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*Suivrai vos conseils et attendrai en philosophie  
d'apprendre mon sort et probablement de toute  
l'Europe à la Gastein. [26.05.1798]*  
**Prince Archbishop Colloredo's Visits to the  
Spa Village Gastein**

### **Introduction**

As the last Prince Archbishop of Salzburg, Hieronymus Count Colloredo (time of reign: 1772–1803/1812) suffered from a relatively poor health status, physicians recommended him to take therapeutic baths in the famous spa village Gastein. He seemed to have enjoyed his stays in Gastein, however, he was by no means satisfied with the primitive accommodation facilities of the famous spa village. The aim of this paper is to give a brief historical overview of the mineral springs in Gastein and their usage. Furthermore, Hieronymus Count Colloredo's stays in Gastein shall be reconstructed via the analysis of his private letters to his brother Gundaker Prince Colloredo.<sup>1</sup> The positive impact, which the Prince Archbishop of Salzburg had on the remote and antiquated spa village Gastein, shall be in the focal point of interest.

### **History of the mineral springs in Gastein**

Gastein is situated in Salzburg, in the district of Pongau. It is located about 1,000 metres above sea level at the northern rim of the *Hohe Tauern* and was originally a gold mining area and the site of an ancient trade route. The oldest document in which the mineral springs of Gastein are mentioned, dates back to 1350, however, one can assume, that people had been bathing in the water even centuries before. The first accommodation for guests was probably built in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The “Straubinger-Wirt”, until the 20<sup>th</sup> century one of the most famous taverns and guest houses in Gastein, was founded in 1460.<sup>2</sup>

- 1 The author of this short paper is currently working for the FWF-Project “The Private Correspondence (in French) of the Last Prince Archbishop of Salzburg, Hieronymus Graf Colloredo, with his brother Gundaker Fürst Colloredo (1772–1801)” [Project number: P24623-G18], which is conducted at the Department of History at the University of Salzburg.
- 2 Cf. Fritz GRUBER, Die Entwicklung des Heilbades in der Gastein bis in das 16. Jahrhundert, in: Heinz Dopsch / Peter F. Kramml, Hg., Paracelsus und Gastein. Vorträge bei den Internationalen Kongressen in Salzburg und Badgastein anlässlich des Paracelsus-Jahres 1993 (= Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde Ergänzungsbd. 14, Salzburg 1994), 499–516; Ulrike ENGELSBERGER, Wildbad Gastein, in: Josef Nössing, Red., Die Alpen als Heilungs- und Erholungsraum. Le Alpi Luogo di Cura e Riposo (= Schriftenreihe der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpenländer N.F. 6, Bozen 1994), 157–175.

Like many other spa towns in Europe, Gastein had survived several ups and downs throughout its history. Especially since the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, authors publishing travel literature, harshly criticised the backwardness and the primitive conditions of the famous spa village of Gastein. Many blamed the former prince archbishops of Salzburg for having neglected one of the finest spas of Europe.<sup>3</sup> The mineral springs had and still have “miraculous” effects, especially on patients suffering from paralysis, organ diseases, asthma, dysfunction of the nervous system, skin rashes, arthritis and rheumatism.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the excellent quality of the air around Gastein has a positive influence on the body. As a consequence, many people from all over Europe came to Gastein despite the primitive accommodation and the difficulty of reaching the town. By the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century more than 1,000 people per year took therapeutic baths in Gastein.<sup>5</sup>

### Hieronymus Count Colloredo and Gastein

When Hieronymus Count Colloredo was elected Prince Archbishop of Salzburg, he already suffered from relatively poor health. Born in 1732 in Vienna, he was the second son of Rudolf Wenzel Count/Prince Colloredo, a high-ranking imperial official and imperial-vice-chancellor since 1745. Since Hieronymus’ health did not allow him to pursue a military career, he became a priest. In 1761 he was elected bishop of Gurk and at the age of 39 (in 1772) he became Prince Archbishop of Salzburg.<sup>6</sup>

So far, it cannot be established when Hieronymus Count Colloredo visited Gastein for the first time, however, on 18<sup>th</sup> June 1790 he mentioned and criticised the facilities and primitive accommodation of the famous spa village in a letter to his brother: “*Suis condamné à passer trois semaines ici ce qui cependant m’ennuyé, car j’y suis très mal logé dans une maison de planches où on risque à tout moment d’être grille.*”<sup>7</sup> He was by no means satisfied with the basic conditions in Gastein, which had not changed a lot since the end of the Middle Ages.

3 Cf. Elisabeth LOBENWEIN / Alfred Stefan WEISS, Vom Wildbad zum Heilbad. Die Thermalquellen in Gastein im Blickpunkt der Reiseliteratur bis ca. 1830, in: Virus. Beiträge zur Sozialgeschichte der Medizin 12 (2013), 27–42.

4 Ignaz NIEDERHUBER, Einige nothwendige praktische Erläuterungen über den nützlichen Gebrauch des im Hochgebirge des Erzstiftes Salzburg gelegenen Gasteiner Wildbades (Salzburg 1792), 21–25; Christa HABRICH, Medizin- und naturwissenschaftshistorische Aspekte der Alpen als Heilungs- und Erholungsraum, in: Josef Nössing, Red., Die Alpen als Heilungs- und Erholungsraum. Le Alpi Luogo di Cura e Riposo (= Schriftenreihe der Arbeitsgemeinschaft Alpenländer N.F. 6, Bozen 1994), 11–33, here 22, 24.

5 Especially “important” or “famous” people (like e. g. monarchs, rulers, politicians, people from the upper nobility, authors, composers etc.), who came to Gastein in order to use therapeutic baths or spent their summer retreat there, have been in focus of attention. Cf. Heinrich ZIMBURG, Die Kurgäste Bad Gasteins in den letzten 500 Jahren (Bad Gastein o. J. [1954]). However, it has to be explicitly noted here that there also existed a hospital for the poor (which included a bath). Roland FLOIMAIR, Hg., 500 Jahre Badehospiz Badgastein (= Schriftenreihe des Landes-pressebüros. Serie „Salzburg Dokumentationen“ 99, Salzburg 1989).

6 Cf. Ludwig HAMMERMAYER, Die letzte Epoche des Erzstiftes Salzburg. Politik und Kirchenpolitik unter Erzbischof Graf Hieronymus Colloredo (1772–1803), in: Heinz Dopsch / Hans Spatzenegger, Hg., Geschichte Salzburgs. Stadt und Land II/1 (Salzburg 1995), 435–535; Alfred Stefan WEISS, Hieronymus Graf Colloredo (1732–1812) – geistlicher und weltlicher Herrscher, in: Mitteilungen der Gesellschaft für Salzburger Landeskunde 144 (2004), 225–250.

7 Státní Archiv v Zámrsku, RA Colloredo-Mansfeld, Kart. 61, fol. 100<sup>r-v</sup>, 102<sup>r</sup>; Letter from Hieronymus Count Colloredo to Gundaker Prince Colloredo, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1790.

It must have been quite an embarrassment for the sovereign of Salzburg to see one of the finest and most famous spas of Europe in such a bad condition. In 1786 he had been to the famous spa town Spaa in Belgium, in order to survey the famous “Emser Kongreß” at close quarters.<sup>8</sup> Spaa, with its modern hotels and baths, casinos, ballrooms and concerts was in harsh contrast to the old taverns and wooden baths of Gastein. The backwardness of the baths and accommodation was so striking that regeneration seemed inevitable. Hieronymus Count Colloredo's predecessors had had various plans for modernising the baths, e.g., to redirect the water to Hof, a village near Gastein. All plans failed primarily due to the inhabitants of Gastein's protests.<sup>9</sup> Colloredo, however, was finally the first ruler of the Archbishopric of Salzburg who actually had at least some impact on the modernisation and further development of Gastein.

## The castle

In the end a natural disaster was the deciding factor for the further development of the spa village. In 1789, a flood and a subsequent landslide had damaged houses, roads and bridges in Gastein. Prince Archbishop Hieronymus Count Colloredo visited the spa village a year later and wrote to his brother in a letter that he was really shocked by the damage the flood had caused the year before.<sup>10</sup> Colloredo was determined to change and improve the situation for the guests in Gastein. He invested quite a lot of money to build a massive dam and repair the roads. He tried to convince the inhabitants of Gastein to modernise their taverns, so that the upper nobility could stay in more comfortable accommodation. He even offered them money for the conversion of their buildings; however, they refused any intrusion from outside. After the failure of his first plan, Colloredo intended to build a public bathing area, consisting of a castle, two subsidiary buildings, a ballroom and two guest houses. He definitely had famous public baths in mind like Spaa or Ems.<sup>11</sup>

He advised a civil servant to find an acceptable place for the buildings and soon it became clear that the valley of Gastein was too steep and too narrow for such a big complex. Furthermore, the landlords of the taverns threatened to boycott Colloredo's plans and said that they

8 For further information regarding the Emser Kongreß cf. Hammermayer, Epoche, wie Anm. 6, 470–488; Josef STEINRUCK, Bemühungen um die Reform der Reichskirche auf dem Emser Kongreß (1786), in: Remigius Bäumer, Hg., *Reformatio Ecclesiae. Beiträge zu kirchlichen Reformbemühungen von der Alten Kirche bis zur Neuzeit*. Festgabe für Erwin Iserloh (Paderborn u. a. 1980), 863–882.

9 LOBENWEIN / WEISS, Wildbad, wie Anm. 3, 38. The plan to redirect the healing water to Hof could be realized between 1828 and 1830. Cf. Joseph ZIEGLER, Hg., 100 Jahre Thermalbad Hofgastein. Festschrift zur Jahrhundertfeier August 1928 (Hofgastein 1928); Sebastian HINTERSEER, Bad Hofgastein und die Geschichte Gasteins. Gewidmet zur Erinnerung 150 Jahre Heilbad Hofgastein 1828–1978 (Salzburg 1977).

10 “*Les médecins me défendent de m'appliquer aux bains, ainsi vous m'excuserés, que je suis si court dans ma réponse à votre chère dernière du neuf, que je vous adresse du haut des montagnes, couché entre les mines d'or et une superbe cascade d'eau, d'une rivier nommé Gastein qui se précipite du haut des roches dans la plene, ce qui fait un coup d'œil superb d'un côté, mais de l'autre on voit les dégüts que les eaux ont fait l'année passée ce qui fait horreur.*” Státní Archiv v Zámrsku, RA Colloredo-Mansfeld, Kart. 61, fol. 100<sup>r-v</sup>, 102<sup>r</sup>, Letter from Hieronymus Count Colloredo to Gundaker Prince Colloredo, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1790.

11 Heinrich ZIMBURG, Das Badeschloß in Badgastein. Sonderabdruck aus dem Badgasteiner Badeblatt Nr. 20, 21, 22 (1962), 5, 7. [Anton WASSING], Wildbadgastein und sein Badeschloß. Zur Säcularfeier der Erbauung des Badeschlosses im Jahre 1794 (Salzburg 1894), 6.

would not sell any land, if he planned to build a public bath. Obviously they did not want to compete with a public bath as this would have meant a loss of income for them. Finally, a reasonable compromise was made: in 1791 Colloredo started to build a “smaller” version of the castle. The building should function only as Colloredo’s private castle and should not be opened for the public.<sup>12</sup>

Colloredo’s well-known stinginess is also reflected in the castle in Gastein: although it was the first stone building in Gastein, it was rather simple in form, style and furnishings. It was a single-storey building, with seven window axes, seven rooms and a kerb roof. The only decoration of the building was at the front, which was made of serpentine. The part of the spring water that was piped to the castle, was called “Fürstenquelle” (“spring of the prince”). All in all the construction of the castle cost about 41,000 florins and lasted four years.<sup>13</sup> Between 1794 and 1800 Hieronymus Count Colloredo used the castle just six times and usually stayed there for three to four weeks between June and July. As a consequence the building remained vacant for the rest of the time.

Colloredo was well aware of the economic and national importance of Gastein, hence he tried to accomplish improvements in order to stimulate the profit for the state. The building of the castle in Gastein can be interpreted as a step in the right direction even though Colloredo’s grandiose plans for a public bath failed due to the resistance of the inhabitants. In 1807, after Colloredo’s escape from the French Revolutionary Army and his resignation as the sovereign of Salzburg, the castle in Gastein was opened to the public by Emperor Franz I. The building was adapted and enlarged and from that time onwards it functioned as a meeting point and provided accommodation for the high nobility.<sup>14</sup>

## Hieronymus Count Colloredo as private person in Gastein

But what do we actually know about Colloredo’s stays in Gastein?<sup>15</sup> As he suffered all his life from relatively poor health, his physicians recommended him to take therapeutic baths in Gastein. So his main reason for going to Gastein was to improve the status of his health. In 1790, during one of his visits to Gastein, Colloredo confided in his brother Gundaker in a private letter that he actually doubted the apparent positive effects of the therapeutic baths. Still, he was convinced that at least the fresh air, the diet as well as the exercise – he loved to

12 ZIMBURG, Badeschloß, wie Anm. 11, 7, 10–11; WASSING, Wildbadgastein, wie Anm. 11, 6–9.

13 ZIMBURG, Badeschloß, wie Anm. 11, 11, 13, 16; WASSING, Wildbadgastein, wie Anm. 11, 9–11. Some of the accounts of the construction of the castle can be found in Salzburger Landesarchiv, Hofbauamt 08/085; Churf. u. k. k. österr. Reg. XIII/12.

14 ZIMBURG, Badeschloß, wie Anm. 11, 16, 19; WASSING, Wildbadgastein, wie Anm. 11, 11–12.

15 So far, Hieronymus Count Colloredo’s stays in Gastein can be reconstructed via his private correspondence with his brother Gundaker Prince Colloredo and – at least to some extent – via the entries into the “Ehrungsbücher” [a specific kind of guest book] of Gastein. Further documentation has not been retraced so far. For further information on the “Ehrungsbücher” cf. Heinrich von ZIMBURG, *Die Geschichte Gasteins und des Gasteiner Tales* (Wien 1948), 160–161; cf. also e. g. M. SCHÖBERL, *Blumenlese aus den Ehrungsbüchern von Badgastein* (Salzburg 1854).

carry out longer rides with the horses – had a positive influence on his health.<sup>16</sup> Colloredo's health deteriorated day by day, especially in his sixties. Furthermore, the tense situation during the First War of Coalition (1792–1797)<sup>17</sup> had a negative influence on his mental and physical strength. On 20<sup>th</sup> June 1795, he wrote in a letter to his brother that not only had his physicians urged him to go to Gastein, but that he himself had to admit his need for therapeutic baths and time for rejuvenation.<sup>18</sup>

Colloredo usually travelled in a horse-drawn carriage to the spa village. A cook, servants and his valet accompanied him. It seems – as far as it is known so far – as if Colloredo did not set value on a grand entourage (which would actually correspond to his stinginess) and that he intentionally withdrew from the outer world in order to flee from the stress of everyday life. Unfortunately we know little about his daily routine and company in Gastein. Only in one letter to his brother one can read that in 1798 he had been to Gastein, where he met with his favourite niece Countess Antonia Lützwow.<sup>19</sup>

### Political Duties during Hieronymus Count Colloredo's visits to Gastein

As Hieronymus Count Colloredo was the sovereign of the Archbishopric of Salzburg, another important and interesting question is how did he fulfil his political duties during his stays in Gastein? Interestingly, some changes can be observed regarding his political duties before and during the First War of Coalition. Before this period of war, Colloredo decided for himself when he wanted to go to Gastein. Important political decisions were postponed during Colloredo's time of absence. His correspondences, especially those with his chancellor and his brother, were at a minimum level or were even interrupted during his stays in Gastein.

After the outbreak of the First War of Coalition the situation had dramatically changed. Before organising a trip to Gastein he asked his brother, who worked as Imperial Vice-chancellor in Vienna, to advise him whether he could leave his residence and go to Gastein or not. On May 26<sup>th</sup> 1798, e.g., he thanked his brother for giving him an update on the topical political situation and for encouraging him to go on a bathing trip: “*Suivrai vos conseils et attendrai en philosophie d'apprendre mon sort et probablement de toute l'Europe à la Gastein.*”<sup>20</sup>

16 “*Je prends ces eaux, ou pour mieux dire, je m'y baigne depuis quatre jours, on dit qu'elle me font et feront encor plus de bien, mais je crois que c'est l'aire, le mouvement et le régime qu'il faut tenir.*” Státní Archiv v Zámrsku, RA Colloredo-Mansfeld, Kart. 61, fol. 100<sup>r-v</sup>, 102<sup>r</sup>, Letter from Hieronymus Count Colloredo to Gundaker Prince Colloredo, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1790.

17 For general information regarding the First War of Coalition and Salzburg cf. Hammermayer, Epoche, wie Anm. 6, 488–498.

18 “*Comme mes médecins veulent absolument que j'aie prendre les bains de Gastein et que j'en sens le besoin moi-même, je n'ai pas voulu manquer de vous prévenir que je compte m'y rendre les premiers jours de la semaine prochaine et en même tems vous prier que [...]*” Státní Archiv v Zámrsku, RA Colloredo-Mansfeld, Kart. 61, fol. 579<sup>r</sup>–580<sup>r</sup>, Letter from Hieronymus Count Colloredo to Gundaker Prince Colloredo, 20<sup>th</sup> June 1795.

19 “*Je me baigne et me porte encor assés bien, grimpant des montagnes avec la Lutzow quand la pluye presque continuelle le permet.*” Státní Archiv v Zámrsku, RA Colloredo-Mansfeld, Kart. 62, fol. 551<sup>r-v</sup>, Letter from Hieronymus Count Colloredo to Gundaker Prince Colloredo, 28<sup>th</sup> June 1798.

20 Státní Archiv v Zámrsku, RA Colloredo-Mansfeld, Kart. 62, fol. 537<sup>r</sup>–538<sup>r</sup>, Letter from Hieronymus Count Colloredo to Gundaker Prince Colloredo, 26<sup>th</sup> May 1798.

At a time in which half of Europe was at war, politics was more than ever on the daily agenda and an extremely important factor, even during Colloredo's stays in Gastein. Before starting his trips, Colloredo installed a commission of government, which should act as proxy for him during his absence, particularly if quick decisions had to be made. As during time of war information density increased enormously, also Colloredo wrote and received many more letters than in times of peace. As he also wanted to be informed about all new developments happening throughout Europe during his stays in Gastein, the amount of his correspondence was much more intensified; consequently he had to fulfil many more everyday duties during his bathing trips.

In 1795 and 1797, he even used his time in Gastein to talk to his "rebellious" subjects. As the peasants from the mountainous areas of Pinzgau and Pongau had refused to become recruited and even threatened to revolt, Colloredo benefitted from his travels to Gastein to have direct contact with them and to "preach remorse and reason to them".<sup>21</sup>

## Conclusion

Since the Late Middle Ages Gastein was one of the best known spas of Salzburg and even Middle Europe, due to the miraculous quality of the mineral springs. Interestingly the accommodation facilities did not change a lot over the centuries. Authors especially, when publishing travel literature in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, harshly criticised the backwardness and the primitive conditions and blamed the former prince archbishops of Salzburg of having neglected one of the finest spa villages of Europe. Prince Archbishop Hieronymus Count Colloredo was well aware of the economic and national importance of Gastein; hence he tried to accomplish improvements in order to stimulate the profit for the state. The building of the castle in Gastein can be interpreted as a step in the right direction, even though Colloredo's more grandiose plans of a public bath failed due to the resistance of the inhabitants. Nonetheless, Colloredo was the first ruler who actually had some influence on the modernisation and further development of Gastein.

Colloredo's main reason for going to Gastein was to improve the status of his health. He withdrew from his turbulent and stressful everyday life and tried to regain some strength in Gastein. This situation radically changed after the outbreak of the First War of Coalition. In times in which important political decisions were on the daily agenda, Colloredo could not so radically withdraw himself from the world, but wanted and had to remain informed about the European-wide developments.

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21 "Je ne fais que d'arriver à la Gastein [...]. J'ai parcouru toutes mes montagnes où j'ai passé mon tems à prêcher à mes sujets au point que j'en suis revenu tout enroué." Státní Archiv v Zámrsku, RA Colloredo-Mansfeld, Kart. 62, fol. 345<sup>v</sup>, Letter from Hieronymus Count Colloredo to Gundaker Prince Colloredo, 3<sup>rd</sup> July 1797.