

FOREWORD

THE BICENTENNIAL OF THE CONGRESS OF VIENNA 1815: Legitimacy on the Periphery

*R*ESTORATION OF EUROPE AFTER NAPOLEON'S defeat was a complex process within which the most difficult tasks were reestablishing the system that dominated before Napoleon's wars and erasing of twenty years of new European experience that not only challenged the *Ancient Regime*, but was actually victorious in a significant part of Europe.

That is exactly the reason why the states that formed the basis of reactive forces, those ones united into the Holy Alliance, had to declare illegitimate all changes that occurred in the chain reaction after 1789, changes that Napoleon managed to spread beyond borders of France.

The Congress of Vienna was important for restoring the previous system and outlawing those changes that could jeopardize authority and legitimacy of the *Ancient Regime*. Austria and Russia were two states specially significant when the region of southeast Europe is discussed. Despite the urgent need to protect legitimacy of European order and prevent further changes of borders, events on the periphery of Habsburg and Ottoman empires, the Serbian revolution and later the Greek revolution, confirmed that the Congress of Vienna had failed, at least in that region at the periphery of Europe.

In order to understand better why it was easier to change borders at the periphery, it is necessary to go back several decades in time. During Napoleonic wars, besides fights over the Balearic Islands, Malta, Corfu, Kotor and trade routes passing over Levant, Mediterranean and the Balkans remained of less significance than fights and possible gains in Central or Eastern Europe, or in the Baltic region. It was just that second-rate position of the Balkans, of former Venetian and Turkish possessions, that enabled change of borders not envisaged by the Congress of Vienna.

In the first part of the issue – *The Balkans*, the papers are related to the territory of Ottoman Serbia in the period from the Peace of Belgrade in 1739 until the Serbian uprising against Ottomans in the sanjak of Niš in 1841. This part is

mostly focused on the most important event of that period, the Serbian Revolution 1804–1830. Eventual success of the liberation movements in Southern Europe, including the Serbian Revolution, proved that the state of affairs in reconstructed European order is unstable in the long run. After the Second Egyptian–Ottoman War in 1841, apart from the uprising in Niš, Ottoman empire was also shaken by rebellions in Crete, Samos and Thessaly.

The second part – *The Mediterranean*, deals with former possessions of Venice, mostly under Austrian rule, except for the Ionian Islands that became a republic under protectorate of Great Britain. One of the most important new territories of the Austrian empire was the Kingdom of Lombardi–Venetia, created in the fashion of the Italian–Napoleonic tradition in order to maintain the dignity of a kingdom that was also under Austrian rule. While creating the Kingdom of Dalmatia Austrians also used Venetian and French experience but they created new Dalmatian identity firmly based on Roman and Christian heritage of Dalmatia. On the contrary, Great Britain did not want to create a new model in the case of the Ionian Islands, but applied Russian-Turkish protectorate model based on Venetian institutional foundations.

Development of national states during 19th century brought about the breakdown of legitimacy concept defended by the largest empires of the continent, so the majority of territories at the periphery of these empires, as a result of wars, turned into national kingdoms. The case of the United States of the Ionian Islands is an isolated one for, during the premiership of Lord Palmerston and with consent of queen Victoria and general public, Great Britain handed over the islands as a gift for the arrival of a new king and dynasty change.