

# An overview of the history of homeopathy in Slovenia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century

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## Introduction

I came upon the subject of homeopathy in the course of my research of present-day alternative or complementary medicine in Slovenia<sup>1</sup> and found out that homeopathy started to appear in Slovenia around the late 1980s and early 1990s. It was commonly held, of course, that as with many other methods of contemporary complementary medicine, homeopathy was a method imported from abroad which spread here as a novelty. Research, however, showed that homeopathy has quite a tradition in Slovenia.

Homeopathy already established itself in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, that is at a time when other healing methods appeared which official medicine considered to be questionable in many ways. Ideas about healing chronic diseases with natural methods were introduced from Germany and spread here in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. These methods were primarily based on empirical findings, but they were not proven scientifically. Following foreign examples natural health and bathing resorts were established in Slovenia. The natural healing methods elaborated by the German priest Sebastian Kneipp and the Swiss industrialist Arnold Rikli were the most successful ones. The Kneipp method was mostly adopted by common people, whilst Rikli's method was accessible only to wealthy people. From the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and until the First World War Kneipp's principles were practised in spas in Ljubljana and Kamnik<sup>2</sup> and some methods, like walking in the morning dew, cold showers, and walking barefoot in the snow survived until the Second World War. The natural health resort in Bled became quite famous. It was established by the Swiss industrialist Arnold Rikli, who had moved to Bled in 1855. Rikli's patients got up early, did not eat meat and were forbidden to smoke or drink alcohol. They were housed in wooden huts, exercised a lot and had water, air, and sun baths. The healing process was long and expensive and only wealthy people could afford it. After the First World War, the health resort stopped operating.<sup>3</sup>

In the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century Mesmer's magnetism spread in Slovenia and numerous lay people and some physicians experimented with it with more or less success, though the practise was banned as early as 1824.<sup>4</sup> The most famous person who engaged in magnetism was undoubtedly the priest Jurij Humar (1819–1890), the “miracle worker” from Primskovo, who was said to heal people with his personal magnetism.<sup>5</sup> Humar himself had no idea about the origin of this unusual power and established some similarity only with the Viennese physician Franz Anton Mesmer (1734–1815). In his surroundings and far beyond Jurij Humar was held

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<sup>1</sup> Nena Židov: Ali so metode alternativne medicine v Sloveniji res nekaj povsem novega? = Methods of alternative medicine – are they really quite new in Slovenia?, *Etnolog* 10 (2000), Ljubljana, 139–159.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Borisov: Zdravilišča in kopališča na nekdanjem Kranjskem, *Kronika* 16 (1968), Ljubljana, 47–51.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Borisov: Sto dvajset let od ustanovitve naravnega zdravnega zavoda na Bledu, *Zbornik za zgodovino naravoslovja in tehnike* 3 (1975), Ljubljana, 168, 171, 173.

<sup>4</sup> Fran Viljem Lipič: *Topografija c.-kr. deželne glavnega mesta Ljubljane z vidika naravoslovja in medicine, zdravstvene ureditve in biostatike*, Ljubljana: Znanstveno društvo za zgodovino zdravstvene kulture Slovenije, 2003, 373.

<sup>5</sup> Janez Žurga: *Čudodelnik s Primskovega Jurij Humar (1819–1890)*, Celovec: Družba sv. Mohorja, 1969; Janez Žurga, Stanislav Maršič: *Čudodelnik s Primskovega, Jurij Humar 1819–1890*, Celovec-Ljubljana-Dunaj: Mohorjeva založba, 1998.

to a very successful healer with exceptional powers and many foreigners came to see him to be cured. Long after his death people continued to seek healing by visiting his grave. Somewhat parallel to the above mentioned "natural" healing methods, homeopathy too spread in Slovenia in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Though rejected by physicians, the method found many adherents among the clergy and also with the aristocracy.<sup>6</sup> In addition, by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century homeopathy was widespread in the countryside and especially in Dolenjska there seem to have been many self-taught homeopaths.<sup>7</sup>

## Sources for a reconstruction of the history of homeopathy in Slovenia

The first written sources date from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Apparently by the 1820s homeopathy had spread in Slovenia to a degree that it became the subject of newspaper debates (e.g. in *Illyrische Blatt* in 1826). A further valuable source is the book *Briefe über Homöopathie* (1833–1834), written by the physician Joseph Attomyr. The data about Slovenia in this booklet are based on information provided to the author by a correspondent from Ljubljana<sup>8</sup>. Some information about homeopathy in the Dolenjska countryside can be found in the notes of the writer Janez Trdina dating between the 1870–1879 period.<sup>9</sup> There is no important literature on homeopathy in Slovenia, but the phenomenon is mentioned in several surveys of the history of official and folk medicine and the information is related to some of its practitioners and users. Further information may be hidden in various archives, certainly more than have been evidenced up to now.

Evidence of the presence of homeopathy is also preserved in museums. The National Museum of Slovenia in Ljubljana has a collection of eight homeopathic medicine kits. Unfortunately, the provenance of most of them is unknown. One is certain to be of aristocratic origin and a similar origin is assumed for two more. In one case the name of the maker is known – Jarmay Gyuláton from Budapest. The National Museum of Slovenia also preserves the legacy of the priest Daniel Terček, which indicates that he was a homeopath. The Bohuslav Lavička pharmaceutical and medical collection of the Lek pharmaceutical factory in Ljubljana exhibits two homeopathic medicine kits from the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but their provenance is unknown. Digging into the available Slovene literature, I came across two preserved homeopathic medicine kits. A photography of the homeopathy kit owned by a Tržič homeopath was published in 1935<sup>10</sup> (it probably belonged to the parish priest Simon Peharc), and a photography of a homeopathic medicine kit, used in Carniola in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (from the collection of I. Logar, Ljubljana) was published in 1977.<sup>11</sup>

Traces of homeopathy are also found in 19<sup>th</sup>-century poetry. The greatest Slovene poet, France Prešeren (1800–1849), mentions it in a satirical poem: *Popred si pevec bil, zdaj si homeopat / popred si časa bil, zdaj si življenja tat. (A poet you were, now a homeopath you are / The chalice of life you were, now the cup of poison you are)*. It was addressed to the

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<sup>6</sup> Luka Pintar: Satura, *Ljubljanski zvon* 29 (1909), Ljubljana, 558.

<sup>7</sup> Marija Makarovič: Zdravstvena kultura agrarnega prebivalstva v 19. stoletju, *Slovenski etnograf* 33–34 (1988–1990), Ljubljana, 489.

<sup>8</sup> Luka Pintar: Satura (1909), ... 557.

<sup>9</sup> Janez Trdina: *Podobe prednikov, Zapiski Janeza Trdine iz obdobja 1870–1879*, Ljubljana: Univerzitetna konferenca ZSMS, 1987.

<sup>10</sup> Viktor Kragl: *Zgodovinski drobci župnije Tržič*, Tržič: Župni urad, 1936, 261.

<sup>11</sup> Peter Borisov: *Od ranocelništva do začetkov znanstvene kirurgije na Slovenskem*, Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1977, 200.

priest Blaž Potočnik, who published poems in Kranjska Čbelica and who was an ardent supporter of homeopathy.<sup>12</sup>

## How did homeopathy spread in Slovenia?

One might say that homeopathy was prohibited in Slovenia before it managed to become established. As early as 1819 homeopathy was forbidden for the civilian population as well as for the army,<sup>13</sup> but some homeopaths from the ranks of physicians and lay homeopaths continued to practise it. There is no clear picture of the sources and ways of how knowledge about homeopathy was acquired. Based on some preserved sources, we may assume that people were trained to be homeopaths either in Slovenia or abroad, i.e. through direct contacts with Hahnemann, specialist literature and journals, and medical manuals for home use.

The only homeopathic school known to date was the hospital in Ljubljana, founded in 1787. The patients were in the care of the Order of the Brothers of Mercy. From 1806 to 1811 the prior and administrator of the hospital was Matevž Gradišek, an enthusiastic homeopath, who established a homeopathic clinical school within the hospital in 1808,<sup>14</sup> but its operation stopped after only one year. Some Slovene homeopaths are believed to have learned about homeopathy straight "from the horse's mouth". Sources indeed mention that Baron Anton Moškoni was a zealous homeopath and a very good friend of Hahnemann. A further source of knowledge were Hahnemann's books. In 1814 Hahnemann's *Organon* and *Materia medica* were studied by the physician Franc Šuklič from Sevnica.

Homeopathy was also spread by means of popular manuals. Many a homestead used to have, not only small homeopathic medicine kits, but also a copy of one or another "home guide to homeopathy".<sup>15</sup> Several general "home medical guides" had "homeopathic" supplements, e.g. *Naš svetovalec v bolezni in zdravju* (The Adviser in Sickness and Health), written by A. Kunze and published in a Slovene translation in 1928.

Some Slovene homeopaths received training abroad, most likely in Germany or Austria, and they were members of the local homeopathic associations. Evidence on this is provided among others by the certificate of attendance related to a course in homeopathy held in Stuttgart in 1879, which was found in the legacy of the Metlika priest Daniel Terček. His legacy also contains *Homöopathische Monatsblätter* (published in Stuttgart) from February 1886 to January 1887. Terček was a member of the Bavarian Homeopathic Society. These documents are kept by the National Museum of Slovenia. How millers from Dolenjska, for instance, learned about homeopathy, is a matter of guessing.

Another unsolved question is where Slovene homeopaths obtained homeopathic medicines. We may assume that they imported them as Vienna and Salzburg are mentioned,<sup>16</sup> and probably also from Budapest. According to the data gathered to date, it is likely that homeopathic medicines were also prepared in Ljubljana and Kamnik.<sup>17</sup> After homeopathy was banned 1819, it was also forbidden to sell homeopathic medicines in pharmacies. In the

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<sup>12</sup> Anton Slodnjak: (Razlaga pesmi), in: France Prešeren, *Poezije doktorja Franceta Prešerna*, Ljubljana: Prešernova družba, Vrba, 1995, 75, 188.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Borisov: *Od ranocelništva do ...*, 142.

<sup>14</sup> Peter Borisov: *Od ranocelništva do ...*, 211.

<sup>15</sup> Luka Pintar: *Satura* (1909), ... 558–559.

<sup>16</sup> Luka Pintar: *Satura* (1909), ... 559.

<sup>17</sup> Janez Žurga, Stanislav Maršič: *Čudodelnik s Primskovega ...*, 35.

1820s and early 1830s, Ljubljana had 6 pharmacies, but not one of them sold homeopathic medicines according to the official reports.<sup>18</sup> Unofficial accounts, however, tell a different story. In the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century homeopathic remedies were available at the chemist's Wagner in Ljubljana, where they were supposedly made.<sup>19</sup>

## Homeopathy and the aristocracy

That the aristocracy had its practitioners and users of homeopathy is confirmed by several sources. Homeopathy is thought to have been practised or used primarily by members of the aristocracy who lived in the countryside: the counts of Hohenwart, Auersperg, Lichtenberg, and Barbo; the Barons Schweiger and Rechbach,<sup>20</sup> Baron Franz and Baroness Maria Wambolt from Hmeljnik Castle near Novo mesto<sup>21</sup> and Baroness Adelma Vay, née Wurmbrand<sup>22</sup>.

There is no doubt that Baron **Franz Wambolt** von Umstadt (1829–1908), who lived in Hmeljnik Castle in Dolenjska, practised homeopathy.<sup>23</sup> Based on the correspondence kept by the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia<sup>24</sup> it is fair to assume that after his death his widow **Maria Wambolt** (1848–1915) continued practising homeopathic healing. She is also thought to be the author of a patient daybook, written in German and kept in the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia. The first to write about this daybook was Milan Dolenc in 1989,<sup>25</sup> who thought that the drugs mentioned in it were of a more recent date and taken from medical manuals which were then in use. However, reading some of the names of medicines mentioned by Dolenc, I assumed that these were probably homeopathic medicines and this assumption was confirmed when I inspected the daybook in the Archives. The daybook lists the names of the patients who saw the baroness between 1908 and 1912. The following data are entered: name and surname of the patient, the date of his or her visit, age, place of residence, health problems and prescribed medicine. Judging from the dates, the baroness had quite a lot of patients of various ages, from little children to elder people. There were periods when she had several patients a day and others when, judging from the daybook, she had none (though she might not have been at Hmeljnik Castle at the time). To provide a better idea of her activities, let me just mention that she saw a total of 39 patients in December 1908.<sup>26</sup> This daybook is a very important source because it enables us to establish the area she covered as a homeopathic healer. Further thorough research might, of course, reveal quite a lot of information about the patients of Maria Wambolt. After her death, there is evidence that her descendants did not continue practising homeopathy: in the inter-war period the medical accessories of Franz and Maria Wambolt were relegated to the rubbish in the castle's attic.<sup>27</sup> For some of the homeopathic medicine kits today kept by the National Museum of Slovenia it is known or at least assumed that they originate from castles. The origin is confirmed for a

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<sup>18</sup> Fran Viljem Lipič: *Topografija c.-kr. deželnega glavnega mesta Ljubljane...*, 307.

<sup>19</sup> Luka Pintar: *Satura* (1909), ... 559.

<sup>20</sup> Luka Pintar: *Satura*, 1909, ... 558.

<sup>21</sup> Bernarda Potočnik, *Hmeljnik, Način življenja plemiške družine Wambolt von Umstadt med prvo in drugo svetovno vojno*, Ljubljana: Slovensko etnološko društvo, 1994, 29, 73.

<sup>22</sup> Janez Žurga, Stanislav Maršič: *Čudodelnik s Primskovega...* 154.

<sup>23</sup> Bernarda Potočnik, *Hmeljnik...* 29.

<sup>24</sup> Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, Hmeljnik Castle Archive. The correspondence of Maria Wambolt, unit 4.

<sup>25</sup> Milan Dolenc, *Knjiga pacientov baronice Marije Wambolt s Hmeljnika*, *Glasnik Slovenskega etnološkega društva* 29 (1989), n. 3–4, Ljubljana, 199.

<sup>26</sup> Archives of the Republic of Slovenia, Hmeljnik Castle Archive, box 7.

<sup>27</sup> Bernarda Potočnik, *Hmeljnik...* 73.

homeopathic medicine kit from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century – it derives from Rudež Castle near Ribnica. Two further medicine kits are of assumed aristocratic origin, primarily because the two cases are lined with precious cloth on the inside and the outside is set in with relief pressed leather and gold fringes. At first sight they look like books and this explains why they were initially kept in the museum's library.

Baroness *Adelma Vay*, née Wurmbrand, who was married to the Hungarian magnate Baron Ödön Vay, seems to have been well versed in homeopathy. She lived in Slovenske Konjice, where she died at the age of 85 in 1925. She was particularly known for healing people with magnetism.<sup>28</sup> Two homeopaths are mentioned in Tržič: the industrialist *Rajmund Jaboring von Altenfels*, the son of the owner of the Tržič steelworks,<sup>29</sup> and *Elizabeta Peharc*. Elizabeta Peharc (1821–1890) owned several foundries and workshops. After the death of her husband she abandoned these activities, founded a private girls school and the first public library in Tržič. She used homeopathy to help people with a variety of illnesses.<sup>30</sup>

## Homeopathy and the clergy

Homeopathy seems to have been quite common among priests in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the towns as well as in the countryside. Their activities in the countryside were probably related to the shortage of physicians. Needless to say, their practises did not meet with approval from the physicians. Two people were particularly instrumental to the assertion of homeopathy in Ljubljana: Blaž Potočnik, a preacher and singer in the Ljubljana cathedral and Matevž Gradišek, the prior of the Order of the Brothers of Mercy.<sup>31</sup> *Blaž Potočnik*, a renowned homeopath, poet, writer, journalist, and propagator of national revival, was born in Stružno near Kranj in 1799. He served as a curate in Šentjernej and Ljubljana and as parish priest in Šentvid near Ljubljana from 1833 to 1872.<sup>32</sup> His homeopathic activities even earned him a mockery comment by the greatest Slovene poet France Prešeren, who was his contemporary. Priests well versed in homeopathy were also active outside Ljubljana. The homeopaths Janez Zalokar and Simon Peharc were both born in Tržič.<sup>33</sup> *Janez Zalokar* (1792–1872) was a curate in Metlika until 1818, later a spiritual educator in Ljubljana's seminary, the parish priest of Tržič from 1828 to 1835, and afterwards the parish priest of Škocjan in Dolenjska. After retiring in 1854 he moved to Ljubljana. He was a homeopath who particularly wanted to help patients of poor means.<sup>34</sup> *Simon Peharc* (1813–1872) was a curate in Gorje and Bled, who became the vicar of Ljubljana Cathedral in 1845, parish priest of Bled from 1848, dean from 1868, and parish priest of Šentrupert from 1860.<sup>35</sup>

Further mentioned homeopaths are *Jožef Bučar* (1776–1843), parish priest of Šentrupert, *Jakob Jeglič*, parish priest of Šmarjeta near Klevevž, provost *Andrej Albrecht* in Novo mesto, and the canons *Valentin Pfeifer*, *Anton Strohen*, *Jožef Jenko*, and *Ignacij Jugovic*. They were said to be skilled homeopaths, who bravely resisted the attacks of the medical profession.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Janez Žurga, Stanislav Maršič: *Čudodelnik s Primskovega*,... 151, 154.

<sup>29</sup> Viktor Kragl: *Zgodovinski drobci*..., 36, 261.

<sup>30</sup> Viktor Kragl: *Zgodovinski drobci*..., 36–37, 402.

<sup>31</sup> Luka Pintar: Satura (1909), ... 558.

<sup>32</sup> France Koblar: Potočnik Blaž, *Slovenski biografski leksikon, Sedmi zvezek*, Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1949, 458–460.

<sup>33</sup> Viktor Kragl: *Zgodovinski drobci*..., 195, 216.

<sup>34</sup> Viktor Kragl: *Zgodovinski drobci*..., 194, 261.

<sup>35</sup> Viktor Kragl: *Zgodovinski drobci*..., 261, 330.

<sup>36</sup> Luka Pintar: Satura (1909), ... 558.

In his notes from the 1870–1879 period which mainly refer to the region of Dolenjska, Janez Trdina mentions the parish priest of Mirna Peč, **Mlakar**, who "is very popular with the people and has a lot of faith".<sup>37</sup> Another homeopath was the head of the deanery of Trebnje, who managed to cure a woman of cancer with homeopathic means.<sup>38</sup> An undisputed homeopath was the parish priest of Metlika **Daniel Terček** (1819–1887) as is obvious from his legacy which is kept in the National Museum of Slovenia and who was mentioned above. Based on his letters to his nephew and to Baroness Adelma Vay, née Wurmbrand, we may assume that **Jurij Humar** (1819–1890), the parish priest of Primskovo, already mentioned as a famous magnetist,<sup>39</sup> was well acquainted with homeopathic healing.

**Franc Pirc** (1785–1880), beside Friderik Baraga and Ignacij Knoblehar one of Slovenia's most famous missionaries, occupies a special place among the Slovene priests homeopaths. He was born in Godič near Kranj, educated in Ljubljana and served as a priest in several places in Gorenjska. In addition to his care of the community's spiritual life he wrote poems and was very much engaged in fruit growing and published several manuals for fruit-growers. And he was also a homeopath. From 1835 until 1873 he served as a missionary in North America. He was with the Dakota and Ottawa in Michigan from 1835 to 1852, and from 1852 with the Ojibwa in Minnesota. In his efforts to prevent and cure diseases among the native Americans, he used the methods of then official medicine (smallpox vaccination) as well as homeopathic medicines. He even mentioned some homeopathic remedies in his poems from the period of his missionary activities in Minnesota.<sup>40</sup>

The medical profession complained to the bishop about the priests who practised homeopathic healing methods, but to no avail. The ordinariate forbade three specifically named priests (Potočnik, Metelko and Jerina) as well as the entire clergy to carry out any healing practises because the applicable health regulations allowed only certified physicians to treat patients; Hahnemann's healing method was rigorously forbidden.<sup>41</sup> All these measures, however, failed to prevent the homeopaths from practising.

## Homeopathy and the countryside

In the countryside, homeopathy spread rapidly among the peasant population towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the number of self-taught homeopaths is assumed to have been considerable.<sup>42</sup> According to Trdina's notes many healers were active in Dolenjska. The most renowned homeopath in Dolenjska was **Varavn**, who is said to have had so many patients towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century that he even had to see some at night.<sup>43</sup> He is also presumed to have made quite a lot of money from practising homeopathy. He reportedly treated and cured the then minister Hohenwart.<sup>44</sup> In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the miller **Jerič** from Stopče practised healing with homeopathy,<sup>45</sup> and in Kronovo near Bela cerkev the mayor, landlord and miller **Jakob Košak** treated people free of charge. In Šempeter, **Marante**

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<sup>37</sup> Janez Trdina: *Podobe prednikov*, ... 832.

<sup>38</sup> Janez Trdina: *Podobe prednikov*, ... 122.

<sup>39</sup> Janez Žurga, Stanislav Maršič: *Čudodelnik s Primskovega*, ... 33, 154.

<sup>40</sup> Marjan Drnovšek: *Franc Pirc (1785–1880), Sadjar na Kranjskem in misijonar v Ameriki*, Naklo: Občina, 2003, 48–49.

<sup>41</sup> Luka Pintar: *Satura* (1909), ... 560, 562.

<sup>42</sup> Marija Makarovič: *Zdravstvena kultura agrarnega prebivalstva*, ... 489.

<sup>43</sup> Marija Makarovič: *Zdravstvena kultura agrarnega prebivalstva*, ... 490.

<sup>44</sup> Janez Trdina: *Podobe prednikov*, ... 433.

<sup>45</sup> Janez Trdina: *Podobe prednikov*, ... 832.

practised homeopathy following the example of Varavn.<sup>46</sup> As far as Dolenjska is concerned, another healer mentioned is the self-taught homeopath **Junc**, who seems to have been so successful that his patients weren't just peasants, but also more affluent people. He is reported to have cured a 42-year-old wealthy person of syphilis.<sup>47</sup>

The Vienna-born wonder doctor and tailor **Henrik Weis** (1815–1892) practised homeopathy in Tržič.<sup>48</sup>

## Homeopathy and physicians

It seems that few physicians in Slovenia were attracted by homeopathy or they may have practised it secretly, because the method was banned and because of the general negative attitude of the professional community. Austrian statistical data from 1889 list three physicians homeopaths in Styria and one in Carinthia and Carniola each.<sup>49</sup> References to physicians homeopaths in other sources are equally scarce.

The first to be mentioned is **Franc Šuklič**. According to information known to date, he lived in Sevnica and suffered from severe headaches, combined with epilepsy. When he was at the edge of despair, Baron Anton Moškon, who had a friendly relationship with Hahnemann, introduced Šuklič to homeopathy in 1814. Šuklič then wrote to Hahnemann and started to acquaint himself with homeopathy under Hahnemann's guidance; he studied the *Organon* and *Materia Medica* and was cured thanks to homeopathy. Around 1817 he was the first in Styria to start treating other people with homeopathic methods. His opponent was the then Styrian *protomedicus* (the physician who officially headed and supervised public health) Lorenc Vest. Šuklič also used homeopathic methods to treat people in Carniola.<sup>50</sup>

Several physicians in Ljubljana were adherents of homeopathy. Beside the above-mentioned Gradišek, the physician **Anton Pober** (1765–1832) played an important role in spreading homeopathy. He was born in Novo Mesto, where he introduced smallpox vaccination as the district physician. In 1819 he was appointed district physician in Ljubljana, where he organised the management of the hospital and he was its director for several years. In 1831, he was appointed district physician of Ljubljana and its surroundings, Ig, and Smlednik, and a member of Ljubljana's public health commission.<sup>51</sup>

The physician **Karol Bernard Kogel** (1763–1839) was born in Novo mesto. After having taken his degree in medicine, he lived in Ljubljana. From 1795 he was a teacher of veterinary medicine at the town's Medical School, and was appointed *protomedicus* of Carniola and Goriška, and court physician in Vienna in 1809. After the disintegration of Napoleon's Illyrian Provinces, he returned to Ljubljana and was again *protomedicus* from 1816 to 1820. For some time, he also headed the Clinical School in Ljubljana. He supported Kern in

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<sup>46</sup> Janez Trdina: *Podobe prednikov*, ... 315.

<sup>47</sup> Janez Trdina: *Podobe prednikov*, ... 330, 315.

<sup>48</sup> Viktor Kragl: *Zgodovinski drobci*..., 261, 339.

<sup>49</sup> *Das österreichische Sanitätswesen* 4 (1889), 27.

<sup>50</sup> Luka Pintar: *Satura* (1909), ... 559.

<sup>51</sup> Ivan Pintar: *Pober Anton*, *Slovenski biografski leksikon*, *Sedmi zvezek*, Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1949, 389; Peter Borisov: *Od ranocelništva do ...*, 231.

promoting vaccination. Later he was a homeopath, who did not engage in promoting the practise, and he continued to research homeopathy in his old age.<sup>52</sup>

The surgeon **Josip Kos** (1791–1862) was born in Kranj where his father, a craftsman, had already been practising healing. He took his degree in surgery and obstetrics in Graz in 1814. For some time, he carried out the duties of district surgeon and obstetrician in Bistra near Ljubljana, before being appointed Ljubljana district surgeon and obstetrician in 1821. Beside carrying out practical surgery he also engaged in homeopathy. In spite of the opposition of some Ljubljana physicians he was successful in healing with homeopathic methods.<sup>53</sup>

The physician **Moder**'s preserved homeopathic kit from Rudež Castle near Ribnica is in the National Museum of Slovenia. It indicates that he used homeopathic methods in his treatments. Moder is believed to have treated, among others, the Slovene writer Fran Levstik (1831–1887).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century Maribor had fifteen surgeons. One of them, **Jožef Semlits**, had a homeopathic practice and pharmacy in the Magdalena suburb.<sup>54</sup>

Several generations of physicians from the Trenz family lived in Šentjernej. One of them was **Ferdinand Trenz** (1807–1887), the grandson of a war surgeon. He was born in Draškovec and studied medicine in Vienna, but did not take his degree. He returned to Draškovec as a landowner and got engaged in homeopathy.<sup>55</sup>

### **The conflict between the physicians and the Ljubljana homeopaths headed by Gradišek**

The Ljubljana homeopaths had such success among the common people as well as part of the educated public that they constituted a threat to official medicine. Nevertheless, the physicians who opposed homeopathy did not manage to suppress the Ljubljana homeopaths nor the prior Matevž Gradišek, who headed the movement and who was in constant conflict with the authorities because he promoted homeopathy and carried it out illegally. He was, of course, defended, by like-minded people and the numerous patients he had helped. As a priest, he was able to win over many members of the clergy to homeopathy,<sup>56</sup> and there is no doubt that his medical education played an important role. Considering that Matevž Gradišek is the most frequently mentioned figure associated with homeopathy in Slovenia, let us now have a closer look at his life and activities.

**Matevž Gradišek** was born in Zgornje Gameljne near Ljubljana in 1776. When he was thirteen, he became a passementer's apprentice in Ljubljana; he was certified as a craftsman at the age of eighteen and found employment as a passementer's journeyman in Celje in 1794. Dissatisfied with his life, he wanted to become a member of the Order of the Franciscans or

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<sup>52</sup> Peter Borisov: *Od ranocelništva do...*, 221; Ivan Pintar: Kog(e)l Karol Bernard, *Slovenski biografski leksikon, Prva knjiga*, Ljubljana: Zadružna gospodarska banka, 1925–1932, 489.

<sup>53</sup> Peter Borisov: *Ginekologija na Slovenskem od nastanka do 80. let 20. stoletja*, Ljubljana: Slovenska akademija znanosti in umetnosti, 1995, 343; Peter Borisov: *Od ranocelništva do ...*, 237; Jurij Zalokar: Josip Kos – eden zadnjih ljubljanskih zdravnikov-ranocelnikov, *Zdravstveni vestnik* 68 (1999) n. 1, Ljubljana, 34–35.

<sup>54</sup> Štefan Predin: *Mariborski lekarnarji...*, 110, 112.

<sup>55</sup> Marinka Dražumerič (ed.), Stane Granda (ed.), *Zbornik župnije Šentjernej*, Ljubljana: Družina, 1999, 155.

<sup>56</sup> Ivan Pintar, France Kidrič: Gradišek Matevž, *Slovenski biografski leksikon, Prva knjiga*, Ljubljana: Zadružna gospodarska banka, 1925–1932, 241.

that of the Order of the Brothers of Mercy. In 1797, when he was 22, he was accepted by the Order of the Brothers of Mercy. He first lived in Vienna, where he adopted the monastic name of Faust. In 1800 he was transferred to Graz, where he learned to extract teeth and let blood. As a member of the Order of the Brothers of Mercy, whose principal task was to take care of the ill, he must have acquired some medical knowledge. In the same year he returned to the monastery of the Order of the Brothers of Mercy in Ljubljana.

In 1803 he was transferred to Valtice (Feldsperg) in Bohemia, where the Order of the Brothers of Mercy had a famous monastery and hospital. Here, he started monastic medical studies in anatomy and osteology and passed his final examination in 1805. His teacher, Norbert Adam Boccius, professor of anatomy and surgery, recommended him for further studies in Prague. Gradišek left Valtice for Prague, where he enrolled at the Medical Faculty of Charles University, first as a part-time student and later as a regular student; for the entire duration of this studies he also worked at the hospital of his order in Prague. In spite of devoting much of his time to treating patients, he managed to pass the doctoral examination in 1806 and become a physician. In the same year, he was elected sub-prior and transferred to the Ljubljana hospital as official deputy of the monastery's prior and senior physician-surgeon.

In 1807 he was appointed prior of the monastery and director of the hospital and held these positions until 1811. He started to advocate the establishment of a clinical school and succeeded in 1808 with the assistance of the physician Kogel, the then *protomedicus*, who was an adherent of homeopathy.<sup>57</sup> However, because the Clinical School educated future homeopaths, Gradišek soon came into conflict with the town's physicians, because the school was a major competitor of the Surgery School.<sup>58</sup>

The next year, the activities of the hospital as well as the school were seriously endangered. Because of the arrival of the French army, the hospital was full of wounded French soldiers and the work in the hospital was seriously hampered. In 1810, Gradišek received orders from the court in Vienna to abandon the monastery and hospital to the French. In the next year, the hospital no longer admitted patients, but only conscripts of the French army. In 1811, the French authorities dissolved the Order of the Brothers of Mercy and the members left Ljubljana. Gradišek abandoned the hospital to the French authorities.<sup>59</sup>

As he had acquired a lot of experience and had been successful in treating patients during his time in Prague, he had no trouble finding new employment. In the same year, 1811, he moved to the home of Matevž Castagna in Ljubljana to become the family's physician. The family highly appreciated him, because he had treated them with success on previous occasions. He remained with them for nearly four years.<sup>60</sup> Because of his successful treatments, numerous patients came to see him there, and he also made house visits. He even visited people in distant places like Trieste or Vienna. In spite of the abolition of his order in Ljubljana, he was faithful to his mission – to heal people. When the French left the Slovene territory in 1813, Gradišek organised an improvised epidemiological hospital in a suburb of Ljubljana (Krakovo), where he treated dysentery and typhus patients from Dolenjska.<sup>61</sup> These activities

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<sup>57</sup> Luka Pintar: *Satura* (1912), ... 77–78.

<sup>58</sup> Peter Borisov: *Zgodovina medicine*, Ljubljana: Cankarjeva založba, 1985, 269.

<sup>59</sup> Jurij Šilc: *Doktor Faustus, Prior usmiljenih bratov v Ljubljani in zdravnik na Kranjskem*, Ljubljana: Kulturno umetniško društvo Tacen, 2000, 58–61.

<sup>60</sup> Pintar: *Satura* (1912), ... 79.

<sup>61</sup> Jurij Šilc: *Doktor Faustus*, ... 63–65.

were not met with approval by the town's physicians. A particularly serious conflict developed between Gradišek and Anton Melzel, professor of anatomy at the Ljubljana Medical School and the director of the Clinical School. In 1814 Gradišek's opponents denounced him to the government and even checked his prescriptions,<sup>62</sup> but the diocese defended him and tried to prove his innocence, and he also received much support from the citizens of Ljubljana and his grateful patients.

In 1814 the Castagna family moved to Trieste, accompanied by Gradišek. During his stay in Trieste, he made short trips to many various other places, visiting his patients. In the same year he moved with the Castagna family to their manor in Škedenj near Trieste. In the following years, Gradišek became a truly ardent homeopath. In 1815, he proposed that the hospital in Ljubljana should be given back to his order and a petition of the same content was addressed to the town authorities by the citizens of Ljubljana.<sup>63</sup> The proposal was, however, fiercely opposed by Anton Jevnikar (1771–1837), the director of the Ljubljana hospital and professor of internal medicine at the Surgery School in Ljubljana, who accused Gradišek of wanting to use his homeopathy-oriented clinical school to hold back the development of medical surgery studies and to enable his order to dominate all medical studies in Ljubljana. In 1815, Jevnikar had indeed again established a clinical school within the hospital, which however did not follow Gradišek's ideas in any way.<sup>64</sup> In 1818, the town adopted a decree to the effect that only civilian male nurses were allowed to work at the hospital.<sup>65</sup>

In 1818, Gradišek returned to Ljubljana for some time; he treated the poor and financially supported them with the money he had received from a legacy. In 1819, he started to learn about magnetism and he experimented on himself and other people. In 1821, he finished his book *Materia Medica*, which he had started in 1812. Beside the family he lived with, he also continued to treat many other patients, who came to see him or which he visited at their homes. His successful treatment led to invitations from several foreign countries. A single figure illustrates how many patients he had: in 1820 he treated no less than 9538 people. He started to think about retirement, but the church authorities sent him as spiritual teacher (in charge of spiritual education) to the monastery in Gorizia in 1822. Here, he also led the hospital, but he returned to Trieste in the same year and asked to be released from the monastery.

He retired in 1824, bought a property in Šmartno near Ljubljana, and started to build a house, in which he arranged a chapel, pharmacy, and medical practice.<sup>66</sup> Here, too, he was visited by many patients and he also continued to see many people at their homes all over Slovenia (Gorenjska, Dolenjska, Štajerska) as well as in Trieste. Gradišek treated poor and rich people alike, and particularly patients who had tried all other methods of treatment, but also the elderly and mortally ill. In 1831 and 1832, for instance, he assisted the dying Baron Lazzarini in Smednik. He received many voluntary gifts for his work. Because of his use of homeopathy in treating people, he was taken to task by the Bishop of Ljubljana in 1828.<sup>67</sup> He also continued his engagement in magnetism.

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<sup>62</sup> Peter Radich: *Zgodovina deželne civilne bolnice v Ljubljani*, Ljubljana: Deželni odbor kranjski, 1887, 50.

<sup>63</sup> Peter Radich: *Zgodovina deželne civilne bolnice...*, 54.

<sup>64</sup> Peter Borisov: *Zgodovina medicine*, 312–313.

<sup>65</sup> Peter Borisov: *Od ranocelništva do začetkov...*, 217.

<sup>66</sup> Luka Pintar: *Satura* (1912), ... 80.

<sup>67</sup> Jurij Šilc: *Doktor Faustus...*, 83.

Because of his activities at his new home, Gradišek once more came into conflict with the medical authorities, represented at the time by *Fran Viljem Lipič*, who carried out the duty of his office. Lipič (1799–1845) was born in Slovakia, studied medicine in Budapest and took his degree in Vienna. He was an excellent internist. He came to Ljubljana in 1823 as second town physician, was appointed district physician in 1832 and assistant director of the hospital in 1833. As the town physician in the 1823–1834 period, he also performed medical police duties and was very much exposed in the conflicts with the homeopaths. It seems that his failure in these conflicts nearly destroyed him: he stepped down from his position and accepted an invitation to become professor of clinical medicine in Padua in 1834; in 1841 he joined the Faculty of Medicine in Vienna. It is interesting to note that in the last years of his life he engaged in hypnosis and telepathy,<sup>68</sup> to which he devoted his last unpublished work *Die biomagnetische Heilmethode*. During his stay in Ljubljana he wrote *Topographie der k. k. Provinzialhauptstadt Laibach*, in which, against all expectations, he mentioned homeopathy only a couple of times. In the chapter *Home medicine, quacks*, he writes: "The time has not come yet to discuss homeopathy in Carniola, practised by priests, in detail nor or its increasing spread. /.../ Unfortunately, we are not able to accurately report how successful the mentioned treatments are, because we have no officially confirmed data except death certificates."<sup>69</sup> In the chapter *Filling the official public health positions* he reports that there were 33 physicians and surgeons in Ljubljana, 23 in the public health sector and 10 private physicians. Physicians and surgeons without substantial means could not afford to stay in Ljubljana for longer periods and many soon left. But a physician homeopath had no trouble in finding employment.<sup>70</sup>

In spite of his endless conflicts with the town's physicians, Gradišek continued his devoted treatment of patients. When cholera broke out in Slovenia in 1836, Gradišek and his assistants were very successful in treating the ill. Of the 200 patients in his care, only five died.<sup>71</sup> Gradišek's death in 1837 seems to have started the decline of homeopathy. There were no more ardent supports from the ranks of physicians and official medicine prevailed. Homeopathy was later practised mostly by laymen.

## Conclusion

In the past, research into the history of homeopathy in Slovenia has been rather sporadic and more systematic research efforts would certainly yield new findings. However, based on the knowledge acquired to date, our conclusion is that Slovene homeopathy started to spread at the time of the Illyrian Provinces. The method had its advocates, practitioners and users in all classes of the population. It had, of course, numerous opponents, in particular from the ranks of official medicine and it was banned in 1819. This may be one of the reasons for the small number of physicians homeopaths. Homeopathy was however practised by many priests and some aristocrats. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, knowledge about homeopathy also spread among the peasant population. According to the data collected to date, homeopathy was well established in Ljubljana in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and a surprisingly high number of homeopaths were active in Dolenjska. The figure most frequently associated with the history of

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<sup>68</sup> Peter Borisov: *Od ranocelništva do začetkov...*, 142; Peter Borisov: *Zgodovina medicine...*, 269; Ivan Pintar: Lipič (Lippich) Fran Viljem, *Slovenski biografski leksikon, Prva knjiga*, Ljubljana: Združena gospodarska banka, 1925–1932, 673–674.

<sup>69</sup> Fran Viljem Lipič: *Topografija...*, 295–296.

<sup>70</sup> Fran Viljem Lipič: *Topografija...*, 303.

<sup>71</sup> Jurij Šilc, *Doktor Faustus...*, 89–90.

homeopathy in Slovenia is Matevž Gradišek, the prior of the Order of Brothers of Mercy in Ljubljana, and a physician, who played a key role in spreading homeopathy among the clergy and a number of physicians in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His death must have been a fatal blow to homeopathy, because it then started to decline rapidly.

The fragments on the history of homeopathy in Slovenia collected up till now cannot provide a comprehensive image, but they are a useful starting-point for further research.

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