

THE AFTERMATH OF A VICTORY: AN EPISODE OF STEPHEN THE GREAT'S DIPLOMACY AFTER THE BATTLE OF VASLUI (10 JANUARY 1475)

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On 6 January 1475, four days before the battle of Vaslui, the government of Venice was aware that the war broke out between Moldavia and the Ottoman Empire. The information is included by Domenico Malipiero in a paragraph of his *Annals* in which the historian resumed the ambivalent policy of the Serene Republic. On one hand Venice was in search for new allies for the war against the infidels, on other hand the Republic initiated negotiations with the sultan aimed to put an end to the conflict. According to the same Malipiero, during a feast dedicated by the Venetian government to the king of Naples, a messenger of Mara Branković, the step mother of Mehmed II, brought in the lagoon a safe conduct.¹ It was an open invitation for the *Serenissima* to send an envoy to Constantinople and to start the negotiations for peace.²

The event was followed by a tense debate in the Council of Ten, an institution which decided the path to be followed in relations with foreign powers. At that time, there were partisans but also enemies of the peace with the sultan.³

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¹ For this episode see Mihailo Popović, *Mara Branković. Eine Frau zwischen dem christlichen und dem islamische Kulturkreis im 15 Jahr.* (Ruhpolding: Franz Philipp Rutzen Verlag, 2010), 116. Mara Branković's envoy was a certain Stephen see *Ibid.*, 186.

² When the safe conduct arrived in Venice the Venetian ambassador, Ieronimo Zorzi, was already left for the Ottoman Empire, see Popović, *Mara Branković*, 186–187.

³ *Annali Veneti dall'anno 1457 al 1500 del senatore Domenico Malipiero ordinati ed abbreviati dal senatore Francesco Longo con prefazione e annotazioni di Agostino Sagredo aggiuntovi i dispaaci al Senato veneto di Francesco Foscari e di altri oratori all'imperatore Massimiliano I e la*

Those who considered that there were no serious reasons to abandon the war pointed to the difficulties of the Ottoman Empire. They argued that the conqueror of Constantinople had to confront a serious threat both in Asia, where Uzun Hassan gathered his troops to invade Anatolia, as in Europe where Hungary and Poland just sealed an anti-ottoman alliance while “Upper Wallachia” (*Valachia Superior* i.e. Moldavia) rebelled against the Turks.⁴

The mention of Moldavia is in no way exceptional. For Venetian chroniclers, it was a common practice to multiply the list of the sultan’s enemies as a method to strengthen the idea that the war with the infidels should be pursued.⁵ The reference to Moldavia could also be linked with information concerning an embassy of the “king of Russia” which arrived in the lagoon promising military support against the Turks.⁶ In the context of Malipiero’s *Annali*, *Valachia superior* is only a character among many others; it could simply suggest that the Republic was in search of as many allies as possible after the loss of the island of Negrepoint in 1470.

It is difficult to know how the news about Stephen the Great “revolt” against the Turks arrived in Venice but no matter how such information was received there were not too many details. In January 1475 in Venice was acknowledged only the name of realm – *Valachia Superior* – and the hypothetical support of Hungarians, Poles, and Russians.

However, soon enough Moldavia became a very important political actor in Venetian strategy after the news of the crushing defeat inflicted to Suleyman

storia veneta dettata da Daniel Barbaro e completata col la storia secreta di Luigi Borghi dall'anno 1512 al 1515 (Firenze: Gio. Pietrop Vieusseux, 1843), 108.

⁴ *Annali Veneti*, 108: *Se considerava che ‘l re de Persia deve uscir in campagna tanto gagliardo dalla parte di Soria; che’l Re d’ Ongharia ha fermado la ligha co’l Re de Polonia a tal effetto; che la Valachia superior ha rebelà con l’ajuto de Onghàri. Poloni e Russi.*

⁵ For an episode of 1497 when the Polish expedition in Moldavia was perceived in Venice as a crusade with gathered Poles, Hungarians, Bohemians, Moldavians, Wallachians, Russians and even Tatars see Ovidiu Cristea, “O altă istorie: campania din 1497 în „Jurnalele” lui Marino Sanudo,” *Analele Putnei* V/1 (2009): 39–50 and O. Cristea, *Puterea cuvintelor. Știri și război în sec. XV-XVI* (Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun, 2014), 232–246.

⁶ *Annali Veneti*, 106: *El Dose ha referido al consegio de Pregadi, che un Ambassador del Re de Russia è sta alla sua presenza; e dopo presentade le lettere de credenza, ghe ha esposto che ‘l suo Re è mollo affettionato a la Signoria, e stima la sua amicizia; che i sente gran despiaser della molestia che dà alla Terra le cose turchesche; che ordenariamente l’ha 100,000 cavalli, e in tempo de guerra ne puoi fare 300,000, e che tutti son parechiadi a servizio nostro, e di chiarirse amico di suoi amici e nemico di nemici.* The title King of Russia had different meanings in the Venetian chroniclers. In the 14th century is a named used sometimes for the Serbian kings due to the assonance between Rascia and Rusia (for this detail see “Addenda et Corrigenda,” *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* 19 (2001): 320: *re di Rusia overo di Servia*). In Malipiero’s case the title is related to the *knyaz* of Muscovy because the text mentions that the King of Russia was Toma Paleolog’s son-in-law.

pasha's army arrived in Venice. The same Domenico Malipiero mentioned that "supported by Hungarians, Bohemians and Russians the Moldavian defeated 90 000 Turks; 40 000 were killed while other 4 000 were taken prisoners among them a son of the sultan".⁷ The event had quick political consequences: Mehmed II recalled the Venetian ambassador, Geronimo Zorzi, after a previous refuse to receive him. According to Mara Branković such change of mind was the result of the defeat in Moldavia "the greatest suffered by an Ottoman army in its history".⁸ Other sources confirmed and amplify the losses of the Ottoman army. An anonymous Veronese chronicle mentions no less than 50 000 Turks killed in a battle which took place in a very narrow place.⁹ Such news pointed to the idea that the infidels could be defeated and that, more than ever, it was necessary a common action of all Christendom.

The emergence of a new enemy of the Ottoman Empire in the East aroused the Venetian expectations in a favorable outcome of the war.¹⁰ Moreover, such favorable circumstances – the defeat of Suleyman pasha at Scutari and in Moldavia – determined Venice to conceive a diplomatic offensive aimed to convince the King of Poland and the Tatars to support, in their turn, the war against the sultan.¹¹ However, there is a striking contrast between such pragmatic actions and overemphasis of the results of the battle of Vaslui: more than 40 000 losses for the Ottoman camp according to Malipiero, 50 000 for Veronese Anonymous Chronicle and no less than 120 000 for Leonardo de Oretona.¹² Surprisingly such perspective is not shared by the letter that Stephen the Great addressed to all the princes of Christendom few days after his military

⁷ *Annali Veneti*, 110: *Referisse anche che'l Valacho, con ajuto de Onghari, Bohemi e Russi, ha rotto 90,000 Turchi; dei quali 40,000 ne è morto, e 4,000 è resta presoni; tra i quali è un Bassa e un fio del Turco.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Cronaca di Anonimo veronese, 1446–1488* edita la prima volta ed illustrata da Giovanni Soranzo (Venezia: Tip. Emiliana) 1915 (Monumenti storici pubblicati dalla R. Deputazione veneta di storia patria. Ser. 3, Cronache e diarii; 4), 307: *Maumeth turcho, havendo mandato grandissima giente in Valachia e credendo quella possedere, li Valachi valenti strinse li Turchi a certi passi e streti, poi dette fra l'horo et tandem fu rotto el campo del Turcho e morti de l'horo piu de L millia e fra questi gran quantita de valenthomeni.* The text was analyzed by Andrei Pippidi, "Noi izvoare italiene despre Vlad Țepeș și Ștefan cel Mare," *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, XX (2002): 15–21.

¹⁰ During the negotiations of 1475 Venice agreed to abandon the regions already conquered by the Ottomans; see the instructions of Venetian government for Ieronimo Zorzi in Popović, *Mara Branković*, 186–187.

¹¹ Nagy Pienaru, "Proiectul scitic. Relațiile lui Ștefan cel Mare cu Hoarda Mare," *Revista Istorică*, 14 (2003): 121–135.

¹² *Războieni. Cinci sute de ani de la campania din 1476. Monografie și culegere de texte* (București: Arhivele Statului, 1977), 130.

triumph.¹³ While he announced proudly the success, the Moldavian lord underlined the imminent danger as, despite the setback, the sultan was a formidable foe able to gather a huge army.

As it was remarked already¹⁴, in its way towards the Western courts, Stephen the Great's letter suffered some interpolations which changed drastically the intentions of the sender. The most obvious was the King Mathias' plan to assume the credit for the success. Due to his skillful diplomacy the king imposed his own version of the event a fact mirrored also by the title of "general captain of the Kingdom of Hungary" (*capitaneu generale del re d'Ungheria*) attributed to Stephen the Great.¹⁵

Also, one may consider that the success of the king's propaganda was due to the humble way in which Stephen himself spoke about the victory and likewise by the hesitant diplomatic actions in respect with the Western powers.¹⁶

Paolo Ognibene brought the news of victory in Venice *via* Buda while in Rome the details about the Turkish defeat were due to Nicolae Ujlaki, "King of Bosnia and Wallachia".¹⁷ In other words there was no Moldavian messenger of victory, as the success was announced by a Venetian and, respectively, a Hungarian subject. Was the Stephen's decision to entrust his message to two foreigners an unwise decision? One may assume that two outsiders had their own agenda and could have distorted in their own purposes the original message and the prince of Moldavia's aims in the war against the Ottomans.

However, there are some arguments which suggest that Stephen's decision was well pondered. The prince's diplomatic initiatives in the aftermath of the victory of Vaslui suggest that he had in mind different outcomes. He made efforts to gain the confidence of Matthias Corvinus¹⁸ while in parallel he tried to appease the sultan's fury. The Polish chronicler Jan Długosz mentioned that, after the battle, Stephen sent an embassy to Istanbul to protest against the attack of his realm led by some brigands without the knowledge of Mehmed II. As

¹³ Liviu Pilat, "Cruciadă și propagandă: vizita regelui Bosniei la Roma și vestea victoriei de la Vaslui," *Analecta Catolica* IX (2013–2014):121 justly pointed out that Ognibene brought with him in Italy another document than the letter sent by Stephen to all Christian princes.

¹⁴ Ștefan S. Gorovei, "Informație, propagandă, mistificare: scrisoarea din 25 ianuarie 1475," *Analele Putnei*, III/2 (2007): 21–26; Alexandru Simon, *Al treisprezecelea apostol. Valachorum regulus* (Cluj-Napoca: Argonaut, 2017), 56 ff.

¹⁵ Gorovei, "Informație, propagandă, mistificare," 21–26

¹⁶ Pilat, "Cruciadă și propagandă," 125.

¹⁷ Ibid., 123.

¹⁸ For the Moldavian-Hungarian negotiations see Șerban Papacostea, *Ștefan cel Mare domn al Moldovei (1457–1504)* (București: Ed. Enciclopedică, 1990), 40–58; Ștefan S. Gorovei, Maria Magdalena Székely, *Princeps omni laude maior. O istorie a lui Ștefan cel Mare* (Putna: Sfânta Mănăstire Putna, 2005): 117–132.

a result, the Moldavian messenger was instructed to request the punishment of those who were to blame for the infringement of the peace. The episode is ignored by other sources but there is no serious reason to doubt Jan Długosz's testimony. The Polish chronicle is a reliable and well informed source and his reconstruction of facts quite accurate. If his information concerning the Moldavian embassy to the Porte after the battle of Vaslui is truthful such initiative may be understand as an attempt of the Moldavian lord to solve the crisis by diplomatic means.¹⁹

In parallel with the negotiations with the Porte, the letter sent to all the Christendom on 25 January 1475 tried to gain any military or political support for an expected Ottoman retaliation: "the above-mentioned Turk (= the sultan) sent against us and against our realm a great army of no less than 120 000 men led by Suleyman pasha the beylerbey [of Rumelia]; with him were all the leaders of the aforementioned Turk, and all the people of Rumelia and the lord of Wallachia with al of his troops and Assan beg²⁰ and Ali beg²¹ and Schender beg²² and Grana beg²³

¹⁹ *Joannis Dlugossi seu Longini canonici Cracoviensis Historiae Polonicae libri XII*, t. V, (Cracovia, 1878): 623: *Nec his legationibus Stephanus ad amicos contentus, ad ipsum quoque infestissimum hostem suum Mahumeth Turcorum Caesarem, insignem ambasiatam dona non mediocriter ferentem, mittit. Queritur se a quibusdam Turcorum latrunculis et exulibus, temerarie et praeter scientiam Caesaris, cum superbiam, fraudem et hostilitatem tam inhumanam in suo pectore suspicari fas non sit, lacessitum esse, illamque omnem furum et exiliatorum manum, in manu Dei potenti, qui causae iustiori semper astat, confecisse. Petebat, ut reliquiae huiusmodi latrunculum, si quae in Dominia sua refugissent, sibi traderentur, pari supplicio cum caeteris poenas meritas soluturi. At Caesar legatione huiusmodi exasperatus magis, quam lenitus, legatos, iure gentium violato, corripens, aliquandiu in ergastulis habuit, postmodum vero omni substantia spoliatis, pedites et pene nudos Valachiam remisit.* Once returned in Moldavia the envoys explained to their master that the war could not be avoided.

²⁰ Issibeg in the German version of the text v. Nicolae Iorga, *Acte și fragmente cu privire la istoria românilor adunate din depozitele de documente ale Apusului*, III (București, 1897), 92. Highly probable the Ottoman commander could be identified with Isa beg Ishakoglu or with Isa beg Hassanoglu. Both of them were active in the area being involved in a number of raids against Moldavia and Transylvania in the second half of 15th century. For an attempt of identification of the Ottoman commanders included in Stephen the Great's letter see Ovidiu Cristea, "Pentru o ediție critică a scrisorii lui Ștefan cel Mare către principii creștini: observații pe marginea listei căpeteniilor otomane," *Analele Putnei* (forthcoming).

²¹ Very probable Ali pasha Mihaloglu one of the most famous Ottoman captain of the 15th century for this family see Mariya Kiprovska, "The Mihaloglu family: Gazi warriors and patrons of Dervish hospices," *The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, XXXII (2008):193–222.

²² Semdrebeg in the German version of the text v. Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, 92. The character could be identified with Iskender beg Mihaloglu.

²³ In the German version the names of the next four commanders is completely different: Dowabeg, Jacobbeg, Walty, Wulubeg. The German translator have considered *Valtival beg* as two different persons *Walty* and *Wulubeg*. It is possible that *Valtival* is a corrupted form of *Baltoğlu*

and Oşu beg and Valtival beg and Serefaga beg²⁴, the lord of Sofia, and Cusenra beg²⁵ and Piri beg, the son of Isac pasha²⁶, of all his Janissaries' might. These aforementioned lords were the most important captains with all their troops²⁷

Besides the obvious plea for help, Stephen's letter seems to reveal other details related to the 15th century diplomacy: for a document intended to gain quickly military support the long list of Ottoman leaders seems of little significance. However, if one take into account that, in the previous years, in Italy circulated unfounded rumors about Ottoman setbacks the aforementioned list may be considered as a proof that the events mentioned in the letter actually occurred. All the Ottoman captains included in the text seem to certify that the battle took place indeed, and that it was a pitched battle not a minor action.

Such assumption is strengthen by the fact that the list is also included in other contemporary sources which suggest that the number and the names of Turkish commanders were relevant. It is the case of Stefano Magno's *Annali Veneti* who stated that in the Ottoman ranks were *Soliman, Ali-bego, bassa della Romania, con la corte d'esso signor de Turchi, insieme con Mathenor, Ansabech, Alibech, Scanderbech, Granabech, Raucubech, Vultriubech, Saraphagabech, signor de Sophia, con Sarabech Patriboli, con el fiolo d'Isac bassa, tutti signori in nelle parti de Romania, con tutte zente de Romania, insieme con tutto el populo de Zarasain, mandando a danni de Valacchi, che nuovalmente dall'imperio di*

but no Ottoman commander with such name appears in the sources of the period. A Baltoglu pasha was the admiral of the Ottoman fleet during the siege of Constantinople in 1453 but he was dismissed by the sultan after the failed attempt to penetrate in the Golden Horn see Agostino Pertusi, ed., *La caduta di Costantinopoli. Le testimonianze dei contemporanei* (Bologna: Arnoldo Mondadori, 2012): 140 and 285. More probable *Valtival* is a corrupted form for Balibeg Malkoçoğlu who was involved several times along with Mihaloglu brothers in attacks against the European enemies of the Ottoman Empire.

²⁴ Schertaganeg, der Herr von Sophye, Iorga, *Acte şi fragmente*, 92.

²⁵ Schturaweg, *Ibid.*

²⁶ After Piri beg the German text mentions Eniss, Isalli und Wasscha which suggests that the translator had difficulties to understand properly the fragment; moreover the words "with of all his Janissaries' might" became "with all his hussars" which is more probable as the Ottoman army included many *akinci* units.

²⁷ There is no critical edition of this text despites the many editions. Also there is no attempt identifies the Ottoman commanders or to compare the letter with the work of Stefano Magno. For the editions see Ioan Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ştefan cel Mare*, vol. II (Bucureşti, 1913), 323; Andreas Veress, *Acta et epistolae relationum Transilvaniae Hungariaeque cum Moldavia et Valachia*, vol. I (Cluj, 1914), 9–10 (both used the manuscript preserved in the Venetian archives); *Războieni. Cinci sute de ani de la campania din 1476*, 129 (followed the text of Ioan Bogdan); *Literatura română veche (1402–1647)*, vol. I, ed. G. Mihăilă and Dan Zamfirescu (Bucureşti: Ed. Tineretului, 1969), 46–49.

*quello s'haveano tratto et levadi havea l'obediencia in tutto*²⁸ or in the Austrian Chronicle written by Jakob Unrest who also mentions a list of Ottoman commanders: *Item Schalem, ain wasche und weglerpeg mit allem hoffgesindt des Turckishen kayser und die ganntz Ramonia (sic) und ... mit den herren aus dem landt, genannt Hewosholber, sunst genannt Unter den Pyrgen, mit ganntzer macht. Item Ysseweg, Alybeg, Sudrebeg, Dacobeg, Jacobeg, Walthi, Wulibeg, Scheraffaweg, der herren von Sophirn, item Schurabeg, Piribeg, enussjappf und wascha mit allen seinen husarten, die all grosmechtig und weyda sindt.*²⁹

There are many differences in respect with Stephen the Great's letter, and one can assume that both documents distorted some of the names. Even in such case, it is highly probable that at least some of the Ottoman commanders were well known in the Venetian circles. One may understand why the Moldavian lord took care to mention some details: for instance, he pointed that Serefaga beg (Seref-aga?) was the lord Sofia probably to distinguish him from a homonymous leader and mentioned that Piri beg is the son of Ishak pasha arguably a well-known Ottoman dignitary.³⁰ Such concern for accuracy mirrored that in the 15th century all the news about an Ottoman defeat were confronted with the issue of credibility namely when the source were almost unknown. Such was the case in 1476 when Stephen announced the fall of Caffa to the court of Buda³¹, a letter ended with the words „it's beyond any doubt" (*aliter non est*).

For the 15th century men (and not only for them) the trustworthiness of the news was strongly related with the credibility of the sender. Or, in 1475 Stephen the Great was for many Western courts an unknown prince from the periphery of Christianity which implied a certain doubt concerning the accuracy of the information sent. Thus, one may understand why the Moldavian lord entrusted to a Venetian, Paolo Ognibene, the task to establish diplomatic relations with the Italian powers interested in the anti-Ottoman war.³² A Moldavian boyar as emissary, even one with a good Latin knowledge and diplomatic skill, could have raised doubts concerning his masters' intentions.

²⁸ Iorga, *Acte și fragmente*, III, 84.

²⁹ Jakob Unrest, *Österreichische Chronik*, herausgegeben von Karl Grossmann (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1957), 45–46.

³⁰ However the ambiguity is not cast away by the detail as during the period there were at least two Ishak pasha: Ishak bin Abdullah and Ishak bin Ibrahim both of them appointed as beglerbeg of Anatolia during Mehmed II's reign see Theocaris Stavrides, *The Sultan of Vezirs. The Life and Times of the Otoman Grand Vezir Mahmud Pasha Angelović (1453–1474)* (Leiden-Boston-Köln: Brill, 2001), 64.

³¹ Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, doc. 144, 325.

³² Probably Stephen the Great also used the opportunity created by the passage of Paolo Ognibene through Moldavia. It was easy to instruct a Venetian who returned from Persia and was interested to go as quickly as possible back home.

Thus, such presumed lack of credibility explains why in a letter to the Pope written on 29 November 1474 Stephen asked the Holy Father to give full credit of the emissary words as they reflected the lord of Moldavia's thoughts and purposes.³³

In fact the entire letter was composed to gain the Pope's trust. Stephen mentioned his own contacts with the *Ak Koyunlu* leader, Uzun Hasan, the formidable foe of Mehmed II, and also stated his negotiations with Venice another argument aimed to prove the Moldavian prince's desire to join the war against the infidels. Stephen seemed to be aware that the credibility was an essential ingredient of the diplomatic success, a truism maybe, but one which was seldom questioned by the Romanian historians.

Recently Giorgio Rota analyzed some well-known diplomatic episodes which involved emissaries of Oriental powers. Despite the different contexts a common trait was the doubt casted by such exotic diplomats – Lodovico da Bologna (in the 15th century), Anthony Sherley and Hakob Margarian (in the 16th century) – all of them acting as ambassadors of the Persian sovereign.³⁴

Such cases are by no means exceptions and one can find also evidence for the misadventures of Western emissaries in Oriental lands. It was the case of Giovanni Battista Trevisan thrown into jail by the grand *knyaz* of Muscovy because he was considered a Polish spy or, according to Domenico Malipiero, because his quality of Venetian emissary was denied (*e sta retenudo per non esser cognosudo*).³⁵

Even Uzun Hassan paid duly attention towards the credibility of his letters. For instance the letter sent to Mathias Corvinus was translated in Caffa in Latin *sub manu publica* and sealed by the Latin bishop Hieronymus. As a result, the King of Hungary considered the received letter as genuine³⁶; furthermore, in an epistle to King of Poland certified that the message was indeed sent by Uzun Hassan.

³³ Bogdan, *Documentele lui Ștefan cel Mare*, II, București, 1913, doc. 142, 318–319: *Quapropter eidem ambasiatori fidem integram placeat adhibere tanquam si cum Sanctitate Vestra oretenus loqueremur*; the last edition Războieni, doc. 3, 126. For the relations between Stephen the Great and the Papacy see Ștefan S. Gorovei, “1473: Ștefan, Moldova și lumea catolică,” *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A. D. Xenopol XXIX* (1992): 75–83; Liviu Pilat, *Între Roma și Bizanț. Societate și putere în Moldova (sec. XIV–XVI)* (Iași: Ed. Universității “Al. I. Cuza”, 2008), 168–169; Liviu Pilat, Ovidiu Cristea, *The Ottoman threat and Crusading on the Eastern Border of Christendom during the 15th century* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2017), 135–190.

³⁴ Giorgio Rota, “Real, Fake or Megalomaniacs? Three suspicious ambassadors 1450–1600,” in Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Tamar Herzog, eds., *Dissimulation and deceit in Early Modern Europe* (London: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2015), 165–183.

³⁵ *Annali Veneti*, 106.

³⁶ *Magyar diplomáciai emlékek Matyas Király Korából 1458–1490. Acta extera* (thereafter *Acta extera*), vol. II, Ivan Nagy, Albert B. Nyáry, ed. (Budapest, 1877), doc. 179, 259.

Stephen's envoys had to overcome the same issues as long as their realm was a distant and little known principality at the Eastern frontier of the Christendom. Even when such circumstances have changed the reaction provoked by the Moldavian ambassadors were not always favorable. For instance, in 1501 Marino Sanudo mentioned in his "Journals" (*I Diarii*) that the Moldavian representatives in Venice were of lesser distinction, poorly dressed and unable to speak Latin.³⁷ The last part of the sentence is quite surprising as the name of the two Moldavian messengers – Raynaldo and Antonio – suggest an Italian (maybe Genoese) origin. Two years later the linguistic barrier remained an important one as Sanudo labelled as "highly barbarian" (*gran barbarie*) the Latin of the letter sent to the doge.³⁸

Such statements strengthen the hypothesis that, in 1475, a Moldavian messenger of the victory of Vaslui could have casted serious suspicions and doubts concerning the news about the victory against the Turks brought in Italy. The lack of knowledge about Moldavia explained why Stephen the Great was considered, soon enough, only a "captain" of the Hungarian King.³⁹ If such title was the direct consequence of Mathias Corvinus' propaganda it is understandable why Stephen used foreign messengers to establish diplomatic contacts

³⁷ *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 3, Venezia, 1880, col. 1467: "Veneno do oratori e nontij di Stefano Carabodam, non perhò homeni da conto, acompagnati da li 4 patricij eri li fonno mandati a visitar; et erano mal vestiti; stetenò in piedi, e per interprete parlò. Presentano una letere di credenza, con la mansiom: *Illustrissimo principi, domino Augustino Barbadico, duci Venetiarum, amico nostro carissimo et confidentissimo, data ex arce nostra* ... [omission in the original text], la domenega drio la festa di la Nostra Dona. Et comenza cussi: *Stefanus, Dei gratia haeres dominusque terrae, vayvoda*. Scrive mandar questi do, Raynaldo et Antonio, et prega se li mandi uno medico, dotor, sapi varir di doie. Poi lhora disseno, il suo signor vlacho, havia certe doie a le volte, perhò vol uno medico, e li vol dar danari. *Item*, comprar certi panni d'oro, et uno starà qui fermo, l'altro va a Roma. Poi disse il suo signor esser gaiardo, e sarà contra turchi, si la Signoria si acorderà col re di Hongaria. Il principe li usò bone parole; sono alozati a l'hostaria di San Zorzi"; short mention of the episode in Eugen Denize, "Ștefan cel Mare în I Diarii lui Marino Sanudo," *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, XXII (2004): 145; see also the critics of Șerban Marin in "Addenda et corrigenda," *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie*, XXIII (2005), 320–326. An interpret was also used in December 1503 when the Moldavian envoy was joined by an emissary of Ioan Corvinus, the illegitimate son of King Mathias see *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 5, Venezia, 1881, col. 579–580.

³⁸ *I Diarii di Marino Sanuto*, vol. 5, col. 150: *Di Stefano Vayvoda. Fo leto una lettera latina; ma gran barbarie. Per la qual advisava, che altre fiale l'anno passa mandò soi nontij qui a tuor uno phisico per la sua egritudine.*

³⁹ Gorovei, *Informație, propagandă, mistificare*, 25 pointed out that no other document labels Stephen the Great as captain of Hungary; see also Alexandru Pinzar, "El capitano generale del Re d'Ungheria et del Valacho chiamato Stefano Vajovoda. Statut și prestigiu reflectate în limbajul diplomatic al epocii lui Ștefan cel Mare," *Analele Putnei*, X/1 (2014): 152.

with the West. Later, the King blamed Venice for the diplomatic exchanges with Moldavia and considered them as an unfriendly gesture towards Hungary.

All these details explain why in 1475 Stephen the Great was so cautious in his approach towards Western powers. Far to be a proof of inability, his option for non-Moldavian messengers was very well pondered. Besides, such option was preserved in the following years when his ambassadors sent to Italy were well accustomed with the negotiations concerning the crusade.⁴⁰ Soon enough the Moldavian lord became an important figure of any anti-Ottoman project in the second half of the 15th century. In this respect it is worth to remember to well-known documents usually ignored by the historians due to their “peculiar” content. Recently Liviu Pilat pointed to a report written on 17 October 1492 which contained the news that Stephen, voivode of Moldavia (*Stephano Vaivoda de Mundavia*) *sagacissimo et calidissimo in lo mestiere del arme* was appointed as a *condottiere* of Venetian army! The report sent to the Duke of Milan by a certain informant, Francesco Trachedini, mentioned also the amount of 70 000–80 000 ducats paid by the Republic for the task. Such information could be seen as pure fantasy as there is no other contemporary evidence to support such statement. But even in such circumstances it is worth to mention the fact that, in Italian Peninsula, the Moldavian lord was a renowned warrior who provoked fear among Venice’s enemies. Even it was only a false rumor launched by the Venetian government the episode suggests something about Stephen’s fame in Italy; centuries before a similar situation is related by the French chronicle, Joinville, who was astonished to note that the Muslim women used the name of Richard Lionhearts to scare their children.⁴¹ In both cases the fame of a warrior is as frightening as the warrior himself.

Even more curious is a document of 1476 published long ago by A. D. Xenopol and republished by N. Iorga. The text seems to suggest that, few months before the battle of Războieni, Stephen the Great’s family, or at least few members were hosted in Venetian lands.⁴² Even if such documents raise

⁴⁰ Liviu Pilat, *Cruciadă și propagandă*, 125.

⁴¹ *La Continuation de Guillaume de Tyr*, ed. Margareth Ruth Morgan (Paris, 1982), 141; Joinville, *Ville de Saint Louis*, ed. Jacques Monfrin, (Paris, 1995), 38 and 276.

⁴² Archivio di Stato, Venice, ASVe, S. S., *Senato Terra*, reg. 31. 1473–1475 [1 martie 1473–28 februarie 1476], f. 125v. *Consiliarii// Diebus proxime elapsis scriptum et mandatum fuit per dominium nostrum potestati et capitaneo Tarvisii quod pro expensis factis familie et equis Illustrissimi Vayvode Moldavie dari faceretur Bartholomeo hospiti ad Coronam in Mestre libri 776, scudi 9, uti constare per computum clare et lucide cognitum fuit, et, quoniam idem potestas noster scribit talem exbursationem et satisfactionem facere non potuisse in executionem mandatorum nostrorum, obstante lege capta in hoc Consilio, ne cuiquam per Cameram Tarvisii persolvi possit nisi captum fuerit per hoc Consilium, sub pena ducatorum mille, et conveniat dignitati nostri domini ac equitati ut ipsi hospiti satisfiat, vadit pars quod scribi possit prefato potestati nostro quod superscriptas*

more questions than give answers, a fact is beyond any doubt: already in 1476 Stephen was in Venetian eyes a very important ally. The victory of Vaslui had an important contribution to such status and even if it was not the greatest disaster in Ottoman history (as Mara Brankovic stated) it had a huge impact in the evolution of Stephen's image from an unknown lord to a renowned captain of crusade against the Turks.⁴³

URMĂRILE VICTORIEI: UN EPISOD DIN DIPLOMAȚIA LUI ȘTEFAN CEL MARE DUPĂ BĂTĂLIA DE LA VASLUI (10 IANUARIE 1475)

Rezumat

Scrisoarea adresată de Ștefan cel Mare principilor creștini după bătălia de la Vaslui este un document bine-cunoscut istoricilor. Cu toate acestea, implicațiile diplomatice ale acestui text, al cărui scop îl constituia o cerere de ajutor adresată capetelor încoronate ale creștinătății, sunt multiple. Analiza documentului arată că domnul Moldovei a fost conștient că vestea victoriei asupra oștilor otomane va avea de înfruntat spinoasa problemă a credibilității, Ștefan fiind la momentul respectiv cvasi-necunoscut curților occidentale. Din acest motiv domnul Moldovei a făcut apel la mesageri "credibili" în ochii occidentalilor (venetianul Paolo Ognibene, respectiv maghiarul Nicolae Ujlaki) și a inclus în scrisoare o serie de detalii menite să dovedească veridicitatea informațiilor transmise. În paralel cu eforturile depuse pentru domolirea furiei sultanului, respectiv pentru strângerea raporturilor cu regele Ungariei, Mathias Corvin, scrisoarea adresată creștinătății conturează portretul unui principe abil capabil să exploateze în plan diplomatic succesul militar obținut.

libras 776, scudi 9 dare et numerare possit, non obstante lege predicta, sicut conveniens et honestum est pro dignitate et honore nostri dominii.// De parte 95. De non 13. Non sinceri 6. The text was analyzed by Ioan-Aurel Pop, Alexandru Simon, "Ungaria et Valachia. Promisiunile valahe ale Republicii Sfântului Marcu din anii 1470," *Revista Istorică* (forthcoming); see also Pilat, Cristea, *The Ottoman Threat and Crusading*, 156 and n. 114.

⁴³ For the impact of Stephen the Great's diplomatic actions see Simon, *Al treisprezecelea apostol*, 55–61.

