

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
Faculty of Social Sciences
Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON
School of Slavonic and East European Studies

Pin-Yu Paris Chen

Race, Nation, and Eugenics
in Interwar Estonian Radical Right Journal
ERK Magazine

Master's Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the radical rightist stances of the Estonian Nationalist Club (ERK) and their organ *ERK Magazine* through biologized and racialised discourses that manifested through the ERK's adaptation, negotiation, and engagement with the transnational race science and eugenic thinking. I argue that the ERK's strong vision of the nation as a biological entity, threatened by degeneration and diseases, was behind their intolerance of national minorities, anxiety of assimilation and miscegenation, elitist and anti-democratic politics, and emphasis on the population's quality over quantity. While borrowing the international vocabulary of eugenics and race science for national socio-political discussions, the ERK's ultranationalist sensitivity also prompted them to defend the Estonian nation's hereditary value, most evidently in Juhan Aul's resolute rejection of the Estonians' alleged Mongoloid origin and his implication in reaffirming the Nordic supremacism in his research.

My research questions the notion of the Estonian intellectuals' relative indifference to racial hierarchy. Rather, a careful analysis reveals the presumption of such hierarchy in their arguments. Revealing the ERK's fierce attacks on national minorities as the threat to the national organism, this study also challenges the conventional wisdom of interwar Estonia's lack of ethnic tension and the success of cultural autonomy. Most importantly, by analysing media reportage and *ERK Magazine*, this study highlights the scandalous rise and uncompromising ideology of an influential yet understudied group of ultranationalist intellectuals, whose publication served as the platform of radical right ideologies. Many of their demands formed the backbone of Konstantin Päts's authoritarian regime.

Keywords: Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi, Estonian Nationalist Club, ERK, race science, eugenics, degeneration, Nordicism, minorities, Juhan Aul, interwar Estonia, biological nationalism

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INTRODUCTION

The Estonian Nationalist Club (*Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi*, ERK) was a momentous radical rightist force on the interwar Estonian political landscape from its establishment in 1931 until its liquidation under the Soviet occupation in 1940.¹ Self-styled ‘ERK’, this acronym appeared in contemporary newspaper reportage, on the cover of its constitution, and served as the title of their official organ, *ERK Magazine* (1933-1940).² Highly elitist and intellectual in nature, the ERK brought together prominent figures such as Jüri Uluots, Edgar Kant, Juhan Aul, Johannes Aavik, Oskar Loorits, Harri Moora, Juhan Vasar, among more than 100 other members, into its politically engaging and uncompromisingly nationalistic circle.³ *ERK Magazine* contributors largely came from this circle, with some notable exceptions like Anton Hansen Tammsaare and Georg Meri. Closely associated with the authoritarian regime of Konstantin Päts, the ERK and its journal publication continued to operate, while all political parties and the populist radical right organisation ‘Estonian War of Independence Veterans’ League’ (*Eesti Vabadussõjalaste Liit*) were disbanded or banned in the Era of Silence (*vaikiv ajastu*, 1934-1940). The ERK called for the abolishment or greater state control of the national minorities’ right to cultural autonomy, and campaigned for changing foreign-sounding names for Estonian ones. Many articles in *ERK Magazine* advocated eugenics, national organism, corporatism, and authoritarianism—ideologies implemented or endorsed by the authoritarian regime.

Despite the ERK and *ERK Magazine*’s importance in interwar Estonian political and intellectual history, they remain unfortunately obscure, receiving but scant and fragmented

¹ ERA.852.1.2339, pp. 1-2.

² ERA 14.11.59, p.2

³ As of December 1931, the ERK boasted of 121 members. ERA.2698.1.6, pp. 81-83.

scholarly attention. Andres Kasekamp characterises the ERK as a radical right organisation ‘with an intellectual bending’ that campaigned for changing the constitution to establish a strong presidency.⁴ Toomas Karjahärm provides the most extensive scholarly treatment of the ERK to date. His monograph on interwar Estonian intellectual history devotes a section to the ERK and lists its ‘nationalist phobias’ based on analyses of *ERK Magazine* articles.⁵ More recently, Martin Klesment attributes the origin of interwar Estonian economic nationalism to the ERK and Leo Sepp, an *ERK Magazine* editor and contributor.⁶ Meanwhile, as Ken Kalling and Leiu Heapost explore interwar Estonian elites’ concerns of eugenic degeneration and the nation’s racial origin, they point out that some of Aul’s polemics on race science appeared in *ERK Magazine*.⁷ To what extent, then, did race and eugenics play a role in the ERK’s politics and ideology? How did *ERK Magazine* disseminate eugenic thinking and biologized discourses in the framework of ultranationalist politics? Did ‘nationalist phobias’ reflect the eugenic anxiety of racial value and degeneration? Were nationalist demands expressed through biological, racial, or eugenic vocabulary? These are the core questions I will address in this dissertation.

By biologized discourses, I do not mean only the social-Darwinian fear of degeneration and miscegenation, nor neo-Lamarckian faith in national regeneration by social measures.⁸ I

⁴ Andres Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia* (Basingstoke: MacMillan, 2000), 30-31.

⁵ Toomas Karjahärm and Väino Sirk, *Vaim ja võim: Eesti haritlaskond 1917-1940* (Tallinn: Argo, 2001), 274-283.

⁶ Martin Klesment, ‘The Origins of Economic Nationalism in Interwar Estonia’, *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 9 (2005): 118-135.

⁷ Ken Kalling and Leiu Heapost, ‘Racial Identity and Physical Anthropology in Estonia’, in *Baltic Eugenics: Bio-Politics, Race and Nation in Interwar Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, 1918-1940*, edited by Björn M. Felder and Paul J. Weindling (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 94.

⁸ See William H. Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Jakob Tanner, ‘Eugenics before 1945’, *Journal of Modern European History* 10.4 (2012):458-479.

include the biologized discourses of the nation. The nation, imagined as an organic living entity comprising of individuals as cells, is a recurrent theme in *ERK Magazine*. The biologized discourse of the nation also extended to race scientists' investigation of the national racial elements, which were weighed on a racial hierarchy of biological qualities. On this basis, the biologized nation contributed to the nationalists' nation-building project, which focused on the national competition of reputation, legitimacy, and capacity—in other words, the rise of racial nationalism.⁹ The ERK, without turning away from the late-nineteenth-century heritage of Estonian cultural nationalism from the National Awakening, embraced this new biological boost of nationalist ideology to serve their purposes.

Given the scarcity of existing archival sources, this study also relies on newspaper reportage and *ERK Magazine* to reconstruct the obscure radical right organisation's activities and ideologies. More specifically, it focuses on *ERK Magazine* and its contributors' biologized discourses of the Estonian nation. In addition to blunt expressions of their 'biological nationalism', I conduct a close reading to look for hints in seemingly unrelated nationalist demands for economy, for sports, for family and school education, for anthropological research, and for a new constitution.¹⁰

To better situate the ERK and its publication's biological nationalism in the European context, I take a spatially and temporally comparative approach. My framework of analysis encompasses the interwar European and American approaches to eugenics and race science,

⁹ For racial nationalism, see Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling, 'Eugenics, Race and Nation in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940: A Historiographic Overview', in *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*, edited by Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 7-8; and Björn M. Felder, 'Introduction: Eugenics, Sterilisation and the Racial State: The Baltic States, Russia, and the Global Eugenics Movement', in *Baltic Eugenics: Bio-Politics, Race and Nation in Interwar Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, 1918-1940*, edited by Björn M. Felder and Paul J. Weindling (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 16-17.

¹⁰ I use the concept 'biological nationalism' more broadly as the fusion of biologized discourses *or* biological vocabulary with nationalistic demands, rather than simply on purity and blood.

as well as those of early twentieth-century Estonian elites before Estonia's independence in 1918. After all, the ERK's eugenic anxiety and biologized nationalist discourses carried the legacy of pre-independence nationalist concerns, and echoed similar patterns in the trans-Atlantic world. In turn, this transnational nature of eugenics and race science suggests a potential divergence from local concerns. It thus invites scrutiny of the nationalists' responses, be they complete acceptance, conditional adoption, or renegotiation and resistance.

My first chapter outlines the comparative framework of biologized nation, eugenics and race science. I begin with the implication of an Estonian 'core racial element'. The biologized nation, however, was blighted by the myth of the Estonians' Mongoloid origin as hereditary degenerate and racially less valuable than other European 'races'. This disadvantage prompted Johannes Aavik and Villem Grünthal-Ridala's defence of the Estonians' biological quality by claiming Nordic superiority, a move typical of many Central and East European nations. Racial superiority and hierarchy, embedded in the imperial and colonial narratives, reinforced existing power relations between Western and Eastern Europe. Meanwhile, the West's eugenic concerns of racial quality, miscegenation and degeneration also spread through scientific exchanges to Western peripheries like Estonia, provoking local elites' anxiety and debates. In particular, I highlight the transnational scientific influence of the Swedish Institute of Racial Biology (SIRB) and how it served as the model for Aul and the biopolitical agenda of authoritarian Estonia.

In the second chapter, I focus on the ERK's early years, especially before the 1934 coup d'état, but also deals with the authoritarian regime's complete or partial fulfilment of the ERK's long-term demands and obsessions. I start with the ERK's scandalous rise by anti-Marxist, anti-German, and ultranationalist rhetoric, bringing fierce media criticism of its 'fascistic' nature. Soon, however, the ERK succeeded in its *dédiabolisation* efforts and integrated into mainstream political debates and mobilisation. Next, I emphasise the ERK's

organisational endorsement of eugenics. I examine the eugenic thinking in the ERK's constitution, the ERK Union's manifesto, and Kant's foreword to *ERK Magazine*. Lastly, I analyse the ERK Union's manifesto's biologized discourse of the nation, the anxiety over the Estonians' weak national consciousness, and the demands to extend ethnic Estonians' control over the economy and border regions at the expense of Baltic German and Russian minorities. Indeed, the Pääts authoritarian regime would tackle these issues with notable success.

My third chapter addresses three main themes of biological nationalism in *ERK Magazine*: race science, intermarriage, and the threats of national minorities on the national organism. I start by establishing Aul's debt to the SIRB's racial classification. However, despite his anti-German sentiments, Aul's belief in racial difference *and* inequality led to his reinforcing Nordacist stereotypes in his research on Estonian racial composition. His international scientific methods, though, did not always go hand in hand with his strong nationalist conviction, especially with ERK's proud Finno-Ugric orientation. Next, I explore *ERK Magazine's* ultranationalist conviction that the national organism's interest came first. Women, historians and elites all had their special mission to fulfil. However, the national organism's cells—Estonian individuals—were perceived as biologically vulnerable to de-nationalisation, so they must be protected from the corruptive influence of the minorities. Therefore, Baltic Germans, Russians, Jews, and Setos all constituted real threats to the Estonian national organism. Acute threat perception motivated the ERK to firmly reject intermarriage as fundamentally contrary to nationalist ideals. Curiously enough, Juhan Vilms's briefing on intermarriage in *ERK Magazine* was so uncharacteristically carefully worded to avoid biological references that it should be suspected for self-censorship to avoid the accusation of Nazi sympathies.

In the conclusion, I will give a brief account of the EKR's liquidation and its members' subsequent fate under Soviet and Nazi occupations. Then, I provide a comparative analysis of

the ERK with the Veterans' League, before identifying the ERK's fascist tropes. I will incorporate a final assessment of biologized discourses of the nation circulated among the ERK circle and by *ERK Magazine* in this comparison. Finally, I will highlight the achievements of this study on the ERK and its publication's politics of biological nationalism.

CHAPTER I

NATION, EUGENICS, AND RACIAL SCIENCE IN CONTEXTS

This chapter begins with an analysis of prominent Estonian intellectuals' opinions on the Estonian nation as a biological entity and the myth of its Mongoloid origin, before moving on to the broader international contexts of eugenic ideology, including Nordic supremacism, miscegenation, and degeneration.

1.1 Estonian Nationalism and Biologization of the Nation

In a pioneer study on the Estonian 'racial' question before Estonian independence, Toomas Karjahärm argues that such discussions rarely centred on racial hierarchy. Rather, prominent Estonian intellectuals were preoccupied with the small nation's survival—which depended not only on quantity and quality, but also the biological and mental nature of the Estonians.¹ Many of these intellectuals also led the momentous *fin-de-siècle* temperance movement, blaming alcohol consumption for biological degeneration and loss of vitality. Under the repressive political climate before the 1905 Revolution, nationalist elites often carried out their political agenda under the guise of the seemingly apolitical temperance movement.² Therefore, beyond the traditional narrative that gives cultural development and the Estonian language a central place in Estonian national awakening, early Estonian nationalism also imagined the nation as a biological asset to be defended with necessary intervention.³

¹ Toomas Karjahärm, 'Tõuküsimus Eestis iseseisvuse eel: Historiograafiline referaat', *Akadeemia* 7 (1993): 1361.

² Ken Kalling and Erki Tammiksaar, 'Descent versus Extinction: The Reception of Darwinism in Estonia', in *The Reception of Charles Darwin in Europe*, vol. I, edited by Eve-Marie Engels and Thomas F. Glick (London: Continuum, 2008), 225.

³ For the historiographical tendency to emphasise the centrality of cultural achievements in early Estonian

It should not come as a surprise that the nation was imagined as biologically distinctive entity. The outdated notion that linguistic differences corresponded to biological differences persisted well into the first half of the twentieth century.⁴ Also, late-nineteenth-century imperial census helped reinforced the idea of language as the marker of a nation.⁵ Such overlapping boundaries led to categorical ambiguity. The Estonian word *tõug* (race), originally meaning ‘animal stock’, came to be used for a wide range of categories such as race, language family, cultural sphere, nation, or people.⁶ The discursive conflation of cultural, intellectual, and biological differences in the word *tõug* testified the interrelated nature of these categories to describe the human world.

While Estonian intellectuals admitted that most nations, including the Estonians, were historically mixed with other races, such mixture did not render the nation less real as a biological entity. Despite centuries of miscegenation, argued Villem Ernits, the modern nations were ‘new crystallisation’ formed out of a core ‘racial element’. He praised the drive for racial purity of more advanced ‘cultural nations’ as a result of the heightened sense of national consciousness, and warned that the alternative would lead to national degeneration.⁷ Thus, Ernits rejected miscegenation for its potential to further compromise the nation’s core

nationalism, see Toivo U. Raun, *Estonia and the Estonians*, 2 ed (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 2001), 57-80.

⁴ See, for example, Juhan Aul’s curious confidence, despite scientific uncertainty, that the Hungarians were related to the Finns and the Estonians. Juhan Aul, ‘Eestlaste tõulisest kuuluvusest’, *Eesti Hõim* 1-2 (1933): 22.

⁵ See Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation. Activists of Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 15; Juliette Cadiot, “Searching for Nationality: Statistics and National Categories at the End of the Russian Empire (1897–1917)”, *The Russian Review* 64.3 (2005): 444.

⁶ Karjahärm, 1347; Ken Kalling, ‘The Application of Eugenics in Estonia’, in *Baltic Eugenics: Bio-Politics, Race and Nation in Interwar Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, 1918-1940*, edited by Björn M. Felder and Paul J. Weindling (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2013), 50.

⁷ Villem Ernits, ‘Rahvusfilosoofilisest ilmavaatest’, in *Rahvusküsimus I: Eesti Üliõpilaste Seltsi Album IX*, edited by Villem Ernits (Jurjev: Eesti Üliõpilaste Seltsi Kirjastus, 1915), 12.

racial element. But opinions on miscegenation diverged greatly. Some of Ernits's contemporaries would distinguish between 'good mixture' and 'bad mixture', like Villem Grünthal-Ridala, or even called for miscegenation with Russians to enhance Estonians' feeble vitality, like Ado Grenzstein.⁸ Jaan Tõnisson, one of the most important Estonian politicians, refrained from making an unambiguous statement regarding miscegenation. Nevertheless, he expressed his biological conceptualisation of the nation by an analogy of the cattle breeder. The Estonians, he proposed, must have their own 'stock book', and like cattle, should not be careless in racial mixing.⁹ Still, regardless of their assessments of miscegenation, they all accepted the premise that nation was a biological reality.

Conceptualising the nation biologically inevitably drew nationalist movements into the debate about the nation's inherent capability to attain higher cultural and political achievements. For Estonian and Finnish elites, they were particularly troubled by the alleged 'Mongolisation' of their Finno-Ugric nations, which threatened to thwart their ambition to become the master in their own house. In an age when European racial superiority alone could justify the rule of colonial empires across Africa and Asia, the supposedly Mongol heritage of the local indigenous population affirmed the Baltic German and Swedish ascendancy in Estonia and Finland.¹⁰ The traditional Swedish view saw the Finns and their language barbaric, while the Swedes took pride in their role as the purveyor and defender of civilisation against Slavs and Asians. Should the Finns take the lead in Finland, wrote a Swedish journalist, what awaited them would be the Chinese stagnation.¹¹ As the old Enlightenment

⁸ Karjahärm, 1347-48, 1351.

⁹ Ibid., 1357. The 'stock book' imagery echoed Francis Galton's proposal to compile the 'golden book' of thriving families. See Francis Galton, 'Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims', *American Journal of Sociology* 10.1 (1904): 3-4.

¹⁰ See Jyoti Puri, *Encountering Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 81-82.

¹¹ Kemiläinen, 99-106.

admiration of Eastern civilisations was replaced by fear of the ‘yellow peril’, and the languishing Chinese empire seen as a cautionary tale rather than a success story, association with the yellow race became increasingly unwelcome in the nineteenth and early twentieth century.¹² While some prominent Fennomans, like Yrjö Sakari Yrjö-Koskinen, embraced the alleged Mongoloid heritage and stressed the great achievements of Asian nations, such thinking had started to become obsolete.¹³ Rather, the new Estonian and Finnish intellectuals tended to repudiate their Mongol racial origin as a myth. Stressing the ‘European’ features of the Finns and the Estonians, they had to make sure that their nation’s biological constitution would not be regarded as a liability for nation building.

On the other hand, the Mongoloid myth could also assume the form of self-criticism. In 1914, Johannes Aavik, philologist and later a prominent ERK member, berated Estonian cultural backwardness, physical ugliness and mental frailty caused by ‘backward selection’, the Darwinian natural selection going in the wrong direction. The worst elements—the weakest, the stupidest, the ugliest—reproduced themselves and left Estonia with so few intellectuals with ‘European looks’.¹⁴ An ardent Estonian nationalist and Fennophile, Aavik was surely aware that ‘Europeans’ commonly thought of Estonians and Finns as the Mongoloid race. Consciously echoed the contemporary racial discourse in which the physically and intellectually superior Europeans ruled over other lesser races, Aavik’s comment represented a blunt rejection of Estonians’ inferior Mongoloid traits. However, Aavik also argues that, ‘under proper conditions’, the Estonians could still reverse the

¹² For the European perception of East Asians and corresponding semantic change from the eighteenth to early twentieth century, see Michael Keevak, *Becoming Yellow: A Short History of Racial Thinking* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011), 1-9.

¹³ Kemiläinen, 62-63.

¹⁴ Karjahärm, 1353.

‘backward selection’ and reach the level of the ‘cultural nation’.¹⁵ As cultural achievement would manifest in physical attractiveness and mental capacity, Aavik opened up the possibility that some natural or human intervention would help generate more European-looking Estonians. But what kind of ‘European’ look did Aavik have in mind?

1.2 Claiming the Nordic Superiority

Villem Grünthal-Ridala, Aavik’s fellow member in the literary and cultural movement of Young Estonia, wrote in “The Racial Question” (1913) that the Finno-Ugric race belonged to the ‘Northern Forest race’, a race close to the Nordic race and whose racial traits approximated those of the Germanics.¹⁶ Often used interchangeably in racialist writings, the Germanics and the Nordic, along with Teuton and Aryan, denoted the same tall, blond, and long-headed race. For the anthropologists, who configured human social development as racial struggles, this ‘master race’ conquered Europe, ruled over indigenous short-skull peoples, and established higher civilisation. Such theory, therefore, credited the Nordic with the highest racial value.¹⁷ By stressing the Finno-Ugric peoples’ close affinity with the Nordic race, Ridala could claim that the former, including the Estonians and the Finns, were among the world’s finest races.¹⁸ Thus, both Aavik and Ridala participated in the Nordacist discourse to define the racial quality of the Estonians. While Ridala exalted the Estonians’ inherent biological potential, Aavik reprimanded his fellow countrymen for failing the better

¹⁵ Ibid., 1354.

¹⁶ Villem Ridala, ‘Tõu küsimus’, in *Eesti Kultura III*, edited by Villem Reiman (Tartu: Postimehe Kirjastus, 1913), 273.

¹⁷ Jon Røyne Kyllingstad, ‘Norwegian Physical Anthropology and the Idea of a Nordic Master Race’, *Current Anthropology* 53.S5 (2012): S50.

¹⁸ Karjahärm, 1350.

half of their natural disposition—the Nordic half.

The biological quality and potential of any given European nation was thus assessed on a racial spectrum between the two extremes: the all-powerful Nordic race and the despised Mongoloid race. One common strategy was to prove that this racially mixed nation contained Nordic blood. Polish physical anthropologists, for example, argued for the abundance of the Nordic racial element in Poland. Meanwhile, they carefully rejected the Germanic monopoly on Nordicism, identifying the Nordic racial element in Poland rather with primordial Aryan Slavs.¹⁹ Similarly, Romanian anthropologists who believed in Nordic supremacy argued for the prominence of Nordic traits among those ‘pure Romanians’ living in isolation in the mountains. Nordic elements, hence, must be indigenous to the Romanians.²⁰ The other strategy was to show that, though not made up of the Nordic race, this nation’s racial element approximated the Nordic virtues. In Stepan Rudnytskyi’s *Ukraine and the Ukrainians* (1914), the influential Ukrainian anthropologist repudiated the claim that the Ukrainians’ racial kinship with the Russians, the Poles, and the Mongols. Instead, he asserted the Ukrainians’ biological independence from its neighbours by naming the so-called Dinaric race as the dominant type in Ukraine. Leading Austrian and German racial theorists received the Dinaric race favourably, evaluating its physical index and intellectual ability as close to those of the Nordic race.²¹ Claiming near-Nordic racial superiority did not only boost national pride. For Central and Eastern European nations, whether still ruled by a multinational empire or newly independent, it was an important source of legitimacy for them to possess biological potential

¹⁹ Maciej Górny, ‘Bone and Soul: Physical Anthropology, the Great War and Nationalism in Eastern Europe’, *Cuadernos de Historia Contemporánea* 36 (2014): 253-54.

²⁰ Richard McMahon ‘On the Margins of International Science and National Discourse: National Identity Narratives in Romanian Race Anthropology’, *European Review of History* 16.1 (2009): 107.

²¹ Górny, 246-47, 251.

for higher cultural and political achievement.

However, Nordic biological potential did not guarantee that such potential would be fulfilled. Such paradox emerged in William Ripley's *The Races of Europe* (1899), where he put forward the discrepancy between the Scandinavia's 'maximum purity' of the Teutonic (Nordic) race, native to Northeastern Europe, and the region's pre-history cultural backwardness.²² Here, racial classification and stratification here fall short of biological determinism. Civilisation is conditioned by its founding people's racial components, but other factors, such as the environment, also play a part in its making. A nation, therefore, can transcend its inferior racial composition and rise to prominence through the national will. It is in light of this ambivalence towards racial determinism that we must read Aavik's exhortation to the Estonians to fight against 'backward selection' for higher cultural achievement. 'Now it can be said that, *ceteris paribus*, race determines a human society's history,' claimed Aavik.²³ Without defining these other factors to be considered, he thus left a door open for the Estonians' self-improvement—through natural or artificial intervention.

1.3 International Eugenics: Miscegenation and Degeneration

Eugenics believes in artificial intervention promoting the reproduction of those with superior traits and suppressing inferior traits. Though a transnational science, eugenics often responded to local concerns.²⁴ In France, eugenics encompassed movements aiming at 'biological regeneration, such as natalism, neo-Malthusianism, social hygiene and racist

²² William Zebina Ripley, *The Races of Europe: A Sociological Study* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1899), 205, 467, 507.

²³ Johannes Aavik, 'Germani ja Romani kultuur', *Eesti Kirjandus* 2 (1912): 62.

²⁴ Turda and Weindling, 8.

immigration restrictions'.²⁵ In Britain, it was Darwin's cousin Francis Galton who first coined the term 'eugenics' in 1883. He hypothesised that intelligence was a hereditary trait. For Galton, 'biological value and hereditary fitness are expressed in social standing and that the class position of each individual is therefore a social marker of his genetic worthiness'.²⁶ Consequently, Galton's eugenics reflected rather the fear of the poor out-reproducing the rich and served to justify existing social hierarchy. Nevertheless, the British Empire's colonial rule constructed the social hierarchy largely in parallel with the racial hierarchy.²⁷ When Galton addressed the low fertility of the 'upper classes', therefore, he did not fail to draw the imperial comparison with 'savage races' such as 'the negro'.²⁸ Meanwhile, the German term 'racial hygiene', employed first by Alfred Ploetz in 1895, had a sharper denotation of the 'lethal threat foreign bodies posed to organic systems' of the German race. Racial hygiene, therefore, answered the 'social-Darwinist anxieties of nationalist, xenophobic and racist right-wing movements', as opposed to the concept of 'social hygiene' advanced by left-wing and welfare-state supporters.²⁹ In Estonia, while early twentieth-century eugenics drew momentum primary from the anti-alcohol movement, nevertheless responded to broader international discussions on miscegenation, degeneration, and racial extinction.³⁰

Intervention—is it required regarding miscegenation? Early twentieth-century discussions demonstrated mixed views on miscegenation's merits. Some took mixed racial

²⁵ Schneider, 4.

²⁶ Tanner, 463.

²⁷ For race and colonialism, see Puri, 81-82.

²⁸ Galton, 3-4.

²⁹ Tanner, 469-470.

³⁰ For the Estonian temperance movement and eugenic concerns, see Kalling, 'The Application of Eugenics in Estonia', 50-52.

heritage as a source of strength, whereas the others identified it as the cause of degeneration. For Niko Županić, a Berlin- and Vienna-based Slovenian anthropologist, the Serbs' biological superiority derived from the mixture of indigenous Illyrians and the Aryan-Slavic people, which he deemed as the Nordic race. In turn, this exceptional racial quality entitled the Serbs to their claim of Albania, rebutting French and German racial theorists' prejudice.³¹ On the other hand, Danish anatomist Frederik C. C. Hansen, who invented the Nordic ancestor *Homo gardarensis* out of an abnormally giant skull, interpreted the Nordic colonisers' rapid degeneration as the result of their intermarriage with indigenous Greenlanders.³² Not merely a vain pursuit of the 'Nordic prestige', Hansen's was a cautionary tale embedded in the fear of degeneration by racial mixing. The fantastic story of Hansen's Nordic ancestor, widely publicised in its time in the printed media and scientific journals, already constituted a form of discursive intervention. Nordic purity was to be observed; miscegenation, abhorred.

In those countries that were widely recognised as historically mixed, however, the virtues of miscegenation remained disputable. Most commonly, the boundary between those 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' for intermarriage was drawn according to power relations, especially that defined by colonialism. French pro-natalists, for example, while ruling out assimilation of colonial subjects, promoted immigration of 'assimilable' Spanish, Italian, and Polish workers to boost national fertility.³³ The British, while implying the virtue of Scandinavian (Nordic) elements in the mixed British population as the carrier of aristocratic nature and conveyor of civilisation, frowned upon 'excessive' or distant racial mixture with

³¹ Górný, 242, 252.

³² Peter C. Kjærgaard, 'Inventing *Homo gardarensis*: Prestige, Pressure, and Human Evolution in Interwar Scandinavia', *Science in Context* 27.2 (2014): 359-360, 372-373.

³³ See Elisa Camiscioli, 'Producing Citizens, Reproducing the "French Race": Immigration, Demography, and Pronatalism in Early Twentieth-Century France', *Gender and History* 13.3 (2001): 593-621.

Oriental or Asiatic elements.³⁴ The United States led the trend of anti-miscegenation laws, on top of racially discriminative immigration legislation, to increase the Nordic element among the American population and combat degenerative influences of ‘coloured’ races.³⁵ Racially discriminative legislation was widely seen as legitimate as a nation’s sovereign right. A British speaker at the 1927 World Population Conference, while highly critical of the American Immigration Act of 1924, still recognised degeneration by racial intermixture as a real danger. Discriminating against non-White population for the danger they posed to the White race was justifiable, but discriminating against White sub-races, like those from Southern and Eastern Europe, was not a sovereign nation’s right to exercise.³⁶

For Central and Eastern European nations, as their elites brought back imperial discourses on miscegenation from London, Paris, Vienna, or Berlin, they inherited the prejudice against Western powers’ Asian and African colonial subjects, but also adapted such distinction between ‘assimilable’ and ‘harmful’ racial elements to their national contexts. Bulgaria, for example, was a site of intense speculations of her population’s un-European racial origins. Turkic, Finnic, or Tatar had been identified as the main Bulgarian racial element. Despite Bulgaria’s linguistic and geographical distance to the Finns, the assumption of their racial affinity testified rather to the nature of ‘Tatar-Finnish’ as a common label for

³⁴ For positive assessment of Nordic elements in mixed ‘Northeastern type’ of the British people, see H. J. Fleure, ‘The Racial History of the British People’, *Geographical Review* 5.3 (1918): 216-231. For racial science’s impact on discrimination in army recruitment before and after the WWI, see Tony Kushner, “‘Without Intending Any of the Most Undesirable Features of a Colour Bar: Race Science, Europeaness and the British Armed Forces During the Twentieth Century’, *Patterns of Prejudice* 46.3-4 (2012): 352-353.

³⁵ Tanner, 465; and Egbert Klautke, “‘The Germans Are Beating Us at Our Own Game’: American Eugenics and the German Sterilization Law of 1933’, *History of the Human Sciences* 29.3 (2016): 30. See also Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 1-14.

³⁶ Alison Bashford, ‘Nation, Empire, Globe: The Spaces of Population Debate in the Interwar Years’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 49.1 (2007): 186-187.

supposedly mixed population on the contact zone between Europe and Asia, namely the Eastern European periphery. The Bulgarians' 'dubious' racial origin and national history, therefore, fuelled their ready confidence in the virtue of racial mixing—though only among the White Europeans. Miscegenation with non-Whites, it was still believed, would lead to harmful results.³⁷ This double standard of miscegenation at once affirmed Bulgaria's European outlook in line with Western colonial powers, refuted the myth of the Mongol element in the Bulgarians, and pointed to racial improvement by mixing with superior blood. Similarly, the Estonian elites' diverse stances on miscegenation must be interpreted in both national and European contexts. Whether pro-miscegenation (Grenzstein) or pro-purity (Ernits), or recommending miscegenation with 'close races' and cautioning against that with 'distant races' (Ridala), Estonian answers to racial mixture operated within similar intellectual constraints and creativity.

The Great War further exacerbating pan-European eugenic concerns of degeneration. Young men, thought of as the nation's 'best stock', were conscripted and sent to the frontline. Either they never returned, or came back with severe injuries that affected their vitality. Coupled with huge loss of manpower was a sharp decline in birth rate. The demographic crisis was considered a catastrophic bloodletting of the nation's biological capital, both in terms of quality and quantity.³⁸ On one hand, thanks to the experiences of war time social planning, Germany as well as many other European countries were more than ready for scientific and state intervention to tackle the post-war national demographic, social and

³⁷ Stefan Detchev, 'Who Are the Bulgarians? "Race", Science and Politics in Fin-de-Siècle Bulgaria', in *We, the People: Politics of National Peculiarity in Southeastern Europe*, edited by Diana Mishkova (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2009), 245-249, 259-260.

³⁸ Tanner, 466; David L. Hoffmann, 'Mothers in the Motherland: Stalinist Pronatalism in Its Pan-European Context', *Journal of Social History* 34.1 (2000): 36-38.

economic crises.³⁹ Stressed public health policies to regeneration the nation by combatting epidemics and sexual transmitted diseases, post-WWI eugenics achieved unprecedented influence.⁴⁰ On the other hand, the eugenic impetus to increase quality came in potential conflicts with the pro-natalist movements with its emphasis on quantity.

The Estonians, a small nation with about a million population, felt particularly threatened by depopulation and degeneration. The First World War, Ernits feared, functioned as a Darwinist ‘counter-selection’ that would have the best Estonian blood drained. Thus, the already weak Estonian nation would face the same fate as the French, whose Napoleonic Wars brought damage to their best racial element.⁴¹ At the same time, the Estonians’ low birth rate prompted anxiety among the elites that the Estonian nation would eventually disappear on the map. Such fear was indeed relative according to the national context. Even the French, far outnumbering the Estonians by 40 times (40 million) around the turn of the nineteenth century, feared the extinction of their nation due to low birth rate and demographic disadvantage, especially in comparison with the Germans. Such demographic anxiety gave momentum to the highly successful French pro-natalist movement in the early twentieth century to combat national degeneration.⁴² The Estonian intellectuals also share high ambitions to reverse the tide of degeneration and depopulation.

But apart from the Great War, other factors also fuelled the fear of the Estonians’ path to degeneration. The late nineteenth century saw industrialisation and urbanisation drawing more

³⁹ Paul Weindling, ‘The “Sonderweg” of German Eugenics: Nationalism and Scientific Internationalism’, *The British Journal for the History of Science* 22.3 (1989): 324-325.

⁴⁰ For the Great War and public health measures, see Maria Bucur, ‘War and Regeneration: The Great War and Eugenics in Eastern Europe’, *Region* 4.1 (2015): 31-43.

⁴¹ Karjahärm, 1361.

⁴² Richard Tomlinson, ‘The “Disappearance” of France, 1896-1940: French Politics and the Birth Rate’, *The Historical Journal* 28.2 (1985): 405-06, 407, 409.

Estonians to Tallinn, Tartu and Narva, forever changing the Estonians' country folk culture and way of living.⁴³ Such dramatic change worried Ridala, who warned that it would lead to a national spiritual crisis.⁴⁴ Moreover, for Tõnisson, the corrupted urban environment provided a fertile ground for activities detrimental for the nation's morality and vitality.⁴⁵ In the nineteenth century, discourses on 'urban degeneration', a phenomenon commonly embodied in Paris or London, rapidly gained currency as a literary motif and common belief.⁴⁶ Little wonder thus that Estonian elites would adopt this anxiety of the city's degenerative influence on urban residents and workers.

Equally worrying was the perceived high crime rate of the Estonians at the turn of the century. Tõnisson pathologised the crime rate, interpreting it as the damning sign of the degenerative Estonian people's spirit.⁴⁷ He cited Vladimar Chizh's 1901 racial criminological research, which biologized criminality as an Estonian hereditary trait.⁴⁸ Chizh's study spoke to the Estonian elites' anxiety of the nation's biological degeneration, but they rejected the Chizh's conclusion. Rather, the Estonians' supposed criminality was not biologically hereditary, and could be cured by removing harmful external factors contributing to degeneration. Juhan Luiga, who wrote his PhD thesis under Chizh's supervision, accepted the

⁴³ See Raun, 70-74.

⁴⁴ Karjahärm, 1351.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 1357.

⁴⁶ See Schneider, 18-19.

⁴⁷ Jaan Tõnisson, 'Kunas on meie rahwal tulewikuloost?', *Postimees*, 13 November 1910.

⁴⁸ For the details of Chizh's research, see Ken Kalling, 'Emil Kraepelin's Successor Prof. Vladimir Chizh, His Research Methods and Objects', *TRAMES* 20.4 (2016): 417-430. For criminal anthropology's progressive origin and Cesare Lombroso's faith in social reforms to tackle criminality biological and social roots, see Peter D'Agostino, 'Craniums, Criminals, and the "Cursed Race": Italian Anthropology in American Racial Thought, 1861-1924', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 44.2 (2002): 319-324.

neo-Lamarckian premises that social reforms, including eugenic-minded temperance movements, could combat such tide of biological degeneration, while Chizh's claim that Estonians were racially more violent and dangerous than the Latvians.⁴⁹ Similarly, Tõnisson cited Chizh's study to make the case for the temperance movement's eugenic ideals of regeneration. Alcohol consumption damaged our people's health, he stressed, but only healthier population could resist criminal tendency. It was therefore urgent to follow the examples of Estonia's Nordic neighbours to renounce alcohol.⁵⁰ Tõnisson and Luiga's stress on social reforms to combat biological degeneration testified to Estonian elites' ambivalence on biological determinism, especially when conflicting with nation-building aspirations. For them, raising awareness, social reform, and elite intervention targeting harmful social factors would lead to the fulfilment of eugenic ideals—a faith inherited by the ERK.

The eugenic aspiration to change the world for the better was seen by the contemporaries as a progressive science. Indeed, figures across the political spectrum signed up to its agenda to promote better health for the population. However, as William H. Schneider convincingly demonstrated, the progressive elements of neo-Malthusianism and social hygiene should not divert our attention to the overarching *fin-de-siècle* context of eugenics, namely the acute anxiety of degeneration. Since concerns of degeneration presupposed a prior state of health and wellbeing to return to, eugenics was in fact more reactionary than utopian.⁵¹ Thus, eugenic thinking paradoxically combined 'an earlier optimism in science as progress with a later nineteenth-century pessimism around degeneration'.⁵² It was this curious combination

⁴⁹ Kalling, 'Prof. Vladimir Chizh', 427.

⁵⁰ Tõnisson, 'Kunas on meie rahwal tulewikulootust?'. His use of the German word *rassenhügiene* (*rassenhygiene*), together with the Estonian translation '*tõuu-tervendus*', indicates that his eugenic thoughts were introduced more through German-language publications.

⁵¹ Schneider, 11-12.

⁵² Philippa Levine, 'Anthropology, Colonialism, and Eugenics', in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of*

that would continue to drive for regeneration in the interwar period.

1.4 Interwar Eugenics, Racial Nationalism, and Biomedical Totalitarianism

In the wake of the First World War, the nation state decidedly became the norm of international order in Central and Eastern Europe. New nation states imagined a territory legitimately governed and dominated by the titular nation. In newly independent Estonia, despite the liberal climate in the 1920s would eventually lead to the progressive legislation of cultural autonomy for national minorities in 1925, it was never doubted that the Estonian state was created *for* and *by* ethnic Estonians. A recent study shows that the immigration authorities prioritised the return of ethnic Estonians in the early 1920s, while Baltic German applications could be suspended or rejected.⁵³ The ascendancy of the nation state model provided fresh impetus to eugenics and racial nationalism, which, in the words of Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling, ‘offered one of the most compelling definitions of the nation, one based on the biological laws of heredity’.⁵⁴ The liberal climate, as well as international funding bodies that saw eugenics as integral to public health schemes, kept the more exclusive parts of such vision in check.⁵⁵

Due to economic and political instability, however, the 1930s saw the liberal democratic climate quickly gave way to the rise of authoritarianism and nationalist fervour. In Estonia and Latvia, authoritarian regimes ushered in new biopolitical agenda concerning abortion and sterilisation, propagated *völkisch* nationalism with the emphasis on the nation as biological

Eugenics, edited by Alison Bashford and Philippa Levine (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 55.

⁵³ See Helen Rohtmets, ‘The Significance of Ethnicity in the Estonian Return Migration Policy of the Early 1920s’, *Nationalities Papers* 40.6 (2012): 895-908.

⁵⁴ Turda and Weindling, 7.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

entity, and emboldening eugenicists' high ambition to shape the fitness of the nation.⁵⁶ Ken Kalling claims that, in the wake of the coup d'état and subsequent establishment of the authoritarian regime in 1934, eugenic ideology in Estonia made a huge breakthrough. Not only did eugenics become officially institutionalised, but physicians also formed a chamber in the new corporatist system.⁵⁷ This elevation of medical professionals' place in state governance, coupled with authoritarian state intervention in the name of the national body's health, moved Estonia toward the path of what Aristotle Kallis called 'biomedical totalitarianism'. Biomedical totalitarianism uses biomedical science to 'promote and guarantee the ideal of infinite individual and social perfectibility through eliminating all forms of perceived pathology' in the 'collective national body', in which nation is often interchangeable with race.⁵⁸ Mental illness, undesired lineage, or different ethno-national groups all constituted pathologies which threatened the health of the race-nation. Eventually, it is authoritarianism, the antithesis of democracy and equality, that proved fertile ground for the mutual reinforcement of eugenics and racial nationalism.

1.5 The Swedish Connection

The confluence of eugenics and racial nationalism received further boost from transnational scientific exchanges.⁵⁹ In the early 1920s, Sweden's pioneering eugenic

⁵⁶ Felder, 13-18.

⁵⁷ Kalling, 'The Application of Eugenics in Estonia', 65-66. For Estonian corporatist authoritarianism, see Andres Kasekamp, 'Corporatism and Authoritarianism in the Baltics: Päts' Estonia in Comparison', in *Corporatism and Fascism: The Corporatist Wave in Europe*, edited by Antonio Costa Pinto (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017), 261-265.

⁵⁸ Aristotle A. Kallis, 'Racial Politics and Biomedical Totalitarianism in Interwar Europe', in *Blood and Homeland: Eugenics and Racial Nationalism in Central and Southeast Europe, 1900-1940*, edited by Marius Turda and Paul J. Weindling (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 390-391, 398-400.

⁵⁹ For the international science network of eugenics, see Stefan Kühl, *The Nazi Connection: Eugenics, American Racism and German National Socialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

research served as a model of admiration which strongly influenced her Baltic Sea neighbours, not the least Germany, the Soviet Union, and Estonia. The Swedish Institute of Racial Biology (SIRB), headed by the internationally renowned professor of physical anthropology Herman Lundborg, was the first state-directed eugenic research institution in the world.⁶⁰ Inspired by eugenic research, anti-miscegenation and racially discriminative immigration legislations in the United States in the 1920s, Lundborg vehemently propagated the urgency to protect the Nordic race in Sweden from degenerative factors.⁶¹ Chairing the SIRB since its creation in 1921/22 to his retirement in 1935, Lundborg could therefore combine his long-term commitment to eugenics movement and Nordic supremacism to the SIRB's research agenda.⁶² It was perhaps not surprising that Lundborg became increasingly receptive to Nazi and fascist ideologies.⁶³

The SIRB model inspired German eugenicist Eugen Fischer to establish the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute of Anthropology, Human Heredity, and Eugenics, after his pilgrimage to the SIRB with several high-profile eugenicists from Germany, Austria, Italy, Finland and Estonia.⁶⁴ In the context of the closer German-Soviet academic cooperation under international isolation, the Swedish-German connection provided further impetus for correspondences between Lundborg and leading Soviet eugenicists. Though Stalin's

⁶⁰ Per Anders Rudling, 'Eugenics and Racial Biology in Sweden and the USSR: Contacts across the Baltic Sea', *Canadian Bulletin of Medical History* 31.1 (2014): 42.

⁶¹ Ibid., 44-45; Ulrika Kjellman, 'A Whiter Shade of Pale: Visuality and Race in the Work of the Swedish State Institute for Race Biology', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 38.2 (2013): 180-181.

⁶² On Lundborg, see Nils Roll-Hansen, 'Geneticists and the Eugenics Movement in Scandinavia', *The British Journal for the History of Science* 22.3 (1989): 336, 338-339.

⁶³ Rudling, 44.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 52; Hans-Walter Schmuhl, *The Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Anthropology, Human Heredity and Eugenics, 1927-1945: Crossing Boundaries* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008): 29-30.

condemnation of eugenics in the 1930s temporarily halted this Swedish-Soviet scientific exchanges, Lundborg's influence outlasted Stalin well into the 70s, most evident in the Soviet academia's ready acceptance of the existence of the Nordic race and racial measurements.⁶⁵

Lundborg's first major project as the SIRB director was to realise his decade-long obsession to carry out a racial survey of the Swedish people. His efforts culminated in the English-language publication of *The Racial Character of the Swedish Nation* (1926), clearly gearing for the international—and especially American and British—eugenics community. Boasting over 12,000 photos and around 50,000 examinees, he carefully documented details used to determine race in the tradition of physical anthropology: height, skull shape, eye colour, skin colour, and hair colour. These details, argued Lundborg in one the earliest SIRB report, could form the basis of a eugenic population policy to determine 'who was pure Nordic, true white, and who was not, and what strategies to encourage the former to reproduce and ensure that the latter did not'.⁶⁶ His methodology notably followed the Swedish anatomist Andres Retzius's 'cranial index' to distinguish the Nordic race from the inferior Finns and Lapps.⁶⁷ Though Lundborg and the SIRB rather used the term 'East Baltic' to refer to Finnish racial type, these two labels were still employed almost interchangeably.⁶⁸ Lundborg used a gradation of light and dark to identify other four racial types: light mixed types, medium dark types, dark mixed types, and dark types.⁶⁹ Lundborg's racial

⁶⁵ Rudling, 51-54, 57-64.

⁶⁶ Kjellman, 'A Whiter Shade of Pale', 180-181; See also Ulrika Kjellman, 'How to Picture Race?', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 39.5 (2014): 583.

⁶⁷ Kyllingstad, S47; Rikke Andreassen, 'The Search of the White Nordic: Analysis of the Contemporary New Nordic Kitchen and Former Race Science', *Social Identities* 20.6 (2014): 444-45.

⁶⁸ See Kjellman, 'A Whiter Shade of Pale', note 11.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 183.

classification would feature prominently in the works of Juhan Aul, an ERK member and interwar Estonia's most prominent physical anthropologist.

As Lundborg's example demonstrates, human classification, ever since the Linnaeus's time, was not without political consequences. While acquiring his fame through affirming existing racial prejudice and fear of Nordic racial degeneration, Lundborg and his eugenic worldview would in turn contribute to the passing of the 1934 sterilisation legislation.⁷⁰ The primary victims of the said legislation were 'feeble-minded' women, whose undesired hyper-productivity, sexual misconduct, genetic flaws, and parenting abilities would put the Swedish nation's future at risk.⁷¹ However, as early as in 1908, genetic research had already proved that negative eugenics had no effect on recessive polygenetic inheritance, thereby questioning the very link between heredity and feeble-mindedness.⁷² Thus, Swedish sterilisation law was mainly justified on social welfare reasons, but lurking in the background was the ready belief in eugenic principles despite the lack of scientific evidence. 'Eugenic and racial hygiene propaganda', as Jakob Tanner rightly puts it, 'was based on the permanent popularisation and vulgarisation of scientific knowledge'.⁷³ Presumptions of racial inequality and biological degeneration, therefore, overrode the seemingly scientific methodology of racial anthropology and eugenics.

In the same vein, a recent study argues that the renowned Nazi eugenicist Fritz Lenz took race rather as a worldview, or even a faith—a faith that, despite its numerous inherent

⁷⁰ See Henrik Kylin, 'The Missing Skull – Professor Lundborg and the Mismeasure of Grandma', *Endeavour* 40.2 (2016): 133; Niels Lynøe, 'Racial Enhancement Through Sterilisation: Swedish Experiences', *International Journal of Mental Health* 36.1 (2007): 22-23.

⁷¹ See Kristina Boréus, 'Discursive Discrimination of the "Mentally Deficient" in Interwar Sweden', *Disability and Society* 21.5 (2005): 444-447.

⁷² Lynøe, 22.

⁷³ Tanner, 468.

conflicts and lack of scientific evidence, provided a basis to realise Nazi racial ideology, in which race functioned as the transcendent idea to unify the German *volk*.⁷⁴ This faith in race allowed its believers to modify racial assessment according to changing political context, and overlook the ‘skin-deep’ racial determinants: various dimensions of human appearance.⁷⁵ This crude scientific method enabled Juhan Aul to come to stress the Nordic racial elements over East Baltic type in Nazi-occupied Estonia.⁷⁶ The sheer irony of the insistence on physical traits as racial determinant is best illustrated by Lundborg’s and the SIRB’s authoritative endorsement of ‘Elsa’ as the ‘finest example of pure Nordic Race’—but in fact, Elsa was a Jewish immigrant.⁷⁷ It was this confidence that race could be accurately measured and identified by outward appearance that inform racialised eugenic sterilisation. In Sweden, over 600 ‘Tattare’, the Roma people, were forcibly sterilised for their perceived degenerative racial quality.⁷⁸ The Swedish case demonstrates that, despite seemingly non-racialised policy justifications, race as a worldview inevitably occupies a huge place in eugenic thinking.

⁷⁴ See Amit Varshizky, ‘Between Science and Metaphysics: Fritz Lenz and Racial Anthropology in Interwar Germany’, *Intellectual History Review* 27.2 (2017): 247-272.

⁷⁵ For the evolution of Slavic racial quality under Nazi assessment, see John Connelly, ‘Nazis and Slavs: From Racial Theory to Racist Practice’, *Central European History* 32.1 (1999): 14-16.

⁷⁶ Anton Weiss-Wendt, ‘Building Hitler’s “New Europe”: Ethnography and Racial Research in Nazi-Occupied Estonia’, in *Racial Science in Hitler’s New Europe, 1938-1945*, edited by Anton Weiss-Wendt and Rory Yeomans (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 302-303, 311.

⁷⁷ Kylin, 132-133.

⁷⁸ Lynöe, 21; also see Alberto Spektorowski and Liza Ireni-Saban, ‘From “Race Hygiene” to “National-Productivist Hygiene”’, *Journal of Political Ideologies* 16.2 (2011): 181.

Chapter II

ESTONIAN NATIONALIST CLUB AND *ERK MAGAZINE*

This chapter reconstructs the ERK's dramatic rise in the early thirties through media reportage. From its inception, the ultranationalist organisation exhibited strong state organicist, anti-Leftist, anti-democratic, and anti-German outlook. The history of the ERK's first two years is followed by a brief account of *ERK Magazine*'s editors and missions. Finally, I will analyse the ERK Union's manifesto, their elitist version of eugenics, their attacks on national minorities, and their demands' fulfilment under Konstantin Päts's authoritarian regime.

1.1 The ERK's Scandalous Rise

Founded by Jüri Uluots, Juhan Lang, Elmar Kiipus, Eduard Roos, Valter Nõges, Ernst Ein and Edgar Kant, the Tartu-based Estonian Nationalist Club was registered on 11 April 1931.¹ The ERK nevertheless remained rather obscure until November 1931, when it received increasing media coverage over its sharp criticism of a literary magazine's ideological position. The affair quickly developed into a public relations disaster. The leadership was forced to adjust its strategy to influence public opinion. It was perhaps at this point that the ERK realised the importance to run its own publication as the organ of ultranationalist views.

In early November 1931, *Päevaleht* first broke the story of the ERK's newfound passion for opposing the "red expressions and anti-state tendency" in the leading literary magazine *Looming*, published by the Estonian Writers' Union. Already in the beginning of October, ERK members found in a meeting that *Looming* had been edited under an excess of 'left-wing

¹ ERA.14.11.59, pp. 1, 10.

spirit', reducing it to a 'well-known propaganda tool'. The ERK argued that such unbecoming magazine should be stripped of its state funding. The same meeting also elected a three-man commission to draft an open letter to explain ERK's stance on *Looming's* ideological deviance.²

The ERK open letter, juxtaposed with a response from *Looming's* chief editor, appeared in *Postimees* in a week. The letter complained about *Looming's* increasingly 'foreign, narrow and uniform' ideological direction and deteriorating literary quality. It criticised *Looming* for going against the *Zeitgeist* of an intensifying sense of national belonging. The editorial ideological direction must be immediately amended, the letter demanded, and all works hindering the state's existence and the nation's development should be denied any place in *Looming*.³ Essentially, the ERK was disturbed by *Looming's* insufficient patriotism and excessive internationalism.⁴ Paradoxically, while the ERK protested that *Looming* only published works expressing leftist worldview, it upheld nationalism and patriotism as the unquestionable measurement of literary quality.

The ERK's attack was targeted at the new chief editor, Johannes Semper, who would remain in his position until 1940. Indeed, Semper had a socialist history as a member of the Estonian Socialist-Revolutionary Party's Central Committee, and he would come to enjoy top positions in Soviet Estonia.⁵ In refuting the ERK's accusation, however, Semper cleverly invoked the image of *Looming* as a 'parliament of writers' that gave voice to both right-wing and left-wing expressions, a democratic space discriminating only literary merits instead of

² 'Aktsoon "Loomingu" senise kursi vastu', *Päevaleht*, 5 November 1931.

³ 'Arwustawad sõnad "Loomingu" üle', *Postimees*, 10 November 1931.

⁴ 'Rahwuslaste klubi protesteerib „Loomingu" vastu'. *Esmaspäev: piltidega nädalleht*, 9 November 1931.

⁵ 'Semper, Johannes', *Eesti Entsüklopeedia*, accessed 1 May 2017, http://entsyklopeedia.ee/artikkel/semper_johannes3v.

political opinions. To illustrate, he listed the patriotic works published recently in *Looming*, emphasising that even those works, supposedly unpatriotic and overtly leftist for the ERK, received positive evaluation in right-wing journalism.⁶ Semper's comparison of the literary magazine to the writers' parliament, amid growing preoccupation to create a strong executive to counter-balance the *Riigikogu*, reflected his liberal democratic conviction in pluralistic politics as a positive characteristic of the current Estonian constitutional arrangement.⁷ For *Looming* and Semper's fellow writers, above all, the parliament analogy distinguished his inclusive vision from the ERK's demand to subject literature in the service of the nation-state.

The ERK's radical stance on fictional literature's nationalistic mission soon backfired. On the same day, *Sõnumed* and *Sakala* used the front page to denounce the 'fascistic' ERK. *Sõnumed* contextualised the ERK by the rise of unsettling fascist movements in neighbouring Finland, Latvia and Germany. Assertive nationalistic politics, according to the article, should never be an end in itself. It prophetically claimed: 'Nationalism is indeed a pretty word; it's lofty and patriotic. But if nationalism is set as the only objective, then very soon, this word can take on ill-sounding meanings'. The ERK's criticism of *Looming*, much as Poland's anti-Semitic pogroms and Tsarist Russian chauvinism, was the product of such problematic nationalism.⁸

Sensationally printing 'fascism', 'anti-democratic' and 'extreme right-wing' in large font to characterise the ERK, *Sakala* gave the reader an intimate account of a recent invite-only conference of ERK leaders with local nationalist organisations in Tartu. It exposed the ERK's internal strifes between the radicals and the moderates. Several ERK members were

⁶ 'Arwustawad sõnad "Loomingu" üle'.

⁷ For an overview of the debates on constitutional amendment in 1931 and leftist opposition, see Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia*, 33-35.

⁸ 'ERK ja ARK', *Sõnumed*, 17 November 1931.

reportedly criticised as ‘too liberal and democratic’, and those known to be against the current ERK political designs were not even invited to the conference. This conference allegedly expressed anti-democratic ideas and discontent with ‘socialist-dominated democratic polity’, and criticised several prominent politicians, including the incumbent *Riigivanem* Konstantin Päts, his predecessor Otto August Strandman, and Johan Laidoner. According to this report, the ERK also intended to form a new political party to participate in the upcoming *Riigikogu* election in 1932. The ERK would like to take the Italian Fascist form of government as the role model for Estonia.⁹

In deep public relations crisis, the ERK leadership swiftly opted for more transparency. An open debate, titled ‘Nationalism and Literature’, would be held in the beginning of December as part of the ERK campaign against *Looming*. The proposition featured Johannes Aavik, a renowned philologist and ‘one of the more senior ERK leaders’, while Karl Ast-Rumor, a Socialist parliamentarian and writer, stood as his chief opponent.¹⁰ Next, the ERK leadership had to tackle the recent ‘false rumours’ circulating in newspapers. Journalists were soon invited over to hear the ERK leaders talk about the organisation’s purposes and goals. First of all, ERK denied any intention to start a political party. Though labelled as a fascist movement, the ERK insisted that it would fight ‘all foreign propaganda’ and uncurbed adoption of influences and ideas, be they Marxist or fascist, to ‘enable our unique and independent national development’.¹¹ To diffuse accusations of the ERK’s fascistic or chauvinistic nature, the leadership chose to represent it solely as an intellectual and patriotic club.

⁹ ‘Fashism organiseerub Eestis’, *Sakala*, 17 November 1931.

¹⁰ ‘Kaks suurt vaidluskoosolekut. Sõda ja rahvuslus termideks. Referentideks Laidoner, Ast, Aavik, Johanson j.t.’, *Sõnumed*, 18 November 1931.

¹¹ ‘Mis on Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi?’, *Postimees*, 23 November 1931.

The ERK despised empty words—their job was to offer well-researched solutions. Besides the central organ of power, *põhikogu* (council), the ERK established three departments—general politics, cultural politics, and economic politics—to work out political proposals. Chaired by Jüri Uluots, Artur Luha, and Eduard Poom respectively, these departments would present current affairs and their stances or proposals to the members, before having their views published in newspapers.¹² In fact, during the past few months of its existence, several ERK members' opinion pieces had been published under the ERK signature in *Postimees*.¹³ While newspapers generally reported unfavourably of the ERK at this point, *Postimees* was willing to provide the ERK with a platform to circulate their ideas. *Postimees*'s ERK sympathy might derive from personal connections. Its chief editor, Jaan Tõnisson, was the father of an ERK member, Ilmar Tõnisson.¹⁴

Eager to prove its respectability, the ERK stressed prominent figures among their ranks. The list included the University of Tartu's Rector, Johan Kõpp; Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Kaarel Parts; Supreme Court Justice, Timotheus Grünthal; and archaeologist Harri Moora. Meanwhile, the ultranationalist club also hastened to emphasise the heterogeneous composition of their membership: 'scientists, teachers, industrialists, businessmen, writers, artists, university students, workers, etc.'.¹⁵ Such portrayal of inclusiveness was hardly

¹² Ibid.

¹³ See, for example, Eduard Poom, 'Rahvuslikust majandusest', *Postimees*, 6 September 1931; Juhan Aul, 'Mõnda H. Reimani "Eestlaste rassilisest koostisest"', *Postimees*, 13 June 1931.

¹⁴ Ilmar Tõnisson signed a *Postimees* opinion piece, which appeared on the same date as 'Mis on Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi', as by 'ERK and ARK'. See Ilmar Tõnisson, 'Rahvuslikud suunitlused', *Postimees*, 23 November 1931. The ARK (*Akadeemiline Rahvuslik Kultuuriühing*), where Tõnisson occupied leadership positions, cooperated with the ERK. Ilmar Tõnisson also declared the ARK to stand in solidarity with the ERK. See 'Mis on Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi', and Grete Rohi, *Ilmar Hans Tõnisson (1911-1939) ning tema rahvuskultuurilised ja poliitilised vaated* (master's thesis, University of Tartu, 2013), 30, 60-61.

¹⁵ 'Mis on Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi?'

convincing, as intellectuals remained over-represented among ERK members. An earlier article presented the elitist-minded organisation more faithfully, reporting that the ERK comprised of ‘nearly 100 well-known Tartu-based intellectuals as members’.¹⁶ Most important, the ERK’s elitist composition and outlook projected a reassuring air of respectability to fend off negative associations of radical thugs and fanatics, while adding weight to their voices and opinions on current affairs.

At the same time, the ERK’s highest echelon was suspected of extremism. Ernst Ein, the president and a founder of the nationalist club, was accused of—despite his resolute denial—fascist sympathies.¹⁷ Indisputable, however, was his Italian connection. After graduating from the University of Tartu, he received scholarship to study at the University of Rome’s Roman Law Institute from 1925 to 1928, and travelled to Rome for short research stay in 1930 and 1931.¹⁸ As the first Estonian ever to specialise in Roman law, he was also known to popularise the Italian Fascist form of government in his academic writings and speeches.¹⁹ He did not hesitate to cite Mussolini’s definition of the nation in his nationalistic writings.²⁰ Later, in July 1934, he would accept the proposal to create a local committee for the Fascist initiative ‘Action Committees for the Universality of Rome’ from a visiting Italian parliamentarian, Alessandro Pavolini, the future minister of propaganda under Mussolini.²¹

¹⁶ ‘Aktsoon “Loomingu” senise kursi vastu’.

¹⁷ ‘Mis on Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi?’.

¹⁸ ‘Ernst Ein – õigusteaduse doktor’, *Postimees*, 29 November 1932.

¹⁹ ‘Kaasomanikkude hagit’, *Postimees*, 9 November 1931; ‘Uueks kohtu-siseministriks dr. E. Ein’, *Maa Hääl: maarahva ajaleht*, 7 October 1933.

²⁰ Ernst Ein, ‘Mõtteid rahvuslikust poliitikast’, *ERK 2* (1933): 31; Karjahärm and Sirk, 277.

²¹ ‘Itaalia parlamendiliige Tartus’, *Päevaleht*, 21 July 1934; ‘Itaalia teadusemees Tartus’, *Sakala*, 23 July 1934. For *Comitati d’Azione per l’Universalità di Roma*, see Aristotle Kallis, ‘From CAUR to EUR: Italian Fascism, the “Myth of Rome” and the Pursuit of International Primacy’, *Patterns of Prejudice* 50.4-5 (2016): 359-377.

The accusations against Ein seemed more than mere libels.

The ERK's ultranationalist stance brought them into conflicts with national minorities, especially the once dominating Baltic Germans. It strongly criticised the newly-opened 'private academy', Luther Academy of German Theology and Philosophy. Located near the University of Tartu, hailed as the Estonian 'national university', the German-language Luther Academy sparked an outcry against such a symbolic provocation by the Baltic German minority.²² The ERK protested that minorities in Estonia were 'too spoilt' and enjoyed 'more rights than Estonian citizens'. They would submit a petition to the *Riigikogu*, calling for 'abolishing cultural self-government law in the current form', or at least subjecting it to further reviews.²³ The ERK thus conceptualised rights protection as a zero-sum game between two clear-cut communities, Estonian and (Baltic) German, a conceptualisation probably reinforced by the ERK's tendency to approach nation as a biologically defined entity. ERK's 'national perspective', for example, was based on 'our natural, *racial*, and historical preconditions and geographical situation' (my emphasis).²⁴ Deemed fundamentally different from Estonians, even in the biological sense, national minorities' Othering was inevitable.

When the ERK made its debut under spotlight in November 1931, the organisation suffered a massive public relations defeat. The nationalist club picked a hard fight to start. Subjecting even fictional works to nationalist ideological evaluations not only smacked of the 'Tsarist chauvinism' and the notorious censorship, but demonstrated the intolerance so

²² 'Eraakadeemia Tartu ülikooli kõrwale!', *Postimees*, 17 September 1931.

²³ 'Aktsoon "Loomingu" senise kursi vastu'. For how Baltic German cultural self-autonomy came under increasing pressure from Estonian nationalists and the Estonian state, see David J. Smith, 'Estonia: A Model for Inter-War Europe?', *Ethnopolitics* 15.1 (2016): 98-99.

²⁴ 'Mis on Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi?'.

alarmingly seen in fascist movements and authoritarian governments in Estonia's neighbours. Only several months into its existence, the secretive nationalist club was blighted by factional strives and controversial speeches, embarrassingly exposed by undercover journalists—or more likely, dissidents from inside. Lacking a platform to circulate their opinions, the ERK was at the mercy of established newspapers. This crisis might have added impetus to issue the ERK's own publication.

1.2 Constitutional Amendment and the ERK in 1932

The ERK continued to seek greater involvement in public life in 1932. Ernst Ein and Edgar Kant, for example, held public debate and presentation respectively.²⁵ On the Independence Day (24th February), the ERK worked with the Student Union and the Academic National Cultural Association (*Akadeemiline Rahvuslik Kultuuriühing*, ARK) to organise 'national-cultural propaganda meetings' all over Estonia. Over 350 speakers reportedly would travel from Tartu and Tallinn to participate.²⁶ The Estonian government even decided to sponsor the speakers' travel cost by offering free train ride.²⁷ Ilmar Tõnisson, who was an ARK spokesperson and executive board member, as well as an outspoken ERK member, was elected the chief organiser of the event. Meanwhile, ERK leaders, Ein and Artur Luha, occupied key positions. They oversaw, respectively, pre-meetings for speakers on the issues of nationalism and culture.²⁸ The patriotic national holiday offered a wonderful occasion for ERK to go mainstream with their radical nationalism. Positive publicity, official

²⁵ 'Kõnesid ja koosolekuid', *Postimees*, 20 November 1932; 'Kõnesid ja koosolekuid', *Postimees*, 15 October 1932; 'Rahvuslaste klubi kõneõhtu', *Sõnumed*, 13 December 1932.

²⁶ '350 kõnelejat rahvuspropaganda koosolekutel', *Päevaleht*, 6 February 1932.

²⁷ 'Ülemaaline propaganda-lend 24. veebr.', *Üliõpilasleht* 1 (1932): 20.

²⁸ Rohi, 29-30.

endorsement, and cooperation with well-established student bodies all testified and contributed to the improvement of the ERK's respectability. For a new organisation recently accused of fascistic sympathies, this was a huge step forward.

The same year also saw the growing preoccupation with constitutional amendment to establish a strong presidency in Estonia. Not surprisingly, the ERK enthusiastically joined the debate that would eventually see three constitutional referenda from 1932 to 1933.²⁹ One of the ERK founders, Valter Nõges, signed his name and the ERK acronym on two opinion pieces for *Postimees* on the issue of constitutional amendment.³⁰ Well-versed on the constitutional subject, he published a 171-page work titled *Proposals for Amending the 1920 Constitution of the Republic of Estonia*. His treatise marked the first publication of the *Estonian Nationalist Club Publishing Series*, whose self-declared mission was to handle 'pressing issues in our public life'.³¹ On top of Nõges's outspoken manner and expertise on this matter, the treatise's symbolic importance as the pioneer of the ERK publishing enterprise indicated a high degree of ERK endorsement of *Proposals*. But most importantly, the ERK demonstrated the high ambition, by launching its publishing wing, to secure a foothold in the cultural-political space of Estonia.

The ERK message came with the customary disclaimer: 'This series does not present the stance accepted at ERK meetings, but only designed to highlight questions that demand a collective stance and more thorough assessment'.³² Indeed, the ERK seemed to lack a unified

²⁹ For the calls for establishing a strong presidency and constitutional referenda, see Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia*, 28, 32-48.

³⁰ See Valter Nõges, 'Põhiseaduse muutmise teostamisaeg', *Postimees*, 3 January 1932; Valter Nõges, 'Põhiseaduse komisjon loogu ühisrinne!', *Postimees*, 11 December 1932.

³¹ See 'Eriteos põhiseaduse muutmise kohta', *Postimees*, 14 January 1932; Valter Nõges, *Ettepanekuid Eesti Vabariigi 1920. A. põhiseaduse muutumiseks* (Tartu: E. Roos, 1932): 166.

³² *Ibid.*, 166.

position at this point. Jüri Uluots, heading the ERK general politics department, represented the Farmers' Assemblies and chaired the short-lived *Riigikogu* constitutional amendment committee.³³ Despite his party's long-term enthusiasm for creating a strong executive, Uluots presented his bill to the *Riigikogu* in mid-March with remarkable lack of enthusiasm.³⁴

Later, after the first constitutional amendment referendum failed by a small margin, the new *Riigikogu* created a second constitutional amendment committee in November 1932.³⁵ With the support of Tõnisson's National Centre Party, the ERK petitioned the *Riigikogu* to broaden the public support, asking for participation in the drafting of the constitutional amendment bill. Dismissing the draft submitted by the Veteran's League, a radical right organisation which enjoyed stronger popular base, as 'hostile to democracy', the ERK sought to distinguish itself by stressing its legalistic approach and commitment to parliamentary democracy. Meanwhile, upholding a 'common front' for constitutional amendment, the ERK recognised the importance to include the Veteran's League's in the process to achieve their goal.³⁶

The *Riigikogu* constitutional amendment committee, therefore, invited the ERK and the Veterans' League over in mid-December to prepare the bill for the first reading. Curiously, it was not Nõges, who published a monograph on the matter, but Ein and Leo Sepp, who represented the ERK. They wanted the Estonian constitution to reflect ERK's nationalistic

³³ The ERK had a leadership reshuffle in early March, when Ein took over the former position of Uluots and Artur Luha was elected the new ERK president. See 'ERK'i peakoosolek', *Päevaleht*, 6 March 1932. The drafting and deliberation of the Uluots bill, however, started informally already in July 1931. See Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia*, 35.

³⁴ See *ibid.*, 35-36. Created in late January 1932, the committee only lasted a few months, due to the imminent parliamentary election in May.

³⁵ Both committees were created in response to constant pressure from the Veterans' League. See *ibid.*, 37-38, 41-43.

³⁶ See Nõges, 'Põhiseaduse komisjon loogu ühisrinne!'

principles. Ein proposed to add clauses to existing paragraphs on the freedoms of association, possession, and economy. These freedoms should be subjected to the overall public interest and responsive to the nationalistic cause. He also envisioned a place in the constitution for corporatist organisations governing national economy and cultural life. The additional clause which Ein suggested for Article 18 on the freedom of association makes a telling example. Public profession-based corporatist institutions (*avalik-õiguslik kutseesinduslik*), as well as educational and cultural institutions, according to Ein, had the mission to ‘cultivate their members’ Estonian state-oriented (*riiklik*) views, advance national economy, and develop national culture’.³⁷ While *riiklik* stresses national minorities’ loyalty to the Estonian nation state, national (*rahvuslik*) narrows the parameter to ethnic Estonians’ culture and economy. Similar calls would soon appear in ERK Magazine and the ERK Union’s manifesto.

Nevertheless, the committee did not accept the ERK’s proposals. Understandably, the ERK chose to give its members a free vote for the referendum on 10-12 June 1933.³⁸ The *Riigikogu* constitutional amendment bill suffered a crushing defeat in the referendum by 32.7% to 67.3%. It was another huge blow to the *Riigikogu*’s authority, inviting fresh accusations of the ‘petty party politics’ of Estonia.³⁹

1.3 Edgar Kant, Eugenics, the Birth of *ERK Magazine*

The ERK issued the first issue of their monthly, *ERK Magazine of General, Economic, and Cultural Politics* (*ERK: üld-, majandus- ja kultuurpoliitiline ajakiri*), in late January 1933. Edgar Kant, an ERK founding member, served as the founding editor-in chief (1933-

³⁷ ‘Uued ettepanekud põhiseaduse kohta’, *Waba Maa*, 15 December 1932.

³⁸ ‘Eesti Rahvuslik Klubi jätab oma liikmetele wabad käed’, *Päewaleht*, 11 June 1933.

³⁹ Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia*, 43.

34), and would continue in various editorial positions until the end of 1937. The initial editorial board consisted of outspoken ERK founders such as Ein and Nõges, but also Eduard Poom, Eduard Roos, Leo Sepp, Harald Tammer, and Eduard Sahkenberg (Enn Salurand). Sahkenberg assumed the role of editorial chief in 1935, and Järvo Tandre (Rudolf Stockeby-Tandre) took over his responsibility in 1936. The last editorial chief, Kaarel Särgava (Karl Peterson), carried on from 1938 until 1940, when the last *ERK Magazine* issue appeared on 11 June 1940, only few days before the Soviet annexation of Estonia. Both Tandre and Särgava ran for the lower chamber election for the Popular Front for the Implementation of the Constitution (*Põhiseaduse elluviimise rahvarinne*), the only officially sanctioned political party in the Era of Silence.⁴⁰ Their editorial practice, therefore, might reflect their close association with Päts's authoritarian regime.

ERK Magazine emphasised its ambition as a 'nationalistic platform' to deal with political, social, economic, and cultural issues.⁴¹ Kant described nationalism as a 'dynamic force', fluctuating in accordance with the nation's vitality. It must be upheld as the proud expression of the nation state as a living being with the mission to contribute to human culture.⁴² Unfortunately, Estonia lacked a nationalist platform to deal with contemporary issues, according to Kant, in a manner without enticement as those 'one-dimensional propaganda assault of outdated social doctrine, organised from an internationalist stance and utilitarian for clique interest'. Hence *ERK Magazine* would address this need.⁴³ Nationalistic and anti-Leftist, *EKR Magazine* also marketed itself as the national magazine 'independent of

⁴⁰ See 'Täna, keskpäevaks 105 kandidaati', *Päewaleht*, 26 January 1938; 'Seni 202 kandidaati', *Päewaleht*, 27 January 1938.

⁴¹ See *ERK* 1 (1933): 27.

⁴² Edgar Kant, 'Lähteks', *ERK* 1 (1933): 1-2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 5.

political parties'.⁴⁴ It aimed to provide timely analyses in the national interest, not as a partisan of party politics.

Kant's poetical language, evidently borrowed from his favourite organic analogies in anthropogeographic studies, reflected his biological conception of the nation.⁴⁵ Not surprisingly, eugenics was high on the agenda for the ERK and the *ERK Magazine*. The ERK constitution specifically banned alcohol consumption within its spatial confinement and during its activities, reflecting the temperance movement's crusade against the source of the Estonians' biological degeneration.⁴⁶ Edgar Kant, in his prologue for the first issue of the *ERK Magazine*, outlined a list of issues to be addressed by the nationalist club and their publication. Among them was Estonia's small population, which required 'special emphasis on quality'. To increase the national quality, therefore, it was imperative to implement a process of 'effective and diligent social selection'. He further invoked the imagery of a sieve, stressing the state's function in building a 'competitive' society.⁴⁷ Meanwhile, echoing early twentieth-century Estonian thinkers, he situated eugenics among various state-directed social selection processes that were not merely biological but also educational. This trend of thinking also manifested itself in the ERK Union's manifesto, which placed eugenics measures among their principles for cultural politics. Here, eugenics became more explicitly defined as the 'improvement of Estonians' physical and racial value', including promoting sports and healthcare measures, as well as combatting particularly damaging transmittable

⁴⁴ 'Kas olete juba lugenud erakondadest olenematut rahvuslikku ajakirja „ERK“?', *Päewaleht*, 2 April 1933.

⁴⁵ For his organic analogies, see Anne Buttimer, 'Edgar Kant, 1902-1978', *Geographers: Biobibliographical Studies* 11 (1987): 74.

⁴⁶ ERA.2698.1.13, p.3.

⁴⁷ Kant, 5.

diseases for the Estonian nation.⁴⁸ Instead of the small nation's numerical disadvantage, the ERK intellectuals, perhaps influenced by their elitist outlook, seemed to share a eugenic vision that particularly emphasised the Estonian biological quality.

In particular, sports pointed a way out of biological determinism and offered the promise of national regeneration.⁴⁹ The ERK stated clearly in the constitution the goal to cultivate its members' 'physical development', while listing 'hiking' and 'sports events' among the nationalist club's activities.⁵⁰ This endorsement of physical culture stemmed from its emphasis on sports to combat urban degeneration and the falling male vitality.⁵¹ Such eugenic concern the urgent need to combat urban degenerative effects not only echoed Tõnisson's anxiety before World War I, but also manifested in Juhan Vilms's recommendation to go for sports, and Juhan Aul's 1940 study of the urban degenerative effects on urban children.⁵² Aul's planned but unwritten chapter for the 1935 ERK yearbook, titled 'On Estonians' Physical Prowess', would have made explicit links between anthropometric data and sport achievements.⁵³ Promoting sports and improving social competitiveness as well as physical and racial values, therefore, reflect the eugenic thinking of the ERK and *ERK Magazine*.

⁴⁸ 'Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubide Põhimõtteid', *ERK* 1.9-10 (1933): 221.

⁴⁹ For the French connection between social hygiene, degeneration fear, and sports, see Joan Tumblety, *Remaking the Male Body: Masculinity and the Uses of Physical Culture in Interwar and Vichy France* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012): 44-56. For the American claim to racial superiority through sports and the perfect body, see Jaqueline Reich, "'The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man": Charles Atlas, Physical Culture, and the Inscription of American Masculinity', *Men and Masculinities* 12.4 (2010): 457-458.

⁵⁰ ERA.3587.1.38, pp. 6-7.

⁵¹ See Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Building a British Superman: Physical Culture in Interwar Britain', *Journal of Contemporary History* 41.4 (2006): 598-599.

⁵² Kalling and Heapost, 98-99; Juhan Vilms, *Erakondadeta ühiskonna poole: Eesti kui korporatiivne riik* (Tallinn: Vaba Maa, 1933), 86-87.

⁵³ ERA.2698.1.7, p. 45.

1.4 The ERK Union Manifesto

Based on the same constitution of the ERK's, other major towns in Estonia started to set up their own nationalist club, including Tallinn, Narva, Petseri, Pärnu, Haapsalu, and Rakvere.⁵⁴ The first among them, the Tallinn ERK, was founded by Sahkenberg along with Theodor Enders and Paul Pommer, on 3 October 1931.⁵⁵ In the summer of 1933, Kant, Nõges, and Roos registered the Tallinn-based Union of Estonian Nationalist Clubs (*Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubide Liit*; henceforth ERK Union), whose constitution opens with the aim to unit ERKs across the country.⁵⁶ The first ERK Union Congress took place in 19 November 1933 in Tallinn. Karl Peterson and Sahkenberg, both based in Tallinn, were elected respectively as the Union's president and the secretary. Aleksander Eller, the Tartu ERK *põhikogu* chairman, was elected the vice president.⁵⁷ As the all-Estonian ERK executive centre shifted to the capital Tallinn, so did *ERK Magazine*. As the ERK Union Congress adopted *ERK Magazine* as their official organ, the ERK Union, instead of the ERK, was named as the publisher in 1934. Nevertheless, the contact address remained in Tartu, while Kant continued to serve as the editor-in-chief.⁵⁸ Starting from 1935, however, the Tallinn ERK and Sahkenberg took over the publishing responsibility, and the contact address changed to Tallinn as well.⁵⁹ Shifting the centre away from the university town could also indicate a broader popular base than merely students and academics. Still, the ERK Union was imagined as primarily for intellectuals. At the first Union Congress, a speaker reportedly congratulated

⁵⁴ ERA.14.11.89; ERA.14.11.78; ERA.14.11.79; ERA.14.11.76; ERA.14.11.60 ; ERA.14.11.84.

⁵⁵ ERA.14.11.89, pp. 1, 6.

⁵⁶ ERA.14.11.60, pp. 1-2, 5.

⁵⁷ 'ERK-ide põhimõtted kinnitati', *Postimees*, 21 November 1933.

⁵⁸ Compare *ERK* 9-10 (1933): 242, and *ERK* 1 (1934): 20.

⁵⁹ See the announcement in *ERK* 11-12 (1934): 174.

the Union for bringing a significant part of nationalistic intellectuals together. It was on this basis, he urged, that ERK Union members could take Estonian nationalism's development forward and defy obstructive foreign influence.⁶⁰ Therefore, he focussed almost exclusively on the intellectuals as the driving force of Estonian nationalism. In the 1930s, when mass mobilisation like the Veteran's League ruled the day, this statement sounded strangely anachronistic, rather reminiscent of the national awakening in late nineteenth century.

At the 1933 Congress, the ERK Union also adopted a six-page manifesto, outlining the principles that the Union must strive to achieve. An organisation 'independent of political currents and groups', the Union could best speak for the 'general interest'. Their core belief was the Estonian nation—the Estonian nation as 'living flora and fauna (*kestev elustik*)' and 'cultural unit', corresponding to the constitutions of the Tallinn and Tartu ERKs.⁶¹ The biological metaphor of animals and plants energised the conventional definition of nation as a 'cultural unit'. As a biological entity, the nation's 'moral, physical, and numerical productivity and virtues' must be enhanced in order to 'fulfil the Estonian nation's higher aims', and to serve as the 'bearer of Estonian nationalism'.⁶² In turn, Estonian nationalism must be guarded by its 'political form', the Estonian nation state. Thus, the manifesto dictates that 'any foreign, hindering, or hostile and negative political current against Estonian nationalism must be eliminated by state power'.⁶³ Such was the ERK Union's holy trinity of nation, the nation state, and nationalism, mutually dependent and empowering, yet paradoxically in dire need of artificial intervention to keep it flourish and alive.

⁶⁰ 'ERK-ide põhimõtted kinnitati'.

⁶¹ ERA.3587.1.38, p.6; ERA.14.11.59, p. 3.

⁶² 'Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubide Põhimõtteid', 221.

⁶³ Ibid., 223.

In the nationalists' eyes, however, the nation state failed to live up to its historical mission to advance the Estonian nation's self-realisation. Consequently, calls for patriotic education occupied a central place in their manifesto. From family to education at every level, the highest responsibility for the future generation's upbringing was to ensure that they would become 'active bearers of Estonian nationalism' and 'healthy personalities'. All means of media, libraries and societies should contribute to the cultivation of patriotism. A corporatist cultural organisation, directed by 'experts and national-minded individuals', should be set up to direct the nation's cultural life, to develop a culture 'responsive to Estonian particularity and mentality' based on 'synthetic way of thinking and subjective development for the benefit of Estonian nationalism', and naturally, for the general interest.⁶⁴

The ERK Union's obsession with cultivating the people's 'true cultural national awareness and will to achieve Estonian nationalism's ideals' reflected the real anxiety that the society operated in a fashion far from their ideal.⁶⁵ The campaign to 'nationalise' names, exchanging foreign-sounding (predominantly German) variants for Estonian substitutes, only elicited lukewarm support. Between 1920 and 1934, only 820 applicants wished to estonianise their surnames. Such indifference was a sharp contrast to the Finnish public's enthusiastic support of a similar finnicisation campaign of Swedish names.⁶⁶ The Estonian flag and its colours, so much the pride in Estonia today, were also reportedly not as widely used and displayed.⁶⁷ It would have to wait until Päts abolished the parliamentary democracy for the

⁶⁴ Ibid., 219-220.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 220.

⁶⁶ V. Jõgi, '15 aastat perekonnanimede muutmist', *ERK* 7-8 (1935): 158; Toivo U. Raun, 'The Movement to Estonianize Surnames in Interwar Estonia', *Acta Historica Tallinnensia* 18 (2012): 99-101.

⁶⁷ Peeter Tammisto, 'Commemoration of Independence Day in the Republic of Estonia 1919-1940', *Ajalooline Ajakiri* 1-2 (2015): 94-95.

ERK's patriotic programme to be endorsed by the autocrat. Päts's State Propaganda Office would become involved in the politics of names, mobilising people to ditch foreign names for Estonian ones. Voluntarily or coerced by social pressure, around 200,000 Estonians took on a new name in the second half of the 1930s.⁶⁸ The State Propaganda Office, policing and standardising the right way to commemorate national holidays, also promoted successfully the display of the national flag as a patriotic expression.⁶⁹ However, at the first congress of the ERK Union in 1933, the nationalists must have seen plenty of alarming signs of the underdeveloped national awareness entrenched in the Estonian society. How to 'nationalise' the Estonian public, therefore, loomed large in the ERK Union manifesto.

Amid the global economic crisis, the Union manifesto urged many state intervention measures. The economic section of the ERK manifesto largely echoes Leo Sepp's three-part essay 'The Crisis of Capitalism' in *ERK Magazine*.⁷⁰ An ERK member and *ERK Magazine* editor, Sepp served as the finance minister (1924-27) and various influential posts concerning economy in government, including the future minister of economy (1938-1940) under the Päts regime. Sceptical of free market and liberal economic principles, Sepp believed in a syndicate system of industrial production—in the Estonian context, namely, a corporatist economy. A state-regulated economy, coupled with functioning private enterprises, therefore, had been his economic ideals for years.⁷¹

But the 'national economy' demanded by the ERK Union meant more than just a

⁶⁸ Raun, 'Estonianize Surnames', 102-105.

⁶⁹ Tammisto, 94, 110, 116.

⁷⁰ See Leo Sepp, 'Kapitalismi kriis', *ERK* 1 (1933): 22-26; Leo Sepp, 'Kapitalismi kriis II', *ERK* 2 (1933): 49-52; and Leo Sepp, 'Kapitalismi kriis III', *ERK* 3 (1933): 77-84.

⁷¹ Klesment, 123-127. For the blurry boundaries between corporations and syndicates in the Estonian context, see Anu Mai Kõll and Jaak Valge, *Economic Nationalism and Industrial Growth: State and Industry in Estonia 1934-39* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1998): 56-59.

solution for the ongoing economic crisis; it envisioned a bigger role for ethnic Estonians too. When the manifesto implies that only big enterprises without healthy market competition required state intervention and nationalisation, it clearly had in mind the mainly Baltic German-owned industries.⁷² When the manifesto asks the state to ensure that ‘in enterprises directed by non-Estonians’, ethnic Estonians should be allowed ‘work and service in the right ratio’ according to the ethnic makeup of Estonia.⁷³ Given that close to 90% of the interwar Estonian population was ethnic Estonian, it leaves no doubt to who would benefit the most.

Like the ERK Union’s nationalist policies regarding cultural and educational affairs, economic nationalism was to be realised under the Päts authoritarian regime. On the one hand, in the name of the nation’s common interest, the state came to direct the economy and fight against harmful competition analogous to divisive party politics—a canker that threatened the very unity of the nation. Foreign trade, price system, and state investment in private sectors all became subjected to state intervention. Estonia gradually modelled its economy on that of Italy and Germany.⁷⁴ On the other hand, the nationalist regime issued decrees that promoted ethnic Estonians’ place in the economy at the expenses of ‘foreigners’. Bookkeeping must be done in the Estonian language, and Estonian-speaking citizens must make up the majority of any company’s board members.⁷⁵ Defying the continual Baltic German and Jewish domination of industries, nationalising the economy would help Estonians to become the true master of the house.

⁷² ‘Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubide Põhimõtteid’, 222.

⁷³ Ibid., 223.

⁷⁴ Anu Mai Kõll, ‘Economy and Ethnicity in the Hands of the State: Economic Change and the National Question in Twentieth-Century Estonia’, in *Economic Change and the National Question in Twentieth-Century Europe*, edited by Alice Teichova, Herbert Matis, and Jaroslav Pátek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 366-367.

⁷⁵ Kõll and Valge, 55.

The ERK Union regarded national minorities with great suspicion, especially the two largest minorities, ethnic Germans (1.5%) and Russians (8.2%).⁷⁶ Historical experiences under Baltic German and Imperial Russia rules made it a commonplace fear that Germany's and the Soviet Union's potential territorial ambition over tiny Estonia. Newspapers, for examples, often humorously presented the (Soviet) Russian and German transgressions in caricatures.⁷⁷ The Russian and German minorities, therefore, were seen by the Estonian public as potential 'fifth column' undermining the Estonian nation state. In this context, the ERK Union demanded 'complete loyalty' from 'foreign peoples' to the Estonian nation state as the precondition for the national minorities' 'cultural self-determination'.⁷⁸ Even though the language employed here is more moderate than the Tartu ERK's attack on German cultural autonomy in late 1931, it does not provide any tool to assess if 'complete loyalty' is achieved. Rather, the minorities would be put on a hamster wheel, constantly striving for 'complete loyalty' with no end in sight.

In addition, the ERK subtly demoted the existing cultural autonomy with a more vague, non-legal reference of 'cultural self-determination'. Such semantic manoeuvre foreshadowed the new 1938 Constitution under the Päts regime, in which all references to cultural autonomy became substituted by 'cultural self-administration'. Soon after Päts's coup d'état, the 'nationalising' authoritarian regime started to curb cultural autonomy, fostering resentment from the Baltic German elites and stimulating a new wave of Russian mobilisation to achieve

⁷⁶ For interwar Estonia's demographic statistics, see Raun, *Estonia*, 130-133.

⁷⁷ See Liisi Laineste, 'The Frighteningly Funny Foreigner: Caricatures of the Other in Estonian Interwar Public Discourse', in *Image of the Other: Ethnic Caricatures in the Second Half of 19th Century and First Half of 20th Century*, edited by Dagnosław Demski and Kamila Baraniecka-Olszewska (Warsaw, Polish Academy of Sciences, 2010), 100-103, 110-120.

⁷⁸ 'Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubide Põhimõtteid', 223.

cultural autonomy.⁷⁹ The small coastal Swedish minority also suffered heavily under Päts's estonianisation campaign.⁸⁰ Unfortunately, the liberal arrangement for national minorities in 1925 could not withstand the onslaught of nationalist criticism and authoritarian challenge.

As the very existence of national minorities invited suspicion, their demographic concentration on border regions with hostile neighbour became a matter of national security. The ERK Union proposed that 'the national border must be safeguarded by settling elements loyal to the nation state in border regions'.⁸¹ The 'border regions' here clearly refers to the Trans-Narva region and Petserimaa, both acquired by the Republic of Estonia from Russia proper after the War of Independence. But who were these people that could not be trusted on the border regions? In Petserimaa, the Russians outnumbered the Estonians by 2:1, but 77% among the latter were actually Seto, a small Finno-Ugric people following Orthodox Christianity.⁸² While claimed by the Estonian Republic as ethnic Estonians, the Setos suffered from zealous estonianising campaigns and colonial portrayal as savages and Russified degenerates.⁸³ Therefore, the Setos and the Russians in Petserimaa were seen as equally susceptible to Soviet Russian propaganda across the border. Internal immigration to

⁷⁹ Smith, 'A Model for Interwar Europe?', 99.

⁸⁰ See Alar Schönberg, 'On Estonian Swedes and Assimilation Campaign of the Republic of Estonia', trans. Kait Realo, in *Lives, Histories and Identities: Studies on Oral Histories, Life- and Family Stories*, edited by Tiit Jaago, Mare Kõiva and Kairika Kärnsa (Tartu: University of Tartu, 2002), accessed 15 July 2017, <https://lepo.it.da.ut.ee/~lehti/Oralhistory/1.1.Alar.htm>.

⁸¹ 'Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubide Põhimõtteid', 223.

⁸² Raun, *Estonia*, 112; Leo Reissar, *Setumaa läbi sajandite Petserimaa* (Tallinn: Kupar, 1996), 122-124.

⁸³ For a survey of the Setos in interwar Estonia from the Estonian perspective, see Indrek Jääts, 'Ethnic Identity of the Setos and the Estonian- Russian Border Dispute', *Nationalities Papers* 28.4 (2000): 654-656; for the Estonian Othering of the Setos as Russified degenerates, see Andreas Kalkun, 'Fasts and Feats in Estonian Representations of the Seto Culture', *Journal of Ethnology and Folkloristics* 8.1 (2014): 54-55, 66-67; for the interwar Seto identity construction, see Antoine Chalvin, 'La construction de l'identité des Setos (1920-1940)', *Études finno-ougriennes* 43 (2011), accessed 25 July 2017, <http://efo.revues.org/127>.

Petserimaa had resulted in the sharp decrease of the Seto percentage in the state statistics of Estonians, from 77.8% (1922) to 61.4% (1934).⁸⁴ The ERK Union, nevertheless, endorsed its implementation as a state policy for national security reasons.

It is hard to assess the extent of circulation of *ERK Magazine* and the ERK's ideas. But archival sources suggest that they were well-received by the Päts authoritarian regime. The deputy internal minister, for example, praised the ERK's nationalist ideas and ordered 1,500 copies of the ERK's *1935 Yearbook of Estonian Nationalism* to be sent to the State Propaganda Office and the Association of Estonian Compatriots Abroad (*Välis-Eesti Ühing*).⁸⁵ Furthermore, the ERK Union manifesto largely prefigured the corporatist and nationalist policy-making of the Päts authoritarian regime. During the 'Era of Silence' (1934-1940), state-directed estonianisation would claim more economic control for ethnic Estonians, and negatively impacted national minorities. In addition, eugenic thinking became a state ideology, as testified by the establishment of the Board of Population Increase and Welfare (1935), and the legislation of sterilisation (1937).⁸⁶ Corporatist bodies, as a substitute for the 'divisive' party politics, would assist the increasingly assertive nation state to achieve greater homogeneity under the unifying concept of the Estonian nation. Instead of a few enthusiasts' obsession, corporatism must have found wider resonance within and outside of the ERK. One of the founders, Ein, though well-known for his Italian connection and support for corporatist and authoritarian nation state, reportedly left the ERK already in June 1933.⁸⁷ Nevertheless,

⁸⁴ Reissar, 122-124.

⁸⁵ ERA.2698.1.6, p.22.

⁸⁶ See Kalling, 'The Application of Eugenics in Estonia', 59-61, 66-67.

⁸⁷ An ERK public announcement claiming that Ein had stepped down as the ERK's president and his long absence since was probably prompted by Ein's decision to serve in the hugely unpopular Tõnisson government as the internal and justice minister. See 'Eesti Rahvuslaste klubi ja dr. E. Ein', *Postimees*, 10 October 1933. But even until 1937, Ein still appeared the ERK members' name list. See ERA.2698.1.11, p. 18.

an extensive corporatist programme made its way into the ERK Union manifesto, and would later be realised in the Era of Silence. The dramatic rise of the ERK and its nationalist ideology suggests that the more biological, more exclusivist conception of the nation rapidly gained currency in the interwar Estonian society.

Chapter III

RACE, NATION, AND EUGENICS IN *ERK MAGAZINE*

This chapter presents an in-depth analysis of ERK Magazine and their contributors' beliefs on the Estonian racial elements, the biologized organic nation state, the threat of national minorities, and the danger of intermarriage. The first part examines Juhan Aul and his implicit endorsement of a Nordicist racial hierarchy. The second part analyses how national minorities and de-nationalisation posed biological threats to the Estonians and their nation states, while detailing nationalist historians' and eugenicists' roles in staging the counter-offensive. The third part discusses Juhan Vilms and the ERK's warning of intermarriage's impact on the organic national body.

1.1 Juhan Aul and Estonian Racial Science

Juhan Aul (1897-1994), who founded the Estonian school of anthropology, was a proud ERK member and *ERK Magazine* contributor.¹ He authored the first article sent to *Postimees* under the name of the newly-founded nationalist club in 1931. Openly declaring his affiliation with the ERK, Aul's sharp criticism of Hugo Reiman's popular monograph on Estonian racial composition sounded the trumpet of the ERK's decisive entry into robust public debates.²

Aul consciously modelled his scientific approach on Sweden's SIRB and its director Herman Lundborg's work. In 1937, he outlined the future missions for Estonian anthropology in an article in *ERK Magazine*. Above all, he called for the establishment an anthropological research centre to accommodate all the anthropometric data and photos as Estonia's racial

¹ For an excellent survey of Aul's life and work in the 30s and 40s, see Kalling and Heapost, 91-102; for Aul's collaboration with the Nazis in the 40s, see Weiss-Wendt, 'Ethnography and Racial Research in Nazi-Occupied Estonia', 296-298, 301-306.

² Juhan Aul, 'Mõnda H. Reimani "Eestlaste rassilisest koostisest"', *Postimees*, 13 June 1931.

biological archive; on this basis, the centre could aspire to become an institute of racial biology, ‘like those well-known ones in Sweden, Norway, and Germany’.³ Lundborg’s influence permeates Aul’s popular and scientific writings, not only just as a repeated cited name, but for his methodological approaches.

Most evidently, Aul followed Lundborg and the SIRB’s classification of human races: Nordic, East Baltic, light mixed types, medium dark types, dark mixed types, and dark type.⁴ His veneration of Lundborg’s classification became evident in his criticism of Reiman’s study. Rejecting Reiman’s usage of the ‘Dalia race’, he indignantly pointed out that the Dalia race only appeared briefly in the introduction to *The Racial Character of the Swedish Nation* in quotation marks—to indicate its questionable scientific veracity.⁵ In a speech organised by the University Student Temperance Union, he distinguished between the ‘depigmented’ (light) and ‘pigmented’ (dark) races. The former comprised of the Nordic and the East Baltic races, while the Alpine, the Dinaric, and the Mediterranean racial types belonged to the ‘pigmented’ group. As the Nordic and the East Baltic racial elements, according to Aul, formed the vast majority of the Estonians, he implied that Estonia rested safely among the ‘light’ nations of the world.⁶ Elsewhere, he pointed out the existence of the dark types as a threat to the nation’s racial body (*Volkskörper*).⁷ Indeed, it was precisely such implication that motivated the SIRB and Lundborg to add the light-dark spectrum into their racial classification of the

³ Juhan Aul, ‘Eesti antropoloogilisest uurimisest’, *ERK* 7-8 (1937) : 160.

⁴ Linders, F. J., and Herman Lundborg, eds., *The Racial Character of the Swedish Nation* (Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1926), 151.

⁵ Aul, ‘Mõnda H. Reimani’.

⁶ ‘Eestlased on põhja ja idabalti tõugu’, *Postimees*, 4 February 1934.

⁷ Juhan Aul, ‘Anthropologische Forschungen in Eesti’, in *Tartu Ülikooli Zooloogia-Instituudi ja -Muuseumi tööd*, vol. 19 (Tartu, 1936), 12.

Swedish (and European) population. Lundborg's SIRB project, as Ulrika Kjellman explains, was about determining 'who were truly white and who were not' among the White race.⁸ Since 'white' indicated a wide range of superior virtues and abilities, the 'truly white' Estonians should be confident about their inherent qualities and reputable position among the European nations.

In the ERK's 1935 yearbook, Aul identified the East Baltic race as the Estonians' primary racial element.⁹ As such, it was a worthy subject for further scientific studies. The East Baltic race was difficult to pinpoint, as Aul wrote in *ERK Magazine*, due to many local appearances derived from its 'polymorphic' nature. Naturally, the Estonian East Baltic race formed a special variant too, and he believes that the planned Estonian anthropometric database *Anthropologia estonica* would help to crack its mysterious nature.¹⁰ However, political situation could alter scientific emphases and results. In the interwar period, Aul presented the East Baltic-Nordic ratio in Estonian racial composition as 29.2% to 24.8%.¹¹ By 1943, however, that ratio would become 35% to 34% in his presentation to important Nazi officers at the University of Tartu. In the same speech, to further legitimise the Estonians in the Nazi's racial mindset, he stressed how the Nordic elements had been native to Estonia since the Stone Age.¹² Apart from scientific opportunism, Aul's shifting stance on the Estonian racial question indicated his recognition of the different racial values attached to the

⁸ Kjellman, 'A Whiter Shade of Pale', 197.

⁹ Juhan Aul, 'Eestlaste tõuline kuuluvus', in *Tähiseid: Eestluse aastaraamat*, edited by Eduard Roos (Tartu, Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi, 1935), 44. See also Kalling and Heapost, 95-96.

¹⁰ Aul, 'Eesti antropoloogilisest uurimisest', 158.

¹¹ Aul, 'Anthropologische Forschungen in Eesti', 12.

¹² Weiss-Wendt, 'Ethnography and Racial Research in Nazi-Occupied Estonia', 303.

Nordic and the East Baltic races respectively in international scientific discourses.¹³

But Aul did not just recognise perceived racial inequality; in fact, his research perpetuated the conventional racial hierarchy. Contrary to his promise to further the study of the East Baltic race, he rather focused on the Nordic race's distribution in Estonia. He launched a crusade against international studies that relied on inaccurate anthropometric data of the Estonians—inaccurately documented before they achieved national independence.¹⁴ It was particularly disturbing that, in a study published in Lundborg's acclaimed *The Racial Characters of the Swedish Nation*, the prominence of Nordic racial element in Estonia was highly underestimated. In response, Aul's new study, based on the measurements of over 15,000 conscripts, aimed to prove that Estonia should be counted among those areas with high Nordic racial concentration.¹⁵ It was true that, unlike some of his contemporaries, Aul avoided making explicit statements about racial hierarchy.¹⁶ Nevertheless, considering the prevalence of Nordicist discourse at his time, his eagerness to highlight the Nordic racial elements in Estonia showed that it was the national reputation at stake.

Similarities could also be found in Lundborg's and Aul's manipulation of anthropological photos to implicitly confirmed existing ideas of racial hierarchy. The SIRB's selective methods ensured that the Nordic type was always photographically represented by 'young, healthy, good-looking' individuals to prove their racial superiority.¹⁷ Such tendency

¹³ I thank Ken Kalling for his comment on Aul's scientific opportunism.

¹⁴ Aul, 'Eesti antropoloogilisest uurimisest', 155.

¹⁵ Juhan Aul, 'Põhja tõu osatähtsusest ja levikust Eestis', in *Litterarum Societas Esthonica 1838-1938: Liber Saecularis* (Tartu: Õpetatud Eesti Seltsi, 1937), 80, 83.

¹⁶ Kalling and Leapost, 93.

¹⁷ Ulrika Kjellman, 'To Document the Undocumentable: Photography in the Scientific Practice of Physical Anthropology and Race Biology', *Journal of Documentation* 72.5 (2016): 828.

already existed in Lundborg's earlier work, *The Swedish Nation in Word and Picture* (1921), commissioned by the Swedish Society for Racial Hygiene. While noble looking students, a military officer, a bishop and an artist represent the Nordic type, the 'Swedish mixed-race types' section features 'a woman of manly type, socially of low standing' and 'Gipsy with Finnish blood. Criminal' to imply the degenerative consequences of miscegenation.¹⁸ Meanwhile, the 'Finnish' (East Baltic) type consists of predominantly more elderly samples, whose professions are either left unmentioned, or are of lower socio-economic status like 'factory girl' or 'sailor'.¹⁹ Despite this seemingly biased approach, Lundborg's selection was not perceived as a subjective approach threatening scientific objectivity; rather, the interwar scientific community trusted the researcher's authority to select photos as the perfect racial exemplars.²⁰

Similarly, in his 1936 article on the Estonian racial composition, Aul presented two plates of nine pictures to illustrate the Nordic and the East Baltic types in Estonia. While the East Baltic plate shows almost only teachers and farmers, the Nordic plate features a high school principal, an airship pilot, a mayor, a sailor, two teachers and two farmers; but most importantly, the 'statesman and professor', Jaan Tõnisson.²¹ Aul's selection reinforced the Nordacist stereotypes—more creative, more adventurous, and capable of leadership. In contrast, the East Baltic type almost seemed to be born for certain social strata. Highly Galtonian in its assumption, this juxtaposition demonstrated Aul's eugenicist belief in the

¹⁸ Herman Lundborg and John Runnström eds., *The Swedish Nation in Word and Picture* (Stockholm: Hasse W. Tullberg, 1921), plates VII, X.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, plates XI-XIII.

²⁰ Kjellman, 'To Document the Undocumentable', 826-827. See also Lorraine J. Daston and Peter Galison, *Objectivity* (New York: Zone Books, 2007), 45-46.

²¹ Aul, 'Anthropologische Forschungen in Eesti', Figure 7-8.

correlation between social standing and genetic worthiness. Moreover, Aul's selective bias speaks for his attitude toward the different racial values of the two main elements of the Estonian people.

The mindset of racial inequality might have spurred Aul's unnegotiable stance on the question of the Estonians' alleged Mongoloid heritage, which had long troubled Estonian intelligentsia even before independent statehood. Among Aul's top complaints in his 1937 article in *ERK Magazine* was the fact that educational textbooks and scientific handbooks still relegated the Estonians to the 'yellow race (*rass*), or the Mongoloid race (*tõug*)'.²² Indeed, even as late as 1933, Vienna still saw a publication portraying 'Mongolised' Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians.²³ Aul slammed such notion as merely a 'fairy tale'. No traces of 'Mongolian racial elements', he insisted, could be found among Estonians.²⁴ Self-evident for him, this claim apparently did not need to be substantiated.

On one rare occasion, when he attempted to justify it, he instead contradicted himself. In the 1935 ERK yearbook, he admitted that some Estonians did exhibit Mongoloid appearances. Without denying that miscegenation could have taken place, perhaps from earlier Chinese or Japanese immigrants, he remained strongly opposed to generalisation based on these isolated cases. However, he thought it was 'perfectly understandable' that, due to their frequent contact with Mongoloid peoples, the Estonian's Finno-Ugric kin tribes in Siberia had Mongoloid features, though 'it still does not mean that they belong to the Mongoloid race'.²⁵ The physical anthropological approaches to the racial question, however, entirely depended

²² Aul, 'Eesti antropoloogilisest uurimisest', 156.

²³ Górný, 255-256.

²⁴ 'Eestlased on põhja ja idabalti tõugu'. See also Aul, 'Anthropologische Forschungen in Eesti', 13.

²⁵ Aul, 'Eestlaste tõuline kuuluvus', 43.

upon anthropometric measurements. Either Aul betrayed uneasiness with his own research methodology, or he excluded the possibility of some racial elements based on unscientific presumptions.

Indeed, though Aul declared that ‘the Estonians are a racially mixed people, just like other European peoples’, he accepted only the racial mixture within a certain boundary—the boundary that marked the closely-related ‘European’ races. Fortunately for him, in ‘Baltoskandia’, the racial composition was not ‘complicated’, thereby minimising biological threat posed by the dark racial types.²⁶ He believed that racial intermixture between the light European types could be beneficial, as illustrated by the racially-mixed Southern Germans’ and Austrians’ high cultural achievements.²⁷ Otherwise, it was to be simply dismissed. He taunted Reiman’s ‘mechanical’ assessment of data that led him to conclude that the Estonians were most closely related to Great Russians by blood. ‘We could as much be related to Spanish Jews!’, ridiculed Aul. Again, Aul treated his statement as self-evident without further explanation. But why was it so unthinkable that the Estonians were related to the Russians or the Jews? For both ‘races’, in the long academic tradition at the University of Tartu, had been conceptualised as biologically foreign and ‘degenerated’, especially by the influential racial psychiatrist, Vladimir Chizh. The comparative approaches to race science were the confluent product of international and national perspectives. While from the Russian nationalist stance, the degenerative Jews and Estonians threatened the biological capital of ‘Aryan’ Russians, the Western European-dominated international tradition regarded the Russians as biologically inferior to the ‘Europeans’.²⁸ A late-nineteenth-century Estonian physician, Peeter Hellat,

²⁶ Aul, ‘Anthropologische Forschungen in Eesti’, 5.

²⁷ Juhan Aul, ‘Poliitilisest antropoloogist’, *ERK* 7 (1933): 191.

²⁸ For Chizh and his influence on the Tartu tradition of Jewish and Estonian racial degeneration, see Marina Mogilner, *Homo Imperii: A History of Physical Anthropology in Russia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 188-196; for the interaction between national and international scientific discourses exemplified by Chizh

even warned that intermarriage with Jews could result in infertile offspring, another definite sign of Jewish biological degeneration.²⁹ This deep-rooted tradition of racial science in Tartu, therefore, formed the basis of Aul's resolute denial of Jewish and Russian racial components in the Estonians.

For Aul, race was a reality, and racial classification a science. Even when he lampooned the Germans' so-called 'political anthropology' in an *ERK Magazine* polemic, he did so rather out of strong anti-German sentiments, motivated by Estonian nationalism, and common among ERK members. It was laughable that, full of false ideas about the Estonians, the ignorant Germans would nevertheless dare to credit Estonia's cultural achievements on German foundation or German blood.³⁰ 'German blood or Aryan race', mocked Aul, was as real as 'blond dictionary or long-headed grammar'.³¹ However, like contemporary anti-Nazi British anthropologists, he only rejected 'German blood or Aryan race' for their supposedly unscientific base, but did not invalidate race as a scientific subject.³² For him, 'German blood' consisted of multiple racial elements, and 'Aryan' denoted a linguistic family.³³ However, while the Aryan race was no more than a myth, his research replicated Nordacist methods and participated in the discourse of the Nordic race.

A eugenic-minded scientist, Aul even conducted his research fully aware of the political

and his student E. M. Badul, see Marina Mogilner, 'Racial Psychiatry and the Russian Imperial Dilemma of the "Savage Within"', *East Central Europe* 43.1-2 (2016): 121.

²⁹ Kalling, 'The Application of Eugenics in Estonia', 57.

³⁰ Aul, 'Poliitilise antropoloogias', 190-192. See also Aul's book review of Sophie Ehrhardt's *Die Rassenzusammensetzung des estnischen Volkes* (1933). Juhan Aul, 'Kirjandust', *ERK* 9-10 (1934): 171-172.

³¹ Aul, 'Poliitilise antropoloogias', 191.

³² For interwar British scientific community's lasting belief in racial differences on either the left or the right, see Gavin Schaffer, "'Like a Baby with a Box of Matches': British Scientists and the Concept of "Race" in the Inter-War Period', *British Journal for the History of Science* 38.138 (2005): 311-317.

³³ Aul, 'Eestlaste tõuline kuuluvus', 43.

consequences of physical anthropology. Racial classification, he believed, could be an applied science for pedagogical and criminological reasons, for physical and biological traits supposedly would reveal one's intelligence and criminal potentiality.³⁴ His racial database of Estonia, as he outlined in the 1937 *ERK Magazine* article, could help advance what he called 'social anthropology' and education, as students' physical strength and career options could be fathomed based on anthropometric measurements.³⁵ Aul's selective bias in representing the Nordic and East Baltic races provides us with a hint about what career plans would be made for students exhibiting respective physical traits. Aul also believed that his research could help select the strong and fittest for the internal colonisation of Estonia.³⁶ Perhaps Aul's own 'political anthropology' is best illustrated by his words. In a 1934 speech, he clarified that, though unlike the contemporary German racial movement, the racial question still interested the Estonians from a *nationalist* perspective.³⁷ Additionally, the disgraceful persistence of the false knowledge of Estonians' Mongoloid heritage, for him, demonstrated why every nationalist should help advance 'nationalistic science'.³⁸ Echoing the ERK Union manifesto regarding eugenics, education, and inner colonisation, Aul's political anthropology was preoccupied with the Estonians' racial qualities.³⁹ Coupled with governmental intervention, his planned anthropometric database *Anthropologia estonica* could be such a tool to help realise the Estonians' racial potentials.

³⁴ Ken Kalling, 'Prof. Juhan Aul and Eugenics', *Papers on Anthropology* 7 (1997): 175.

³⁵ Aul, 'Eesti antropoloogilisest uurimisest', 159.

³⁶ Kalling, 'Prof. Juhan Aul and Eugenics', 176.

³⁷ 'Eestlased on põhja ja idabalti tõugu'.

³⁸ Juhan Aul, 'Intensiivsemale loomingule rahvuslike teaduste alal', *ERK* 9-10 (1936): 207.

³⁹ See 'Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubide Põhimõtteid', 220-222.

Aul's call for 'nationalistic science', however, existed in tension with international scientific standards. Most evidently, this tension manifested itself in Aul's paradoxical acknowledgement of the discrepancy between linguistic and racial affinity, and his insistence on the Finno-Ugric nations' solidarity.⁴⁰ He even believed the Hungarians to be racially closed to the Estonians too, despite the lack of evidence based on racial anthropology.⁴¹ The ERK's Finno-Ugric orientation might have motivated Aul to look for the source of Finno-Ugric solidarity in their biological composition. The ERK Union manifesto states that Estonia's place is in Northern Europe and among the Finno-Ugric 'kindred peoples'.⁴² The Finno-Ugric Cultural Congress, their cultural cooperation, and Hungarian nationalist youth movement were discussed and celebrated in *ERK Magazine*.⁴³ In a petition calling for the Estonian government's attention to the dying Liv people in Latvia, the ERK Union protests that 'the preservation of the Liv people, their language and culture is also important to other Finno-Ugric kindred peoples, who cannot watch one of their kindred people's hard fate with indifference'.⁴⁴ The prominent ERK member Oskar Loorits's staunch 'Finno-Ugrianism' against 'Indo-Germanism' also helped promote the ERK's Finno-Ugric orientation.⁴⁵ The persistence of the ERK Finno-Ugrianism was testified by Kant's and Uluots's ready supports for Estonian anthropological expeditions to kindred people's tribes in Northwestern Russia

⁴⁰ Kalling and Heapost, 92.

⁴¹ Aul, 'Eestlaste tõulisest kuuluvusest', 22.

⁴² 'Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubide Põhimõtteid', 219, 224.

⁴³ Alo Raun, 'Soome-Ugri hõimude koostöö kultuuri alal', *ERK* 4-5 (1936): 73-74; Balázs Somogyi, 'Ungari rahvuslike noorte liikumine peale Maailmasõda', *ERK* 1 (1937): 19-21.

⁴⁴ 'ERK-ide Liidu märgukiri Riigihoidjale', *ERK* 7-8 (1937): 154.

⁴⁵ For Loorits's Finno-Ugrianism, see Ergo-Hart Västriik, 'Oskar Loorits: Byzantine Cultural Relations and Practical Applications of Folklore Archives', *Studies in Estonian Folkloristics and Ethnology: A Reader and Reflexive History*, edited by Kristina Kuutma and Tiit Jaago (Tartu: Tartu University Press, 2005), 213-214.

under Nazi occupation.⁴⁶ These expeditions helped Aul collect anthropometrical and photographic data of local population.⁴⁷ If not for the Nazi's retreat, Aul would have had more possibilities to test his belief in the Finno-Ugric people's racial affinity.

Aul's belief in race classification survived the Nazi collaboration and Stalinist suppression. His student fondly remembered how, in his Soviet-era lectures, he would repeat his belief in the fundamental difference between race science and racism—the former as a natural science, and later as an ideology.⁴⁸ The 'natural science' of human races, however, was compromised from the very beginning, when Linnaeus blended descriptions of outer appearances with value judgements.⁴⁹ Ever since, racism had developed in symbiosis with race science.

Despite Aul's passionate anti-German sentiments, he propagated in interwar Estonia a racial *Weltanschauung* that shared more similarity with that in Germany than he would admit. Already in 1936, his German-language article would entertain his target readers' expectations, stating that the Nordic racial component had been more numerous before the East Baltic race's settlement in present-day Estonia.⁵⁰ It contradicted with his statement in Estonian-language publications, which rather identified the East Baltic race as the primary Estonian racial component. It also sought to cater the Estonian case to the Nordacist degeneration fear, fear of the demise of the most potent race by immigration and intermarriage. Nazi Germany,

⁴⁶ Aigi Rahi-Tamm and Argo Kuusik, 'Tagasi esivanemate maale: Eestlaste evakueerimine Loode-Venemaalt 1942-44', *Ajalooline Ajakiri* 1 (2017): 111-112.

⁴⁷ Weiss-Wendt, 'Ethnography and Racial Research in Nazi-Occupied Estonia', 309-310.

⁴⁸ Mart Niklus, 'Remembering Professor Juhan Aul', *Papers on Anthropology* 25.1 (2016): 89.

⁴⁹ Charles Linné, *A General System of Nature Through the Three Grand Kingdoms of Animals, Vegetables, and Minerals*, Vol. 1 (Swansea: Voss and Morris, 1800), 9.

⁵⁰ Aul, 'Anthropologische Forschungen in Eesti', 12.

which gradually came to dominate anthropological research internationally, would increasingly draw Aul into its sphere of influence, albeit in the name of science. Academic journals, research trip, and eventual collaboration with the Nazi occupation authorities all testified to close affinity of their agendas.⁵¹

Nevertheless, it was strong nationalist conviction that drove Aul's research on race science. On the platform of *ERK Magazine*, he propagated the Estonians' worthy racial elements; lamented international false evaluations of Estonian racial values; proposed eugenic enhancement of future generations; and solicited his readers' support to further advance Estonian race science. These issues must have been discussed in ERK meetings, since he also addressed his fellow club members on related topics, and worked in the ERK's department of cultural politics on anthropological issues.⁵² His efforts bore fruit in the government-approved 1939 curriculum of the new Eugenics Institute at the University of Tartu. The eugenic curriculum included interbreeding's damaging effects on birth rate, social appreciation of racial values, and eugenic sterilisation.⁵³ Aul's concept of 'social anthropology' meant that he might have entertained transferring this new eugenic curriculum into social policy making. However, the outbreak of World War II and subsequent Soviet annexation prevented his ambition to further enhance the racial quality of the Estonian nation.

1.2 Estonian National Organism, De-Nationalisation, and National Minorities

ERK Magazine contributors often compared the nation to an organic entity, composed of individuals as cells, with its will and mission to fulfil. The Estonian organic nation, however,

⁵¹ Weiss-Wendt, 'Ethnography and Racial Research in Nazi-Occupied Estonia', 298.

⁵² ERA.2698.1.13, pp. 15, 51, 64.

⁵³ Ibid.

was constantly under threat—threats like assimilation, minorities, and unpatriotic national feelings. Patriotic feelings for the nation, like a cell’s obligation to the organ, unfortunately still lay dormant in many Estonians. The ERK activists and their writings, therefore, served as a call to arms to ‘submit personal and class wish and interest to those of the nation’, in Ein’s words, so as to defend the nation’s natural right as the ‘highest historical-social true organism’ on the basis of which all aspects of life should be organised.⁵⁴ The state, as the nation’s political form, should intervene to organise, for example, youth organisations under a centralised platform.⁵⁵ Despite their naturalist vocabulary, the ERK organic nationalists did not imagine a natural inclination of individual members of the nation to start bottom-up initiatives to realise the nation’s will; rather, they theorised a top-down approach heavily reliant on the elites and the nation state to organise the people and to enforce discipline and nationalism.

If the ERK’s ideal nation state functioned as a super organism formed of various profession-based corporative organs, then the nationalist elites, represented by the ERK, naturally worked as the heart or the brain of the nation. The ERK elitism, already characteristic of the nationalist club from its very inception, came out loud and proud after the coup d’état in March 1934. The first issue of *ERK Magazine* published after the coup featured two petitions from the ERK Union for the *Riigivanem* Päts, one of which concludes:

‘Patriotic intelligentsia have placed great hope for the *cure* of our education life on the current government, which does not let the mass’s mood sway its actions, but freely implements the right patriotic policy’ (my emphasis).⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ein, 27-28, 31.

⁵⁵ Eduard Salurand, ‘Ringvaade: Noorsugu tuleb riiklikult organiseerida’, *ERK* 1 (1935): 28.

⁵⁶ ‘ERK-ide Liidu Märgukiri Nr. 6 keskkooli reformi asjus’, *ERK* 5 (1934): 89.

The amorphous mass, therefore, is meant to be governed by a strong leader on the wise advice of the ERK's 'patriotic intelligentsia', so as to 'cure' the national body's diseases.⁵⁷ The nationalist elites' importance to the national body's health, therefore, demands that all levels of the organism—family, school, national state—to contribute to the making of elites. In turn, argues Kaarel Särgava (Karl Peterson), will proudly devote and sacrifice themselves for the national regeneration.⁵⁸ Even in the national organism, the biological analogy still applies to the hierarchy of organs.

Nationalist historians, too, have an irreplaceable role in the national organism. The historian's primary mission, declares Juhan Vasar in an *ERK Magazine* article, is to be the national organism's memory. A nationalist historian rejecting the Baltic German historiographical tradition, Vasar turned instead to Sweden for inspirations. This Swedish connection could be seen, for example, in his talk in an ERK grand meeting in 1932 on the Swedish youth nationalist movement.⁵⁹ Following the ERK ideology that everything should serve the national interest, Vasar argues that, since history is never objective, the historians should actively excavate those moments neglected by the Baltic German narrative, and yet critical to the Estonian nation's development. Technically, such selection is done by historians. Yet, Vasar describes metaphorically that 'life itself must determine' this 'principle of selection' (*seleksiooniprintsiip*) of what should be emphasised in history.⁶⁰ His word choices reflect the aspiration of history to be on a par with natural sciences. Together with his article's life imagery and organic analogy, they also carry a clear reference to Darwinian biology.

⁵⁷ Similar metaphor of illness was used by Päts to justify his coup and dictatorship. See Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia*, 105-106.

⁵⁸ Kaarel Särgava, 'Rahva organiseerimise alused', *ERK* 1 (1935): 9.

⁵⁹ 'ERK'i peakoosolek'.

⁶⁰ Juhan Vasar, 'Meie rahvusliku ajaloo ülesannetest ja orientatsioonist', *ERK* 5 (1933): 119.

Historians, therefore, should respond to nature's calling and fulfil its mission to the national organism by adopting a nationalistic *seleksiooniprintsiip*. Vasar praises Hendrik Sepp, another *ERK Magazine* contributor, as the only historian so far fulfilling such mission.⁶¹ Constantly alarmed, the ERK saw the national organism not only afflicted with various diseases, but also troubled by false memory poisoned by 700 years of slavery under Baltic German landlords.

To withstand the toxic Baltic German influence, the family, as the cell of the organic nation, must stay strong. Säreava claims that the family is where the 'spiritual body of the members of the nation is formed'; hence, 'remaining indifferent to the family would be a crime against the nation'.⁶² This nationalist emphasis on family must have renewed social pressure on women.⁶³ A glimpse of such pressure could be seen already in 1933, when *ERK Magazine* published its first and only article written by a female author. Praising the results of women's education and career in Estonia, Alma Martin tellingly had to pre-emptively state that 'it must not be thought that the university has to close its door to women'. Rather, she believed that educated women can fulfil both their career choices and domestic obligations as the mother and housewife.⁶⁴ When another *ERK Magazine* article declared that 'foreign mother makes a poor educator for the Estonian nationalist', it was expected that Estonian

⁶¹ Ibid. Both Vasar and Sepp were members in the fraternity 'Sakala'. For Hendrik Sepp's contributions to *ERK Magazine*, see Hendrik Sepp, 'Võõrast mõjust, eriti venestumishädaohust enne Eesti iseseisvust', *ERK* 3 (1933): 66-71; and Hendrik Sepp, 'Ajaloolilisi mõjusid eesti rahvuse säilitamisel', *ERK* 1 (1935): 10-14.

⁶² Säreava, 'Rahva organiseerimise alused', 7.

⁶³ For nationalistic eugenicists' positions on the women's question, see Kalling, 'The Application of Eugenics in Estonia' 65.

⁶⁴ Alma Martin, 'Naiste kutseharidus ja kutseline tegevus', *ERK* 5 (1933): 135-136. For the radical right Veterans' objection to female emancipation and the dwindling female participation in politics, see Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia*, 79, 86, 123.

mothers should bring up their children as nationalist-minded Estonians.⁶⁵ Women's primary obligation, after all, should be toward the family and toward Estonia's future patriots.

Särgava's call for greater state intervention in family affairs, however, rather reflected the degenerative fear of Estonians' assimilation into German sphere. The ERK exhibited particular hostility to *Kadakasakslased*, or 'Germanised Estonians'. Eduard Salurand (Sahkenberg) urged 'nationally-conscious Estonians' to declare 'merciless war against all expressions' of such voluntary Germanisation and Russification, against those Estonians who have 'forgotten the voice of their Estonian blood ties'.⁶⁶ Pathological metaphors reminiscent of German discourses of racial hygiene were often employed. Juhan Viidang denounced this phenomenon of Germanised Estonians (*kadaklus*) as 'our society's poisonous aspergillus'.⁶⁷ For Särgava, he returned to the motif of sickness, calling *kadaklus* the 'cancer' that troubled especially educated Estonian families.⁶⁸ What made this cancer all the more deadly was Estonia's precarious geopolitical position between the two huge neighbours, between 'Russian bolshevism and German racism'.⁶⁹ The Estonian national body, therefore, must awaken the dormant national consciousness in its cells, as well as fight those tumours that have developed the harmful consciousness.

It was argued that Estonians were particularly vulnerable to assimilation and losing national consciousness. First of all, warned Ein, the weakly developed Estonian national consciousness rendered it defenceless against Russian or German influence. But more

⁶⁵ Juhan Vilms, 'Segaabelud rahvuspoliitiliselt', *ERK* 1 (1936): 20.

⁶⁶ Eduard Salurand, 'Ringvaade: "Kadakad" ja "pajuvenelased" ilmuvad päevavalgele', *ERK* 2 (1935): 48.

⁶⁷ Juhan Viidang, 'Viigileht, mis vajab kõrvaldamist', *ERK* 2 (1935): 40.

⁶⁸ Särgava, 'Rahva organiseerimise alused', 7.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 6. See also Ein, 31.

importantly, the Estonian biological composition carried the danger of easy assimilation. In a commentary about the Second Congress of Estonian Compatriots for *ERK Magazine*, Jaan Maide, *Kaitseliit*'s Chief of Staff (1927-1934; 1935-1940), heavily digressed on the issue of assimilation.⁷⁰ Contrary to common beliefs, he argued, 'de-nationalisation' hits culturally advanced nationalities like 'the Germans, the Swedes, the Danes in the U.S.A.' faster than those belonging to cultural backwaters like 'the Spaniards, the Italians, the Greeks, [and] the Chinese'.⁷¹ Despite Maide's euphemism of 'culture', he actually grouped these according to the Nordicist hierarchy of racial values. This digression paved the way for his emphasis on the need to maintain close ties between the Estonian homeland and her emigrants, especially those to Russia—another multi-ethnic empire which endangers the survival of emigrants' distinctive nationalities. Therefore, the Estonians, composed of 'light' racial elements like their 'Baltoskandian' brothers, must be particularly aware of the danger of de-nationalisation and assimilation.

Biologically vulnerable to de-nationalisation, the Estonian nation must be guarded from such danger by the nation state and the nationalist intelligentsia. The two ERK Union petitions submitted to the *Riigivanem* soon after the 1934 coup both reflected the strong fear of de-nationalisation, especially signs of unabated Germanisation of Estonians. The first petition argued for a simplified and free application to boost the popularity of Estonianising foreign-sounding names, especially German-like ones.⁷² Besides strengthening patriotic feelings and developing Estonian nationalism, the ERK Union stressed the importance to avoid unwittingly assist 'chauvinistic German expansionism' by displaying these German-

⁷⁰ *Kaitseliit* (Defence League) was the Estonian Republic's official paramilitary organisation.

⁷¹ Jaan Maide, 'II Ülemaailmse Välis-Eesti Kongressi puhul', *ERK* 7 (1933): 192.

⁷² See also A. Õunapuu, 'Kas nimi ei riku meest?', *ERK* 1 (1935) 14-17.

sounding family names to foreigners. In foreigners' eyes, these names would give the false credential to Germany's claim over Estonia as part of its old cultural space.⁷³ The second petition targeted the dominance of German language in educational system, citing the support of nationalist intelligentsia and the University of Tartu. The solution it proposed, however, was to remove German language completely from primary school, so that it would not pre-determine the order of foreign language acquisition in middle school. It was in the interest of 'nationalistic cultural politics' to favour in school English and French over German and Russian, spoken by the two largest national minorities.⁷⁴ Frustrated at the political parties' inaction over the grave danger of de-nationalisation, the ERK turned enthusiastically to the regime free of divisive party politics to prevent the Estonian people, the majority of which lacked sufficient national consciousness, from losing themselves.

But even if some Estonians lost themselves to *kadaklus*, the Estonian Eugenics and Genealogy Society (EEGS), many members of which belonged to the ERK or contributed to *ERK Magazine*, were ready to reclaim them.⁷⁵ Historian Adolf Perandi wrote confidently in *ERK Magazine* that Estonia now possessed the key to unmask a person's true origin. This tool was Ottkar Lorenz's 'scientific genealogy', which combined *biology* with sociology to deal with, among others, 'racial hygiene' issues.⁷⁶ Perandi took inspiration from the Nazi instrumentalisation of genealogy, praising the Nazi decree to make it compulsory for all officials to submit their genealogical data as part of the 'Aryan movement' to 'plant faith in

⁷³ 'ERK-ide Liidu Märgukiri Nr. 5 nime- ja eestistamise asjus', *ERK* 5 (1934): 87

⁷⁴ 'ERK-ide Liidu Märgukiri Nr. 6 keskkooli reformi asjus': 88.

⁷⁵ For a brief history of the Estonian Eugenics Society (renamed the Estonian Society of Eugenics and Genealogy in 1931), see Kalling, 'The Application of Eugenics in Estonia', 52-53.

⁷⁶ Adolf Perandi, 'Genealoogia rahvuslikke ülesandeid', *ERK* 9-10 (1935): 177; Adolf Perandi, 'Genealoogia senine viljelemine tuleviku ülesanded Eestis', *ERK* 7-8 (1937): 161.

people in their prowess'.⁷⁷ Meanwhile, the EEGS's new Estonian Kinship Research Bureau, he explained, cooperated with the Estonian State Statistics Central Bureau in the 1934 National Census for more accurate data on personal heritage. Genealogy, he stressed, must be promoted from a 'nationalistic political stance'.⁷⁸ Nationalistic historians overwhelmingly threw their weight behind utilising genealogical data for nationalistic purposes. Such aim was endorsed by Juhan Vasar in his speech at the Second Congress of Patriotic Upbringing in Tartu in 1935.⁷⁹ Moreover, Vasar, Perandi, and August Oinas all occupied leading positions in the EEGS's genealogical section.⁸⁰ Perandi claimed that, according to the data, 'part of the existing German people were descended directly from Estonians, part of them immigrated from foreign lands, and only part of them were descended from Germans'.⁸¹ Echoing Ernits's belief in the persistence of the Estonians' mystical core racial elements, Perandi suggested that scientific genealogy could help reclaim these Germanised Estonians and their precious biological elements from the false German belonging.⁸² The nation state, then, should guarantee that their offspring would receive patriotic education to awaken their Estonian national consciousness.

Perandi's claim that the Estonian state overestimated the Baltic German numerical strength opened another front for the ERK to attack German cultural autonomy in Estonia.

⁷⁷ Perandi, 'Genealoogia rahvuslikke ülesandeid', 178.

⁷⁸ Perandi, 'Genealoogia senine viljelemine tuleviku ülesanded Eestis', 161, 163.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 162.

⁸⁰ Kalle Kesküla, 'Eesti Eugeenika ja Genealoogia Seltsi tegemistest', Eesti Genealoogia Seltsi Saaremaa osakond, 1, accessed 1 August 2017, <http://www.genealoogia.ee/saaremaa/Eesti%20Eugeenika%20ja%20Genealoogia%20Seltsi%20tegemistest.pdf>.

⁸¹ Perandi, 'Genealoogia senine viljelemine tuleviku ülesanded Eestis', 164.

⁸² Perandi, 'Genealoogia rahvuslikke ülesandeid', 180.

From the ERK's very inception, the cultural self-government legislation's liberal provisions for national minorities had always been a focal point for the nationalists' discontent. An ERK petition in early 1934 demanded the state support for minority cultural self-government should match the size of their population.⁸³ Only accounting for 1.5% of the total population of Estonia, further reduction in number could seriously impact the Baltic German minority. The constitution, nevertheless, guaranteed the right for everyone to choose his nationality. Much to the ERK's glee, the Supreme Court unprecedentedly ruled in 1936 that a person had to submit evidence to prove his national belonging. In praising the ruling, Säreava claimed that the ERK possessed data that showed many names on the German minority list were not actually 'German by blood'. Even the secretary for German cultural affairs (*saksa rahvussekretär*) was suspected to be a Germanised Estonian.⁸⁴ Now, the ERK had biology and genealogy on their side to stem further loss of Estonian blood to German pretension. Consequently, the numerically weakened Germans, they assumed, would not be able to sustain the cultural autonomy for long.

Despite the small size of national minorities, their unnatural existence compromised the national body. An *ERK Magazine* contributor pathologised the German and Jewish institutions of cultural autonomy as *tumours* developing in the organic body of the Estonian nation state.⁸⁵ Tumours like these made the Estonians feel ill at home, and their existence, instead of fostering the minorities' greater friendliness and loyalty to the Estonian nation state, posed a grave biological threat.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the naïve Estonian leadership and parliamentarians

⁸³ 'ERK-ide Liidu Märeukiri', *ERK* 2 (1934): 45.

⁸⁴ Kaarel Säreava, 'Eesti kadakas ja eesti sakslane', *ERK* 1 (1936): 24.

⁸⁵ E. Jalak, 'Uusi tuuli vähemustepoliitikasse!', *ERK* 1 (1934): 9.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 7; 'ERK-ide Liidu Märeukiri', 44.

only granted extra generous concessions to national minorities, ridiculed the author, so that Estonia might prided herself upon even the briefest international media coverage of ‘the world’s most democratic constitution’.⁸⁷ With the new constitution and a strong presidency, the ERK thus placed great hope on the new president to restore the nation’s health.

Simply renegotiating or scaling down cultural autonomy’s scope, however, would not appease the ERK’s grievances. More radical voices among the ERK ranks saw enemies not in the institution, but in the national minorities themselves. Alien to the platform of the Estonian nation state, Ein believed that national minorities must be ‘eliminated’.⁸⁸ Sahkenberg, in his column of news highlights, regularly derided the German and Russian minorities as untrustworthy elements. He criticised the German minority for Nazi sympathies or German chauvinism and expansionism.⁸⁹ The Russian minority received less sustained hostility from him, perhaps due to their comparative socio-economic disadvantage. But when Sahkenberg did lash out, his rhetoric was no less violent. When the controversial Bishop Joann of the Estonian Apostolic Orthodox Church from Petserimaa gave a ‘seditious’ speech in Tallinn at the funeral of politician Aleksei Sorokin of the Russian Party, Sahkenberg branded him as a ‘Russified Seto’ and ‘traitor to Estonian nationalism’. Furthermore, he accused the Estonian nation state’s protection of religious freedom being abused by ‘chauvinistic Russians living in Estonia’, who expressed animosity towards the national majority, and spread ‘anti-Estonian propaganda’. Half sarcastically, he called for immediate resolution to banish Bishop Joann and Aleksandra Adler, the female ‘prophet on horseback’ suspected of anti-state secret

⁸⁷ Ibid., 7.

⁸⁸ Ein, 28.

⁸⁹ See, for example, Eduard Salurand, ‘Ringvaade: Sakslaste tegevus ja vähemusrahvuste kultuuroromavalitsus’, *ERK* 1 (1935): 25; Eduard Salurand, ‘Ringvaade: Sakslased ja Eesti’, *ERK* 2 (1935): 47-48; and Eduard Salurand, ‘Ringvaade: Mis sündis Viljandis?’, *ERK* 3 (1935): 68.

gatherings, to the tiny island of Kihnu.⁹⁰

Sahkenberg's insult of 'Russified Seto' reflected the Estonian fear of the disloyal Russian minority living in the border region of Petserimaa. Like another *ERK Magazine* contributor, ethnographer Gustav Ränk believed the Russian majority in Petserimaa could be receptive to Russian propaganda, compromise border security, and assimilate their neighbouring Estonian, Ingrian, and Seto peoples.⁹¹ In a recent study, Andreas Kalkun points out that interwar Estonian ethnography and media 'carried colonialist ideology' justifying the state-sponsored 'modernisation' campaign to assimilate the Setos led astray by corruptive Russians.⁹² Deliberately substituting Seto festive names by Russian terminology 'to strength the allusion to the *Russian nature* of these feasts' (my emphasis), and juxtaposing 'lazy' Russians and Setos with hard-working Estonians, interwar Estonian writings about the Setos constructed the discursive stigmatisation of 'Russified Setos' as the Other.⁹³ The deep-rooted stereotype of 'Russified Setos' even made Ränk feel compelled to clarify the Setos' distinctiveness, despite the influences of 'Slavic' and 'Russian elements'.⁹⁴ The Seto festive drinking and indifference to the Estonian temperance movement, furthermore, was discussed by the Estonian Eugenic Society, of which Aul was a prominent member, as a eugenic threat to the national body. In the 1930s, the Estonian nation state sought to deter such threat by police brutality.⁹⁵ Even racially, the Seto and the Russians exhibited dubious origins. In describing

⁹⁰ Eduard Sahkenberg, 'Kodumaine Ringvaade: Piiskop Platoni pärandus ja venelaste eestivastane ässitustöö', *ERK* 5 (1933): 136-137.

⁹¹ See Jalak, 8; and Gustav Ränk, 'Meie idapiiri asustusest', *ERK* 3 (1933): 57-62.

⁹² Kalkun, 54-55, 66-67.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 62-64.

⁹⁴ Ränk, 58.

⁹⁵ Kalkun, 64-65; see also Chalvin.

that he recorded Estonia's lowest percentage of Nordic racial element in Petserimaa, Aul betrayed a tinge of contempt by describing Petserimaa's 'very poor' presence of Nordic racial elements.⁹⁶ Instead of the rather statistically neutral term 'low' that he used to describe other counties, he reserved 'very poor' exclusively for Petserimaa. Elsewhere, Aul also conceptualised the Russians as biologically different than the Estonians. He attributed the 'brown-eyed and the dark-haired' Estonian population to the Alpine race, a 'pigmented' race and hence less valuable than the Nordic or East Baltic races, whose racial elements were brought 'from the south' and mainly 'through the Russians'.⁹⁷ Worse, the Russian's higher birth rate would allow them to eventually challenge Estonian dominance.⁹⁸ The border region of Petserimaa, therefore, posed the triple threat of eugenic degeneration, disloyal citizens, and Russian assimilation.

Compared with the Baltic Germans or the Russians, the ERK and *ERK Magazine* rarely targeted the Jews. Despite enjoying the cultural autonomy's protection, their tiny number (4,434; 0.4 % of the Estonian population) helped leave them relatively unscathed from the ERK's attacks on national minorities.⁹⁹ On one rare occasion, however, *ERK Magazine* published an anonymous polemic blasting the Jews for abusing the Estonian state's generous offering of cultural autonomy. Living in a 'cultural-politically closed state within the state', argues the author, the Jews take advantage of this protection to build an economy of their own, just like the Baltic Germans.¹⁰⁰ Citing statistics from the article 'Minorities in Estonia'

⁹⁶ Aul, 'Põhja tõu osatähtsusest ja levikust Eestis', 82, 84.

⁹⁷ Aul, 'Eestlaste tõuline kuuluvus', 43.

⁹⁸ Kalling, 'The Application of Eugenics in Estonia', 59.

⁹⁹ Figures from the 1934 census. See Anton Weiss-Wendt, *Murder Without Hatred: Estonians and the Holocaust* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009): 3-4.

¹⁰⁰ 'Ringvaade: Kellel on Eestis hea elada', *ERK* 6 (1936): 135-136. See also Klesment, 121-122.

in the ERK's yearbook, where disproportionate percentage of Jewish ownership in industry, trade, and transport are highlighted, the author complains that the Jews only work in lucrative professions.¹⁰¹ In 1936, for example, while only 6 out of 10,000 Estonians were doctors, for the Jews that number went up dramatically to 201.¹⁰² Therefore, the *numerus clausus* demanded by the EEGS and ERK member Juhan Vilms would hit the Jews severely.¹⁰³ It seems that the Jewish threat to the Estonian national organism, therefore, was mainly economic.

It must not be forgotten, however, that Aul joked about the impossibility of any racial affinity between the Estonians and the Jews. Their fundamental differences could have been reproduced and reinforced by the long history of anti-Semitic discourse. Such discourse's prevalence allowed many comments left unsaid but easily understood. Estonian interwar newspaper comics, for example, disproportionately cast monstrous Jews for gory cannibalism, invoking the common theme in folklores and anti-Semitic pamphlets.¹⁰⁴ An *ERK Magazine* contributor's mockery that the 1925 Law on Cultural Autonomy was made only for the politicians to play Solomon's role and to have Estonia's name inscribed on the Golden Book of Jerusalem, thus, carries a trace of casual anti-Semitism.¹⁰⁵ More explicit anti-Semitic comments could also be found in Vilms's writings elsewhere.¹⁰⁶ Anton Weiss-Wendt also

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 135; R. Kadaja, 'Vähemusrahvused Eestis', in *Tähiseid II: Eestluse aastaraamat*, edited by Eduard Roos (Tartu: Eesti Rahvuslaste Klubi Kirjastus, 1936), 50.

¹⁰² Nikolai Sarv, 'Eesti arstkond iseseisvuse ajal ning Eesti Arstideseltside Liit', *Eesti Arst* 11 (1937): 894.

¹⁰³ Ken Kalling, "'Kultuurrahvaste mentaliteet peab saama enam kollektivistlikumaks'" (Dr Juhan Vilmsi sõnad ja teod)', *Tartu Ülikooli ajaloo küsimusi* 43 (2015): 93; Kalling, 'The Application of Eugenics in Estonia', 58.

¹⁰⁴ Laineste, 105.

¹⁰⁵ Jalak, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Kalling, 'Dr Juhan Vilmsi sõnad ja teod', 93.

showed that, at least in 1938, the flaring German anti-Semitism corresponded to the increase of every anti-Semitism in Estonia.¹⁰⁷ It would not be a surprise for an *ERK Magazine* reader to learn about ‘Jewish economic exploitation’ in Estonia, which conjured up in his mind the dark imagery of a Jew-spider with a huge nose eating a poor man alive.

1.3 Juhan Vilms and Intermarriage

Considering the ERK’s hostility toward national minorities and fear of assimilation, it is curious that the 1933 ERK Union manifesto did not cover the issue of intermarriage. The ERK’s overlapping membership with the EEGS and their shared concern of the Estonian nation’s biological and intellectual qualities, however, meant that the intermarriage issue would inevitably be put on the table. In early 1936, eugenicist Juhan Vilms published in *ERK Magazine* a briefing of a closed-door Tallinn ERK discussion about intermarriage and its impact from a national political perspective. This document, which fundamentally rejects intermarriage, remains the most comprehensive the ERK has produced on this issue to warn ‘particularly young couples about intermarriage’s difficulties’ in the ‘nation’s biological-psychological life’.¹⁰⁸

Echoing Aul’s view, the document recognises the mixed-blood Estonian people as the product of inevitable intermarriage with, among others, the Germans, the Russians, the Latvians, and the Swedes. Vilms dismisses such ‘erroneous opinions’ as the ‘Estonian people’s need for “blood purification”’ regarding intermarriage. Intermarriage will continue to happen, Vilms believes, and no governmental decree can ban it.¹⁰⁹ After all, intermarriage’s long history means that the Estonian blood has never been ‘pure’ in any sense. Such argument

¹⁰⁷ Weiss-Wendt, *Murder Without Hatred*, 10.

¹⁰⁸ Vilms, ‘Segaabelud’, 20.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 18-19.

echoes with Aul's insistence on the Estonians's multi-racial components. However, this does not mean that intermarriage is in any sense *natural*. Quite the contrary, Vilms emphasises that past racial mixture has happened predominantly by *coercion*, such as in wartime, while 'voluntary mixture' nowadays is a new phenomenon.¹¹⁰ Intermarriage, therefore, becomes one of the contemporary problems *ERK Magazine* should tackle with.

The document takes the stance of intermarriage as 'poison for our national organism', especially regarding the danger of assimilation by the two largest national minorities.¹¹¹ A decade earlier, Vilms wrote a similar warning in a eugenics handbook, but he recommended 'blood-improvement' intermarriages with neighbouring kin-groups like the Finns, the Livs, and the Latvians.¹¹² In this briefing, nevertheless, he does not make an exception for intermarriage with 'kin-groups'. Intermarriage should be rejected because it hinders the harmonious family life, as well as the child's 'intellectual development', 'patriotic upbringing', and the 'integrity of patriotic mentality'.¹¹³ Consequently, intermarriage only produces inadequate children to carry forth Estonian nationalism and to fulfil the national organism's mission. Besides, Vilms argues that no benefit comes with intermarriage. Contrary to the traditional degenerative fear of the Estonians' low vitality, he claims that, based on various statistics, the Estonian vitality is no worse than other peoples, hence no need to resort to intermarriage to increase birth rate. He also cites Aul's Saaremaa research to show that children of mixed parentage are not more talented.¹¹⁴ Without necessity or benefit, but with very tangible harms to the national organism, intermarriage should no longer be an option.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 19.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 19.

¹¹² Kalling, 'The Application of Eugenics in Estonia', 58.

¹¹³ Vilms, 'Segaabelud', 19-20.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 18.

The briefing gives the impression that the ERK's top objection to intermarriage is cultural, not biological. Indeed, many *ERK Magazine* contributors, like Oskar Loorits or Georg Meri, conceptualised the Estonian nation primarily in terms of the distinct culture and language.¹¹⁵ This briefing's conclusion, nevertheless, points out that the intermarriage issue concerns the 'nation's biological-psychological life'.¹¹⁶ Such confusion is coupled by the curious absence of any reference to 'race' in the text. This semantic prudence stands in sharp contrast with Vilms's bold wording a decade ago, when he passionately and sensationally describes 'communism's threat to Estonia's racial hygiene' by plotting to assassinate the political and social leaders with racially superior elements.¹¹⁷ A page later, he claims that marrying Russians can 'corrupt the Estonian race', because 'scientifically, it is not recommended to marry' racially distant peoples.¹¹⁸ The reason of this intermarriage briefing's reticence on racial and biological matters, in fact, was its sensitive nature and potential censorship. Just half a year ago, in September 1935, Nazi Germany passed the so-called 'Blood Protection Law', prohibiting intermarriage between Jews and gentiles for eugenic reasons.¹¹⁹ The briefing also hints at its origin by referring to 'Greater German propaganda' and 'blood purification' as the context for this Tallinn ERK discussion on intermarriage. Thus, the document's careful wording dissociates the ERK from the accusation of 'German racism' while addressing this timely topic regarding the Estonians' biological quality. Finally, this

¹¹⁵ See, for example, Oskar Loorits, 'Kas oleme ida või lääne päritolu?', *ERK* 3 (1936): 49-53; and Georg Meri, 'Võitlus hinge pärast', *ERK* 6 (1933): 147.

¹¹⁶ Vilms, 'Segaabiellud', 20.

¹¹⁷ Juhan Vilms, 'Kommunismi hädaoht Eesti tõutervisele', *Vaba Sõna* 1 (1925): 16.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹¹⁹ Paul Weindling, *Health, Race, and German Politics Between National Unification and Nazism, 1870-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 531.

briefing also reaffirms the emphasis on quality over quantity in the elitist ERK's population policy.

The ERK manifesto on intermarriage is also a response to early twentieth-century Estonian intellectuals' discussions on miscegenation.¹²⁰ It dismisses Grenzstein's pro-miscegenation argument based on the need to increase the Estonians' vitality, while chastising Ernits' enthusiasm for racial purity in a biological sense. Meanwhile, the intermarriage manifesto is a clear departure from Ridala's and Vilms's earlier recommendation to mix with 'close races'. Rather, it stresses how intermarriage prevents marital harmony and the children's patriotic family education. Without an explicit endorsement, though, the ERK briefing does echo Ernits' biological conception of the nation, assuming the modern mixed-race Estonian nation as a new crystallisation with a core racial element to be treasured. The intermarriage manifesto, therefore, carefully treads historical and contemporary constraints to arrive at a conclusion addressing both the cultural and biological concerns of ERK members and their various backgrounds. Intermarriage is firmly rejected, and the Estonian nation's primacy proudly asserted.

An analysis of *ERK Magazine* contents and their contributors' beliefs reveal that racialised discourses and biological vocabulary enjoy wide currency on the platform of the nationalist club's organ. They can be identified in pieces about racial anthropology and nationalist historiography, as well as attacks on national minorities. But most importantly, the ERK belief of the nation as a living organism forms the important biological premise through which the readers are expected to understand these writings. In particular, the Estonians' biological vulnerability to assimilation spurred the ERK and *ERK Magazine* to firmly steer the nation away from the dangerous waters of foreign influences.

¹²⁰ See my first chapter for more details.

CONCLUSION

Despite the ERK's determination, the complete 'nationalisation' of Estonia—the complete subjugation of the personal to the national—was never fulfilled. Even in *ERK Magazine*'s very last issue in 1940, a contributor complained about the excess of foreign-sounding names among artists and academics. Resorting to public shaming, he listed illustrious names such as Adamson-Eric and August Jansen.¹ Prominent figures' reluctance to respond to the surname estonianisation movement was a theme already in late 1936, almost two years after the launch of the aggressive state-sponsored campaign. Edgar Kant, representing the ERK Union, signed a joint petition with several other patriotic organisations to demand explanations from those 'distinguished leaders in our public life' who had yet changed their surnames. The petition slammed those elites who represented the Estonian state and people by foreign-sounding names.² Despite the state-sponsored and ERK-endorsed pressure to estonianise surnames, some continued unfettered. August Torma, the First Republic's last ambassador to London (1934-1971), only changed his surname from *Schmidt* in 1940, shortly before the Soviet annexation of Estonia.³

The new Soviet regime moved swiftly to liquidate the ERKs, the ERK Union, and *ERK Magazine* on the charge of their 'reactionary activity' that stood 'contrary to the Estonian people's interests'. The additional charge of 'ties with foreign reactionary circles' were brought against the ERK and the Tallinn ERK, the two ERKs that the chief of internal security

¹ O. Loo. (Oskar Loorits?), 'Aeg on loobuda võõrapäraseist nimedest', *ERK* 3 (1940): 106-108.

² Also featured among the signing parties were the *Kaitseliit* and the Estonian Student Union. See 'Organisatsioonide märgukiri hr. Riigivanemale perekonnanime eestistamise asjus', *ERK* 6 (1936): 114-115.

³ See Tiina Tamman, *The Last Ambassador: August Torma, Soldier, Diplomat, Spy* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), 11-12, 101-102.

targeted first. This highlighted their leading positions among the seven existing ERKs.⁴

Prominent ERK figures generally avoided the worst of the brief Soviet occupation (1940-1941). In the subsequent Nazi occupation (1941-1944), some assumed new academic positions and were involved in various degrees of collaboration. Kant became the University of Tartu's new rector; Aul headed the university's Institute of Anthropology and Racial Studies; and Vasar worked as the deputy director of education under the Estonian Self-Administration.⁵ Some were less fortunate. Arrested by the NKGB in 1941, Särgava was sentenced to death a year later in a Siberian prison.⁶ Eduard Roos, the important editor of *ERK Magazine* and other ERK publications, was deported to Siberia in 1945 and only returned to his homeland in 1957.⁷ Vilms, lecturer at Tallinn University of Technology (1940-1943), was interrogated by the Nazis before his escape to Finland in 1943, and subsequently to Sweden and Argentina.⁸ Soon, in 1944, many ERK members would share his fate. Among many others, Kant, Uluots, Ein, Aavik, Vasar, Loorits, and Salurand escaped to Sweden, Canada, and the United States. They all died in their forced exile. Aul was an exception who stayed behind the Iron Curtain, but never renounced his belief in race science.

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⁴ ERA.852.1.2339, p.1; ERA.852.1.2353, p.1; ERA.852.1.2342, p.1; ERA.852.1.2349, p.1; 'ERK-id suleti', *Sakala*, 3 July 1940.

⁵ Buttimer, 73; Kalling and Heapost, 97-99; 'Juhan Vasar', *Album Academicum Universitatis Tartuensis 1918-1944*, accessed 15 August 2017, http://www.ra.ee/apps/andmed/index.php/nimed/view?id=5451&_xr=eNpLtDK0qs60MrBOtDKGMIqtDI2sllpSC0tTi0v0ExNLS5SAYhZWSgWpRal5mbmZIK6pIVJZYnFiEYhtaKVUCKUNlaxrawEzGRIG.

⁶ 'Coetus 1917/1918', *Korp! Fraternitas Estica*, accessed 15 August 2017, <https://www.cfe.ee/album-esticum?show=1917#A897>.

⁷ 'Eduard Roos', *Album Academicum Universitatis Tartuensis 1918-1944*, accessed 15 August 2017, http://www.ra.ee/apps/andmed/index.php/nimed/view?id=8913&_xr=eNpLtDK0qs60MrBOtDKGMIqtDI2sllpSC0tTi0v0ExNLS5SAYhZWSgWpRal5mbmZIK6JlVJQfn4xiGlopVQIpQ2VrGtrART7GMs%253D.

⁸ Kalling, 'Dr Juhan Vilmsi sõnad ja teod', 85.

The ERK's radical right politics invites a rigorous comparison with the most well-known interwar Estonian radical right organisation, the Veterans' League.⁹ Both organisations exalted an organic nation that trumped all class and party divisions.¹⁰ But their concepts of organic nationalism differed greatly. With an estimated 25,000 members from all professions and high working-class support, the Veterans' League upheld a more horizontally imagined comradeship united by the nation and sublimated from the war of independence's 'brotherhood of the trenches'. Though the League argued for a strong leader, its ideological hierarchy distinguished rather between those who followed its 'spirit' and the rest of the mass.¹¹ In contrast, the elitist ERK only had 121 members by December 1931.¹² Boasting of prominent public figures and intellectuals among its ranks, the ERK imagined the national organism hierarchically. The 'nationalist elites' of historians and academics in the ERK would direct the organism's brain and sacrifice for the mass. The ERK and *ERK Magazine's* ideological stance on inequality was reinforced by their eugenic emphasis on quality. As Vilms put it bluntly, 'Human beings are not of the same value, so they also can't always be equal!'¹³ Also, the biological essentialism and racial classification—evident in Aul's,

⁹ See Stanley G. Payne, *A History of Fascism, 1914-1945* (Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 324; Roger Griffin, ed., *Fascism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 215-216. The Veterans' League has been variously referred to as 'Freedom Fighters', 'EVL' or 'vaps / vapsid'. For terminology, see Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia*, 1; Andres Kasekamp, 'The Estonian Veterans' League: A Fascist Movement?', *Journal of Baltic Studies* 24.3 (1993): 263; Andres Kasekamp, 'Fascism by Popular Initiative: The Rise and Fall of the Vaps Movement in Estonia', *Fascism* 4.2 (2015): 155; David J. Smith, *Estonia: Independence and European Integration* (London: Routledge, 2001): 18-23.

¹⁰ Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia*, 65-66.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 64-66, 73, 91-93.

¹² ERA.2698.1.6, pp. 81-83. It would be safe to assume that, even including other ERKs across the country, their total membership could not have exceeded 250-300. Unfortunately, the Tallinn ERK's name list did not survive. By December 1937, ERK membership had decreased to 100, many of which perhaps registered instead in the Tallinn ERK. See ERA.2698.1.11, pp. 18-19.

¹³ Vilms, *Erakondadeta ühikonna poole*, 92.

Perandi's, Maide's, and other *ERK Magazine* contributors' writings—offered the ERK another tool to conceptualise hierarchy. In opposition to the ERK's biological nationalism, the Veterans' League and their organ *Võitlus* specifically dismissed race and 'anthropological or ethnographic curiosities' as inadequate measure of one's worth. For them, it was the spirit that mattered.¹⁴ The Veterans' populist yet 'democratic' stance thus contrasted sharply with ERK's ideologically elitist organic nationalism, which did not conceive every member of the nation equally.

Even the ERK's organisational structure reflected its elitist nature. From its very inception, the ERK aspired to provide guidance for the nation state, hence the tripartite system for deliberating and drafting political proposals. The ERK also demonstrated greater willingness to work with the political establishment to achieve its goals. Speaking of entry requirements, as any new membership application must be supported by three ERK signatories, such semi-closed nature was not conducive to mass membership. Rather, it perpetuated the ERK's homogenous and elitist nature.¹⁵ Indeed, the ERK had no ambition for mass mobilisation. Unlike the Veterans' League, the ERK had no paramilitary wing. Female members, though not forbidden in the ERK constitution, did not exist at all. Meanwhile, the Veterans' League not only recruited women, but also set up a women's section which enjoyed 'honourable and equal position' with other internal corporatist sections.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the Veterans' corporatist thinking remained rather incomplete, while the ERK already outlined corporatist structure for the constitutional amendment, presented at the *Riigikogu* committee,

¹⁴ Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia*, 73.

¹⁵ ERA.2698.1.13, p.3.

¹⁶ However, women were barred from the League's highest positions. Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia*, 85.

and detailed it in the ERK Union manifesto.¹⁷

But these two radical right organisations also targeted different enemies. The Veterans' League attacked the political parties for hijacking democracy and fragmenting the nation, but above all, it abhorred Marxism, the Socialists, and the Soviet Union. Spurred by a heightened perception of the Red Threat, the Veterans' League embraced Nazi Germany and Hitler as the powerful force to withstand Communist aggressions.¹⁸ Communism, though, was not the biggest threat for the ERK. Indeed, the ultranationalist club first gained attention by criticising *Looming's* 'internationalism'. But it argued rather about a state-subsidised magazine's obligation to preach patriotism than against internationalism itself. Both the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany were perceived by the ultranationalist club as threats to Estonia's security. Often, *ERK Magazine* slashed out against Germany's territorial ambitions in the Baltics, against Baltic German minorities' Nazi sympathies, and to a lesser extent, against the Russian (and Seto) population as Soviet propaganda's easy prey.

For the ERK and *ERK Magazine*, the biggest threats were the German, Russian, and Jewish minorities, plus those Germanised and Russified Estonians. Pathologised and biologised, their existence was deemed as 'cancer' or 'tumour', fundamentally dangerous and alien to the Estonian national organism. Therefore, their poisonous influence in the organic nation must be eliminated, their cultural autonomy abolished or subjected to the Estonian nation state's control, and their economic ownership nationalised. Even their biological constitutions were imagined differently, a view endorsed by race science and Perandi's 'scientific genealogy'. Aul's argument of Estonia's high percentage of the Nordic racial elements further affirmed the Estonians' superior biological value and close affinity with the

¹⁷ Nõges, 56-57. His proposal allocates 20 out of 100 seats in the *Riigikogu* to represent profession-based groups.

¹⁸ Kasekamp, *The Radical Right in Interwar Estonia*, 70-73, 77.

Scandinavians.¹⁹ However, *ERK Magazine* deemed the Nordic race as biologically vulnerable to assimilation. So the Estonians—given that the majority only possessed weak national consciousness—must be defended from the assimilative effects of German and Russian minorities. Seeing the danger of assimilation and weakened national consciousness in intermarriage, the ERK thus strongly discouraged marrying non-Estonians. Therefore, for the ERK, the cultural and biological differences between the Estonians and the minorities should be recognised, guarded, and used to inform policy making. Despite avowed anti-German sentiments, such politicised biological essentialism evident in *ERK Magazine* shared much in common with Nazi ideology.

Given the ERK's hatred of minorities, biological nationalism, as well as anti-liberal and anti-Marxist creed, we must ask: Was the ERK fascist? Despite the limited scope of this study, I am tempted to give some preliminary answers. Following Roger Griffin's definition of the core of fascism as a 'palingenetic form of populist ultra-nationalism', I argue that the ERK exhibited extensive fascist tropes.²⁰ The ERK's palingenetic myth was well illustrated by Oskar Loorits's hostility to 'Indo-Germanism'. In an ERK debate, he claimed that the German conquest and colonisation destroyed the Estonian culture, and the Estonians degenerated physically and spiritually under 700 years of German slavery.²¹ Thus, the ERK's mission was to continue the unfinished business of the National Awakening, bringing the Estonians to recognise their worth, and setting ablaze the dormant patriotism living in them, so as to better serve the national organism's interest. However, in contrast to the Veterans' League, the ERK

¹⁹ Arguing for Estonia's 'Baltoskandia' and Northern European orientation, Kant borrowed Sten De Geer's nine-point definition of Baltoskandia, one of which being 'the core habitus of the Nordic race'. Aul's study of Estonia's Nordic racial elements was also a response to De Geer. See Edgar Kant, 'Eesti geograaafilisest kuuluvusest', *ERK* 7-8 (1935): 139-140.

²⁰ Griffin, 4.

²¹ 'Kes tõi eestlastele ristiisu?', *Sakala*, 13 April 1933.

was decisively elitist instead of populist, exhibiting neither ‘charismatic form of politics’ nor ambitions for mass mobilisation.²²

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This study’s strength lies in its comparative framework and interpretive close reading. Through close reading, this study challenges Karjahärm’s dismissal of the concepts of racial inequality and hierarchy in early Estonian intellectuals’ discussions.²³ Rather, I have shown that they often implied ready subscription of Western racialist thinking and Nordic supremacism. My careful examination of ERK ideology and *ERK Magazine* articles also reveals how quality was strong emphasised over quantity in ultranationalists’ eugenic thinking. Thus, this study provides the ultranationalist perspective as a welcome addition to Kalling’s emphasis on interwar Estonian eugenicists emphasised more pro-natalist approaches to respond to the small nation’s fear of extinction.²⁴ Focusing on ultranationalists’ grievances, this study also highlights the ERK’s intense hostility and suspicion of minorities, which contrasts sharply with interwar Estonia’s relative ethnic homogeneity and progressive provision of cultural autonomy. Furthermore, my comparative approach contextualises the ERK and *ERK Magazine*’s biological nationalism and eugenic concerns in the similar trans-Atlantic pattern. The Swedish connection of Lundborg and the SIRB, so essential in Aul’s race anthropological studies, also calls for attention to the thin line between race science and racial nationalism. This study, therefore, shows the ERK and its publication’s heavy

²² Griffin, 5.

²³ Karjahärm, 1361.

²⁴ Kalling, ‘The Application of Eugenics in Estonia’, 49, 64-65, 68.

implication in the propagation of a biologized discourse of ultranationalism that endorsed elitist authoritarianism, corporatism, racial nationalism, and eugenic thinking.

The particular focus on the discourse of the biologized nation limits this study's ambition. It does not pretend to offer an exhaustive account of the ERK and *ERK Magazine*. A more comprehensive treatment of the elitist ultranationalist club is still to come.

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