



U.N.I.T.I

UNIONE NAZIONALE INDUSTRIE TURISTICHE ITALIANE

PIAZZA DEL POPOLO, 18 - ROMA - PIAZZA DEL POPOLO, 18

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BRIONI - ROMAN VILLA.

THE SEA-PORT OF AN EMPIRE POLA AND THE BRIONI ISLANDS

If we would understand the importance Pola had for the ex Austrian Empire, we should arrive at the city by sea. It is a port from which all our coast from Venice to Tarento could be dominated, and therefore we can easily understand why it cannot henceforth, as an Italian port, have the same military importance for Italy, that it had for Austria.

Whoever coming from the upper or lower Adriatic, and arriving at Pola, must comprehend the powerful menace of the port, protected not only by artificial defences constructed by the Austrians, but also by a line of rocks on the north and south, and by the Brioni Islands on the west. This group of rocky islands the *Pullari* of the Ancients, is the most advanced and potent dyke that nature has ever made, as a defense for the port of Pola.

These islands have common with Pola life and story from the time when, perhaps a

thousand years before the Christian era, the first people settled in Istria, and occupied the higher lands of the biggest of the group, namely the Brioni Maggiore, an island about 6 km. long by 3 km. wide, with a coast line indented with little bays cut into the deep valleys, and protected by ten little reefs and by the minor sister island; a real gem of the sea, the greatest and richest, in vegetation and in natural beauty, of those island that have protected the Istrian coasts from Parenzo to Pola.

Many of these have now disappeared but the Brioni still remain to the joy and the culture of man. Forgotten in chronicle and in story, every day reveals what the earth turns up, a precious testimony of their past life, and the liveliness of far-off memories; this resurrection of Pagan and Christian monuments associated with a various abundant and marvellous vegetation, forms a noble and picturesque en-





BRIONI - ROMAN REMAINS.

semble that it would be difficult to find its equal.

The proprietor of the Island, Sig. Kupelwieser, has spared no pains to revive the life of this delicious corner of the world in which the story of all time has left interesting pages. This much sought summer sojourn not only when subject to Austria, but also under the Roman Empire, still preserves remains of graceful and grandiose villas as the rustic villa of Monte Collisi with a splendid establishment for the pressing of olives; and that of Val Catena, in which little port the hooks in the masonry of the Roman mole may still be seen.

If the excavation could be continued the remains of other villas would certainly be brought to light, with which the constructive knowledge and skill of the Romans were able to satisfy the hedonism of the most wealthy,

so as to complete the picture, already rich, of Roman life that in this marvellous frame of nature, offers a real and precise archaeological esthetic joy.

And furthermore even primitive Christianity with the Basilica of Val Madonna on the same plan as the churches of Ravenna and Grado, and the church of S. Peter later on, has left notable traces in this island that passed in medioeval times under the dominion of Venice, and has only in these last years resumed its functions as a delicious restorer of health and a summer sojourn.

The destiny of the Brioni is signalized by the enchantment of the place; that of Pola in its strategic position that did not allow it to remain in the possession of any power other than Italy, be it a Roman Italy, Byzantine, Venetian, Austrian, or any but an Italy of the Italians.

It must then be ours; and Rome quickly recognized it. When scarcely had she subdued the Istrians though she had not yet entirely conquered Istria, a century before our era, Rome founded its two colonies of Trieste and Pola: the first as a bulwark against Aquileia, and the latter as a sentinel of Carnaro.

As a matter of fact, the solid possession of the coast imported ancient Rome more than the interior did, because a menace could be hurled on Rome from either Trieste or Pola.

From 27 B. C. Pola was perhaps the chief place of the province: it was a city of about 20,000 inhabitants, and was surrounded by a vast territory comprising the present communes of Dignano and of Valle, and sought from the sea, the springs of its vitality its functions and its importance. And while Aquileia centered in its emporium the commerce of upper Adriatic, Pola well-situated on the route of Salone, and the highways by sea to Constantinople, Illyricum, Noricum and Dacia and Pannonia, was a stopping place necessary for the transmarine traffic between Rome and the Orient. And Pola had the same importance during the Byzantine period. The new Kingdom of Italy with Ravenna as its capital, initiated a glorious period in the



POLA - TEMPLE OF AUGUSTUS AND TOWN HALL ON THE FORUM.

history of Pola; the country round the city - according to the poetic picture that Cassiodorus, the Secretary of Theodoric the Great, gives us, - was «populated with olives, crowned with vines: a delicious sojourn; dispensary of the royal palace, pleasures to the rich, fortune to the mediocres».

At the beginning of the V century, Pola was considered the granary of Ravenna, and by the destruction of Aquileia a. D. 452, it secured to itself all the commerce of the Adriatic, remaining the capital of Istria, still under the Byzantine Empire. After a D. 1000 Pola declines and just when the Republic of Venice in 1331, had received the spontaneous surrender of Pola - which had opposed itself so much to the Serenissima - the city was living only by continual strife, and communal ambition. Certainly Venice left no glorious or lasting records of itself there, except the fortress on the antique Campidoglio. The idea of restoring the port of Pola - which was useless or nearly so, during the Venetian occupation that lasted four centuries - remained to the French who saw its strategic importance; in fact when Count de l'Epine passed to the imperial ser-

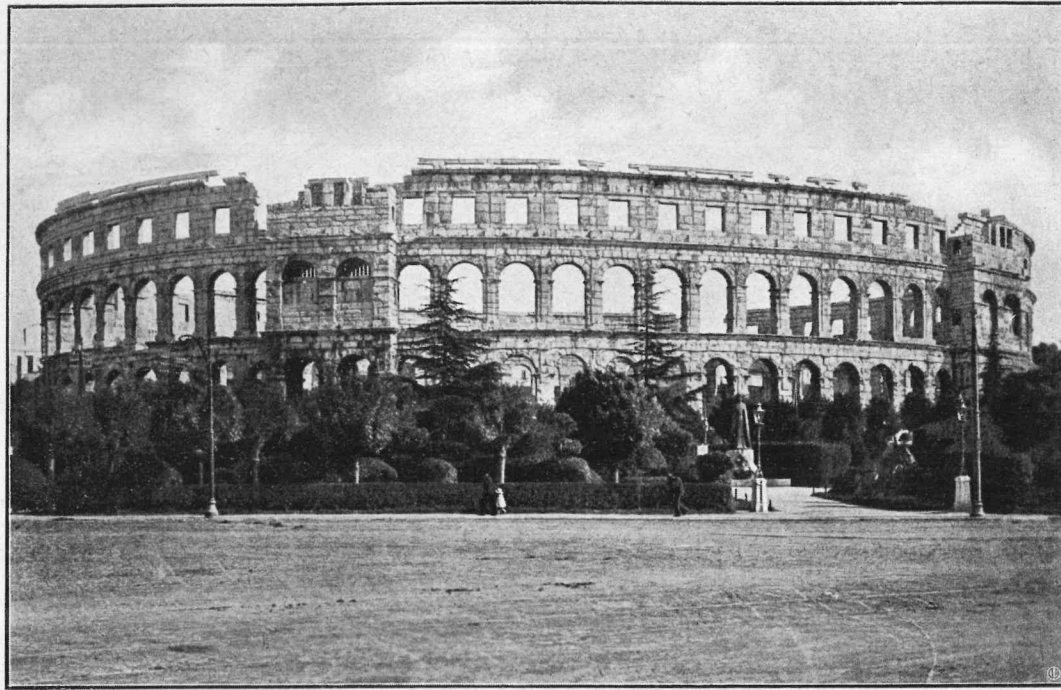
vice in 1802, after Pola had belonged to Austria, he proposed to make the city a sea-port for the Austrian navy, and when Pola was given back to Austria in 1814, with the whole of Istria, the construction of the fortifications was already initiated.

While Austria was in possession of Pola, she found the city a cumbersome burden for her, as it was for the Serenissima, but when she saw her hold of Venice unstable, she thought seriously about the matter, and quickly brought to a termination the works of the port, works she had projected already in 1848, but had not begun till 1861.

Thus should Pola rise again and prosper, only as a menace to Italy: this has been its destiny from 1861 to 1918.

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But if Pola should draw from the Austrian naval port, a new and flourishing life, and should reach the number of inhabitants it had under Rome, it must be said that Austria knew not how to preserve its antique



POLA - THE AMPHITREATRE.

physiognomy, or to give it a new esthetic aspect.

In fact she even changed the smiling nature of the place by the harbour works which rendered it necessary to cut off the pleasant little islets with liging rocks, and umbrageous ancient olive trees that were mirrored in the tranquil gulf. Long military constructions were backed monotonously without intervals of space roned in a line like rigid Austrian mariners on board a ship.

Sad to say, the rich jewel of the Trecento the Church and Cloisters of S. Francis, become a military magazine and the most conspicuous Roman monuments neglected and in part disfigured; the view on the horizon shut out from the city by the interminable walls of the arsenal; occupied with cannons and batteries the crests, the peaks, the seven hills which the city gloried in retrace the position and image of Rome. Modern Pola is not a city esthetically Italian, neither in its edifices, nor in its ultimate story: we fell that it represents for us a parenthesis closed: a mask that has darkened the Roman fulgidness of Pola, but fortunately has not destroyed it.

However the great necessity of space required for the modern city, enlarged beyond the antique, has prevented the ruin of Roman and Medioeval monuments.

Around the Palazzo Pubblico, the seat of the Commune, the old streets radiate out, and the ancient ascents leading to the Campidoglio, and down below towards the sea coast. In this centre of the city, which embraces all the monumental glory of Pola except the Arena, there remain as in a jewel case, all the links of its story, not bound to, nor fused with that of the Austrian domination, turning round beyond the antique *pomerium*, what we consigned *nolentes dolentes*, to the Austrians themselves in 1814.

Italy was destined to take up its monumental story again, and the isolation of the Arch of the Sergi, and of the Temple of Roma and Augustus, willed and achieved by Umberto Cagni - the first Italian Admiral of Pola - marked the initiation of a new era.

Besides the plan of the Roman city which remains integral, there are three of the principal monuments that Rome has launched in



POLA - THE ARCH OF THE SERGII OR PORTA AUREA.

the Adriatic city: the Forum, the Arch of the Sergi, and the Capitol or Campidoglio.

Of the two temples in the Forum one has been incorporated in the Medioeval Palazzo Pubblico; the other has been transformed into a church and remains almost intact. It was dedicated in the first times of Christian era by the pious colony tho the cult of the Mother - City, and of the first Emperor to whom its owes its resuscitation. Richly decorated, it preserves the façade almost perfect, with four columns of *venato* marble with rich capitals surmounted by a tympanum in which there was a medallion with the inscription: « *Romae et Augusto Caesari Divi f (ilio) patri patriae* ».

This temple now overlooks the Forum, by the demolition of three small houses that hid and suffocated it.

Along with this temple the Arch of the Sergi has been redeemed to Italy. It was also called *Porta Aurea* or the Golden Gate because originally it was backed up against the Oriental gate of the city to which the street of the Forum opened. It has four columns with Corinthian capitals, and was decorated at the sides and in the interior by a frieze and festoons, and was admired and pointed out for its architectonic elegance by artists of the Renaissance as Buonarroti and Sangallo. It was kept enclosed by Austria for 100 years in an iron sunk fixed in the modern place of higher level, but has now been restored to its original aspect and freed from encumbrance on all sides, as the pious lady *Salvia Postumia* willed it when she erected it in memory of her sons or brothers *Sergi*, whose name has been perpetuated through the whole Medio Evo.

Above these two monuments there stands the Campidoglio or Capitol of the Roman colony, in which among the Roman records the most conspicuous is the theatre between *Porta Ercole* and *Porta Gemina*, brought to light in part only, by recent excavations, there still remaining buried the orchestra and the *cavea* (pit). But by far the greatest jewel of the Campidoglio is the church of *St. Francis*, which drew from the poverty of the order of

the Minors and their rigid discipline a severe simplicity which the Romanic style enriches by a pure architectonic line, and Gothic ennobles with the light grace of its elegant ornamentation.

In the façade there is a magnificent portal in smooth square stones surrounded by small twisted spherical columns, and pilasters with leaves and shells. It is surmounted by a tympanum admirably carved.

The church has a single nave of uncommon amplexness, with three large Gothic windows on each side and three others in niches, and there is the little pulpit from which the humble Franciscan gave his discourses.

Austria made a military magazine of both Church and Cloisters, but this evil was removed immediately *Pola* became Italian, and the sacred edifice will now be restored for divine worship.

But when we arrive by sea or from the height of the Venetian Castle on the Campidoglio, we observe the plan of the Roman city still intact, one moment our attention is fixed and our admiration excited, above all in viewing the *Arena*, which among the hundred amphitheatres still to be seen in other imperial cities of Italy, is certainly one of the most conspicuous on account of its marvellous position, and for its aspect; in fact time and the hand of man, transformed the monument in a ruin preserving it like a gigantic skeleton of stone, to which no fancy or skill of an artist could give an architectonic form so singular. Admired by illustrious artists and by learned visitors of every period, the amphitheatre unfortunately drew also some people as a good stone quarry; already in the Trecento the three rows of seats or gradations would have been entirely destroyed, but remained intact, also the 72 arcades supported by doublepilasters which round the slope of the hill on two axis marked 137 and 110. The two principal entrances are constructed of simple but severe monumental arches, and in the centre is the elliptical arena 67,45 metres by 41,65 and here were given the sports and games.

The arena was surrounded by a corridor with a railing which separated it from the

podium in which the better class of the people were, and the capacity of the whole was about 20.000 spectators.

Such is the monument Romanity has left to *Pola*. When we think that it was projected to demolish it and reconstruct it in Venice, that the « ships on entering the Canal of *S. Mark* might admire it before any other thing which the potent sagacity and audacity of Venetians had created »; not only archeologically but as Italians we should rejoice that

the demolition was not executed and that during the 100 years of Austrian domination the amphitheatre and the other monuments have remained to attest the Romanity of this most Italian region. They were the most precious treasure; the incontestable and inalienable property, and the highest testimony of the original nobleness of our race that finally has re-entered into possession of *Istria*, by virtue of its army and people.

GUIDO CALZA

