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**THE NATIONAL – ALBANIAN AND STATE FORMING
DIMENSION OF GJERGJ KASTRIOTI SCANDERBEG***

"... not only you have to love and always keep in mind the fatherland and the country, where everybody was born and educated, but also to protect and to save it even by shedding blood... All these definitively have been in my heart and for them I have engaged all my aptitude and my body and soul efforts..."¹

Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg

Introduction

Gjergj Kastrioti-Scanderbeg (1405-17.01.1468) is the most important national hero and the greatest strategist and statesman of Albanians who led the war for freedom against the Ottoman occupation for the political-national union of the Albanians.²

The many frequent military victories glorified Scanderbeg at a national level, and he was revered even outside Albania. He became famous abroad as in his fatherland, because when Scanderbeg came out victorious in front of the big Ottoman attacks, the West itself experienced great and frequent losses in the wars against the same enemy.³ In these wars, Scanderbeg had not only protected his interests and the interests of his people, but also merely manifested a feeling of relevance, of the civilizing supremacy against a military horde that he had somehow despised. It's almost unexplainable how a leader of a small population with so much arrogance could ever challenge the greatest military and economic power of the time.⁴ Skanderbeg's obstruction of the Ottomans' entry into Italy allowed the refinement of European cultural heritage. So, Renaissance blossomed and

* This presentation is part of the lectures segment run from 1-2 November 2018.

¹ Marin Barleti, *Historia e Skënderbeut*, "Infobotues", Tiranë, 2005, p. 484.

² *Fjalori enciklopedik*, Tiranë 1985, p. 963-964.

³ Mr. Lulëzim Lajçi, *Letërkëmbime të Skënderbeut I*, "Fjala jonë, Prishtinë 1995, nr. 4, p. 14.

⁴ Arbën Xhaferi, *Kodi Kastriotan*, Gjergj Kastrioti – Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 133.

reforms occurred. The printing press was invented and later developed (1456). Commerce expanded and provided some impetus for exploration and colonization of the Western World where hundreds and thousands of his descendants found shelter.⁵ Consequently, Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg was crowned as a hero of the western civilization, and by excelling at military actions against the enemy, he comes first in the list of the Western prominent military leaders of the time.⁶

From many experts, his military genius has been compared to Alexander the Great. The Brigadier James Wolfe, commander of the British army at the siege of Quebec in Canada, wrote to Lord Sidney : "*Scanderbeg overtook all the officers, ancient and modern with a small defensive army. That I have read in the Turkish history and nowhere else*". In the book titled, "*The rise and fall of the Roman Empire*" authored by the historian Edmund Gibbon it is said : "*In the list of the heroes, Janosh Hunyadi and Scanderbeg have drawn our attention, because their military art delayed the destruction of the Byzantine Empire ...the Albanian prince rightfully can be distinguished and praised as a champion of his national independence. His enthusiasm of knight and religious defender have ranked him alongside the names of Alexander the Great and Pyrrhus....*"⁷

Scanderbeg, a genius warrior and strategist, has been so much glorified that Napoleon Bonaparte in his memories in St. Helena calls the Albanian formidable hero as one of the greatest military man of all times.⁸

According an Italian called Petrucci, in a letter sent to the Senate of Venice, are given some previously unknown characteristics of the Albanians' hero, Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg. According to Petrucci, a Scanderbeg's contemporary, who has seen him in many battles: "*Kastrioti has a big stature, more than the usual man's size, powerful, muscular... with gifted and noble from birth ...*"*During the night, his*

⁵ Edwin Jacques, *Historia e popullit shqiptar nga lashtësia deri në ditët e sotme, Lajmi i mirë, Tiranë, ?, p. 213.*

⁶ Mr. Lulëzim Lajçi, *Letërkëmbime të Skënderbeut I*, "Fjala jonë, Prishtinë 1995, nr. 4, p. 14.

⁷ Joseph DioGardi, *Gjergj Kastrioti "Skenderbeg - Skënderbeu"*, *Skënderbeu - shok me të mëdhenjtë e më të mëdhenjve*, "*Matchable to the greatest of the great*"- Edmund Spenser (poet of Elizabethan time). <https://www.aacl.com/post/alb-vatra-symposium-on-skenderbeg>.

⁸ Moikom Zeqo, "*Lirinë s'e solla unë, atë e gjeta midis jush*" - *Skënderbeu*, published in ZP, 25 February 1994.

sword stays always close to his bed. On peacetime, he often goes wearing national clothes... He is extremely careful on eating and drinking... while on the morally he could be considered an example ... Pure, devoted, gentle, orator and noble... He possesses unimaginable memory in a way that he like Pyrrhus his great ancestor, almost recognizes all the names of the warriors ..."⁹. Except the mother tongue, Petruzzi have said that Scanderbeg totally possesses the Turkish, Tatar, Slavic, Latin, Persian and Celtic languages and also has good knowledge on the ancient Greek and Roman history.¹⁰

Joseph J. Dioguardi says *"In short, Gjergj Kastrioti is an unrepeatable military genius, with great belief and courage, a philosopher who kept alive and nourished like no one else the personal freedom and the national independence. Today, his majestic figure, with the sword in his great saddle horse, vests full of grace the capitals of Italy, Austria and Hungary."*¹¹

The League of Lezha, March 2, 1444 - A European innovative idea

Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg appeared in the national and international scene after the Ottomans' defeat in the Battle of Nish (Zlatica), on 3 November 1443. He returned to Kruja three weeks later, and on 28 November, 1443 raised the flag of freedom, the red and black with the two-headed eagle. Regardless the difficult conditions that existed in the beginning of the '40es, Scanderbeg knew how to find the links he needed for a good start of the liberation rebellion. As Barleti informs us, Scanderbeg just had manifested in the stronghold of Kruja, the red and black flag with the two headed eagle, travelled region to region explaining the peasant masses the character of the liberation war inviting them to take on the arms against the foreign oppression, convincing them to fight not for his feudal possession, but for their

⁹ http://shqiperiaebashkuar.al/?p=23400&fbclid=IwAR0xzaeR_S0C1LbpRrob3y6ajM3NQtp8mrs5nqWyYIE_FX0U08jUngvLhvE.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Joseph J. Dioguardi – President i LQSHA, *Evropa i përulet Skënderbeut edhe 600 vjet më pas "Matchable to the greatest of the great"* - Edmund Spenser (poet of Elizabethan time) <https://www.parajsa.com/forum/t/evropa-i-perulet-skenderbeut-edhe-600-vjet-me-pas>.

freedom, to liberate not a special region, but the entire oppressed country.¹²

After succeeding in convincing the feudal chiefs, demoralized by the previous failures, to leave aside the disagreements among them and to unite in a single front against the Ottoman rule, he called up the first Albanian League in Lezha, at Shën Koll church, on 2 March 1444.¹³ Although the meeting was held in a Venetian possession, the Venetians' stand was a typical one. They were present during the meeting, not as friends, but as observers with specific espionage goals. This is because the Republic of Venice did not want to ruin the good relations with the sultan. Therefore, each promise made to Albanians was nothing else but empty words.¹⁴

The League of Lezha which is known in the history as the Albanian League, represents the first union of the Albanian feudal lords at a national level.

Scanderbeg as "*primus inter pares*" was elected General Captain ("*Capitaneus generalis*"). The Albanian princes established with him that kind of relation that Dhimitër of Albania had when calling the nobles of the XIII century "*homines mei*". However this relation, because of the war's dimensions, would continuously glorify Scanderbeg as Lord of Albania ("*Domines Albaniae*"). The idea of unification is the idea of converging, of establishing the national states, a very innovative idea that characterized European Middle Ages and European Renaissance. Moikom Zeqo wrote that before Machiavelli's theory of the national states for Europe, the League of Lezha had already carried the proper message, by making the two-headed eagle of Scanderbeg the heraldic symbol of the entire Albanian nation. Let's not forget that the unification of Italy and later of Germany respectively by Garibaldi and Bismarck aspired to be fulfilled some centuries later, in the XIX century. The League of Lezha was innovative idea at a European level. This international aspect of his should not be denied. At a Balkan level, only the Albanians assembled such a productive league, something that the other Balkan countries failed to organize, with the exception of

¹² Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu, themelues i shtetit kombëtar shqiptar mesjetar, Studime për Skënderbeun, 3, Tiranë, 1989, p. 29-30.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Zef Mirdita, *Lidhja Shqiptare ose Lidhja e Lezhës*, Gjergj Kastrioti – Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 6.

Hungary etc.¹⁵ At an international level, the League of Lezha, as in the cases of the State of Arbër ancestors and of Regum Albaniae that between the European West and the Byzantium East chose an accurate and vital and strategic path, viz the West, because in the East Byzantinism was replaced by Ottomanism, wildly powerful and fatal. Scanderbeg and his contemporaries brilliantly confirmed Albania's European status and left to the descendants the real example of the final integration in Europe.¹⁶

The undisputed European vector of the League of Lezha empowered Albania's resistance and survival, established the great relations with the European civilization in the cultural, humanist and in the Christian religion aspect, because the Albanians' titanic war for freedom was also the clash between Christianity and Islam, though it never became a fundamentalist war.

This explains the metaphorization of Scanderbeg as "Athleta Christi", and still today is the Albanian name that connects Albania with Europe more than any other name. The League of Lezha remains a guiding path for Albania. It can be said that without the League of Lezha we wouldn't have the Albanian nation today. The League of Lezha is the perfect example institutionalized national agreements and consensus.¹⁷

In the League, participated almost all the Albanian nobles, especially those who lead the previous rebellions against the Ottomans, such as Gjergj Arianiti, Andrea Topia, Nikollë Dukagjini, Teodor Korona Muzaka, Stefan Cernojević, from Zhabjak of Montenegro, together with his sons and other chieftains from Northern and Southern Albania.

Although there were divergences among the Albanian nobles because of their personal interests especially related to their properties preservation, the decision to unite in the common war against the Ottomans was taken. It marks at the same time the starting point of the great political deed that lies in the great military victories: the establishment of the unified Albanian state, which marked from its side a big step forward compared with the previous situation when Albania

¹⁵ Moikom Zeqo, "*Lirinë s'e solla unë, atë e gjeta midis jush*" – *Skënderbeu*, published in ZP, 25 February 1994.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

suffered from the political mincing and the feudal anarchy. This big historic step is closely related with the name of Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg, a distinguished prominent military commander, a genius strategist in battle and a talented political leader who knew how to break the centrifugal inclinations of the feudal lords and to combine their particular possessions into a unified Albanian state.¹⁸

Milan Šufflay, analyzing this historic event of the Albanian people, says that "under Scanderbeg rule the Albanian nobility unified in the war against the Turks. It was established the true Albanian state, after the fall of Constantinople, Serbia and Bosnia, the last biggest state in the Balkans."¹⁹

Scanderbeg, the founder of the Albanian state

The foundation of the Albanian medieval state headed by Scanderbeg was the most important step of the political unification of Albanians, although it didn't succeed to include in all the medieval Albanian territories. Scanderbeg's Albania-Arbëria, was not the "ethnic Albania". It was neither the Albania who forms the Albanian State. Scanderbeg's principality was only a small part of Albania, let's say one fourth.²⁰

Referring to the documents, Scanderbeg presented himself as descendant and follower of the war for unification undertaken at the end of the XIV century by the Albanian rulers such as the Balshaj. Scanderbeg takes pride in the fall of this dynasty, which is precisely connected with the battle of Savër in 1385 and the Ottoman invasions in the Balkans.²¹

In the beginning, this state indeed was a federation of nobility, whose were declared allies to one another and with equal rights. Although Scanderbeg was elected chairman of the Albanian League and general commander of the allied armies, didn't have any right on

¹⁸ Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu, themelues i shtetit kombëtar shqiptar mesjetar*, Studime për Skënderbeun, 3, Tiranë, 1989, p. 30.

¹⁹ Zef Mirdita, *Lidhja Shqiptare ose Lidhja e Lezhës*, Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 36.

²⁰ Dhimitër Beratti, *Evropa në kohën e Skënderbeut*, Skënderbeu 1468-1968, Vatra, Boston, 1968, p. 50.

²¹ *Fjalori enciklopedik*, Tiranë 1985, p. 966.

their possessions. He was first among equals (*primus inter pares*).²² Scanderbeg, 39 year old, was elected chief general.²³ "The League's Army," writes Noli, "was made up of nearly 18000 men, half cavalry and half infantry, three fourth of which belonged to Scanderbeg's paternal principality, Kruja, Mat, Mirdita and Dibra regions."²⁴

With such a political basis, the war against the Ottomans that was predicted to be long, had little chances for success. The feudal lords particularism undermined the strength of Albanians. The right of integrity that they dared to fight for, obstructed the military actions.

However, the necessities of the defensive war forced Scanderbeg and his collaborators to overcome these inner difficulties. This was done willy-nilly at the detriment of the personal power of the feudal lords. This endeavor started with the strengthening of the army. The majority of the soldiers were recruited from the Kastrioti's territories. Thus, Scanderbeg decided for a total war against the common enemy feeling strong by the unlimited support of the people of his country, started to not consider them when the interest of war required such action against the separatist privileges.²⁵ During the military actions against the enemy, Scanderbeg entered the possessions of the feudal nobles and established there loyal military garrisons, and undertook additional security measures that violated their autonomist rights of inviolability. In addition, he begun to strip time after time the suspicious nobles of their feudal possessions, distributing them to his distinguished military fellows.

This process caused obviously dissatisfaction among the nobles who jealously asked to preserve their separatist power. Their dissatisfaction was growing, but at the same time Scanderbeg's national authority had much more increased.

When the authority of "the Lord of Albania", as Scanderbeg was called - had increased even more, some nobles, including some of his

²² Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu, themelues i shtetit kombëtar shqiptar mesjetar*, Studime për Skënderbeun, 3, Tiranë, 1989, p. 30-31.

²³ Edwin Jacques, *Shqiptarët – Historia e popullit shqiptar nga lashtësia deri në ditët e sotme*, Lajmi i mirë, Tiranë, ?, p. 204.

²⁴ Zef Mirdita, *Lidhja Shqiptare ose Lidhja e Lezhës*, Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 36.

²⁵ Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu, themelues i shtetit kombëtar shqiptar mesjetar*, Studime për Skënderbeun, 3, Tiranë, 1989, p. 30-31.

closest collaborators, openly betrayed him by joining the Ottomans in the war against their homeland. These betrayals worsened the situation in Albania, by hampering the war of Albanians, who had to face at the same time the enraged campaigns of the sultans, Venice's refined provocations and the desperate strikes of the nobles. Nevertheless, under Scanderbeg's leadership, Albanians continued to have victories in their epic war, and parallel to them to defeat the feudal division.²⁶

The empowerment and the consolidation of the concentrated Albanian state made it an important political and military factor in the international relations. Scanderbeg's war was part of that war for freedom which the peoples of Southeastern Europe, and among them in the first line the Albanians, became a barrier to the Ottoman expansion, enlargement that endangered the destinies of the European civilization in general.

Scanderbeg's diplomatic activity

Scanderbeg was clearly aware that the anti-Ottoman war in Albania required the cooperation with the outer forces, interested in the common war against the Ottoman rule.

As every Medieval statesman, Scanderbeg had his special chancellery office continuously dealing with his relations with the foreign countries and special personalities inside and outside the country. This kind of state body had already existed before him in the medieval Albania. Almost all the rulers of the feudal states had their chancelleries, either in the form of a simple secretariat or with more secretaries, whose primary responsibility was drafting or editing the acts, the notes, the political letters, the diplomatic and financial ones of their principality or possession after the dictate and orientation of their lord. Usually, their official acts, the secretaries had to edit in both languages of the European medieval culture: in Latin with the countries of the West, in Greek with the Eastern Byzantium territories. If the acts or the letters were addressed to the neighboring western or northern rulers or institutions, it was used the Latin or the Medieval Slavic language.

The date when the chancellery was established is unknown. However, there are two hypotheses about its establishment date. The

²⁶ *Ibid*, p. 30-32.

first hypothesis relates to the beginning of the liberation war in 1443. The second hypothesis relates to the fact that this chancellery office, either as an office with one official might have been inherited from his father, Gjon Kastrioti, who has had his own chancellery since the first years of the XV century. Nevertheless, Scanderbeg's chancellery had a wider correspondence activity than his father Gjon Kastrioti, or of any other medieval Albania's prince or lord. During the age of Scanderbeg, chancellery sent many letters signed by Scanderbeg himself, most of which are lost without a trace. Also, many other letters are lost, but their traces are found in the responses that Scanderbeg received from their senders. The authentic letters written by Scanderbeg or the chancellery and signed by him are few.²⁷

It was Scanderbeg who opened the way of Episcopal correspondence between the four Popes of Rome and Ragusa, Venice, Hunyadi, Alfonso, etc. This is due to his powerful chancellery and resourceful and skilled ambassadors who were sent to fulfill their role whenever it was needed.²⁸

In all this diplomatic activity, Gjon and Pal Gazulli were two of the most important "travelling ambassadors" of Kastrioti. The latter represented the chief lord of Albania to Rome, and also was "adviser" of Gjergj. Gjon, as would be demonstrated by the not far end of his life, retired gradually from his diplomatic responsibilities due to his health and age. However, there are many historians who agree that he retired because of his ardent will to conclude his scientific studies.

Pal Gazulli, from the early '50es to the day our Nation's Hero died, was involved in keeping the relations of Albania with Hungary, Ragusa and the countries of the Apennines Peninsula. Barleti says: "...so, it was this Pal Gazulli the mind of our Gjergj who filled his heart with courage to continue the war against the infidels..."²⁹

²⁷ Kristo Frashëri, *Letrat e Skënderbeut*, shih në: Studime për epokën e Skënderbeut 3, Tiranë 1989, p. 191-202; Lulëzim Lajçi, *Përplasjet e Skënderbeut me sultanët*, Koha ditore, 20 June 2015. <http://arhive.koha.net/?id=1&l=62918>.

²⁸ *Faik Konica dhe Guillaume Apoliner, e vërteta e një miqësie*. http://www.Gazetaexpress.com/arkiva/faik-konica-dhe-guillaume-apoliner-e-v-235-rteta-e-nj-235-miq-235-sie-130917/?arch_tb=temp;http://www.nacionalalbania.al/2014/01/faik-konicadhe-guillaume-apoliner-e-ver-teta-e-nje-miqesie/.

²⁹ <https://www.voal.ch/gjon-gazulli-astronom-e-diplomat-shekulli-xv-nga-daniel-gazulli/> Daniel Gazulli, *Gjon Gazulli, astronom e diplomat i shekulli XV*, <https://www.voal.ch/gjon-gazulli-astronom-e-diplomat-shekulli-xv-nga-daniel-gazulli/>.

Thus, in addition to his commander and strategist skills in the fight against the Ottoman Empire, Gjergj Kastrioti, commander of the Albanian army and lord of Albania, developed a wide diplomatic activity. He had continuous correspondences with the most distinguished lords of the time, e.g., the Popes Eugene IV (1431-1447), Nicholas V (1447-1455), Calixtus III (1455-1458), Pious II (1458-1464), Paul II (1464-1471), the king of Naples and Two Sicilies, Alfonso of Aragon, and later with his son Ferdinand, the duke Francesco Sforza of Milan, the count Gonzaga, the prince Lorenzo de Medici of Florence, the kings of France and Hungary, the doge of Venice, the king of Spain, the king of Poland etc.

His first diplomatic enterprise dates on 1443-1444, and further on 1448-1456 when Scanderbeg established connections with Hunyadi also to set a common front. Scanderbeg paid attention especially to the collaboration with the Republic of Venice, the Kingdom of Naples, Rome's Papacy, taking into account that this collaboration would be at the interest of those countries. However, these countries, with some exceptions, only aimed benefit from Scanderbeg and Hunyadi's war, by leaving them all the burden and only sending good words and congratulations.

Because Scanderbeg was aware for these stands, and this is better understood especially in the difficult situation of the second and third siege of Kruja (1466-1467) when stated that: "*he wouldn't believe that could exist such a malice as these priests have demonstrated*" and that "*he had to fight more against them rather than against the Turks*".³⁰

From the field of the archive documentation, the earlier traces of Scanderbeg's correspondence date in 1445. The letter is lost, but based on the replay from the Venice's senate we learn that in the first months of 1445 (perhaps even in the last months of the previous year) Scanderbeg and his brother Stanish asked the Republic of San Marco to confirm them those concessions and chapters that the Republic had agreed with their father, Gjon Kastrioti, when he was alive. Also, from the answer that the king of Naples, Alfonso V, sent to Scanderbeg on 14 December 1447,³¹ we learn that the hero in his letter expressed his

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Skënderbeu-Alfonsi V, letërkëmbimi "vjen" në Tiranë. <http://www.arkiva.lajmeve.com/Skenderbeu-Alfonsi-V-leterkembimi-vjen-ne-Tirane.134206/>.

determination to fight against the Ottomans.³²

From two decisions that are taken in Venice, we also learn that Scanderbeg sent to the Senate of Ragusa at least two letters; in 1448 and 1449. There are continuous archival data on Scanderbeg's letters. An earlier document is the letter-credential delivered by Scanderbeg, with his sign and seal. Through this letter-credential, Scanderbeg orders Ninci, one of his chancellors, to represent him in the financial actions with the commune of Ragusa.

The letter-credential is partially damaged, and is edited in this way:

"Honorable lords, nobles and wise men in all views, to lord Knez and Vlastela, rulers of the city of Dubrovnik, many greetings.

Lords, you have shown me ... (?) on which reasons I sent my chancellor Ninci, which would address you on our behalf, you lords in general trust him and give him ...(?) May God please you. Scanderbeg (signature):

(Month) Çerëshinar, day 7, in Lezha (the small seal).

The document dates in 1450. The month *çerëshinar* is written in Albanian, because so it was called in the Middle Ages from the Albanians the month of June. Scanderbeg kept the small seal in his ring.³³

The letter addressed to "the Commune of the city of Siena" dates on 8 August 1451,³⁴ and it is written in Latin (the address of the receiver

³² Kristo Frashëri, *Letrat e Skënderbeut*, see in: Studime për epokën e Skënderbeut 3, Tiranë 1989, p. 193.

³³ *Ibid*, p. 194.

³⁴ *"Magnificent nobles and wise men, after the obligatory greetings, I inform You that the past year, the Empire with four hundred thousand Turks, kept a place called Kruja, in the territories belonging to Albania besieged, and couldn't take it and was developed a great battle from which on the side the Christians, perished and taken prisoners were sixteen thousands. Therefore, you as faithful Christians and commons with great authority are pleased and obliged from the part of the omnipotent God and from our side to protect this country of Kruja and to condescend to help as much as you please and is appropriate to you. And for this, please lay your faith and trust to the abbot Lazër, our chaplain, the bearer of this letter as if it was here our person himself. Written in Kruja on the 8th day of the month of August indication XIII..*

Appreciated on you about everything - Gjergj Kastrioti, lord of Albania"

In the Archive of the State of Siena, is found the original letter of Gjergj Kastrioti – Scanderbeg (Lord of Albania), who on 1451 sent this letter to the noble citizens of the Assembly of Siena (at that time the Republic of Siena), through which informed them on the victory against the Ottoman invaders, which had surrounded Kruja. See: Lutfi Alia: *Letër e Skënderbeut - drejtuar fisnikëve të Kuvendit të Sienës, Itali* [https:// web. Facebook. com/ Arena Dard](https://web.facebook.com/ArenaDard)

and two paragraphs exactly the introductory part with the greetings and the conclusive part prior of signing the letter), while the text has been correctly written in Italian.³⁵ The letter was written in Kruja, some months later after the majestic victory of Albanians under Scanderbeg's leadership against the Ottoman armies that under the command of sultan Murat II and his son, the future sultan Mehmet II, kept the capital of Albania besieged for more than five months. The letter expresses the enthusiasm of the glorious victory. Scanderbeg aimed not only to announce the sensational victory, but also encourage the Italian states to wake up and participate, at least with financial aids in the vital of Albanians against the Ottoman invaders, if not with military forces, as this was of mutual interests. The dimensions of the Albanians' war had subsequently excessively increased. To show the greatness of the Albanian resistance, Scanderbeg also speaks about the damages his fellow countrymen had.

Enrico Bolletti writes about the echo of this great victory of Albanians against the Ottomans and the contribution of the Assembly of Siena: "*The nobles and the people of Siena responded to Gjergj Kastrioti's demand for a considerable financial aid, to be used for buying weapons and to organize military campaigns against the Ottomans. These collected aids, the people of Siena gave to the friar Lazër*".

This friendship relations of Gjergj Kastrioti with the people of Siena, has diversified during another special event. On 1460 -1461, Gjergj traveled different times to Rome. In 1461 he went to Siena as a guest at the wedding of Antonio Piccolomini (nephew of the Pope Pious II) with the daughter of the king Ferdinand II of Naples and two Sicilies. At this time, Pious II consecrated Catherine of Siena (Saint from Siena), Europe's patron saint and Doctor of the Catholic Church.

During the wedding days in Corsignano-Val-d'Orcia of Siena, Scanderbeg also met with Giovanni Bellini (known with the name Giam-Bellino), one of the most prominent painters of the Italian Renaissance of the XV century, who made a portrait to Gjergj Kastrioti, which is rightfully considered the first portrait. In parallel of the

ane/posts/451354211572642?_rdc=1&_rdr. Shenim: -Lutfi Alia, is a medic in Centro Prevenzione Oncologica of Siena – Italy.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

compliances in events and time, the author in this portrait has painted the scar of a wound at Gjergj's temple, coinciding with a historic fact. Months before, Gjergj was wounded exactly at the temple during a fierce battle against the Ottomans. This portrait of Gjergj Kastrioti, named by the author "GIORGIUS SCANDER BEK" is exposed at the Galleria degli Uffizi in Florence.³⁶

The lord of Albania sent these kind of letters also to other states of the Italian Peninsula. Before coming to Siena, the friar Lazër who seems to be the personal chaplain of Scanderbeg, has consigned a letter of Scanderbeg to the Venetian administrator of Danja, Augustin de Renerio, to present it to the Senate of the Republic. While visiting the municipality of Siena, he went in Milan, where consigned to the duke Francesco Sforza a letter signed by Gjergj Kastrioti, Lord of Albania. The letters are lost, but their content is known due to the response letters sent to Scanderbeg. The Senate of Venice didn't promised any help but notified him that was ready, if Scanderbeg wanted, to become intermediate to reconcile him with the sultan. The Duke of Milan is more flexible in his reply. He says that he admires the war that Scanderbeg has made in the defense of Kruja, and admits that it is everyone's duty to halting the march of the Turks, but also remove them as far as possible. However, he added that it was impossible for him to grant this help because he didn't possess any "ship" to bring the soldiers in the Balkans, and the duchy of Milan was economically ruined from the plague that had stricken the country. The duke Francesco Sforza writes at the end of the letter that he had charged the duty to the friar Lazër to widely verbally explain Scanderbeg the difficult situation of his and the promise that he will send the demanded aids once the situation improves. From the last word of the duke of Milan, it comes out that the friar Lazër, although in the letter sent to the Commune of Siena he is not described as ambassador, orator, or nuntius, but portatore (bearer of the letter), whose mission is considered as much important as that of a regular ambassador.³⁷

The necessity to expand the war against the Ottoman invaders is also described in the letter that Scanderbeg sent from Lezha on 8 April

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ Kristo Frashëri, *Letrat e Skënderbeut*, see in: *Studime për epokën e Skënderbeut* 3, Tiranë 1989, p. 195.

1456, to Domenico Capranica, Fermo's Cardinal (Italy).³⁸ We can also mention another letter written by Scanderbeg in Kruja, on 18 July 1456, addressed again to the duke of Milan, Francesco Sforza. The original letter is found in the State Archive in Milan (Archivio di Stato di Milano) and carries the seal of Scanderbeg, a round seal on wax, presenting the Albanian two-headed eagle. Based on its content, the letter is a protocol message with acknowledgments and congratulations that Scanderbeg sent to Sforza. However, the importance of the letter does not lie in the words written, but in the message it carries. It is understood from the prehistory of the theme that it treats.

The mission was charged to Pal Gazulli, one of his closest collaborators. Before coming to Milan, Pal went to the duke of Burgundy (Bourgogne), Philip III, in Dijon (France) by Scanderbeg order to bring as a gift six Ottoman prisoners. Through the symbolic gift, a known practice this in the Middle Ages, he invites the French sovereign to participate in the war against the Ottomans invaders. During the return from Burgundy to Albania, Pal stopped in Milan to meet Francesco Sforza. The meeting might have been held in the spring of 1456. After returning in Albania and after being reported about the negotiation with Sforza, Scanderbeg sent the letter to the duke of Milan.³⁹

The letter was sent to Milan by Gjergj Pjetri, an employee of the Scanderbeg's chancellery, and it begins with the greeting expressions. It says that Pal Gazulli was in charge that after finishing the job in Burgundy to return to Milan and to express F. Sforza " *the most intimate heart feelings with the highest devotion* ", his considerations towards " *the most brilliant prince* ", as it is described by him the duke of Milan. The real content of the letter begins with Scanderbeg saying to Sforza that he has wanted to show him his affection for a long time, but had no possibility because of the wars that Milan was waging to Venice and the enmity he had with Naples, with which "the lord of Albania" had special relations. So, as long as Milan was at war with Naples, Albania's ally, Sforza couldn't be a friend of Scanderbeg. Now that Milan is at peace with Venice and Naples, it is high time for him, wrote Scanderbeg, to express to Sforza, more than ever his "affections"

³⁸ "Ylli", nr. 1, Tiranë, 1967, p. 16-18.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

and expected from Sforza that he like Naples to be engaged in the war against the Ottoman invaders. There is a phrase in the letter explains that Scanderbeg proposed Sforza to send a "solemn" ambassador, viz, plenipotentiary in Milan, that in case of no objection. The ambassador's duty was expressing to the duke his opinion. It seems that Sforza didn't respond to the invitation. Differently acted the duke of Burgundy. The return of Pal Gazulli in Kruja, was subsequently followed by the arrival in Albania of a French knight named Montreal who was the *arlad* of the duke of Burgundy together with 50 soldiers ready to fight at the side of Albanians against the Ottoman armies. We do not know if they fought or not against the Ottomans, but there is an archival data showing that in the fall of 1457, immediately after the battle of Albulena, in the beginning of September, the French soldiers returned to their homeland. On this occasion, Scanderbeg sent to the duke of Burgundy as gift an Ottoman prisoner, perhaps one of the many prisoners who were caught in Albulena.⁴⁰

In this framework of these international reports, there is also a letter of the Pope Calixtus III addressed to Scanderbeg, on 9 June 1457:

"Dear son...

From both your letters, which were received at the same time, we're informed for the coming of the wicked Turks that want to occupy your cities and how much efforts you have put to face all this enemy, that is unleashed against you, not because you lack of courage, because you have decided to face the enemy with all your strength. We, dear son, have always had a very good opinion about your nobility and we know with how much patience and courage there was in your resistance in those places, alone, to the wild Turks, who in a great number unleashed against your lands to harm and destroy Christ's believers. Your glorious name is widespread in all the Catholic peoples for all these good works that you have done, for this brilliant victory. Therefore we request you to continuously preserve your previous courage, to break the attacks of the barbarians and make a good use of soldier's power and Christ's defenders...

Nevertheless, we don't have the intention to abandon you; because, no matter how big and hard missions charged to our fleet sent in Orient might be, and no matter how big our obligations towards the protection of the faith might be, yet again, at the highest speed, we are sending in aid of your

⁴⁰ *Ibid*, p. 196-197.

nobility an armed ship, and we will try to send other aids in the future..."⁴¹

Many letters concerning the financial issues of the state have also been sent by the Scanderbeg's chancellery. There is no doubt that the main financial sources used for his epic war were secured within the country. As the war deepened, and the great damages that the country suffered and with the needs of an unequal war became evident, the country's sources turned to be scarce. The determination to continue to the end the liberation war, forced Scanderbeg to address for financial assistance to the countries that were directly threatened by the Ottoman invasion.⁴²

In parallel to the financial support requests, in a letter of 1457, Scanderbeg ordered his prothonotary, Gjergj Pelini, to demand from the Senate clarifications, why wasn't allowed the Albanian army to pass through the territories of Zeta (the today Montenegro), to free them from the Ottoman rule. He instructed his prothonotary to say to the Venetian gentlemen on Scanderbeg behalf the following:

"If you will grant me the permission I shall pass. If you don't, I'll act as I see appropriate."

In its response, the senate begged Scanderbeg to give up this demand, because this would give to the sultan the pretext to attack Venice's possessions in Albania, a thing that the republic wanted to avoid at all costs.⁴³

Even in another letter addressed to Venice on 1459, is reflected Scanderbeg's strong character. This letter has the character of a protest against the Venetian captain of the Adriatic Bay, Laurent Mauro, who in a meeting having with Scanderbeg on 4 June 1459 in Lezha's stronghold, accused Scanderbeg that he has grabbed the land of Shat from the Venetians hands, while indeed Scanderbeg has liberated it from the Ottomans. In the letter addressed to Seignory, Scanderbeg stated the following:

"On 4 June 1459, in the castle of Lezha, Laurent Mauro, captain of Bay and ambassador of the Venice's Seignory, basing on the information taken

⁴¹ Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu 1468-1968 (prepared for publishing by Edward A. Licho, Pan Albanian Federation of America, Vatra, Boston, Massachusetts (1968), p. 125-127.

⁴² Kristo Frashëri, *Letrat e Skënderbeut*, see in: Studime për epokën e Skënderbeut 3, Tiranë 1989, p. 197.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 99.

*from her rector's in Albania, that allegedly me Scanderbeg have grabbed the land of Shat from the hands of that Seignory with the help of the count of Shkodra. As it's not true that I have grabbed from the hands of Venice's Seignory, I don't accept that accusation and I state that I have grabbed it from the hands of the enemy.*⁴⁴

In the series of Scanderbeg's letters there are also two known letters written at the eve of the military expedition undertaken in the fall of 1460 in Italy to help Ferdinand of Naples, his ally, who was in a very difficult situation because of the rebellion of the feudal barons in his kingdom.

One of the most powerful adversaries of Ferdinand, the prince Giovanni Antonio Orsini of Taranto, sent a letter on 10 October 1460 to the lord of Albania, trying to convince and advise Scanderbeg to give up the Italian expedition to avoid the great shame:

10 October 1460⁴⁵

"Honorable, magnificent and valuable loving courageous friend of ours.. Now, we have heard that you have sent in Puglia your infantry and cavalry men, and they are robbing and harming the lands of His Majesty the King Ranier and ours; ...you with the you Albanians are neither enough to help don Ferrante , nor attack those powerful enemies he has, and therefore we are begging and encouraging you to give up on what you have decided, and through a better road to withdraw your men... And anyhow, if you always have the desire to fight, you have your endeavor, against the Turks, which can give you more glory and honor rather than involve in a lost cause, which does not belongs to you and in which will have only losing without any reward, putting in danger all those you have send and will send.

*From the castle of our happy king, near Agrolamo, day X of October
Johanes Antonius de Orsinis, prince of Taranto.*

Immediately, on 31 October 1460, Scanderbeg responded from

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 200-201.

⁴⁵ Skënder Blakaj-Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka "Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 54-57; *Burime të zgjedhura për historinë e Shqipërisë*, Vol. II, VIII-XV Centuries, (Tiranë, 1962) prepared by Aleks Buda, Injac Zamputi, Kristo Frashëri and Petraq Pepo, editor Kristo Frashëri, published by Universiteti Shtetëror i Tiranës, Instituti i Historisë dhe i Gjuhësisë.

Kruja to the letter of the Prince of Taranto. The letter contained a series of long and very interesting arguments and reasoning which enlighten Gjergj Kastrioti's political platform and his moral norms:

31 October 1460

Very lucid and honorable lord.

I received the letter of Your Lordship, which surprised me more than afflicted me, considering the way you are writing it... And, after saying that you are surprised that our men are robbing and harming your lands and the lands of the King that you have made your own.⁴⁶ ... but I'm replying to you: if on this matter the king Ferrante is found in a difficult situation, the fault is yours for all the bad things that would come as a consequence, and also for the shame of the infamies you did acting like the whores who have become whoremongers as they grew old, and with sweet words attract the others to do what they have previously done, just as you did by attracting barons and people like the cattle in the butcher-house... And after you saying that with Albanians I cannot help nor protect or harm his powerful enemies, here my response: the situation has changed, and if our chroniclers⁴⁷ do not lie, we are called Epirotes, and you have to now that in other times, our ancestors (clear reference to Pyrrhus - L. Lajçi) passed in the country you hold today

⁴⁶ Instead of Ferdinand of Aragon, the rebel nobles have proclaimed king René of Anjou.

⁴⁷ Here is about for our old chronicles, unfortunately vanished in the waves of our troubled national history. These chronicles mentioned by Scanderbeg, and also by the annals and books mentioned by G. Adae in 1332 (*"The Albanians have a total different language from the Latin nevertheless they use the Latin alphabet (litteram latinium) in their books"*), Barleti in 1501 (*"Lately I come to possess annals, that can be better called fragments rather than annals, which report based on the legends of our ancestors, about the reconstruction rather than the construction of this city. It is written in the language of the people (in vernacula lingua)"*). And which language might have been the language of the people in Shkodra at the time of Barleti if not the Albanian – L. Lajçi, Gj. Muzaka in 1510 (Gj. Muzaka, when he complains to his sons, to whom he writes the *"Memory"* says that he does not know the first memories of his tribe, because *"they are lost with the country's chronicles"*), present a new literature in the spirit of humanism secularism, fruit of the intellectual work of men of science and knowledge in studying the country's ancient history, a literature that was not destined only to fulfill the intellectual necessities of a close circle of learned people, but for the interest of a wise society. Barleti and Gj. Muzaka say that although the wide coverage of this literature unknown along with the topics, as it was destroyed in the troubled waves of our national history, those few evidences directly or indirectly spoke about its essential content, and allow us to conclude with them were thrown the first steps of the Albanian historiography. As such it served as a precious tradition on forming a prominent legion of writers, historians and humanists of the XV century as Andrea Alesi, Gjon Gazulli, Leonik Tomeo, Marin Barleti, Marin Beçikemi, Viktor Karpaçi, Martin Segoni etc. Mr. Lulëzim Lajçi, *Letërkëmbime të Skëndërbeut 3*, "Fjala jonë", Prishtinë 1995, nr. 6, p.14.

and fought hard against the Romans, and we know that in the most of the time parted with honor rather than with shame; however I would engage all my greatest powers, my qualities and all my friends and allies to help my lord King Ferrante..."

Sent from Kruja, the last day of October.

Gjergj Kastrioti called Scanderbeg.

Except the historiographic data, correspondence of Scanderbeg shows us norms of excellence of character. *"Everything that might happen,"* writes Scanderbeg to his ally Naples' Ferdinand in 1460, *"I will be a friend of virtue and not of destiny."* Through this phrase of deep morality, philosophical and political content, our hero wanted to say that he is not going to leave himself to the chance, but will stay faithful to the word given, an Albanian traditional faith, regardless the cost. While when his ally, Giovanni Antonio de Orsino, prince of Taranto, advised him to give up on the alliance with Naples' Ferdinand because his cause is already lost, our hero replied: *"by keeping the given word we have overcome so many perils that cannot be counted, and many times we have seen death in the eye, because the violation of the faith will bring us the humiliation of ourselves and will cover us with the shame of dishonesty and ingratitude."* Among the brilliant norms of virtue, Scanderbeg included above all the respect of the human justice and the impartial stand towards the allies. *"If for this work the king Ferrante is now found in a difficult situation,"* Scanderbeg writes to Orsino, *"the fault is yours of all the bad things that would come and also for the shame of the infamies you did by acting like the whores who have become whoremongers as they grew old, and with sweet words attract the others to do what they have previously done, just as you did by attracting the barons and people like the cattle in the butcher-house."*

Also, in parallel to the data that speak on the complex personality of our national hero, from this correspondence, of not minor importance, are also those pieces that talk on our culture, ancient as those of our peoples. In the letter that Scanderbeg sent to Orsino (1460) writes: *"If our chroniclers do not lie, we are called Epirotes, and you have to now that in other times, our ancestors (clear reference to Pyrrhus - L. Lajçi) passed in the country you hold today and fought hard against the*

*Romans and we know that in the most of the time parted with honor rather than with shame.*⁴⁸

The same day, Scanderbeg addressed a letter to king Ferdinand himself, where informs him that he has felt himself because anybody asked him what to do, and he has fulfilled his duty by helping his ally.⁴⁹

Also the correspondence with the sultan Murat II, his former master-emperor, and with the sultan Mehmet II the Fatih, conqueror of Constantinople, we clearly discover as much as the strategist and also the natural hero he is manifested with. It should be admitted that today this correspondence seems nearly absurd in first view, without first learning the written truth.

In one of these occasions, the sultan Murat II sent to Scanderbeg standing now as an insurmountable barrier in the way of the Ottoman Empire to Europe, a menacing letter on 15 June 1444.⁵⁰ In that letter, the sultan Murat II pledges revenge to punish Scanderbeg for his betrayal towards the Ottoman Empire.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Mr. Lulëzim Lajçi, *Letërkëmbime të Skëndërbeut* 3, "Fjala jonë", Prishtinë 1995, nr. 6, p. 14.

⁴⁹ *Holy Royal Majesty*,

My Lord: it seems to me that this is a very bad nature of those people that see their lords, kinship or friends in bad shape or from a necessity and wait to be called or begged. I know for sure that to Your Majesty is remembered that, immediately after the attacks and the erupted rebellion in Your Kingdom, I, to fulfill my duty, sent myself, the assets and everything that I possessed. Your Majesty, because thought or believed that it wouldn't be the case, or I wouldn't come or put in action what I have said, didn't asked my for anything. But I, from the information I hear that the affairs of Your Majesty are worsening every day, without any further consultation with Your Majesty, with those few ships that I possess, sent in Puglia some men, infantry and knights, at service of Your Majesty. I have not heard if they were useful until now; but only the prince of Taranto writes me a letter, which copy and my reply I'm sending to Your Majesty, and I am surprised that his lordship believes that me, from his severe words, will change opinion. Therefore I want to say a thing: May God guard Your Majesty from the evil, from the harm and danger and anything that might happen I shall be a friend of virtue, not of fate. Let your Majesty see that in the people I have sent, have they properly served and if I need to send more and how; I am informing that are many days since I have properly prepared two hundred knights, for the will of Your Majesty, with conviction I am begging if You see any threat for your country, please inform me because I will be there myself with many people as I could bring even if no one else is left, I have the courage to replace my men and with the faith that I want to die with all of them at service and in the state of Your Majesty, on whose feet I am humbly posing myself.

Issued in Kruja, the last day of October, 1460.

Servant and vassal of Your Majesty,

Gjergj Kastrioti, called Scanderbeg.

⁵⁰ Skënder Blakaj - Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka "Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 52-54.

⁵¹ Skënder Blakaj-Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka

After receiving sultan's letter and after carefully listening to the words of the ambassador of sultan Murat II, Scanderbeg thanked and honored the ambassador, and after five days escorted him with a strong letter in the Albanian style openly challenging the sultan Murat II. The letter dates on 14 August 1444, and since the beginning of it Scanderbeg presents himself as Christ's Athlete and prince of Epirotes.⁵² In the letter, Scanderbeg rejected all the insults and the threats of the sultan by openly challenging him.⁵³

In his reply, Scanderbeg, nonetheless was very well known to the sultan for staying for some decades at his service and comes out as a perfect strategist at the right time, writes to him with clear messages the he [the sultan] was the invader, and for himself writes that was a freedom winner.

Also, exists a correspondence between Gjergj Kastrioti Scanderbeg and the sultan Mehmet II.⁵⁴ The sultan with the impossibility to defeat "the brother" as he addresses him in the letter, offers him some conditions in exchange of peace. The letter of the Sultan Mehmet II has been written in Constantinople on 7 May 1463⁵⁵.

Gjergj Kastrioti, with finesse and courage, by not doubting for a

"Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 52-54. Ibid, see: Musa Ahmeti: The original is preserved in the Secret Archive of Vatican, Fond: Miscellanea: ARM.H. Vol. 2. F.397. The letter has been written in parchment, has a round lead seal. The parchment is sprinkled with gold. The dimensions 59.5 x 96cm. The original is written in Ottoman language and is attached with the official translation of the time, in the Latin language. We have used the text in the Latin language to do the translation of this document.

⁵² Skënder Blakaj - Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka "Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 54-57.

⁵³ The letters have been discovered, translated and prepared by: Musa Ahmeti. Scanderbeg's letter has been written in the Latin Language. It's the original and carries Scanderbeg's signature. In none of the letters are preserved the seals, even why in both exists the seals' traces, and has been preserved only the rope. From the letter is seen that Murat II and Scanderbeg have had correspondence even prior these letters. Scanderbeg writes to him that "your separated me from my brothers", that means they were not poisoned. Now it's known that Reposh died in the monastery of Hilandar, Stanish we see many times as fellow warrior of Scanderbeg, while Konstantin is found as Scanderbeg's ambassador at Alfonso V in Naples. Skënder Blakaj - Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka "Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 52-54.

⁵⁴ In the book of the French author, Camille Paganel, entitled "Historie de Scanderbegh au Turks et Chretiens au XV siecle" of 1855, is also found the correspondence between the sultan Mehmet II and our national hero Gjergj Kastrioti (p. 302-305). [http:// www. gazetadita. al/leterkembim-mes-sultan-mehmetit-dhe-gjergj-kastriotit/](http://www.gazetadita.al/leterkembim-mes-sultan-mehmetit-dhe-gjergj-kastriotit/).

⁵⁵ Skënder Blakaj-Ismail Ismaili, *Letërkëmbime të Rilindjes Kombëtare Shqiptare*, Biblioteka "Kujtesë", Prishtinë 2014, p. 65-67.

single moment on Mehmet trickery, replies to him the deserved answer, and even treating him as a prince and not a sultan and emir. Scanderbeg letter is dated on 25 June 1463.

Conclusions

These few fragments on Gjergj Kastrioti - Scanderbeg by no doubt manifest the personality that through him synthesized an entire epoch in our national history, the centennial war against the Ottoman rule (1380-1479) for the protection of the Albanian territories, war which established a stable foundation of that national-state and spiritual building that generations of Albanians fought and sacrificed during the centuries. Scanderbeg is: "*the most divine creature of this terrifying race of warriors, who since was alive was glorified with different legends from the Western Europe*", writes on 1925, the known historian Milan Šufflay.⁵⁶

The reasons of this special glorification derives because Scanderbeg leading the Albanians, faced innumerable Ottoman forces in a time when Europe was living one of the most critical moments of her medieval history. The armies of the Ottoman Empire, equipped with inexhaustible military energy, chaired by two ambitious sultans, after concluding the occupation of the Balkan Peninsula, invaded Hungary, to head on the Central Europe and Albania and from there to pass in the Italian Peninsula. In front of this serious danger, the European powers, especially the Italian states, were deeply divided. Instead of uniting to face together the great danger, they fought each-other mitigating this way the invading vigor of the Ottoman army. As consequence, the role of Albania in this dramatic situation was equal with that of Hungary. Both parts, Hungarians chaired by Hunyadi, and also Albanians led by Scanderbeg, with their historic resistance obstructed for some decades the advance of the sultans, the first towards the Central Europe, the second towards toward the Italian Peninsula.⁵⁷

This is proved by the king of Hungary, Matthias, in the letter he sent to the Pope on 1464 where explicitly writes the reason of the Ottoman campaigns against Albania: "*I know that Your Holiness, is informed on*

⁵⁶ Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu dh Evropa*, see: Gjergj Kastrioti - Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 171.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p. 19-20.

what the sultan did during the past days in Albania. Nobody puts in doubt that he doesn't want to stop in the Epirus mountains, but through them, he seeks to prepare a passing bridge to crush all of Europe."⁵⁸

A laconic appraisal on Scanderbeg in protecting the European civilization is given by the knight Newport, who came from the far away England to fight under the flag of Scanderbeg in Albania. During his return, he stated in Rome, on February 1458 the following: "*If the Albanian stronghold falls, the conquer of Europe by the Turks is certain, because there is not any other power to do that resistance*".⁵⁹

Scanderbeg himself was conscientious that in Kruja was played not only Albania's destiny, but also that of Europe. This is written by him in the letter addressed to the prince of Taranto G. A. Orsino, on 31 October, writing the following: "Had I been defeated, of course also Italy would have felt the consequences, and in that case, that possession that you say it's yours, would belong to the Turks."⁶⁰ From all these, is clearly shown that Scanderbeg gave not only a heroic spirit but also a national and international character to the Albanian resistance against the Ottomans.

Therefore, Scanderbeg's death on 17 January 1468, 550 years ago, has been a great loss for Albania and for the western world. With his death, Albania lost her independence, while the western world lost one of its most prominent defenders. The only who enjoyed the death of Scanderbeg, was the sultan Mehmet II, conqueror of Constantinople, who reportedly called out: "*Scanderbeg's death is a heavy loss for the Christendom, who lost in this way its sword and shield.*"⁶¹

"...Therefore, convincingly, we may say, writes Arbën Xhaferi, that his historic role is great and decisive, not only because he became Christ's Athlete, but on the fact that he didn't become Sultan's champion. Had he chosen the second role, Europe's history would have been totally different."⁶²

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. 22.

⁵⁹ Kristo Frashëri, *Skënderbeu dhe Evropa*, see: Gjergj Kastrioti - Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 22.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p. 20.

⁶¹ Anton Athanasi, *Njeriu dhe heroi, Skënderbeu 1468-1968*, Vatra, Boston, 1968, p. 12.

⁶² Arbën Xhaferi, *Kodi Kastriotan*, Gjergj Kastrioti - Skënderbeu 600 vjet pas, Zagreb, 2005, p. 133-134.

*He was the greatest leader of the Balkan who gave to his country a clear orientation towards Europe till the day he died. He was the first testament of Albanians' orientation.*⁶³

To conclude the question on Scanderbeg's love for the motherland, we are giving here an appraisal from Fan S. Noli, on August 1960 where is emphasized the following:

"...sometimes I ask myself,
surprised, if we have among us
somebody that is that alive today,
as Scanderbeg!"⁶⁴

⁶³ Ismail Kadare, Köln, 12.12.2010.

⁶⁴ *Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu 1468-1968* (prepared for publishing by Edward A. Licho, Pan Albanian Federation of America, Vatra, Boston, Massachusetts (1968) p. III.