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INTRODUCTION & OBJECTIVES: Philipp Bozzini was born on May 25, 1773 in Mainz, Germany. His father, Nicolaus Maria Bozzini de Bozza, came from a well-to-do Italian family that had to escape from Italy at approximately 1760. Bozzini started his medical studies in Mainz, and approximately in 1794 went to Jena to complete them. On June 12, 1797 Bozzini was granted the title of doctor of medicine, which allowed him to establish in Mainz as physician.

MATERIAL & METHODS: Sources from medical journal, German manuscripts and European medical chronicles were analysed regarding the life and contribution of Philipp Bozzini.

RESULTS: Bozzini travelled several times to France and the Netherlands in order to acquire professional experience. During the War of the Second Coalition against France, Bozzini served in the imperial army and was in charge of a 120-bed campaign hospital in Mainz. His extraordinary merits during this time were known by the Archduke Karl of Austria (1771–1847), who would protect in the future Bozzini’s invention.

The Lichtleiter was a primitive endoscope to inspect urethra, female bladder, rectum, cervix, mouth or wounds. Bozzini thought that the instrument could be incorporated into Austrian military hospitals. This required a device to be sent to Wien, and also the performance of an expertise by health authorities. After the review the judging committee suggested some changes. Once such changes were made, they were satisfied with the operation of the instrument in patients (only examinations of the peritoneal cavity were not approved), particularly also because the procedure was painless.

Bozzini’s knowledge of mathematics, philosophy, and chemistry was outstanding. Aeronautic studies and drawings of a flying device were unfortunately lost.

Like many idealist people, Bozzini had no experience in business matters, but devoted himself with enthusiasm to his scientific activities. From 1804 on, his dedication to the development of his instrument for endoscopy was virtually complete. To earn a living, Bozzini practised obstetrics with extreme care.

On April 4, 1809 Bozzini died at 36 years of age from that infection. He left his wife in a bad financial situation. She died 6 months later. Their 3 small children were given over to friends.

CONCLUSIONS: Bozzini with his insights and his ideas was three quarters of a century ahead of the technical and scientific possibilities of his time. His instrument with artificial light, mirrors and specula was the father of any endoscope and opened the gate of the modern laparoscopy.