

THE DEFENSE OF ULCIN

Ulcin, an ancient Illyrian city of the Labeate tribe known with the name Ulcinium or Olcinium and mentioned for the first time in 168 BC, when the Romans conquered it, was one of the most protected harbors. There embayed the powerful naval fleet of the Illyrian state.

According to the Decision of the Great Powers in 26 June, 1880, Ulcin with its suburbs should be ceded to Montenegro. The Istanbul government faced with the firm resistance of Ulcin's inhabitants and all Albanian regions was forced to accept the ceding of Ulcin with the aim to prevent the plan of naval demonstration, which would have had consequences for it.

Whereas the Supreme Porte started intensive preparations to take energetic measures against extremely revolted Albanians, branches of the Albanian League of Ulcin and Shkodra took urgent countermeasures in organizing the resistance against the decision of the Great Powers and against the threat of the government of Istanbul. Thus, in August, 1880, about 2000 Albanian volunteers from city and suburbs of Ulcin grabbed their arms. Later on, after it became known that the united naval fleet of the Great Powers would demonstrate in the waters of Ulcin, 6000 Albanian volunteers attacked on 17 September, 1880 and took Ulcin in their hands, this compelling the ottoman army to withdraw into its garrisons and fled the town in secret.

In the emerged situation, the rapport of forces was 1: 10 at the enemy's advantage (3000 Albanian volunteers against 30 000 troops and 200 fire barrels of artillery, let aside the superiority in armaments and war technique: only Montenegrin troops boasted of 6000, based on 4 artillery batteries in the vicinities of Mount Sutorman in north). Meanwhile, the united naval fleet of the Great Powers boasted of 17 big warships with 138 canons and 7300 troops of the naval infantry as well as 22 battalions of the ottoman army that kept blocked the whole region from Lezha to Shkodra.

After the defeat of the Klesa's defensive operation, the

day next to 23 November, 1880, the ottoman forces kept marching to Ulcin. In this direction, still in front of them remained as an obstacle the defense line in the Mount of Mozhura. Therefore, they were divided into two columns: one followed Shëngjergj-Ulcin road, and after crossing the Mount of Brinja, moved towards the point where the other road of Shkodra passed by the Pistul village in the eastern part of Mozhura. Here, it encountered the avant-garde of the Albanian forces. The other part of the ottoman forces followed the Klesë-Ulcin road and came in the northern side of Mozhura. Differently from the expectations of the Ottoman command, the Albanian forces of Mozhura did not make any resistance because after the defeat of Klesa their determination was shaken.

After the surrender of Ulcin, hundreds of families set on the way of emigration. The major part went in the direction of Shkodra, Shëngjin and Durrës. Tens of Uncinian trade ships accosted in the Albanian seashore.

This was the tragic end of the Albanian Ulcin. But, the armed resistance of Albanians convinced the international opinion that the region of Ulcin was not a Montenegrin one and the Great Powers had granted it unjustly to Montenegro.