

## **The heir to the throne Franz Ferdinand and Brioni - a short chronicle and new insights?**

Christine Casapicola, 12.10.2019, conference in Pula on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the death of Paul Kupelwieser

Everyone who deals with the Brioni Islands probably knows the memoirs of Paul Kupelwieser. They were published in 1918 by his brother in Gerold publishing house under the title "Aus den Erinnerungen eines alten Österreichers". Paul Kupelwieser meticulously describes his career and the history of "his" island. Probably many of us also know how these memoirs end, namely with the sentence: *In mid-July 1908 Brioni received the visit of the heir to the throne, his Imperial Highness Franz Ferdinand and his wife, the Duchess of Hohenberg.*

The published memoirs end with these words, but an interesting excerpt from the history of Brioni begins with precisely this sentence: **The struggle for Brioni between the heir to the throne and Paul Kupelwieser**. Already during his first longer stay, Franz Ferdinand enjoyed the island so much that he absolutely wanted to own a piece of land there. Paul Kupelwieser has put his memories of the dispute with the heir to the throne on paper but had not published them on the advice of his brother Karl. The records have been preserved and can still be found in the Kupelwieser Collection in the Austrian National Library.

Paul Kupelwieser describes his encounters with the heir to the throne and his family very precisely. He begins with the story of a visit in 1908. The sovereign couple comes incognito, is shown around the island and shows interest in the recently completed Hotel Carmen.

In December 1909 Kupelwieser is called to Sophie Hohenberg. She tells him that the family intends to come to Brioni in February 1910 and wants to stay at the Hotel Carmen. Sophie inquires about the prices and asks for a personal gas stove so that the cuisine can be taken care of by her personal staff.

In February 1910, the heir to the throne actually arrives with his family. Kupelwieser has redesigned an entire floor and turned the dining room into a salon. He describes their first stay as quite harmonious. He personally shows Franz Ferdinand around the island and the heir to the throne assures him that the climate is very pleasant for him and that he feels very comfortable. He personally guides Franz Ferdinand on a tour across the island and the heir to the throne assures him that the climate would be ideal for him and that he felt very comfortable.

Until then Kupelwieser's records had been free of negative vibrations in regard to relations with the heir to the throne. It should not be forgotten, however, that the text was intended for publication and Kupelwieser held back with expressions of dissatisfaction. Nevertheless, concern can be noticed already at this early stage of the relationship. Kupelwieser writes that the heir to the throne had said that the island would be in better hands with some other owner and that if the island belonged to him, he would first have all the cows slaughtered. These sentences had a direct effect on Paul Kupelwieser's health. He gets - so he writes - heart complaints and has to undergo medical treatment. So far, the text from the memoirs.

In the background the following happens: already during the stay of the heir to the throne, negotiations about a possible purchase of a plot for Franz Ferdinand on Brioni begin. On 16.3.1910 Alexander von Brosch discusses the possible options in a letter to Franz Ferdinand. Brosch is the aide-de-camp of the heir to the throne and represents him to the public in the matter. The letter shows that Kupelwieser is trying to make Franz Ferdinand buy a land plot on the mainland. He refuses and insists on Brioni, more precisely on the peninsula Barbana. Kupelwieser offers a corresponding piece of land free of charge, but - according to the proposal - after 20 years the entire property, including a villa built by Franz Ferdinand, is to be given to Kupelwieser or his heirs. Brosch calculates that the offer, which at first sight seems unacceptable, is actually

quite lucrative, if one includes the saved purchase price (that is approx. 200,000 crowns) and further that with interest and compound interest this capital would double in 20 years. Therefore Brosch recommends further negotiations.

Kupelwieser senses that the heir to the throne takes things seriously and actually thinks about selling the entire island and own alternative investments on the mainland. A letter from Kupelwieser follows on 31 March, then his son Carl takes over the case and writes to Brosch on 7 April 1910 and on 9 April 1910. An agreement is not reached.

The break between the successor to the throne and Kupelwieser comes at Easter 1911. Kupelwieser mentions that he was allowed to dine for the last time at the table of Duchess Hohenberg. As a guest of the heir to the throne, the court garden director, a certain Hofrat Umlauf, is also present these days. According to Kupelwieser, he estimates the value of Brioni at 25 - 30 million crowns.

As Kupelwieser writes in his memoirs: *It seems to me that this all too high estimate was probably the reason why His Highness no longer thought of a purchase, but looked for new ways how the desired goal could be achieved. A few weeks after Umlauf's estimate, an article was published in the Paris edition of the New York Herald that, due to the political situation with Italy, it was urgently necessary for the Austrian state to acquire Brioni. The non-military parts could be left to the heir to the throne.*

By now Kupelwieser fears to be expropriated. And something else happens: Kupelwieser is being bullied. He puts it like this: *The port admiral Excellency Ripper, a certainly efficient in many directions, very diligent and very ambitious, believed to earn the special benevolence, even the gratitude of the heir to the throne by doing everything possible to prevent the further development of Brioni. As I had heard from reliable sources, it was his intention to wear me down, i.e. to torture me in such a way that I would have to offer Brioni to Franz Ferdinand and to be grateful for any price he would pay for it.* According to Kupelwieser, Franz Ferdinand's wife Sophie mediates so far that not only scorched earth is left behind. After all, she wants to return to Brioni. In a letter to Father Krallinger (chaplain to Brioni), she wrote in November 1911: *Hopefully we will come back to Brioni, we all feel so fine there.*

Despite the disagreements, the heir to the throne and his family went on holiday to Brioni again in 1912. A meeting with the German Emperor Wilhelm takes place and shortly afterwards it seems as if an agreement on the land issue can still be achieved. Chief negotiator for the Kupelwieser family is son Carl. In the course of a sailing trip he agrees with the heir apparent on the following conditions: Kupelwieser establishes a villa and leaves it to Franz Ferdinand for 20 years or more, the heir to the throne only pays the interest on the bank loan to be included. The location of the property: the peninsula Peneda. The key points of the oral agreement are recorded in writing

Back in Vienna Franz Ferdinand, according to Kupelwieser, actually hands over the document to his lawyer for preparation. But when the finished contract is finally presented, Franz Ferdinand wants to know nothing more about it. *The old worries about Brioni are back,* writes Kupelwieser.

After the year 1912, there is no more correspondence on the subject and even Kupelwieser mentions the heir to the throne only once as a side note. For Austrian historians this signifies the end of the struggle for Brioni. Therefore Franz Ferdinand did not purchase any property there and there were no projects for a villa or the like.

Not so the Italian historians, especially architect Marco Pozzetto, the biographer of the architect Max Fabiani. Pozzetto states that it came to a court case of the harbor command (Pula) against Kupelwieser and

finally 1912 the western part of Brioni was ceded to the heir to the throne. Pozzetto quotes the architect Max Fabiani, who says: *I do not know if and when the historical documents, including the general drawings of the park of 1910, which must have existed, will no longer be a state secret, just because once again a head of state resides there.*

What is meant is that the plans for Franz Ferdinand's Brioni Villa were the model for the architect Glanz, according to which he built Tito's state villa next to the Castrum. The plans for the state villa, however, are not public, but confiscated and locked up. Unfortunately, Pozzetto does not name the sources for his comments.

Austrian and Italian historians disagree on the question of a villa on Brioni. Theodor Mautner Markhof has managed to find plans of a villa on Brioni in an archive in the course of working up his family history. There is a view of the land side of the villa and this view in fact has a great resemblance to Tito's state villa on Brioni. Further research is ongoing.

So I would like to conclude my speech with the following question: Pozzetto seems to be right when he talks about the plans for a villa in Brioni that go back to Franz Ferdinand and later become the model for Tito's state villa. Is Pozzetto right about the lawsuit against Kupelwieser? Did this trial take place? Did Kupelwieser have to relinquish part of the island to Franz Ferdinand in the end? So far in the Austrian archives no documents with answers to these questions have been found. The answers can be found, if at all, here with you in Pula.

#### Sources:

##### **Austrian National Library, Kupelwieser Collection:**

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Letter of 16.3.1910, Alexander von Brosch to Franz Ferdinand

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Letter of 7 April 1910, Carl Kupelwieser to Alexander von Brosch

Letter of 9 April 1910, Carl Kupelwieser to Alexander von Brosch

Letter November 1911, Sophie Hohenberg to Father Krallinger

##### **Other:**

Marco Pozzetto (Ed.): Max Fabiani, architetto. Gorizia 1966