

From the Thirty Years' War to Prince Eugene of Savoy Historical Background

The European history of the 17th century was characterized by two main conflicts, namely by the clashes between Protestants and Catholics, which affected almost all European countries during the Thirty Years' War (1618 - 1648), on the one hand and by the continuing struggle against the Ottomans, who tried to extend their territory from the Balkans towards the west during the second half of the century, on the other.

In the west of the continent, France, ruled by King Louis XIII and King Louis XIV, tried to gain supremacy in Europe and to reduce the power of the Habsburgs in Spain as well as in Germany. As a consequence - apart from the wars between France and Spain - France started to conquer territories along the Rhine and formed an alliance with the Ottomans. England and the Netherlands, the new economic powers, also took part in these events. During the fight for freedom of the Dutch against the Spanish a new art of fencing had developed as a consequence of a military reform of the Orange, which, mainly based on expert training, permitted troops greater manoeuvrability and stability.

Until the beginning of the 17th century the imperial armies varied in equipment and were only hired for the duration of a campaign. Now they formed a permanently paid standing army. Due to the lack of money of the Emperor the army was partly financed by so-called war-contractors like generalissimo Albrecht Duke of Mecklenburg, better known as Wallenstein. The peace treaties of Osnabrück and Münster ended the Thirty Years' War in 1648.

Compared to other Central European armies the Ottoman army was organized completely different and equipped with strange weapons like bows and arrows; it had been pushing forward to the west since the 60ies of the 17th century and was defeated on August 1, 1664 at Mogersdorf near St. Gotthard, situated on the river Raab.

But it was not until 20 years later that the advancement of the Ottomans entered a crucial phase, as the Turkish army, lead by Grand Vizier Kara Mustapha, marched up in front of the gates of Vienna in July of 1683. The threat of the imperial capital and royal residence threatened the whole of Central Europe. And it was not until September 12, 1683 that Vienna was relieved by a united army of imperial and Polish troops. This was the turning point as well as the beginning of the repulsion of the Turkish army. As a result of the decisive battle at Zenta, situated on the river Theiß, (1697) and the peace treaty of Karlowitz in 1699 a large part of Hungary and all of Transylvania could be regained.

These successes were mainly due to the military genius and diplomatic skills of Prince Eugene of Savoy (1663 - 1736), who therewith laid the foundation of Austria's big-power status during the first third of the 18th century.

The most important items of the exhibition

Following a historical sequence, **section 1** shows weaponry and equipment of the imperial army from the time before the outbreak of the Thirty Years' War. In both the right and left-hand corners to the entrance there are two portraits, one of field marshal Gallas and one of an unknown general, where the visitor can see how officers of the nobility were attired at that time. Five small oil paintings by Hans von Aachen, in the right desk-like display case, show the wars fought by Emperor Rudolph I (who died in 1612) against the Turkish army.

How muskets and pikes (axes) were used at the beginning of the 17th century can be studied in the adjacent **section 2** at the copperplate engraving series by Jacob de Heyn. Such weapons are also presented on open display and in showcases. Two other large figurine-display cases show how the imperial infantry (left) and cavalry (right) were equipped.

Section 3 is dominated by the figure of generalissimo Wallenstein (bronze sculpture by A. Brenek, 1876, in the center of the room). In the showcase on your left, beneath the window, you can see an autograph order written by Wallenstein and addressed to field marshal Pappenheim, who died during the battle of Lützen in 1632.

Section 4 begins with a series of 12 large battle paintings, ordered by imperial field marshal Octavio Prince Piccolomini and created by the Dutch painter Peeter Snayers. They illustrate the main battles of the Thirty Years' War and offer, in addition to military details, also significant cultural details. Right in the center of the wall, a painting by P. Meulener shows the mortal wounding of the Swedish King Gustavus Adolphus at Lützen in 1632. Rotating stands display engravings of the most important events and portraits of the sovereigns and field commanders involved in the war.

In **sections 5 to 7** the visitor will find weaponry, flags, garments and paintings of the Turkish Wars. In the central showcase of **section 5** Ottoman weaponry, headgear and insignia („horse tails“) are on display. At the back of it a monumental painting, by an unknown master, shows the liberation of Vienna with the lifting of the Turkish siege (September 12, 1683).

Moving into **section 6**, you will see the „Kamisol“ (jacket) of a soldier from about 1690, one of the oldest examples of standardized uniforms, in a showcase near the wall on the left side. A segment of a Turkish tent forms the background for Turkish firearms, displayed in the big wall-showcase on your left, while in the front of it you will discover the Seal of Sultan Mustapha II, one of the most significant trophies of the decisive battle at Zenta (1697).

The recapturing of the cities of Ofen (1686) and Belgrade (1688), occupied by the Osmons, as well as the battles at Mohács (1687) and Slankamen (1691) can be seen in the rotating stands on your right and on medals which are on display at the showcases beneath the window.

Section 7 starts with two showcases where flags are on display (on the right side the red standard of the 13th Dragoon Regiment of Prince Eugene of Savoy). This hall is dedicated to the memory of Prince Eugene, and you will also see the portrait of the aged Prince Eugene by Jan Kupezky.

The pall and decorations of mourning, used in the solemn requiem mass for Prince Eugene († April 21, 1736), as well as a breastplate worn by the Prince and a marshal's

baton can be seen in the big showcase on your right. Next to it an oil painting shows Prince Eugene with mementoes awarded to him by Pope Clemens XI in 1716 (consecrated sword and hat). Garments worn by Prince Eugene are on display in the central showcase.

On the wall near the window portraits of Emperor Leopold I (1658-1705) and Emperor Charles VI (1711-1740) are shown; and between the two portraits medals and a marshal's baton represent Emperor Joseph I, whose short-term reign lasted only from 1705 until 1711.