

SKANDERBEG AS PART OF EUROPEAN CONSCIENCE

In the frame of the Skanderbeg's year many articles were published about our hero, among which attempts were made to trim down the importance of this figure and to diminish his role in the European history and culture. Given this concern, the study aims at identifying the incorrectness of two theses aiming at downgrading Skanderbeg as a man who fought to take back his father's lands or who was merely a mercenary of the king of Naples.

Certainly there might be a myriad of discussions but this article elaborates on Skanderbeg's position in the European conscience. European conscience, from which many projects spread throughout Europe was elaborated by the outstanding writers of the philosophical thought in Europe, such as Montaigne, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Kant, etc., or as Denis de Rougement labels them as "the great souls". Europe is the output of these "great souls" and not a political adventure of some politicians. According to these philosophers, Europe should be seen in contrast to non-Europe. Europe represented the place of liberty, while non-Europe, Asia, represented the country of despotism and uniformity. Europe represented liberty and diversity, while Asia stood for tyranny, uniformity and obedience to the despot.

When the Ottomans invaded Constantinople many European princes applied the policy of compromise with the new conqueror. Skanderbeg remained loyal to liberty. Precisely, in view of the idea of liberty, which characterizes Europe and which was forsaken by these princes, among many European thinkers, Voltaire devoted a special chapter to Skanderbeg in his major work, "Essay on Manners", emphasizing this aspect of liberty.

The study, focusing on Voltaire's appraisal of Skanderbeg, also makes a philosophical interpretation of this page of our history, based on Hegel's philosophy of history, which viewed

history as a dissemination of the idea of liberty, and accordingly, even the great men in history. Nietzsche is also included in this interpretation, for whom the so-called destroyers are “the Philistine of culture”.