

# *Opera theater as a tool of politicization*

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	<i>Nikola Šubić Zrinjski</i>	<i>Hunyadi László</i>	<i>Bánk bán</i>	<i>Libuše</i>
<b>Criticism of the government</b>	the king did not send help to Zrinski and the deffenders	advisers working against Hungary's interests; the ruler's breach of his word	the government commits political and economic violence against Hungary	the ruler lost the right to be show respect due to his attitude to Bohemia
<b>Legitimacy of government</b>	not questioned; but - <i>to the Croat, the ban is the king</i>	not questioned; waiver of right to rule to the governor who works against the interests of Hungary	questioning whether the legitimacy of the queen regent or the viceroy is stronger?	national dynasty; the message that the king's legitimacy is derived from the people
<b>Autonomy / state rights</b>	Entire opera as an allegorical ode to Croatian freedom; sacrifice to achieve freedom in the future	only Parliament can judge nobles - judicial murder of Ladislaus Hunyadi	<i>ius resistendi</i>	the whole opera as a celebration of the idea of national freedom; the period of Czech princes, the establishment of a national dynasty, the Czech legal system, the democracy of Czech society
<b>National survival / announcement of a better future</b>	The defenders' sacrifice will enable future freedom	announcement of the future reign of Matthias Corvinus	/	prophecy - announcement/recall of the most famous events in Czech history

# *Nikola Šubić Zrinjski*

- siege of Siget: 5.8. - 7.9. 1566
- commanders: Nikola Zrinski / Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent
- strength: 2,300 defenders / 117,000 Ottomans
- losses: all but 7 defenders / 35,000 Ottomans
- a very strong echo in European literature and arts (historiography, epics, poetry, fine arts, music)
- in collective memory: one of the key battles of Croatian history; Zrinski and the defenders - a true example of Croatian patriotism
- 19th century: a new wave of popularity - inspiring for the Croatian, Hungarian and German national movements

Criticism of the government (in the scene when it is clear that the king will not send them military aid)

- Officer Juranić: *Why doesn't the king come / to our aid?*
- Zrinski: *Don't talk like that, my son. / It is good to persist in that place / Even if the whole world collapses. / For our home, our faith and our king / The Croats are happy to sacrifice for.*

# Patriotism

## End of Act I

**Zrinski:** *But before we lay down our lives,*

*Let us take an oath to Almighty God:*

*By Almighty God I swear*

*That I shall defend Szigeth with my life*

*And I'll never leave your side,*

*While my heart still shows signs of life!*

**Chorus:** *By Almighty God we swear*

*That I shall defend Szigeth with my life*

*And I'll never leave your side,*

*While my heart still shows signs of life!*

## End of Act II

**Zrinski** (after refusing Sokolović's offers):  
*Tell the Turk: repeat our holy oath!*

**Juranić and Paprutović:** *To the last breath!*

**Eva and Jelena:** *'Tis sweet to die for our homeland.*

**Zrinski:** *Go, tell your Emperor,*

*What have you seen here!*

**All:** *We sacrifice for our homeland!*

## End of Act III

**Eva, Zrinski, Juranić, Paprutović:**  
*Farewell to you, my home, farewell.*

*May God be with you, now and ever.*

*Your enemies are ever ready to march*

*And plan to tread on your every step.*

*But no! Every son of yours is ready to fight,*

*To protect you forever with all their might!*

(\*\*\*)

**Zrinski:** *To die in glory, for our country, we trust!*

**All:** *We'll take on the enemy! He'll fall, he must!*

# Political usage

- Stjepan Radić (1888): "Long live Zrinski, down with that tyrant Héderváry!"
- 20th century: declaration of Croatian patriotism and opposition to the Yugoslavian regime

# *Libuše*

- mythological ruler - treated as a real person in historiography up until the 18th century
- a confirmation of continuity, a legend about the beginning of a national dynasty
- the legendary scene of the judgement - confirmation of Czech democracy since ancient times
- the spontaneous process of transformation in narratives from a real person, through a character from legends to a national symbol

# Composition chronology

## Opera

- Act I finished on 2 September 1871
- Act II finished on 18 February 1872
- Act III finished on 12 November 1873

## Political context

- war threat; optimism due to articulation of Fundamental Articles
- 20 October - Franz Josef refused to sanction the Fundamental Articles
- 1872 - Franz Josef decided he wouldn't have himself crowned as king of Bohemia



All (to Přemysl):

*With you we shall all go together*

*Whenever you will bid us go,*

*Courage leads us into battle*

*Which cannot but end in victory*

# "Additional" critiques of the government

- The topic itself: an independent ruler of an independent Czech principality in the early Middle Ages
- possible interpretation: expression of dissatisfaction with the current state of limited political autonomy of the Czech Kingdom
- Libuše's adherence to Czech, not German, law in resolving the brothers' conflict
- Possible interpretation: the necessity of respecting Czech rights and protecting Czech interests, i.e. dissatisfaction with too strong German influence

# *Hunyadi László*

- the conflict between the pro- and anti-Habsburg parties in Hungary
- Leaders: Ulrik of Cilli and Ladislav Garai / János and Ladislav Hunyadi
- 1456. Ulrik of Cilli killed in Belgrade, killed by Ladislav Hunyadi himself or his men
- the king swore not to avenge the murder, but executed Hunyadi anyway
- Interpretations ranging from premeditated murder to self-defense, depending on the author

**Chorus of Hungarian knights (of Cilli,  
just appointed governor):**

*...Cillei was sent upon us  
as God's worst punishment,  
governor he is not  
for any one of us,  
this murderer of all things good,  
nurturing son in his bosom,  
whose dark soul had been possessed*

**Chorus of Hungarian knights (to king,  
after killing Cilli):**

*The traitor is dead at last,  
and no discord any more,  
long live young King László,  
long live our land and home!  
The bloodthirsty beast is dead,  
Our fatherland is saved!  
The monster is dead,  
Our fatherland is saved!*

# *Bánk bán*

- assassination of Queen Gertrude in 1213.
- a group of Hungarian nobles dissatisfied with the king's policy
- leaders of the conspiracy: Péter/Petur, son of Turoy; Simon Kacsics, Bánk of Bár-Kalán
- 1270 - appearance of the "rape narrative" - dominant in literature until the end of the 18th century
- authors of the Enlightenment and the 19th century - return to sources, objectivity
- political topics discussed: right to rule in the kings absence; *ius resistendi*

**Thank you for your attention!**