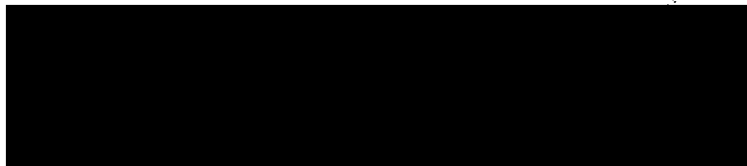


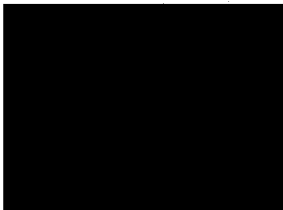
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GENERAL INFORMATION ON CURRENT CONDITIONS IN LITHUANIA



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Prepared by:



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Prepared for:

Case Number

Date Completed: 10 September 1952

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GENERAL INFORMATION ON CURRENT CONDITIONS IN LITHUANIA

PROBLEM

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Request was made by Chief, [REDACTED] 13 May 1952 for general information on current conditions in Lithuania with special reference to living conditions, collective farms, economic conditions, Partisan activities, and political changes.

SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

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SUMMARY

The following conclusions may be made as a result of the survey:

Economic and living conditions, although far below the pre-war level, appear to be relatively good. Food and clothing are available in limited quantities. Partisan activity is continuing on a limited scale but with decreasing vigor. Although the collective farm system has greatly reduced the acreage of each individual farmer, those who joined have adjusted quite well to the change and appear to be better off than those who resisted the movement.

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GENERAL INFORMATION ON CURRENT CONDITIONS IN LITHUANIA

I. Living and Economic Conditions 25X1X6

A [REDACTED] reports that as of July 1950, living conditions in Lithuanian urban areas were generally good, but ^{1/} that in general the standard is lower than before World War II. In contrast to the scarcity of goods which once prevailed, shops are now able to fill ordinary needs, though the quality of goods on sale is inferior to pre-war standards.

A Lithuanian emigre reports ^{2/} that even though economic conditions have improved considerably since the introduction of the Soviet currency reform in December 1947, worry over one great problem is unceasing, that is, how to survive the Soviet occupation. Nationals are in constant fear of traps, and no one is ever sure whether or not the person speaking to him is an agent-provocateur whose purpose is to ascertain his attitude toward questions asked, and later report to the authorities.

Until 1951 a sense of security was wholly absent, and people lived in constant fear of deportation, a calamity from which there is no escape once the individual has been so designated.

Migration from rural to urban centers is large, especially since establishment of collectivization and the currency reform, both of which affected the farmer adversely. Townspeople earn much more than farmers, and it is for this reason that people from rural districts, especially young people, migrate to the towns to find employment. Many relatives of Partisans are also moving into towns to avoid risk of deportation.

Recent reports indicate that social customs are changing. ^{4/} People in rural districts no longer organize dancing evenings as they did before the war. This is partly due to Partisan orders, and there seems to be no mood for dancing as result. On the other hand, dances are organized in urban centers, but these are mostly attended by Russians. People generally are quiet, and appear to avoid conversations except with those in whom they have complete confidence.

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Village people dress much as in the past, but they are far worse off financially since the currency reform was instituted. Peasants drink as they did before the war, but less than during the German occupation. They produce "Schnapps" or "Samogon" for their own use, but not for sale. The penalty for selling a bottle of Samogon is one year's imprisonment; if a still is discovered the sentence is five years.

Until 1949, Communist propaganda among the peasants was weak, but it has since been intensified. For this purpose, teachers from the towns were employed (Party members) and a system of patronage of collective farms by town offices, factories, secondary schools, and universities, was used, but until 1951 much of this was still unimplemented.

Laborers work eight hours a day, six days a week, and receive pay for overtime work. Apparently even administration officials work an eight-hour, six-day week. Most officials are new, though some of the old ones have been retained.

A Lithuanian emigre reported in April 1951^{7/} that the Russians in Lithuania form a privileged class and live well. This is especially true of office employees, members of the Communist Party, and specialists. Russian factory directors give special favors to Russians, if the factory director is a Lithuanian, his assistant is almost always a Russian, whose authority is actually greater than that of his Lithuanian superior. Factory workers include many Russians, especially women, who establish residence in Lithuania because living conditions are better than in Russia.

Throughout 1950 the number of persons employed increased steadily in all parts of the country, and by the end of that year total employment was 11% greater than in 1949. Increase in real wages was also marked during the year.^{8/}

The monthly salary of an average worker is about 250-300 rubles, with higher rates for the professions.^{9/} Doctors and dentists receive low salaries and may practice privately only after their working day in hospitals or clinics has been completed.

It was observed in 1950 that nearly all the old factories in Kaunas had been rebuilt and were again in operation.^{10/} Only small workshops or repair shops still remain in private hands, and evidently no new factories have been built since the war. Discipline in the factories is severe. If a worker is late or takes a day off without sufficient cause, he is penalized or dismissed. People fear the security police so much that they take no part in sabotage or subversive activities; but if there should be a revolution, the majority of workers would turn against the Communists.

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Groups of Lithuanian Communists are being sent to work in Latvian factories for periods of from three to six months. Latvian Communists, on the other hand, have been assigned as deputy chiefs of Party organizations in various branches of the Lithuanian factories, and after six months they return to Latvia. The purpose of these mutual exchanges seems to be that inasmuch as the Communists are Party members first and Lithuanian or Latvian second, they should learn about conditions of work in all Soviet republics in order to qualify for the jobs which might be assigned them by the Party in any locality. These exchanges of Communists which occurred from September to November 1951 were the first step in an inter-exchange of citizens among the various non-Russian republics, a method of "denationalizing" various populations. ^{21/}

It has been reported ^{12/} that by July 1950, all large apartment houses had been nationalized. The rent for apartments such as these, consisting of three rooms, kitchen and bath was 40-70 rubles per month, while apartments in private houses bring a higher rental. Administration officials and workers have no difficulty in getting apartments through official channels.

As of August 1951, most commodities such as bread, butter, and clothing were in short supply. ^{13/} Available merchandise was of the poorest quality; shoes poorly made, usually with rubber soles; and suits made of mixed or artificial (ersatz) material.

The family unit exerts a major influence on the younger generation, and forms the core of native resistance. As yet, schools have not been completely transformed into instruments of Communism, and the majority of teachers are still Lithuanians whose indirect influence on the pupils fosters resistance to the foreign yoke.

Life in the towns and cities is tolerable, and the Russians are making great efforts to raise the standard of living. ^{14/} However, the Lithuanians are neither influenced nor deceived by these efforts and still maintain their deep-rooted desire for freedom.

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II. Collectivization

Collectivization of farms in Lithuania is regarded as a calamity for the peasants. It was started on a large scale in 1948 and reached its peak during 1949. In 1951 a Lithuanian displaced person reported that about 90% of the peasants had been forced to join the collective farms, although the percentage varied between different sections of the country.^{15/} In the Vilnius region, for example, only about 30% of the peasants were affected, while in other districts representation was 100%. The first individuals forced to join the collective farms were the village headmen and the more prosperous farmers.

Two German repatriates from Lithuania who lived in the area of SIALLIAI and JUSKAICIA until May 1951 report that recruitment of peasants into collective farms usually occurs in the spring of the year.^{16/} Only those who have personal property may enter a collective farm; those without it are not accepted, even though the shortage of labor is acute.

The collective farm is managed by an elected chairman, usually a native Lithuanian, who has control over all work brigades, including even the bookkeeper. However, actual control is vested in a Russian, commonly known as Lieutenant-colonel (podpolkovnik). This official is the local agent of the Ministry of Agriculture, and it is he who decides what crops should be planted, the area and amount.

The small private farm-holder must pay a heavy annual tax in addition to his compulsory delivery of agricultural produce. The rate of payment to the state for land kept by the individual farmer is said to have increased markedly since the autumn of 1950.^{17/} The peasant who joins the collective movement benefits by certain help and privileges from the Soviets, and also pays lower taxes because he is covered by a system of taxation quite different from the normal state tax.

Members of collective farms are given small plots of ground for their own use and are permitted to keep cows and goats, but not horses. They must feed their cattle from their own supply of grain, and after making compulsory deliveries to the state, farmers

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may sell their surplus produce on the open market. Two price levels prevail, one which is the rate paid by the state, the other is whatever price the farmer can get on the free market. ^{18/}

Farmers continue to live on their own individual farms, but they have not easily adjusted to the fact that their farms are now common land, and that they are no longer owners of all the livestock. They are apt to behave as though the property were still their own, trying to retain their horses, harvest their hay together, and divide it among themselves. Since there is a great shortage of labor, a large portion of the grain is left unharvested. In spite of this scarcity of labor, farmers of 60 years or more may not be members of the collective farms. They are not expelled, but are given half an acre of ground on which to live and support themselves.

^{19/}
As of May 1951, the monthly salary of a common laborer was reported as between 250 and 300 rubles. Farm laborers are paid by workdays. However, work scheduled for one workday ordinarily requires at least two or more days to accomplish. Thus, a Kolkhoz laborer very often completes not more than 100 workdays a year. Lithuanian farmers despise the new system, and resent the false impression made by the Communist Lithuanian press ^{20/} that membership in collective farms had been a voluntary matter. A farmer may till his own soil on Sundays or at night, though he must frequently work on the collective farm until well into the night. A member of a kolkhoz may not transfer to a factory for work, because his collective farm entrance pledge will not permit him to change his profession.

Members of collective farms receive identification papers which serve as passports. If a member wishes to travel he must fill out a printed form given him by the farm chairman. On it he must indicate where, when, how, and for what purpose he wishes to travel. As these facts warrant, the collective farm chairman writes out a travel certificate in the Russian language. ^{21/}

Every collective farm consists of 20 or more farm units previously owned by individual farmers. Due to mismanagement and inefficiency, productivity has declined since collectivization, and total output is far less than that of Lithuania as an independent state. ^{22/}

Reaction of the Partisans against collectivization in 1950 was reported as strong, and their abusive treatment of those who joined the system temporarily retarded the process of collectivization.

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III. Partisan Activities and Political Changes

A Lithuanian national who claims to have participated in guerrilla activities in Lithuania, reports that the Partisan movement is the only resistance movement in Lithuania open to all who wish to lend active support to opposition of the present Communist controlled government.^{23/} This movement, developed immediately after occupation of the country by Soviet forces during World War II, is inspired by patriotism and at present is said to be under the leadership of a former Lithuanian general.

According to reports dated May 1951, the numerical strength of the Partisans grew steadily until the beginning of that year.^{24/} This steady increase in members was due to the hazards involved in returning to civilian life by former members of the movement. The report states that young men joined the Partisans for one of three main purposes: to escape military service, to circumvent the threat of deportation, and because of collectivization of agriculture. The group included a few women, most of whom were employed in a secretarial capacity.

A former prisoner of war also reports that certain trusted individuals in towns and cities served as channels through whom the Partisans could send messages or make connections.^{25/} Though without definite proof, it is believed that Partisan accomplices have been planted in all government offices.

Sabotage operations of significance were rarely undertaken by the Partisans prior to May 1951.^{26/} The reason for this was numerical weakness, as compared to the occupation forces, which precluded the possibility of achieving lasting success. The only known act of sabotage occurred during the period 1947-1948, when railroad tracks located in the area of SIAULIAI-MAZEIKIAI were blown up. Otherwise, Partisan activity was confined almost exclusively to small raiding expeditions on the kolkhozes, in order to obtain supplies.

Partisan activities are anti-Russian and anti-Communist, directed against all Russians, all Communist Lithuanians, and against all informers and traitors. Reportedly, Partisans avoid battle with Soviet troops except when there is no alternative. Whenever possible, they retreat into swamp areas where they have constructed under-water log defenses which are inconspicuous and offer safe refuge from pursuit.

Informed persons report that there is another well organized group of Partisans in Lithuania who, rather than fight, work as under-cover agents in kolhozes, factories and government offices.^{27/} They gather information on Communists, and report their findings to

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the field units which are thereby guided in raids -- killing Party members and destroying their property.

Before collectivization it was estimated that about 90%^{28/} of the Lithuanian population was sympathetic to the movement. This resulted in a mutual exchange of services: the Partisans were supplied with food and in return they assured refuge and protection in case of molestation by Soviet units. After collectivization was imposed, Partisan activities were seriously hampered, inasmuch as farmers were unable to provide food and the Partisans were compelled to shift for themselves in obtaining necessary supplies. At the same time, Partisan influence became evident in the stiffened resistance of the farmers, and during the deportation operations conducted by the Soviets, Partisans rescued many who had been taken into custody by their overlords.

Prior to August 1951, the Partisans were feared more than anti-Partisan units. Partisans killed their opponents, and legal punishment for supporting Partisan activity was imprisonment or deportation.

According to a German repatriate, Partisan leaders usually wore the old Lithuanian army uniform; members of the movement in general wore civilian clothing, and espionage agents wore the uniform of Soviet officers.^{29/} During the winter months, white outer clothing and caps were used as camouflage to blend with the snowy landscape.

According to observations made by escapees from the Baltic area as late as July 1951, the total number of active Partisans is unknown, but activity is largely concentrated in small individual units.^{30/} These groups seldom include more than four or five men, and in recent years there has been no strong Partisan activity of the type prevalent before 1947, when Partisans were able to occupy and hold villages. During the spring of 1951, about twenty Partisans raided the community of Baltriskes and shot members of the local government.^{31/} However, the usual type of Partisan activity consists in posting threats of violence or attacking individuals known as Communist collaborators.

These same escapees report that until the middle of 1949, it was customary for the Russians to exhibit bodies of persons executed because of resistance, in the public squares. This practice has been discontinued, and authorities are now attempting to control popular aid to Partisans by rigid enforcement of anti-Partisan laws.

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In June 1951, a Lithuanian refugee reported that the Partisans are no longer well organized, and that small groups now seem to have uncertain contact with each other. Since the Soviets are attempting to dissolve these groups, Partisans must defend themselves as long as possible. This Lithuanian informant feels that the Partisans have become extremely cruel, and that without hesitation they will murder anyone suspected of being Communist or of having sympathetic tendencies.

The same source reports that at present there is no apparent evidence of organized passive resistance; nor is there any general knowledge of illegal publications. In 1948 underground leaflets were occasionally distributed in the streets of Kaunas, sometimes printed by students. One group was arrested because of carelessness in distributing leaflets in churches. Efforts are now being made to organize illegal activities on a national scale.

Escapees from the Baltic area of USSR reported in July 1951 that the number of Russian civilians in Lithuania seemed very large. Rough estimates indicated that the populations of KLAIPEDA and VILNIUS are about 75% Russian, KAUNAS, 35 - 40% Russian, and PANVEZYS (the Soviet military center in north central Lithuania) about 50% Russian.

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██████████ indicate that Lithuanians are now a unified people. The old political parties have either lost their appeal or have vanished from the national consciousness. It is generally admitted that the Smetona regime was not a true democracy; rather, that it was a police state during the life of which farm workers were grossly underpaid. Today the tendency of the people inclines toward the left, and, though opposed to Socialism as a political philosophy, they quite naturally are seeking social reform. A strong movement for social justice and improved living conditions has already been launched.

So far as is possible to do so, Lithuanians are ignoring their present government; their attention is focused on regaining independence. Russians hold almost all the high government posts, but for the Lithuanians who do hold relatively important positions in the government, membership in the Communist Party is not required.

A well-educated Lithuanian national who arrived in the United States in January 1951 reports that the most significant political groups now fighting Communism in Lithuania are the AKTIVISTAI (under Roman Catholic sponsorship), and the NEPRIKLAUSOMA LIETUVA (Independent Lithuania). During the German occupation these groups were rivals, due to the German policy of divide-and-conquer. The two groups were then fighting each other for government control, but today they are apparently united in common cause - liberation of their country from the Soviet yoke.

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Although emigre representatives enjoy the confidence of the majority of their fellow-countrymen, the Partisans maintain that it is they who will have the decisive voice in the future government of Lithuania, and that the emigres will have to accept secondary responsibility in the administration of the country after its liberation.

For additional information and details of recent Partisan activity, see [REDACTED]

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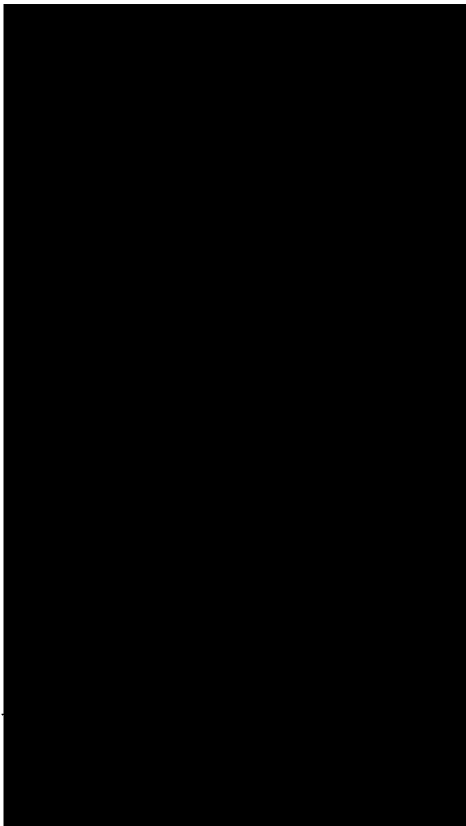
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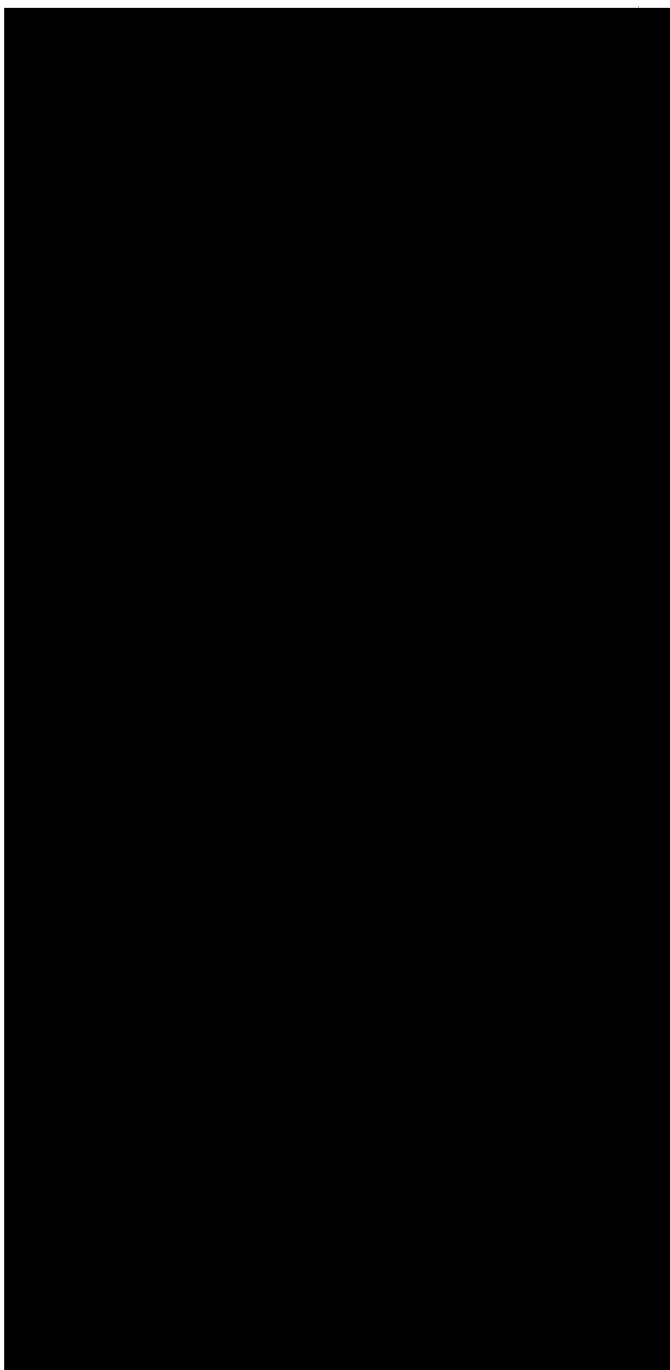
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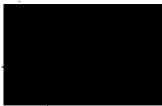
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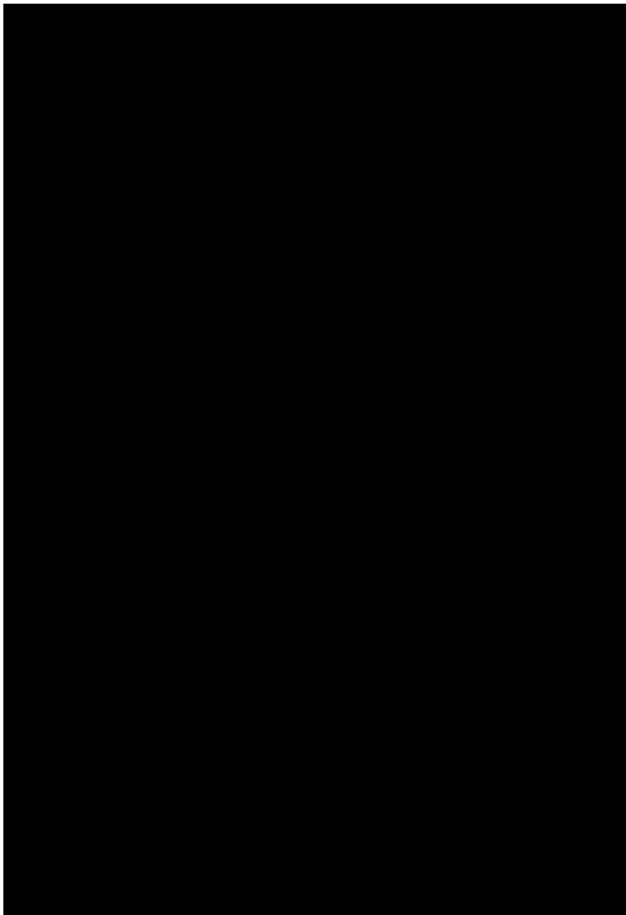
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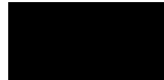
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