

CARL DIEM'S "ORGANISATION PLAN FOR PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN BULGARIA" 1937

"Plan de organización de la educación física en Bulgaria" de Carl Diem, 1937

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Abstract

In the middle of the 1930s, sport in young Bulgaria was in a deficient state not only in the eyes of its government, but also in those of foreign observers. The "Law on the Physical Education of Youth", passed in 1931, did not seem to fulfill the expectations placed in it, which is why the government asked for advice and the preparation of a general plan by an expert to be sent by the German Reich. Carl Diem, internationally known and respected at least since the 1936 Olympic Games, stayed in the country in the fall of 1937 and drafted the requested plan, which contained a concept for the future organisation of national sports, the construction of sports facilities and the training of "gymnastics teachers" on more than 60 pages, including annexes and an analysis of the current situation.

The present study attempts a synoptic-descriptive presentation of this "Organisation Plan for Physical Education in Bulgaria", which was groundbreaking for national sports.

Keywords: Carl Diem, Organisation plan, Physical education, Sport in Bulgaria, Gymnastics teacher training.

Resumen

A mediados de los años 30, el deporte en la joven Bulgaria no sólo era deficitario a ojos de su gobierno, sino también de los observadores extranjeros. La "Ley de Educación Física de la Juventud" aprobada en 1931 no parecía cumplir las expectativas depositadas en ella, por lo que el gobierno solicitó el asesoramiento y la elaboración de un plan general por parte de un experto que sería enviado por el Reich alemán. Carl Diem, conocido y respetado internacionalmente desde los Juegos Olímpicos de 1936 a más tardar, estuvo en el país en otoño de 1937 y redactó el plan solicitado, que contenía un concepto para la futura organización del deporte nacional, la construcción de instalaciones deportivas y la formación de "profesores de gimnasia" en más de 60 páginas, incluyendo anexos y un análisis de la situación actual.

El presente estudio intenta hacer una presentación sinóptica-descriptiva de este "Plan para la Educación Física en Bulgaria", que fue pionero para el deporte nacional.

Palabras clave: Carl Diem, Plan de organización, Educación física, Deporte en Bulgaria, Formación de profesores de gimnasia.

Summary of Research Problem

Bulgaria is a relatively young country in the European family of states: It was only in 1878 that this country, located in south-eastern Europe, gained its national independence and thus statehood after 500 years of Ottoman rule, which was characterised from the outset by a mainly Russian, but also German presence. As a result of the “Congress of Berlin”, the great powers of the time appointed Prince Alexander Josef von Battenberg, who came from a morganatic marriage, as “Knyaz” (Prince) of the autonomous Principality of Bulgaria, which he ruled from 1879 to 1886. After his abdication in 1887 due to considerable domestic political turmoil in the principality, which had in the meantime been united with Eastern Rumelia, the regency under the leadership of Prime Minister Stefan Stambolov elected the future Tsar Ferdinand I of Saxe-Coburg as his successor, initially as Prince Regent of the country, which at that time was still formally subject to the Ottoman Empire.¹

With statehood, a general sports movement grew up in Bulgaria, analogous to other European countries, which quickly gained popularity.

This was also accompanied by the emergence of the first sports organisations: One of them, the “Union of Bulgarian Gymnastics Associations ‘Yunak’” (*also named ‘Yunak Gymnastic Society’*)², was founded with the arrival of ten Swiss “gymnastics teachers” in 1898.³ The aim of this association was the “spread and development of gymnastics in Bulgaria, as well as unity and mutual support of the organisations, which should become the healthiest pillar of the young state through education in love of the homeland”.

At the beginning of the 1930s, Bulgaria began to move closer to the German Reich politically, culturally and economically⁴, and especially in the aftermath of the 1936 Olympic Games, German sport in general, but also its organisation and training in this field in particular, received increased attention.

For it was not only the Olympic Games, in which a Bulgarian team was able to participate at all only thanks to a major financial contribution from Germany⁵, and which revealed that physical education was deficient both in terms of the training of physical education teachers and the organisation of physical education in schools, as well as the organisation of sport in the broadest sense and the promotion of competitive sport, and that the need for reform was becoming increasingly pressing.⁶ It was not only the failure of the Bulgarian team at the Olympic Games, but also the realisation of the Bulgarian decision-makers of what they lacked in comparison to other nations, which was becoming more and more evident even before that. All this prompted the Bulgarian government to ask Germany for advice and support in the field of sport. The German government complied with this request by giving Reichssportführer Hans von Tschammer und Osten, as the employer of the sports official Carl Diem, leave of absence to carry out this assignment and sending him to Bulgaria.⁷

During his counselling stay in Bulgaria, Diem came to sobering conclusions without being able to make a qualitative distinction between sport in schools and clubs, which is deficient in both areas.

¹ Confirmation by the Bulgarian parliament took place in the summer of 1887, recognition by the major European powers and the “Porte”, however, only in 1896, the proclamation of independence from the Ottoman Empire and the founding of the Tsardom of Bulgaria finally in the early autumn of 1908.

² Cf. Mitev, L. and E. Vitanova (2020); Bardareva, R. (1991).

In this study, the terms “physical education”, “physical culture” and “sport” are used according to today’s understanding; sport-like activities such as medieval “knights’ games”, “(pre-)revolutionary military training” or similar are not considered here. In this respect, “rifle associations” or folklore ensembles, as they existed before the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878, are not taken into account with regard to organised sporting activities in Bulgaria.

³ Louis-Emil Eyer, Daniel Blanchoud et al.

⁴ See also Zlatarski, V. (2020); Hoppe, H.-J. (1979); Oliver Stein, O. (2011) p. 218 ff.

⁵ Through the mediation of the Bulgarian diplomat Stefan Chaprashikov and thanks to his personal contacts, the German Reich handed over to the Bulgarian government a donation of Philip F. Reemtsma in the amount of 20,000 Reichsmarks.

⁶ Cf. Mitev, L. (2014), p. 70 ff., and Hoppe, H.-J. (1979), p. 47.

⁷ Cf. CuLDA (2009), p. 1344. Diem’s relationship with Tschamer was by no means always free of tension. Examples of their highly ambivalent relationship, especially in terms of foreign sporting policy, can be found in detail in Teichler (1991). For a rather general account of Carl Diem and his relationship to Bulgaria, see Schenk, J. (2021).

In autumn 1937⁸, Diem drafted the “Organisationsplan für die Leibeserziehung in Bulgarien” (“Organisation Plan for Physical Education in Bulgaria”. briefly “Organisation plan”), which was published in Sofia the same year. This stay was later followed by three more short visits to the country. While in 1940 he wrote in his diary entry that his “plan [...] was still a long way off”⁹, two years later he was able to note about his conversation with Georgi Karaivanov on March 23, 1942:

...Das Gesetz über die Hochschule [...] erlassen. 4-jähriges Studium. Turnen als Hauptfach, dazu ein wissenschaftliches Nebenfach. Vier Lehrstühle Medizin, Pädagogik, und 2 Praxis, daneben außerordentliche wissenschaftliche und praktische Lehre. Bis April wird Gesetz entschieden. Karaivanov rechnet mit einem Lehrstuhl und mit Direktorat. Yordanov fällt aus, da mit Jüdin (Inhaberin eines Maniküre-Salons) verheiratet.¹⁰

However, the Organisation plan not only had relevance for the later Sport University and its educational mission, but also a sport-political dimension.

Aims and Objectives of the Study

The subject of this study is a simplified presentation of the situation of institutionalised sport in Bulgaria in the 1930s, focussing on the circumstances of the time, as well as the structural reform initiated with the help of the German sports official Carl Diem with regard to the establishment and academisation of sport as a mass movement. This reform also took place later on the basis of the aforementioned Organisation plan.

This plan, which preceded an analysis of the sport situation in the country and presented reform recommendations on this basis, was the first of its kind for Bulgaria and also provided the basis for science-based, academic training of physical education teachers. It was of decisive importance for the foundation and structure of the State College of Physical Education in Sofia, today’s National Sports Academy “Vasil Levski”.

Organisation and Methodology of the Study

The present study is based on the source texts of the “Organisation plan for Physical Education in Bulgaria”¹¹, the “Report on my activities in Bulgaria, September-November 1937”¹², both about 60 typewritten pages in total, the lecture on “Sport in Bulgaria”¹³ and Diem’s diary entries from this period as well as a number of Bulgarian documents, especially press articles. The “Law on the Physical Education of Bulgarian Youth” of 1931 together with its amendments and changes from 1933 and 1937 and, last but not least, the “Speech of the Minister of National Education in the People’s Assembly on the Draft Law on the Physical Education of Bulgarian Youth” are also taken into account.¹⁴ These texts will be subjected to a comparative analysis and evaluation in the following.

It is also indispensable to consider the research situation on the topic at hand: While in the German-language literature, despite an immense number of studies, articles and research papers on

⁸ Cf. CuLDA (2009), p. 1350. Diem stayed in Bulgaria from 15.09. to 30.11.1937, undertook several trips through the country and at the end of his stay wrote a long article in the newspaper “Zora” in addition to the Organisation plan with appendices and activity report.

⁹ CuLDA (after C.-J. Diem) (2009), p. 1635; Note: The spelling of proper and place names used in the present study corresponds to the transliteration rules published by the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and standardised by law, published in the “Darzhaven vestnik” (State Gazette) No. 19, 13.03.2009, p. 6 f.. Within the quotations, however, the spelling of names used there, which was common in Germany at the time, is retained. All German and Bulgarian quotations were translated by the author.

¹⁰ Ibid, p.1730 “... The law on State College [...] enacted. 4-year course of study. Gymnastics as the main subject, plus a subsidiary scientific subject. Four chairs of medicine, pedagogy, and 2 practice, in addition to extraordinary scientific and practical teaching. The law will be decided by April. Karaivanov expects a chair and a directorship. Yordanov drops out because he is married to a Jewish woman (owner of a manicure salon).” In fact, Georgi Karaivanov became the first director of the “State College for Physical Education” founded in November 1942. He held this post until autumn 1943, when he became head of the youth organisation “Brannik”.

¹¹ 1938 also published in Bulgarian in: “Uchilishten pregled. Organizatsionen otdel”, p. 855 ff (in Bulgarian).

¹² CuLDA (2009), p. 1344 ff.

¹³ Diem, C. (1942), p. 786 ff. Diem gave this lecture in his capacity as Director of the International Olympic Institute on February 18, 1938, to the German-Bulgarian Society in the “Haus der Deutschen Presse” in Berlin, Tiergartenstraße.

¹⁴ Tsankov, Al. (1931).

and about Diem¹⁵, there is almost nothing on the subject of the Organisation plan, if one disregards Frank Becker's brief mention of it in his monograph¹⁶, there are at least a few mentions in the Bulgarian-language literature: In Bulgarian sports historiography of the 1960s and 1970s, he is mentioned by Vasil Tsonkov, Nikola Popov, Natalia Petrova, and Angel Stoychev as one of the advocates of bourgeois sports ideology against which socialist sport was engaged in an ideological struggle. In recent times, after the political changes in Bulgaria, the activities of Carl Diem have been presented in a very limited scope in the research work of Rayna Bardareva with regards to the establishment of the National Sports Academy. Lozan Mitev was the first who, ideologically unencumbered, in his dissertation and several further studies examines the activities of Carl Diem as the first propagandist of the Olympic idea in Bulgaria and as a reformer of sport in Bulgaria.¹⁷

Analyse

Political Environment and Sports Situation in the Country

For a historical understanding of the environment in which Diem was to work in Bulgaria, it is important to note that Bulgaria had to accept considerable territorial losses, pay extremely high reparations and cope with a large population exchange with Greece as well as a wave of refugees from neighbouring states as a result of the new border demarcations, as a consequence of the 1919 Peace Treaty of Neuilly, which is perceived as almost traumatic in the collective Bulgarian memory. The country was thus plunged into a continuing deep social, economic and cultural crisis, as well as ongoing domestic and foreign political instability, alternating between coups and coups d'état and various government reshuffles.

Bulgaria's interwar period was essentially marked by four more significant events:

1. The civil war triggered in 1923 with the connivance of the Tsar by the June coup by officers against the coalition government led by Aleksandar Stamboliyski and the unsuccessful attempt at a counter-coup within the framework of the so-called September Uprising under communist leadership.

2. The 1926 "Refugee loan" brokered by the League of Nations and granted through a consortium of British, Italian, Swiss, Dutch and American banks, which, similar to the Dawes Plan in Germany, was intended to ease the country's reconstruction and the difficult situation of Bulgarians from Macedonia and Aegean Thrace who had been resettled in Bulgaria by the armistice or peace agreement. In fact, this loan brought about a release for Bulgaria from the tight reparations clamp by reducing the country's heavy dependence on French banks for making reparations payments through the transfer of war debt shares to American and British banks and thus also efforts by France to influence Bulgaria.

3. The "Great Depression" of 1929 and the following years did not spare Bulgaria, but due to the country's lower level of development in industry, banking and finance as well as agriculture at that time, the effects were not quite as dramatic as in the western industrialised countries. The depression in Bulgaria was triggered by the bankruptcy of the wholesale company "Baklevi Brothers" from Ruse and the subsequent loss of confidence in the Bulgarian banking system. A targeted subsidy policy in the agricultural sector and rural areas meant that this sector, which later in the 1930s generated about 60% of the gross domestic income and employed about two-thirds of the population, came through the depression years somewhat less damaged.

4. As a result of a government crisis that had been smouldering for a long time, in fact since 1931, in which the tsar initially replaced acting ministers or the army leadership, the May Putsch of 1934 finally took place on 19 May under the leadership of the anti-constitutional "Military

¹⁵ The so-called "Diem debate" is not the subject of the present study due to its scope, the contradictory nature of its content and its only rather subordinate relevance in the specific case. In this concern cf. Becker, F. (2019), Kluge, V. (2002), Krüger, M. (2010) et al.

¹⁶ Becker, F. (2019), p. 580 ff.

¹⁷ Mitev, L. (2002).

League”, an association of active and reserve officers, and the political circle “Zveno”. The forced abdication of the Tsar was foreseen in case he would not submit to the demands of the putschists. Under this pressure, the tsar issued various directives in the following days to dissolve parliament, abolish the state “Constitution of Tarnovo”, appoint a new government under Kimon Georgiev, merge individual ministries, dismiss senior officers and more. Immediately afterwards, parties and trade unions were also banned. With the help of officers loyal to the king, Boris III finally succeeded in having Prime Minister Georgiev replaced in January 1935 and later also the leadership of the “military alliance”. “Zveno” fell into political isolation and Boris III held sole power in the country until his death in 1943.

Regardless of the political upheavals, Bulgaria was able to record a gradual economic upswing during the 1930s, which became noticeable through modernisation measures, especially in the agricultural sector and food production. At the same time, foreign economic and trade relations with Germany intensified, which, however, also led to an increasingly strong political and cultural influence of Germany on Bulgaria.¹⁸

Although there was a gradual, if not satisfactory, improvement in the economic situation and material living conditions compared to the immediate post-war situation in 1918, at least until Bulgaria later joined Germany in the war, many of the necessary material and infrastructural prerequisites were still lacking, for example to meet more ambitious educational demands and legal requirements. This was also true in the field of modern sport.

A sports movement comparable to the “physical exercise culture” that had already developed in Western countries about 100 years earlier only began in Bulgaria parallel to the liberation from Ottoman rule and in a veritable avalanche from about the mid-90s of the nineteenth century onwards. The enthusiasm for this continued for decades despite all adversities and shortcomings, which meant that there was a high degree of open-mindedness and willingness to reform in the country, at least from an idealistic point of view. Diem himself later wrote:

Auf der einen Seite muss man sich vor Augen halten, dass sich Bulgarien in einem politischen Zwischenstadium befindet. Die Demokratie ist aufgehoben und der autoritäre Staat noch nicht da. Für diesen fehlt es an einer geistigen Leitlinie und der Organisation der geistigen Exekutive. ... Für das bulgarische Volk kommen die neuen Sportgedanken nicht unvorbeireitet. Der Bulgare ist ein fleißiger Zeitungsleser, und ich musste oft genug darüber staunen, ... wie weit das Verständnis für die Notwendigkeit einer gesunden Körpererziehung sich verbreitet hatte. Die Bulgaren wussten bisher nur nicht recht, wie sie die vielerorts gehegten Gedanken ausführen sollten.¹⁹

With regard to sport, Diem does not ignore the existing potential of school and club youth as well as of parts of the teaching staff, but at the same time he also points out the differences between urban and rural regions as well as between the individual types of schools.²⁰

But what was the concrete reason for drawing up the organisation plan relevant for the further development of physical education and sport in Bulgaria in the broadest sense?

¹⁸ The armament sector is also significant here: in February 1936, the Bulgarian government released funds in the amount of 1.81 billion leva for armament procurement and modernisation. Almost simultaneously, Tsar Boris III received 12 Dornier 11 bombers and 12 Arado 65 fighter planes as a “gift” from Göring on the occasion of his birthday. Attempts to evade this courtship and procure armaments in the Soviet Union failed because of differing views on the procedure and because the SU ambassador in Bulgaria, Raskolnikov, was not expelled in the course of Stalin’s “purgings”. Likewise, procurement efforts in Sweden, Italy, Great Britain and France were unsuccessful, which is why the Bulgarian military finally fell into a unilateral and almost total dependence on the German Reich.

A comprehensive description and analysis of the Bulgarian economic situation between the two world wars can be found in Dimitrov, M. (2014).

¹⁹ CuLDA (2009), p. 1350 *On the one hand, one must bear in mind that Bulgaria is in an intermediate political stage. Democracy has been abolished and the authoritarian state is not yet here. For this, there is a lack of a spiritual guideline and the organisation of the spiritual executive. ... For the Bulgarian people, the new sporting ideas do not come unprepared. The Bulgarian is a diligent reader of newspapers, and I had to marvel often enough ... at how widespread the understanding of the necessity of a healthy physical education had become. The Bulgarians just didn't know quite how to carry out the ideas that were cherished in many places.*

²⁰ Cf. CuLDA (2009) p. 1347 (“Report...”, paragraph I d “Settlement”).

In 1937, the Bulgarian government asked the German government for basic expert advice in the field of physical education, and this came specifically in the person of Carl Diem.²¹ The background to this request for advice may have been the mediocre performance of Bulgarian athletes at the 1936 Olympic Games²², but also the country's own realisation that it needed to catch up and reform its organised sporting activities.

At the time of his most significant trip for Bulgarian sport to Sofia, Carl Diem was already a recognised and, in the eyes of many foreign observers, proven and knowledgeable sports official, albeit one who was not politically uncontroversial, especially among the German sports authorities. In addition, his experience as a long-time prorektor of the German University of Physical Education (DHfL)²³ as well as his success as organiser of the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin seemed to predestine him for the task as a government advisor.

The fact that Carl Diem was chosen as government advisor was certainly also due to the Bulgarian ambassador in Berlin at the time, Stefan Chaprashikov²⁴, for whom as deputy president of the IOC and on the basis of numerous previous meetings Diem was no stranger.

Diem's task was to “elaborate a general plan for physical education in schools and clubs”²⁵, based on the “Закон за физическото възпитание на българската младеж”, (*“Law on the Physical Education of Bulgarian Youth” - Bulgarian abbreviation: ЗФVBM*) (), which had been in existence since 1931, the implementing decree of December 25, 1933²⁶ and the amending and supplementary law of 1937 relating to both²⁷. Diem later wrote about this in the report on his trip to Bulgaria:

Dieses Gesetz ist im wesentlichen auf Grund deutscher Gesetzesvorschläge aus dem Jahre 1916 ausgearbeitet. Diese wurden seinerzeit nach meinen Entwürfen von den deutschen Turn- und Sportverbänden dem Kriegsministerium vorgelegt und bezweckten die Einführung einer Sportpflicht für die schulentlassene Jugend und eine Spielplatzbaupflicht für die Gemeinden. Das bulgarische Gesetz schließt sich diesen Vorschlägen an, erweitert aber die Zeit der Verpflichtung bis zum 21. Lebensjahre.²⁸

“Die Anwendung dieses Gesetzes in Bulgarien festzustellen” (To ascertain the application of this law in Bulgaria) was also part of his tasks and finally led him to the laconic conclusion “dass das Gesetz im wesentlichen nicht durchgeführt ist” (“that the law is essentially not implemented”).²⁹

²¹ The invitation even extended to Diem's wife Liselott. By decision of the Council of Ministers on March 16, 1937, Foreign Minister G. Kyoseivanov with a proposal and request to Tsar Boris III and obtained his “Reshenie za vazlagane na d- r Karl Diem i negovata sapruga da prouchat i predlozhat proekt za reorganizirane telesnoto vazpitanie na uchilishtata i izvanuchilishtnata mladezh v tsarstvoto i da nachertayat osnovite na edna planomernost vav vazpitatelniya i sastezaten metod”, “Darzhaven vestnik”, n° 78 from April 10, 1937, in: Sbornik na deystvuvashite zakoni po Ministerstvoto na narodnoto prosveshthenie, Sofia 1940, p. 400.

²² A total of 27 Bulgarian athletes took part in gymnastics, shooting (50m prone), athletics (marathon, decathlon), equestrian sports (eventing), cycling (track and road races) and fencing, but they did not win any medals or even came in first.

²³ He held this office since the foundation of the DHfL in 1920, but had to resign in 1933 due to pressure from the new rulers.

²⁴ Stefan Chaprashikov, also close to the Bulgarian Tsar's court, was elected a member of the IOC in September 1929 in Lausanne during the 28th session of the IOC and held this post until his suicide in 1944.

²⁵ CuLDA (2009), Ibid.

²⁶ Darzhaven vestnik, 217.

²⁷ Darzhaven vestnik, n° 114 from 28.05.1937 and n° 275 from 11.12.1937.

²⁸ CuLDA (2009), p. 1344. *This law was essentially drafted on the basis of German legislative proposals from 1916. At the time, these were submitted to the War Ministry by the German gymnastics and sports associations according to my drafts and were intended to introduce compulsory sport for young people leaving school and a duty to build playgrounds for the municipalities. The Bulgarian law follows these proposals, but extends the period of obligation until the age of 21. In fact, the law provided for a kind of “step-by-step plan” and social programme that was supposed to integrate the country's completely impoverished and in parts even antisocial youth. It was mainly the social conditions in the country that made it difficult or even impossible to implement the law.*

²⁹ Ibid.

Sports Act of 1931

Although this law was only passed in 1931, it was amended three times in the same year. Further amendments followed in 1937, the last in December of the same year.³⁰ Two of these amendments or additions were essential, as they had not been included before: Firstly, Article 25, which for the first time in Bulgarian history had a separate section for the financing of state-organised sports, and which was already - untypically for a law - formulated in a very detailed manner, now regulated financial matters of sports even more explicitly. Secondly, this same article referred in the added “Note” to Article 13, which had also been reworded by a substantial addition: In this, the Ministry of Public Enlightenment reserved the right to assign a “delegate” of the Ministry to each executive board of an association, as well as to replace the executive board and appoint a managing one in the case of violations of the letter of the law or the discipline of the association. This passage, in turn, was so general that it allowed a lot of room for interpretation and thus sanctions against the sports associations.

The implementing regulation for the law itself did not appear until nine months after it was passed.

What were the essential aspects of the said sports law?

Scope of application (pupils and youth):

- Instruction in physical education compulsory up to the age of 21
- Compulsory in all schools
- Extracurricular organisations in the field of physical education

Time scope:

- 2x per week, 1 hour each, basic sport
- 4 times a week for 25 to 30 minutes each for group exercises and games
- 1x per month (winter), 2x per month (summer) excursions

Contents:

- In primary schools:
 - ½ hour daily games
 - 4 hours weekly excursions to nature, handicraft workshops, factories etc. according to Art. 34 of the National Education Law
- In progymnasia:
 - 1x weekly special instruction
 - 5x. ½ hour group exercises and outdoor games weekly
 - 4 hours per week nature excursions, handicraft workshops, factories etc. according to Art. 43 of the National Education Law
 - Instruction by specialist teachers

Teaching staff:

- Specialist training (courses at home or abroad)
- Before appointment, one-year teacher training and successful state examination
- Appointment by the Minister according to the proposal of a commission at the Ministry of National Education
- Compulsory work in extracurricular physical education organisations, 2-4 hours of which can be counted towards the weekly quota

³⁰ Due to the very short period of time between the completion or handover of the Organisation plan and the passing of the amendments to the law, it can be considered impossible that Diem's ideas were still incorporated into the aforementioned revised sports law, which remained in force in this form until 1944.

Sport for students:

- Compulsory membership in student / university sports organisation
- 2x / week 1 h each

Sport for school leavers / extracurricular sport:

- In local extracurricular sports organisations
- Obligation of all private and public companies and enterprises to ensure that their staff take part in sporting activities
- For more than 100 employees, obligation to provide playgrounds, halls and showers by the companies concerned; threat of a fine in the event of non-compliance.
- Reimbursement of costs by employer for substitute membership in external sports organisation up to 36 leva.
- Sporting activities only after prior and appropriate ministerial approval.
- Obligation of sports organisations to join associations (one association per sport!)
- Pupils' membership only in sports organisations/facilities affiliated to the schools
- Organisation, control and supervision of sports operations by local municipal "councils" under the cross-governmental "Supreme Council for Physical Education"
- Space requirement for playing fields, halls, swimming pools etc. 1 to 5 hectares for up to 20,000 inhabitants, beyond that 3m² per inhabitant.; only one(!) stadium per town (exceptions subject to approval).
- Financing from membership fees, games and competitions, fees from factories and enterprises, state subsidies.
- Establishment of a fund at the ministry of National Education to finance youth sports.

At the time of the plan drawn up by Diem in November 1937, there was university or tertiary training for future teachers with academic aspirations for the majority of school subjects, but not for gymnastics and physical education or its teacher training.³¹

Diem wrote about this:

Die ältere Turnlehrerschaft ist in Kursen des Junak-Turnverbands ausgebildet; einige jüngere Lehrkräfte sind im Ausland gewesen und zwar an verschiedenen Anstalten. Als Ergebnis wurde mir berichtet, dass die an der tschechischen Universität in Prag ausgebildeten Turnlehrer die allerschlechtesten seien, nur wenig besser seien die Ergebnisse an der Hochschule für Leibesübungen in Warschau, dagegen sind sie mit der vierjährigen Ausbildung an der Königlich Ungarischen Hochschule in Budapest zufrieden. Die dort gewonnene Ausbildung ist modern und gründlich. Leitende Stellen haben die Bulgaren nur solchen Lehrkräften anvertraut, die auf der Deutschen Hochschule für Leibesübungen erzogen worden sind; diese halten die 4-6monatigen Turnlehrerkurse des Kultusministeriums ab. Demgemäß ist die jüngere Turnlehrerschaft modern ausgerichtet und gibt einen flotten, natürlichen Turnunterricht. Auch hier wieder beeinträchtigt durch die Gemeinschaftserziehung an Progymnasien, wo sich der Turnunterricht meistens nach den körperlich schwachen Mädchen zu richten hat.³²

³¹ Diem himself, who considered himself a "sportsman" throughout his life, makes no consistent or comprehensible distinction in his Organisation plan between "gymnastics", "sports" and "instruction within the framework of physical education".

³² CuLDA (2009) p. 1345 *The older gymnastics teachers are trained in courses of the Junak gymnastics association; some younger teachers have been abroad at various institutions. As a result, I was told that the gymnastics teachers trained at the Czech University in Prague were the very worst, only slightly better were the results at the College of Physical Education in Warsaw, whereas they were satisfied with the four-year training at the Royal Hungarian College in Budapest. The education gained there is modern and thorough. The Bulgarians have only entrusted leading positions to teachers who were educated at the German University of Physical Education; these teachers hold the 4-6 month gymnastics teacher courses run by the Ministry of Education. Accordingly, the younger gymnastics teachers have a modern orientation and give brisk, natural gymnastics lessons. Again, this is affected by the community education at the Progymnasiums, where the gymnastics lessons are mostly geared to the physically weak girls.*

The Organisation plan and its Annexes - Content and Commentary

The Organisation plan itself clearly goes beyond the aspects of the Sports Act and is divided into eight sections on its 28 typewritten pages (without annexes) in addition to the introduction and summary:³³

- I. School Gymnastics
- II. State Youth Association
- III. The Organisation of the Bulgarian Sports Federation
- IV. Construction of training facilities
- V. Leader³⁴ Training
- VI. Five-year plan, Mission celebration, Start-up time
- VII. Cooperation
- VIII. Conclusion

In addition to this Organisation plan, there are six explanations and appendices, some of which are several pages long and not stringently structured, to which reference is made in the margin of the Organisation plan:

1. Memorandum of the German Reichstag³⁵
2. Detailed guidelines for the “Krum-Youth”³⁶
3. Detailed guidelines for the organisation of sports clubs, the main sports association, performance tests, events.
 - I. Sport clubs
 - II. Operating instructions
 - III. Leader requirements
 - IV. Sports association – “Bulgarsko Yunachestvo”
 - V. Performance tests, Events
4. More detailed guidelines for the calculation of requirements, construction of gymnasiums, playgrounds, sportsfields, swimming pools, etc. Annex: school clothing
 - I. Calculation of requirements
 - II. Facility
 - III. Swimming pools
 - IV. School clothing
5. Leader training
6. Cost accounting scheme; work plan for the six-month start-up period

³³ This study is based on the typewritten text version of the “ORGANISATION PLAN for PHYSICAL EDUCATION in BULGARIA” from the “Sachakten”, folder 508 (number 05KDA2012000036), which is kept in the CuLDA. This document is quoted in the following and according to the original pagination.

Individual passages of text in the document presented to this study are underlined in such an apparently arbitrary manner that one might think of a speech manuscript. Handwritten additions appear here and there, but all of them, as well as the references to the appendices, were included in the Bulgarian translation, which was completed shortly afterwards. The original spelling is used for all citations.

³⁴ The German word is “Führer”. Today’s negative connotation with the lexeme “Führer” should not lead one in retrospect to ascribe to it a meaning in “fascist” interpretation. Rather, in general usage and everyday life at the time, it corresponded to the sense of “leader”, “chief”, “foreman” or the like. This word was unencumbered and found non-political application in writings by Diem and other sports leaders of various political orientations long before the rise of National Socialism.

³⁵ Diem (1942), p. 1134 ff.: Memorandum of the German Reichstag No. 2893 of January 7, 1927, “Why the daily gymnastics lesson?”, prepared by Carl Diem and presented by the “Committee for the Promotion of Physical Exercises”. This report comprised about 32 typewritten pages.

³⁶ It seems reasonable to assume that the “Krum Youth” was the intellectual model for the later “Brannik”. Cf. footnote 38.

Diem himself “confirms” an almost complete identity with the German sporting establishment of the time when he writes in his activity report on the stay in Bulgaria that for the “overall organisation ... he [had] the German model in mind”.³⁷

Diem’s assessment of the status quo and development potential

The Organisation plan itself is not limited to the presentation of what is desirable or required of it for the future. On the contrary, in each section it contains more or less explanatory, sometimes very critical or lengthy thoughts on the status quo of Bulgarian sport in general and in particular. Diem attests that sport as a whole has a low threshold level and a great need for development and catching up. Not only is there a lack of suitable or “properly” trained gymnastics teachers, but the schools’ facilities with courts, halls and equipment also leave much to be desired. In Diem’s opinion the fact that boys and girls are usually taught together is also detrimental to the positive development of school sport.³⁸

Diem’s observations and findings were also based on four trips through the country he had made during his stay in Bulgaria, during which he had noticed the aforementioned shortcomings.

Thus he complains about the serious loss of pupils in the upper classes of primary schools (“... but only 76% remain to the end”) and the progymnasia (“... 70% of the age groups concerned have moved in, of whom in turn only 70% enjoy instruction to the end”) as well as the low coverage of the year groups in the gymnasia (“... 8% of the age groups”).

Im übrigen ist in den bulgarischen Schulen der vorgesehene planmäßige Unterricht durch die unzulänglichen Einrichtungen beeinträchtigt und fällt oft aus. Von 123 Gymnasien mit insgesamt 1500 Klassen haben nur 56 Turnhallen, von 8000 Progymnasien und Volksschulen nur 321 eine Turnhalle, 416 Progymnasien sind ohne Spielhof, ohne Halle und ohne Geräte. Die vorhandenen Spielhöfe sind klein, meistens steinig, die Hallen ebenfalls klein, behelfsmäßig, vielfach zu anderen Zwecken verwandt, Geräte sind planlos zusammengestellt und in schlechtem Zustande.³⁹

The fact that Diem was familiar with the Bulgarian sports law is not only reflected in the fact that he repeatedly refers to it, but also points out gaps: for example, he calls for special attention to be paid to school-leaved youth (15-19 years), who are not sufficiently taken into account in the sports law. Following the example of the Hitler Youth, he suggests the creation of a state youth association, the “Krum Youth”.⁴⁰ In the Organisation plan, he even dedicates an almost three-page appendix to it, in which the “program” is defined in addition to the size, structure and clothing: “... general physical training, tent camps, hiking days, hygienic instruction and civic education,...” and suggests that local sports, military and cultural associations as well as the hunters’ association or young tourists’ association “take over the patronage of a Jugendfähnlein”.⁴¹

The same applies to the restructuring of the association system and extracurricular youth work, which he saw as necessary: “The new Bulgarian Unified Sports Federation under the name ‘Yunachestwo - Federation for Gymnastics and Sport.’⁴² should incorporate the tradition of the

³⁷ CuLDA (2009), p. 1349. References to the “German model” can also be found repeatedly in the Organisation plan itself. See also Becker, F (2019), p. 582 ff.

³⁸ Organisation plan, p. 3f.

³⁹ CuLDA (2009), p. 1344 *In addition, the scheduled lessons in Bulgarian schools are impaired by the inadequate facilities and are often cancelled. Of 123 grammar schools with a total of 1500 classes, only 56 have gymnasiums, of 8000 progymnasia and primary schools, only 321 have a gymnasium, 416 progymnasia have no playground, no hall and no equipment. The existing playgrounds are small, mostly stony, the halls are also small, makeshift, often used for other purposes, equipment is haphazardly arranged and in poor condition.*

⁴⁰ “Krum” youth goes back to the Bulgarian Han (Khan) Krum (“the dreaded”), who lived at the beginning of the 9th century and was considered the most powerful prince, army commander and reformer of a Bulgarian empire.

⁴¹ Diem, C. (1937), Organisationsplan..., Annex 2 “Nähere Richtlinien für die Krum-Jugend”. (*lit. transl. youths company*) In addition, there were “electives” such as rowing, gliding, riding, pioneer service, naval service, motorcycling, scout service for boys and women’s auxiliary and sick service for girls.

⁴² Translates roughly as “Bulgarian heroism”.

Yunak Federation, but also the freshness and spirit of the sports federations”. Here again, he was probably thinking of the German counterpart, the “Deutscher Reichsbund für Leibesübungen”.⁴³

In order to understand and classify the Organisation plan in the context of its time, it is indispensable to study the accompanying “Report” of December 7, 1937⁴⁴, which provides the rationale for the individual sections of the plan.

After a short introduction, the report is divided into four main sections and several subsections:

- I. State of affairs to date
 - a. School
 - b. Club
 - c. Physical constitution
 - d. Settlement
- II. My proposals (five demands in the context of a five-year plan: Daily gymnastics lesson; 3-semester compulsory physical education at universities; state youth as army pre-school; foundation of a unified gymnastics and sports federation as army after-school, leader principle, KdF (abbrev., German: “Strength through joy”); unified system of physical education, various events, sports badge; construction of training facilities
- III. Feasibility
- IV. Final remark

However, as in the Organisation plan, Diem does not only focus on school sport, but also on the association and federation system, which he attests to considerable deficits. Under the umbrella of the Bulgarian Yunak Association (see above), various local Yunak communities were founded throughout the country in the decades following the founding of the state. Later, the Bulgarian National Sports Federation, which was essentially made up of football clubs, the Bulgarian Cycling Federation, and the Bulgarian Ski Federation were added as larger sports organisations. During its existence (1895-1946), the federation had 242 local structures with about 60,000 members. Diem writes about this in his “Report”:

Der älteste aller bulgarischen Verbände ist der Junak (Held)-Turnverband, von den Freiheitskämpfern vor rund 60 Jahren gegründet und patriotisch gerichtet; die turnerische Entwicklung hat mit der patriotischen nicht Schritt gehalten. Es ist mir nicht gelungen, an einem einzigen Übungsabend teilzunehmen, denn sie sollen im wesentlichen nur dann üben, wenn eine Veranstaltung bevorsteht. Tatsächlich waren auch die meisten von mir besuchten Junak-Turnhallen anderweitig besetzt oder unbenutzt; die benutzten erkannte ich daran, daß man vom letzten Übungsabend her die Geräte nicht weggeräumt hatte. Der Betrieb wird hauptsächlich durch jüngere Schüler gestellt, die mit ihren Turnlehrern klassenweise als Jugendgruppe des Junak freiwillig üben und mit Schulentlassung dann, wie das psychologisch zu verstehen ist, auch verschwinden.⁴⁵

In summing up the state of sport in Bulgaria, Diem comes to the sobering and disillusioning conclusion:

- ... dass
1. Das Schulturnen unzulänglich ist,
 2. Die schulentlassene Jugend, von geringsten Ausnahmen abgesehen, keine körperlichen Übungen mehr treibt und
 3. Das Vereinswesen sich zur Zeit unter der Entwicklungsschwelle befindet.

⁴³ Diem, C. (1937): “Organisationsplan ...”, S. 13

⁴⁴ The “report” is a longer diary entry under the title “Bulgaria 15.09.1937 - 30.11.1937 Report on my activities”. This is quoted from in the following.

⁴⁵ CuLDA (2009), p. 1346 *The oldest of all Bulgarian associations is the Yunak (Hero) Gymnastics Association, founded by the freedom fighters about 60 years ago and patriotically directed; the gymnastic development has not kept pace with the patriotic one. I did not manage to attend a single practice evening, as they are essentially only supposed to practice when an event is coming up. In fact, most of the Yunak gyms I visited were also otherwise occupied or unused; the ones that were used I recognised by the fact that they had not put away the equipment from the last practice evening. The gymnasium is mainly run by younger pupils who voluntarily practise with their gymnastics teachers in classes as the Yunak youth group and then disappear when they leave school, as is to be understood psychologically.*

Das Gesetz von 1931 ist nicht durchgeführt und auch so nicht durchführbar.⁴⁶ Die Sportvereinsorganisation wird nicht in der Lage sein, die Jugend aufzunehmen und auszubilden, wenn sie ihr bei Durchführung des Gesetzes neuerdings zugeleitet würde.⁴⁷

Diem's recommendations

In summary, the following focal points of need as well as key findings and recommendations for action can be identified in Diem's "Organisation plan" and "Report":

- Promotion and improvement of sport and gymnastics in schools and clubs (teacher training, equipment and facility construction⁴⁸, intensification and differentiation of teaching and operation)
- Structuring of the clubs and federation system ("standardisation")
- Leader education, needs, training⁴⁹
- Reform organisation (time, finances, staff deployment and interdepartmental cooperation, etc.)⁵⁰

In the chronological presentation of Diem's written testimonies about his stay in Bulgaria, his name article in the newspaper "Zora"⁵¹ (written in a largely positive style) should not be omitted, in which he gives his overall impressions in a friendly manner, appeals for greater sports awareness among school leavers, expresses his gratitude to the institutions supporting him, the officials of the Ministry of Education who met him with open-mindedness and various association leaders, all of whom he praises for their "willingness to sacrifice and unconditional love for sport", whose commitment "deserves to be supported by the state", and goes on to say that "sport as I envisage it can become a great self-educator for Bulgaria and create that national community in whose ranks the Bulgarian can meaningfully spend his free time... and on the occasion of the national sports festival he will feel the strength and unity of the entire people, the great tasks that the future will impose on the Bulgarian people".⁵²

An analysis and evaluation of Diem's trip to Bulgaria cannot do without the reception of the lecture on "Sport in Bulgaria" given to members of the German-Bulgarian Society at the House of German Press in Berlin in 1938.⁵³ In doing so, Diem takes the opportunity to emphasise on several

⁴⁶ At that time, the elements of foreign laws that seemed most suitable to the government of the time were adopted without adapting them to the Bulgarian situation.

⁴⁷ CuLDA (2009), p. 1347 "... that, 1. school gymnastics is inadequate, 2. young people who have left school, with very few exceptions, no longer do any physical exercise, and 3. the club system is currently below the development threshold. The law of 1931 has not been implemented and cannot be implemented in this way. The sports club organisation will not be able to accommodate and train the youth if it were to be directed to it when the law is to be implemented in the future".

⁴⁸ Diem concedes that a good part of the Bulgarian youth is of a level comparable to the habitus of their Western peers, but also recognises the numerous structural deficits in the sports facilities that stand in the way of a prosperous development, which is why corresponding reform efforts are expressly confirmed: "A second authoritarian personality, ..., is the new mayor of Sofia, Ivan Ivanoff, who relies entirely on the urban development plan of the German architect Professor Muessmann. The mayor had asked me to work through this plan with Professor Muessmann with regard to the sports facilities, and I succeeded in inserting a number of previously unplanned, well-located sports fields into the plan and also to design their layout in detail. ... The plan also contains a national stadium, in which the construction ideas of the Reichssportfeld are most happily united." Diem, C. Tagebücher, p. 1350 and copy of the letter to Lord Mayor Ivanov dated November 12, 1937, with a very detailed list of criteria and gradation of requirements.

⁴⁹ For Diem, this aspect is of very special relevance, a "sine qua non", following "proven" German structures (e.g. HJ) and the military (sport as "army pre-school").

⁵⁰ Even though Diem attests to "the Bulgarian's" organisational ability, who has also "shed the 'yawash-yawash' of the Turkish rule that weighed on him for 500 years...", he sees a need for action in organisation and administration: "To implement my plan, I have demanded dictatorial powers for the youth, sports leaders and the leading ministerial department. By the way of normal administration, as I convinced myself, the task could hardly be solved." Diem, C. Tagebücher (*Diaries*), p. 1350.

⁵¹ Issue 5516;

⁵² *Ibd.*

⁵³ Cf. Diem, C. (1942), p. 786 ff. This lecture was published as well in the "Yearbook of the German-Bulgarian Society", 1939 edition, and comprises 14 pages. It is quoted from this lecture in this section.

pages his intensive preparation for the trip, but also to point out his many years of knowledge of the people acting in Bulgaria and of the ancient and recent history of the country.

This speech, which is predominantly well-meaning in its diction and sometimes contains almost pathetic “softeners”⁵⁴, then emphasises - and this may be due to the occasion and the addressees - the good structural conditions that exist in principle in parts of the country

Wenn man ein noch so kleines bulgarisches Dorf besucht, so ragt weithin das stattliche Schulgebäude aus den oft recht einfachen Wohnhäusern heraus.

and the development potential of large parts of the population with regard to sporting performance

Die bulgarische Jugend zeugt von einer ungehobelten Kraft, sie ist wissbegierig und strebsam.

or:

“Ich bitte, dies nicht als unerhörte Kränkung zu betrachten ...”, “... tief bewegt und ergriffen ...”, “... diese Anzeichen des antiken Sports wie ein kleiner Sonnenstrahl ...”, “... unter keinen Umständen den Eindruck entstehen lassen, als sei das bulgarische Schulwesen in irgendeiner Form primitiv ...”, “Ich habe auf meinen Reisen Bulgarien liebgewonnen. ... Welch echte Gastlichkeit, Ehrlichkeit und Grundtüchtigkeit des Volkes! Wirklich ein Arbeits- und Kriegervolk, ... Es lebe Bulgarien!”

but is not sparing in its criticism of the methodology, didactics, organisation as well as the technical and personnel equipment of sporting activities.

In contrast to the Organisation plan and the report, here in the lecture only two paragraphs are devoted to the merging of the various sports organisations under the umbrella of a “state youth association” and the “Leader principle”.

Here, in contrast, Diem’s attention is thus more focused on school sport, the teaching staff largely trained in the “Yunak Gymnastics Association”, individual associations (football, athletics, tennis, swimming, rowing, skiing and tourism), problems, deficits and challenges, whereby he concludes that ultimately only “a rebuilding, (...) which requires many resources” can solve the problems that exist in his view:

Ich habe daher

1. Das Schulturnen in meinen Plan aufgenommen,
2. die Sportpflicht im vorhandenen Gesetz beibehalten, dies aber auf das 19. statt 21. Lebensjahr beschränkt und zur Ableistung dieser Sportpflicht nach Verlassen der Schule soll eine Staatsjugend begründet werden.,
3. Einen großen einheitlich geleiteten Sportverband vorgeschlagen, wie er heute in Deutschland besteht, wie er auch unter ganz anders gelagerten Verhältnissen in Amerika besteht. ...

Im Einzelnen habe ich an den Volksschulen, Progymnasien und Gymnasien die tägliche Turnstunde vorgeschlagen. Das ist ein Ziel, das erst vor kurzem in Deutschland erreicht worden ist... Weiter habe ich eine dreisemestrige Sportpflicht an der Universität in Vorschlag gebracht, um auch bei der akademischen Jugend eine körperliche Ausbildung zu gewährleisten.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ *If you visit a Bulgarian village, however small it may be, the stately school building stands out from the often quite simple residential buildings. ... Bulgarian youth is a source of uncouth strength, it is inquisitive and ambitious. ... “I beg you not to regard this as an outrageous slight ...”, “... deeply moved and moved ...”, “... these signs of ancient sport like a little ray of sunshine ...”, “... under no circumstances give the impression that the Bulgarian school system is in any way primitive ...”, “I have grown fond of Bulgaria during my travels. ... what genuine hospitality, honesty and basic efficiency of the people! Truly a working and warrior people, ... Long live Bulgaria!”*

⁵⁵ *Diem once again shows his good knowledge of foreign conditions by explaining that the “daily gymnastics lesson exists in Sweden and some American schools”. I have therefore 1. included school gymnastics in my plan, 2. recommended compulsory sport to be retained in the existing law, but to limit it to the 19th instead of the 21st year of age, and to establish a state youth for the performance of this compulsory sport after leaving school, 3. proposed a large uniformly governed sports federation, such as exists today in Germany, as it also exists under quite different conditions in America. Specifically, I have proposed daily gymnastics classes at elementary schools, progymnasiums, and high schools. This is a goal that has only recently been achieved in Germany... Furthermore, I have proposed a three-semester compulsory physical education at the university in order to ensure physical education among academic youth as well*

Finally, the question arises whether and to what extent the plan was accepted by the Bulgarian side. At present, only Diem's own legacy and a number of press articles from those weeks are available. Diem himself notes in his "report" with regard to feasibility:

Meine 60 Schreibmaschinenseiten umfassende Ausarbeitung wurde dem König auf dessen Wunsch vorgelegt, unter den Ministern verbreitet und im Ministerrat beraten. Der Ministerpräsident⁵⁶ sprach mir bei meinem Abschiedsbesuch im Namen des Ministerrates den Dank für die geleistete Arbeit aus und stellte in Aussicht, dass der Plan, der schon in der ersten Lesung beraten sei, bei der Verabschiedung angenommen werde. Der Kriegsminister⁵⁷ hatte sich vom König die Zustimmung zur Begründung einer "Staatsjugend"⁵⁸ erbitten und unmittelbar nach meinem ihm gehaltenen Vortrag einen Sonderausschuss eingesetzt, dessen Zweck im Wesentlichen war, die Zustimmung des in Bulgarien bedeutenden Reserveoffiziers-Verbandes, der Jäger- und Turn- und Sportverbände herbeizuführen, was gelang.

Der Besuch des Reichsjugendführers⁵⁹ kam außerordentlich glücklich in der Zeit der Beratungen. ... Der Reichsjugendführer hat dem Kriegsminister angeboten, die in Aussicht genommenen Jugendführer in Deutschland ausbilden zu lassen. ... Wir dürfen erwarten, daß Jugendführer und Turnlehrer nach Deutschland zur Ausbildung entsandt werden und ein deutscher Sportbauarchitekt nach Bulgarien berufen wird.⁶⁰

If his diary entries are to be believed, Diem was in a thoroughly optimistic mood with regard to the feasibility of his plan and the momentum it would generate, provided that a few basic prerequisites would be put in place:

Die Sportgemeinde von Sofia, ..., war darüber (Anm. des Verf.: Sportstättenbau) offensichtlich erfreut. Für das bulgarische Volk kommen die neuen Sportgedanken nicht unvorbereitet. Der Bulgare ist ein fleißiger Zeitungsleser, und ich mußte oft genug darüber staunen, wie weit ... das Verständnis für die Notwendigkeit einer gesunden Körpererziehung sich verbreitet hatte. Die Bulgaren wussten bisher nur nicht recht, wie sie die vielerorts gehegten Gedanken ausführen sollten.

Zur Durchführung meines Plans habe ich diktatorische Vollmachten für die Jugend-. Die Sportführer und die leitende Ministerialabteilung gefordert. Auf dem Wege der normalen Verwaltung wäre die Aufgabe ... kaum zu lösen.

Der Bulgare ist fähig zu organisieren. Er hat das „Jawasch-Jawasch der türkischen Herrschaft, die 500 Jahre auf ihm lastete, abgestreift, ... Ich habe niehmal's zu warten brauchen, was auf dem Balkan doch gewiss eine Neuigkeit bedeutet.⁶¹

⁵⁶ Georgi Kyoseivanov served as prime minister from 1935 to 1940. During this period there were eight(!) government reshuffles and thus a politically problematic environment for the implementation of reforms. *My 60 typewritten pages were presented to the King at his request, circulated among the ministers and discussed in the Council of Ministers. During my farewell visit, the Prime Minister thanked me on behalf of the Council of Ministers for the work I had done and held out the prospect that the plan, which had already been discussed in the first reading, would be adopted when it was passed. The Minister of War had requested the King's approval for the establishment of a „State Youth and immediately after my lecture to him, he had appointed a special committee, the purpose of which was essentially to obtain the approval of the Reserve Officers' Association, the Hunters' as well as the Gymnastics and Sports Associations, which are important in Bulgaria, and which succeeded.*

⁵⁷ General Hristo Lukov (1888-1943), after his term as Minister of War (1935-1938), when he had fallen out of favour with the Tsar for allegedly influencing state affairs and the appointment of ministers, among other things, and had to resign, subsequently.

⁵⁸ However, this only came into being three years later as the "Brannik": Initiated by the pro-German Prime Minister of the time, Bogdan Filov (1883-1945), the "Brannik" was founded during the XXV National Youth Meeting in December 1940 as a youth organisation that was mentally and structurally based on the structure of the "Hitler Youth" with the "Law on the Organisation of Bulgarian Youth", called the "Brannik Law", but was banned and dissolved again by the country's new rulers as early as 1944. From 1942, the Bulgarian Red Cross also belonged to the "Brannik" because of its many youth members. Cf. Poppetrov, N. (2009), pp 805-848 and Mitev, L. (2014), p. 76 f.

⁵⁹ Baldur von Schirach, in office 1931-1940.

⁶⁰ CuLDA (2009), p. 1349.

⁶¹ CuLDA (2009), p. 1350 *The sports community of Sofia, ..., was obviously pleased about this (author's note: building sports facilities). For the Bulgarian people, the new sporting ideas do not come unprepared. The Bulgarian is a diligent reader of newspapers, and I was often amazed at how far ... the understanding for the necessity of a healthy physical education had spread. The Bulgarians just didn't know how to carry out the ideas they had in many places.*

To carry out my plan, I gave dictatorial powers to the youth and sport leaders and the higher ministerial level. The task ... could hardly be solved by normal administration.

The Bulgarian is capable of organising. He has shaken off the "yawash-yawash" of the Turkish rule that weighed on him for 500 years... I have never had to wait, which is certainly news in the Balkans.

However, Diem repeatedly complained in the following years on the occasion of his visits that his proposals and demands were not implemented or were implemented only very slowly:

- Sonnabend, den 21. Oktober 1939, Hotel Slovenska Beseda [Slavyanska Beseda]
... Minister Filov, Archäologe, sprach vorzüglich Deutsch und gut unterrichtet. Überreichte ihm 2 Exemplare meines Berichts im bulgarischen Druck. Stellte Jugendgesetz in Aussicht – als Rahmengesetz mit veränderlichen Ausführungsbestimmungen. Bat um meine weitere Unterstützung.⁶²
- Freitag, den 24. Mai 1940, Hotel Bulgarie [Bulgaria]
... Filoff erzählte gestern, dass das Jugendgesetz, an dem ich mitgearbeitet hätte, noch nicht eingebracht werden könne. Battamberski [Batembergski], der in die Sobranje [Nationalversammlung] gekommen ist, sagte mir, dass er in der Kommission für dieses Gesetz säße.⁶³
- Freitag, den 31. Mai 1940 Sofia-Berlin
... Ergebnis: eine schöne Woche in Bulgarien. ... Mein Plan liegt noch in weiter Ferne.⁶⁴

It is important to note that the unification that went hand in hand with the aforementioned Youth Act met with fierce resistance from the previously existing “free” Bulgarian sports associations, such as the Bulgarian National Sports Association (BNSF), which was subordinated to the Bulgarian Youth “Brannik” and, in line with the political conjuncture, was forced to unite with the oldest Bulgarian gymnastics associations “Yunak” to form an overall sports organisation for the purpose of better state control.⁶⁵

Public perception

Diem’s stay and activity in Bulgaria attracted a lot of attention in the German, but even more so in the Bulgarian media of the time. From the (mainly Bulgarian) newspaper cuttings⁶⁶ from the time of his stay in Bulgaria, which are kept in the CuLDA in Cologne, it is clear that Diem was followed almost “at every turn”, even in the provinces. What is striking is that not a single article from Diem’s bundle of written memorabilia questions his mission or casts doubt on the meaningfulness of the enterprise. Thus, a Bulgarian newspaper commentary (which cannot be attributed) after Diem’s departure from Sofia reads as follows:

Ние смятаме, че този план ни налага да спрем вниманието си на няколко първостепени въпроси из нашето тел. възпитание, върху които сигурно се спира и г. Дийм. Това са: училищното тел. възпитание, организация на тел. възпитание, строежа на салони и

⁶² CuLDA (2009), p. 1551. Said Minister Filov, at that time still Minister of “Popular Enlightenment” (vulgo: National Education), became Prime Minister of Bulgaria four months later and ruled as such and from September 1943 to September 1944 as Chairman of an unconstitutionally elected Council of Regency.

Saturday, October 21, 1939, Hotel Slovenska Beseda [Slavyanska Beseda].

... Minister Filov, archaeologist, spoke excellent German and well informed. Presented him with 2 copies of my report in Bulgarian print. Held out the prospect of a youth law - as a framework law with variable implementing provisions. Asked for my further support.

⁶³ *Ibd.*, p. 1625

Friday, May 24, 1940, Hotel Bulgarie [Bulgaria].

... Filoff told me yesterday that the Youth Law, on which I had worked, could not yet be introduced. Battamberski [Batembergski], who has come to the Sobranje [National Assembly], told me that he was on the commission for this law.

⁶⁴ *Ibd.*, p. 1635 *Friday, May 31, 1940, Sofia-Berlin*

... Result: a nice week in Bulgaria. ... My plan is still a long way off.

⁶⁵ This compulsory union was abolished in 1944 when the communists came to power. However, in 1945, under pressure from the new government of the (communist-dominated) Patriotic Front, the Yunak movement itself was first forced to unite with the Bulgarian People’s Sports Federation in a joint People’s Federation for Sport and Gymnastics, but was then banned in 1946 because of fascist, bourgeois and Great Bulgarian tendencies and was also dissolved. For a detailed account of the Yunak movement see: Mitev, L. (2010a) and *thes.* (2010b).

⁶⁶ Cf. CuLDA (n.y.), files 0508 and 0806 (Einzelblätter). Unfortunately, in almost all cases, the many (short) articles available cannot be assigned to a newspaper or magazine, or in very few cases it can at best be assumed which newspaper it is. Date and even page references are missing almost throughout.

игртища, създаването на държавна организация за телесно и национално възпитание, подготовката на ръководители и организация на върховното ръководство на тел. възпитание.

Сигурно г. Дийм дава просветеното си мнение по тях и то с подобаващата тежест и познания. Нам остава да използваме това, ако искаме да имаме полза от съветите на г. Дийм. Предварително искаме да обърнем вниманието на всички, от които зависи това, чш изпълнението на предложения ни план не ще търпи свободни тълкувания още повече, че ние далеч нямаме познавач на въпросите от ранга на уваж. г. Дийм., колкото и да се чувствуват тук засегнати някои патриотично настроени среди. Ние се опасявамр, впрочем това не е ставло за пръв път у нас, че все ще се намери някой административен големец, който ще пожелае да прекрои плана на г. Дийм под благовидния предлог, че условията ни налагат това. Искам ли да имама полза от идването на г. Дийм, ние ще трябва да го послушаме каквото ни каже и в каквото ни поучи. Иначе, нямаше смисъл, нито нужда от идването му.⁶⁷

The German-language sources on Diem's work in Bulgaria that can be verified or are available in the CuLDA are all positive. There is no questioning of Diem's mission. Beyond that, it is difficult to find further source material from the period in question: Although Carl Diem frequently communicated at the German legation or with members of it, almost nothing has been preserved on him in the files of the Political Department of the Foreign Office from the period after 1936. The same applies to the files of the legation itself. Although there is a file "Diem and Bulgaria" mentioned in the contemporary registration aids of the Cultural Department of the German Foreign ministry, the respective documents were filed in a volume of files that did not survive the Second World War.

Implementation of the Organisation plan

Although not immediate in time, the Organisation plan led to changes and innovations in Bulgarian sports operations in the following years:

On December 29, 1940, the "Law on the Organisation of Bulgarian Youth" ("Brannik" Law) was passed, which may be traced back to Diem's proposal to found the so-called "Krum Youth".

In 1942, with the founding of the "State College for Physical Education" (Darzhavno Visshe Uchilishte za fizicheskо vospitanie)⁶⁸, at least part of his ideas for the academisation of sports teacher training achieved a breakthrough.

The end of the Second World War in September 1944 brought about a comprehensive political and ideological change in Bulgaria, which affected all areas of life. The monarchy that had ruled until then with its bourgeois social order was replaced by a phase that lasted for many years into the 1950s and was characterised by the persecution of political opponents and state terror under the leadership of the Moscow-influenced "Patriotic Front" (PF; *Otechestven Front*).⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *We believe that this plan will cause us to focus attention on some of the first priority issues of our physical education, as I am sure Mr Diem has done. These are: school physical education, organisation of physical education, construction of halls and sports grounds, creation of a state organisation for physical and national education, training of leaders and the establishment of a supreme leadership of physical education.*

Certainly, Mr. Diem has given his informed opinion on this and has done so with due weight and appropriate knowledge. It only remains for us to make use of this if we want to benefit from Mr Diem's recommendations. Before doing so, however, let us draw the attention of all those on whom this depends to the fact that the execution of the plan proposed to us does not permit any free interpretations, all the more so because we have by far no connoisseur of the matter of the rank of the venerated Herr Diem, however much individual patriotically minded circles may feel concerned. We rather fear, and this would not happen for the first time, that an administrative wannabe will be found somewhere who, under the well-meaning pretext that circumstances demand it, wishes to reshape the Plan. If we want to benefit from the coming of Mr. Diem, we must listen to what he tells us and what he teaches us. Otherwise, there would have been neither sense nor need for his coming

⁶⁸ Today's National Sports Academy "Vasil Levski"

⁶⁹ This Patriotic Front is not to be confused with the Austrian one of the same name under Dollfuß. The Bulgarian PF, based on the decisions of the Comintern Congress of 1935, was founded in 1942 and an amalgamation of various anti-monarchist parties, organised the resistance in the country, brought about the "September overthrow" on September 9, 1944, took power and then immediately made peace with the Soviet Union, Britain and the USA. War was declared on the German Reich. However, the dominance of the communists from the beginning led to the first splits and resignations of smaller party organisations and individual functionaries as early as 1945. Despite this, in September 1946 the PF organised a referendum which resulted in the proclamation of the (socialist) "People's Republic of Bulgaria". The PF organised itself from 1948 as a mass socio-political movement. In 1990 it renamed itself the "Patriotic Union" and since then has existed as a rather marginal patriotic movement.

Since Bulgaria was now at war with its former allies after the PF came to power and the political change of sides, Germany and everything German was subjected to a different, a negative perception by the now ruling circles and were seen as contrary and harmful to the construction of a new social order.⁷⁰

And only now, after World War II, in Bulgaria, which was initially governed by the PF and later by the Bulgarian Communist Party (BCP), were there further structural changes in the sports sector, interestingly enough, all of them and some of their content were based 1:1 on Diem's proposals and concept.

In 1944, the "Central Council for Physical Culture and Sport" (*Tsentralen savet za fizicheska kultura i sport*) was created as an ideological and administrative-organisational control unit, which in 1957 became the "Bulgarian Union for Physical Culture and Sport" (*Bulgarski sayuz za fizicheska kultura i sport*).⁷¹

In 1945, the "State Directorate for Physical Culture and Sport" (*Darzhavna direktsiya za fizicheska kultura i sport*) was set up at the Ministry of Public Health, which in 1948 functioned as the "Supreme Committee for Physical Culture and Sport" (*Vissh komitet za fizicheska kultura i sport*)⁷² and whose main task was to ensure the material basis of sporting activities (courts, halls, equipment, etc., e.g. 1955: State programme for the construction of sports facilities), to set up programmes for the training of "scientific cadres and management personnel" as well as sports teachers, to ensure medical supervision and care for sports operations, and last but not least to produce sports technology and popular science literature.

In 1946, the "People's Union for Physical Culture" (*Naroden fizkulturen sayuz*) was founded.⁷³ 1948 saw the introduction of the "Ready for Work and Defence" medal (*Gotov za trud i otrana*), which is comparable to the sports badge.⁷⁴

Conclusion

For Bulgaria in the 1930s, the need for reform in the field of sports was considerable and obvious. Diem's ideas thus fell on fertile ground, not only in terms of the subject and organization, but also in socio-political terms. This may also have been due to a prevailing zeitgeist there and at that time, as in many other European countries, but it should not obscure the fact that the plan, albeit delayed, had an effect after all, even despite the formulations and requirements that are questionable from today's perspective.⁷⁵

The "Organisation plan for Physical Education in Bulgaria" of 1937 had no (temporal!) immediate effect on sporting activities in Bulgaria. The reason for this may have been the economic and cultural circumstances and conditions in the country at the time, as well as political controversies and the "European general weather situation". Moreover, no documents have emerged to date that provide detailed evidence of its specific treatment in parliament or within the government, for example, or of its official adoption. It was only with the passing of the law on the College of Physical Education⁷⁶, which had been under discussion since 1941 and was published on

⁷⁰ Symptomatic of this perception were the relevant publications of later years by Popov, Stoychev, Petrova, Tsonkov and others (see also References).

⁷¹ Cf Karova, D. (n.y.). This "Central Council" was not directly attributable to the Diem conception and is mentioned here only for the sake of completeness.

⁷² Equivalent to "Reich Committee for Physical Exercise", v. Tschammer und Osten.

⁷³ This People's Union was the federation of all sports associations under one roof and controlled by the PF government.

⁷⁴ Cf. Commission on Dossiers - COMDOS (Ed.) (2014); cf. Mitev, L (1996), p. 182. The first attempt to introduce a sports badge in Bulgaria was made by Boris Yordanov in 1942, but failed.

⁷⁵ The "idea of the leader" and the "making of a people fit for defence", the latter as one of the justifications for the intensification of sport, are not innovations or "unique selling points" of Diem's conception: Already in 1931, the then Bulgarian Minister of National Education, Aleksandar Tsankov, used precisely this terminology in his speech when introducing the law to the National Assembly. See also "Uchilishten pregled", March 1931, Book 3, p. 14ff.

⁷⁶ Darzhaven vestnik No. 2, 1942.

January 3, 1942, that this very “State College of Physical Education” was founded and officially opened on November 15, 1942, and Diem’s efforts to reform sport in Bulgaria found an echo in education and sport policy.⁷⁷

In Diem’s opinion, the Organisation plan aimed at a positive change in the sense of a structured intensification of general sporting activities and sport as a whole. His work also had a political dimension in that the reform proposals presented in his “Organisation plan” were also aimed at standardising and bringing all sports organisations into line, comparable to the German “National Socialist Reichsbund für Leibesübungen” of the time, although not everywhere to the goodwill of all concerned.

The sports business, the training of sports teachers and the association system were subsequently reorganised and restructured, which ultimately led to the abolition of the autonomy of the sports associations and federations that had been autonomous in Bulgaria until the end of the 1930s, and to their being brought into line, also under the provisions of the “Brannik Law”.

Diem himself was “erased” from sports historiography or reflection in terms of educational history after the Second World War in the countries occupied or politically influenced by the Soviet Union that had previously had a connection with the German Reich or where Nazi Germany-controlled policies had had an impact, and specifically in Bulgaria: In contrast to the time before 1944, when his activities and his visits to Bulgaria received considerable coverage in the local media, his work and achievements were now put “on the index” and thus consigned to oblivion or banned from thought.

From the perspective of retrospective experience and later knowledge of the consequences of a way of thinking nourished by the ideas of a “Führer-Prinzip”, militarisation of society, enforced conformity for the purpose of unification and mass movement, it may seem quite easy to criticise Diem’s thoughts and ideas, even to condemn them, and finally to decide that the end does not justify all means. However, this should not prevent a factual analysis and evaluation of the mission addressed to Diem, which was primarily aimed at a professional improvement of the status quo, and his proposals in this regard.

It may seem an irony of history, even paradoxical, that Diem’s “fascist-bourgeois” model, which was ostracised as such by the Moscow-directed Bulgarian communists and the Patriotic Front they controlled, and which was only applied in a rudimentary way for a short time in tsarist Bulgaria, became authoritative in Bulgaria for a long time until well into the 1950s, despite the political-ideological antagonism between “planner Diem” and later executors.

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⁷⁷ Cf. Vitanova, E. (2016), p. 56ff.

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