

# ON THE OCCASION OF 200<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE BIRTH OF DR JANEZ BLEIWEIS

## EDITORIAL

Gregor Majdič

*Veterinary Faculty, Gerbičeva 60, 1000 Ljubljana*

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the birth of a great, though under-known Slovene, Dr Janez Bleiweis. He was born in 1808 in Kranj and was a doctor, veterinary surgeon, journalist and politician by profession and interest, who was dedicated to the progress of Slovenia and development of the Slovene language. Slovenian Veterinary Research has published a special issue dedicated to this great Slovene, who has majorly contributed to the development of medical and veterinary education in Slovenia and to the development of Slovene scientific terminology. However, since work of Janez Bleiweis was important not only locally, we decided to publish abstracts of articles from this special issue also in a regular issue of Slovenian Veterinary Research, which is distributed internationally, so we can introduce Janez Bleiweis to the international audience.

Janez Bleiweis made a great contribution to the development of the standard Slovene language and to national awakening, to developing consciousness of the fact that the Slovenes are a nation and as such deserve our own country. Although Janez Bleiweis graduated in human medicine in Vienna and was at one point a director of the Ljubljana maternity hospital and professor of forensic medicine at Ljubljana Medical-Surgical institute, he devoted more of his time to veterinary medicine. His mission was the progress of the Slovene people. For him the most important part of a nation was farmers and craftsmen whom he saw as the basis of the economy and thus a founding element for the existence of a nation and state. Already then he knew that farmers and craftsmen can only be successful if they are educated and knowledgeable. Therefore as the secretary of the Agricultural Society of Carniola he strove for the establishment of a three-year agricultural school. He was successful in his endeavors and in 1848 a veterinary and farrier school was established in Ljubljana, with its first students enrolled in 1850. Thus Janez Bleiweis was the originator of veterinary education in Slovenia and a predecessor of veterinary experts at the Ljubljana Veterinary Faculty, which was established over a hundred years after his school. In 1843 Janez Bleiweis started publishing a newspaper entitled *Kmetijske in rokodelske novice* (Farmers' and Craftsmen's News), whose editor and main journalist he remained until his death in 1881. For a number of years it was the only regular newspaper published on the territory of the then Carniola and it brought important advice to farmers and craftsmen for »wiser management«. Janez Bleiweis was the first publisher

and editor of a specialist newspaper in the Slovene language. Bleiweis definitely deserves a lot of credit for the development of the Slovene standard language. As a politician he supported the introduction of Slovene into schools and offices and was instrumental in the adoption of Gaj's alphabet, which is still in use today. In his work he was pragmatic and in favour of slow changes. He was not one to support revolutionary change, which is probably the main reason why he was so underrated in our recent history. He was also religious and wanted the Church to play an important role in the society. Besides, Bleiweis strongly opposed the Illyrian movement and thought the ideas of a uniform language of the South Slavs, which some of his contemporaries supported, to be inappropriate as such a language could not exist since it would be an artificial formation. For his commitment to the Slovene language and his editing and publishing the Farmers' and Craftsmen's News Janez Bleiweis can be considered the first publisher of specialist literature in veterinary medicine. In a way his News can be seen as a predecessor of today's Slovenian Veterinary Research journal. Since its beginning in 1961 the Research has seen numerous changes and as a scientific publication does not have the same readership and mission as the Farmers' and Craftsmen's News did. They have something in common though – despite globalisation and supremacy of the English language in science all over the world, the editorial board of the Slovenian Veterinary Research still strives for the preservation and development of the Slovene scientific language. Even though some years ago the Slovene version of the Research was discontinued, all articles, including those by foreign authors, are still accompanied by summaries in Slovene, which is our way of nurturing and preserving our scientific language. This year, perhaps symbolically at the 200th anniversary of the birth of Dr Janez Bleiweis, the Slovenian Veterinary Research received a special acknowledgement by being accepted in a reputable group of journals which have their citation index determined, on the basis of which a journal's impact factor is awarded. Thus the Slovenian Veterinary Research earned a great reputation of being the first scientific journal on biomedicine in Slovenia to manage to break through into this select group of journals from all over the globe, which is, unsurprisingly, dominated by journals from English-speaking countries. By being included in the Science Citation Index, the Slovenian Veterinary Research will gain global recognisability, which in the age of globalisation is very important also for small journals and nations. At the 200th anniversary of the birth of Dr Janez Bleiweis the editorial board finds it fitting for our journal to render homage to this great Slovene, by publishing a special edition in which different authors will try to shed light on his

figure and work, which was very important for all of us to be able to live in our own country and be educated in our own language. In this way we wish to pay our respects to the memory of Dr Janez Bleiweis and bring him and his significance for the Slovene nation a little closer to all those who may not be familiar with his work.

## JANEZ BLEIWEIS - ON THE 200<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF HIS BIRTH

Peter Vodopivec

*The Institute of Contemporary History, Kongresni trg 1, 1000 Ljubljana*

Much has been written about the political, professional, cultural and editorial work of Dr Janez Bleiweis in the last decades and authors of different disciplines have convincingly refuted a dark and negative image that literary and political historians had, since the beginning of the 20th century, created and spread concerning Bleiweis, his political, cultural and historical role and his spiritual horizon. Researchers who re-examined and reconsidered Bleiweis' activities in national politics today agree that until his death Bleiweis remained a central figure and an undisputed leader of the Slovene national movement. He was – in Vasilij Melik's words – the first Slovene politician, for he was a politician when there was no Slovene politics and enjoyed a good reputation as a politician after Slovene politics had acquired a more definite direction and characteristics. He was among the first to accept the name 'Slovenia' for the territory inhabited by the Slovene population and with his News decisively influenced the adoption of a uniform Slovene alphabet and, cautiously yet persistently, strove to bring about the equality of the Slovene language and Slovene national demands. His critics liked to mock the title of "the father of the Slovene nation", yet for most of his contemporaries who used it, it was an expression of genuine acknowledgement and respect. This fact was well known even to Bleiweis' opponents, who – despite criticism – acknowledged his merits in the development of Slovene national consciousness, his efforts to raise the educational level of the population and modernise the countryside as well as his endeavours for unified national political action. Those who know his work well have long maintained that he was a good and knowledgeable expert, who with his professional articles, organisational and educational activities and a number of practical proposals and initiatives was an untiring advocate of the modernisation of the Slovene society and economy and informed his compatriots of the latest achievements in agriculture, especially stockbreeding, veterinary medicine and medicine, i.e. in the areas he was engaged in.

According to Professor Srdjan Bavdek, two hundred years after Bleiweis' birth these opinions and findings are, like in the present volume of Research, more or less known and accepted only in narrow scholarly circles, while in the memory and consciousness of a broader public a negative image of Bleiweis remains, an image of a frightened, conservative, even clerical politician, who in his loyalty to

the emperor and monarchy opposed any more decisive national political initiatives and far-reaching cultural and economic ideas. This image was mostly instilled by political and literary historians, who besides his conservatism resented Bleiweis' allegedly unfavourable attitude towards Prešeren, his – also alleged – ties with clericalism and ultramontanism and his disputes with the Young Slovenes, and it was politically generalised and aggravated by Edvard Kardelj in the 1930s in his work *Razvoj slovenskega narodnega vprašanja* (The Development of the Slovene National Question). Such decidedly negative and historically distorted image entered history books and textbooks after the Second World War.

The papers published in this commemorative volume of Research refute the negative assessments of Bleiweis' personality and work, which persisted for so many years. Unkind and adverse views of Bleiweis have, according to Srdjan Bavdek's extensive examination of judgments of "the father of the Slovene nation" from different periods, their roots in severe political polarisation between the Young Slovenes and Old Slovenes in the 1860s and 1870s, and it was critics' political, literary and historical views rather than an objective analysis and reflection that influenced the creation of a one-sided and dark image of Bleiweis in the previous century. Certainly Bleiweis did not only attract negative criticism during his life and later on in the twentieth century; there were positive opinions as well, although the former, under the influence of political circumstances and development, gradually overshadowed the latter. The articles collected in this volume illuminate Bleiweis' political, editorial, educational, professional and cultural work from different angles, convincingly argue against negative views of his historical role and importance and objectively place his person, points of view and work into the historical concept of the time in which he lived and worked. In this light they present him as a doctor, veterinary surgeon, agricultural expert, writer, organiser of vocational education, and secretary of the agricultural society, and examine his efforts in stockbreeding, forensic medicine, eradication of livestock infectious diseases, organisation of veterinary service and development of scientific terminology. Srdjan Bavdek also discusses Bleiweis' political involvement and his views of the language, Prešeren and literature and points out that the theses of Bleiweis' clericalism and his unfavourable attitude to Prešeren have long been disproved in modern historiography and literary history.

Therefore this commemorative volume is an account of Dr Bleiweis' figure and work based on findings of the most recent research, which reveals in no ambiguous terms that Bleiweis and his adherents had a rather clear and recognisable programme. It was based on one hand in the enlightenment, reform and physiocratic movement of the Pre-March Period and on the other hand in conservative yet realistic and gradual modernisation-oriented view of Slovene cultural, social and economic conditions. Bleiweis' focus was farmers and small craftsmen, whom he saw as the most important agents of Slovene national consciousness. He was against more radical social changes, which could increase social tensions, cause pressure on towns and pave the way for Germanisation. He believed that a hurried transformation of what was then still predominantly rural society could