

“Cultures of Defeat”: Reflections on the Adoption of German Racial Anthropology and Racial Hygiene in Bulgaria (1878–1941)

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The issue at hand

Racial anthropology and eugenics form the central pillars of a historical and ideological phenomenon that the French philosopher Michel Foucault called “biopolitics” or “biopower.” Racial anthropology, eugenics – or “racial hygiene” as eugenics was favorably called in Germany and in countries under German cultural influence – and demographic policies formed the respective branches of Nazi biopolitics. But according to Foucault, biopolitics is an essential component of the modern state in general (cf. FOUCAULT 2003: 239–264). Therefore, it would be wrong to consider this phenomenon as being limited to Germany, or more specifically, to *Nazi* Germany (cf. in general WECKER 2009). Indeed, the German variants of racial anthropology and eugenics alone cannot account for the holocaust, since other factors must also be taken into consideration. However, what remains undeniable is the role that these fields had in providing the ‘scientific’ springboard from which the mass crimes of German Nazism relating to the extermination of whole peoples and ethnic groups were launched.

As history shows, the biological assessment of a population (i.e., racial or physical anthropology) and the control of its reproduction – in terms of both “quantity” (demographic policies) and “quality” (eugenics) manifest themselves in different ways. There was a democratic version of biopolitics which in France was labeled as “puericulture” and in England and the USA as “reform eugenics” in the late 1930s – as opposed to German racial hygiene (cf. SCHNEIDER 1990a and 1990b; KÜHL 1997: 145–157). Some scholars assert that within the democratic context of the North American and Western European post-war societies and with the progress of prenatal diagnostics, eugenics became individualized, and the responsibility for the abortion of embryos owing to eugenic factors became a matter of discussion between the parents and the doctor involved, while the role of the state was reduced to granting the respective legislative framework (cf. KÜHL 1997: 233–238). On the other hand, various attempts at controlling the population growth in certain developing countries under the supervision of the UNO, can also be seen as a sort of biopolitics (cf. CONNELLY 2008). Finally, we can also discern a Soviet brand of biopolitics which most definitely did not disappear with the official banning of eugenics in 1930 (KREMENTZOV 2010).

But still, even after enumerating these variants of biopolitics, we cannot ignore the fact that owing to its association with mass crimes and industrialized methods of eradication, the German example is unique. German biopolitics, furthermore, had proponents among selected non-German nations elsewhere in that part of the European continent which came under the sphere of influence of the Nazis after the Second World War broke out. But, as we will attempt to demonstrate via an illustration from the conditions within Bulgaria, even these incomplete and parochial imitations

within the multinational setting of Hitler's "new order of Europe" underscore the singularity of the German offshoot of biopolitics. This reminds us also that the beginnings of German and Austrian biopolitics at the turn of the 20th century took place within a multinational setting – i.e., a Central European and partly even Southeast European framework. Even by that time, this position was clearly characterized in the supposed cultural hegemony of the Germans vis-à-vis their non-German neighbors, whereby this traditional hegemony was now going to be 'justified' within the regime of biology (cf. WEINDLING 2011).

These circumstances allow us to stipulate that with regard to the Nazi crimes during the Second World War, it makes sense to examine similar phenomena within other countries and consider the limitations which prevented a full-fledged imitation of that which was occurring in Germany, whether because of moral boundaries or simply material restrictions. In this way, we can recognize the singularity of Nazi biopolitics and apply sharper contours to their criminal ramifications.

The Bulgarian case is of particular interest in this respect, since we can trace a German influence that begins with the foundation of the Bulgarian state in 1878. During the interwar period, the position of Bulgaria mirrors to some extent that of Germany. Bulgaria experienced a similar isolation from its Balkan neighbors as Germany did in Central Europe vis-à-vis France, Great Britain, Czechoslovakia and Poland. Germany and Bulgaria had been allies during the First World War and consequently shared the fate of having been defeated. Territories, which nationalists had considered essentially German or Bulgarian, were lost in the aftermath of the Great War; subsequently, revanchist attitudes played a prominent role in both countries. Similar observations can be made with respect to the impact of paramilitary right-wing groups.

Let us now take a closer look into the conditions after the lost war of 1914–1918: According to Wolfgang SCHIVELBUSCH (2001), a specific "culture of defeat" came into being in Germany during that time. In the debates of the German right-wing intelligentsia, national weakness was an ever-present topic. These debates referred to "national traitors" such as the revolutionaries of late 1918 and as well as the strong role of left-wing parties in the Weimar Republic. However, weaknesses among the domestic elite during the war also came to the fore in these discussions. A new feature in this discourse was its appeal to technology and medicine. Technocratic and engineering approaches should help in overcoming national weakness and form the backbone for future national projects – in other words, social issues were supposed to be solved via technology and natural science (cf. *ibid.*: 309–314). These specific developments corresponded to general trends common in most European states, yet they manifested a special prominence in Germany: The nation was increasingly conceived of as a biological entity; consequently the promise of national rejuvenation had to be sought in the application of Darwinian natural selection which had been neglected owing to the influence of the degeneration that came in the wake of modernism (cf. TURDA 2010: 64–93). Both with respect to the physical body of the nation and to the revision of external borders, national grandeur should be regained by means of racial hygiene and by "sanitizing" the nation.

In the Bulgarian society of the interwar period, in turn, certain features emerged that were similar to the German ones: the loss of two wars – the Second Balkan War

of 1913 (the goal of which was Macedonia) and from 1915, Bulgaria's participation in the First World War (for the same cause). The concomitant loss of territory instead of its gain put an end to any optimism regarding the future of the nation. These circumstances, in turn, caused a Bulgarian "culture of defeat" which experts describe as an introspective or "melancholic" mood that dwelled among bourgeois intellectuals (cf. TODOROVA 1995: 85–88; ELENKOV 1998; FOTEV 2010). The latter started to question the Bulgarian national character and to reflect on its possible drawbacks and advantages. Such attitudes were open to influences from outside which claimed to provide answers regarding this national decline – this was in particular true with respect to approaches such as eugenics and racial anthropology. The reasons therefore were simple, and in the Bulgarian case they were the same as in Germany: Eugenics could explain national decline in terms of biological degeneration and offer a remedy, promising in turn a great national future following the orderly application of the laws of heredity. Racial anthropology offered a supposedly scientific-oriented method to distinguish the ethnic Bulgarians from those of the hostile neighboring nations – in the Bulgarian case not only from the Turks, Romanians and Greeks, but also from the South Slavic Serbs who dominated the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, as well as from the ethnic minorities in Bulgaria who purportedly threatened the nation's homogeneity. Consequently, German racial hygiene and racial anthropology became the objects of much admiration.

Comparisons should not be strained, however: Germany was a powerful industrial country with a rich tradition of university education, while Bulgaria, an agrarian country just on the very verge of industrialization and still dependent on the import of industrial goods, could barely afford a scientific infrastructure that could measure up to that of Germany. The country's only university, in Sofia, was founded in 1888, and its Medical Faculty was established only in the last year of the First World War. Therefore, in Bulgaria's case even after the First World War, accruing expertise and scientific knowledge was often a question of studying abroad. In this respect, the transfer of knowledge from Austrian and German universities was an important factor. In her monograph on Bulgarian students studying abroad from 1878 until the First World War, Rayna Manafova determined via various figures that Russia, Germany, France, Switzerland and Austria were the favoured destinations for Bulgarian students. According to this research, it appears that the cumulative number of Bulgarian students graduating in Germany and Austria-Hungary (taken together) was greater than for any other country listed above (cf. MANAFOVA 1994: 50).

Just these few facts demonstrate that the networks between German and Austrian scientific figures and their Bulgarian counterparts formed a sort of hierarchical scheme – not dissimilar to the relation between mentor and pupil. In some cases, this relationship could even be described as colonial. The Bulgarian pupil often copied the German blueprint (literally). And in the case of Bulgarian racial hygiene in the inter-war period, the relationship became one-sided, to such an extent that German experts in the field knew virtually nothing about the activities of their Bulgarian epigones. One rarely finds a rejection of German principles with respect to racial anthropology, as we will see in the case of the biologist Metodi Popov.

One more thought should be touched upon in advance: Within the field of biopolitics we will concentrate on racial anthropology and on racial hygiene (or eugen-

ics). Although the two may be differentiated from each other by their methods, aims, and their respective discourses, they have a common denominator – the attempt to formulate a biological foundation for one’s own nation that in the long run would exclude, or at least stigmatize, all citizens who were not ethnically German or Bulgarian. In the Bulgarian case, certain representatives of racial anthropology were also propagators of racial hygiene and vice versa, so that it makes sense to examine both of them when we seek to sketch the German influence upon the field of biopolitics in Bulgaria. Apart from that, in their respective historical developments, racial anthropology and racial eugenics alternate with each other with respect to their popularity among the Bulgarian public. While racial anthropology was dominant in the decades before the First World War, racial hygiene would prevail in the 1920s. From the mid-1930s on, both would be equally present as different but sufficiently related representations of biopolitics, which by that time were being heavily influenced by their proponents in the Third Reich.

The prelude: German influence on Bulgarian racial anthropology up to 1918¹

The indication of a disposition towards Austria and Germany among those Bulgarians studying abroad certainly had positive implications for cultural relations. The general history of these Austro-Bulgarian and German-Bulgarian relations can be traced back to the foundation of the modern Bulgarian state in 1878 and has already been the topic of historical research (cf. in selection NAZARSKA 2011; SCHALLER 2006; POPPETROV 2006; TROEBST 2004; BOJADŽIEVA 2003; KJULJUMOVA-BOJADŽIEVA 1991; NATEV 1997; ZIDAROVA 1983; *Bălgarsko-germanski otnošenija i vrážki*, vol. 2–4 1979–1989). But with respect to the development of racial anthropology in Bulgaria, it was rather the result of individual developments with a dash of coincidence which led to the dominance of German influence.

One of these contingencies was the arrival in Bulgaria in early 1880 of the Lithuanian doctor, Jonas Basanavičius (or Ivan Basanovič, as he was called in Russia and Bulgaria) (1851–1927), a graduate of the Moscow Academy of Medicine. Basanavičius would become the first expert working in Bulgaria on racial anthropology. In the 1870s, as a student, he had authored a Lithuanian spelling book in Latin script, even though this variant had been prohibited in the wake of the Polish-Lithuanian January Uprising of 1863. It is not clear, therefore, if the reasons for his emigration to Bulgaria were related to this political background or to his health – Basanavičius suffered from bronchitis of the apex of the lung which made resettlement to a mild climate advisable. During his Moscow years, Basanavičius had come in contact with several Bulgarian medical students. One of his Bulgarian colleagues, Dimităr Mollov (1846–1914), became the first president of the Medical Council of Bulgaria after Russian troops had wrested the Bulgarian lands from Ottoman rule in 1878. Mollov indeed provided Basanavičius with a post as district physician and director of the hospital in the western Bulgarian town of Lom. At the time every Russian subject, including Basanavičius, was highly regarded, and Bulgaria’s demand for foreign medical doctors was great due to the fact that the public health system of the newly founded state

1 For this sub-chapter cf. in detail PROMITZER 2010.

was still in its infancy. Basanavičius soon left the country and spent two years specializing in internal medicine and gynecology in Prague and Vienna (cf. TROJANSKI 1974; VISOCKIS 1992; MANGAČEV 2008; *Dr. Jonas Basanavičius* 2003). Thereafter he resumed his post in Lom before moving in 1892 to the Black Sea port of Varna, where he became chief of the local hospital's internal medicine ward. In 1887 Basanavičius visited the Sixth International Congress for Hygiene and Demography that took place in Vienna (*VI. Internationaler Congress für Hygiene und Demographie*, vol. 34, 1888: 75). Thereafter he also became a member of the Viennese Anthropological Society (*Vorstand und Mitglieder der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft* 1906: 6). In the late 1880s he conducted anthropological examinations of 185 women and nearly 2.500 men in Bulgaria in the course of which he sought to prove that a major part of the Bulgarian population was not of recent Slavic, Turanic or Finno-Ugric descent, but of Thracian origin and therefore autochthonous since antiquity (BASANOVIČ 1891).

This early Austro-Bulgarian link was soon overshadowed by a German-Bulgarian one: In 1896, a group of renowned intellectuals and other personalities of public life formed a committee which was funded by the Bulgarian government in order to publish an extensive monograph on Bulgaria and its population. Within this framework, the Bulgarian Ministry of Education initially assigned Basanavičius to organize the collection of anthropological material in Bulgaria, which would then be published in the planned monograph. This task, however, was actually completed by the Bulgarian pediatrician, Stefan Vatev (1866–1946) (TROJANSKI 1974: 266; BĀKARDŽIJEV 1941; VATEV 1898). Vatev was a graduate of the University of Leipzig. With him, the impact of German physical anthropology became palpable in Bulgaria. As an anthropologist, Vatev was a student of the Austro-German Felix von Luschan (1854–1924). During his period of specialization in pediatrics in Berlin, Vatev helped the renowned anthropologist measure some one hundred Africans on display at the German Colonial Exhibition of 1896. Back in Bulgaria, by order of the War Ministry, Vatev would supervise military physicians who took anthropological measurements of about 6.000 soldiers stationed throughout the country (VATEV 1900). Vatev was not the only academic in the Balkans who measured native soldiers for anthropological purposes (cf. POMADOV 1904), but he was the most consistent. He was perhaps only matched by Clon Stéphanos (1834–1915), the first director of the Anthropological Museum in Athens, who since the early 1890s had measured Greek pupils and soldiers in Greek military institutions and from among those foreign forces stationed in Greece (cf. TRUBETA 2013: 59–61). In Serbia, in turn, the first anthropological measurements of soldiers would only start with the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, when the originally Slovene anthropologist Niko Županić measured Bulgarian and Turkish prisoners of war (PROMITZER 2010: 156–159).

In the course of his research, Vatev informed Johannes Ranke (1836–1916) in Munich, the first-ever professor of anthropology in Germany, of his preliminary results, and Ranke convinced him to expand the investigation to schoolchildren, following the example of Rudolf Virchow's "school statistic" of the 1870s (*ibid.*). Ranke considered Virchow's endeavor "the greatest anthropological study ever" and praised him for having established the blond "Teutonic" type as a particularly German racial type (ZIMMERMAN 1999: 427).

The Bulgarian Ministry of Education supported Vatev's plan, ordering Bulgarian teachers to follow Vatev's instructions, so that Vatev soon had measurements of the eyes, hair, and skin color of about 270.000 schoolchildren, along with those of about 30.000 soldiers at his disposal. Vatev followed Ranke's advice and retained the hierarchy of Virchow's school statistics, with the favorable blond type at the top and less desirable mixed and brunette types holding the second and third places (respectively), even though dark and mixed types were more common among the Bulgarian population than blonds and fair skinned. What the results actually showed was that the fair type was better represented among the Turks and the Muslim Pomaks than among the ethnic Bulgarians (WATEFF 1903). The comparison with Virchow's school statistics ends here: Virchow was an adversary of anti-Semitism, but – as Andrew Zimmermann contends – his racial differentiation between Germans and Jews was responsible for the dissemination of tacit postulations which would later allow for the biologization of anti-Semitic prejudices (ZIMMERMAN 1999). In the Bulgarian case, however, the prominent level of blondness among the Muslim minorities vis-à-vis the ethnic Bulgarians was an unwelcome result which devalued the study's possible use for nationalist policies. Both Vatev's results (although not those related to the ethnic minorities) as well as the findings of less relevant Bulgarian authors were included in the monograph on Bulgaria and its population mentioned above, something that had been planned since 1896 and yet remarkably was published in Russian and not in Bulgarian, since it was authored by a Russian journalist (JURKEVIČ 1905: 6–18).

Krum Drončilov (1889–1925) was the second important Bulgarian racial anthropologist in the early 20th century. He was also a disciple of Luschan and trained in *Negeanthropologie*, as he called it, because Luschan entrusted him with measuring the skulls of deceased railway construction workers in the German colony of Cameroon (DRONTSCHILOW 1913). In the autumn of 1912, shortly before the mobilization of recruits for the First Balkan War, Drončilov measured about 450 soldiers and policemen on leave in southwestern Bulgaria. Drončilov managed to measure another 90 soldiers. The results of his examinations formed the backbone of his doctoral dissertation on the anthropology of the Bulgarians, written under the supervision of Luschan and defended in 1914 in Berlin (DRONTSCHILOW 1914).

In the autumn of the following year Bulgaria joined the Central Powers in order to gain its share of the Macedonian prize of which it had felt slighted by its former allies (Serbia and Greece) in the Second Balkan War. Shortly thereafter, Bulgarian publishers in co-operation with the German allies edited the "Deutsche Balkanzeitung" in Sofia. This was also the organ where in 1917 Ferdinand Birkner (1868–1944), professor of prehistory at the University of Munich, published an article on anthropological research in Bulgaria and claimed: "In Bulgaria, anthropological research has been conducted in an exemplary fashion and to an extent which has been hardly equaled, and never surpassed anywhere" (BIRKNER 1917). The findings of Bulgarian racial anthropology were further disseminated among the German audience by Johann Baptist Loritz (1891–1965), the deputy secretary of Munich's German-Bulgarian Society. In 1915, Loritz published his doctoral dissertation on his anthropological measurements of Bulgarian skulls, which rested on the findings of Basanovič, Vatev, and Drončilov (LORITZ 1915). In 1917, Loritz published a small book which featured Bulgaria as Germany's ally, where the allegedly non-Slavic origin of the

Bulgarians – a pet issue of Bulgarian racial anthropology since its beginnings – occupied a prominent place (LORITZ 1917: 61–66).

This short outline of the first heyday of Bulgarian racial anthropology intends to show how the concepts and ideas of German racial anthropology were transferred to the Bulgarian context. Within a favorable setting for cultural and knowledge transfer, the role of individual actors such as Jonas Basanavičius, Stefan Vatev, and Krum Drončilov – all of whom had studied and/or specialized in Germany or Austria – played an important part. In the case of Vatev, the literal adoption of Virchow's hierarchy of blond "races" proved unsuccessful, because it did not demonstrate the "racial" superiority of ethnic Bulgarians vis-à-vis the Muslim minorities. This context, however, uncovered the value given to racial anthropology for the scientific, i.e., biological, legitimization of exclusivist nationalism (DETCHEV 2009). This is also the reason why Vatev's attempt to assess the Bulgarian population anthropologically was supported by the Bulgarian government. However, since the network of those who dealt with racial anthropology in Bulgaria was weak, the interest of the Bulgarian state in a wholesale anthropological examination of the Bulgarian population decreased after Vatev had withdrawn from active anthropological work in the early years of the 20th century. His successor, Krum Drončilov, had to organize his work generally without the help of the state and could not rely on the support of teachers or army physicians, as had been the case with Vatev.

One more thought should be pondered on before we examine the situation during the interwar period: With respect to the German variant of physical anthropology – at least up to the second decade of the 20th century – we should also keep in mind that despite its approval of and focus on racial differences, it had up to that point been an expression of a relatively "liberal" version of the genre (MASSIN 1996). The same held true with its Bulgarian epigone.

German trademarks in the rise and fall of Bulgarian racial hygiene

During the interwar period, Bulgaria was the only state in the Balkans which belonged to the losers of the Great War. To the north and to the west, the country bordered on victorious adversaries who had realized their national ambitions to a large extent: Greater Romania, which incorporated large parts of former Russian and Hungarian territories, and the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, which – compared to the pre-war Kingdom of Serbia – had become an Adriatic state reaching far into Central Europe. Even Greece was better off than Bulgaria; at least in the direct struggle with the latter it had won Western Thrace and a large part of Macedonia, although it lost the ensuing military adventure in Western Anatolia against Turkish troops under the command of Kemal Pasha (1922). Even the position of Turkey – the direct successor state to the Ottoman Empire which had likewise been defeated in the First World War – could not be compared with that of Bulgaria which had to pay reparations and had lost territories to its enemies which were considered essentially Bulgarian – namely Macedonia to the southwest (to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes), the Aegean Coast to the south (to the Greeks) and Southern Dobruja to the northeast (to Rumania). Up to the mid-1930s Bulgaria was encircled militarily by its neighbours, a feeling that was augmented by the establishment of the Little Entente in the early 1920s and by the Balkan pact of 1934 signed by Greece, Turkey,

Romania, and Yugoslavia in order to retain the geopolitical status quo in the region and to rebuff any revision of its borders.

Political circles in Bulgaria, however, were eager for such a revision: Two lost wars in a row – the Second Balkan War of 1913 and the First World War – created a tense situation in domestic politics. In the autumn of 1918, King Ferdinand (1861–1948), the second modern Bulgarian ruler of German descent, was confronted with the proclamation of a Bulgarian Republic. In order to save the monarchical institute, he abdicated in favor of his son Boris III (1894–1943). In 1923, the army and fascist formations toppled Prime Minister Aleksandar Stambolijski (1879–1923) and his government of the Agrarian Union. After his arrest, Stambolijski was tortured and eventually assassinated. The reasons for this coup were to be found in Stambolijski's political views and in the fact that he had signed the peace treaty of Neuilly with its humiliating terms for Bulgaria. In the same year, a Communist uprising was quelled by government forces and the Communist party, the former left-wing “narrow Socialists” which had existed since 1903 and renamed themselves in 1919, was banned. In the years following, various armed and unarmed right-wing formations including those of Macedonian origin, as well as the Communist attempts on the life of the King, threatened the Bulgarian political stage.

In such a precarious climate those who sought the biological foundation of the Bulgarian nation could not simply continue with the former optimistic outlook of a racial anthropology that was eager to search for somatic traces of Bulgarianhood both domestically and beyond the borders of the Bulgarian state. A pessimistic outlook regarding the future of Bulgaria coincided with warnings about the nation's impending biological degeneration, allegedly through alcoholism, venereal diseases as a consequence of promiscuity and prostitution, as well as in a decline of the birthrate (cf. MIRČEVA 2004 and 2011; PROMITZER 2007; BALOUTZOVA 2011). Thus, racial anthropology, which had received a certain degree of public interest before the First World War, became irrelevant in the 1920s. This fact was underscored by the tragic death of Krum Drončilov in a traffic accident in 1925. With his demise, the classical form of racial anthropology in Bulgaria was well and truly over.

Insofar as the issue of “race” was discussed among Bulgarian intellectuals in these years, it was not an element of anthropological comparisons, but mainly used as a spiritual metaphor in treatises of right-wing intellectuals on the “national character” of the Bulgarians. The only other field in which the issue of “race” was addressed in the sense of keeping the “Bulgarian race” “clean” from degeneration was that of eugenics. From its modest beginnings in the late 19th century, Bulgarian eugenics had not been as oriented towards German science as racial anthropology had been. As I have shown elsewhere, the first Bulgarian discussions about biological degeneration and the application of artificial selection on human beings were mostly influenced by French, British, and American literature which was made accessible via “mirror reading” – to use a term from Diana Miškova – i.e., via translations into Russian or even from the Russian translations into Bulgarian (PROMITZER 2011a; cf. MISHKOVA 2006: 30, 33–34). But now, in the post-war situation of the early 1920s, this would drastically change: amidst the Bulgarian struggle against the supposed threats of biological decline, the German example of racial hygiene, specifically from its most notorious propagators, became a lodestar. It is peculiar that among the three most con-

sistent Bulgarian proponents of racial hygiene – Stefan Konsulov (1885–1954), Ivan Ljubomir Rusev (1898–?), and Konstantin Pašev (1873–1961) – only the first had graduated from a German university. Konsulov was indeed the main propagator. But even in his case, eugenics did not form the core of his professional interest when he was in Germany. Before the First World War, Konsulov had studied natural science and zoology in Sofia, Zagreb, and Belgrade. From 1920 to 1921 he studied at the University of Breslau (Wrocław), where he defended his doctoral dissertation on protozoa found in the intestines of frogs and toads (KONSULOFF 1922). During this time, he had a chance to study the precarious post-war situation of the German middle-class. It seems that in these years he realized that German racial hygiene could serve to remedy this situation, and consequently he adopted a similar approach for a resolution of the Bulgarian situation.

The second Bulgarian proponent of racial hygiene, the psychiatrist Ljubomir Ivanov Rusev, was among the first students of the recently founded medical faculty in Sofia, where he also occupied the post of an assistant professor for a short period. Although he had no direct insight into the German situation, he was similar to Konsulov in that he popularized the basic principles of German racial hygiene for the Bulgarian audience. While Konsulov used the Bulgarian daily press to disseminate these ideas, Rusev published his views in the official periodical of the central Bulgarian public health authority (RUSEV 1925a and 1925b). Konsulov was heavily influenced by German authors such as Erwin Baur (1875–1933), Eugen Fischer (1874–1967), and Fritz Lenz (1887–1976), something which became apparent in Konsulov’s brochures on the “Laws of Heredity” and on “The Degeneration of Cultural Mankind” (cf. KONSULOV 1928 and 1930). In one of his early articles, Konsulov was even hesitant about the Bulgarian name for eugenics. He thought about using either *rasova higiena* – which was a translation of “Rassenhygiene” – or *rasova služba* – which means “racial service” (KONSULOV 1923a and 1923b). It is obvious that *rasova služba* was a literal translation of *Rassedienst*, a term which the German eugenicist Wilhelm Schallmayer (1857–1919) had suggested in 1918 (SCHALLMAYER 1918)², but which could not be asserted vis-à-vis the older term *Rassenhygiene* which had already been coined by Schallmayer’s colleague Alfred Ploetz (1860–1940) back in 1895. The same was the case in Bulgaria, where the term *rasova higiena* would consequently prevail. We can further assume from the scarce information at our disposal that the short-lived Bulgarian Society of Racial Hygiene of 1928 borrowed heavily from its German counterparts (cf. PROMITZER 2007: 229–232).

In the 1930s, the lack of internal security and the negative effects of the world economic crisis on the national economy and workforce formed the historical background of the further Bulgarian discussions on racial hygiene. At the time, the Bulgarian ophthalmologist Konstantin Pašev asked for the introduction of the principle of “National Solidarism” in Bulgaria, which at least by its name was oriented towards German “National Socialism” (PAŠEV 1932). It should, therefore, come as no surprise that Pašev started to praise the 1933-German Law for the Prevention of Hereditary

2 This book was actually the third edition of *Über die drohende körperliche Entartung der Kulturmenschheit und die Verstaatlichung des ärztlichen Standes* (SCHALLMAYER 1891).

Diseased Offspring in several popular articles. The Bulgarian *coup d'état* of 1934 by the right-wing military *Zveno* movement (which was influenced by the ideas of Italian Fascism) offered an opportunity to renew the organizational efforts of Bulgarian racial hygienists. In that year Ljubomir Rusev published a textbook on the principles of racial hygiene (RUSEV 1934). Regarding the title of the book, next to the words *rasova higiena* he put the term *evgenika* (eugenics) into brackets, as if to show that his own attempt was meant to be broader than the German example. But actually, in his rare references, Rusev mainly quoted German authors. Formal ideological polyphony, but an actual orientation towards German racial hygiene in its Nazi variant also characterized the second, likewise short-lived, Bulgarian Society for Racial Hygiene of 1934–1936 which also carried the designation *evgenika* in brackets. This can be distilled from the few issues of the society's organ "Narod i potomstvo" (Nation and Offspring). Although the handful of Bulgarian intellectuals and scientists who formed the Sofia-based backbone of the Society was sufficient to form a sworn community, there was an insufficient response from an interested audience to achieve adequate membership subscriptions that could maintain both the journal and the association. In early 1936, the Bulgarian Society for Racial Hygiene was formally incorporated into the Bulgarian Society for Hygiene and Preventive Medicine – in practical terms this meant the end for further organizational efforts in the field of racial hygiene (PROMITZER 2007: 238–241).

The isolation of the Bulgarian racial hygienists was not only palpable in Bulgarian society, but their international contacts – particularly those to Nazi Germany – were hardly existent. It was a telling fact that among the Bulgarian participants of the International Congress on Population, which was held in 1935 in Berlin, one can find personalities like the political economist and statistician Dimităr Mišajkov (1883–1945) who was a full professor for statistics and political economy and simultaneously president of the official Supreme Statistical Council of Bulgaria and his pupil Slavčo Dimitrov Zagorov (1898–1970), who also lectured at Mišajkov's institute and was director of the state-run Bulgarian Statistical Service. Both were open to right-wing tendencies in their own country and were deeply entwined in governmental functions; explicit Bulgarian eugenicists like Konsulov, Rusev or Pašev, however, were notably absent from the congress (cf. *Bevölkerungsfragen* 1936). It is true that Ljubomir Rusev in 1936 undertook an educational trip to Germany in order to become acquainted with the application of eugenic measures and the Bulgarian government wrote him a letter of recommendation. However, this activity was a private one and did not yield any practical consequences.³

In the interim, King Boris had managed to oust the *Zveno*-government and to replace it with a government of his own supporters. The King's regime retained the ban on political parties and consequently brought Bulgaria closer to Nazi Germany, until Bulgaria in March 1941 signed the Tripartite pact and entered the Second World War on the side of the Axis powers. During this time, one can read occasional articles by Bulgarian proponents of racial hygiene, pleading (in vain) for the introduction of compulsory sterilization, in particular when in 1943 the Bulgarian Law for Families

3 Cf. The Central Historical State Archives of Bulgaria, f. 372k, op. 1, fol. 17.

with Many Children stipulated premarital medical examination for couples to minimize the occurrence of hereditary diseases when those same families applied for governmental support loans (PROMITZER 2007: 243–244; cf. BALOUTZOVA 2011: 207–244).

In considering the relationship between Bulgarian racial hygiene and its German paragon we come to the conclusion that the whole business was rather one-sided: Bulgarian eugenicists knew many things about German racial hygiene, but conversely, Bulgarian racial hygiene was totally unknown in the Third Reich. The only exception is the case of Nikola Ilkov⁴, a Bulgarian serologist. In 1942, Ilkov worked for a certain time at the *Kaiser-Wilhelm-Institut für Anthropologie, menschliche Erblehre und Eugenik* (Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Heredity and Eugenics) (WEINDLING 2011: 52). His stay certainly had to do with the fact that in the same year he became head of the newly founded “Racial Hygiene” section within the framework of the Institute for Public Health in Sofia (*Izvestija na Glavnata direkcija* 1942: 290). It is indicative that the records of the Institute, which are held by the Central Bulgarian State Archive, do not reveal anything about the practical work of Ilkov in his new capacity. Judging from his publications after the Second World War (cf. ILKOV 1977) and from the fact that in the period up to September 1944, racial hygiene in Bulgaria did not otherwise play an important role in official public health policies, we can assume that the name of the section was more auspicious than descriptive of any practical activities. We, therefore, believe that the main task of Ilkov might have had to do more with the analysis of various blood group samples in a distinctively different context than with concrete or even prospective tasks in the field of racial hygiene.

Serology and the return of racial anthropology

In the interim, racial anthropology had at least partly reclaimed the place it had held in Bulgaria before the First World War. Serology and the research of blood groups were important for this new initiative: serology brought racial anthropology in contact with genetics and the Mendelian laws of heredity. Hereafter, racial anthropology also became potentially interesting for proponents of racial hygiene. It was not by accident that the first paper concerning the prevalence of blood groups among Bulgarians was published in 1929 in the German *Zeitschrift für Rassenphysiologie* (Journal for Racial Physiology). Its authors, Hristo Mihajlov Seizov and Vasil Tinev Cončev, were collaborators at the Biological Institute at the University of Sofia. Their paper presented the provisional results of the blood group analyses of Bulgarian pupils from the Bulgarian capital (SEISOW/ZONTSCHEW 1929). Another author, Panajot Ganef – likewise a collaborator at the Biological Institute – in the early 1930s collected data from about nine thousand persons and combined blood group analysis with anthropometrical methods. He published his preliminary results as well in the *Zeitschrift für Rassenphysiologie*, claiming that the Bulgarians were biologically different from the Greeks and Turks, being instead closer to the Germans and the Russians (GANEFF 1935). The head of the biological institute was the renowned biologist

4 If birth-and-death-dates are not given after the name of an actor, then they have not been accessible.

Metodi Popov (1881–1954) who had made a name for himself in the field of cell stimulation. Popov was a member of the staff of the short lived journal *Rassen im Donauraum* (Races along the Danube) that was published in German in Budapest. One of its editors was Franz Rothen, a Hungarian-German who became an influential member of the Fascist Arrow Cross Party and later an advisor on Eastern Europe in the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin. In the singular 1935 issue of this Budapest-based journal, Hristo Seizov presented a survey of Bulgarian racial anthropology and racial hygiene, thereby showing that the two disciplines were related to each other (SEISOW 1935). The results of these studies formed the background for a paper on the racial history of southeastern Europe which was published in 1937 by the German anthropologist Michael Hesch (1893–1979) in the *Leipzigiger Vierteljahrshefte für Südosteuropa* (Leipzig quarterly for South-eastern Europe) (HESCH 1937).

In 1939, Heinrich Barten (1907–?), a Prussian employed as a teacher in Bulgaria from 1934 to 1944, published a short article on issues of racial science and demographic policies in Bulgaria. It appeared in the German *Zeitschrift für Rassenkunde* (Journal for Racial Studies) (BARTEN 1939). In the same issue of this journal, Metodi Popov laid out his view on the “racial composition” of the Bulgarian nation (POPOFF 1939). Therewith the new Bulgarian variant of racial anthropology was folded into the German concept of “racial science” (Rassenkunde, Rassenlehre). But whence came this sudden German interest in Bulgarian issues? It certainly had to do with the fact that at the time vehement polemics about the role of race, racial anthropology, and racial hygiene were taking place in Bulgaria. And so, the respective German models also became a matter of discussion. Barten relates that an anonymous brochure on the “racial character of the Bulgarians” had been published in 1937 (*Rasovijat oblik na bălgarite* 1937). The unknown author had used unpublished material collected by Panajot Ganev in order to claim that the Bulgarians were different from the other Slavs, since they contained a considerable share of the non-Slavic Protobulgarian or Turanian elements. The same author furthermore asked for the introduction of measures of racial hygiene along the German model. Heinrich Barten notices that the brochure actually advertised the aims of the pro-Nazi anti-Semitic movement “Fighters for the Progress of Bulgarianhood” (“Ratnici za napredak na Bălgarština”). Therefore he wrongly ascribed its authorship to the movement’s leader, Asen Kantardžiev (1898–1981), although the brochure’s style and contents suggest that the author was the aforementioned biologist Stefan Konsulov. It appears that Metodi Popov was upset that as yet unpublished results of his institute were being used by a person from outside, and so he himself started to give public lectures on the racial composition of the Bulgarians which were based on Ganev’s research and were printed in two brochures. There, Popov openly criticized the German view about an existing hierarchy of European races (POPOV 1938a and 1938b). Heinrich Barten does not mention that Popov had to interrupt his series of public lectures since one of them was broken up by a gang of the “Fighters for the Progress of Bulgarianhood” (VALČANOV 1963: 84–96). Popov’s own article in the *Zeitschrift für Rassenkunde* – an abstract of his public lectures – reveals that in the German language, Popov was far more cautious with respect to his criticism of the theory of the Nordic Master race than in his Bulgarian publications. He otherwise stuck to his conviction that the Slavic element among the Bulgarians was far more important than the Turanic one,

but he underscored that the Slavs originally had been part of the Nordic race (POPOFF 1939). Heinrich Barten furthermore explained to the German audience that Popov was criticized by the liberal philosopher Dimităr Michalčev because his approach (which should repudiate racism) was itself charged with racial elements. Barten commented that Michalčev and the Bulgarian intelligentsia as a whole, despite their erudition, were not able to grasp the study of heredity as the core of racial science (BARTEN 1939: 65).⁵

In 1942, Popov's assistant Ganev published a second article in the *Zeitschrift für Rassenphysiologie* in which he used his sample to purport the existence of racial unity between the Bulgarians and the Slavic Macedonians (GANEFF 1942). This publication was not without practical use since in the interim Bulgaria had taken its share – namely the territories of Macedonia and southern Serbia – in the dismembering of Yugoslavia following the German invasion of April 1941.

Metodi Popov, in turn, came to the conclusion that a compromise with the ruling Bulgarian regime which was becoming more and more oriented towards Nazi Germany was impossible. In late 1942, he had to flee Bulgaria and took refuge in Slovakia (HADŽI-VALČANOV 2002: 249–250). The Bulgarian regime, for its part, cast a suspicious eye on the other biologist, Stefan Konsulov, and on likeminded persons who were rated as even closer allies of the Third Reich and who, in the event of a coup, were considered as willing to replace the current government. But the course of the war prevented such a scenario from unfolding. The Communists took power in Bulgaria in September 1944, and shortly thereafter Konsulov – who did not rank among the biggest fish – was arrested and sentenced to several years of prison owing to his collaboration with German Nazism and his racist convictions (PROMITZER 2007: 244). Konstantin Pašev, however, who had praised the Nazi-sterilization law and declared himself a supporter of National Socialism, was able to retain his position as a member of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences probably due to his merits as a pioneer in Bulgarian ophthalmology. In 1950 he was even dignified with the first class medal named after Georgi Dimitrov and consequently occupied an honored place in the medical historiography of Bulgaria (KOLČEVA 1981).

A short conclusion

In this paper I have wanted to sketch the German influence on two distinct branches of biopolitics – racial anthropology and racial hygiene. One can differentiate two periods when this influence became palpable; the divide is formed by the years of the First World War. In the pre-war phase, the development of Bulgarian racial anthropology, which is the older branch of biopolitics, was directly influenced by German peers. When compared to the post-war period in this discipline, both the German and Bulgarian manifestations can still be labeled as “liberal.” This was not any longer the case with Bulgarian biopolitics as a whole after the First World War was lost. In the societies of both Germany and Bulgaria, a peculiar “culture of defeat” came into being; it provided fertile ground for the emergence of Fascist tendencies and the

5 About the further discussion between Popov, Mihalčev and Stefan Konsulov who intervened against Michalčev cf. PROMITZER 2011b.

spread of biologist concepts among the public. These similarly pronounced “cultures of defeat” advanced the Bulgarian adoption of the German concepts of racial hygiene, while non-German variants of eugenics were hardly considered by the Bulgarian protagonists. A similar process can also be observed in the second rise of Bulgarian racial anthropology in the 1930s; here the taking over of German concepts – namely that of the “Nordic Master Race” – was met in part with criticism.

One can come to the conclusion that the radiation of the German “culture of defeat” with racial hygiene and *Rassenkunde* among its core elements, was a lodestar not only for Bulgarian followers, since the German concepts of racial hygiene and racial science were also studied and imitated in other countries of southeastern Europe which – like Yugoslavia, Romania, and Greece to a lesser extent – purportedly belonged to the victors of the First World War. Here, other “defeats,” namely those in the course of state-building and precipitated by the world economic crisis laid the ground for the reception of such concepts by domestic intellectuals.

A closer look at the respective German-Bulgarian networks in the fields of racial anthropology and racial hygiene further reveal a sharp difference: Whereas racial anthropology since its inception was an accepted and lauded natural science in the Bulgarian public, racial hygiene always had to struggle to make its agenda audible. Both approaches were clearly influenced by their paragons in Germany, other national schools did not play a significant role. In the case of anthropology at most we can refer to Joseph Deniker (1852–1918), a French anthropologist of Russian origin, with whom Vatev collaborated occasionally (VATEV 1907). In the case of eugenics, occasional attempts to promote a moderate variant by excluding radical measures such as sterilization and by following French examples remained peripheral, since they were tempered by their defensive approach (i.e., not proactive) and did not call for an agenda of their own (cf. ČUČULIEVA 1981).

The development of racial anthropology in Bulgaria was based on a lively and bilateral relationship with its role model in Germany. Around the turn of the 20th century, Bulgarian anthropologists were being educated and instructed at German universities, whereby Felix von Luschan and Johannes Ranke were the most eminent as mentors and representatives of classical anthropology. Bulgarian anthropologists such as Stefan Vatev and Krum Drončilov published in the *Correspondenz-Blatt der deutschen Gesellschaft für Anthropologie, Ethnologie und Urgeschichte* (Correspondence of the German Society for Anthropology, Ethnology and Pre-History) or in the *Archiv für Anthropologie* (Archive for Anthropology). There were even German peers such as Ferdinand Birkner and Johann Baptist Loritz, who reported on the state of racial anthropology in Bulgaria – this German interest was again present in the second half of the 1930s when the use of serology for assessing “racial” differences and the issue of “race” itself were discussed among Bulgarian scholars.

Bulgarian eugenics, however, did not profit from direct contact with representatives of German racial hygiene. With regards to networking, it was an isolated approach, although German racial hygiene formed the only paragon for Stefan Konsulov, Ljubomir Ivanov Rusev, Konstantin Pašev, and others. Konsulov and Pašev nonetheless had contacts with their colleagues in Germany, but these were limited to their narrower fields of expertise – combating the malaria mosquito in the case of Konsulov and the discipline of ophthalmology in the case of Pašev. But it is still pe-

cular that the eugenic aspects of the 1943-Law for Families, which focused on premarital medical examinations, were not promoted by these Bulgarian pioneers of eugenics and racial hygiene, but were rather an imitation of the respective legislation of Nazi Germany that had been simply copied by anonymous Bulgarian civil servants.

There is also a difference in the standing of representatives of Bulgarian eugenics and Bulgarian racial anthropology in the German public. For the latter, Bulgarian eugenics were virtually unknown. This was definitely not the case with racial anthropology, in particular not in the 1930s, when the research of blood groups led to a renewal of Bulgarian racial anthropology, in this variation, with a close connection with genetics. This was exactly the period when Metodi Popov and his collaborators published in German journals such as the *Zeitschrift für Rassenphysiologie* and *Zeitschrift für Rassenkunde*.

But even these relations cannot hide the fact that racial anthropology – to say nothing about racial hygiene – could not claim a similar position as a leading science in Bulgaria as was the case in Nazi Germany. And this is also the answer to the introductory question with respect to the uniqueness of German mass crimes in the Second World War: The main issue in Bulgaria – as in most other states along the European periphery – was still with the nation. “Race” was only an auxiliary structure to play the old melody of Bulgarian exclusivist nationalism. The Bulgarian scholars and politicians, therefore, stopped whereas the population engineers of Nazi Germany under the protection of the SS moved beyond the theoretical into the practical.

Even so, accounting for the past is not a strong suit of Bulgarian physical anthropologists. This shall be demonstrated by a final example: In the early 1970s, when Bulgarian socialism was at its cusp, the anthropologist Peter Boev, as a kind of late-comer, published a monograph on the “Racial Types of the Balkan Peninsula and the Islands of the Eastern Aegean.” The tradition of German-Bulgarian relationship and the expiring role of German as an academic language were maybe responsible that the book was written in German and namely with a terminology that was ignorant of the critical UNESCO statements on race issued since 1950 (cf. BOEV 1972).

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