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IZ ZGODOVINE EPIDEMIJ



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Newspaper reporting on the smallpox epidemic in Carniola in 1873–1874

ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the smallpox epidemic between 1873 and 1874 in Carniola through reporting of Slovenian and German newspapers. These also provide the basis for a detailed study of the spread of the disease in Carniola, measures adopted by the provincial authorities and their infringement, as well as the consequences for the population that smallpox left in its wake. With a further focus on Ljubljana, the article also investigates the number of the deceases and their social structure at the zenith of the epidemic. By analyzing these processes, it aims to demonstrate the course of the smallpox epidemic in Carniola as reported in newspapers and the way in which newspapers set on notifying the public daily about the disease.

KEY WORDS

Carniola, Ljubljana, epidemic, smallpox, newspapers

IZVLEČEK

POROČANJE ČASOPISJA O EPIDEMIJI ČRNIH KOZ NA KRANJSKEM V LETIH 1873–1874

Članek analizira epidemijo črnih koz v letih 1873 in 1874 na Kranjskem skozi poročanje slovenskega in nemškega časopisja. Pri tem s pomočjo časnikov podrobneje raziskuje širitev bolezni na Kranjskem, ukrepe deželnih oblasti in njihove kršitve ter posledice, ki so jih črne koze pustile pri prebivalstvu. Dodatno, s poudarkom na Ljubljani, raziskuje število umrlih ter njihovo socialno strukturo na vrhuncu epidemije. Z analizo teh procesov skuša članek prikazati, kako je potekala epidemija črnih koz na Kranjskem glede na poročanje časopisja ter na kakšen način so se časniki lotili vsakdanjega obveščanja javnosti o bolezni.

KLJUČNE BESEDE

Kranjska, Ljubljana, epidemija, črne koze, časopisje

Introduction¹

Smallpox (Ger.: *schwarze Pocken* or *Blattern*) was a contagious disease in humans caused by two known variants of the variola virus: the severe *variola maior* (ca. 30% mortality) and the milder *variola minor* (ca. 1–2% mortality). The virus was spread by droplets from the mouth and nose when sneezing, coughing, or through contact with contaminated body fluids and objects (e.g., clothes). The symptoms included red rash, fever, vomiting, fatigue, and often also dehydration. Those who successfully recovered from the disease were usually left with scars all over the body (especially on the face, which often had psychological consequences), and not a small number of people suffered partial or complete blindness. The disease could only be contracted once, and on recovery a person developed lasting immunity to smallpox.

There was no medicine for smallpox, and the only way to prevent infection was through immunization, which was achieved by using two methods. The first one, *variolization* (derived from the term *variola*), was used to confer immunity by inserting the material collected from the vesicle of an infected person into an incision in the skin, which most often resulted in a milder form of the disease. After successful recovery, a person developed lasting immunity to smallpox. The second example was *vaccination* (from the Latin word *vacca* or cow),² a similar procedure that used the cowpox instead of the smallpox virus. Unlike *variolization*, this method only generated short-term immunity, which required revaccination, but it also had a somewhat lower mortality than *variolization*.³

The disease already occurred in the Habsburg Monarchy before the nineteenth century in a wave of European epidemics, and it also aroused attention of many physicians that worked in Carniola at one time or another.⁴ One of the last smallpox outbreaks in Europe took place in Yugoslavia in 1972, where the disease first appeared in Kosovo, whereas Slovenia recorded not a single case of infection, thanks to strict measures and mass vaccination.⁵ Today, smallpox has



Patient infected with the smallpox virus
(<https://novice.svet24.si/clanek/zanimivosti/585aafb431e94/bolezni-moderne-dobe>)

been eradicated worldwide, as also confirmed by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1980.⁶

Although the smallpox epidemic also raged in Carniola between 1873 and 1874, it is not often treated in Slovenian historiography. The only exception is a detailed discussion by Peter Vodopivec, who drew on newspapers, annual statistics, and other sources from the Historical Archives Ljubljana and the Archives of the Republic of Slovenia. His article *Črne kozе na Kranjskem in v Ljubljani v letih 1873/74* (Smallpox in Carniola and Ljubljana in 1873/74) was later also summarized by Andrej Studen in *Kronika 19. stoletja* (The Chronicle of the Nineteenth Century) for the purposes of composing a short lexical entry *Huda epidemija črnih koz* (Devastating Smallpox Epidemic). On the other hand, several historians have written about smallpox (especially the eighteenth-century epidemics) and vaccination in general. In her contribution *Bolni otroci in starševske skrbi: odnos do otroškega zdravja na primeru prepričevanja koz v 19. stol.* (Sick Children and Parental Care. Attitude toward Child Health and the Case of Smallpox Prevention in the Nineteenth Century), Urška Železnik describes, among other things, the overall attitude toward smallpox vaccination and ways in which the government sought to motivate the public to get vaccinated. Drawing on the statistical analysis and the documentation of the physician Gian Andrea Manzoni, the same author also provided a detailed study in her article *Cepljenje proti kozam v koprskem okraju v 30. letih 19. stoletja* (Smallpox Vaccination in the Koper District During the 1830s) about the process and the extent of smallpox vaccination in Koper and its surroundings. Although Marjana Kos devoted a segment of her Master thesis *Življenje v Ljubljani ob koncu 18. in na začetku 19. stoletja* (Life in Ljubljana at the End of the

¹ The article is based on a term paper for the study course Selected Chapters from the Nineteenth-Century Slovenian History under the mentorship of Katarina Keber.

² Vaccination and revaccination were also widely used during the period discussed in this article.

³ "Smallpox" (<https://www.britannica.com/science/smallpox> (October 23rd, 2019)); Grignolio, *Kdo se boji cepiv?*, pp. 49–52; Kos, *Epidemija*, pp. 288–292.

⁴ The disease was, among others, described by the physician Fran Viljem Lipič in his work *Bolezni Ljubljancev* and before him by the physicians Balthasar Hacquet from Idrija, Anton Muznik from Gorizia, and Vincenc Kern from Ljubljana.

⁵ *Epidemija črnih koz v Jugoslaviji* (<http://zgodovina.si/epidemija-crnih-koz-v-jugoslaviji/> (October 15th, 2020)); Lipič, *Bolezni Ljubljancev*, pp. 153 and 160.

⁶ "Smallpox" (<https://www.who.int/csr/disease/smallpox/en/> (October 23rd, 2019)).

Eighteenth and in the Early Nineteenth Century) to the smallpox epidemic between 1873 and 1874, her work largely focuses on analyzing vaccination as well as the treatment and burial of smallpox victims. Kos also wrote the article *Epidemije črnih koz v Ljubljani v drugi polovici 18. stoletja* (Smallpox Epidemics in Ljubljana in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century) based on death registers, newspapers, and administrative materials, in which she described the spread of both types of vaccination to Carniola and studied smallpox epidemics in Slovenian territory in the second half of the eighteenth century.⁷

This article aims to fill certain gaps in the knowledge about the course of the epidemic between 1873 and 1874, as well as bring forth the first study of newspaper reporting on smallpox in Carniola and determine the social structure of the deceased with an emphasis on Ljubljana when the epidemic reached its peak.⁸

The onset of the epidemic in the Habsburg Monarchy and rare cases of infection in Carniola

After the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871), a new smallpox epidemic swept through Europe, causing the greatest devastation in the Habsburg Monarchy between 1872 and 1874 during its gradual spread across its territory. The most affected provinces were Lower Austria, Salzburg, Silesia, and Trieste in the south.⁹ In 1873, the disease also took hold in Styria, Carinthia, and Carniola, where it peaked in the first quarter of 1874.¹⁰

Until March 1873, smallpox incidences in Carniola were hardly ever mentioned in Slovenian and German newspapers and remained in the shadow of drawing up the new election act.¹¹ On March 7th, 1873, *Slovenski narod* was the first to report “that smallpox and cholera patients [were] admitted to the city hospital for such time as [was] necessary to prevent these diseases from escalating into epidemics, after the provincial hospital could not accommodate them in a separate area.”¹² This clearly shows that smallpox incidence

rate in Ljubljana and Carniola did not deviate from the average at that time. Two days later, the same newspaper reported on smallpox infections in Kranjska Gora and stressed that the number of patients in the provincial hospital in Ljubljana had slightly increased, even though it still indicated individual, unrelated cases from various areas across Carniola.¹³ At the end of March, *Slovenski narod* reported on new smallpox infections and lack of space in the provincial hospital, but without causing alarm over the slight increase in morbidity.¹⁴

In early April, newspapers again reported on a few new smallpox infections and a death (of a woman), adding for Ljubljana that although “the disease [had] not evolved into an epidemic, the city [continued] to register individual smallpox infections”, and called on the population to protect itself to the maximum extent possible.¹⁵ Then, the news of smallpox and infections quieted down until the end of April and reappeared again in early May 1873 with reports on a few infected individuals and a small (unspecified) number of victims.¹⁶ At the end of July, new reports about the diseases surfaced in Kranj and its surroundings, and a slight increase in infections was also observed in the surroundings of Ljubljana (Vižmarje and Medvode).¹⁷ Nonetheless, smallpox still did not spread widely across the province.

Between August and October, there was again silence, with not a word about the disease to be found in *Slovenski narod* and no news in the newly established *Slovenec*.¹⁸ Only *Laibacher Zeitung* noted a few cases of smallpox in Ljubljana and its surroundings, but it said nothing about an epidemic. Isolated smallpox incidences were casually mentioned together with other seasonal diseases, such as tuberculosis, angina, and typhus.¹⁹

The mass spread of the disease to Carniola and the adoption of protective measures

In November, *Slovenski narod* wrote nothing specific about smallpox and remained largely concentrated on the election to the provincial assembly, which took place on November 11th, 1873—unlike *Slovenec*, which did report a few times on the disease. In the middle of the month, it published a letter from Graz, where smallpox already seemed to be abating due to winter. However, by mid-month, the Styrian

⁷ Further details on the works are specified in the list of literature.

⁸ During the time of writing the article, when measures to reverse the spread of Covid-19 were in place, the figures on deaths from newspapers could not be verified in death registers of Ljubljana's parishes due to the closure of archives.

⁹ At that time, Trieste, Istria, and Gorizia-Gradisca formed part of the Austrian Littoral, which was severely affected by the epidemic—in all probability, smallpox spread throughout Carniola from there (Vodopivec, Črne kozе, p. 92; *Slovenski zgodovinski atlas*, p. 148).

¹⁰ Vodopivec, Črne kozе, pp. 92–96; Železnik, Bolni otroci, pp. 438–449.

¹¹ For the Austrian half of the monarchy, the above-mentioned act from 1873 introduced direct election to the Imperial Council in Vienna in the form of four curiae (Cvirn, *Dunajski državni zbor*, pp. 128–129).

¹² *Slovenski narod*, March 7th, 1873, p. 3.

¹³ *Slovenski narod*, March 9th, 1873, p. 3.

¹⁴ *Slovenski narod*, March 30th, 1873, p. 3.

¹⁵ *Slovenski narod*, April 3rd, 1873, p. 3.

¹⁶ *Slovenski narod*, May 4th, 1873, p. 3.

¹⁷ *Slovenski narod*, July 31st, 1873, p. 2.

¹⁸ The first issue of *Slovenec* was brought out in October 1873. Initially, it was published twice or three times weekly, hence the somewhat limited body of information on the epidemic; *Slovenec*, October 14th, 1873, p. 1.

¹⁹ *Laibacher Zeitung*, October 3rd, 1873, p. 3; October 10th, 1873, p. 3; October 20th, 1873, p. 3; October 22nd, 1873, p. 3.

capital observed a new surge in infections, and the press feared that the movements of the army would trigger a mass spread of the disease from Styria to Carniola.²⁰ Toward the end of the month, the same newspaper started to issue increasingly frequent reports on smallpox-related deaths.²¹ Also noting the growing incidence of the disease, in mid-November *Laibacher Zeitung* wrote that smallpox infections were on the rise, causing above-average mortality in children and adults. Nonetheless, in November 1873, tuberculosis still featured as the disease that affected the highest number of Ljubljana's inhabitants.²²

In mid-December, *Slovenski narod* noted a high incidence of smallpox in Ljubljana's surroundings and "that several high school pupils in Ljubljana also showed symptoms of smallpox."²³ On December 19th, 1873, newspapers pointed to the growing number of new infections among schoolchildren, forbidding school attendance to all children whose family members had contracted smallpox.²⁴ The very next day, the authorities passed even stricter measures by closing the gymnasium, the secondary school (Ger.: *Realschule*), and all public schools in Ljubljana for three weeks. This was also the first time in 1873 that the newspaper wrote about a spreading epidemic.²⁵ By the end of the month, reports on infections began to circulate throughout Carniola. On Christmas Day, for example, all schools were shut down in Novo Mesto, and the Poljane hospital in Ljubljana, already running beyond its capacity, had to open a new provisional hospital in Trnovo, which reportedly filled up in a few days. Patients also received in-home care from private physicians, and the specifically designated sanitary police was called in to do a house-to-house search for many infected who did not seek medical help at all.²⁶ On the last day of 1873, the authorities issued a proclamation on extending the closure of schools in Ljubljana for a month (until the

end of January 1874) or until the end of the epidemic in Carniola.²⁷ December 1873 thus brought about a turning point, with smallpox spreading throughout Carniola and newspapers now reporting almost daily on new infections and the provincial government taking the first measures to reverse the epidemic. In the last week of December, *Slovenski narod* regularly criticized the provincial government for its failure to effectively tackle the smallpox epidemic, which now threatened to continue spreading unhindered and to claim an untold number of more victims.

In the first quarter of 1874, the smallpox epidemic reached its peak in Carniola. On New Year's Day, a permanent (sanitary) commission was set up at the city hall in Ljubljana with the main task to prevent the spread of the epidemic. It was composed of the mayor, four city councilors, two physicians, and the city's chief advisor.²⁸ At its first session, the commission passed two measures: to augment the capacity of the provisional hospital in Trnovo to receive fifty more patients and to disinfect the patients' clothes, even at the city's expense for those who could not afford it.²⁹ According to newspaper reports, the number of smallpox deaths surged in January 1874 and the provincial government used the record amount of health funds for treating smallpox and cholera patients.³⁰ As numerous letters from across the province reveal, in mid-January smallpox continued to spread throughout Carniola, forcing the sanitary commission in Ljubljana to extend the imposed school holiday for (at least) until February 3rd, 1874, whereas the authorities in Novo Mesto prolonged it (at least) until January 27th.³¹ The last third of the month witnessed ever more frequent reports about the surge in smallpox infections precisely in Novo Mesto and its surroundings—the local hospital had exceeded its capacity and the dread of the disease was so great that "no one dared to visit their neighbor's house so as not to contract smallpox."³² In the Carniolan capital, an uproar was set off by the news that infected inmates were being transported from Ljubljana Castle to the provisional hospital in Trnovo, as many citizens feared their escape.³³ Then at the end of January, reports on a severe outbreak of smallpox also surfaced in Kranj and its surroundings, also leaving the local inhabitants too afraid to leave their homes. Official reports stated high numbers of infections and deaths among children, and the increasing morbidity

**— Iz Novega mesta) se nam piše:
Vlada je tudi tukaj zaukazala telegrafično,
gimnazijo, normalko, in dekliško šolo zapreti in sicer zaradi kôz. Ubogi Dolenjci! ne samo s živinsko kugo, nego še s tem jih bog korobači. Sola se tedaj začne še le 7. jan.**

Newspaper article on school closures in Novo Mesto (Slovenski narod, December 25th, 1873).

²⁰ *Slovenec*, November 20th, 1873, p. 3.

²¹ *Slovenec*, November 11th, 1873, p. 4; November 25th, 1873, p. 4; November 27th, 1873, p. 4; November 29th, 1873, p. 4.

²² *Laibacher Zeitung*, November 15th, 1873, p. 4.

²³ *Slovenski narod*, December 17th, 1873, p. 3.

²⁴ *Slovenski narod*, December 19th, 1873, p. 3.

²⁵ *Slovenski narod*, December 20th, 1873, p. 3; *Slovenec*, December 20th, 1873, p. 4.

²⁶ *Slovenski narod*, December 25th, 1873, p. 3; December 28th, 1873, p. 4; December 30th, 1873, p. 3.

²⁷ *Slovenski narod*, December 31st, 1873.

²⁸ The press here only mentions a commission without stating the names of its members.

²⁹ *Slovenski narod*, January 1st, 1874, p. 3; *Laibacher Zeitung*, January 2nd, 1874, p. 3.

³⁰ *Slovenski narod*, January 8th, 1874, p. 3.

³¹ *Slovenski narod*, January 14th, 1874, p. 3; January 15th, 1874, p. 3; *Slovenec*, January 20th, 1874, p. 4.

³² *Slovenski narod*, January 18th, 1874, p. 3.

³³ *Slovenski narod*, January 20th, 1874, p. 3.

was soon also observed in adults.³⁴ At the same time, the sanitary commission in Ljubljana published the following additional measures to end the spread of the epidemic: physicians were to report the number of smallpox infections, all classrooms and personal objects of the deceased were to be disinfected, and school holiday, as already stated, was extended until February 3rd.³⁵ Although the situation was extremely serious, newspapers reiterated at the end of January 1874 that the epidemic was already losing its breath and that such prolonged school closures were uncalled for. They also repeatedly called on the provincial government to introduce mandatory smallpox vaccination as the most effective and reasonable method of protection against the spread of the disease.

Although schools in Ljubljana reopened on February 4th, teachers already complained that same day about “many pupils not coming to school, who [were] in perfectly good health but [lived] in the same household as smallpox patients.”³⁶ All this points to the high numbers of the infected and those in close contact with them continuing to persist in early February. High morbidity is also confirmed by the article published the next day on the hospitals in Poljane and Trnovo being again overloaded with smallpox patients.³⁷ For the rest of the month, newspapers reported on numerous smallpox cases throughout Carniola, signaling that the epidemic was far from over and thus completely contradicting newspaper reports from the end of the previous month. The disease even reached as far as Mount Nanos, something considered impossible due to its elevation and the constant wind, which were believed to protect those areas from all kinds of epidemic diseases.³⁸ In February, sections of *Slovenski narod* and *Slovenec* reporting on deaths and their causes still indicated a significant number of persons dying of smallpox. *Laibacher Zeitung* also featured an article assuring that “ist [...] Impfstoff zur Vaccination und Revaccination in guter Qualität aus der steiermärkisch landschaftlichen Impfstoff-Regenerierungsanstalt [...] stets nach beliebigem Bedarf zu beziehen” (the substance for vaccination and revaccination coming from the Styrian provincial institution for vaccines is of high quality and readily available in any quantity).³⁹ The statement most likely sought to persuade the greatest possible number of people to get vaccinated—a method that many newspapers regarded as the most effective in battling the epidemic.⁴⁰

³⁴ *Slovenski narod*, January 30th, 1874, p. 3.

³⁵ *Slovenec*, January 29th, 1874, p. 3.

³⁶ *Slovenski narod*, February 5th, 1874, p. 3.

³⁷ *Slovenski narod*, February 6th, 1874, p. 3.

³⁸ *Slovenski narod*, February 17th, 1874, p. 3.

³⁹ *Laibacher Zeitung*, January 5th, 1874, p. 4.

⁴⁰ Such articles were not a rarity. Throughout the epidemic, many newspapers devoted several sections urging the pop-

Containing the disease. The end of the epidemic and its aftermath

Still in early March 1874, some areas across Carniola reported on the persisting presence of smallpox and advised caution but added that the epidemic was less severe than in the previous two months. On March 21st, 1874, the end of the epidemic was declared in Novo Mesto, while reports about the epidemic continued to trickle from other parts of the monarchy, especially from the neighboring Styria, where the highest number of cases were recorded in the Savinja Valley.⁴¹ A decline in smallpox deaths was also reported in newspaper sections on deaths and their causes. The provisional hospital for smallpox patients in Trnovo was closed in March but remained on alert for a new possible epidemic outbreak.⁴²

Over the next few months, news on the epidemic in Carniola disappeared completely and the morbidity rates returned to normal. This raises the question of what really facilitated the containment of the epidemic. Had the measures imposed by the provincial government and the sanitary commission finally borne fruit? Was the end of the epidemic due to the weather change (the transition from winter to spring)? Or was it owed to a greater proportion of vaccinated population? Although the sources offer no definitive answer, the epidemic undoubtedly had profound physical and psychological implications. As already noted in the introduction, the disease left many survivors with scars and some of them blind. In many families, both parents contracted the disease and died of it, making their children orphans. On March 3rd, 1874, *Slovenski narod* stated an example of an entire family contracting smallpox (both parents and seven children) that was reduced to poverty after having lost their ability to work, source of income and all savings.⁴³ The impact of the smallpox epidemic on the population in the first quarter of 1874 is even more vividly illustrated by how

— (Bolezni kože v Ljubljani) se je toliko zmanjšala, da bodo denes zaprli bolnišnico, ki jo je bil magistrat napravil za silo v Trnovem. Vendar bode še pripravljena ostala, ko bi se epidemija, ki nikakor še nij nehala, zopet širiti začela.

Newspaper article on closing the provisional hospital in Trnovo (Slovenski narod, March 22nd, 1874).

ulation to become vaccinated and the authorities to impose mandatory vaccination.

⁴¹ *Slovenski narod*, March 21st, 1874, p. 3.

⁴² *Slovenski narod*, March 22nd, 1874, p. 2.

⁴³ *Slovenski narod*, March 3rd, 1874, p. 3.

the period was dubbed in the press—“the times of smallpox”.⁴⁴ However, relief for Carniola was short-lived because a new wave of smallpox already hit in 1882.

The reasons for the spread of the disease

One of the main reasons that the epidemic swept across Carniola was improved connections between individual parts of the monarchy and faster mass movements facilitated by new inventions, most notably the construction of the Southern Railroad in 1875, linking Vienna with Trieste and partly also traversing Carniola with its capital Ljubljana. These changes intensified and accelerated the movement of people, trade contacts,⁴⁵ and enabled a smoother circulation of soldiers, who were the most common transmitters of epidemics such as smallpox and cholera in wartime. According to the Carniolan press, the epidemic first struck the areas along the Southern Railroad.⁴⁶

Reading the newspaper reports also leaves one with the impression that, despite repeated calls for action, the measures introduced by the provincial government were not swift, adequate, and effective enough to stop the epidemic in its tracks. Yet part of the blame also rested on the Carniolans themselves, many of whom completely disregarded the protective measures or abided by them to the minimum extent possible. Thus, one could read in newspapers about “a property owner making a three-hour journey to settle legal matters at court, with a scarf wrapped around his head and his face and arms dotted with pustules that had already begun to fill with pus”.⁴⁷ People often refused to bid farewell from their deceased family members and kept their bodies in their homes for days; many failed to mount black signs signaling an infected household, the sick moved about freely and even frequented common areas (taverns, courts, churches, stores, and so on). Moreover, no prohibition was imposed on visiting patients, whereas hygiene and disinfection remained atrociously poor despite repeated warnings.⁴⁸

According to newspapers, another significant reason for the spread of the disease was resistance to vaccination, observed not only by among many healthy or sick individuals but also among physicians who were skeptical of the vaccine and often even actively agitated against it. In addition, no one was held legally accountable for such actions, because

the decree, issued in 1836 for the Austrian part of the monarchy, merely recommended smallpox vaccination. Variolization was introduced in Carniola as early as 1799 by the physician Vincenc Kern, and according to the data for the 1870s, between 13,000 and 14,000 Carniolans received the vaccine (in the form of vaccination and revaccination) annually before the epidemic. Along with physicians, they were given various bonuses and other privileges, whereas the mothers of unvaccinated children were propagandistically labelled as bad and irresponsible. To boost the preventive efforts during the epidemic itself, the city council even imposed emergency vaccination for Ljubljana, which raises some doubt whether the press rightly stated the low vaccination rate as one of the main reasons for the epidemic of such magnitude.⁴⁹

Smallpox deaths with an emphasis on the province of Carniola and the city of Ljubljana

Table 1: The number of smallpox deaths per 10,000 inhabitants.⁵⁰

Province	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875
Carniola	1,2	4,0	21,2	51,1	4,3
Carinthia	1,9	2,7	18,3	27,8	5,6
Styria	1,7	7,0	15,1	22,4	8,0
Trieste	2,1	72,2	4,1	5,9	2,7
Gorizia-Gradisca	1,1	5,5	7,6	5,2	1,4
Istria	0,6	18,3	9,5	8,9	3,0

As the table shows, the most severely affected southern Austrian part was the city of Trieste in 1872, followed by Carniola in 1874, when the epidemic reached its peak in the province.

Table 2: The number of smallpox deaths by year in Carniola.⁵¹

Province	1871	1872	1873	1874	1875
Carniola	58	187	993	2407	203

Given the data above, it is possible to confirm the statements in newspapers that the epidemic in Carniola peaked in 1874. Between 1873 and 1874, smallpox killed altogether 3,400 persons or about 0.7% of the then Carniolan population of 480,000.

The table 3 clearly illustrates the widespread incidence of the smallpox epidemic in January, February, and March 1874 in Ljubljana, which can also be

⁴⁴ *Slovenski narod*, March 4th, 1874, p. 2.

⁴⁵ Trade was especially strong with Trieste, the monarchy's main port—whence the epidemic is believed to have spread across Carniola via the Southern Railroad; *Slovenski zgodovinski atlas*, p. 153; Vodopivec, Črne koze, p. 92.

⁴⁶ Vodopivec, Črne koze, p. 92; Studen, Huda epidemija, p. 258.

⁴⁷ *Slovenski narod*, February 25th, 1874, p. 3.

⁴⁸ Vodopivec, Črne koze, pp. 92–93.

⁴⁹ Vodopivec, Črne koze, p. 92; Železnik, Bolni otroci, pp. 441–444; Železnik, Cepljenje proti kozam, pp. 259–274; Studen, Huda epidemija, p. 259; Kos, Življenje v Ljubljani, p. 92.

⁵⁰ Vodopivec, Črne koze, p. 92.

⁵¹ Ibid.

gathered from the reporting of Slovenian and German newspapers.

Table 3: The number of smallpox deaths in Ljubljana in the first half of 1874.⁵²

Month	January	February	March	April	May	June
Smallpox deaths	31	28	18	10	4	4

Table 4: The number of smallpox deaths in Ljubljana between December 1873 and March 1874 by age group.⁵³

Age (years)	0–5	6–20	21–50	50 +
Smallpox deaths	31	12	31	6

Most victims of the smallpox epidemic in Ljubljana belonged to the age groups between several weeks and five years and between twenty-one and fifty years. Not surprisingly, because the disease was posed a particular threat to infants and small children of up to five years. There were also several reports during the epidemic on a somewhat surprising spread of the disease among adults.⁵⁴ Of all victims of the epidemic, children aged less than two years accounted for no less than one-quarter of all smallpox deaths in Ljubljana, and the average age of the deceased was around nineteen years of age.⁵⁵

Table 5: Smallpox deaths in Ljubljana between December 1873 and March 1874 by sex.⁵⁶

Sex	Men	Women
Smallpox deaths	37	46

Albeit widely believed to not have discriminated among social strata, between December 1873 and March 1874 smallpox affected much more severely the poor, for example, children of ordinary workers, bakers, and cottagers. Most victims in the age group older than twenty years were cooks, joiners, carpenters, shoemakers, bakers, maids, farmhands, locksmiths, and housewives. Only 15% of all the deceased were from the middle and high social strata

(teachers, accountants, judges, and so on).⁵⁷ The reasons for this could be, among others, that members of lower and less educated strata were more reluctant to receive the vaccine, which then reflected in higher morbidity and mortality rates. At the same time, low mortality rates in higher strata can also be attributed to better hygiene, higher living standard, and better healthcare more readily available to them in the event of infection, compared to lower strata.⁵⁸

To conclude

The analysis of Slovenian and German newspapers in Ljubljana shows no noticeable deviation from the average number of smallpox infections before the autumn of 1873. Until November 1873, spotlight was on political developments, such as the drafting of the new imperial council election act from April 1873 or the election to the Carniolan provincial assembly, which was held in mid-November that same year. A slight increase in the number of infections can be observed in early autumn through newspaper reports on several unrelated cases across Carniola without mentioning any kind of epidemic. This changed in December, when the number of smallpox infections sharply increased. Only then did Slovenian and German press begin to write about an epidemic and call for maximum participation in vaccination as a crucial step toward ending the epidemic. The provincial government joined efforts with the local authorities in adopting a series of measures, such as school closures, organizing a sanitary commission, disinfecting the clothes of the infected, and opening a provisional hospital in Trnovo. Despite all measures, however, the press frequently urged the authorities to impose additional restrictions. At the end of January 1874, newspapers reported that the epidemic began to lose its breath, but these statements turned out to be false as hospitals began to fill up again with smallpox patients. At this point it seems that reporting rapidly switched from one extreme (demanding further action) to another (overly optimistic forecasts of the end of the epidemic). Contrary to the assessments provided by newspapers, the epidemic then started to abate in March, followed by the relaxation of some measures and the closure of the provisional hospital in Trnovo. Overall, reporting on smallpox put the main spotlight on Ljubljana and, somewhat surprisingly, the news of the epidemic was always featured on the penultimate page,⁵⁹ most probably so as not to cause excessive or unnecessary panic among the population.

⁵² Ibid, p. 95.

⁵³ *Slovenec*, December 2nd, 1873, p. 4; December 11th, 1873, p. 4; December 13th, 1873, p. 4; December 20th, 1873, p. 4; December 30th, 1873, p. 4; January 6th, 1874, p. 4; January 8th, 1874, p. 4; January 17th, 1874, p. 4; January 22nd, 1874, p. 4; January 24th, 1874, p. 4; January 29th, 1874, p. 4; January 31st, 1874, p. 4; February 5th, 1874, p. 4; February 7th, 1874, p. 4; February 12th, 1874, p. 4; February 19th, 1874, p. 4; February 21st, 1874, p. 4; February 26th, 1874, p. 4; February 28th, 1874, p. 4; March 5th, 1874, p. 4; March 7th, 1874, p. 4; March 12th, 1874, p. 4; March 14th, 1874, p. 4; March 17th, 1874, p. 4; March 26th, 1874, p. 4; March 31st, 1874, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Železnik, *Bolni otroci*, p. 440.

⁵⁵ See note 53.

⁵⁶ See note 53.

⁵⁷ See note 53.

⁵⁸ Železnik, *Bolni otroci*, pp. 442–447.

⁵⁹ At the time, *Slovenski narod*, *Slovenec*, and *Laibacher Zeitung* most often only comprised four pages.

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P O V Z E T E K

Poročanje časopisja o epidemiji črnih koz na Kranjskem v letih 1873–1874

Po francosko-pruski vojni (1870–71) se je v Evropi ponovno pričela širiti epidemija črnih koz. Habsburško monarhijo je epidemični val dosegel leta 1872 in se po njenem ozemlju postopoma širil naslednji dve leti. Med najbolj prizadetimi deželami monarhije so bile Spodnja Avstrija, Šlezija in Salzburg, medtem ko sta bila med najbolj prizadetima južnima območjema monarhije mesto Trst in dežela Kranjska. V slovenskem in nemškem časopisju pred jesenjo 1873 na Kranjskem ni mogoče zaznati večjega odstopanja od povprečnega števila primerov črnih koz. Nekoliko povečano število obolenih zasledimo šele novembra 1873, medtem ko je epidemija vrh doživela med decembrom 1873 in marcem 1874. Bolezen se je po poročanju časopisja najbolj razmahnila predvsem v Ljubljani, Kranju ter Novem mestu. Za zajezitev epidemije v deželi so posamezne mestne oblasti skupaj z deželno vlado sprejele številne ukrepe, med drugim ustanovitev sanitetne komisije, obvezno dezinfekcijo prostorov ter osebnih stvari obolenih, zaprtje šol in izredno cepljenje. Kljub temu moramo poudariti, da je časopisje deželne oblasti pogosto pozivalo, naj za zajezitev epidemije uvedejo dodatne omejitve, prebivalce pa je naprošalo, naj se udeležijo cepljenja. Ukrepi med Kranjci velikokrat niso bili upoštevani, saj so ljudje odhajali v skupne prostore (gostilne, cerkve, sodišča ...), se zadrževali pri umrlih za črnimi kozami in vzdrževali nizek higienski standard. Časopisi so že konec januarja ocenili, da epidemija izgublja sapo, vendar se je ta pričela mimo njihovih napovedi umirjati šele marca, skladno s tem pa so deželne oblasti sprostile nekatere ukrepe. V letih 1873 in 1874 je na Kranjskem za črnimi kozami skupaj umrlo 3.400 oseb, kar predstavlja okoli 0,7 % takratnega prebivalstva dežele. Največji delež umrlih v Ljubljani med decembrom 1873 in marcem 1874 predstavljajo osebe iz starostne skupine od nekaj tednov do pet let in osebe iz starostne skupine od 21 do 50 let. Med žrtvami črnih koz največkrat najdemo pripadnike nižjih slojev, kot so otroci navadnih delavcev, pekov in kajzarjev, medtem ko so žrtve po 20. letu starosti prav tako opravljale poklice, značilne za najnižje sloje, to so bili hlapci, dekle, kuharice, gospodinje, čevljarji in tesarji. Razloge za takšno socialno strukturo umrlih lahko najdemo v večjem odporu proti cepljenju med nižjimi sloji ter v večji higieni, kvalitetnejših bivalnih razmerah in boljši oskrbi za obbolele pri višjih slojih prebivalstva.



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