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## EDUCATIONAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS OF VILLA KONCZAKÓWKA IN BRENNA

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### Konczakówka w Brennej. Konteksty historyczno-edukacyjne

#### Streszczenie

Konczakówka – willa zwana też dworkiem myśliwskim znajdująca się w Brennej, to miejsce atrakcyjne turystycznie, posiadające również potencjał edukacyjny. Powstało niemal 100 lat temu dzięki cieszyńskiemu kolekcjonerowi i kupcowi handlującemu żelazem – Brunonowi Konczakowskiemu, który dzieląc rodzinną pasję związaną z łowiectwem, od 1927 roku nabywał grunty, w tym gajówkę na stoku Czupel w Głębcu. Sama willa w stylu tyrolskim zbudowana została z drewna modrzewiowego i limbowego bez użycia gwoździ. Budowę rozpoczęto wiosną, a ukończono w grudniu 1929 roku. Dworek stał się miejscem spotkań towarzyskich, nie tylko tych, którzy byli powiązani z odbywającymi się tu polowaniami. Wnętrza dworku urządzone według pomysłu właściciela, ściśle współgrają z jego zainteresowaniami: zarówno kolekcjonowaniem dzieł sztuki, jak i trofeów myśliwskich. Choć pomieszczenia zostały mocno ograbione z eksponatów, to ciągle można dojrzeć tu czasy świetności miejsca. Limbowe meble, wiszące obrazy i niezliczone trofea myśliwskie teraz służą celom poznawczym, np. zobaczeniu, jak wygląda głuszec, skrajnie nieliczny ptak lęgowy, w Polsce narażony na wyginięcie. Przybywających do Konczakówki turystów niezmiennie wita pierwszy gospodarz tego miejsca, którego postać uwieczniono w drewnianej rzeźbie zawieszanej u powały. Oddzielnym obiektem należącym do nieruchomości jest neogotycka kaplica św. Huberta wzniesiona z piaskowca godulskiego.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Brenna, dworek myśliwski, Brunon Konczakowski, historia regionu, turystyka, edukacja artystyczna.

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## Abstract

Villa Konczakówka, also known as a hunters' manor, is situated in the town of Brenna. It is regarded as a tourist attraction also because it is a listed heritage building with educational potential. The place was built nearly 100 years ago through the efforts of Brunon Konczakowski, a Cieszyn-based collector and iron merchant, who kept his family's passion for game hunting and, in 1927, began to buy land properties, which included a forester's lodge on the slope of Mount Czupel in Głębiec (Brenna). The Tyrolean-style villa was built of larch and Swiss pine wood without using a single nail. Its construction began in the spring of 1929 and was completed in the same year's December. The place became a venue for social meetings, not only for people involved in the game hunting activities taking place there. The interior of the building, decorated according to the owner's ideas, closely matches the owner's interests, namely collecting works of art and hunting trophies. Although the rooms have been heavily stripped of exhibits, the glory days of the place can still be experienced there through Swiss pine furniture, wall-mounted paintings and countless hunting trophies, which can now be used for educational purposes. For example, one can see what the capercaillie, an extremely rare breeding bird, at risk of extinction in Poland, looks like. Visitors to Villa Konczakówka are invariably greeted by the original host of this place, whose silhouette is immortalised in a wooden sculpture hanging from the ceiling. A separate building belonging to the property is the neo-Gothic chapel of Saint Hubertus, built of locally quarried sandstone.

**Keywords:** Brenna, hunters' manor, Brunon Konczakowski, regional history, tourism, art education.

## Introduction

Brenna is a village in Teschen Silesia (Polish: Śląsk Cieszyński). Its history dates back to late the 15th and early 16th centuries<sup>1</sup>. It is an attractive places for sports enthusiasts and visitors to the region.

The sporting nature of the place is accentuated by venues and facilities such as a horse stud farm, ski lifts (Centrum and Węgierski), a canoeing and kayaking marina (a lake on the Leśnica brook) and a sports hall, and its natural scenery makes it the starting point of many trails leading to mountains such as Równica, Błatna, Horzelica, Grabowa, Kotlarz, Stary Groń, Trzy Kopce Wiślańskie, and Orłowa. Moreover, some buildings in the village listed on the Register of Immovable Heritage Sites. In addition to St John the Baptist Church from the 18th century, a 1789 presbytery vicarage from 1789 and a 17th-century cottage, the village has a hunters' villa, known as Villa Konczakówka<sup>2</sup>, with its St Hubert's chapel<sup>3</sup>. Although brochures for visitors to the village contain information about

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<sup>1</sup> W. Grajewski, *Brenna. Dzieje góralskiej wsi Śląska Cieszyńskiego*, Volume 1., *Od czasów najdawniejszych do roku 1848*, Stowarzyszenie Rozwoju "Integracja", Brenna 2014.

<sup>2</sup> PL.1.9.ZIPOZ.NID\_N\_24\_BK.443040, Register of Immovable Heritage Sites [Polish: Rejestr zabytków nieruchomych], as at 1 July 2024; <https://dane.gov.pl/pl/dataset/1130/> [accessed on 04.10.2024].

<sup>3</sup> PL.1.9.ZIPOZ.NID\_N\_24\_MA.11885; as above.

the villa, it is incomplete or even incorrect. Both the attention given to the site and research into the life of its original owner have produced a collection of comprehensive materials about the place. Filling the information gap with a reliable description of the historical contexts and educational value of Villa Konczakówka, which will soon celebrate its 100th anniversary, is the main aim of this paper.

## Research methods and research problems

The detailed analysis of the data collected on the basis of archival research (both of state and private archival records) and court records is made complete by including information from local newspapers and magazines. It follows that the analysis is based not only on the traditional, historical research method, but also methods typically used in media studies. Moreover, the ethnographic research method was used to some extent.

The theoretical and practical<sup>4</sup> research problems in this study are related to several questions. One of the questions is about when, in which year, the villa was constructed. Not less important is the question about the motivation behind the original owner's decision to invest their capital to build the place. Another question looks at how the property was used in the course of last century. This paper also attempts to answer the question about what guests visited Brunon Konczakowski's villa. Who visited the place and who has never been there? Also of great importance is the answer to the question about what use is made of the physical and spiritual legacy of the original owner of the hunters' manor.

## Findings and discussion

Brunon (Bruno) Konczakowski (1881–1959), the original owner of the building that this deals with is a legendary man. It can be claimed that most people living in the region have heard stories about this unremarkable iron merchant and his great passion for investing money in what is known as *emotional assets*. He collected mainly military items, which later found their way into the collections of the Museum of the Polish Army, the State Art Collections of the Wawel Royal Castle, or the Museum of Teschen Silesia in Cieszyn. He is also known as the founder of a private museum in the capital of the region<sup>5</sup>, as well as a keen

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<sup>4</sup> B. Klepacki, *Wybrane zagadnienia związane z metodologią badań naukowych*, "Roczniki Nauk Rolniczych" 2009, Issue 96(2), pp. 38–46; S. Palka, *Metodologia, badania, praktyka pedagogiczna*, Gdańskie Wydawnictwo Psychologiczne, Gdańsk 2006, pp. 11–36.

<sup>5</sup> J. Spyra, *Kolekcja Bruno Konczakowskiego – przykład prywatnego muzeum dzieł sztuki i rękodzieła artystycznego*, "Materiały Muzeum Wnętrz Zabytkowych w Pszczynie" 1990, Volume 6, pp. 109–128.

hunter and an extremely sociable person. This encouraged him to take steps to invest his capital in another property<sup>6</sup>.

This was made possible by a commercially successful first decade of the inter-war period. Konczakowski could afford to pursue an idea that suited his aforementioned interest in hunting. In the autumn of 1927, or more precisely on 26 September 1927, Brunon and his wife, Elly, or Elisa Maria, née Vogt (1887–1933), acquired a forester's lodge and a plot of land in the village of Brenna<sup>7</sup> (on the southern slope of Mount Czupeł in Głębiec (Brenna)), from the heirs to the builder Ludwig Kametz, who had died four years earlier. The forester's lodge was an old cottage, so it was no secret that the luxury-loving Brunon would try to build another place at the site of the lodge. As the *Gwiazdka Cieszyńska* weekly wrote, he intended to build a villa there and acquire his own hunting rights<sup>8</sup>. The construction of the villa, or rather a hunters' manor, today commonly known as Villa Konczakówka, began in the early spring of 1928<sup>9</sup>, but the building work was not completed before that year's December<sup>10</sup>. Bruno even brought in mountaineers from Zakopane (as well as carpenters from Górki Wielkie and Brenna) to work alongside local peasants at the building site<sup>11</sup>. The wood that was needed (Swiss pine wood and larch trunks) was brought not only from the Sub-Tatra region (Podhale), but also from the Italian and Austrian Alps. It is worth noting that the villa, built in the Tyrolean style<sup>12</sup>, which was the predominant architectural style in Central European tourist and spa destinations of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, was constructed without using a single nail, as the logs

<sup>6</sup> Konczakowski was already the owner of a tenement house at number 19 in Cieszyn's market square, which he had inherited from his father, Józef.

<sup>7</sup> Regional Court in Cieszyn, Land & Mortgage Registration Division, Title register for Brenna, LWH, No. 263.

<sup>8</sup> "Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" 1927, Issue 76, p. 3.

<sup>9</sup> The information on Brenna's official website that he bought the property in 1924 is incorrect <https://turysta.brenna.org.pl/pl/dworek-mysliwski-konczakowka> [accessed on 06.10.2024].

<sup>10</sup> For an account of the work at the building site and for information about the site workers, see: J. Mendrek, *Opowiadania*, typed pages, Skoczów 1977, pp. 54–58, (item 9596 in the collection of the Museum of Teschen Silesia in Cieszyn).

<sup>11</sup> According to Mendrek, the highlanders expected 20 zloty a day for *mossing* (moss was used to seal spaces between logs of wood), so Konczakowski bargained with the girls working at the site, who did the job at a competitive price of 6 zloty a day. Cf. J. Mendrek, *Opowiadania...* pp. 55–56.

<sup>12</sup> The Tyrolean style, also known as Alpine or Swiss style, has its roots in folk architecture. German architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel designed villas in this style as long ago as in the 1830s. The interest in this style was heightened by a competition for artwork and designs on Swiss national architecture, which was announced in Switzerland in 1852. Several entries in the competition were based on folk architectural motifs. The fashion for buildings in this style became very popular in Europe after the 1873 Vienna World's Fair; E. Wijas-Grocholska, *Dachy w szwajcarskim stylu*, from <https://dachy.info.pl/branza/dachy-w-szwajcarskim-stylu/> [accessed on 06.10.2024].

were laid with notched connections. The villa is a rectangular plan structure on a solid stone foundation, which made it possible to control the sloping land<sup>13</sup> at 640 m above sea level. In addition, recesses and arcade panels were used in the villa's stone underpinning to compensate for the difference in height, with basement windows placed in them.



**Photograph 1.** A commemorative photo taken after completing the first stage of the Villa Konczakówka project, April/May 1928

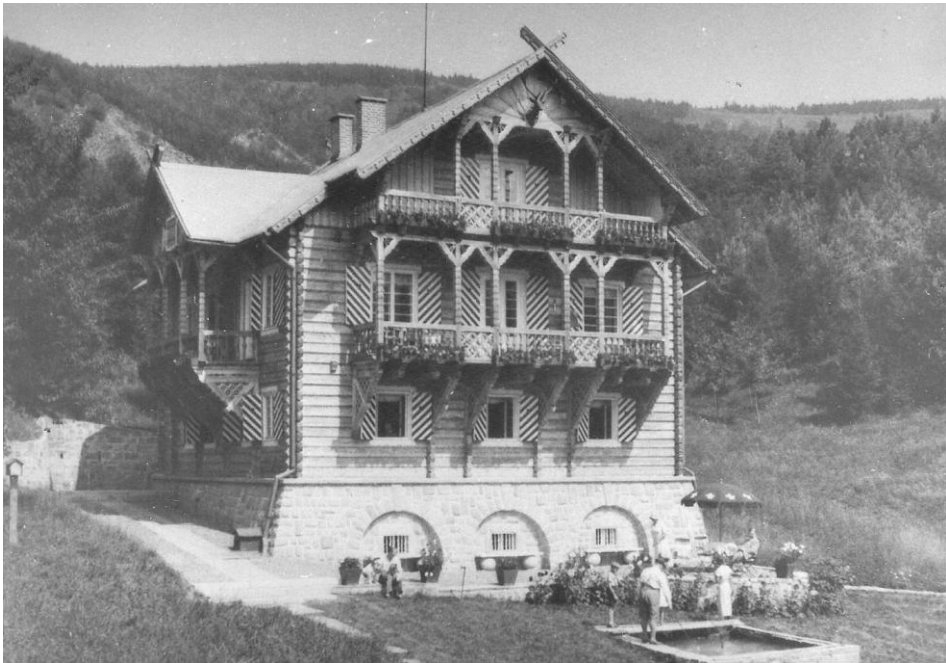
Source: Private collections kept by Marzena Bogus-Spyra and Janusz Spyra (materials concerning Bruno Konczakowski).

The building itself, with a so-called high ground floor, a ground floor and an attic, was originally covered with a material resembling asphalt shingles<sup>14</sup> rather than, according to the style guidelines, regular shingles or *dranica*, which is planks obtained by splitting logs manually (the roof is covered with sheet metal now). The roof was laid on rafters with moulded ends for decoration and simi-

<sup>13</sup> Alpine/Tyrolean style houses were built on a high, ground-levelling stone foundation, with timber-framed storeys covered by a low pitched roof.

<sup>14</sup> As architectural styles changed and the industrial revolution emerged, the need arose for a low-cost waterproofing material that allowed easy roofing and was a cheap material to replace expensive copper sheets. Asphalt shingles were first used in construction in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but they were not in common use before the 1920s. Brunon Konczakowski, who had a building materials store and traded in roofing paper.

larly decorated purlin ends. The chimneys lacked the upper covering common in the Tyrolean style (decorative gabled roofs). The gables of the building were partially boarded, creating an additional decorative motif. The triangular gables to the south and the west were decorated with deer antlers. Balconies extended under the eaves, on the front wall and on the side wall (facing a meadow). Outside, a spacious terrace with three stone benches was also an eye-catching feature of the building. It was directly connected to the garden, allowing dwellers to enjoy the almost unlimited space. A simple stone fountain was also placed on the grass right in front of the terrace. The villa's facade and, in particular, the balustrades of the balconies were decorated with cut-out geometrically-shaped features. Wood was also the material of the villa's openwork balustrades. The decorative shutters with two-coloured slanted strips also attracted attention.



**Photograph 2.** Villa Konczakówka in the 1930s.

Source: Private collections kept by Marzena Bogus-Spyra and Janusz Spyra (materials concerning Bruno Konczakowski).

The stunning villa, with its five bedrooms, a dining room and utility rooms, has an equally interesting interior design (said to have been designed by Bruno himself). In keeping with the purpose of this property, it had a style that suited the owner himself and the guests who visited the area for a hunting experience. The ubiquitous wooden panelling (even the ceiling between the ceiling joists was lined with herringbone planks), supplemented with small masonry features

(such as chimneys), created the impression of uniformity but also a unity of style. The interiors were filled with heavy Swiss pine wood furniture<sup>15</sup>. A tiled cooker in bottle green (this colour was also used for the panes of furniture and the clock standing in the dining room) added a bit of colour to the interior.



**Photograph 3.** The dining room in Villa Konczakówka in circa 1934

Source: Collections of the Museum of Teschen Silesia in Cieszyn, reference: MC/F/06907.

The whole area is decorated with countless antlers hanging on the walls (unique wig roe bucks, and bucks with non-typical antlers)<sup>16</sup>, a bear skull, stuffed animals (a medallion of a wild boar, foxes, crafted birds including capercaillie, which nowadays are extremely rare breeding birds, at risk of extinction in Poland), skins from wild boars and roe deer.

The interior decoration was made complete by paintings related mainly to hunting. It is said that a painting by Joris Hoefnagel could once be found there.

<sup>15</sup> Swiss pine wood walls and furniture items show health-promoting properties. According to recent studies, Swiss pine wood (or stone pine wood), has a calming effect on the autonomic nervous system so it allows you to sleep deeply and soundly thanks to the resins and essential oils it releases, especially pinosylvin. Staying in rooms lined with Swiss pine wood helps to slow down the heart rate.

<sup>16</sup> Not all of the antlers were Konczakowski's trophies. Some of them, especially the exotic ones, were simply bought by him. Most of them date back to 1930–1935.

Pictures (including lithographs), drawings and oil, tempera and watercolour paintings hang on the building's walls. These works were created by artists such as Otto Vollrath, Alfred Weczerzick, Josef Schmitzberger, Janina Gessner, Alfred Mailick, Václav Lev (Leo) Anderle, Georg Wolters, Carl Zimmermann, August Endlicher, and three paintings with amusing images (showing anthropomorphised animals) by Karl Wagner. A copy of a 1620 Rubens painting depicting St Hubert can be found there too. The pastel drawing captioned "Rud. Schuster Kunstverlag Berlin" differs from the original not only in size and painting technique, but in the presence of an additional dog behind the deer. What visitors to the villa will not find there today is a number engravings that originally hung in the dining room: a portrait of a highlander and a 'procession' of hunters. They will no longer see a bronze sculpture of St Hubert with a deer standing next to it, either.

In this description of the interior design of the building, it is also worth mentioning a truly unique wooden figure hanging on chains from the ceiling, which is still described by local news writers as "a sculpture of the god of wine hanging overhead". Indeed, one had to be familiar with Konczakowski's habits to see the owner himself in this hybrid, this being a male torso emerging from the two horns of a male Alpine Capricorn. The distinctive hat on his head was his favourite fez, or tarboosh, which he often wore when greeting his guests. The polychrome sculpture is a fairly faithful presentation of Bruno's facial features, and it reflects his character and hospitality as well. When and from whom he commissioned this chandelier, known as the *Lüstermännchen*, which was popular from the end of the 18th century (and popular particularly in Bavarian and Tyrolean areas), could not be established. However, a thorough examination of the item shows that it was made in 1930 by a person who signed it their initials "J.W.J.". This, however, has not yet been deciphered, although various dictionaries of artists have been consulted. It is likely that the person was one of many skilled craftsmen who, in response to high demand, produced this type of chandelier in two versions: one with a female and one with a male silhouette.

Above the large table in the dining room, there was also a huge chandelier. The base of the chandelier was a wagon wheel with metal fittings and eight arms complemented by a lower lampshade that was made of parchment (probably from sheep or goat skin). The lampshade had eight fields featuring hunting scenes (a young deer, a grouse, a fox, a deer with a huge antler, a bear, a marten, a wild boar, two pheasants). The author of these works was Rudolf Lamich from Cieszyn, who painted the lampshade walls in 1934.

There was also a collection of hunting weapons, including an antique cutlass, bear-hunting javelins, crossbows, double-barrelled shotguns and other rifles. The ambience created by the owner of the villa was complemented by commemorative photos. To this day, a photograph of Konczakowski's beloved



dachshund, Droll, from a kennel in Gartenstadt Gartenstadt<sup>17</sup> (near Hollabrunn), located about 50 kilometres from Vienna, hangs on the wall.



**Photographs 4 and 5.** Hanging from the ceiling is a sculpture of the owner of the villa. By J.W.J. 1930 (photographed by M. Bogus-Spyra)  
Source: Private collections kept by Marzena Bogus-Spyra and Janusz Spyra (materials concerning Bruno Konczakowski).

<sup>17</sup> This is evidenced by the inscription on a stone gravestone (Droll von Gartenstadt). The dog was buried by a stream about 70 metres away from the villa.

Slightly later than the house was constructed, the chapel of St Hubert<sup>18</sup>, patron saint of hunters, was erected, accessed by a long flight of stone steps. Fryderyk Konczakowski, son of Bruno and Elly, recalled that during a trip with his father through Austria, he had seen the prototype for such a chapel in Waldsee (near Mariazell), and soon afterwards, enchanted by the structure, built a similar one on his property. The chapel was built in the neo-Gothic style, using locally quarried sandstone, referred to as Godula sandstone, or sometimes as Brenna sandstone<sup>19</sup>. Centrally above the portal of the chapel, a partially glazed rosette only shows the stone head of a deer, with a golden cross above it. However, the most interesting feature is a Venetian mosaic with the image of the patron saint. It was made at the Kraków-based workshop called 'Krakowski Zakład Witrażów, Oszkleń Artystycznych i Fabryka Mozaiki Szklanej w Krakowie S.G. Żeleński'<sup>20</sup>. At the bottom of the mosaic is an inscription reading 'Krakow S.G. Żeleński'. In the lower right-hand corner, there is a caption reading 'Z.G. 1930', which indicates when the work was created. The building was consecrated by Cardinal Adam Sapieha (1867-1951), who was the Metropolitan Archbishop of Kraków at the time. A little further away from the villa and St Hubert's chapel, hidden among trees, is another chapel with an image of St. Jude (known as Thaddaeus).

The trees and the woodland park on the nearby hills, too, are the result of Konczakowski's efforts. He could afford to do so because he and his wife were gradually acquiring further land in the area. Following their first purchase of land in September 1927, they bought more land, from Paweł Wiesner as soon afterwards as on 19 December of that year. Ten days later, they bought a plot of land from Jerzy Waliczek. On 1 June 1929, Elly Konczakowska bought a plot of land from Paweł Strzelów and his wife, Zuzanna Strzelów. On 18 August, they bought another plot of land, this time from Paweł Galik and his wife, Helena Galik. All subsequent purchases of land were in the name of their son, Fryderyk<sup>21</sup>. All of the land covered approx. 200 *morga*'s<sup>22</sup>, or 120 hectares. It is a known fact that

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<sup>18</sup> According to the website of the Polish National Heritage Institute [*Narodowy Instytut Dziedzictwa*], the chapel was erected in 1934, which is not true. In fact, it was built not later than in 1930. <https://zabytek.pl/pl/obiekty/kaplica-sw.-huberta-930655> [accessed on 08.10. 2024].

<sup>19</sup> The sandstone was extracted from a nearby quarry, one of the largest quarries in Brenna.

<sup>20</sup> In 1902, the architect Władysław Ekielski and the decorative painter Antoni Tuch founded a stained-glass factory. They were soon joined by S. G. Żeleński, who was put in charge of the development of the factory's operations. Cf Z. Sroczyński: *Żeleńscy. Rodowód, dzieje rodu Żeleńskich z Żelanki*, Oficyna Wydawnicza "Adiutor", Warszawa 1997.

<sup>21</sup> Regional Court in Cieszyn, Land & Mortgage Registration Division, Title register for Brenna, LWH No. 484. and LWH No. 471; LWH 262 ; LWH 520, LWH 525, LWH 614, LWH 596, LWH 648, LWH 642, LWH 634.

<sup>22</sup> The size of *morga* varied depending on the region. For example, in the Lower Austrian region, one *morga* was equal to 0.5755 ha.

the family was one of the woodland owners in Teschen Silesia<sup>23</sup>. The villa and the forest were looked after by the forester Kawulok<sup>24</sup>, who Brunon would join for hunting (a cook and a maid also worked in the manor, and it was emphasised that Konczakowski hired only Polish servants<sup>25</sup>). The property in Brenna became Konczakowski's private hunting ground, where he hunted for smaller animals, namely capercaillie, hares and foxes, because these were the only ones found in the woods there (although deer and roe deer could be spotted occasionally). The forest at the site was not old because there had previously been a pastoral farm there<sup>26</sup>. Brunon, who was also dubbed "avid Nimrod"<sup>27</sup>, an outstanding hunter. He went hunting not only in his woodlands, but also in the state-owned forests in Niepołomice (where he bought a licence to hunt for roe deer), and in the woodlands belonging to the Stonawski family in Pogórze<sup>28</sup>. In the years between the wars, Konczakówka was a fashionable fishing ground complemented by a rich social life. Brunon would invite many guests to the place, the most famous one being President Ignacy Mościcki (who had his own residence in the town of Wisła, on Mount Zadni Groń by Mount Koziniec). The place was also frequented by Wojciech Kossak, who often stayed at a manor house in the nearby village of Górki Wielkie<sup>29</sup>, and, reportedly, also by

<sup>23</sup> As the "Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" weekly wrote, "A large part of the forests, approx. 18,000 hectares, mainly in the mountainous areas, is held by the State Administration of the former Teschen Chamber. Large forest areas are also held by Count Larisch in Zebrzydowice, Folwarczny in Małe Kończyce, Count Thun in Wielkie Kończyce, the commune of Skoczów, Golezów Cement Factory in Golezów and Górna Leszna, and Konczakowski in Brenna. The rest of the forest land is owned by farmers, especially in mountainous areas". ("Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" 1930, Issue 63, p. 4).

<sup>24</sup> As this surname is common in the region (a well-known family from the village of Istebna), it has not been possible to establish the forester's name, but there is every indication that he was one of the brothers of Jan Kawulok, regionalist, musician and storyteller (1899–1976).

<sup>25</sup> "Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" 1938, Issue 34, p. 4.

<sup>26</sup> The owners would set up what was known as 'pastoral farm partnerships', with their main assets being the mountain pastures where sheep grazed. In Teschen Silesia, pastoral farming was closely linked to the Wallachians, who had settled in the Beskid Mountains in the 16th century. The local highlanders learnt Wallachian shepherding and started making cheese and produced wool. Cf. L. Delaveaux, *Górale beskidu zachodniego pasma Karpat. Rys etnograficzny zwyczajów i obyczajów włościan okolic Żywca*, Józef Czech, Kraków 1851; J. Spyra, *Wisła. Dzieje beskidzkiej wsi (do 1918 r.)*, Volume 2, Galeria Na Gojach, Wisła 2007, pp. 33–37.

<sup>27</sup> „Gwiazdka Cieszyńska”, 1934, Issue 70, p. 4.

<sup>28</sup> In 1860, the estate was purchased by Jan Stonawski, and in 1876, after his death, it was bequeathed to his widow, Helena, née Król, who passed the property on to her son Adolf Stonawski. In 1937, Piotr Stonawski became the owner. In 1945, the Pogórze estate was nationalised.

<sup>29</sup> Tadeusz Kossak and Anna Kossak, née Kisielnicka, arrived in Górki Wielkie in 1922 from the Eastern Borderlands. The Kossaks leased the manor, which had previously belonged to the Habsburgs, from the Polish State Treasury and, after winning a tender for the property, became its owners. The Kossaks hosted many writers, including Jan Parandowski, Maria Dąbrowska, Jan Sztudynger, and Melchior Wańkowicz. Wojciech Kossak would come the place from Krakow, together with his children: Jerzy Kossak, Maria Pawlikowska-Jasnorzewska, Magdalena

Hans Moltke<sup>30</sup>. However, there are numerous discrepancies in the information concerning visits to Konczakówka by Hermann Göring<sup>31</sup>, the prime minister of the German Reich and the Great Hunter of the Third Reich. Frederick Konczakowski's memoirs show that his father never hosted him<sup>32</sup>, which can be confirmed by information from local newspapers, which meticulously recorded various events in Göring's life<sup>33</sup>, so his visit to the region would have been widely reported. It is therefore necessary to correct the information that can be found on tourist information websites, which suggest that 'his' bed can still be found in one of the villa's seven bedrooms<sup>34</sup>. This, however, is refuted by all the available sources. The information concerning the visits by the prime minister of the German Reich to areas belonging to the Polish state only confirms that in February 1935 Göring came to hunt for lynx, wolves and wild boar in the Białowieża Forest<sup>35</sup>. A visit to Bruno could only have taken place during the Second World War, when an outpost of the German Abhwera was located in Konczakówka, although even such a fact would certainly have been publicised. There is also no

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Samozwaniec. Jadwiga Unrug and her husband Stanisław Ignacy Witkiewicz (Witkacy) would visit the place as well.

<sup>30</sup> Hans Adolf von Moltke (1884–1943), a German diplomat. From 1913, he held the post of attaché at the Athens embassy and later in Istanbul (1914). In 1922–1924, he was a member of the Upper Silesian Mixed Commission [Polish: Górnośląska Komisja Mieszana], then a counsellor at the German embassy in Istanbul, and later the head of the Polish department at the German Foreign Ministry. He became a German MP in Poland in 1931 and, from November 1934, held the post of ambassador. He carried out his mission almost until the outbreak of World War II.

<sup>31</sup> Hermann Göring (1893–1946), a German politician and military officer, one of the most important activists in Nazi Germany, and a commander-in-chief of the Luftwaffe, but above all a war criminal. Cf: R. Manvell, H. Fraenkel, *Göring. Człowiek, który miał być następcą Hitlera*, Wyd. Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 2007.

<sup>32</sup> It is said that when Mościcki and Göring arrived for hunting, there were two dozen security officials on the alert in the open air. However, it is not clear which hunting occasion it was and where. It may have been a meeting in Białowieża. Göring was in close contact with President Mościcki. They went hunting together on several occasions, and Göring gave Mościcki a gift: a Hanover hound, followed by another gift in 1938, which was a Mercedes-Benz G5.

<sup>33</sup> In 1929–1939, the "Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" weekly mentioned Göring several times, including his wedding ("Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" 1935, Issue 31, p. 1.), his presence at the funeral of Józef Piłsudski ("Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" 1935, Issue 40, p. 2), his journey to the Balkans ("Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" 1935, Issue 45, p. 2), his visit in February ("Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" 1936, Issue 18, p. 3), his visit to Rome together with his wife ("Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" 1937, Issue 7, p. 1), and his 25th anniversary as a military officer ("Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" 1939, Issue 9, p. 3).

<sup>34</sup> <http://dziennikgorski.type.pl/?p=1802>; <http://www.eksploratorzy.com.pl/viewtopic.php?f=76&t=3634>; <https://katowice.wyborcza.pl/katowice/1,35063,2421233.html> [accessed on 08/10/2024].

<sup>35</sup> At the start of 1921, the area of the Białowieża Forest became part of the Polish state by virtue of the Riga Treaty and was incorporated into the state forest. ([https://geografia.umcs.lublin.pl/publikacje/tmp/16\\_biaowieza\\_monografia\\_63bff47813796.pdf](https://geografia.umcs.lublin.pl/publikacje/tmp/16_biaowieza_monografia_63bff47813796.pdf), p. 1104, [accessed on 13/12/2024]). Göring continued to go hunting there in 1937 and 1938, but did not take the hunting invitation in February 1939, and was replaced by Heinrich Himmler.

mention in the files in Katowice, where all meetings of notables were recorded<sup>36</sup>. Certain information may point to another Göring, namely Albert, who acquired Austrian citizenship in 1936 and rescued many people from wartime oppression<sup>37</sup>. During the war, Albert Göring worked as an arms export director at the Skoda factory in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, which was relatively close to Brenna. Unfortunately, there is no indication that a person with no interest in hunting would have visited Konczakowski's manor, so this hypothesis, too, has to be dismissed.

Similar information concerns a visit by Count Galeazzo Ciano<sup>38</sup>. Edda Ciano and Galeazzo Ciano stayed in Białowieża at the end of 1939, which was recorded in photographs by the then fledgling photographer and filmmaker Włodzimierz Puchalski. In diaries<sup>39</sup>, Galeazzo Ciano recalls, *inter alia*, hunting at that time, but wrote nothing about his visit or visits to the Brenna manor. During his visit to Poland, Ciano met and talked to, well, Hans Moltke, but the meeting took place in Warsaw.

It is known from the various interviews that have been transcribed and can be found in the materials about Bruno Konczakowski<sup>40</sup> that many people from Cieszyn, Bielsko, Skoczów and other places in the region would visit Konczakówka (they included two engineers with degree: Stanisław Staszkiwicz and Konrad Szubert, Judge Janusz Michalski, and Professor Józef Król), which is documented by photographs. Konczakowski not only hunted there. Above all, he relaxed with his family there, planted an orchard and raised poultry. As a member of the Silesian Hunting and Fishing Society, he took part in the hunting exhibition held from 7 to 15 June 1930, and his exhibits deserved special recognition<sup>41</sup>.

At this point, it is also worth mentioning that just before the outbreak of World War II, the authorities did not favour Konczakowski, who, supposedly for 'political reasons', was not allowed to buy the surrounding land, which in this

<sup>36</sup> Professor Ryszard Kaczmarek and Dr Mirosław Wędzki, who study records and newspapers from the inter-war and wartime periods, confirm that no such visit took place.

<sup>37</sup> When, in 1945, Albert Günther Göring (1895–1966) was preparing to be interrogated by American investigators in a Nuremberg prison, these investigators did not believe that the brother of the powerful Marshal Hermann Wilhelm Göring not only hated Nazism and was not a member of the Nazi Party, or NSDAP, but that he also had rescued Jews, dissidents and others at risk, and that he himself had been hunted down by the Gestapo. Cf: W. Hastings Burke, *Lista Göringa. Niezwykła historia Alberta, młodszego brata marszałka Trzeciej Rzeszy*, Wyd. Dolnośląskie, Wrocław 2011.

<sup>38</sup> Galeazzo Ciano, Count di Cortelazzo (1903–1944), an Italian politician, diplomat and journalist, leading activist of the fascist movement, and a son-in-law of Benito Mussolini.

<sup>39</sup> C. Galeazzo, *Pamiętniki 1939–1943*, Volumes 1–2, Wyd. St. Jamiołkowski and T.J. Evert, Łódź 1949.

<sup>40</sup> Private collections kept by Marzena Bogus-Spyra and Janusz Spyra (materials concerning Bruno Konczakowski).

<sup>41</sup> A hunting exhibition in Cieszyn, "Łowiec Polski" 1930, Issue 29, pp. 368–369.

case covered an uncultivated weedy land of seven *morga*'s. The highlander who approached Konczakowski about the purchase wanted to use the money to pay off his debt to his siblings. A newspaper note shows that Bruno was not particularly keen on buying the land, while the authorities actually punished not the Cieszyn merchant, but a poor peasant from whom no-one else wanted to buy this wasteland in the mountains<sup>42</sup>.

At the beginning of the war, in 1940, Konczakowski was sent to the Dachau camp because he was not German enough for the invaders at the time. When the war ended, he was sent to a labour camp for not being Polish enough. After the liberation, he continued to run his business for some time. However, he was no longer as energetic as he had been before to develop his business contacts and his passion for hunting. After all, the total centralisation of economic management was an effective impediment to that.

After World War II, Konczakowski also lost his beloved hunting lodge in Brenna. It was not quite in line with the laws passed by the communists. Unfortunately, no documents have been found which would clearly show that the villa was taken away from him on the basis of a court order<sup>43</sup>. Probably after the land was taken away from him by virtue of the agrarian reform decree of the Polish Committee of National Liberation of 6 September 1944<sup>44</sup>, which came into force on 13 September 1944 and which led to a fundamental change in the structure of the ownership of land properties (the provisions of the decree were applied by both the courts and the administrative authorities)<sup>45</sup>, he stopped going to the property, which now was allegedly looked after by the forester Kawulok, who later handed it over to an unnamed engineer<sup>46</sup>. The change of title was regis-

<sup>42</sup> *Pod włos...*, "Polonia" 1938, Issue 4848, p. 5; "Gwiazdka Cieszyńska" 1938, Issue 34, p. 4.

<sup>43</sup> Zofia Jablonska claimed that he needed only one more witness to keep his land instead of having it taken away from him. When she asked him why had not decided to subpoena her as a witness, Konczakowski allegedly said: "let them take it away! How am I going to get the money to pay taxes?" An interview with Zofia Jablonska, 25 August 1988, in: Private collections kept by Marzena Bogus-Spyra and Janusz Spyra (materials concerning Bruno Konczakowski).

<sup>44</sup> (Dz.U. [Journal of Laws] of 1945, No. 3, item 13). It is worth noting that this decree was a law passed against the constitution.

<sup>45</sup> Under the law as it stands today, he would have a chance to recover the property, as the Constitutional Tribunal aptly explained, in its resolution of 19 September 1990, W 3/89 (OTK 1990, No. 1, item 26), that a land property is a property of an agricultural nature, as the intention of the legislator was to allocate, for the purposes of the agrarian reform, those properties or parts thereof which were or could be used for agricultural production activities involving plant, animal and fruit production, but by other entities. Moreover, the prevailing view taken by the courts is that a land property is a property of an agricultural nature, and the land taken away from Konczakowski was not of such a nature.

<sup>46</sup> Kawulok swore to Brunon that he had handed over all the contents of the villa, but pulled out a handkerchief with the initials BK on it, which Konczakowski considered an act of betrayal. His son Frederick, too, said that the house had not officially seized from them, but added that

tered in the Land and Mortgage Register on 5 September 1958<sup>47</sup>. The manor was formally handed over to the local forest district office. Practically, however, it served, until 1989, as a holiday resort for members of the Provincial Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, first in Katowice, then in Bielsko-Biała. Today, the building is used as a training and recreation centre for the Ustroń Forest District Office and is owned by the State Forests, a Polish state forest management company [Polish: *Lasy Państwowe*].

As far as contemporary educational contexts are concerned, which are, after all, linked to the historical background of Villa Konczakówka, the place has, for many years, been used to support the development of art education. Every year, in August, Kończakówka plays host to international open-air painting and sculpture workshops, which are organised by, among others, by the Stowarzyszenie Twórcze Brzimy association.

The commune of Brenna, too, in its promotional activities, emphasises the uniqueness of the area rich in history, heritage sites, tourist attractions and natural scenery. Closely linked to this is the Hunting Trail in the commune. It allows visitors to learn about hunting culture, the surrounding nature and the fauna of the local forests. According the commune's official website,

the trail starts in Brenna Spalona, from where you can hike by along the Głębiec street. You reach a crossroads and leave the trail signs and walk to the Konczakówka Hunting Manor on the slope of Mount Czupel, surrounded by magnificent tree species, including larches, oaks and Douglas firs. After a visit to the manor, return to the crossroads and follow the signs of the walking trail along the forest path that leads to the area of Mount Czupel. From there, you can set off to Mount Błotnia (Błotny) or along the mountain ridges towards Górki Wielkie.<sup>48</sup>

Bruno Konczakowski's manor is also one of the sites along the cross-border route called 'Behind the scent of the tree'<sup>49</sup>, as one of twenty Polish and Slovak sites. It was listed as the fifth most inspiring wood-related place to learn about the history and culture of the Poland-Slovakia borderland region. The trail runs from Brenna in Poland to Babín in Slovakia and back. Importantly, a tour of the sites of geographical and historical heritage can be complemented by modern

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without the land it was impossible to keep the building in good condition. When he visited Brenna in 1960, after his father's death, everything there was supposedly complete. Vide: an interview with Fryderyk Konczakowski, 15 July 1988, in: Private collections kept by Marzena Bogus-Spyra and Janusz Spyra (materials concerning Bruno Konczakowski).

<sup>47</sup> Regional Court in Cieszyn, Land & Mortgage Registration Division, Title register for Brenna, No. 153. This title register shows that 15 properties were taken over (title register numbers: 22, 463, 484, 520, 618, 616, 525, 614, 596, 634, 626, 648, 642, 266 and 471), a total of 90.66 ha, including 1.28 ha of farming land and developed land.

<sup>48</sup> <https://turysta.brenna.org.pl/pl/szlak-mysliwski> [accessed: 16.12.2024].

<sup>49</sup> [https://europapnews.pap.pl/sites/default/files/2021-11/Prezentacja\\_Za%20woniom%20drzewa.pdf](https://europapnews.pap.pl/sites/default/files/2021-11/Prezentacja_Za%20woniom%20drzewa.pdf) [accessed on 16.12.2024].

technology and the use digital apps, as the sites "along the trail have been marked with information boards that show QR codes to confirm your visit to the site, to download the e-Lykożrut/e-Kornik app, or to download other information about the project. A text in Braille is available so that people who are blind or visually impaired can read the trail information and confirm their visit to the attraction they have reached<sup>50</sup>.

Intriguing sites, routes, educational paths, hiking trails and other attractions in the Brenna area can be combined with opportunities to try local food, which the original owner of the hunting villa, too, loved.

## Conclusion

The history of Villa Konczakówka has been written on the basis of on reliable and verified sources. They confirm that the villa, which was built in 1929 to function as a leisure and recreational facility and to serve the hunting passion and social gatherings, is an important heritage site in the region. Its history has a dimension that not only documents an interesting part of the tourist history of the region, but which is also a description of a place with contexts of an educational nature, allowing the lives of individuals to be linked with opportunities for action in certain political and economic systems. Brunon, who was building a business in the time of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and who knew how to invest his capital well between the two world wars, had to surrender part of his estate during the Stalinist period. As mentioned, the title to his beloved villa had been changed under communist rule on 5 September 1958, while he himself died a year later on 21 September, in Vienna, a place equally close to his heart. Without passing any judgement on Konczakowski's passion, although hunting is not something to be proud of nowadays, it must be said, not in a lofty tone, that he left behind a monument, not of bronze or marble, but one of spiritual legacy. His legacy is documented by a collection of cultural artifacts and a well-maintained piece of landscape with a property that art historians have come to appreciate, and which continues to serve posterity today in an educational capacity.

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<sup>50</sup> <https://europapnews.pap.pl/node/1952> [accessed on 16.12.2024].



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