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**Tomaž Lazar**

dr., višji kustos, Narodni muzej Slovenije, Prešernova 20, SI-1000 Ljubljana  
E-pošta: tomaz.lazar@nms.si

## Pozabljeni izumitelj Edmund Pistotnik in njegove eksperimentalne puške v Narodnem muzeju Slovenije

### IZVLEČEK

*Edmund Pistotnik (1823–1891) je za časa življenja sodil med najprepoznavnejše izumitelje v habsburški monarhiji. Sprva se je odločil za vojaško službo v 7. pehotnem polku in postopoma napredoval do čina stotnika, a se je moral zaradi bolezni že leta 1860 upokojiti. Nato se je posvetil snovanju tehničnih izumov, še posebej dejavno na področju oborožitvene tehnologije. Najopaznejši preboj je dosegel z repetirno puško na enovito strelivo, patentirano leta 1860, izdelal pa je tudi enostrelno predelavo prednjače tipa Lorenz in izboljšavo sistema Wänzel. Kljub velikim pričakovanjem avstrijska armada ni sprejela v uporabo nobenega od Pistotnikovih modelov strelnega orožja. Trije njegovi prototipi so se po neznanem spletu okoliščin ohranili v Narodnem muzeju Slovenije. Do nedavnega so bili javnosti povsem neznan, zato želimo s pričujočim sestavkom podrobneje opozoriti na te izjemne zgodovinske raritete.*

### KLJUČNE BESEDE

*Edmund Pistotnik, izumiteljstvo, orožje, vojaška tehnika, Narodni muzej Slovenije*

### ABSTRACT

#### FORGOTTEN INVENTOR EDMUND PISTOTNIK AND HIS EXPERIMENTAL RIFLES IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SLOVENIA

*In his days, Edmund Pistotnik (1823–1891) was one of the most recognizable inventors in the Habsburg Monarchy. After initially deciding to embark on a military career in the Seventh Infantry Regiment and being gradually promoted to the rank of captain, he was compelled to retire already in 1860 due to poor health. After that, he devoted his life to designing technological innovations, particularly in the field of arms technology. Pistotnik attained the most visible breakthrough designing the metallic cartridge repeating rifle, patented in 1860, and he also designed a single-shot version of Lorenz muzzle loader as well as an improved variant of the Wänzel action. Despite his great expectations, the Austrian army refused to put any of Pistotnik's firearm models to use. Due to an unknown turn of events, three of his prototypes have been preserved in the National Museum of Slovenia. Since they have remained completely unknown to the public until recently, the aim of this article is to provide a detailed description and raise awareness of these extraordinary historical rarities.*

### KEY WORDS

*Edmund Pistotnik, innovation, arms, military technology, National Museum of Slovenia*

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## S U M M A R Y

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### Forgotten inventor Edmund Pistotnik and his experimental rifles in the National Museum of Slovenia

In his days, Edmund Pistotnik (1823–1891) was one of the most recognizable technological innovators in the final period of the Habsburg Monarchy. At the zenith of the industrial revolution and amidst the swift advancements in military technology, he became particularly invested in the innovation of firearms. Even though he probably accomplished much more than any other innovator of Slovenian descent in this field, his role is now all but forgotten.

Edmund Pistotnik was born in the Carinthian village of Komelj (Kömmel) and in 1843 joined as a cadet the Seventh Infantry Regiment with its seat in Klagenfurt. After being gradually promoted to the rank of captain, he was compelled to retire already in 1860 due to poor health. Released from active duty as an officer, Pistotnik moved with his family to Graz and fully committed himself to technological innovation, which had been his hobby since the mid-1850s. Initially, he mainly developed ideas for innovative transport means, particularly watercraft, but also submarines and propeller aircraft.

Immediately upon retirement, Pistotnik invested all his energy in military technology and achieved the most visible breakthrough designing the metallic cartridge repeating rifle, patented in 1860. The said rifle was designed as a variant of the standard Austrian M1854 Lorenz percussion muzzle-loader with an added wedge-shaped vertical breech block and a tubular magazine holding seven rounds in the rifle buttstock. At the time of innovation, the rifle was considered one of the most advanced small arms constructions in Europe. In terms of technological accomplishment, it was second only to conceptually similar competitive systems from the United States of America, e.g. Sharps M1859, Henry M1860 or Spencer M1860.

Despite promising trials, the Austrian Army never put the new arms to use. So, two years later, Pistotnik invented the even simpler single-shot, breech-loading rifle adapted for a paper cartridge, for some time considered a serious candidate for a new rifle of the Austrian armed forces. Nonetheless, the army commission ultimately opted for the competitive systems Wänzel and Werndl. Although Pistotnik hoped to meet with some success at least with his proposed improvements for the Wänzel rifle, he was ultimately left with no other choice but to admit defeat. An amateur mechanic without his own production capacities, he could in no way position

himself as an equal rival to established rifle producers and state-of-the-art industrial plants.

Due to some unknown turn of events, three prototypes of Pistotnik's rifles – a slightly remodelled repeating rifle from 1860, a single-shot, trapdoor breech loader from 1862 and the modification of the Wänzel M1854/67 rifle designed five years later –

have been preserved in the National Museum of Slovenia. While they have remained unknown to the public until quite recently, the contribution at hand aims to offer a more detailed presentation of their action and draw attention to Edmund Pistotnik's wrongly overlooked role in the technological development in the Habsburg Monarchy.