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Die Türken vor Wien ('The Turks at the gates of Vienna'):

Music and drama for the 200th commemoration day of the Second Turkish Siege
of Vienna – between patriotism and entertainment

Abstract. In 1883 the 200th anniversary of the victory against the Turks was celebrated in Austria, especially in Vienna. The monuments that were built on this occcasion, however, are referring to the historical events of 1683 only to a lesser extent. They are far more referring to the political situation in 1883, when the liberal urban Viennese citizens had conflicts with the government that was dominated by Christian Conservatives. Such a tendency concerns architecture, monuments and pictures as well as literature and music that dealt with the anniversary. On this occasion compositions that are addressed to the mayor use bourgeoise symbols, while Richard Kralik in his drama Die Türken vor Wien ('The Turks at the gates of Vienna') tries to mediate his vision of a state dominated by Catholic and German Austrians. Some institutions try to serve bourgeoise Viennna as well as the monarchy in the choice of their programme, as is the case with the k. k. Hof-Operntheater (Court Opera). However these artistic efforts about the subject were not very successful on stage. Productions that used the anniversary to combine it with exoticism, Viennese clichees, comic effects and light music were more popular, as the light opera Die Türken vor Wien by Karl Costa and the composer Paul Mestrozi shows. The historic event of the Turkish siege and Vienna's liberation is only the platform for a successful pieve of entertainment in 1883.

Commemorations of the Turkish Siege were ideal for the purpose of hostile propaganda.¹ There was a long tradition of connecting the image of 'the Turks' with exoticism and erotic adventures but also – up to the present – with that of an enemy in general.² The Turks were regarded as a danger to the West. The victory against the army of the Ottoman Empire in 1683 was seen as a chance to save the ideological concept of the Occident.³ The battle on 12 September 1683 was interpreted as one of the most important dates in the history of Vienna, of Austria, and even of the Christian world in general.

On the one hand, that cliché of a dark menace was used against new enemies for centuries. Connecting them with the Turks meant to present them as the new danger for the western civilisation as can be seen below. On the other hand, there were various heroes involved in the battle of 1683, who could be used as a role model for different purposes and

ideologies. As recent researches⁴ show, even the commemoration in 1783 was in fact primarily a celebration for the House of Habsburg. The most important goal at that time was to idealise the emperor Leopold I, although his escape from Vienna made it difficult to present him as a hero. The victory of 1683 strengthened the position of the Habsburgs in the east. They were portrayed as the saviours of Christianity against the heathens.⁵

In 1783 the Turks were no longer an imminent threat. New enemies arose for the rulers from within, most of all the proponents of the Enlightenment.⁶ However, a hundred years later (1883), liberal newspapers expounded the victory of 1683 as the beginning of European education and the Enlightenment, which should have been defended against the conservative and clerical forces of the state, represented in the cabinet of Eduard Taaffe.⁷ The purpose of commemorating 200 years of liberation was explained in the *Linzer*

'In times of peace we are celebrating a feast in honour of European education, which we once with the blood of our sons saved from the Turkish flood. In our heart the memory of the great hour lives, when the barbarian orient wanted to steal the future of our enlightenment.'8

In the 1890s the liberals were in decline, while the conservative movement was strengthened. As a consequence, the article mentioned above ended with the exhortation to fight against reactionary forces:

'Only progress is able to give nourishment and power to the people, and there we are feeling woeful, when we see our state in its way of regress. May the gracious fate, which often escorts our folks, soon lead us back to the way of progress, so that we can shout out loud, happy and free: "Vivat, cresca, floreat!"

The Christian-conservative forces attacked their liberal opponent, as one can read in the newspaper *Das Vaterland*:

Tagespost:

'Indeed, the Turks could not have mistreated our forefathers worse than we do it with our people today. Instead of the enemy, who once threatened us from the outside, the enemy is within; his symbol is not the half-moon, but the golden calf is his idol and trophy. [...] As the Turkish danger caused the unity of Christiany 200 years ago, today the golden calf will be beaten with the help of the Holy cross.' 10

The commemoration in 1933 was combined with the general German day of Catholicism, being used as a propaganda of the ideology of the new government of Engelbert Dollfuß. These celebrations were ideal to explain the Austrian Mission, which meant that the former multi-ethnic Austria was regarded as an archetype of the western civilisation. During a grand consecration play, *St. Michael führe uns an*, written by Rudolf Henz, Dollfuß announced the establishment of a Christian corporative state with an authoritarian leadership.¹¹

Today the websites of right-wing extremists in Austria use the Siege of 1683 to agitate against the alleged new conquerors of their country, the Turks and other immigrants. ¹² As it was mentioned, the celebrations in 1883 in Vienna were dominated by the dispute between the liberal Government in Vienna and the conservative one in Austria. An expression of that conflict was the disagreement related to a shared monument. ¹³ There were two monuments because of constant disagreements: the so-called Türkenbefreiungsdenkmal ¹⁴ was erected in St. Stephens cathedral in Vienna in 1894 in form of a baroque altar, and the monument of Vienna's mayor Andreas Liebenberg. The first was supposed to illustrate the idea of a multinational monarchy. But the arrangement of the figures clearly shows the hierarchy and the preferences: Pope Innocent XI and Emperor Leopold I act as intercessors to Mary. In the first model, the emperor even took the place of Mary. Prince Starhemberg, the person in the altarpiece, represents St. George – instead of a dragon, there is a killed Turk beneath him. Mayor Liebenberg is shown as a pitifully sick person. The Polish King Jan Sobieski, Supreme

Commander of the Replacement Army, is equal in position to Karl von Lothringen, Johann Georg III von Sachsen, and Max Emanuel von Bayern, military leaders under his command.¹⁵

This kind of interpretation of Sobieski's role – as it can be also seen on the memorial tablet, erected on the Kahlenberg in 1883 – was powerfully contested by the Poles. This might have been the reason why the celebrations of Sobieski in Krakow were especially impressive. If Die Presse stressed that the celebrations of the Turkish Siege in 1883 were 'a Viennese, a Viennese, an Austrian and a German festivity'. Liberation had been achieved thanks to 'the mighty support given then by the German princes and German tribes', and therefore one had to demonstrate 'German sense and German spirit'. The citizens of Vienna were the heroes, not the foreign help: 'without those citizens even Starhemberg's heroic courage, the support of the Polish King and the genius of Lothringen would not not have prevented the fall of Vienna and the victory of the orient against the occident'.

In reaction to the Türkenbefreiungsdenkmal, the monument for mayor Andreas Liebenberg as the hero of the liberal citizens was planned by the representatives of Vienna.²⁰ The monument, an obelisk of nine metres length, was erected on the Mölkerbastei, one of the theatres of war in 1683. This time Liebenberg is not a poor and a sick person as shown on the Türkenbefreiungsdenkmal in St. Stephens. The golden portrait of Liebenberg is attached to an obelisk. On top of the monument the goddess Victoria is presented, on its base lies a lion, holding the shield of a beaten Turk. The Liebenberg monument was presented on 12 September 1890, seven years after the centenary, with the Emperor and the archdukes absent – they were at a manoeuvre at that time – but in the presence of the celebrities of the city council.²¹

Musical monuments aimed at symbols of different groups. Joseph Bayer's march Zur Erinnerung an das 200jährige Jubiläum der Befreiung Wien's aus der Belagerung durch die Türken was dedicated to the liberal Viennese mayor Eduard Uhl. The composition is divided

into two parts, depicting two sides of the battle: a Turkish one (with the well-known means of musical exoticism) and an Austrian (march). The title page of the piano score shows the symbols of urban celebration: Andreas Liebenberg, dressed like a participant of a historic procession of Hans Makart, looks at the newly built town-hall. The inauguration of this building was the central event of the city celebrations.²²



In defaming or neglecting the bourgeois heroes, conservative Catholic circles aimed at the Liberal Party and provoked an éclat in the year before the commemoration.

The focal point of this conflict was an essay by the anti-liberal journalist and historian from East Friesland, Onno Klopp alias J. Vota, a convert to Catholicism. He characterised the Viennese bourgeoise in his book *Das Jahr 1683 und der folgende Türkenkrieg bis zum Frieden von Carlowitz 1699* as cowards.²³ The liberal representatives of the city were deeply offended and the liberal press responded in an indignant way.²⁴ Klopp's view was often presented at that time, for example in the drama *Die Türken vor Wien* written in 1883 by Richard Kralik, who celebrated the idea of the 'Austrian Mission' in numerous articles, dramas, and plays with music. In this play the German princes are the heroes, and the citizens

try to flee the city in the face of danger. Only Liebenberg manages to prevent that. The emperor's duty was not to fight, but to intervene for his peoples, praying to Holy Mary:

'Nearly the whole German Empire is present. Even the King of Poland joined to the better part. Only the emperor stayed away in wonderful modesty, not so that his shining name could take away the fame from each of the heroes.'25

The year 1883 was very important for Richard Kralik, as he recalled in his memories. He decided to dedicate his future life to the Austrian Mission. He wanted his poetry to be a means for educating the people. *Die Türken vor Wien*, a wild mixture of German and Austrian myths, was intended to demonstrate that the Habsburg Monarchy should be the model for the ideal state of the future. But his drama was not performed during the festivities of the anniversary – on purpose, as Kralik said:

'The drama was intended for the centenary, commemorating the liberation from the Turks. I was just plight finishing it and did not attempt to find a theatre for it. There was no interest to turn the day of commemoration into a festivity because of political reasons.'²⁷

His statement was obviously directed against the liberal mayor and the city councilmen, who did not want a great historical procession like the one on occasion of the Silver wedding of Franz Joseph and Elisabeth four years before. A festivity for the common people in the Prater had to be enforced by the citizens.

The liberal Viennese Government was not interested in supporting public demonstrations for popular political movements, as their arguments for the refusal shows:

'The city of Vienna wants to commemorate the liberation of Vienna from the Turks in a worthy and effective way. The representatives of the city refused to be forced to organise noisy and clamorous feasts, that only serve to tendentious demonstrations, which in no way correspond to the atmosphere and political disposition of the city and to the character of the German folk.'28

Maybe Kralik's heroic renouncement of the performance of his play made one forget that there actually was no need for it. The council declined the proposals to organise a competition for a new play on the subject of 1683.²⁹ Even the director of the Hofburgtheater, Adolf von Wilbrandt, did not present a new piece. He thought that the old drama *1683* by Hippolyt Schaufert – a flop in 1869 – would be accepted by the Viennese audience on the celebration days because of its patriotic character. But in his memoirs he admits a setback:

'On September 12, the day of liberation, we had it performed for the first time, but already three days later it was the last time: the criticism of the play was stronger than patriotism, although I believed in its power. *1683* reclined to the archive.'30

Schauffert's drama, as well as most of the other plays that dealt with the events from 1683, failed.³¹

The majority of the performances held in Vienna did not deal with the commemoration of the Turkish Siege directly. There were two ballets in the k. k. Hof-Operntheater (Court Opera): Aus der Heimat. Bilder aus dem Volksleben der österr.ung. Monarchie (mit theilweiser Benützung von Volksmelodien) and Der Stock im Eisen – both by Franz Doppler, the conductor in that opera house, died in June 1883. Although these two works do not contain any reference to the Battle of 1683, they are still connected to the centenary, to the both celebrating camps respectively: Aus der Heimat is an appreciation of the Monarchy, and Stock im Eisen of the City.

Aus der Heimat was originally written for the silver wedding of the imperial couple in 1879 in order to promote the 'Vielvölkermonarchie'. In that homage to the emperor one can see the different nations of the monarchy in four pictures, represented by folk dances. Finally the allegories of Vindobona and Danubia with her tributary streams appear. The second ballet

shows an optimistic version of the Viennese legend of 'Stock im Eisen'. The characters in the play – with the exception of the allegories – are bourgeois citizens of Vienna.³²

In addition to the Burgtheater, the Theater in der Josephstadt performed a play which also presented the memory of the battle of 1683. Reviews in the newspapers show that this was a far more entertaining production than Schaufert's drama. The author Karl Costa (Kostia) was the director of the theatre, then famous for the popular folk play. The leaders of the private theatres in the suburb had to consider economic success. Famous actors, entertainment, extraordinary sensations – in the best case the combination of all elements – seemed to be the basis for profit, and exotic subjects belonged to those sensations. Marion Linhardt analysed the programm of the Theater in der Josephstadt and concluded that its popular repertoire of that time had a preference for comic and exotic elements. The comedy *Abrakadabra oder Über Land und Meer* (Abracadabra, or By land and sea') by Karl Costa for instance was written for the popular magician Charles Arbre (the pseudonym of Carl Baum from Olmütz). It was performed for several months.

The story of the Turkish Siege of Vienna was in accordance with Costa's programme. For the celebrations in 1883 he wrote the patriotic folk play *Die Türken vor Wien*, with the music by Paul Mestrozi. The play was given sixty-six times en suite. A poster of the play stressed its patriotic character: Vindobona is placed in the centre and surrounded by the heroes of 1683. Although Emperor Leopold I does not appear as a character in the comedy, he is depicted above the heroes. Behind the heroes there is a collage of the scenery of the play situated in Old Vienna with the Turkish camp. The same idea was recommended in the playbook for the first scenery:

'Music, curtain in between: Hall of fame – Old Vienna appears in the background of the columned hall; in the upper curvature of the columned hall all the heads of the

historical heroes from 1683 in a relief of stone, on the left the statue of Kollonitsch, on the right the statue of Starhemberg, in the middle Vindobona.³⁸



As a matter of fact, the poster shows the stage directions: A comedy is embedded within a patriotic prologue and the last scene. All the citizens and soldiers are walking in a procession. In the end they are singing the 'Te Deum', Vindobona appears and speaks the epilogue to the audience of 1883:

'What they sowed, brought fruits to posterity,

the brittle stonework broke in ruins!

And from the debris rises to the light

An ocean of houses now proud in its magnificence.'

At that moment the orchestra plays 'O Du mein Österreich' in tempo Adagio. On the commemoration day on September 12' the song was performed at the end of the performance, when actors and audience were singing the 'Kaiserhymne' (Emperor's Hymn).

The title page of the piano score illustrates another image. It is a counterpart of Viennese and exotic subjects, as one can hear in the music. The piece starts with a march 'a la turca' which turns into a Viennese waltz – there is nothing heroic or patriotic left. Being experts in popular music entertainment, Karl Costa and Paul Mestrozi were aware what the

audience of the Josephstädter Theater wanted to see and hear. Patriotic moments and exotic parts were united in a burlesque comedy with corresponding musical-numbers, which was typical for the repertoire of the Theater in der Josefstadt at that time, mixed with all the clichés of a cosy Vienna. The password 'St. Stephan and Vienna' used by the Viennese women in the play could be understood as a motto:³⁹ even in hard times the citizens of Vienna are drinking and singing.

Vindobona, disguised as soldier Hermann, brings out a toast and stresses the cliché of cosy Vienna:

'Ah, wine! ... It strengthens the humour and banishes our worries and sorrows. Our Humor will stay as long as the blue heaven arches over Vienna, as long as our beautiful Danube flows down then – as long as the vine gleames on the hillside – therefore a high to the humour.'40

The well-known heroes from the historical works are presented as characters in the play. All of them have common people as counterparts: The main male hero is Kolschitzky (after the historical figure Georg Franz Kolschitzky), who worked for the Polish King Jan Sobieski as an interpreter and spy in the Turkish camp. It is said that the information he provided was crucial for the victory, and there was a legend that he was the first, who got the privilege to have a coffee house. At the end of the play he offers his love to the Viennese girl Lori, to be the 'erste Kaffeeschänkerin'. Hes is also known by his nickname – Bruderherz, as he was called in some earlier plays. The comic character is the Bohemian tailor Wenzel Praczek: like the latter figure of the Bohemian brave soldier Schwejk in the novel by Jaroslav Hašek, he is the one, who overcomes dangerous situations with naivety and humour. The negative characters are not the Turks, as suggested in the prologue. Like in *Bruder-Herz* by Georg Köberle, performed at the Carltheater in 1861, as well as in similar plays later on, the real enemies are the French agents. In Karl Costa's play *Türken vor Wien* the French

chevalier, disguised as Spanish Marquis Valedo, and the fugitive Italian galley slave Lamberti, act as agents for the French King. Vindobona herself kills her archenemy, the Marquis Valedo.

Costa and Mestrozi used all the clichés which are connected to exoticism: a Turkish march shows well-known musical motives 'a la turca'. The satirical couplet 'Der Beglerbeg Bimbambo', sang by the Austrian soldiers under the leadership of Vindobona used those clichés in the text. In the fourth scene one can see the Turkish camp with the tent of Kara Mustapha. There resounds from the background the sentimental morning prayer of a muezzin, accompanied by a choir of Turkish soldiers. As in other works for the stage dealing with that matter there were odalisques of Kara Mustapha's harem present in Karl Costa's drama. First they are greeting the morning with the four-part romantic song 'O Paradiso, so lieblich sūß' in their bedroom, following the stereotype of an erotic Orient. But soon after that they are acting like the rebellious Viennese women in the play because of the disregard of Kara Mustapha. They want love and wish to return to the Orient. And there is the magical Suleika, who causes the battle, because lovesick Kara Mustapha wants to give her Vienna as a gift.

Karl Costa included even a gipsy girl in the play. Her song 'Leichthin ziehet – wie der Wind, Lustig das Zigeunerkind' in the manner of gipsy music in operettas of that time must have been a highlight of the show. It was written for Karl Costa's wife, thirty years younger than him, the actress Rosa Goldstern. He made her the star of the evening and gave her all the important female roles of the play: Vindobona, Gertrud – a poor woman from attacked Perchtoldsdorf, Suleika, and the gipsy girl Rocsi. On the one hand, the simplicity of the singing parts leads to the assumption that Rosa Goldstern might not have been a great singer. On the other hand, Suleika's and especially Rocsi's exotic parts allowed her to have an interesting performance. Consequently, among the theatre plays inspired by the events from 1683, only those that turned into a sentimental remembrance and used exotic entertainment,

were successful. All of the plays have one thing in common, might they be serious or just entertaining: The actual historical events were used only as a means to present contemporary political ideas or a to provide a simple show. This is especially well demonstrated by a couplet from 1903, which was sung by the folk-singer Max Jauner, accompanied by the band The Grinzingers, in a popular place for entertainment in the Viennese Prater, *Venedig in Wien* ('Venice in Vienna'). The song was written by the Viennese composer Carl Lorens, and it refers to the popular spectacle *Die Türken vor Wien*⁴⁶ (words by Friedrich von Radler, music by Ernst Reiterer), which was about the second Turkish siege of Vienna in 1683. That play was performed at the opening of the Olympia-Arena in Venedig in Wien on the occasion of the the 220th anniversary of the historical event. That gigantic hall was famous for being 'the largest theatre of Europe'. It was built for 3475 spectators and had a stage broader than thirty metres. About a thousand performers, the real elephants and camels took part in the spectacle, which was so successful that it was repeated eighty times.⁴⁷ The event is recollected in the song by Franz von Jauner:

'There is a spectacle in Venedig in Wien,

it is called The Turks attacking Vienna,

it happened four or five hundred years ago

when Vienna still suffered from the Turks...'48

The time frame of 'four or five hundred years' indicates that the historical event of 1683 was not really relevant.

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⁴ Cf. the project 'Türkengedächtnis' of the Institut für Kulturwissenschaften und Theatergeschichte, Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften, Vienna www.tuerkengedaechtnis.oeaw.ac.at. > (accessed 9 April 2013); Sandra Bittmann. 'Der mediale Diskurs um die zweite Türkenbelagerung Wiens zwischen 1683 und heute'. MA diss., University of Vienna, 2008; Sandra Bittmann, '1683 – und was uns davon bleib: Die zweite Türkenbelagerung als medialer Referenzrahmen'. *SWS-Rundschau* 51/2 (2011), 145–64.

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