

The Turkish Defeat at Vienna (September 12, 1683)

Abstract

Taken from a pamphlet “Printed for Samuel Crouch at the Corner of Popes-Head Alley next Cornhill, 1683,” this English eyewitness account offers a vivid picture of Christian-Turkish warfare in seventeenth-century Central Europe. As the text makes clear, Polish king Jan Sobieski won great renown for breaking the Turkish siege that had pinned down Habsburg forces within Vienna (though Austrian resistance before the Poles’ arrival had sapped Turkish strength). In this report, the interplay of aristocratic-dynastic with religious and ethnic-cultural discourse reflects the manner in which Christian Europeans viewed such warfare.

Source

A True and Exact Relation of the Raising of the Siege of Vienna and the Victory obtained over the Ottoman Army, the 12th of September 1683

After a Siege of Sixty days, accompanied with a Thousand Difficulties, Sicknesses, Want of Provisions, and great Effusion of Blood, after a Million of Cannon and Musquet Shot, Bombs, Granadoes, and all sorts of Fire Works, which has changed the Face of the fairest and most flourishing City in the World, disfigured and ruined most part of the best Palaces of the same, and chiefly those of the Emperor; and damaged in many places the Beautiful Tower and Church of *St. Stephen*, with many Sumptuous Buildings. After a Resistance so vigorous, and the Loss of so many brave Officers and Souldiers, whose Valour and Bravery deserve Immortal Glory. After so many Toils endured, so many Watchings and so many Orders so prudently distributed by Count *Staremburgh*, and so punctually executed by the other Officers.

After so many new Retrenchments, Pallizadoes, Parapets, new Ditches in the Ravelins, Bastions, Courtins, and principal Streets and Houses in the Town: Finally, after a Vigorous Defence and a Resistance without parallel, Heaven favourably heard the Prayers and Tears of a Cast-down and Mournful People, and retorted the Terror on a powerful Enemy, and drove him from the Walls of *Vienna*, who since the Fifteenth of *July* last early in the Morning, to the Twelfth of *September*, had so Vigorously attacked it with Two hundred thousand Men; and by endless Workings, Trenchings, and Minings, reduced it almost to its last gasp.

Count *Staremburgh*, who sustained this great Burden, assisted by so many Gallant Officers, having given Notice to the Christian Army, by Discharge of Musquets from the Tower of *St. Stephen*, of the Extremity whereto the City was reduced, they discovered on the Twelfth of this Month, early in the Morning, the Christian Troops marching down the Neighbouring Mountains of *Kaltemberg*, and heard continually the Discharges of their Artillery against the *Turks*, who being advanced thither, were fortified with Parapets of Earth and great Stones, to hinder the Descent of the Christian Army from the Mountains, who notwithstanding did advance. The Vanguard of the Horse and Foot, seconded by the Polish Horse, had a long Skirmish with the *Turks*, disputing every Foot of Ground; but seeing themselves totally vanquished by the Christian Forces, who had surmounted all the Difficulties of the Mountains, and drawn down their Cannon in spite of them, they retired Fighting, leaving to the Christians all their Camps full of Pavillions, Tents, Barracks, and Eight Pieces of Cannon (with which they had raised a Battery on that side Four days before) and retreated towards their Principal Camp, between the Villages of *Hernalls*, *Haderkling* and *Jezing*; but as they passed by the Bastion of *Melck* they fired their Cannon furiously on them: The Christians being ravish’d with the Victory, pursued them with so much heat, that they were not only forced to leave their great Camps, but likewise all their others; flying towards *Hungary*: And it is certain,

had not the Night come on, they had totally defeated and routed the *Ottoman Army*.

During these hot Skirmishes on the Mountains, the Christians lost near 100 Men, among whom the Serjeant Major of the Regiment of *Schultz*, Prince *Maurice of Croy*, Captain of the Regiment of *Grana*, the Prince his Brother, Mareshal Lieutenant of the Field, was wounded there in his Shoulder: They fired then continually against the Approaches and Batteries of the *Turks*, with the Artillery from our Bastions and Ramparts; the Besiegers, animated by the presence of the *Grand Visier*, answered vigorously from theirs, and great Volleys of Musquets were discharged from both sides, intermingled with great quantities of *Granado's*. The *Grand Visier*, who was in the Approaches, gave them hopes of carrying the place; Prince *Lewis of Baden* and Collonel *Heusler* entred their Trenches, at the same time Count *Staremburgh* sallied and seconded them, and repulsed the Janizaries, who saved themselves, with the *Grand Visier*, whose Son was either killed or taken Prisoner, and himself wounded, as 'tis said. Of late the Enemy had not shot so many Bombs nor Stones, nor Fire-works, as they did that Sunday Morning when our Men descended from the Hills towards the *Scotch* and *Melk* Bastions, upon which there stood a great many People to see from a-far our Descent and the Combat; but they observed the Enemy did but little Hurt. Towards the Evening the *Turks* seeing the Christians Masters of their Camp over against the *Scotch* Bastion, and that our Cavalry had entred it, planted Two Pieces of Cannon and shot against them, a while after, seeing themselves surprized, they quitted their Approaches and all their Artillery, consisting of Seventy five Pieces of Cannon, Fourteen Cannons for Battery, and some Mortar Pieces being comprized therein. At the same time there happened a Skirmish in the Camp with the Janizaries, who were come out of the Trenches, but they made no great resistance, and like Cowards ran away.

In the Night the Christians made themselves Masters of all the *Turks* Camp. Afterwards Four Companies of our Foot entred into the Enemies Approaches with Torches and lighted Straw, but found nothing but Dead Bodies; they took possession of the Enemies Artillery, some whereof were brought into the City. All the night long we saw Fires at a distance, the *Turk* having fired as many of their Camps as so sudden a flight would give them leave, and retreated from the *Island* by favour of a Bridge which they had made below the River, upon one of the Arms of the *Danube*, the Christians having seized the Bridge above, on the same River.

On Monday Morning we saw all the Camps and Fields covered with Souldiers as well *Poles* as *Germans*. The *City* was relieved on *Sunday* about Five of the Clock in the Afternoon, and every bodies curiosity carried them to see the Camp, after they had been shut up above two Months.

The King of *Poland* having in the mean time with the greatest Vigor repulsed the Enemy on his side and put them to flight, leaving the Plunder of their Camp behind them, which consisted of a very Rich Tent of the *Grand Visier*, his Colours, Two Poles with the Horse Tails, their usual Signal of War, and his Guidon or Standard, set with Diamonds, his Treasure designed for the Payment of the Army, and in short, all his Equipage was possess'd by the *Polanders*. As for the rest of the Tents, Baggage, Artillery, Ammunition, and Provisions enough to load Eight thousand Waggon, was divided among our Army.

Night coming on, we could no longer pursue, having followed the Enemy about a Mile from their Camp, and our Army having been all that time without Eating and Drinking, we were forced to found a Retreat to refresh them. We had all that Night to rest in, and the Enemy to save themselves. The next day being the Thirteenth we continued not the pursuit for the same reason, which without doubt we might have done with great advantage, since they fled in much disorder toward *St. Godart* to get over the River *Raab*. We are building a Bridge at *Alltemburgh* in *Hungary*, and our Armies will march very suddenly. On Sunday Night, after the Battle, his Imperial Majesty came to *Cloister Nuburgh*, Four hours from *Vienna*, from whence he sent the next day to compliment the King of *Poland* and the Electors upon their good success the day before.

On the Fourteenth, Count *Staremburgh* came to his Imperial Majesty (who received him with all manner

of demonstrations of Affection and Esteem) and gave him a Relation of several considerable passages during the Siege: A short time after the Emperour embarked on the *Danube*, and landed above the Bridge before the Town, and entered the City at the *Stuben Gate*, at Landing he was received by the Electors of *Bavaria* and *Saxony*, who were attended by their Guards and a great many Noble Men. It being impossible to remove in so short a time such a number of Dead Bodies, both *Turks*, *Christians*, and *Horses*, whereof the stench was so great on the Road, that it was enough to have caused an Infection.

We saw the Mines of the *Turks* which had made so great Breaches, one in the Bastion of *Leb* and the other in that of the *Palace*, each about Six Fathoms long from bottom to top: There were also Five Mines under the Courtin, which would have been ready to spring in two days, when they designed a general Assault; which would have been dangerous, as well for the greatness of the Breach, as the diminution of the Strength of the Besieged: As His Majesty passed over the Bridge erected on purpose at the Bastion of *Stuben-Tower*, he was harangued in Latin by the Magistrate, and thence he went to the Cathedral of *St. Stephens*. Three Royal Vollies were made by all the Artillery, the first at his Majesties arrival near the Town, the second at his landing, the third during the *Te Deum*; which being ended, he returned to his Palace, and gave Audience to several Publick Ministers, and after dined with the two Electors.

Towards Night arrived the D[uke] of *Lorraine*, who was received with great Joy and Satisfaction (having behaved himself to Admiration) for his Care, Valour and Conduct, during the whole Action. On the fifteenth the Emperour, Electors, and D. of *Lorraine*, went to Visit the King of *Poland* and take a View of his Army, which was Encamped upon the High-way as far as *Ebersdorf*. The Elector of *Bavaria* was at the Head of his Troops with his Sword drawn, with which he made a most profound Reverence to His Imperial Majesty; who came and embrac'd him, saying a Thousand obliging Things of him, desiring him to put up his Sword; Whereupon his Electoral Highness told him that it was the same Sword which had been given him by His Imperial Majesty at *Alten Oettinghen* Two years since, and which having promised to wear for his Service, he was now come to perform his Duty: but since his Majesty commanded him to put it up, he obeyed. And then he asked his Majesty whether he should March or Retreat with his Troops: He likewise asked the same of his Highness of *Lorraine*, who stood by the Emperours side, and then follow'd the Emperour to *Ebersdorf*, and from thence to *Schwechet*, where was the Head Quarters. As soon as the King saw the Emperour coming, he advanced towards him, accompanied with the Prince his Son, the great Mareschal *Jablonowsky*, Palatin of *Russia*, with several other Persons of Quality, very bravely attended; and as we marched likewise in a great Body, we made a Demi-circle on both sides, and drew so near to one another that we made a perfect Circle, that no body could enter.

Their Majesties being on Horse-back, complimented each other upon the Victory, which the one attributed to the other; the King of *Poland* had the greatest share of the glory of this day which he best deserved: for he may be truly stiled one of the Greatest Kings of Christendom, and the most Valiant. After half an hours Conversation, the Emperour was desired by the King of *Poland* to see his Army, which he accepted of, and was conducted by his Great Mareshal. In effect never any thing could be seen more Great and Heroick than the Four thousand Hussars, who were all well-armed with Coats of Male, and all the rest of the Army very bravely accoutred.

Having viewed the whole Polish Army, the Great Mareshal commanded the said Hussars to make the Course which they are used to make when they go to invest the Enemy, wherewith His Imperial Majesty was highly pleased.

Afterwards His Imperial Majesty returned to Court, where we learn every hour so many particulars of this happy Success, that the Victory and the Loss which the Enemy has suffered, is greater than can be imagined.

We have taken all the Tents of the Enemy, about One hundred and twenty Great Guns, all their Baggage, and a very great Quantity of Ammunition.

It is confirmed likewise, That the King of *Poland*, has (besides the Tent of the *Grand Visier*) his Horses with their rich Harness. It is also said, That besides all the Treasure in Silver, which was designed for the payment of the *Ottoman Army*, there were two Cabinets with Jewels; so that the Booty was so great, that it is not well to be express'd.

Last Night Forty Janizaries having saved themselves upon the Battlements which are call'd Pavillions, with a great number of Christian Children of both Sexes, whom they had made Slaves, and the Poles having summoned them to surrender, they begg'd that they might be received into the Janizary Guards of the King of *Poland*, and unless that might be granted, they would kill the Children and defend themselves to the man: Whereupon the King of *Poland* granted their request.

Yesterday the King of *Poland* began to march in pursuit of the *Turks*, and was to be this Night at *Wischa*. Our Army is to follow too Morrow. One Part is already past the *Danube* in quest of the Rebels.

His Imperial Majesty makes account too morrow to return to *Lintz*.

September 19th

The Emperour is gone this day to *Lintz*: We are now beginning to cleanse the City of its Rubbish, and carry off the Dead Carcasses of Man and Beast. The *Turks* had a *French Engineer* in their Camp, who hath done very much hurt to this City, and ruin'd us 50 Pieces of Cannon: There was also a great many *French* among the *Janizaries*, and many were found among the Dead with *French Silver* and Gold in their Pockets. There are daily brought in a great number of *Turks* Prisoners since the flight of the *Grand Visier*. It is intended to set the *Turks* that are already, and shall be hereafter taken, at Work on the reparation of our *Bastions* and *Courtins*. The *Sieur Kaunitz*, the Emperours Resident at the Port, who was found in the *Grand Visier* Tent, is now in this *City*.

This moment comes the News that *Friday* last the *17th*, a part of the *Turks Army* fled away in such haste, within sight of *Raab*, as if ours were at their backs; the Officer who brought it, added that in his way from *Raab* he met with but two *Turks*, whom he brought Prisoners to *Bruckham* of *Ceytha*, where he sold them for four Pecks of Oats. All the Enemies or Rebels who had got into the Isle of *Schut*, are retired thence. There are gone down from hence some Boats full of Infantry towards *Hungary*. We are in hopes to hear shortly of some great Enterprize on the *Turks*. Here are daily brought in abundance of young Children whom the *Turks* had taken Captive; they ravish'd the young Maids and Women, and cut off the Heads of the old Men and Women.

Here is News from *Gratz*, That Count *Budiani* (who hath desired Count *Strasoldo* to intercede for him to the Emperour) had commanded 8000 *Hussars* of his Troops, under the Command of his Son and the Count *Nadasti*, to fall on 2000 *Turks* encamped near *Canisa*, and that they have put them all to the Sword. *Baron Buroni* is dead, and his Son revolted from the Rebels, and begs the Emperours Pardon. The *Turks* who are Prisoners, unanimously affirm, That the *Grand Visier* hath caused *Ibrahim Bassa Visier* of *Buda* to be strangled for first giving Ground at the Battle before *Vienna*. Part of the *Ottoman Army* is arrived near *Greekish Weissenburg*.

Since this Signal Victory obtained by the Christian Army (who some days had refreshed themselves) we are certainly informed they passed *Presbourgh* the 23th of *September*, in pursuit of the scattered Forces of the *Ottoman Army*, who fled to *Stollweissebourgh*; so that a few days will bring us an Accompt of what has passed between them. This Victory hath already given this advantage to our Affairs, that the Count of *Trausmondorse* [Trautmannsdorf] had taken and confiscated the Castles and Revenues of those who had done Homage to the *Turk*; and it was resolved to do the like in *Hungary*.

Finis

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