turbulent Igor'.
143. For no longer now does the Sula defend with the flow of her silvery stream the town of Perejaslavl'; and the Dvina, too, has turned into churned up mud and has ceased to defend the erstwhile dreaded townsmen of Polotsk.

Descendants of Vseslav, Prince of Polotsk

144. Alone Izjaslav of the keen sword gave resounding buffets to Lithuanian helmets – to cut down the glory of his grandsire (Vseslav of Polotsk) when, cut down himself by Lithuanian swords, he fell under vermilion shields on the gory grass as if on a bed with his lady.
145. And Bojan foretold:
146. "Prince Birds (of prey) have hooded your men with their wings, and beasts have licked up their blood."
147. Neither of your brothers – (neither) Brjachislav nor that other Vsevolod – was there; thus, all alone, out of your valiant body you let your soul fall, pearl like, through (the loop of) your golden necklace.
148. Dulled are the voices, merriment droops, the trumpets of Gorodec are sounded alone.
149. Jaroslav (of Chernigov) and all grandsons of Vseslav! The time has come for you to lower your banners and sheathe your dented swords.
150. For you have departed from the glory of your grandsire.
151. You it was who with your feuds started to draw the infidels into Russia onto Vseslav's domains.
152. None but those feuds allowed the Kuman to do violence to the Trojan land in our seventh millennium.

c) Reminiscences about Vseslav the Wizard

153. Vseslav cast lots for the damsel he wooed.
154. By subterfuge, propping himself on his lance, he vaulted toward the city of Kiev and just managed to touch with the staff of his lance the Kievan golden throne.
155. Like a fierce beast he leaped out of Belgorod at midnight, having enveloped himself in blue mists.
156. Some three times he managed to bite off a piece of luck: he opened the gates of Novgorod, he shattered the glory of Jaroslav.
157. Like a wolf he leaped toward the river Nemiga; trod out the grain on the threshing floor; (for) sheaves on the Nemiga were placed head to head to be threshed with flails of Frankish steel: lives on that threshing floor were laid down, souls were winnowed from bodies.
158. The blood-stained banks of the Nemiga had been wickedly sown: they had been sown with the bones of Russians.
159. As prince, Vseslav judged men; as prince, he ruled towns; but at night he prowled in the guise of a wolf: from Kiev to Tmutorokan' he skimmed before cock-crow and (still) as a wolf crossed the path of Great Khors.
160. In Polotsk the bells of St. Sophia would ring in the morning for him – but he would be listening already to the ringing of matins in Kiev (travelling across in the space of a bell peal).
161. Despite his having the soul of a wizard in a twofold body, he often suffered dire pangs.
162. Of him the seer Bojan had pithily said in the tag:
163. "Neither guile nor skill can save man or bird from the Judgment of God."

d) The Results of the Feuds

164. O how Russia shall moan recalling her first years and first princes!
165. Prince Vladimir of old – he – could not be confined to the Kievan hills.
166. Now his banners have gone some to Rjurik others to David (of Smolensk, Rjurik's brother), and their plumes wave in counterturn.
167. Lances hum on the Danube.

e) The Incantation of Igor's Wife

168. But list! I hear the voice of Jaroslavna: at dawn like a cuckoo she calls toward the strange region.
169. "I will fly like a cuckoo", she says, "down the Dunaj.

170. I will dip my beaver-trimmed sleeve on the river Kajaly.
 171. I will wipe the bleeding wounds on my prince's strong body."
 172. Jaroslavna at dawn weeps on the ramparts of Putiv[i]l', wailing:
 173. "Wind, Great Wind! Why, Lord Wind, blow so fiercely?
 174. Why carry those Huns' nimble arrows on your nimble wings against the troops of my darlings?
 175. Are you not content to blow in the heavens, cloud-high, or rock the ships upon the blu sea?
 176. Why, Lord Wind, scatter my joy all over the feather grass?"
 177. Jaroslavna at dawn weeps on the ramparts of Putivl', wailing:
 178. O Dnieper, son of Slovuta! You that have pierced stone hills so as to run through the Kuman Land.
 179. You that have borne on your lulling wave Svjatoslav's galleys as far as Kobjak's camp;
 180. Lull and bring, Lord River, my darling to me that I may stop sending my tears seaward thus early."
 181. Jaroslavna at dawn weeps on the ramparts of Putivl', wailing:
 182. "Bright, thrice-bright sun! You that to all are warm and comely;
 183. Why, Lord, have you shed your most scorching rays on the troops of my darling?
 Why, in the waterless waste, have you parched their bows with thirst and stopped their quivers with anguish?"

f) The Escape

184. (In response) the sea plashed at midnight; waterspouts advanced; and, through the mists, God pointed to Igor', the way from Kuman Land to the Russian Land, toward the golden paternal throne.
 185. The evening glow retired. Igor' (a tented captive) slept one moment, was awake another: in thought he measured the prairie from the Greater Don to the Lesser.
 186. Having stolen a horse (for Igor'), Vlur (a Kuman, traitor to his tribe) whistled at midnight from across the river: he gave Igor' the signal – Igor' shall not waste away (in captivity).
 187. The earth fell to rumbling, the grass swished, the tents of the Kumans swayed.
 188. While, like an ermine, Igor' slipped toward the river reeds; a white wild duck, he floated across the water.

189. Then he sprang upon the swift steed (prepared by Vlur) and (when he had worn it out) alighted and ran in the guise of a white-footed wolf.
190. And thus he sped to the meadowlands along the Lesser Don and then, a falcon, flew cloud-high, killing geese and swans for breakfast, lunch and dinner.
191. And even as Igor' flew, Vlur ran wolf-like shaking off the cold dew (from the long grasses); for both had worn out their horses.

g) Igor's Dialogue with the Lesser Don

192. Said the Lesser Don:
193. "O Prince Igor'! Not meager is your achievement; not meager are Konchak's rancor and the joy of the Russian Land."
194. And Igor' said:
195. "O Little Don! Your achievement is not meager either, for it was you who gently rocked a prince on your waves; you carpeted your silvery (chalky) banks with green grass for him; you clothed him with your warm mists in the shelter of your green trees.
196. You had fowls to guard him: he scaup duck riding the ripple, the gull in midstream, the crested black duck in midair."
197. The river Stugna held different speech. Shallow by nature it waxed big by swallowing alien runnels and rills and then trapped young prince Rostislav between two bushes, locking him in the deep near its dark bank.
198. His mother wept the youth's death.
199. Woe wilted the (riverside) flowers and dolor bowed the trees to the ground.

h) The Pursuit – and Another Dialogue

200. No chattering magpies are these: on Igor's trail Gza and Konchak come riding (and chattering):
201. Then no cawing came from the ravens; the grackles were still; the (real) magpies made no chatter.
202. But in the willows the woodpeckers climbed, with their tapping marking the way to the river; and lo! the nightingales with gay melodies announce the dawn.
203. Said Gza to Konchak:
204. "Since the falcon is getting back to his nest, let us shoot the falcon's offspring dead with our gilded arrows."
205. Said Konchak to Gza:

206. “Since the falcon is getting back to his nest let us ensnare the falconet in the toils of a beauteous maiden”.
207. “But”, said Gza to Konchak:
208. “If we ensnare him in the toils of a beauteous maiden, neither him nor her shall we have – while our own birds will be hunted down in the Kuman plain.”

i) The Homecoming

209. In prediction, even of Svjatoslav’s son, it had been already said by Bojan, song maker of ancient times – the times of Jaroslav, of Oleg, of the Kagans –
210. “Hard as it is for the head to go without shoulders, it is also bad for a body to be without head” – for the Russian Land to be without Igor’.”
211. The sun shines in the sky: Prince Igor’ is back in the Russian Land!
212. Damsels sing on the Danube; their voices, wafted across the sea, reach Kiev.
213. Igor’ comes riding up the Borichev slope toward the Virgin Pyrgiotissa (the Church of our Lady of the Tow<er>).
214. Countries rejoice, cities are merry.
215. Old princes have been praised; now is the turn of the young.
216. Glory to Igor’, to Bold Aurochs Vsevolod and to young Vladimir!
217. Hail, princes and knights, you who fight for the Christians against the infidel troops.
218. Glory to the princes, and to the knights’ honor!

(Translated by Vladimir Nabokov)

THE DISCOURSE OF IGOR'S CAMPAIGN

Part One

a) The Exordium

- 1 Might it not become us, brothers, to start in an ancient style of speech the stern tale of Igor's campaign?
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- 4 Indeed, as he recalled the feuds of an earlier age, he would - he said - "Set ten peregrines upon a flock of swans and the swan that was first overtaken sang first."
- 5 Of course, brothers, Bojan did not really set ten peregrines upon a flock of swans: his own wizard's fingers he set upon the live strings, and they sang in plaintive praise of the princes: Jaroslav of old, and Mstislav the Brave - who knifed Rededja to death in front of the Cherkes army - and Roman the Fair, the son of Svjatoslav.
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- 7 Thus filled with martial fervor, he led his valiant troops against the Kuman Land in the name of the Russian Land.

b) The Omen (the eclipse of Wednesday, May 1, 1185)

- 8 Igor' gazed up at the clear sun and presently saw darkness come from it and enshroud all his men.
- 9 And he spoke to his retinue, saying:
- 10 "Brothers and knights! Since to be slain is better than to be enslaved,
- 11 come, let us mount our swift steeds and feast our eyes on the blue river Don."
- 12 For the prince's mind was aflame with desire, and between him and the omen stood that craving of his to taste the Greater Don.
- 13 "I wish", he said, "with you, Russians, to break lance on the edge of the Kuman plain; I wish either to lay down my head or scoop up and drink a helmetful of the Don."

c) Imitation -- and Exposition

- 14 O Bojan, nightingale of long ago! If you were to trill your praise of these troops while ranging, O nightingale, over the trees of your thought; if, weaving your paean around these times, you were to soar in your mind (like the eagle) up to the clouds if you were to rove (like the wolf) the Trojan Trail, to the hills across the grassland;
- 15 then the song a grandson is destined to sing in praise of Igor' would have gone:
- 16 "This is no storm sweeping falcons across the wide plains; and lo, grackles flock in haste toward the Greater Don..."
- 17 Or, perhaps, thus should the song go, O wizard Bojan, descendant of Veles:

Abstract

The Discourse of Igor's Campaign (Slovo o polku Igoreve) Translated by Vladimir Nabokov

This publication presents the hitherto unpublished text of *The Discourse of Igor's Campaign*, an English translation from the Old Russian *Slovo o polku Igoreve*, executed by Vladimir Nabokov in the early 1950s and later replaced by a new version (*The Song of Igor's Campaign*, New York 1960). The early translation is reproduced from a typescript discovered in the private archive of the renowned Harvard Slavist and comparatist Renato Poggioli, a friend and correspondent of Nabokov. The text is reproduced faithfully, with only minimal necessary emendatory interventions.

Keywords: The Discourse of Igor's Campaign, Slovo o polku Igoreve, Vladimir Nabokov, Translation from Old Russian into English, Renato Poggioli Archive in Rome.