BERLIN CONGRESS AND THE ALBANIAN LANDS
(13 JUNE -13 JULY 1878)

BERLIN KONGRESİ VE ARNAVUT TOPRAKLARI
(13 HAZİRAN -13 TEMMUZ 1878)

БЕРЛИНСКИЙ КОНГРЕСС И АЛБАНСКИЕ ТЕРРИТОРИИ

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Abstract

Six Major Powers (Germany, Austro-Hungary, England, Russia, France, Italy) besides Russia unsatisfied with the decisions taken in the San Stefano Treaty between the Ottoman Empire and the Russian Empire (the latter to dominate in terms of the treaty), called the Berlin Congress on June 13, 1878, to design a new political map of Europe, to stop the momentum of Russia and to set their strategic and influence points in the countries of the Balkan Peninsula.

Major Powers at the Berlin Congress have treated problems of Balkan states, but have not solved their crisis. In the worst manner the Albanians problem was treated, where not only did not won their state as other Balkan states but even worse, its territorial integrity served as spoil of market to satisfy the appetites of the Balkan states, and which were supported even from diplomacy of European states.

Key Words: Berlin Congress, Albanians, History Research

Özet

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ile Rus İmparatorluğu arasında akdedilen ve Rusya’nın şartlarını dayattığı Ayastefanos (Yeşilköy) Antlaşması ile alınan kararlardan Rusya

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haricinde memnun olmayan altı büyük devlet (Almanya, Avusturya-Macaristan, İngiltere, Rusya, Fransa, İtalya), Avrupa’nın siyasi haritasını şekillendirmek, Rusya’nın hizmini durdurmak ve kendi stratejik noktalarını belirleyip Balkan yarımadasındaki etkisini yerleştirmek için 13 Haziran 1878 tarihinde Berlin Kongresi’ni düzenlemiştir.

Büyük devletler Berlin Kongresi’nde Balkan ülkeleri sorunlarını ele almış, ancak problemlerini çözmemişlerdir. Arnavut meselesi en kötü şekilde ele alınarak, diğer Balkan ülkelerinden farklı olarak kendi devletlerini elde etme imkanı sunulmadığı gibi Arnavutların toprak bütünlüğü, Avrupa diplomasisi tarafından desteklenen Balkan ülkelerinin iştahını tatmin edecek eşya muamelesi görmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Berlin Kongresi, Arnavutlar, Tarih Araştırmalar

Six Great Powers such as Germany, England, France, Russia, Austro-Hungary and Italy, unsatisfied with the agreement and the decisions that came out of San Stefano's Treaty*, between the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, on March 3, 1878, gathered in Berlin to design a new political map of Europe by areas of interest, indicating the language of force, stopped strengthening and expansion of the Russian Empire in the Balkan Peninsula countries. The Great Powers at the Congress of Berlin represented politically by: "Germany - Prince Bismarck, Austro-Hungary - Count Andrássy, France - Monsieur Waddington, United Kingdom - Lord Beaconsfield, Italy - Count Corti, Russia - Prince Gorchakov, Ottoman Empire - Alexander Karatheodori Pasha, Mehmet Ali Pasha and Sadoullah Bey†.

The new political map was as the result of primarily two associates, Emperor Napoleon III and Otto von Bismarck*. "They support their policy: Realipolitik - notion that relations between states are determined simply by force and that the most powerful wins²".

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"During the Congress, which lasted a full month, from 13 June to 13 July 1878, the German power was represented by Prince Otto von Bismarck, who, with the economic development of 1878, began to disrupt the balance of Europe, and in order to solve the great Eastern Crisis has chosen Berlin, which he considered as "the new symbol of economic power". Decisions would be taken unanimously, meaning: full accordance of six Great Powers.

"In the Congress of Berlin (13 June - 13 July 1878) Great Powers, decided that instead of San Stefano's Bulgaria, to create the Principality of Bulgaria, much smaller than the first one, which would extend between the Danube and the Balkan mountain range, tributary and under the nominal vassalage of Istanbul. Meanwhile, out of the remaining part, the southern part of Bulgaria was decided to be established as an autonomous province named Eastern Rumelia, which will remain within the Ottoman Empire, but with a Christian governor" (Articles I - XXII)

Beside the representatives of the great powers, the Congress of Berlin was attended by representatives of the Balkan states (Serbia which was seeking for the territory of Kosovo, Bulgaria, the territories that were given to her in San Stefano, Montenegro, seeking for Shkodra and other northern territories whereas "Greece, specifically sought to annex beside Crete, Thessaly and southern Macedonia, the whole Epirus up to rivers Vjosë and Aliakmon, including as northern points the cities of Vlora, Tepelena, Permet and Konica", the exception was Romania). These cleavages fret excessively the population of Albanian territories, but unfortunately they were not able to mend their decisions, although they never sat back.

The Congress was attended by a government delegation of the Ottoman Empire led by Karatheodori* Pasha with his first assistant Mehmet Ali Pasha*. "The former prime minister, Sadik Pasha, was appointed to represent Turkey at the Congress of Berlin as the first omnipotent ... On Thursday he was called to the Council of Ministers, where he was given the instructions... on Friday morning while he was explaining his visit to the representatives of participating powers/states, suddenly through a Sultan's decree in this position was appointed the second omnipotent Karatheodori Efendi, who was also promoted to the position of Mushir and charged with state duty in the Ministry, ... Sadik Pasha was notified

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4 Gazmend Rizaj, Upper Albania, 1800-1913, Prishtina, 2011, p.131
5 AKSH, Kristo Frasheri, Albanian League of Prizren 1878-1881, Tirana 2012, p. 262
* Karateodori Pasha, was Fanariot greek, taken from Misha Glenny, Balkan's History, 1804-1999, Nationalism, Wars and Great Powers, London, 2000, p.140
that he won't be departing to Berlin and Karatheodori Efendi was invited to select his staff for his mission”.

Consecutive wars with Russian Empire weakened significantly the Ottoman Empire, which at the Congress of Berlin in 1878, attended only as observer, without the right to vote.

"But the Turkish delegation didn't have equal rights to those of the Great Powers. He could discuss of any issue on the agenda, but was not entitled to vote on the decisions of Congress”.

At this congress, the Albanians came out as the most harmed, who not only were not invited, but even worse, the Great Powers traded their territorial integrity, by satisfying the requests of neighbouring states; residents of the Albanian population in order to protect their lands engaged the intellectuals of that time.

"Albanians who sent their two most prominent intellectuals, Abdyl Frasheri and Jani Vreto" could not persuade the Great Powers.

This forced Albanians to ceaselessly address the Great Powers with various petitions and memorandums in defence of their lands. The decisions of the Congress of Berlin seriously jeopardised the interests of the Albanian people and territorial integrity of Albania. Albanians were not granted even the basic right to live free and to govern themselves.

"The Congress of Berlin was also addressed by another protest from Prishtina, by the population of Kosovo, Dukagjini, Debar, Skopje, Bitola, Tetovo, Yeni Pazar, Senica, Taslixhe and Gucia, expressing disagreement with the agreement, under which a part of the Albanian territories were annexed by Serbia, Montenegro and Bulgaria” 9. The Congress of Berlin (1878), appointed Mehmet Ali Pasha as the key person, with experience, to hand over the lands of the Albanian population to Serbia and Montenegro. "Today Mehmet Ali Pasha, left Istanbul being appointed as a Turkish commissioner for implementation of the articles of the Treaty of Berlin regarding the handing over the territories to Serbia and Montenegro, and to convince the Albanian people of the provinces earmarked for handover. …” 10

6 HofStaatsArchiv, Wien, NeueFreiePresse, Nr. 4958, 17. Juni 1878, Vien, Morgenblatt, S.1.(free translation)
9 M. Rizvanolli, War of Serbia and Montenegro for the occupation of the Albanian lands during the Eastern Crisis, 1875-1878, Gjakova, 2007, p. 73.
10 Archive of Kosovo, Skender Rizaj, British Documents on the Albanian League of Prizren, (1878-1881), Prishtina, 1978, p.80
Having provided an infantry regiment of three battalions, Mehmet Ali Pasha, went to Gjakova to inform the population about possible consequences if they did not obey his order to hand over the land to Serbia and Montenegro, under the Treaty of Berlin. His arrival in Gjakova, specifically at the Tower House of Abdul-lah Pasha Dreni, sparked major reactions to the whole Albanian population and particularly to that population planned to be given as a "gift" to Serbia and Montenegro. After a bloody war that took place between the rebels who were led by Sylejman Vokshi, and those who defended Mehmet Ali Pasha, the latter was killed."Unsuccessful talks of the 1st and 2nd of September 1878, triggered a war that lasted until September 6, 1878, where Mehmet Ali Pasha, Abdullah Pasha Dreni, Shaqir aga Curri, Bajram aga Rrustemi, were killed, with around 100 others surrounded in Saraj while on the League side, 400 warriors were killed and 700 wounded" 11. At the same time Mehmet Ali Pasha, informed the prince of Serbia and Montenegro, for his mission, who they welcomed, but the Albanian population had a great reaction where as a consequence Mehmet Ali Pasha remained dead, the death that shook diplomacy of Great Powers, especially the Ottoman Empire. The correspondence to inform about the killing started. "News of the killing of Mehmet Ali Pasha, created here a very deep impression, for Turkey totally undesirable news and unpredictable damage to their interests, if fierce measures are not taken immediately to protect its authority in Albania..." 12. The killing of Mehmet Ali Pasha, shook not only the Porte, but the Great Powers diplomacy as well, who through telegrams informed their bodies. One of them is the Austro-Hungarian consul in Shkodra, Lippich, who in his telegram dated September 8, 1878 informs the following: "A telegram that came tonight from Prizren says that Mehmet Ali Pasha was killed in Djakova on the 6th of this month after a three-day fightings against superior rebel forces..."13. The head consul Lippich, through a telegram informed Vienna of the killing of Mehmet Ali Pasha "A telegram that came tonight from Prizren says that Mehmet Ali Pasha was killed in Djakova on the 6th of this month after a three-day fightings against the superior rebel forces. With him were massacred Abdullah Pasha; in whose house he has been trapped by rebels and many others."14

Beside protests, provincial and general national uprisings, the League bodies addressed the Great Powers, with the option for autonomy within the Ottoman

11M. Rizvanolli, War of Serbia and Montenegro for the occupation of the Albanian lands during the Eastern Crisis, 1875-1878, Gjakova, 2007, p. 183
12Archive of Kosovo, Skender Rizaj, British Documents on the Albanian League of Prizren, (1878-1881), Prishtina, 1978, p.91
14 The Archive of National Museum - Shkodra- Reports of the top Austro-Hungarian consulate in Shkodra to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vienna, the telegram of consul Lippich, Vj.30-1-103, nr. 4827/501, 8 September 1878, Shkodra.
Empire, but there were also the ones that were seeking for the unification of Albanian lands in an independent Albanian state.

"Thus, in the memorandum, that a group of Shkodra patriots sent on June 13, 1878 to Lord Beaconsfield, head of the British delegation at the Congress of Berlin, after talking in detail about the danger that threatened the territorial integrity of Albania by neighbours, it is proposed, as the most appropriate solution for the Albanian cause, under the circumstances that Eastern Europe was, the creation of an independent Albanian state"\(^{15}\).

This would be an opportunity for the Albanian people as every nation in Europe to live free and serve the Balkan's equilibrium and beyond. But useless, the Great Powers for their political and strategic interests rejected the requests and the reality of Albanian people, by denying them the right of being equal among equals. Despite this ignorance towards them, the leaders of the League continuously insisted that Albanian cause is addressed by this Congress.

"Abdyl Frashëri, head of the delegation, tried to convince the president of the Congress, Chancellor Bismarck, in a meeting that he had with him, to include in the agenda of a session the issue of the Albanian nation. But German Chancellor refused that, by brutally stating that "there is no Albanian nation" "\(^{16}\).

This indicated that the territorial integrity inhabited with the Albanian majority is under the sovereignty of the sultan, and as such should be divided and shared to the neighbouring countries, or Balkan monarchies, by expanding territories of Serbia and Montenegro, Bulgaria, Greece.

Memorandum of 13 June 1878 of the Great Powers, among others contains: "Albania cannot join with Greece, profound race differences: language, culture and civilization make this union impossible; Albania will never accept the Slavic occupation, whether it is from the borders of Bulgaria, or of Montenegro; Albania will not accept it and this is proven by more than four centuries of battles to preserve intact the character, traditions and national physiognomy."\(^{17}\)But it was in vain, the Great Powers had designed the new map of Europe. "However, the Great Powers in Berlin gave to Serbia Albanian areas of Sanjak of Nish that is 10,972km\(^2\), with 614 villages and eight cities, of which more than half of the inhabitants of this territory were Albanians, indigenous inhabitants\(^{18}\).

\(^{15}\) Academy of Sciences of Albania, Institute of History, History of Albanian nation, Tirana, 2002, p. 162

\(^{16}\)Same p. 162

\(^{17}\)The Archive of National Museum - Shkodra - Reports of the top Austro-Hungarian consulate in Shkodra to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Vienna, year 1878-79, Shkodra, vj. 30-65.

\(^{18}\)Gazmend Rizaj, Upper Albania,1800-1913, Prishtina 2011, p.135
Montenegro as well, was fairly awarded by the Great Powers at this congress, as a gift they received approximately half of the territorial integrity (which they still have), with majority of Albanian population.

"Montenegro, at the Congress of Berlin, under Articles XXXI-XXXIII, along with recognition of independence, gained Niksic, Kollashin, Spuzh, Podgorica, Zhabjak, Tivar, Plava and Gucia, but due to armed resistance by the Albanian League, instead of Plava and Guci, the Great Powers decided that Montenegro be granted Ulcinj" 19

Bulgaria in comparison with decisions of San Stefano has taken less, but that does not mean that the Albanians were not harmed. What was given to Bulgaria which was not Bulgarian, majority belonged to Albanians. "It is contrary to the leaders and Humanism for us to submit to the Serbian and Bulgarian administration, since there is no connection between them and us," 20. By protesting in the name of humanity, on the same time claiming they don’t recognize any other government rather than the Ottoman government, which shows that they are under autonomist program under Sultan.

“Bulgaria did not enjoy the territory of eastern Albania, but, on the other hand, Greece (which did not benefit anything from the Treaty of San Stefano) got the territories of Çameria.

The Berlin Treaty besides enabling Austria-Hungary to conquer Bosnia and Herzegovina allowed to invade one day Kosovo as well, by previously winning the right to establish military garrisons and build strategic roads in Novi Pazar sancak "until beyond Mitrovica".

These concessions brought Vienna to cast the first step to conquer in one day entire Kosovo and then get access in Thessaloniki.” 21.

The fight for dominance over the monopoly broke out between the great powers, Russia was keen to preserve the decisions taken in San Stefano. Austria-Hungary desiring to extend its expansion in the Balkans wanted to stop Russia’s momentum. France by using the policy of neutrality with Russia wanted to isolate Germany and worsen the Russia's relations with Britain. While the Italy considered Austria-Hungary as main rival, by any means required solutions that weaken the position of Austria-Hungary in the Balkans.

“Russian Empire fought to sanction the terms of the San Stefano Treaty, while Great Britain and Austria-Hungary tried to lessen as much as possible the Russian benefits and strengthen their own position in Eastern Europe. German Empire attempted to satisfy Austria-Hungary in order not to let them join with France to

19 Gazmend Rizaj, Upper Albania, 1800-1913, Prishtina 2011, p.137
20 Skender Rizaj, British Documents on the Albanian League of Prizren and the beginning of breakdown of Balkans (1877-1885), Prishtina, 1996, p.62
neutralize objection of Russia, provoking a deterioration of its relations with the British Empire. France’s main objective was to politically isolate the Germany, whereas Italy, in turn, required other solutions that will lead to the weakening of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in the Balkan Peninsula\textsuperscript{22}.

Berlin Congress, regarding the Albanian matter, does not differ at all from the tragedy played out in San Stefano. Berlin Congress only made several changes in the interests of the Great Powers, these changes aimed at weakening of Russian Empire and strengthening Austria - Hungary in the Balkan territories, pretending to prevent Russian expansion.

"Congress of Berlin decided to extend its territory between the Danube and Balkan mountains. Areas south of the Balkan Mountains would create one autonomous province of the Ottoman Empire called Eastern Rumelia. Territories of Macedonia, together with Albania’s eastern provinces, which under the San Stefano Treaty bestowed to Bulgaria, also remained under Ottoman rule. Congress of Berlin recognized the independence of Romania, Serbia and Montenegro.\textsuperscript{23}"

Even though they were part of the Ottoman administration, Serbia, Montenegro and Romania were recognized as fully independent states and as a reward, besides their territories they were also given other areas to the detriment of other nations such as: being formally still part of it, North Dobruja given to Romania and extract from her the province of Bessarabia in favour of Russia. Austria was granted the right to invade Bosnia and Herzegovina. Russia took Batum, Kars and Ardahan, France was granted secret permission to take Tunisia, which was formally part of Turkey. The Germans have not taken any territories. "Preserving the peace was great benefit to Germany.\textsuperscript{24}"

Significant changes were made between Serbia and Montenegro border. Austria-Hungary, decided that Serbia shall not expand to the south (in the direction of Novi Pazar, Mitrovica and Prishtina, which Vienna coveted for itself), but on the southeast, giving the provinces of Pirot, Train, Nish and Vranje; all these areas, by San Stefano Treaty were promised to Bulgaria. Due to same reason, at the insistence of Vienna, Montenegro did not get territorial gains in northern side, towards Herzegovina and Novi Pazar. "According to the Berlin Treaty, it will extend mainly from the south side: it shall take the provinces of Tivar, Podgorica, Plava, Gucia, Rugova and Kolasin. Annexation of Ulçin was not recognized, but

\textsuperscript{22} Albanian Academy of Sciences, Institute of History, History of Albanian nation, Tirana, 2002, p. 162

\textsuperscript{23} Albanian Academy of Sciences, Institute of History, History of Albanian nation, Tirana, 2002, p. 162

\textsuperscript{24} Norman Rich, Diplomacy of the Great Powers 1814-1914, Tirana, Toena, 2006, p.227
Cetina gain the right to sail Montenegrin trade ships freely in Buna River and Shkodër Lake.  

Two great powers, which had not participated at all in Russo-Turkish war: Austria-Hungary and the UK, had territorial gains at Ottoman Empire expenses, especially Austria-Hungary, which won the right to invade militarily, supposedly to administer the areas of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Besides Spic harbour, on the southern shores of Dalmatia which formally annexed, it also won the right to keep military garrisons in the Sancak of Novi Pazar. By playing the role like a lawyer to defend the Ottoman Empire, "Great Britain gained the right to invade Cyprus," which pretended in the Congress, to be an ardent defender of the Ottoman Empire.

Although Greece was not participating in the Russo-Turkish war, she claimed to annex Thessalia, Macedonia, Crete and especially Epirus (Vilayet of Janina). England objected this, but in the end it was decided that the border in Thessaly and Epirus to be delineated by a Turkish-Greek commission. However, Congress recommended that Kalamas River in Epirus and Selemvria River in Thessaly to serve as boundary line. "If Greece and Turkey do not agree between them, stating in Article 24, then the Great Powers shall intervene." Interests of the Albanian people with decisions of the Congress of Berlin were severely violated.

Great powers closed their eyes to the Albanian cause. Territorial integrity served to satisfy the demands for territorial expansion of neighbouring countries. Although territorial gains were reduced compared with the Treaty of San Stefano, Montenegro was given except Tivar, also Plava and Gucia (Articles 28, 29 of the Berlin Treaty). "Greece was granted the right to require border revision in harm of the Albanian lands in the south (protocol no. 13), however the Treaty did not have any final decision on this matter."

The reason why the Albanian cause as an issue of its own, was not included on the agenda is that; in the Congress of Berlin, the Great Powers did not address the problem of Albanians as diplomatic issues, but as geographical area, whose territory will serve as the commodity market, to satisfy the interests of neighbouring countries, and in return, the Great Powers would easier realize their aspirations for dominance in strategic points.

Aspirations of Austria-Hungary for access in Thessaloniki encouraged her on building strategic roads in Sancak of Novi Pazar, beyond Mitrovica, to enable themselves the invasion of Kosovo at later stage, same as they did with Bosnia and Herzegovina.


\[28\] Arben Putro, Diplomatic history of Albanian matter, Tirana, 2003, p.19
Decisions that Congress of Berlin took harmed the Albanian cause, both politically and territorially, by breaking its territorial integrity, especially the Article 23 of the Treaty and item no. 13 of the Protocol of Congress of Berlin.

According to Article 23, the High Porte was forced to draft for Balkan territories that were under its rule, the "organic regulation" for autonomous administration of vilayets. While the second one or Protocol No. 13 of the Congress of Berlin was related to Venoms of Mirdita.

Initially the issue was raised by the representatives of France and Austria-Hungary. They sought by High Porte to observe also in the future the "privileges and immunities" (namely: Venoms, ), that Mirdita peoples enjoys “ab antiquo” (since ancient times). Representatives of the High Porte, initially objected point no. 13 "However it added that the High Porte had no intention to implement its reforms in the Mirdita region" 29.

Article 23 seriously violated Albania’s vital interest. Albania unlike neighbouring states which were given "territorial gifts" is denied the right to join four vilayets in a single vilayet. This formula is not applied to other Balkan countries.

“It should be mentioned the initiative of representatives of Austria-Hungary and France to include in the protocols of Congress of Berlin (second part of protocol no. 13) the issue of "privileges and freedoms" of Mirdita that were "traditionally recognized" (ab antiquo). It might be thought that this comes from the narrow frame of border issues to touch upon, except this, also the other aspect of the Albanian cause, that of the autonomy” 30.

Even our Renaissance movement members supported the reforms for autonomy as a basis for territorial unification of four vilayets in a single one.

“Protocol No.13 cleared the path for Vienna, which for a long time enjoyed the right of defending the Catholic population in Ottoman Empire (kultusprotektorat) to intervene freely in internal life of Mirdita and turn it into an advanced foothold for its further expansion towards Adriatic coast of Albania and towards the Central Balkan territories” 31.

After a month of intensive work, the Congress of Berlin, on 13 July 1878, completed its work. These outcomes were beneficial by the Balkan countries such as Serbia, Montenegro, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, but not for Albania.

This Congress did not address the Albanian matter as National matter, and its territorial integrity served as a robbery heaven to satisfy the interests of neighbouring states, and the abovementioned realized their predatory aspirations.

For Albanian nation remained only one option, the option of uprising.