

**EMIL KRAEPELIN'S SUCCESSOR PROF. VLADIMIR CHIZH,
HIS RESEARCH METHODS AND -OBJECTS**

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Abstract. Professor of psychiatry Vladimir Chizh was a successor of Emil Kraepelin at the University of Tartu (now: Estonia; then: Russian Empire) during the years 1891–1916. The same period witnessed the second and decisive rise in Estonian national movement leading finally to the foundation of Estonian state in 1918. A particular character in Estonian national discourse was its notorious biologisation, i.e. strong presence of eugenical ideology. Professor Chizh's scientific research supported this tendency. In 1901 Chizh published a study in which he compared the criminal activity of Estonians and Latvians. Chizh's method derived from an assumption that the two neighbouring Baltic populations possess an extremely similar environmental, cultural and socio-political background. The biological (racial) essence of the two groups he believed to differ – Latvians belonging to Indo-European nations, Estonians being Finnic. Deriving from the previous – if any differences in the criminal behaviour of the two existed, these could be explained by biological factors. In the results of his work Chizh reported on a notorious disbalance in the criminality of the two nations, Estonians exceeding Latvians in a rough ratio 5:3. Chizh, supporting the teaching of Cesare Lombroso, had achieved in such a way his goal, i.e. he believed that he had proved the biological essence of criminal behaviour. For the Estonian community the study by Chizh opened a subsequent field for further discussions on the topic 'nature versus nurture'.

Keywords: Vladimir Chizh, Juhan Luiga, criminal anthropology, race studies, eugenics

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1. Introduction

Psychiatry at the turn of the 19th century left a strong impression on Estonian national emancipation. The emergence of modern Estonian nation took place in the German-dominated Baltic Provinces of Russia, where political processes were strongly influenced by a linguistic division ('ethnicity') based on social hierarchy. The upper layers being historically German speaking, the lower ranks, the

indigenous peasantry, were starting to evolve into modern Estonian (and Latvian) nations only in the 19th century. Parallely, a third player was strengthening its positions in the Baltic political stage – it was the Russian state, escalating the policy of Russification (see also the article by Erki Tammiksaar in this volume of *Trames*). All three parties used rhetorics which included biologisation of national discourse, that is – race theories, the so-called degeneration theory and eugenical ideas.

From the last decade of the 19th century the second rise in Estonian national movement witnessed an increased involvement of academic circles (incl. medical professionals) and the Estonian abstinence movement. The latter did a lot in educating people in the matters of science and public health. As a result of the characteristic of the Estonian nationalism – the so-called perception of a small nation (i.e.: fear of extinction) – and a depreciative standpoint by which Estonians, who seemingly lack political history must be viewed as a *Naturvolk* (instead of *Kulturvolk*), an environment emerged, where the young Estonian elites transferred the paradigms deriving from the then natural sciences into national discourse. It was the context where topics related to psychiatry (i.e. degeneration theory) also found a place in the theoretical foundations of Estonian nation-building (Kalling 2013; Kalling and Heapost 2013).

The article studies the Estonian people both as reasearch objects for the past psychiatrists and – as a reaction to it – the Estonian reception of particular academic scholarship. The main attention shall be on the works in the field of criminal anthropology by Vladimir Chizh (1855–1922), the successor of Emil Kraepelin (1856–1926) as a professor of pshychiatry at the University of Tartu.¹ Studies by Chizh were among the triggers to initiate Estonian-language discussions on the biological qualities of the nation. Analysis of these discussions can contribute not only to the history of ideas in Estonia, but also to the international historiography of the ‘nature versus nurture’ controversy.

2. Some facts about Vladimir Chizh

Vladimir Chizh was the professor of psychiatry and head of the Psychiatry Clinic at the University of Tartu during the years 1891-1916. He was a graduate (1878) from a Military Medical Academy in St Petersburg (defended in 1883 also his doctoral degree there). In 1884–1885 Chizh visited Europe and studied at the institutes of several outstanding psychiatrists of the era, e.g. Wilhelm Wundt (1832–1920), Paul Flechsig (1847–1929), Joseph Delboef (1831–1896), Alfred Vulpian (1826–1887) and Jean-Martin Charcot (1825–1893). Before recieving a position in Tartu Chizh practiced at St Panteleimon Hospital in St Petersburg, and

¹ Until 1893 this Baltic university town was officially named Dorpat according to German tradition. Then, in the course of Russification it was renamed Yuryev. Tartu – the Estonian name of the place – became official only in 1917.

lectured as a private docent in forensic psychopathology at the University of St Petersburg. In Tartu Chizh read the courses of psychiatry and physiological psychology (Aadamsoo 1973; Slabinskii 2015). The latter discipline – according to Konstantin Ramul (1879–1975), professor of psychology at the University of Tartu during 1928–1965 – must in fact be viewed as experimental psychology. Ramul sees it important to stress that Chizh thus continued the work of Kraepelin in Tartu. Under Chizh's supervision 8 dissertations (added by several minor studies) were written in the field of experimental psychology. Chizh also retained the psychology laboratory founded by Kraepelin in Tartu (Ramul 1974).

As a scholar, Chizh was notoriously versatile. This is obvious from the contacts he had during his study trip to Europe – he improved his knowledge on the anatomy of nervous system under Flechsig, studied experimental psychology under Wundt and hypnosis under Delboef. Chizh's stay at Wundt's lab was rather successful as ended with a remarkable discovery. Chizh demonstrated that from two simultaneous events the one which was attended, enters consciousness first. This phenomenon – relative timing of visual events – comes under various names from which the prior entry is one associated with the study by Chizh (Chizh 1885).

In recent Russian academic literature Chizh is erroneously praised as the founder of experimental psychology in Russia (it was in fact Kraepelin), also he is believed to be the first scholar to formulate the principle of complacency (6 years before Sigmund Freud) (Slabinskii 2015). Modern sources like to mention the contributions of Chizh to culture studies, his pathographies of outstanding persons and psychopathological studies of literature (Sirotkina 2002). (In 2010 several such writings by Chizh were reprinted also in Estonian (Chizh 2010).)

A field of science which interested Chizh during his whole career, was criminal anthropology (anthropological criminology). The latter witnessed its best years at the last turn of the century. It represented a standpoint by which criminal behaviour is inborn (and hereditary). The teaching relied on Darwinism, explaining the behaviour of 'born criminals' through the phenomenon of atavisms, i.e. criminality was seen as a trait in behaviour – sometimes expressed also in the morphology of the particular individual – characteristic of the uncivilised and supposedly immoral ancestors of humankind. In such a way the doctrine had a link to the then race sciences, which – deriving from the so-called recapitulation theory – saw it possible to divide nations according to the prejudices of the era into civilized (*Kulturvolk*) and uncivilised (*Naturvolk*) ones.

Chizh supported the ideas of Cesare Lombroso (1836–1909), one of the key figures of criminal anthropology. This is viewed as one of the reasons, which caused Chizh's alienation from his Russian colleagues (Slabinskii 2015). Perhaps it is worth mentioning that Kraepelin also appreciated the general essence of Lombroso's teaching, according to which criminality is an inborn biological phenomenon (Kraepelin disagreed with Lombroso concerning the supposedly Darwinian-based atavistic essence of immorality.) (Lees 2002:151).

Yet it cannot be stated that criminal anthropologists shared an absolute belief in biological determinism among humans. In the era when genetics in its modern

sense was still in a stage of formation, the ‘nature versus nurture’ controversy characterised this scholarship as well. Also Lombroso accepted the idea by which criminal behaviour must be caused by multiple factors, included social. At this point we are approaching the studies run by Chizh.

In his attempts to prove the central doctrine of criminal anthropology, the inborn criminal behaviour, Chizh chose Estonians and Latvians as his study objects. Chizh’s methodology derived from a presumption that the two neighbouring ethnicities lived in a socially similar environment, but possessed a different biological background, i.e. if there were differences in their criminality rates, these had to be explained by biological factors.

3. 19th century science on Estonians’ ‘race’

In 1901 Chizh published an article in a Russian juridical journal *Vestnik Prava*. It was titled “The influence of ethnicity on criminality”. Chizh uses only once the term ‘race’ (*rasa*), instead he preferred the words ‘ethnicity’ (*natsionalnostj*) and ‘nation’ (*narod*). These were defined by linguistic criteria, but constituted biological entities for Chizh. He wrote about ‘physical and psychological organization’ of different ethnicities: “Latvians as a nation [*narod*] of Arian origin must basically differ from Finnic Estonians” (Chizh 1901:42, 44).

For the whole 19th century the scientific community (primarily physical anthropologists) were convinced that Estonians (together with other Finnic people) belong to a different human type (race, variety) than average Europeans. This statement seems to have been initiated by Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1724–1840), the ‘father’ of physical anthropology, who had already in 1795 placed the ‘Northern Finns’ into the so-called Mongoloid variety of mankind.² Even if Blumenbach had in mind the Sami people and not ‘Southern Finns’, like Estonians, the definition stuck to the whole Finno-Ugric language group. A strong support for placing Finnic tribes outside the European racial realm came from the Indo-European language theory gaining strength during the first half of the 19th century and spreading the idea by which linguistic borders between human populations must coincide with these of biological ones. As Estonians spoke a non-Indo-European language, they could be viewed also ‘racially alien’ and – according to the then race theories – also inferior.

Only in the final decades of the 19th century the ‘Mongolid’ theory lost its position. A new so-called race type was defined to characterise people of North-Eastern Europe (incl. Finnic speaking groups). For the stratifying race theories, it did not belong to the peak of racial hierarchy, but leastways it assured societies sensitive in such matters, such as Estonians, that they still belong to the ‘White race’.

² According to Blumenbach mankind must be divided into Caucasian, Ethiopian, Mongolian, American and Malayan varieties.

Despite these new trends the old scientific prejudices concerning the biological essence of 'ethnicity' remained alive, linguistic criteria still linked with racial ones and this all amplified by textbooks and encyclopaedias even at the beginning of the 20th century (see i.e. Aro 1995). Even at home, in a teaching aid of physical anthropology issued in 1912 by Eber Landau (1878–1959, a private docent of anatomy at the University in Tartu lecturing the course of physical anthropology), Estonians were placed into the Ural group of the Uralo-Altai branch of Mongoloid race (Landau 1912).

For the Estonian elites during the national awakening the 'Mongoloid theory', even when declaring Estonians racially inferior, was of secondary importance. (Only after the birth of the Estonian state, in the 1920s and 1930s, the leading physical anthropologist Juhan Aul (1907–1994) saw as one of his tasks to refute this theory (Kalling and Heapost 2013:83).) The main concern was a fear that the biologised concept of 'ethnicity' when applied to Estonians, may contain some deeper debilitating factors. In this context the low birth rate of Estonians was much discussed. It was asked whether Estonians were 'degenerating'. To reverse the process – to turn 'degeneration' into 'regeneration' – the anti-alcohol movement achieved a great deal. A challenge was an seemingly high ratio of mental disease among the population (Luiga 1903). The question was asked whether it derived from a general debility of the Estonian 'stock'? Some leading Estonian medical professionals from the beginning of the 20th century, giving collective diagnoses to their fellow Estonians (such as *neurasthenia estonica*), blamed the rapid emancipation of the nation. The movement from rural environment into urban was believed to cause mental stress and (deriving from it) psychiatric disorders. (Kraepelin seems to have been reasoning in such a way too.) Another explanation came from eugenical ideology. According to it the achievements in medicine enabled the weak to survive and breed. Professor Chizh – who seemed to agree with the last theory – with his works supported such discussions (Luiga 1909:1).

4. Professor Chizh's method

In his article from 1901 Chizh stated that it was still unclear why the rates of different crimes in different countries (also in different regions within one state) notoriously differ. According to Chizh there was a temptation to explain such deviations with the biological type of particular populations, but it was not easy, as the differences could also be caused by social or political conditions the people live in. Besides – for the scholars who supported the biologisation of the topic – a challenge was the mixed European nations, making the studies into the ethnic (in a biological sense) character of criminality difficult.

At this point Chizh could declare that he happened to know an ideal 'unmixed' ethnic complex for a needed comparative study. Chizh believed Latvians and Estonians both to be extraordinarily 'pure-blooded' due to very few intermarriages with neighbouring people, as well as between each other (Chizh claimed that he

knew only one Estonian-Latvian couple). The only influence equal on both nations could come from Germans, who had ‘misused their right of the stronger’.

Chizh’s method derived from his conviction that the two neighbouring populations inhabiting the Baltic coast must be by their historical, social and economical environment extremely similar, possessing at the same time a different biological origin. Chizh believed that if a criminal was created via ‘ethnic’ (biological) factors, there must be a big difference between the data concerning the two compared nations. And in the opposite case – if social conditions are causing criminality, then there should not be noteworthy differences between the criminal behaviour of the two groups.

Chizh concentrated his attention on the Province of Livonia, i.e. modern Southern Estonia and Northern Latvia (incl. Riga). At the time discussed the province was inhabited by 550 000 ethnic Estonians and 560 000 Latvians (added by a smaller number of Germans, Russians etc).

Chizh described first the supposed similarities of the two groups under study. He mentions common history (600 years of German domination), also similar political, ideological (religion) and social conditions affecting the development of the two neighbouring populations. Also climate and topography did not differ greatly between the Southern and Northern parts of the province, plus there were rather similar agricultural traditions. Speaking about later developments created already by the Russian state, becoming a sovereign of the Baltic territories at the beginning of the 18th century, Chizh mentions the common school and legal system. (The material studied by him came from one institution – the district court in Riga, the capital of the province.)

The only difference in social sphere between the two groups was the bigger ratio of urban inhabitants among Latvians. This, primarily the metropolitan town Riga with all its ‘vices’, should have increased the criminality of the latter. Chizh also mentions that according to some data Latvians could be more prosperous. He does not discuss it further, instead relies on “people knowing the local conditions” by which it is in Latvians’ character to ‘show off’.

In describing the ‘ethnic’ difference of the two groups, Chizh was even more nondescript and prejudice-influenced. He gives a statement (based among others on his own impression obtained during the ten years he had spent in the Baltic realm) by which Estonians and Latvians differ “essentially, both by their physical organisation and spiritual essence [*sklad*]” (Chizh 1901:46).

Chizh could have received an impulse for his approach from Nikolai Pirogov (1810–1881), an outstanding Russian surgeon, promoter of medicine and pedagogy. Pirogov had been a professor in Tartu in 1836–1841. In his memoirs Pirogov describes his life in Tartu. Accepting a possibility that there must have been tensions between the German-speaking upper layers and indigenous Estonians, Pirogov still recites some (internationally known) debilitating jokes heard by him from German-speaking people about Estonians. At the same time Pirogov praised Latvians (he had a Latvian maid, with whom he was very content). Pirogov, who also believed that it was easy to distinguish between the

two nations, concludes: "Latvians aren't like Estonians... Indeed – Latvian language is very similar to Sanskrit, Latvians are rather close to Slavonic tribes. Nobody calls a Latvian an idiot..." (Pirogov 1887:312).

5. Results presented by Chizh

For his study Chizh used the archives of the Riga District Court (*okruzhnoi sud*). He studied data from the years 1894–1897. Chizh selected his material (an aspect later enabling his critics to undervalue his results), i.e. he did not include into his research the cases if the convicted person belonged to an ethnicity other than Estonian or Latvian. Chizh also chose only particular crimes for his study, e.g. infanticides, felony mayhem, murders and qualified theft. He explained such choice with his aim to concentrate on passion crimes. Besides he believed that infanticide (usually it were single mothers leaving their newborn in a lethal helpless situation) should be a good marker to characterise not only the psychology of a female involved, but that of the community surrounding her. Chizh agreed with those authors who suggested that women committing infanticide do not differ from ordinary women, their tragedy is a social predicament (Chizh 1901:48).

According to Chizh there had been 143 cases of infanticide committed by Estonian and 79 by Latvian mothers during the discussed period. When calculated to 1000 inhabitants the occurrence of infanticide among Estonians was 0.25 and among Latvians 0.14 (ratio 10:5,6). In such a way the Estonian community seemed to have been almost twice less compassionate.

Chizh also showed that Estonians committed twice as many murders than Latvians. When calculated to 1000 inhabitants it was 0.24 against 0.12, the ratio favouring Estonians with 10:5. In absolute numbers Chizh reported on 73 murders committed by Estonians and 46 murders by Latvians. Chizh divided murders into three 'classes'. First there were murders committed for obtaining property. Here he could report 18 cases with Latvians against 15 cases with Estonians involved. The second group were passion-related murders (hate, revenge, jealousy) where Estonians exceeded Latvians clearly (25 cases against 7). The third group were murders committed in the state of affect (resulting from fights or alcohol intoxication). Here Estonians had a record of 33 cases against Latvians' 21. Chizh stressed that Estonians had not committed crimes of jealousy (Latvians had 3 such cases). Chizh also pointed at the low number of murders committed by Estonians for property, he saw it contradicting his other results.

Estonians also exceeded Latvians in committing crimes of violence (inflicting serious wounds) – the numbers were 80 to 51. Chizh grouped these deeds and noticed that only the violence committed under the influence of alcohol was almost equal between the two ethnic groups. He declares these crimes casual, i.e. here the environment was to be blamed. In other cases (property-related violence, violence caused by hate or revenge) Estonians clearly dominated the statistics. Chizh at this point was amazed by the minor character of problems causing severe

conflicts between Estonians. He concludes that by their character Latvians are milder and more modest than their northern neighbours.

It is perhaps no surprise that according to Chizh Estonians outnumbered Latvians also in qualified thefts (i.e. major intentional thefts). And – there were also more Estonians among habitual criminals (individuals sentenced 3 and more times). Summing up all the crimes studied by him (altogether 673) Estonians were involved in 408 and Latvians in 265 cases. In his conclusion Chizh could state that he had proved the anthropological – i.e. psychological, physiological and anatomical – factors to play an important role in criminal behaviour (Chizh 1901:58).

Chizh was convinced that Estonians differed from Latvians by their character and psychological disposition, relevantly also by their ‘physical organisation’. Chizh believed that different civilizing agents during the history (school, religion etc) have influenced Estonians less than Latvians. Later he smoothed this rather racist statement insisting that Estonians, as other civilised nations, also denounce all the discussed crimes on moral basis, there just happened to be among them more such people who by their ‘organisation’ were inclined towards misbehaviour.³

Chizh was convinced that his results prove to be an important fundamental knowledge. Chizh believed the practical value of his work to be modest, because of a tendency towards a decrease of biologically ‘pure’ human populations, i.e. there were few such cases when only the ‘ethnic’ factors can become crucial in shaping the population’s behaviour.

Chizh’s study was followed by a similar one by the Russian meteorologist Alexander Klossovsky (1846–1917). The work by Klossovsky, an amateur in criminology, concentrated on crimes against property (arson, robbery, theft and horse theft), finding also here that in broad terms the crime rates in the Province of Livonia increased towards the north, i.e. towards the Estonian-dominated regions. (Only the island county of Saaremaa inhabited by Estonians was an exception with even lower crime rates than among Latvians.)

Klossovsky, who had conducted his study from Odessa, had used official published data, supposedly the Newsletters of the Livonian Province (*Лифляндские губернские ведомости* / *Livländische Gouvernements-Zeitung*), where criminal statistics was given by counties. The latter could be separated into Estonian and Latvian ones. Klossovsky had studied the years 1890–1895. According to him Estonians had committed 17 075 crimes against 8570 of Latvians, i.e. a ratio 10:6.2 in favour of Estonians.

Drawing conclusions, Klossovsky points to the fact that in Latvian counties there was a female prevalence over males – to 1000 men there were 1105 women. In Estonian territories the number was 1079 (an exception being again Saaremaa with a ratio of 1172 women to 1000 men).

³ It was the University of Tartu where in the second half of the 19th century the scientific doctrine of the so-called moral statistics emerged (Lederer 2013).

Klossovsky also pointed at the possibility that the lower criminal rates in Latvian territories could be explained by better economic and cultural conditions, first of all by abundant urban settlements (especially Riga) where people could find employment. Klossovsky also believed that the nearby Courland Province, inhabited by Latvians and possessing according to him higher cultural level,⁴ could support the more 'civilized' behaviour of Latvians. (Klossovsky 1905)

6. Estonian reception of Chizh's work

Chizh's goal was not to study Estonians' (and Latvians') character, as the aim of this article is not to discuss the validity of Chizh's and his colleagues' results. Just a short comment is needed, based on modern biological sciences. According to the latter Estonians and Latvians are genetically very close (Nelis et al 2009). Such biological similarity was confirmed already by physical anthropologists working with human morphology in the middle of the 20th century (see i.e.: Mark, Heapost, Sarap 1994). This means that the hypothesis of Chizh was not valid, and his conclusions were wrong as well. Quite the opposite – the differences in the behaviour of Estonians and Latvians must not be explained by the biological essence of the compared populations.

In the era discussed in the article the situation was different. From the beginning of the 20th century the emerging Estonian elites followed the studies run on their fellow countrymen already with keen interest. Warm welcome in 1902 by a leading Estonian activist Henrik Koppel (1863–1944), a medical doctor, to a booklet by a local physical anthropologist Richard Weinberg (1867–1927) was typical. The latter had studied Estonians' brains and declared that these should be viewed as average European ones, Estonians thus being fully capable of contributing to the Western civilization (Weinberg 1901). Koppel praised Weinberg for breaking old stereotypes.

Vladimir Chizh's research was not so positive, reviving the old racist theories. Mihkel Pung (1876–1941), a lawyer commenting on the study of Chizh from the Estonian standpoint admitted that a nation with such characteristics must feel unlucky (Pung 1902). Yet he tried to question the used methods; it was Pung who pointed at Chizh choosing his cases by criteria suitable to him. Pung could not overturn the professor's factological data, so he tried to argue the theory of Lombroso. Pung asked if it was correct to judge on people by the "length of their hands and breadth of chest". (For the sake of truth it has to be stressed that Chizh never touched morphological details in his article. Kraepelin also seems to have denied this aspect in Lombroso's theory (Lees 202:151).) Pung declared that it was impossible to accept that bodily traits fixed the moral character of an individual. Thus the whole concept of criminal anthropology must be wrong as is denying

⁴ Courland (German *Kurland*), now Southern and Western Latvia, was united with Russia only in 1795. Previously it had been a semi-autonomous duchy of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth with rather enlightened rulers.

people a possibility to develop themselves. Pung who supported the left-wing ideology, was not the only one to wonder about the supposedly hereditarian characteristics of his countrymen.

Another Estonian lawyer, Karl Grau (1884–1952), commented on Chizh’s work in 1911. He had run a modest study to check Chizh’s methods and results (which according to him “declared criminality a national inheritance of Estonians”). According to Grau the unequal crime rates of Estonians and Latvians could be explained by the time period chosen by Chizh to be analysed. The years 1894–1897 were special in this sense, as by then the crime incidence among Latvians had (already) dropped, but concerning Estonians the same process (which later also took place) had not started (according to Grau the year 1894 witnessed a peak in Estonian criminal statistics). Secondly – and this was perhaps more important – Grau pointed at a tendency by which the highest crime rates in Estonian-inhabited territory came from the county (Viljandimaa), where the inequality concerning property was the biggest. Grau encouraged patriotic people to dedicate themselves to the improvement of social conditions in Estonia and diminish the property gap by supporting the social layers in need, as well as children belonging to risk groups (Grau 1911).

7. Conclusion: Chizh revised

In 1909 one of the leading Estonian newspapers published an obituary to Lombroso (Luiga 1909a). Its author, Juhan Luiga (1873–1927), wrote that the founder of criminal anthropology had “diminished the guilt of the humans”, and that a man according to Lombroso’s teaching is not a subject with free will and fully responsible of his deeds, but just an object conducted by the organisation of his physical body – there are ‘born criminals’ who cannot be improved. Luiga does not position himself pro or against this standpoint, just mentions that there is a growing opposition to it.

Luiga, an Estonian psychiatrist, student of Chizh, was a crucial figure in introducing natural sciences-based ideologies into Estonian national discourse. The process was complicated as it contained controversies. Chizh had to question his earlier statements as well.

A work by Chizh from the year 1908 discussed the effects of political life on the ethiology of mental disease (Chizh 1908). What excited the Estonian community in Chizh’s new treatise was that he tackled the ethnic differences of revolutionary activity in the Baltic Provinces during the 1905 Russian revolution. Now he claimed that it were Latvians – not Estonians whom one would suspect in the light of his previous work – who were outstandingly aggressive (Chizh 1908: 157–162).⁵ Chizh tried to explain the situation by different national characters –

⁵ The higher revolutionary activity in the Latvian territories of the then Baltic Provinces is a fact accepted by historians, one of the explanations being a bigger presence of German population in the more severely plundered Latvian dominated areas (Raun 2005:39–40).

using the term 'anthropology' – of the two nations, declaring Estonians to be more considering.

Estonian reaction to Chizh's article was headed by Luiga, who did not seem to be content with Chizh's plaudit to Estonians for remaining less aggressive. (In the era of revolutions, but especially in the light of social Darwinism, such modesty could witness a weakened vitality (Kalling and Heapost 2013:88–90).) Similar ideas were expressed by the then most outstanding Estonian medic Peeter Hellat (1857–1912), who remarked bitterly in 1910 that during the revolution the Latvians died in a more heroic way (Hellat 1910:28).

According to Luiga the attempts of Chizh to explain revolutionary disobedience by biological factors were also too simplistic. Luiga comments that in racially homogenous (as believed by him) Russian provinces one could witness different patterns of revolutionary activity. In such a way the social factors were not to be underestimated.

The main issue in the particular article by Chizh was in fact broader. Chizh presented ideas which again placed him in opposition with the majority of his Russian colleagues. The problem was that when in the era of counter revolution following the uprising of 1905, the Russian psychiatrists blamed the repressive political situation for the growing number of mental disorders, Chizh denied it (Luiga 1909b; Slabinskii 2015). Quite the opposite – according to Chizh it is the liberation of societies, which increases the number of the insane. Chizh followed one of the fundamental concepts of eugenics, by which the achievements in medicine and public health, keeping the weak and diseased alive, have a dysgenic influence on human populations, expressed among others by an increase of mental pathologies. And – as developed societies tend to be also liberal, the increase of the ratio of different pathologies is inevitable when humankind keeps its positive path (Chizh 1908:3).

For Estonian elites, with their goal being national emancipation and at the same time accepting the biologisation of nationalist ideologies, such a message was a serious challenge. Luiga denied it already in 1904 in his doctoral thesis (written under the supervision of professor Chizh). Luiga accepted that mental disorders are of somatic origin and spread like other diseases (incl. hereditarily). Deriving from it – and believing that developed societies have achieved results in fighting i.e. infectious disease – he was convinced that also mental disorders should retreat in the course of social improvement (Luiga 1904).

Juhan Luiga as one of the propagandists of eugenics in Estonia, chose in fact a dualistic approach. Especially it concerns the pre-independence era. For his own community, fellow Estonians, Luiga propagated biologised approaches, i.e. suggested eugenic methods (anti-alcohol measures). In a broader context, in the ethnically based political fight in the then Russian Baltic Provinces, he stressed social factors. It must have been a reaction to the biologized rhetorics used by the opponents – the Russian 'party' inclined to speak about the degenerative character of the Finnic 'stock', the German scholarship making hints on the 'inferiority' of Estonians' 'race'.

Luiga was not alone in his approach. To conclude, it would be important to stress that also Vladimir Chizh should not be viewed as dogmatic, representing just one side of the ‘nature versus nurture’ controversy. As Lombroso, Chizh was also interested in the phenomenon of talent. In 1906 he published an article where he tried to analyse its hereditary nature. Let us forget about his methodology (he searched family connections between individuals included in the *Entsyklopedicheski slovarj*⁶ [Encyclopaedic Dictionary] published in 1899 by Florenti Pavlenkov (1839–1900)) and pay attention at his conclusions. These denied direct inheritance of genius. Quite the opposite – according to Chizh giftedness emerges by chance similarly rarely in every social layer, and: “because of that only by opening everyone all possibilities to every activity, we can increase the number of talented people” (Chizh 1906:72).

8. Epilogue

After Estonia became independent, the self-esteem of the young nation rose. This also concerns the perception of national crime statistics. In 1927 an Estonian psychiatrist Konstantin Lellep (1888–1958) made perhaps the last attempt to characterise the ‘race’-related criminal inclinations of Estonians. According to him Estonians should in general fit the “Nordic (leptosomic) type, be high-grown and astenic, with cold and contemplative character”. Lellep pointed at the relatively high ratio of affective crimes (infanticide, murder and heavy injuries) among Estonians which according to him could suggest some ‘racial’ background different from neighbours (Lellep 1927a:149). Yet, as criminal behaviour characteristic to the supposedly submissive types – the delicts of possession– were relatively rare among Estonians, the latter could, by their criminal inclinations, qualify as a ‘noble nation’ (Lellep 1927b:20).

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⁶ The used methodology obviously emulates Francis Galton’s *Hereditary genius* (1869) who wrote this treatise under the influence of his half-cousin Charles Darwin.

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