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Living Conditions

General Post-War Conditions

1. In order to obtain a full picture of life in Lithuania at present it is necessary to glance back at the years immediately after the war (1945-1949). The factories in Kaunas had been destroyed by the Germans in 1944, and the Germans had also removed what machinery they could to Germany. In the beginning, the workers did not receive any pay for about six months, and later they were paid with delays of one or two months. They lived as they could. The peasants and the farmers were better off and, although the Bolsheviks had also carried out requisitions, had managed to hide away some reserves of food. In the towns, the shortage of food was acute. Therefore, everyone "speculated" in any way he could.
2. Some two months after the occupation by the Russians, general mobilization of all men aged 17-18 up to 40 and over was proclaimed. Many tried to avoid mobilization, and the story of the beginning of the partisan movement is well known.
3. Toward the end of 1945 and in 1946, Germans from East Prussia, forced by famine, began spreading to Lithuania. They were mostly women, girls, and children. They were often to be seen in the towns, sleeping in the streets, without shelter, food, or adequate clothing; many died of starvation. Later most of those who survived were sheltered by the farmers and settled down somehow. When the repatriation of all Germans was ordered in 1951, it appeared that there were 12,000 - 15,000 of them in Lithuania. There are now 10 Germans left in the Kaliningrad area.
4. From the end of the war, when Red Army units began to be moved back to Soviet Russia, there were robberies on a large scale. Hardly anyone escaped

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being robbed by a demobilized Russian, especially in 1945, and this continued right up to 1949. These Russians, old and young, came to Lithuania from Russia after the war looking for food, and the young ones, in particular, were very skilled thieves. The bandits did not stop at robbery or thieving; sometimes the victim was murdered before being stripped. Hardly a day passed without some new story of robbery or murder. The robberies were carried out by day as well as by night, and it must be remembered that electric light was supplied only to the center of the city and to offices. Some women shopkeepers were killed on occasions when the bandit came in when nobody else was about and then quietly walked out with the contents of the till. Sometimes the bandits posed as partisans and went robbing the farmers.

5. During this period, the workers had to live as best they could. To keep themselves from starving they stole what they could from the factories and passed it on to the black market. This practice still continues. Soviet authorities inflict severe penalties if anyone is caught: up to five years for carrying away a 5 kg bag of flour or some other commodity. Such punishment does not stop the pilfering, however. One cannot manage to get enough on which to live otherwise. Until 1949, food remained scarce and difficult to get. Since 1950 conditions have improved in both respects, but one still has to "combine" (work petty rackets) however one can, and so every worker tries to carry away from his factory any products he can get hold of. For example, if one works in the Kova cigarette factory, Ozeskienes Street, one tries to take away unpacked cigarettes, pack them at home, and then sell them to someone in a kiosk or on the market. If the packet of cigarettes is retailed at 1.65 rubles, one sells it to the kiosk man for 1 ruble and he sells it at the official price of 1.65 rubles and pockets the difference. "If you do not combine, you cannot live", is the general rule.

Wages and Other Forms of Income

6. In 1951, the prices of various articles were reduced, but this was offset by increasing the norm to be fulfilled by the workers. A worker is not paid unless he fulfills the whole of this norm. Those doing heavy work, for example, loading in the ports, can earn 800 rubles or even up to 1,000 rubles a month, but they have to work like slaves, with no time even to stop to smoke a cigarette. The ordinary and unskilled workers and lower class civil servants receive very low wages. A few examples follow.

<u>Position</u>	<u>Rubles per Month</u>
Cinema mechanic	450
Postman	370
Hospital orderly	310
Hospital nurse	370
Unskilled worker, from	270
Ordinary worker	400 - 550

7. It must be remembered that wages in the above scale are subject to compulsory deductions for state loans and insurances at the rate of 50-60 rubles per month, while for single persons and those having fewer than a specified number of children there is an additional tax. Thus a gross salary, for example, of 370 rubles per month is actually equal to 310 rubles per month.
8. The pension for the mother of a son killed in the war is 150 rubles per month. Drivers of trucks taking goods into the provinces are considered well off because they can often get something extra for picking up passengers. To ordinary people, 450-500 rubles is considered quite good pay. Naturally, higher officials who earn more than 800 rubles, or 1000 - 2000 rubles, can and do live quite well. There are some who receive up to 10,000 rubles per month; "they can live like gods!" The ordinary man sees clearly that the Bolshevik system is to form a privileged class (artists, professors, higher officials, etc.) and to try to attract the youth of the country (students get stipends of 200-300 rubles per month). Nothing is cared about the others, the lower grade officials or the common workers. The rule is to play them off against each other.
9. In the past, the poorer people suffered great hardship. Conditions are better now, and they are learning to manage. For example, some keep goats.

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50X1-HUM

A young she-goat costs about 100 rubles and there have never been so many goats in Kaunas as there are now. Requiring very little food, they are very useful for their milk and cheese. Whoever can keep a cow, chickens, or pigs; a live pig sold on the market, weight 2 - 3 centners (1 centner = 50 kgs), costs 1500 - 2000 rubles. The people have learned to be very economical; not a crumb is wasted and use is made of every last scrap of food. The crowded street market or Tolkuchka plays a great part in today's life in Kaunas. Militiamen raid it from time to time, but not as they did two or three years ago.

Shortages

10. There are still queues, but this is probably the result not so much of shortages as of the system of distribution. Naturally when white flour is brought to the shops for sale twice a year, before the first of May and the October Revolution holidays, queues form at once, but from time to time there are also queues for the ordinary black bread. The reason for the occasional shortage of bread is that flour is delivered periodically to the bakery (the central bakery in Kaunas is the Parama), in an amount that should suffice until the next delivery. If it is used up ahead of time, there is at once a shortage of bread until the next consignment of flour arrives. This also applies to other products; they come, so to say, in waves. At one time, there may be plenty of everything; at another there is nothing to be obtained until the next supply arrives. For example, it is quite usual for winter things, such as warm-lined leather gloves, to be available only during the summer, and summer things only in winter. The winter things are quickly bought up in the early autumn, and the next supply does not arrive until the following summer, and vice versa.
11. The women in the queues and at the market do not hide their feelings, and there are frequent rows with the militiamen when they try to interfere. The militiamen are simple country lads and can do nothing against a crowd of angry women. Sometimes there are regular fights.
12. Shopping is sometimes complicated in other ways. For example, pocket flashlights are available, but the case (ordinary flat type) is obtainable only in one kind of shop, the battery in another, and the bulb in a third.

Housing.

13. Apartments are scarce and hard to get, and one cannot get a good apartment without paying anything from 1000 to 4000 rubles "key-money". A poor apartment (three rooms in a basement) is up to 50-60 rubles per month; an ordinary three-room apartment in a nationalized house costs 100-120 rubles per month.
14. Private houses, which have not been nationalized because their cubic dimensions (kubatura) were below the limit, are heavily taxed. The floor space per person is 8 sq.m.
15. If one has a garden, each fruit tree or bush is counted and registered.

Rural Conditions.

16. At present the farmers and the peasants are badly off. They still live in their own farm houses but new collective farm settlements are already being built. The kolkhoz farmer lacks the incentive to work, while, on the other hand, there is a shortage of agricultural labor. The disorganization in the administration of the collective farms induces young people to leave the land and move to the towns, where each endeavors to enter some school. This enables him, in Kaunas, for example, to become registered officially, and this also explains why all the schools are so crowded at present. The shortage of labor and the lack of incentive to work are the cause of the failure to collect the harvest; here and there potatoes have remained in the fields and rotted, flax was not gathered, etc. Now the peasants are sometimes even short of bread.
17. On the other hand, those connected with the administration of the collective farms are better off; they have much easier "working days", because the

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50X1-HUM

agricultural workers must sometimes put in two or three days' work to earn one "working day's" pay.

Collectivization

18. Collectivization is almost complete and now embraces approximately 90 percent of the farms. Individual farmers cannot hold out any longer. Even those who have only five-six hectares of land are forced to join the collective farms. The taxes on the individual farms are so heavy that no one is able to pay them. Some time ago, loans were being granted quite easily, but after a while, repayment was demanded; and, if the farmer could not pay, he was turned out of his farm. This happened only too often. If a farmer cannot pay his taxes and they are long overdue, he is lucky if he can get into a kolkhoz. Otherwise he is liable to be arrested and have his farm attached to the kolkhoz anyway.
19. The farmer can sell his produce on the market only if he can prove, by a certificate, that he has fulfilled his deliveries to the state. For his grain the state pays him 5 rubles per centner while grain on the free market costs 150 - 190 rubles per centner.

Drinking

20. There is a little less drinking now than there used to be, chiefly because the farmers have neither the grain nor the potatoes for making home-brewed vodka "Samogon." Some time ago, the people were drinking such spirits very heavily. They used to cost five - six rubles per half-liter in the provinces and eight - nine rubles in Kaunas and were made of grain or sugar-beet.
21. Penalties are now imposed on persons producing Samogon illegally, unless they can prove that they are doing so for their own purposes, such as for a wedding, and not for sale.

Prices

22. The following are a few food and drink prices prevailing in Lithuania up to June 1951:-

	<u>Rubles</u>
Butter, "Karvute", per $\frac{1}{4}$ kg.	9
Butter, poorer quality (at the market), per kg.	30 - 36
Flour (wheat flour)(at the market), per kg.	10
(Flour is obtainable in the shops only for a day or two before the May and October Revolution holidays, when enormous queues form, and the price per kg is 6 rubles.)	
Bread, black, per kg	1.65
(White bread, "Bulka", is not ordinarily on sale)	
Sugar (not always available), per kg.	10 - 12
Potatoes, per kg	1 - 1.20
(When there is a scarcity, the cost at the market is sometimes up to 3 rubles per kg)	
Meat, beef, per kg	14
Beer, per bottle	3
Schnapps (vodka) 40%, per $\frac{1}{2}$ liter	22
Wine, per bottle	15 - 20
Cigarettes, Avrora, per 20	1.60
Cigarettes, Parasutas, per 20	1.20

(These are the ordinary cigarettes, made in Kaunas, which everybody smokes. The best quality Papiroay (Russian type with mouthpiece) are rarely smoked and cost 6 - 8 rubles per pack).

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50X1-HUM

Rubles

A meal in a restaurant consisting of soup and two meat balls (kotlety) 4 - 7

23. The following are a few prices of clothing prevailing in Lithuania up to June 1951:

Rubles

Cloth for man's suit, medium quality, per meter	200 - 300
Cloth for overcoat (good quality is rare)	250 - 300
Silk (scarce and very difficult to get) per meter	200 - 300
Calico per meter	6 - 18
Man's suit, ready made	1500
Shirt	40 - 100
Gloves, leather with warm lining, pair	40
Shoes, thick crepe rubber soled, from Czechoslovakia	467
Shoes, ordinary	250 - 300
Shoes, canvas fabric (brezent) (They last only 2-3 months)	60 - 100
Man's hat, good quality	100
Socks, men's, cotton, per pair	6 - 8
Socks, men's, silk and cotton mixture per pair	15
Women's stockings, karron, per pair (They are made of "parachute silk")	39 - 45

24. The following are a few prices of general items prevailing in Lithuania up to June 1951:

Rubles

Bicycle	600 - 800
Sewing machine (hand)	900
Wireless set, Moskvich, 3-tube	190 - 200
Wireless set, Ural, made in Kiev, very good quality, since the special reduction of prices in 1951 (The former cost was 1,000 - 1,200 Rs)	800
Camera, very simple	100 - 150
Camera, good quality, up to	1000
Watch, poor quality (guarantee only for 1 year)	200 - 600
Car, Moskvich	8000
Car, Pobeda	18,000

(Cars are not obtainable in any shop, but only by some special order)

25. The following are a few prices for household goods prevailing in Lithuania up to June 1951:

Rubles

Ordinary chair (with upholstered seat)	40 - 50
Couch or divan	600 - 1500
Buffet or sideboard, good quality	2000 - 3000
Ordinary iron cooking pot	50
Aluminium cooking pot	50 - 60

26. The following are a few transportation fares prevailing in Lithuania up to June 1951:

Rubles

Taxi fare in Kaunas (Pobeda car) per km approx.	2
Bus fare in Kaunas, per fare stage	0.60
Railroad ticket from Vilnius to Moscow, approx.	100
Railroad ticket from Kaunas to Mazeikiai	30-35
Ticket from Kaunas to Vilnius by air, approx.	70

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