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Baroque “Spin-Doctoring”: The Manipulative Use of Caprara’s Reports from Constantinople in 1682

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Abstract: *Before the Second Siege of Vienna in 1683, there was a famous tug-of-war between “Easterners” and “Westerners” at Leopold I’s court. At that time, the Habsburg monarchy did not yet boast a “Foreign Office”. The institution in charge of relations with the Ottoman Empire was the Aulic War Council. Its president, Margrave Hermann von Baden, was the leading “Westerner”, and clearly thought that Louis XIV posed a greater menace to the monarchy than the Ottomans did. That is why, when the ambassador extraordinary to Constantinople, Conte Alberto Caprara, started sending alarmist reports in the summer of 1682, Baden manipulated them in a rather breathtaking fashion, almost turning their meaning on its head. The episode poses a fascinating question about the nature of “absolutism”: Was Baden’s “spin doctoring” designed to delude the Emperor himself – or was it part of a complex game enacted with Leopold’s approval?*

Keywords: 1683, “Easterners” and “Westerners”, Aulic War Council, Hermann von Baden, Alberto Caprara, absolutism

Cultural factors may have made life more difficult for diplomats in the 17th century than in the comfortably cosmopolitan aristocratic world of the 18th and 19th centuries. The Ottoman Empire held particular challenges in store. The French ambassador in Vienna could routinely conduct a poll of all the important statesmen in Vienna. He used – or at least believed he could use – the good offices of the Dowager Empress to advance his views.¹ The Sultan Valide was a powerful person in Constantinople, too. But no such informal gatherings in her salon would have been possible in the world of the harem. As Elisabeth Lobenwein has shown in her paper, the Imperial “Internuntius” found it far more difficult to gain access to privileged sources of information. Thus, to a large extent, he had to rely on the information supplied by middlemen such as the celebrated dragoman

1 Lucien BELY, *Les Secrets de Louis XIV. Mystères d’Etat et pouvoir absolu*, Paris 2013, p. 334.

Panajotti,² quite apart from the fact that decision making appeared to be far more centralised in the Ottoman Empire. The Grand Vizier might occasionally have to defend his views in the divan, with – as legend has it – the Sultan listening to the proceedings in secret. But he was not obliged to have minutes recorded or summaries written.

The religious factor made it almost mandatory for Christian emissaries to assume a posture of general hostility to the world of Islam. Propaganda was directed at – and produced by – a world of writers reared on the political correctness of the day, which put a premium on religious orthodoxy. All over the Catholic world diplomats were eager to defend their ruler's policy against any suspicion of backsliding possibly harboured by the Papacy, which remained a political factor that could not easily be dismissed with impunity. However, the real enemy often appeared to be less the Ottoman leaders than the other European envoys in Constantinople, from the French to the Transylvanians, and sometimes also potential allies such as the Venetians and Poles, who engaged in the diversionary game of deflecting Ottoman aggressive designs onto each other. The assumption was shared by most observers that one of the Köprülü's "arcana Imperii" was to rely on foreign wars to keep the Janissaries from playing politics in the capital. If that was so, the name of the game was not so much to stop them from starting wars as to re-direct their warlike instincts into less dangerous directions. Thus, in the late summer of 1682, when he had almost despaired of preventing a rupture with the Ottomans, the Imperial internuntius Alberto Caprara wistfully complained that if he had only been equipped with adequate instructions, he might have succeeded in making the thunderstorm erupt elsewhere ("*Wenn er einige proposition hätte tun können, vielleicht würde der platzregen auf andere fallen...*").³

The cultural approach helps to underline the difficulties faced by diplomats in a strange or alien environment. At the same time, placing too much emphasis on the cultural factors shaping foreign policy can be very misleading or prove to be a veritable "red herring", to use the British mystery writer Dorothy L. Sayers' term for clues deliberately planted to point in a wrong direction. Any comparison of the challenges faced by the Vienna Habsburgs inevitably comes to very clear-cut conclusions. France was a Catholic kingdom, ruled by a first or second cousin of the Habsburgs. (Indeed, those close ties and the claims derived from them were one of the perennial bones of contention.) If French did not yet count as a lingua franca at the Viennese court, Frenchmen of all stripes – from Walloons such as Buquoy to Burgundians such as L'Isola, Lorrainers, or even Huguenot exiles such as Souches – played an important part in the Habsburg administration. Yet, since the peace of Zsitvatorok in 1606, the Habsburg monarchy had clashed with the Turks for just one

2 See Zsuzsanna CZIRAKI, *Language Students and Interpreters at the Mid-Seventeenth Century Habsburg Embassy in Constantinople*, *Theatrum historiae* 19, 2016, pp. 27–44.

3 Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv (hereafter HHStA), Turcica 152, VII–VIII 1682, fol. 52 (15 July 1682).

year (in 1663–1664), as compared to the more than twenty years they had spent fighting the French (almost forty years in the case of their Spanish cousins).

In terms of trust, too, for all the dismissive comments on the famous “Völkertafel” that accused the Turks of perfidy and unreliability,⁴ the balance sheet once again seemed to point in favour of the infidels. True, the Hungarian borderlands, the “Wild East” of the Habsburg Empire, were a constant source of irritation, reminiscent of the piracy in the Caribbean that had for a long time been summed up by the slogan “*No peace beyond the line*”.⁵ Both sides seemed unable to control the raiders, with much of the blame apportioned to unruly Magyar magnates or unpaid garrisons who went on the rampage because of a lack of provisions.⁶ In the baroque era, though, neither side harboured any great illusions about “war crimes” being a privilege of “the other”. The excesses committed by their own soldiers were a familiar topic among exasperated statesmen, let alone among the estates of the provinces burdened by winter quarters. Ahmed Koprülü once summed up the dismissive attitude of the metropolis towards “the almost constant civil war” in Hungary: raids conducted by less than 5,000 men should not be regarded as breaches of the peace.⁷

Equally, the French corsairs who attacked Vera Cruz in 1683 were freelancers for whom the Sun King could not be blamed.⁸ French “re-unions” in Europe, however, were clearly a state-managed and state-directed affair, adding insult to injury by their fake-judicial façade. Hermann von Baden, as President of the Aulic War Council, was not being at all outrageous or iconoclastic, but well within the limits of conventional wisdom, when in one of his memoranda prepared for the crucial meetings in August 1682 he argued that it was France rather than the Ottomans that could never be trusted (quite apart from the

4 An almost verbatim version of that sort of mistrust can be found in an earlier report from the Imperial resident in Constantinople, Cesare Gallo, that “*this enemy respects oaths and treaties very little*” (“*iuramenta und capitulations wenig in acht nimbt*”); HHStA, Turcica 107, VI–X 1618, fol. 149 (20 September 1618).

5 See the classic Carl BRIDENBAUGH, *No Peace beyond the Line. The English in the Caribbean, 1624–1690*, New York 1972; Peter EARLE, *The Sack of Panama*, New York 2007, pp. 132–159.

6 I found some fascinating glimpses of a certain sort of anti-Hungarian camaraderie between Habsburg and Ottoman officials in a slightly earlier period. Lothar HÖBELT, *Friedliche Koexistenz – unfriedliche Grenze: Der Hintergrund der Schlacht von Vezekeny 1652*, Burgenländische Heimatblätter 73, 2012, pp. 1–34. Once again, in 1665, the Pasha of Buda repeated that sort of advice when Count Leslie was on his way to Constantinople: the Emperor should behead a number of Hungarian magnates and introduce absolutism into the kingdom.

7 Geza PALFFY, *Scorched Earth Tactics in Ottoman Hungary*, Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiae Hungaricae 61, 2008, pp. 181–200; Victor v. RENNER, *Wien im Jahre 1683*, Vienna 1883, p. 15.

8 Clara Elena SUAREZ ARGUELLO, *El puerto de Veracruz ante un asalto pirato, mayo de 1683*, in: Lourdes de Ita Rubio (ed.), *Organizacion del Espacio en el Mexico Colonial: Puertos, Ciudades y Caminos*, Morelia 2012, pp. 145–162; Rafal B. REICHERT, *Sobre las olas de un mar plateado. La politica defensiva espanola y el financiamiento militar novohispanico en la region de Gran Caribe, 1598–1700*, Merida 2013, p. 150.

practical argument that losses in the East could be recovered more easily than losses in the West⁹); “*da aufkeinerlei weis, art und manier man sich dermalen von seiten Frankreichs eines nützlichen, vil weniger sicheren fridens zu versehen hat*” (“right now one can in no way or manner expect a useful, even less a reliable peace on the part of France”).¹⁰

The words just quoted, of course, represent the views of the “Westerners”, one of the factions at the Court of Vienna. In the Vienna of the 1680s, the different shades of “Westerners” were dominant to a much larger degree, I would argue, than they have usually been given credit for.¹¹ There was no discernible set of “Easterners”, let alone a “French” party as opposed to the “Spanish one”. If anything, there were “appeasers”, i.e. statesmen who looked at the balance of forces and drew the conclusion that it was safer to avoid or at least postpone any conflict with France for the time being. Hermann von Baden, Montecuccoli’s successor as President of the Aulic War Council, was certainly “a Westerner’s Westerner”, a paid-up member of the Spanish party – almost literally so, as he had worked for the Spanish court in earlier phases of his career. In later years, the Aulic War Council was to acquire a reputation synonymous with indecision and drift. But nobody could accuse Baden of not getting his priorities right. In the spring of 1682, just as Caprara was working his way downriver towards Constantinople, he was busily plotting the first stages of a war against France with Count Georg Waldeck, William of Orange’s confidant who had organised a confederation of Franconian estates that served as a bridge between the Dutch and the Austrians.¹²

Ambassadors’ reports had to be evaluated back home. In France, policymaking was supposed to be the outcome of the rivalry between Colbert and Louvois, Finance and War, the two big departments, with the Foreign Secretaries – such as Lionne or Pomponne – walking a tight-rope between them.¹³ The baroque world of Vienna did not yet know a Ministry of Foreign Affairs or a State Department. The Austrian and Bohemian Court Chancelleries – which are perhaps comparable to English Secretaries of State – were

9 Onno KLOPP, *Das Jahr 1683 und der folgende große Türkenkrieg bis zum Frieden von Carlowitz*, Graz 1882, p. 144 quotes Count Quintin Jörger, who supposedly turned that argument on its head.

10 HHStA, Turcica 152, VII–VIII 1682, fol. 149 v. (11 August 1682).

11 Obviously, this is a topic that would require a far more extensive discussion. I have tried to do so in a forthcoming article: *1683 and all that: Easterners, Westerners – or a War on Two Fronts...*, English Historical Review, in print.

12 HHStA, Kriegsakten 159, fol. 100–139, P. L. MÜLLER (ed.), *Wilhelm von Oranien und Georg Friedrich von Waldeck. Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte des Kampfes um das europäische Gleichgewicht, Vol. 1: 1679–1684*, Den Haag 1873, pp. 81 ff., 144 ff.; Karl Otmar v. ARETIN, *Das Alte Reich*, Vol. 1, Stuttgart 1993, pp. 281, 287–290, 299 f.

13 Daniel DESSERT, *Colbert. Ou le mythe de l’absolutisme*, Paris 2019, emphasises the power of his networks; Camille ROUSSET, *Histoire de Louvois et son administration politique et militaire*, 4 Vols., Paris 1863–1891, is still a magnificent source of information.

primarily concerned with domestic affairs.¹⁴ The overall direction of policy was vested in a small number of ministers who formed part of the “Secret Conference” and who often held prestigious appointments at Court but were mostly unburdened by departmental duties. The “differentiations between household and administration occurred gradually” – and had not yet been completed in Vienna.¹⁵

There were only two exceptions to that rule. The Imperial Vice-Chancellor (Reichsvizekanzler) was in charge of relations with the estates of the Holy Roman Empire, and the Aulic War Council and its President were in charge of relations with the Ottoman Empire. This traditional prerogative gave Baden not just a motive but also an opportunity to censor the flow of information from Constantinople (and from the outposts in Hungary). As far as we can tell from the protocols of Conferences, despatches from Paris or the German Courts were usually read in Council verbatim. But information from Constantinople went through an editing process overseen by Baden. In 1682, this privilege gave him the opportunity of protecting his negotiations with Waldeck and their result, the Laxenburg Alliance, against all counter-currents that might have resulted from any of the unwelcome news from the East.

As Georg Michels and Yasir Yilmaz have recently reminded us, the Grand Vizier Kara Mustafa did not at all start with the fierce reputation he acquired in 1682–1683.¹⁶ At the start, he was even regarded as a more moderate version of his old master (and almost relative) Köprülü Ahmed. Once he did fight wars, he started to do so in the steppes of Ukraine. Peace negotiations with the Russians had started in 1681 but had not yet been concluded. The Tsar’s chief envoy had died en route.¹⁷ His successor did sign on the dotted line – but added the suggestion that perhaps Muscovy and the Ottomans could pool their resources to fight the Poles, who continued to lord it over the Orthodox faithful in Lithuania. That sort of news may not have been totally unwelcome in Vienna: after all, once before, from

14 When John P. SPIELMAN, *The City & The Crown. Vienna and the Imperial Court 1600–1740*, West Lafayette 1993, p. 60 writes: For the remainder of the period, the Hofkanzlei “was in effect, both foreign ministry and Austrian justice ministry”, he is certainly right from Strattmann onwards. I am not so sure about Hoher’s period of office up to 1683.

15 Jerome DUINDAM, *Vienna and Versailles. The courts of Europe’s dynastic rivals, 1550–1780*, Cambridge 2003, p. 110; Stefan SIENELL, *Die Geheime Konferenz unter Kaiser Leopold I. Personelle Strukturen und Methoden zur politischen Entscheidungsfindung am Wiener Hof*, Frankfurt 2001.

16 Georg MICHELS, *The Habsburg Empire under Siege. Ottoman Expansion and Hungarian Revolt in the Age of Grand Vizier Ahmed Köprülü (1661–1676)*, Montreal 2021, pp. 338, 343; Yasir YILMAZ, *Grand vizieral authority revisited: Köprülü’s legacy and Kara Mustafa Pasa*, *Mediterranean Historical Review* 31, 2016, pp. 21–42; see also Merlijn OLNON, ‘A most agreeable and pleasant creature?’ *Marzufoulu Kara Mistafa Pasa and the Dutch in the Levant (1668–1682)*, *Oriente Moderno* 83, 2003, pp. 649–669.

17 HHStA, Turcica, 151, I–IV 1682, fol. 1 v. (3 January 1682). The terms of the peace treaty were finally sent to Vienna in May (Ibidem, V–VI 1682, fol. 119–123).

1672 to 1676, during the crucial phases of the Dutch War, the Poles had effectively shielded Austria from any aggressive designs on the part of the Turks.¹⁸

If there was a new conflict on the Ottoman horizon, however, it was in a direction that was even more welcome to the Habsburgs. The last few months of 1681 witnessed a breach between their two big potential challengers: in a high-handed type of gunboat diplomacy “avant la lettre”, the Huguenot French admiral Duquesne bombarded an Ottoman port in the Aegean, Chios, in retaliation for its sheltering Tripolitan corsairs.¹⁹ Matters were further exacerbated by ceremonial disputes between Kara Mustafa and the new French ambassador, the Vicomte Gabriel de Guilleragues.²⁰ Louis XIV had always been a hardliner in questions of protocol, famously so in his disputes with Pope Alexander VII. This time, however, he adopted a far more pragmatic approach and was willing to compromise.²¹ However, once Duquesne returned from the Dardanelles, he was almost immediately engaged in another confrontation with an Ottoman vassal, the Dey of Algiers. The statesmen in Vienna can perhaps be forgiven for indulging in a piece of wishful thinking when they mused aloud whether Kara Mustafa could not be persuaded by the Dutch (or the English!) to take a more active part in that war. Just imagine the reaction of the Pope if he had got hold of that paper!

Conte Alberto Caprara, who was sent to Constantinople in 1682, had indeed started life as a subject of the Pope, as he hailed from Bologna.²² Yilmaz has explored the sorry fate of no less than four Imperial envoys who had died from plague or other causes over the course of the previous few years.²³ Since 1680 the Habsburgs had only been represented in Constantinople by a resident, Georg Christoph Kunitz. Caprara was supposed to fulfil the ceremonial requirements of an “orator” charged with renewing the Peace of Vasvar, signed in 1664 and valid for twenty years. Vasvar, coming on top of Montecuccoli’s victory at Szentgotthard (Mogersdorf), had been regarded as a treaty that was surprisingly favourable to the Ottomans. Given the supposedly congenial international environment, with the Porte maybe on the verge of starting a war with France, policymakers in Vienna can perhaps be

18 In 1676, when the Polish War was about to come to an end, the Ottomans had floated a trial balloon suggesting they might enter the Dutch war as French allies; see Harald STRANZL, *Frankreichs Ost-europapolitik in den Türkenkriegen: Ludwig XIV., die Reunionen und das Jahr 1683*, unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Graz 1993, pp. 97, 100.

19 Michel VERGE-FRANCESCHI, *Abraham Duquesne. Huguenot et marin du Roi Soleil*, Paris 1992, pp. 298–309; Jean-Philippe CENAT, *Le roi stratège. Louis XIV et la direction de la guerre 1661–1715*, Rennes 2010, p. 135.

20 Philippe ROY, *Louis XIV et le second siège de Vienne (1683)*, Paris 1999, pp. 38–45.

21 Obviously, the French compensation payments gave rise to allegations that they were combined with bribes for Kara Mustafa that might serve as an inducement to turn his attention towards the Habsburgs. The Sultan was supposed to have received 50–60,000 talers and Kara Mustafa 10–20,000 (HHStA, Turcica 151, V–VI 1682, fol. 53, 13 May 1682).

22 John STOYE, *The Siege of Vienna*, New York 1964, p. 45.

23 V. RENNER, *Wien im Jahre 1683*, p. 36.

excused for thinking they would have no great trouble in prolonging the truce on more or less the same terms as before.

Caprara’s mission had first been discussed in July and August 1681, after Thököly had ended the armistice but before news of the incident at Chios (23 July) had reached Vienna. At that time, observers in Vienna were worried, although not too much so.²⁴ They realised that the Ottomans were not involved in any war right now – and they suspected that both the Transylvanians and the French were busy lobbying Kara Mustafa to turn against the Habsburgs next. In the opinion of the Aulic War Council, Kunitz was not qualified for such important business (“*dem werck nicht gewachsen*”). That is why a proper ambassador (“internuntius”) ought to be dispatched to Constantinople to put a stop to these dangerous machinations.²⁵ Unfortunately, this is where the paper trail (almost) ends. The Turcica files in the Viennese archives do not contain another “opinion” on this crucial topic for more than six months.

The short notices summarising the outgoing post of the Aulic War Council (Hofkriegsrats-Registrator) just tell us that Caprara was duly appointed on 24 August 1681 (together with another envoy, Lt.-Col. Baron Saponara, who was sent to negotiate with the Hungarian rebel chieftain Thököly).²⁶ In September Caprara travelled to Pozsony/Bratislava to consult with his cousin, General Enea Caprara, who had commanded the Imperial troops fighting Thököly in Upper Hungary since February 1680.²⁷ The Venetian ambassador was probably exaggerating when he reported that Christoph Abele, the “Hofkammerpräsident” in charge of finances, was already collecting “masses of money” for Caprara’s mission.²⁸ On 22 October the Aulic War Council sent an interim order to Kunitz and told Caprara to return to Vienna. However, the Emperor had in the meantime returned to Sopron to be present at the crucial last sessions of the Hungarian Diet. Obviously, the situation in Hungary was of great importance for any assessment of the tactics to be employed vis-à-vis the Turks. Thus, it was only on 12 December 1681 that Caprara was told to be ready for his audience with Leopold, which did not take place until mid-January.²⁹ A final delay was due to adverse weather conditions, i.e. ice blocking travel on the Danube.³⁰

We can only guess that during the months following the initial impulse in the summer of 1681 the urgency of the job seems to have diminished. After all, this was the time when

24 See Leopold’s letters to Grana in July 1681 (HHStA, Spanien 62/2, fol. 261, 269, 279 v.).

25 HHStA, Turcica 151, V–VI 1682 (sic!), fol. 91–99; opinion of the Aulic War Council, fol. 101–107 (13 August 1681). NB: Those papers have obviously been placed in the wrong folder!

26 KA, HKR-Reg., 24 & 26 August 1681.

27 Ibidem, 25 February 1680.

28 HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 155, No. 21 (14 September 1681).

29 KA, HKR-Reg. 22 & 25 October, 9 & 12 December 1681; HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 155, No. 78 (17 January 1682).

30 Ibidem, No. 81 (24 January 1682), 86 (31 January 1682), 88 (7 February 1682).

Duquesne was still throwing his weight about in the Aegean and a prolongation of the 1664 armistice seemed a mere formality. Indeed, at that time, in the autumn of 1681, Kara Mustafa did actually forbid his Transylvanian vassals to rock the boat and antagonise the Austrians.³¹ Caprara did not actually set out on his way to Constantinople before 3 February 1682. In fact, as it turned out, he left Vienna exactly the day before Louis XIV reversed his position of October 1681 and took the highly unusual step of sending a letter of apology to the Ottoman Court, at the same time reprimanding his ambassador for being obstinate and risking a rupture in relations with Turks.³²

Thus, things no longer looked quite so promising as they had done a few months before. Even worse, Caprara's superiors made him a hostage to fortune by not equipping him with plenipotentiary powers to offer worthwhile concessions to the Ottomans. His superiors realised that they had to give way on the number of villages the Ottomans claimed belonged to Neuhäusel/Nové Zámky;³³ Baden was also willing to dismantle Leopoldstadt, the fortress the Austrians had started building as a replacement after the loss of Neuhäusel in 1663.³⁴ Caprara was allowed to fiddle with the small print but he was not equipped with a fallback position in the event of the Ottomans wanting something more substantial than a simple re-interpretation of the terms of 1664. Nor was he supplied with ample reserves of money for paying his way at Constantinople – and offering bribes.

Kara Mustafa played into Baden's hands with his delaying tactics that came on top of the delays produced by Caprara's belated start from Vienna. Already from Buda, Caprara sent a warning to Vienna on 16 February 1682 that things had assumed a far more serious complexion than expected. But after Buda he more or less vanished from the screen for more than three months. From his reports we know that he reached Belgrade on 4 March, Sofia on 22 March, and finally Constantinople at the beginning of April.³⁵ But Kara Mustafa did not seem to be in a hurry at all. He claimed he had been too busy with the conclusion of the Russian peace to attend to Caprara earlier.³⁶ When Caprara tried to kick-start

31 Eva BOKA, *La politique étrangère de Imre Thököly (1678–1685)*, Südostforschungen 48, 1989, pp. 51–86, here p. 64.

32 H. STRANZL, *Frankreichs Osteuropapolitik*, pp. 174–179; Claude MICHAUD, *L'Ambassade de Guilleragues à Constantinople. Louis XIV et les Turcs à la veille du siège de Vienne 1678–1683*, in: Jean Berenger (ed.), *Les Relations Franco-Autrichiennes sous Louis XIV. Siège de Vienne (1683). Colloque à propos de tricentenaire de siège de Vienne* (manuscript, St Cyr 1983), p. 14.

33 G. MICHELS, *Habsburg Empire under Siege*, has explored the way the commanders of Neuhäusel extended the reach of their tributary extortions.

34 HHStA, Turcica 152, VII–VIII, fol. 147 v. (11 August 1682). The year before, the Venetian Ambassador mentioned a debate about whether Caprara was allowed to offer the Ottomans “a piazza” (HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 155, No. 51, 16 November 1681).

35 HHStA, Turcica 151, I–IV 1682, fol. 38 v., 99, 107, 148.

36 *Ibidem*, V–VI 1682, fol. 86.

negotiations, he was always met by the argument that after all, it was the Habsburgs who wanted something from the Ottomans. If that was so, they had better offer something in return.³⁷ But that was exactly what Caprara was unable to do.

If Barker talks about the “*exorbitant Turkish demands presented*”, he is, strictly speaking, overstating the case, but at the same time underrating the challenges faced by Caprara.³⁸ There were dark hints by both the Aga of the Janissaries and the Kaimakan, Kara Mustafa’s deputy, about their appetite for the fortresses of Győr/Raab and Comorn/Komárno, the latter being the main Habsburg port on the Danube, a few miles downriver from Neuhäusel on the Vah. But there was no real negotiating position. These “demands” were in the nature of private suggestions, even if delivered as Mafia-style offers that were difficult to refuse. On top of that, the Ottomans did not allow Caprara to stay in touch with his home base by means of regular couriers under the pretext that there was no news to report anyway.³⁹

Those early weeks of Caprara’s stay in Constantinople, April to June of 1682, were exactly the weeks when Baden, together with Waldeck, pushed the Laxenburg accords down the throat of the Emperor’s old circle of advisors. The business-as-usual faction, Johann Adolph Schwarzenberg and the Austrian Chancellor Paul Hochof, fought a rearguard action: they ridiculed the plans associated with the Laxenburg alliance as “castles in the air” that were based not on facts, but on “pure hypotheses”.⁴⁰ Moreover, lack of funds militated against any new commitments. In the end, though, Baden and the Westerners – supported by the Marquess of Borgomanero, the Spanish Ambassador – got their way.⁴¹

The Laxenburg treaty – with its clientele stretching from the borders of Bohemia to the Rhine – provided a missing link between the Emperor and the Dutch. Spain had returned to the fold after Juan Jose’s death in 1679. Sweden had joined William of Orange in a treaty signed ten days after the French had occupied Strasbourg and Casale in the autumn of 1681. The Emperor could not afford to turn his back on all these potential allies. Both geographically and politically, he was the linchpin of the emerging anti-French coalition. It was these opportunity costs of not turning west that the Habsburgs – with an eye on the struggle for the Spanish inheritance – could ill afford.

Even so, it was Waldeck who was surprised that the Austrians did not take the Turkish threat more seriously (“*Es ist merkwürdig, wie leicht es diese Herren mit den Türken nehmen*”). Even more so, William of Orange was beset by doubts whether the Emperor

37 HHStA, Turcica 152, VII–VIII 1682, fol. 11.

38 Thomas M. BARKER, *Double Eagle and Crescent. Vienna’s second Turkish Siege and its historical setting*, Albany 1967, pp. 151, 153.

39 HHStA, Turcica 152, VII–VIII 1682, fol. 36, 104 v.

40 HHStA, Kriegsakten 159, fol. 105 v. (10 May 1682); for a line-up of Imperial ministers see P. L. MÜLLER (ed.), *Waldeck*, pp. 154–163.

41 For the conferences with Waldeck see HHStA, Kriegsakten 159, fol. 100–139.

would be able to honour his commitments when faced with such dangers from the East.⁴² But Leopold and his court presented a stiff upper lip to the world. They pooh-poohed any suggestions of trouble brewing in the East, with blithe assurances that a few bribes would suffice to prevent any serious outbreak, both in Hungary and with the Turks. To prevent any “leaks”, Baden had also stopped his predecessor Montecuccoli’s practice of sharing the reports from Constantinople with the Venetians or comparing notes with them.⁴³ Baden was certainly economical with the truth when he told Waldeck that Caprara had observed no signs of warlike preparations on his way to Constantinople.⁴⁴

In fact, Caprara had sent a series of warnings to Vienna as soon as he entered Ottoman territory. Shortly after he left Buda, an Ottoman soldier had told him that he had been quickly sent on his way so that he would not notice all the preparations the Turks were undertaking to attack the Emperor (and the fortress of Győr/Raab in particular). From Belgrade he reported that an order had been given to construct a bridge across the Sava, which he took to be a sure sign of war.⁴⁵ However, in a first reaction, on 22 April 1682, just before Baden started drafting plans with Waldeck, the Aulic War Council put a different light on Caprara’s predictions of doom. They thought that the internuntius was influenced too much by “common discourse”. The renegade soldier who had so assiduously warned him had presumably done so on purpose, as a ruse to scare him so that the Austrians would be even more eager for peace – and thus willing to pay a higher price for it.⁴⁶

The Aulic War Council did add a recommendation that Caprara should be given more specific and “categorical” instructions. A certain amount of money and a judicious offer of territory would be necessary to preserve the peace – but that was up to the Emperor, of course. At any rate, they strongly advised against contemplating a Turkish war: even if with God’s help the Imperial arms turned out to be victorious, the Austrian lands would certainly be ruined by Tatar incursions. In a separate but undated opinion that evaluated all the reports up to 19 March they addressed Kunitz’s theory that Kara Mustafa was eager to go on campaign because he wanted to take the Sultan with him and thus isolate him from the influences in the serail, which were uniformly hostile to the Grand Vizier. Caprara agreed with that assessment and stressed the urgency of the situation. Once preparations

42 P. L. MÜLLER (ed.), *Waldeck*, pp. 88, 172 (22 June 1682), 182 (20 July 1682).

43 HHStA, *Dispaci di Germania* 155, No. 12 (10 August 1681).

44 P. L. MÜLLER (ed.), *Waldeck*, pp. 163 (24 May 1682), 166 (30 May 1682), 199 (15 September 1682); Heinrich v. SRBIK (ed.), *Österreichische Staatsverträge. Niederlande, Vol. 1: Bis 1722*, Vienna 1912, p. 222 quotes William in a report from the Hague (21 September 1682): “*Nach dem Success der Dinge in Ungarn würden sich die meisten Sachen richten.*”

45 HHStA, *Turcica* 151, I–IV 1682, fol. 94 (21 February 1682), 99 (4 March 1682).

46 *Ibidem*, I–IV 1682, fol. 52–54 (“*opinio*”); fol. 57 (almost illegible) minutes of the discussion, dated 22 April.

had reached a certain stage, a “point of no return” would be reached as there was no way Kara Mustafa could cancel such an operation without a grievous loss of face and resources. This time it was Baden and his followers who talked of “pure hypotheses”: There was no basis and no certainty (“*ohne fundament und ohne gewißheit*”) about Kara Mustafa’s being forced into war to escape from his domestic difficulties.⁴⁷

It was more than two months after his arrival that Caprara succeeded in meeting Ottoman dignitaries for the first time for two conferences on 22 June and 6 July 1682.⁴⁸ Shortly before, he had finally managed to entrust some of his reports to a courier. They must have arrived in Vienna during the second half of July. Now the battle over the direction of Imperial policy received a new impulse. In a first round on 23 July Baden scored a victory when it was decided that the troubles in the East should not deflect the Emperor from intervening in Italy. Baden dutifully listed all the arguments against a forward policy in the West but concluded that there were far stronger “*argumenta pro parte altera*”. In the present state of affairs a “*courageous combination*” (“*dapfere zusammensetzung*”) against France was to be preferred, no matter what other dangers there were. One must not allow the French to drive a wedge between the two branches of the House of Habsburg so that they could overwhelm them separately (the original mixes German with Latin: “*um beide zu superieren faciendo ut pugnant singuli*”).⁴⁹

Baden did not just stick to his guns. He also tried to take the sting out of Caprara’s warnings by turning them almost on their head when presenting his conclusions to the Emperor and his fellow Council members during a second conference on 11 August. He did so by quoting rather selectively from the despatches. Caprara relied on an essentially opportunistic appraisal of Turkish strategy. The Turks would perhaps turn elsewhere if they could no longer find ready allies in Hungary.⁵⁰ That is why he had argued for a preventive campaign against Thököly and the Hungarian rebels as the only sort of deterrent that might yet produce results: “*un colpo su la testa di ribelli e cosi Vra. M. havessi subito una buona pace*” (“*a blow to the heads of the rebels and that way Your Majesty will all of a sudden have a good peace*”).⁵¹ Baden agreed that the best way to prevent a war in the East was to “pacify” Hungary. But the term he used – “*die Rebellen zur Ruhe gebracht*” – was an ambivalent one.⁵² Rather than a sharp strike against the rebels he brazenly argued for another round

47 Ibidem, fol. 136–142 (no date given).

48 HHStA, Turcica 152, folder ‘Kunitz-Caprara’, fol. 115–121 contains the reports of these two meetings, with special emphasis on questions of protocol.

49 HHStA, Vorträge 6, 1682, fol. 63 v. (23 July 1682).

50 HHStA, Turcica 152, IX–XII, fol. 52 (summary on 25 September 1682).

51 HHStA, Turcica 151, V–VI 1682, fol. 87 v., 137 (17 June 1682); repeated in Latin Turcica 152, IX–XII 1682, fol. 13 (5 September 1682).

52 HHStA, Turcica 152, VII–VIII 1682, fol. 145 v. (11 August 1682).

of appeasement.⁵³ The negotiations with Thököly should be speeded up. Strassoldo, the Imperial commander in Upper Hungary, was told he had better not dare irritate the enemy without explicit orders.⁵⁴ In his report, Baden – himself a disciple of the Jesuits who had initially embarked on a career within the Church – even argued that one should be far more open-minded about returning churches to the Hungarian Protestants.

Baden also returned to the arguments derived from Ottoman domestic politics. Caprara had insisted that Kara Mustafa was hell-bent on war against the Habsburgs (“*ostinatissimo di fare la Guerra*”).⁵⁵ Caprara suspected that the Grand Vizier was feeding the Sultan with fake reports from Buda about provocations by the Austrians.⁵⁶ On the other hand, Caprara had collected testimonies from a wide range of worthies, including the Valide Sultan, her Chief Eunuch, the Mufti, and the Sultan’s Master of the Horse.⁵⁷ As an opinion poll of the chattering classes of Constantinople, that survey was quite impressive. Kara Mustafa was far from popular with the Ottoman Court luminaries. What Caprara and Kunitz had both emphasised, though, and what Baden and his associates did not choose to pass on was that not only were all those dignitaries who had reassured Caprara of their peaceful intentions removed from the levers of power but none of them was prepared to make a move against Kara Mustafa. If anything, they were looking forward to the war as it might spell Kara Mustafa’s disgrace in the event of a setback. In other words, he needed to be given rope to hang himself with.⁵⁸ The Turkish opposition to Kara Mustafa and the Emperor were both waiting for the other side to pull the chestnuts out of the fire for them.

Alas, once again Baden and the Aulic War Council put quite a different tack on Caprara’s pleas. They highlighted the courteous way the internuntius had been received in Constantinople – without passing on Caprara’s judgment that this friendly behaviour had not just been adopted to score points against the proud French ambassador but mainly to mislead the Austrians into a false sense of security (“*ingannarci*”) and disguise the fact that “*tutti si rivolgera contra di noi*” (“*everyone will move against us*”).⁵⁹ Baden chose to disregard the warning that for the time being Kara Mustafa must still be regarded as the absolute

53 As late as 22 June 1683, Saponara was empowered to offer Thököly a princely title and a few comitate, starting with those east of the River Tisza, but not excluding some others. Kriegsarchiv (hereafter KA), Alte Feldakten 187, 1683/6/35. The Spanish Ambassador, Borgomanero, took an active part by also writing to Thököly (O. KLOPP, *Das Jahr 1683*, p. 187; T. BARKER, *Double Eagle and Crescent*, pp. 155, 412).

54 KA, Hofkriegsrat-Registratur (hereafter HKR-Reg.) 8 July 1682; Alte Feldakten 187, 1683/I/ad 12 contains the complaints of Saponara against Strassoldo, who was also blamed for the loss of Kassa and chose to switch to the Venetian army (HKR-Reg. 22 April 1684).

55 HHStA, Turcica 151, V–VI 1682, fol. 137 (17 June 1682).

56 HHStA, Turcica 152, VII–VIII 1682, fol. 114 (6 August 1682).

57 All of them were mentioned in the summary on 25 September 1682 (Ibidem, IX–XII, fol. 37, 51).

58 Ibidem, V–VI, fol. 144, 149 v., 165 (17 June 1682).

59 HHStA, Turcica 151, V–VI 1682, fol. 148 (22 June 1682).

ruler of the Ottoman Empire. He reassuringly quoted Caprara’s conclusion that almost the whole Turkish Court was opposed to war but left out Caprara’s observation: “*nulla serva perche e arbitrio assoluto d’ogni cosa*” (“*that would avail nothing as Kara Mustafa decides everything on his own*”).⁶⁰ Baden blithely argued that even if the Grand Vizier himself seemed immune to bribery, that disposition was not shared by others. After all, money had always proved to be the “most efficient medium of all negotiations.”⁶¹ Even towards the end of the year, when reviewing Caprara’s despondent reports from October, he still put his hope in the wisdom of the Ottoman statesmen, who surely included a number of “uncommon and farseeing politicians.”⁶²

By the way, there are no indications of any prior antagonism between Caprara and Baden. After all, Baden was probably instrumental in the choice of ambassador. Even Borgomanero, the Spanish Ambassador, approved of Caprara, praising him as a “*soggetto di molto spirito e talenti*” (“*a man of much spirit and many talents*”).⁶³ Caprara went on to write several letters from Constantinople pleading that Baden should not abandon him.⁶⁴ The financial plight he complained about was even more embarrassing because – in contrast to former special envoys such as Czernin or Leslie – Caprara did not belong to the landed elite of the monarchy. Most top-ranking “civil servants” were supposed to act as “lenders of first resort” to their sovereign prince. But Caprara was genuinely unable to finance his own expenses, at least in the medium term.⁶⁵ Whatever their earlier relations, by the end of the year, Baden and Caprara had clearly arrived at opposite ends of the political spectrum. In December 1682, Caprara would openly argue for a U-turn. He implored the Emperor to make peace with France. “*Di Gratia, concluda presto colla Gallia la pace*.”⁶⁶

60 Ibidem, fol. 14 (10 May 1682), fol. 88 (summary of reports in May).

61 HHStA, Turcica 152, VII–VIII 1682, fol. 144 v., 146 (minutes of conference 11 August 1682). Actually, Caprara later on talked about maybe bribing the Reis Effendi (VII–VIII, fol. 100). French sources talked about no less than three million being offered to Kara Mustafa. HHStA, 11 August, fol. 141, 147; E. BOKA, *Thököly*, p. 75. Already in the spring of 1682, the Transylvanians had spread the rumour that Caprara came equipped with an offer of one million (HHStA, Turcica 151, I–IV 1682, fol. 122, Kunitz 9 March 1682). The utmost Baden ever suggested was half a million (Turcica 152, VII–VIII, fol. 146 v.) The only traceable amount is 20,000 ducats for Caprara (KA, HKR-Reg 14 August 1682). When Borgomanero wrote about “substantial sums” entrusted to Caprara, he had obviously been misinformed by his Austrians, who were eager to reassure him that everything was being done to ensure a satisfactory outcome of the negotiations in Constantinople. (T. BARKER, *Double Eagle and Crescent*, pp. 135, 152.)

62 HHStA, Kriegsakten 159, fol. 292.

63 HHStA, Dispacci di Germania 155, No. 9 (27 July 1681).

64 HHStA, Turcica 151, V–VI 1682, fol. 177 (“*mi ha posto in questo imbroglio – mi proteggera*”) 27 June 1682; Turcica 152, VII–VIII 1682, fol. 68 (July 1682).

65 Baden stressed that fact in his summary of the reports from May (HHStA, Turcica 151, V–VI 1682, fol. 115 v.)

66 HHStA, Turcica 152, IX–XII 1682, fol. 121 (12 December 1682).

The one ray of hope Caprara held out was the low quality of the Turkish troops. In Napoleon's famous phrase, the famed Janissaries had become a corps of shopkeepers ("*Janizari piu che mai dati alle mercanzie ed alle bottigherie*").⁶⁷ Recent scholarship has ratified that judgment. The janissaries were well advanced on their way from a "fighting force" to an "entrenched privileged group" within the urban population.⁶⁸ The core of the Turkish army consisted of no more than maybe 60,000 men. The rest were "canaglia", in Caprara's opinion.⁶⁹ Thus, he was confident that a victory could be easily achieved. After such an initial setback things might change quickly because the Grand Vizier's enemies would be encouraged to start moving. ("*La vittoria non dovrebbe essere difficile perche queste truppe son poco buono e facilmente potrebbe arrivare qualche accidenti che mutasse le cose avendo il Visir potente inimici.*")⁷⁰ That is why he advocated a forward policy. At the very least, Caprara proposed a scorched earth policy in Hungary: "*usare tutte le piu feroci hostilitate per fare loro paura.*"⁷¹

But then, of course, Caprara was unable to participate in the deliberations in Vienna, as he remained a virtual prisoner of Kara Mustafa. In stark contrast to the hard-line diplomat, once he was convinced of the likelihood of a Turkish attack, Baden, as a professional soldier, did not at all underrate the Ottoman host, whether it consisted of 200,000 men or only 100,000. In February 1683, the members of the Aulic War Council were reduced to hedging their bets when they were asked how many troops should remain in the West once the Turkish war started.⁷² Baden admitted that to tell the truth, they would all be needed in the East as the Turks were putting a force into the field such as had not been seen for a hundred years.⁷³ After all, Baden had always warned that the Emperor was unable to fight a war on two fronts – only his conclusion had always been to make peace with the Turks at almost any cost. He clung to that belief even in early 1683: in the West it was not just one or two counties, or even one kingdom, that was at risk, but the liberty of all Europe.⁷⁴

67 Ibidem, V–VI 1682, fol. 149, 22 June 1682. Caparra also added that the janissaries were not eager for another bout of siege warfare that involved digging trenches (Ibidem, IX–XII 1682, fol. 52 v.).

68 P. M. HOLT, *Egypt and the Fertile Crescent 1516–1922. A Political History*, Ithaca 1966, p. 64; Baki TEZCAN, *Searching for Osman. A Reassessment of the Deposition of the Ottoman Sultan Osman II (1618–1622)*, Ph.D. Thesis, Princeton 2001, pp. 253, 258 wrote about "*a political interest group with economic privileges*". In the end it did not matter whether soldiers became tax-farmers or tax-farmers soldiers.

69 Significantly – and somewhat ironically – Guilleragues, the French ambassador, shared Caprara's low opinion of the Turks. In fact, in his contempt for Kara Mustafa, who was, he said, without either honour or prudence, he was far more outspoken than his Austrian colleague. See his report from 17 May 1683, quoted by H. STRANZL, *Frankreichs Osteuropapolitik*, p. 173.

70 HHStA, Turcica 152, IX–XII, fol. 139 (18 December 1682).

71 Ibidem, fol. 121 (12 December 1682).

72 KA, Alte Feldakten 187, 1683/II/3 (5 February 1683).

73 KA, HKR-Reg. 7 Dec. 1682, 5 February 1683; AFA 187, 1683 II/3 (5 February 1683).

74 KA, Alte Feldakten 187, 1683/I/12 (7 January 1683).

It was only in the autumn of 1682 that Leopold had started to become uneasy. The Hungarian rebel Thököly had cashed his advance payments (i.e. his marriage to Hungary’s alluring richest heiress, Ilona Rakoczy, née Jelena Zrinski⁷⁵) and then cancelled the armistice. He surprised Kassa/Košice, the Fort Leavenworth of the Wild East, then overran the most lucrative parts of Hungary, the mining towns in present-day Slovakia. Upon receipt of the bad news, Leopold reacted with an angry note, complaining about why he was never told about such news in time. Different measures would have to be adopted or “we shall lose all of Hungary”.⁷⁶ Caprara’s cousin Enea, the general, reported that the active Austrian forces in Hungary numbered no more than 6,000 men.⁷⁷ On 18 September, in a letter to his confidant Sinelli, Leopold seemed to agree that something had to be done against the Turks and the Hungarian rebels after all.⁷⁸ He sighed that everybody insisted he take a firm line – but the question was: against whom?⁷⁹ Leopold’s confidence in the primacy of the Western orientation had received a jolt, but that fleeting moment of dissatisfaction did not lead to a change of heart. After all, military operations were suspended as winter approached (for that reason Thököly even agreed to another armistice).

In 1682, the contours of a Grand Alliance against Louis XIV were taking shape. Even if the Emperor was unable to join wholeheartedly in a full-scale effort to stop French expansion once and for all, he had at least been able to pretend that he would do so. Leopold was not spoiling for a fight on two fronts. But he was willing to run that risk rather than risk the collapse of the emerging anti-French combination in the West.⁸⁰ He would feed them whatever promises it took to prevent a U-turn on the part of his potential allies. At the same time, he would ration his own contributions to the cause very carefully. A few weeks before the Emperor had decided to increase his army from 63,000 to 76,000 men, roughly equivalent to the Spanish peacetime forces, but still less than half those at the disposal

75 KA, HKR-Reg. 2 April, 29 April & 13 June 1682; see the summaries of Saponara’s reports 25 March 1682, 3 September 1682; HKR-Exp. fol. 567 v. (2 May 1682 Ansuchen um Ehekonsens); J. STOYE, *Siege of Vienna*, p. 46; John P. SPIELMAN, *Leopold I of Austria*, London 1977, p. 96 ff.; Oswald REDLICH, *Weltmacht des Barock. Österreich in der Zeit Kaiser Leopolds I.*, Vienna 1961, p. 230.

76 “Man muß einmal anders zur Sache thun, sonst werden wir um Ungarn kommen” (KA, AFA 187, 1682 VIII /5, 26 August 1682).

77 KA, Alte Feldakten 187/VIII/5, Leopold to Hermann v. Baden 26 August 1682; HKR-Exp. fol. 516 (29 September 1682).

78 HHStA, Familienkorrespondenz A 15, Leopold to Sinelli, 18 September 1682. I am grateful to Laurenz Enzlberger for his invaluable help in deciphering and translating these letters.

79 Ibidem, Leopold to Sinelli, 19 September 1682 (“*Omnes dicunt cum rigore procedendum sed contra quem?*”).

80 Oswald REDLICH, in his magisterial *Weltmacht des Barock*, p. 271, maybe ruled out a war on two fronts too firmly.

of Louis XIV.⁸¹ Even at the height of the crisis in the early summer of 1683 he promised to keep at least 24,000 men at the ready to come to the help of his Western allies. But the ambivalence of the term “Imperial troops” might cover a lot of arrangements. After all, were not Waldeck’s Franconians and the Bavarians part of the Empire, too? In a manoeuvre that might be called sleight of hand, Leopold surreptitiously put the movement of troops to the West into reverse. Internal memos read that after all, in order to help one’s neighbours one first had to prevent one’s own house from catching fire.⁸²

Part of the posture adopted by Leopold I involved bluffing: an internal change of guard helped to lend credibility to that façade. The two pillars of appeasement, Schwarzenberg, whom Borgomanero had once even accused of treason,⁸³ and the upstart secretary Hochoer, had both died in the spring of 1683.⁸⁴ Their successors, Count Albrecht Zinzendorf and Theodor Stratmann (who had started life in the service of the Emperor’s Neuburg father-in-law)⁸⁵ were – next to Baden – the two most Western-minded Vienna paladins imaginable. Christoph von Abele, the head of the Hofkammer, dealing with finances, did not count for much: the Emperor did realise that it was all a question of the money he did not have (“*Non est dubium quod in pecunia omnia haerebunt*”⁸⁶). But then the job of the Hofkammer was simply to find the money somewhere else. Abele was placed under supervision by Sinelli, then replaced with a more pliant candidate.⁸⁷ Thus, paradoxically, just at a time when Vienna was forced to turn its attention towards the East, the Court was dominated by “Westerners” as never before.

The gist of Caprara’s reports had certainly been twisted to convey a message diametrically opposed to what had been intended. Baden’s spin-doctoring and selective omissions are likely to remind historians of Bismarck’s famous “editing” of the Emser Depeche in 1870.

81 See the statistics in John A. LYNN, *Recalculating French Army Growth during the Grand Siecle, 1610–1715*, French Historical Studies 18, 1994, pp. 881–906; Davide MAFFI, *Los ultimos Tercios. El ejercito de Carlos II*, Madrid 2020, pp. 156–160. During the Dutch War the French army reached a maximum strength of between 250,000 and 280,000 men, reduced to between 140,000 and 165,000 after the peace of Nimwegen.

82 HHStA, Kriegsakten 160, I–VI, fol. 78 (14 March 1683), fol. 106 (20 April 1683); A W G. von ANTAL & J.C.H. de PATER (eds.), *Weensche Gezantschapsberichten van 1670 tot 1720, Vol. 1: 1670–1697*, s-Gravenhage 1929, p. 355 (10 June 1683).

83 HHStA, Kriegsakten 161, VI–XII 1684, fol. 71–76, Grana to Leopold I, 2 July 1684.

84 It seems that shortly before Schwarzenberg wanted to withdraw from Court because he had not been appointed “Obersthofmeister”; HHStA, Familienkorrespondenz 15, Leopold to Sinelli, s. d. (1683).

85 G. ANTAL – J.C.H. de PATER (eds.), *Weensche Gezantschapsberichten I* 348 (25 March 1683). Leopold was for a long time uncertain whether to appoint a “foreigner” as Austrian Chancellor. When he finally did so, he told Stratmann to sell all his properties abroad and respect the Austrian nobility and their privileges (HHStA, Familienkorrespondenz 15, Leopold to Sinelli, 15 & 25 June 1683).

86 Ibidem, Leopold to Sinelli, 6 August 1682.

87 See also ibidem, Leopold to Sinelli, 18 September 1682; P. L. MÜLLER (ed.), Waldeck, p. 164 (27 May 1682).

If that was not manipulation, what was? Of course, Bismarck wanted to impress a wider public, whereas Baden’s efforts were directed at a fairly small group of “insiders”. This raises an interesting question connected with the concept of “absolutism” that is difficult to decide with the same degree of certitude: Who exactly was going to be manipulated? In the summer of 1681, the newly appointed Venetian ambassador Domenico Contarini had arrived in Vienna. From the very first he was scandalised by the way two rival factions of ministers blocked each other at the Imperial Court. He did not hide his suspicion that the ministers “*were hiding the true state of things from His Majesty*”.⁸⁸ The question is: Did Baden and his allies (such as Zinzendorf and to some extent also Sinelli) really dare to deceive the Emperor, or were they not acting in accord with Leopold’s intentions? Did not the Emperor want to be “deceived” – or at least want to be presented with a convincing case that coincided with his priorities?

The Emperor clearly approved of Baden’s stand, even if he did not trust him all the way. He realised that his top military man was over-zealous. Another weakness of Baden that Leopold referred to obliquely in his letters to Sinelli, as far as we can tell from the context, seems to have touched upon Baden’s deserved reputation for indiscretion.⁸⁹ The historian, of course, has to be grateful for that trait of character. If the confidences he routinely betrayed to the Swedish ambassador Pufendorf a dozen years earlier are anything to go by, he really was unlikely to keep a secret. But the Emperor did not hold it against him all that much, insisting that Baden take part in all the crucial meetings of July and August 1682 and take the leading part in charting the future course of action.⁹⁰

Of course, for the Emperor it was a headache that Baden bickered with Charles of Lorraine, who was, after all, Leopold’s brother-in-law.⁹¹ Interestingly, one of their disputes concerned the value of pikes as infantry weapons: Baden thought they had already become obsolete, compared with bayonets; Lorraine apparently still regarded them as useful against Turkish cavalry.⁹² As a Salomonic solution it was apparently left to the colonels, who after all were the “owners” of their regiments, to decide what sort of weapon they would order for their men.⁹³ Leopold’s angry outburst in September may be regarded as a shot across the bows of all those who engaged in too blatantly wishful thinking. But if he had really

88 HHStA, Dispacchi di Germania 155, No. 6 (20 July 1681): “*nacondono forse lo stato vero delle cose alla Maesta*”.

89 HHStA, Familienkorrespondenz 15, Leopold to Sinelli, 23 July 1682.

90 Ibidem, Leopold to Sinelli, 27 July & 6 August 1682.

91 Leopold liked to use Sinelli as an intermediary to massage Charles’s ego (ibidem 14 & 30 August 1682).

92 KA, Alte Feldakten 187, 1683/IV/12 (22 April 1683). Interestingly, colonels were allowed some leeway as to the equipment they ordered for their regiments (AFA 187, 1683/IV/9). The French were noticeably slow in converting from pikes to muskets. Louvois ruefully praised the superior fire discipline of the Germans (C. ROUSSET, *Louvois III*, pp. 324, 329).

93 KA, Alte Feldakten 187, 1683/IV/9.

felt deceived by Baden, he would have reacted differently. After all, the supposedly meek-and-mild Emperor had sacked and banished such heavyweights as the Princes Weikhard Auersperg and Wenzel/Vaclav Lobkowitz (who, shortly before his disgrace, had boasted that the Emperor was just being carried around as a figurehead).⁹⁴

Maybe Auersperg and Lobkowitz had committed the mistake of being inscrutable, thus easily creating the impression that for one reason or another they were playing both sides. During one of his rambling talks with Pufendorf in the early 1670s, Baden had accused Lobkowitz of always turning things around until nobody could any longer penetrate his real intentions.⁹⁵ Baden himself was loquacious, but reliable – reliably pro-Spanish (and thus pro-Habsburg...?) If he erred on the side of over-enthusiasm, he meant well. True, the Turkish war led to a diminution of Baden's position. As a paper-pusher, the “minister of war” was outshone by the successful commander in the field, Charles of Lorraine. A few years later, when Thököly's papers were recovered and many of his followers closely questioned, a compatriot of the Capraras, Count Antonio Caraffa, even tried to prove that Baden's relations with the Hungarian rebels had been nothing short of treasonable. Baden drafted a memorandum defending his actions.⁹⁶ It is ironic that he was eased into a sort of semi-retirement as an ambassador to the Imperial Diet in Ratisbon just as the war in the West for which he had been preparing actually began in 1688.

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94 Adam WOLF, *Fürst Wenzel Lobkowitz, erster geheimer Rath Kaiser Leopold's I. 1609–1677*, Vienna 1869, p. 425.

95 HHStA, HS W 824, Pufendorf Diary, fol. 211 v. (6 February 1672).

96 KA, Alte Feldakten 188, 1683/XIII/20 contains an (undated) defence of his conduct; Christian BEESE, *Markgraf Hermann von Baden (1628–1691). General, Diplomat und Minister Kaiser Leopolds I*, Stuttgart 1991, pp. 279–293.