

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

What Is Everyday Life Like After Communism?

East European countries have been experiencing a major period of transition. State Communism, dependence, and command economies are being superseded by democracy, independence, and capitalism. Yet, within a relatively short period, it has become clear that many East Europeans are ambivalent about these changes. This has been reflected, for example, in the electoral victories of former Communists in various countries. What has been far less clear for many foreign observers is why such ambivalent sentiments have become prevalent.

This monograph seeks to make a modest contribution to understanding how the changes have affected the everyday lives of people in Eastern Europe. It addresses mundane but nonetheless important questions, such as the following: How has the transition affected the routines of daily life? How has it changed, or not changed, people's experiences as they shop, get around, work, and relax?

More specifically, how do people who were used to queuing in state-run shops, and being served by surly people, react to the enticing service offered in new, privately-owned shops? How do they adjust from a context where the state catered, albeit unevenly, to their needs for housing, income, and employment, to one where responsibility is increasingly being shifted to the private sector and to themselves? How do they cope with living in a society that used to reward conformity and self-effacement and now emphasizes individuality and initiative? What is it like to be faced, for the first time ever, with the real prospect of unemployment and poverty, while a fortunate, devious and entrepreneurial few achieve financial wealth and success? What is it like to see savings eroded by currency reform and inflation, to the point that they are virtually worthless?

How does it feel to live in a society where in some spheres positive changes are occurring (as in the expanded freedom to publicly speak one's mind), where in others the changes are negative (as in the intensified poverty of the elderly and the emergence of the unemployed), and where, in yet other spheres (for example the political), discourse often appears to be far removed from reality and one can be left acknowledging that "the more things change, the more they stay the same."

Such questions can be raised about every country that has cut the cord with Soviet domination. And many answers have been provided. In particular, during the demise of the Soviet Union and the initial period of transition, the media provided voluminous coverage of political, social, and economic events. Since the fall of the Berlin wall, and especially during times of crisis, the media have provided a barrage of information, opinion, and often dramatic images.

Threaded among such coverage there are also snapshots of the trials, tribulations, and occasionally the pleasures, of everyday life. There are brief descriptions of recurrences of shortages and queues, of the growth of unemployment, of the lack of hot water, and of the rise of new elites and their alleged mafia and criminal connections. There are also accounts of the sometimes garish adoption of western fads, fashions, and habits: the opening, and popularity, of McDonalds in Moscow, Prague and elsewhere; the rush to acquire western cosmetics and clothes; and the appearance of BMW's, Mercedes, car alarms, and cellular phones.

Yet, despite such coverage, for many westerners the peoples of Eastern Europe, their concerns, their hopes, their fears, and their dreams, can remain alien or "other." As the focus of the camera shifts geographically from one crisis to another and is interspersed with accounts of tragedies and dramas from other parts of the globe, knowledge of everyday life in Eastern Europe continues to be a series of uneven glimpses. The voices of the people—despite many efforts by journalists—are seldom heard.

Westerners' general knowledge of everyday life in Eastern Europe is further selective given the media's tendency to focus either on centers of political conflict (as in Chechnya and in Kosovo and the former Yugoslavia more generally), on centers of influential decision making (as in Moscow), or on the "big four" (those countries that are geographically closest to Western Europe—the former East Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary). Far less coverage is given to other countries, including Lithuania.

More detailed accounts of the everyday lives and preoccupations of the peoples of Eastern Europe can be found in documentaries and books prepared for the general public. Here *Blood and Belonging* by Michael Ignatieff (1994), is a good case in point. Ignatieff brings the reader on a swift, informative trek through Croatia, Serbia, Ukraine, Germany, and Kurdistan, with a focus on "the new nationalism" in each of these places. His inclusion of journeys to Quebec and Northern Ireland in addressing the topic also goes some way toward breaking the barrier of East Europeans as somehow "other." Travelogues — such as those by Dervla Murphy (*Transylvania and Beyond*), Sophie Thurnham (*Sophie's Journey, 1994*), and Stan Persky (*Then We Take Berlin, 1996*) — also do much to reveal the experiences and concerns of East European peoples.

Accounts by East Europeans themselves also provide many insights into the realities of everyday life. Here, I am thinking in particular about Slavenka Drakuliè's books: *How We Survived Communism and Even Laughed About It* (1993) and *The Balkan Express* (1994).

In *How We Survived Communism* the reader is exposed to East Europeans', and especially women's, everyday experience of life under Communism. Much is revealed about the difficulty of undertaking routine tasks such as laundry, and about what it was like to live in an environment where acquiring something as basic as toilet paper could be a struggle, and where acquiring tampons could be impossible. A clear picture emerges of women carrying the brunt of domestic life — the burden of which, given the lack of basic conveniences and amenities, was far heavier than that in the West.

Such an account is not a substitute for more formal political, sociological, historical, and economic analyses of Communism. Rather, it is an important complement to them, and, arguably, an equally important genre. As feminists put it: "the personal *is* the political." Drakuliè provides the reader with personal knowledge about Communist politics, economics, and social life, elaborating the mundane realities of everyday life as experienced from "below."

Similarly, Drakuliè's *The Balkan Express* does much to complement, and go beyond, media and formal political analyses. She does not discuss the major figures involved in the Balkan conflicts, the machinations of the United Nations, NATO, and other western bodies, or which person or group might be most culpable. Rather, the reader is seared by her accounts of the human side of war; the futility of it; the peoples' frustration, fear, anger, and sometimes boredom; and their alienation from former neighbours through processes that often seem logically inexplicable.¹ In sum, Drakuliè's writings bear testimony to a void — that of the voices of ordinary people.

Influenced by Drakuliè, this research also aims to help to fill a void by focusing on living conditions in Lithuania as revealed in interviews conducted by young people. Their approach is broad rather than narrow, and their work serves as a springboard for their insights into multiple facets of Lithuanian life.

By highlighting on one small part of the former Soviet Union, at a particular moment in time, I hope that this research will provide the reader with an understanding of how some people in a lesser-known part of Eastern Europe have felt about living in a society which is perched — often schizophrenically, it seems — between old ways and new.

The Genesis of this Research

This research grew from the academic year that I spent as a visiting associate professor at the Department of Sociology in Vilnius University in Lithuania (1993–1994). The position was sponsored by the Civic Education Project of Yale University and the Central European University. The Civic Education Project responds to requests from East European universities for visiting lecturers to

stay for the full academic year. With such a relatively long stay lecturers have a good chance to get to know, and work with, East Europeans. The project came into existence primarily thanks to the financial sponsorship of international financier George Soros and annually funds over one hundred lecturers in East European countries.²

When Vilnius University requested a visiting sociologist, they specifically requested someone who could teach qualitative research methods including observation, participant observation, interviewing, life histories, and documentary analysis. This request was an appropriate one. Although students had ample exposure to quantitative and survey methods of sociological research, qualitative research methods had rarely been taught. Indeed, at the time of my arrival (and, for that matter, of my departure) while a substantial number of faculty were heavily engaged in carrying out market research and in conducting public opinion polls for Gallup and other agencies, far less attention was being given to documenting qualitative aspects of Lithuanian society, or of the changes taking place.³

In preparing to teach qualitative research methods, I realised that the course could provide a valuable opportunity for students to document their own observations of their society and to interview other people about their experiences. Moreover, by focusing on everyday life in Lithuania, students at different stages of their studies and with varying abilities to express themselves in English could all participate in the course and undertake its assignments. Equally important, by encouraging students to examine their own society I could better avoid falling into the trap that confronts every western lecturer, namely, that of continually speaking about one's own country and its research and thereby fostering the impression (even if unintentionally) that one's own country is somehow superior.

I therefore structured the course around the premise that the best way to learn about qualitative research methods is to do qualitative research. The students would study literature on qualitative research methods, but their evaluations would be based primarily on the work that they themselves carried out. I asked them to write observations and do interviews, for inclusion in a manuscript about everyday life in Lithuania that would be read primarily by foreigners, and especially western foreigners.

Twenty-five students took the course.⁴ Most of them were third- and fourth-year students, ranging in age from nineteen to twenty-two. Already fluent in Lithuanian and Russian, they had worked hard to reach a level of competence that enabled them to take a sociology course in English. For most of the students this was their first academic course taught in English and their first exposure to a western lecturer.

The classroom environment was a challenging one. Several students had spent time abroad and spoke excellent English, but others could barely converse at all. They were all initially very shy about speaking English in the classroom. In part, this was due to their apprehension about expressing themselves verbally in a foreign language in front of their peers. But it was as much, and more, due to Soviet pedagogical traditions whereby the lecturer did all the talking (or read from a text) and students were expected to be docile, to speak only when spoken to, and not to question or challenge the lecturer. While the students had an excellent educational foundation, critical thinking had not been encouraged. Kerry Stromberg, (1994, 1), advisor for educational affairs at the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington, D.C., described the situation of education in Lithuania:

Under Soviet occupation, pedagogy, curriculum, and even textbooks were dictated by Moscow. Teachers were forced to convey Soviet propaganda and ideology regardless of their personal belief. Both teachers and principals were given step by step directions of what to teach, how to teach it, and when. Principals were used as watchdogs to make sure teachers stayed within the party line.

And teachers, in turn, were the police of their classrooms. The simplest way for teachers to prevent students from asking “inappropriate” questions was to avoid interaction and interpretation of the subject at hand. If discussion was held, it was merely a rote dialogue of appropriate answers to prepared questions.

Although they were initially hesitant to express themselves orally, the students were clearly keen to learn and to communicate. This was most evident in their writing. They wrote prolifically and received written comments back from me. Again, their abilities to write in English varied widely, as did their rate of progress. But everybody made some progress, and their ingenuity in finding words to express themselves often enhanced the poetry of their prose. As the course progressed, classes and written exchanges were supplemented by conversations. I sat down with each student, sometimes in the café at the University, or in the informal setting of my kitchen, and we went over their written work to discuss and clarify their observations.

Thus I became both a teacher of qualitative research methods and a student of Lithuanian life; similarly, my students were simultaneously teaching and learning.

This research is not comprehensive. The spirit of the project was very open ended: I did not direct students to write on special topics. They chose their own subjects, and I began to group their writings under various themes only when their work was fully complete. Just a fraction of their work is presented here.

The material is significant for a number of reasons. First, although it is not specifically a work in psychology, sociology, history, or economics, the research provides insights into each of these areas. The tone is personal, lay, and general, rather than formal and academic. The aim of the students is modest — to communicate in a straightforward way about details of everyday life. In writing the accompanying narrative, my aim has also been modest — to write in a basic and informative way, unburdened by the constraints of individual social scientific disciplines. Second, it is based on contributions by young people, an age group who, not only in Lithuania, but also internationally, are often among the last to be encouraged to speak and be heard. I hope that publishing their work will encourage other students and young people to organise and express themselves by way of the written word. Third, its focus is on Lithuania, a country that is little known in the West. Through these interviews, Lithuanians of all ages get an opportunity to express themselves.⁵

Lithuania: A Brief Overview

Lithuania is the most southerly of the Baltic states, with Latvia lying immediately to the north and Estonia lying north of Latvia. Lithuania is the largest of the three countries with a territory of 65,200 square kilometers, making it almost as large as Ireland (70,283 square kilometers) and larger than Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Denmark. Lithuania is bordered by Belarus on the southeast and by Poland and the Russian enclave of Kaliningrad on the southwest. Most of its immediate western border consists of the Baltic sea. Geographically, Lithuania can be considered as a bridge not only between the east and west, but also between north and south: the geographical center of Europe lies twenty-five kilometers north of Vilnius.

Lithuania has the largest population — 3.7 million as of 1995 — of the three Baltic countries. This population includes various ethnic groups. In 1995, in the country as a whole, 81 percent were Lithuanian, 8.5 percent were Russian, 7 percent were Polish, 1.5 percent were Belarussian, and 2 percent were classified as “other.” The concentration of ethnic minorities is greatest in the southeast of the country where many Poles reside. Located in this area, the capital Vilnius had a population of 574,000 in 1995, of whom 52.8 percent were Lithuanian, 19.2 percent were Russian, 19.2 percent were Polish, 4.8 percent were Belarussian, 0.7 percent were Jewish, and 3.3 percent were classified as “other.”⁶

As of early 1990, the major historical event for most Lithuanian's was the Soviet occupation stretching from 1940 to the beginning of the 1990s. During the earlier part of this period (including the years 1941 to 1944 when Soviet occupation was replaced by German occupation), Lithuania lost nearly half a million people due to deportations, executions, and guerrilla warfare.

It was only in the late 1980s, under the leadership of the movement called Sajūdis, that efforts toward the restoration of Lithuanian independence gathered political strength. Yet by the end of 1991, independence had already been restored, with general elections being held the following year. (For further details, see Appendix I.) Perhaps the most important point in this context is that the Lithuanian Democratic Labor Party (a successor to the Lithuanian Communist Party), led by Algirdas Brazauskas, won a landslide victory in these elections. The following year, Brazauskas enjoyed further political success when he became the first freely elected president of Lithuania.

The research reported below was therefore undertaken in a period (1993–1994) when the former communists were again in power, with Lithuania being the first post-Soviet country where this occurred.

Analyzing public opinion and voting patterns whereby President Brazauskas and his colleagues achieved success, and subsequent twists and turns in the public's mood and political preferences, have been major preoccupations of social scientists who specialize in contemporary Lithuanian society.⁷ Our concern — with the everyday lives of Lithuanians — is at once removed and relevant. Let us now turn our attention to these everyday matters as described by the Vilnius University students approximately two years after the restoration of independence.

1.

Observations on Living Conditions

Living in Multi-Unit Housing

The students were often critical of their living conditions, particularly, of the large, Soviet-built, apartment blocks in which the majority of Lithuanians — at least in the city suburbs — are housed. These living conditions are iconic of those which prevailed across the Soviet Union. As one urban specialist, Professor Jurgis Vanagas of Vilnius Technical University, remarked (1995; 35–36): “The fact is that as well as in other former Soviet states, housing form in Lithuanian cities consisted of multistoried apartment blocks located in compact residential areas . . . in city outskirts. Principles of planning and composition of residential units as well as of housing types, constructions and materials were so uniform that if one looked at any given neighbourhood, one had no idea where it was — the Baltic States, Central Russia, Siberia, or the Far East?”

In Lithuania, the building density has been such that nearly 400 people are accommodated per hectare. Each person had an average of nearly 18 square meters of living space. By contrast, in Sweden, where 53 percent of housing is multistoried, the comparable average is 45 square meters per person. It is little wonder that for Professor Vanagas, traditional Lithuanian housing in the suburbs evokes the image of a “human ant-hill” (36, 37).

Rūta Biliukaitė described one problem which can be encountered in these “multi-unit houses”: the lack of respite from noise.

Many inhabitants of Vilnius are doomed to live in multi-unit housing. The walls of these homes have one very important flaw — they do not always absorb or hold in the noise in the apartment, and give the opportunity for neighbors to enjoy various sound effects.

Living in an apartment with “paper” walls, it’s better not to forget about it. People begin to learn to live in these conditions in early childhood. They are told what not to do at home, that is not to jump or make noise as it disturbs the neighbors. It is enough for them to skip with a rope or play ball for less than half an hour and the doorbell will ring. An angry neighbor will be found when the door is opened, and for this reason children sometimes won’t open the door at all. Usually the neighbors will cry: “Plaster is falling down from the ceiling in my apartment” or “I’ve got a headache from your noise.” After preambles of such a kind, threats and warnings follow about telling the parents what their children have done.

If children live in apartments with one above the other they don’t use a telephone to talk to each other. Instead, they have a more interesting conversation using the radiator (I mean that they shout what they want to say through the vents of the radiator. Of course these conversations are also audible to other neighbors).

When someone has a party all of the neighbors around must sacrifice their quiet and peaceful evening. Neighbors who live downstairs especially suffer from parties taking place in the apartments above: besides music they have to listen to the beating of shoes. For all parties in the multi-unit houses one unwritten law exists: all dancing must finish at midnight. It’s best to seat guests at the table and spend the next part of the party more calmly if one does not want to have conflicts with the neighbors.

The most terrible thing is when someone decides to do repairs in their apartment. If you want to escape a headache the best thing to do is to disappear from the building for a while.

It is not necessary to be curious about your neighbors’ lives. Some details of them will cross the walls and you can’t help hearing. You hear when spouses quarrel, when parents chide their children, when a neighbor sneezes, when someone enters your neighbor’s apartment, and so on.

Other problems with these apartment blocks include their entrances, which are often bleak. Graffiti-covered walls, garbage in the stairwells, and a lack of attention to general maintenance of the buildings, all contribute to this. These grim entrances are a stark contrast to the pleasant and well-kept interiors of individual apartments within.

With the political transition, a major shift occurred in the ownership of the apartments. By the end of 1994, 93 percent of housing that had been the property of the state was privately owned. One might think that the entrances to the buildings would have improved with privatization. But this was not necessarily the case. Algė Makulaviėienė offers some thoughts on this and speculates on the reason why:

My husband and I moved from a one-room apartment into a bigger one in a larger building. It is an old building, built in Soviet times. So the quality isn't very good at all. But that is not the worst part. The main thing that surprised us was the impenetrably dirty entrance, and the landings, windows and stairs.

There were a lot of old, torn carpets, thrown away onto the stairs. The ceiling was burnt in some places, perhaps by children "playing." Also, there were a lot of dirty flowers that only spoiled the surroundings and didn't beautify them at all. Perhaps somebody didn't need them anymore, so they simply threw them away onto the landing that belonged to nobody. No one cared about cleanliness and order. And the only places that could attract the attention of a stranger were the doors of the apartments. Each was nicer than the other — improved with false leather and imitation wood, so they indicated that the residents were not poor.

The main fact I should mention about our building is that it has been a communal one without an owner. So "everything belongs to everybody and to nobody" — this was what we heard during the fifty Soviet years. The idea has failed. The system was broken. But people change their minds so slowly, or they don't change at all.

All the apartments became private, so not only the apartment but also a piece of landing is our property. But nobody thinks like this. Why? "If somebody else uses it as well, I am not responsible for it" — that is the idea.

Isn't it easier to cooperate and work together on our mode of life, to make it nicer for both yourself and your neighbors? And if people don't feel a need for this, what do they mean by saying "my" and "our" in general? What do they suggest with these words? As we see "our" is equal to "nobody's." So is it the same when we say "our country" or "our city"? Does it mean "nobody's" again? It's sad, but sometimes it seems it's true.

What of relations between neighbors in these buildings? If Algė's concluding questions are common ones, the possibility of people working together more to improve their surroundings would seem to exist. Sadly however, Rūta Ziliukaitė suggests that the transition period, and the economic difficulties which

are ensuing for some people, is leading to a deterioration, rather than an improvement, in neighborly relations.⁸ In particular, she observes, the phenomenon of borrowing from neighbors seems to be declining:

Does any connection exist between food prices and neighbors' interaction? Maybe it sounds strange, but actually in some cases a connection exists.

Usually in multi-unit houses neighbors seldom visit one another. But when they want to acquire some information, or to borrow something, they visit. Often the reason for visits is to borrow food: when people decide to cook a certain dish and find that they lack some ingredient for it — they have a good occasion to visit their neighbors.

Earlier (before the rise in food prices) these visits were quite frequent. Even if the shops were open and the person could go and buy what they needed, they preferred not to waste their time and would borrow eggs, or sour cream, or whatever was necessary from neighbors. Now these visits are becoming rare: people are thinking more about what they can cook and do not hastily borrow something from their neighbors. But sometimes it is impossible to avoid a situation where they need to borrow, and if they do borrow something they return it within a day. Before the raising of prices people didn't care very much about paying "debts" as they knew that their neighbors would also borrow according to their need; besides food was really cheap and then the repaying of several spoons of sour cream seemed nonsensical.

The Emergence of Individual Homes

Following independence, individual homes began to be built as an alternative to Soviet-style apartments. Indeed, it has been observed that "Lithuania's entire building industry is in the process of breaking away from post-war decades of constructing exclusively high density multistoried vast residential areas and approaching mainly to the dispersed low-rise single family houses" (Vanagas 1995, 35). The early phase of this phenomenon caught the attention of Lina Gudelionytė, and she contrasts these homes with other styles of housing:

Nowadays, in Lithuania, there is something which strikes your eyes — a lot of new houses which have been, and are being, built. They are mostly located in nice places, away from industrial areas. If they are in towns, they are far from the center, in places without many neighbors.

These large houses with modern designs are increasing, like mushrooms after rain. The process is widespread throughout the country, which a few years ago departed from a centralized Soviet style of government and became a democratic country with a market economy. Looking back a few years, when nearly all living accommodation belonged to the state, property was in the ownership of the whole nation. All people and families, no matter what social or professional class they belonged to, lived in apartments provided

by the state. These apartments were in buildings five to twelve stories high, and were called “boxes.”

At that time, in the larger towns in Lithuania, you would see only a few individual houses. They were mostly in the old town, or respectable places. They had usually been built before World War II, before the Soviets occupied Lithuania. The few individual houses that were built in Soviet times were for government workers or for members and leaders of the Communist Party. Those houses had a kind of double ownership: they were neither the state’s nor private.

This situation was supported by strict laws on property: private property was almost forbidden; everything was the state’s property.

There was a different situation in the countryside, in the small towns and villages. There, in accordance with their farming lifestyle, people had individual homes. Even the collective farms helped rural people to build such houses.

Everybody knew the Communist thesis about the “equality” of all people working in Lithuania. Families’ homes and living conditions didn’t show their social and economic situation. They didn’t indicate peoples’ lifestyles. All were equal, and had the same possibilities, rights, and salaries.

Of course in reality there were exceptions to this “rule.” Some were more “equal” than others. I mean the elite: they had the best accommodation, lifestyles, shops, and so on. And these people were a well-known minority. I mean everybody knew who they were.

Lina’s remarks on the existence of an elite in Soviet times are significant. As she observes, while the theory was one of equality, the reality was that some people had a lot more than others. Signals of this included their higher-quality accommodation (for example, occupying a larger apartment in a building) and their ability to purchase such western goods as were available. Nowadays, within high-rise apartment blocks, a family’s greater purchasing power can be revealed by their apartment door, where, as Algė Makulaviėienė remarked earlier, “false leather and imitation wood [indicate] that their residents are not poor.”

But occupancy of a newly built private house is a far more dramatic, and reliable, display of wealth than a fancy door of an apartment, or an occasional trip to a luxury store. Not surprisingly, the emergence of these homes prompted Lina to raise some basic questions about the people who have managed to surge ahead economically and purchase this luxury: “Who are the people that are building these houses now — especially when there is a difficult economic situation? If everybody started out in an equal financial position, how did some people manage to build a house, and to pay for it?”

Lina devoted a lot of energy to answering these questions, and her inquiry took some interesting twists and turns. Initially, she reflected on more general social and economic changes in Lithuania and on how many Lithuanians thought that people who lived in such homes had likely become wealthy by exploiting new business opportunities — especially shady, or black market, ones:

With radical changes in Lithuania's system of government, new property laws were developed. By the early 1990s, the privatization process had begun. Property ownership was allowed. People got checks from the state to invest somewhere, and most of the population used these checks to buy the apartments which they were living in from the state. The new main principle was: everyone can have their own property; nobody, even the state, can deprive them of it.

After the legislation was developed, and after the market economy took its first steps, some people became richer. Some very young and rich people appeared. How did they become rich? Perhaps they were clever enough to use the confused political and economic situation in Lithuania to their own advantage. Many of these people were traders with western countries or Russia. (They took Lithuanian goods that were cheap here, and sold them abroad where they were expensive. Or they did the opposite — they bought cheap goods abroad and then sold them here where they were expensive but popular. This was the start of the market economy.)

It was a very good time to do business, but frequently illegal. Often these people didn't pay taxes. They were not official. They worked as black market forces, or the mafia — not subject to any control.

But these were not the only business people. Many other people started businesses officially, and made a good profit.

This period has been difficult for people who live in traditional ways: they live by Soviet thinking; the state has to provide for them. They still don't feel responsible for themselves.

Because of all this, new social stratification began. People with initiative, courage, an adventurous spirit, and knowledge of the best ways to get money have become financially the strongest. Educated and qualified people have stepped one step back, or down, the social stairs. Inflation and shortages of goods have had an impact on these peoples' minds: they were pessimistic, and held out little hope of improving their living conditions.

During this social and economic crisis, there were a lot of stereotypes about rich people and about the new classes emerging in society. It was said that businessmen were occupying the country, that the mafia were governing us, and so on. So the houses that were built at that time were assumed to belong to those rich people, the "mafia."

And it's possible, because middle-class people could hardly afford a house. It takes a huge sum of money. Living in Lithuania with a stable, paying job, you couldn't build a house — salaries are too low. You have to work in two jobs, or have a secret source of money, to survive.

When commencing her research, Lina shared these critical assumptions about the occupants of the new houses. But she was curious to find out: "Are these opinions true?" She also wanted to inquire into how living in a new house affected a family's life:

How can people build such private homes? Who are they? Where do they get the money? I decided to interview a family which had moved from an

apartment to a new house. I wanted to see how the family and their lifestyle had changed and to find their reasons for moving. Before I did the interview I assumed, based on popular stereotypes, that people living in a new house would be rich people who had got money illegally, that they would have materialistic values, that they would have a low educational and cultural level, that the new house is a status symbol for them, that they have invested everything they have to build the house, and that the house would bring the family more stability, harmony, and self-satisfaction.

Lina decided to choose a new home at random, to go up and knock on the door, and to ask the occupant for an interview. At this point, one of her major concerns was that the person she approached “might suspect me of being spying on the ‘mafia’”! The family she interviewed live far from the centre of Vilnius on a quiet street in Fabijoniškės, an area where there are some individual homes. She did not know anything about the family beforehand, or about the type of people they were. As she said later: “The family I interviewed did not reflect . . . popular stereotypes . . . The family was not in the situation I expected.” Indeed the interview reveals a Lithuanian family that seems to have thrived under circumstances old and new. It also provides some interesting perceptions of how the move from a smaller apartment to a large house has affected the family dynamics and their occasionally ambivalent feelings about this.

“Living in a New Home”: An Interview by Lina Gudelionytė

I interviewed the hostess of the house. Her mother and daughter were also there. The father wasn't home.

Lina Gudelionytė: *How long have you lived in this new house?*

Hostess: Two years.

L.G.: *How did you live before? Were you satisfied with your living conditions?*

H.: Our family lived in the Old Town, in a three-room-apartment, in a building with five floors [a “box” type]. We are a three person family — myself, my husband, and daughter — and my mother also lives with us. So, we were only four people in three rooms. Our daughter is the only child in the family. We had enough space. We did not have as many things as we do now — not as much furniture. But we had enough to satisfy us. Our kitchen was large. Our daughter slept in a room with her grandmother. Now she has a room of her own.

My husband worked as a builder. I was a professional dancer. Financially we were sufficiently strong — we were not starving. But we lived a very expensive lifestyle. We loved to travel, and each summer we went out of Lithuania in our car. That was very unusual [the family had special permission to travel]. It took large sums of money, and we saved all year. I, as a dancer, traveled a lot with my dance company. I saw that many other Lithuanian people were not able to travel.

My husband is a quiet person. His hobbies are traveling and tourism. He was, I think, also satisfied in our previous apartment. Our family has good, strong relations — no quarrels. We keep our old traditions and ways of thinking. Every year we wait for our journey, and every time we borrow money (half the sum we need) from friends, and go to Europe. After our holidays are over we again start to save money instead of buying things.

L.G.: *Why did you move from an apartment to a house?*

H.: My husband decided to buy some land out of town (it was cheap), and to build a house. He was keen on it as a professional builder. He wanted to make a better life for us. I was against moving from our good apartment. I imagined problems looking after a house, and I didn't want the trouble of moving things from one place to the other. But my husband was very keen, and he persuaded us.

So moving to the house was a natural process, without a high-spirited mood or dreams. We felt a good feeling for our father because of his good heart and the big job he did for us. And he felt very important, very happy, doing the best for his family.

L.G.: *Do you work now?*

H.: I've already been on a pension for one year—after twenty years' experience as a professional dancer. [*She is about 40.*]

L.G.: *You don't need to have a job?*

H.: Well, I'll work if financial problems arise. My husband's salary is enough to live on. I'm rather happy, staying at home, spending time working in our house, having my leisure time filled with hobbies. Our family has a dog, I have to take care of it. He's our second "child." Also, I feel that I can open myself doing housework: creating and decorating the interior to my taste. I like nice surroundings. It takes about five to six hours a day to clean the house. But I don't find it boring or heavy — I was a dancer, so physical duties are useful and pleasant for me.

L.G.: *What social group can you identify yourself with? Did it change after moving?*

H.: I don't know. I don't distribute people to any group. For me, all people are equal, whether they are ministers or simply workers. I'm a cultural worker, and my husband is a builder — but we find common spheres of interest. We are simply a family, simply people.

L.G.: *How have your relations with friends changed? Are they totally new?*

H.: My friends, our family friends, are totally stable. Some new friends have appeared. They are our new neighbors. All of them are from the same building company with which my husband works. They have become good friends because of our location nearby.

L.G.: *Do you feel envy from society, relatives, and friends?*

H.: No, I don't. We had problems with the racket [the mafia], but they made a mistake — our family isn't rich. We are not involved in business. As for our relatives, they are happy for us. We gave our three-room-apartment as a gift to my husband's sister's family. And we don't regret that. So we have felt no envy really.

L.G.: *Did your way of relating with neighbors change?*

H.: Yes. Our relations with our new neighbors are closer (even though they are physically further away) than they were with our neighbors in the apartments. We communicate with each other about the problems we have keeping our street clean. Our families respect each other, and we are friends.

L.G.: *Who built your house, and how long did it take?*

H.: The process took about two years before we moved, so it is already about four years since we started building. My husband built our house himself with the help of his friends. The building materials were relatively cheap at that time, especially for builders — because they had some privileges in buying them. So it wasn't difficult to build our "castle." I helped only a little, in arranging our house on the inside. Everything else was done by our father.

L.G.: *Did you sacrifice anything in order to get this home?*

H.: No, I think no. It was only during the difficult period of the blockade on Lithuania [when Russia stopped the supply of oil and other important materials to Lithuania] that we had difficulty in buying goods we needed for our house. Then we sacrificed some things I had got from abroad: TV, video player, tape recorder. These are expensive here and there are few of them, so we sold ours. But spiritually we made no sacrifices. Even my husband, I think, in building this house did not sacrifice his leisure time — he did it with pleasure.

L.G.: *Do you feel you have a more satisfactory way of life, living in a new home?*

H.: Well, I enjoy living in an individual house, my house. I have no complaints about my living conditions. Of course our house isn't perfect. It still needs some things. But, in a word, I can say that I feel very good living here. I have more space, more privacy, more independence (though these are only feelings, for, as I have said, I had no complaints about our apartment). Here, I feel like a bird in its own nest. I like to have space around our house, and to have order in it. It is the face of the family. Well, it's better for my self-satisfaction, to live in a house and not in an apartment . . . because now I wouldn't like to go back and live in an apartment. [Her mother and daughter nod their heads in agreement.] But we are not tied to our house stupidly. We go to outside activities, we attend cultural events.

L.G.: *What are the advantages and disadvantages of life in a house?*

H.: The advantages could be: the silence and quietness of this district where we live, in our street; more space outside; the forest nearby; good transportation; good neighbors; and the house is our own property. The disadvantages could be: too much silence around where we live; too much space in the house — I mean unused space, the third floor. We pay for it, but we do not use it. It's not a problem to pay for it, but simply we have nothing to do in it.

L.G.: *Have relations in the family changed?*

H.: Actually no, but factually yes. The house strengthened and united our family. But from another point of view we were disunited — because now everybody has their own room. So we meet each other more rarely, we communicate less, and we do not see each other as often and immediately as in our apartment where we did not have as many rooms and floors as we do now. My daughter [who is eighteen, and is a student at the university, studying German] has the strongest feelings about this.

Daughter: Yes, I feel a lack of being together with the family. Now I'm alone in my room for long periods. I have a room on the second floor, and my mother and grandmother are usually on the first floor, where the kitchen is. I don't hear my mother, or my beloved dog. I miss our old apartment — it was good to live there!

L.G.: *Do you not feel comfortable in your new house?*

D.: Well, I have no complaints. It is simply that I miss my childhood street and places where I spent my time with my best friends. Now they are far away from me.

L.G.: *Is it a problem to pay taxes for the house and to pay for heating, electricity, water, and so on — because these cost more than they would in an apartment?*

H.: No, it's comparatively cheap — I mean compared to prices abroad. I know that abroad it's different: it's expensive to keep a house. Only rich people, older people, can have houses. In Lithuania, a lot of people could have houses if they wanted them — that's my opinion. But they simply don't have the courage, they don't know how to get a private house, or how to build it. But if they want, financial problems can be overcome. If you want, you can earn enough money, if you have the desire and some brains.

In the future, I think that prices for having a house will rise, but I hope we'll be able to pay for it. If not, I'll start to work. I'm not lazy. I'm still young.

L.G.: *What value does your house have for you? What does it mean for you?*

H.: The house is a good thing. It's comfortable, stable, and the roof of life. It is pleasant to live in it. But there are higher things in life — spiritual things.

L.G.: *Have your dreams changed since moving from the apartment?*

H.: No, I think no. This moving wasn't an event in our lives. Of course it was . . . but not such as to influence the stable spiritual state of our family. Our house isn't a "temple" — it's a thing that we value. We are a cultural family. I am a cultural worker. I have dreams that are higher than material things, and that are not changeable.

Our family is very romantic. We are crazy about traveling and about steeping ourselves in cultural life and events. We like to visit friends from abroad and to invite them here with us. We always spend a lot of our money on traveling. We were not, and we are not, rich people. It's our lifestyle and I like it. Money isn't a stable thing — there are better things in life. Money only helps to reach them. Before we moved here, I liked to spend my time reading, knitting, and listening to music — the same things I do now.

L.G.: *How do you imagine a happy family?*

H.: Well, first of all, there must be harmony between the wife and husband, agreement in most spheres of life, and tolerance. Everybody has to have their own independence, and not to decrease the independence and freedom of others.

L.G.: *But if a family has financial problems, how can it be harmonious?*

H.: I agree with you, it's another case. If you cannot purchase what you want for your dinner, you will not think about travels abroad. But on the other hand, everybody has a possibility to build their life in the best way. Everybody can earn enough money. We don't lack money. I think that if we lacked money, we would not have the desires we do have.

L.G.: *Can you say that you earned your living conditions on your own?*

H.: Yes, I think so. Because we are not businessmen, we don't steal, we don't "use" our parents. We simply have had good jobs and a good image of life.

L.G.: *Can you say that your life is in harmony? Are you a lucky person and family?*

H.: Well, I'd dare to say that we live in harmony. I enjoy our life. We have no deep troubles, those we have are little — they only make our life stronger. We have not had tragic events in our lives, no critical situations. I'd say that our family is lucky. I am not making this up — my mother and daughter can confirm it. [*They confirm it smiling, with very warm expressions on their faces.*]

L.G.: *Did you feel chaos in Lithuania after the Soviets fell?*

H.: No, not so much. We took part in our national revival. But we weren't affected too much by the inflation crisis. My husband is a good worker with a stable job and salary. I can only feel pity thinking about poor families, starving ones, thinking about young families.

L.G.: *Do you feel an improvement in Lithuania, or the opposite — deterioration?*

H.: Of course, like everyone else, I feel an improvement. People started to open their minds, their worldview. They started to travel more and to read and see more broadly. They are going further than their own back yard. They have started to feel more responsibility and to make higher requirements of themselves and others — it is raising the civilized and cultured way of living.

L.G.: *How do you see your future?*

H.: My future? Our future? Good. I'll have more free time for myself, for learning interesting things — for instance about geography and cultural life. I hope to travel more, to develop myself, to enrich my daughter's experience.

L.G.: *So you are an optimist?*

H.: Truly! Only optimistic, I never think about bad things. If they happen — it's only occasional, incidental, not the rule.

L.G.: *What, from your point of view, can human beings not attain in this world?*

H.: Perfection. Nobody can be perfect — such is human nature. But we were born to seek perfection, and we will do it our whole lives. We can treat each other well and be educated, polite, intelligent, and friendly.

L.G.: *Is it worth it, to live on this earth?*

H.: Without a doubt! Surely!

The Situation of Old Age Pensioners

The family interviewed by Lina is one of the lucky ones. The mother's occupation as a dancer allowed her to travel and make foreign friends. In turn, this facilitated the family in traveling, and in acquiring foreign goods. Such opportunities were not available to many Lithuanian families during the Soviet period.

Moreover, whereas many people who were financially comfortable during the Soviet period now find themselves in dire straits,⁹ especially those in state-funded positions, her husband's occupation as a builder is easily transferable to the rapidly developing and more lucrative private sector. Extensive renovations and construction are being undertaken by private businesses, including banks, shops, restaurants, and hotels. Construction is also being undertaken by the state itself, including improvements to airport buildings, roads, and so on.

Realistically, in the Lithuanian context, the possibility that the man of the family acquired at least some of his construction materials through "gray" legal means should not be dismissed. For example, another student, Giedrė Rindzevičiūtė, talked to an ex-prisoner about his experiences. The man was university educated and an engineer. He spent a year and a half in prison "for trying to bribe a customs official to smuggle some cheap building materials from Byelorussia." When Giedrė talked to him five months after he had got out of prison, the only work he could find was selling in the market, and apparently in a not very profitable way.¹⁰ "He told me he's working in the market six days a week. He's selling margarine, vegetable oil, and other products which he buys from wholesalers. He doesn't feel comfortable doing this kind of work, but he must do something to make a living . . . When I asked what he thinks about the future, he said he didn't have much hope."

This man's dismal situation clearly contrasts with that of the husband of the woman interviewed by Lina. Determining why one failed, and the other coped well during the transition period is, unfortunately, beyond the scope of this modest project.

The situation of the grandmother of the family interviewed by Lina is also of interest with respect to the more general issue of living conditions in contemporary Lithuania. The grandmother is clearly in a good situation. She lives harmoniously with her daughter and her family in a pleasant home, and without financial worries. Many other pensioners are not so fortunate. Indeed, if one considers the various social groups in Lithuania, pensioners are probably among those who have suffered most and benefited least from the changing circumstances of the transition period. Sadly, this seems to be true in post-Soviet countries more generally.

At first glance, many pensioners may appear to be not so badly off because their housing is relatively secure. Privatization of property in Lithuania involved issuing vouchers with which tenants could privatize the accommodation they occupied. In this way, many pensioners have come to own their apartments. Their problem is not paying the rent, but paying for utilities, food, medicine, and other basic needs. Put simply, since the transition, pensions have not been sufficient to cover everyday necessities. Remarks by Valters Nollendorfs (1993, 2) with respect to pensioners in Latvia fully apply in Lithuania (as in Estonia also): “The pensioners are receiving starvation monthly pensions . . . There is no doubt that a pensioner cannot survive on a pension alone.”

Nor was the situation going to improve in the near future. In 1996 Jolanta Paluckienė observed that since 1990 “pensions have been losing their value. Whatever position pensioners had earlier occupied on the labour market, no [matter] how many years they had spent in employment, they were poor. Pensioners who had to live on their pension alone, faced the nightmare of permanent impoverishment . . . Statistical data show that pensioners are unable to subsist from their pensions” (371, 372).

The difficult financial situation of pensioners is exacerbated by inflation and currency transitions that have greatly diminished the value of their savings.¹¹ Linas Turauskas discusses this situation in a narrative titled “Diminishing Social Security”:

A few words: during my usual “journey” from Kaunas to Vilnius, I heard two rural women talking about their savings. One said that she had 50,000 rubles in 1989, so now she has just 500 litas. She doesn’t know what to do, she is not politicized, she doesn’t support the left or the right. . . .

Well, I thought — 50,000 rubles. You could have built a perfectly good house, or bought two of the best Soviet cars (other kinds weren’t available). But what can be done with 500 litas?

There was much more security during the Soviet regime. People were more equal to one another when you compared them by standards of living. They were happy, or at least most of them were not dissatisfied. And now that ground which is called “social security” is broken.

I fell asleep thinking about that, and I was awakened by a shabbily dressed old man who showed me his pensioner’s certificate and asked for some money. I gave some change to him. These divisions — I can’t stand them.

The reader might ask: if pensioners cannot live on a pension alone, and if many of them do not have substantial savings, how do they survive? One way, as we have seen, is that their families provide for them. Many pensioners also supplement their resources in various ways. For example, and like much of the population, they pick mushrooms in the autumn and cultivate garden plots in the

suburbs, growing fruit and vegetables that can be preserved for the winter. Some pensioners sell their produce, especially flowers, on the streets. And some also find other items to sell, including clothes they have knitted and personal belongings.

Pensioners also take jobs. As of 1995 it was estimated that 15 percent of pensioners were “economically active” (Paluckienė 1996, 371). When informal and seasonal work such as babysitting are factored in, the percentage of pensioners working is far higher. Perhaps it should be mentioned that, at that time, with the retirement age set at fifty-five for women and sixty for men, pensioners accounted for over a quarter of Lithuania’s population. Plans were in place to increase the retirement age by four months annually, until it reached sixty for women, and sixty-five for men (373, 372).¹²

Many pensioners, however, are unemployed and lack resources other than their pension. For example, they may not have any family left, or only unsupportive family members. Sadly, it appears that some family members are abusive to the older generation in various ways — including trying to take their apartments from them.¹³ Some pensioners do not have access to garden plots, or, if they do, lack the strength to tend them.

Taken together with the inadequacy of their pensions, it is not surprising that the phenomenon of older people begging has emerged. One sees pensioners sitting or kneeling on the ground outside shops, often with their hands deferentially outstretched. One also hears stories about pensioners taking drastic action to try and meet their basic needs. For example, several doctors who work in mental health told me about old people trying to get themselves signed into mental hospitals, not because they were mentally ill, but because that was the only way they could think of getting regular meals.

So the reality is that many pensioners in Lithuania live in conditions of severe economic deprivation. Although some pensioners in western countries also have deplorably low incomes, the scale of deprivation appears to be harsher in the Baltics.

How are old people viewed by other Lithuanians, and especially by the student contributors to this research? This is a difficult question to answer. The students freely chose their topics and, with the exception of an excellent interview with an old age pensioner by Tadas Leonėikas, which follows below, the topic of old people rarely arose in their work.¹⁴ The one exception to this was when the students were writing about transportation, and especially their experiences on buses. It seems that students most regularly encounter old people on buses.

Universally — and understandably, given the uncomfortable and extremely overcrowded conditions on the buses—taking the bus was described as an unpleasant experience. And, within this context, old people seemed to be seen as a particular nuisance. The following narrative by Reda Staraitė, titled “*The Perils of Buses*,” is typical of the way the students mention elderly men and women:

Thank God that I live near the Department of Sociology, the place where I have lectures, as I can reach the university on foot very successfully. It takes only fifteen minutes for me if I walk straight through a small forest.

I prefer going on foot for two reasons. First, every morning I have the chance to breathe in clear air, to enjoy the wonderful landscape, and to wake up once and for all. The second, and most important reason, is that I avoid taking the bus. This is the greatest advantage of my neighborhood near the university, because this “procedure” of going by bus or trolley-bus at peak hours is unbearable. Then a bus often becomes a place of real struggle for existence.

You have a good chance to observe many especially dramatic situations at a bus stop where the bus begins its route. A huge crowd of tired people wait for an empty bus secretly hoping to get a seat. As soon as the bus comes all potential passengers become an assault group and a real rush begins. *This is the moment when, as a rule, rather elderly men and women with several big bags in their hands suddenly gain a particular power and strength and demonstrate it [emphasis added].*

Sometimes fighting people near the doors of a bus make a crush there, and no one can get into the bus. Finally, the strongest and most powerful passengers take seats. But there are not enough seats for all of them. The show goes on. These passengers start pretending that they are the most tired and unhappy people in the world. They are deadly unfortunate and angry. At that time I wouldn't wish you to find yourself near such people. You simply do not have any right to sit and are guilty for just standing nearby. I don't even want to tell about what happens should you casually take a seat. Then it is advisable to give up your place if you want to avoid real trouble.

You can feel this same atmosphere in almost every bus in the morning when people are leaving their homes and in the evening when they are coming back and the buses are most crowded.

Pensioners appear to be equally offended by the behavior of young people. Sometimes their hostility to the youth is very clearly declared, as in the following narrative by Audra Dargytė, entitled “Old Ladies on the Bus”:

I went to my classes and saw a typical situation on the trolley-bus. It was, as usual, full. A lot of people tried to get out of it, and the last one was an old lady. She was a very slow person. And one young guy at the front of those getting on said loudly: “If you are so old and slow don't go on buses!” The old lady shouted back at him: “OK, who will collect my pension in that case?”

Now I understood that all younger passengers would suffer. I was right. All the middle-aged and old ladies started to grumble and later shouted at us: "You can't imagine that you will become old too, and that you'll be in the same situations — when your children will tell you that you are useless . . . and you will have to stay at home without leaving it at all" . . . and so on and so forth.

After that, as usual, neighboring couples of old ladies (who were strangers to each other) started to talk about their "bad" young relatives, their homes, their incomes. . . . And their conversation flowed further and further away from the starting point of their talk to the political and economic situation in Lithuania.

While the students were obviously irritated by their encounters with old people on the buses, they are also aware of, and sympathetic about, the difficult socioeconomic situation of pensioners. Linas Turauskas is another student who grumbled about elderly women on Vilnius trolley-buses; but he also, as recounted above, was moved to give some money to an elderly man after hearing two women discussing the withering away of their savings. Aida Baibokaitė, in discussing the rising price of medicine, notes the problems this poses for older people: "The situation for pensioners is especially difficult — their subsidies are so small that they cannot be ill, even though they will get a rebate."

Even in the course of discussing the situation on buses, students sometimes point to admirable behavior on the part of old people. One example of this is Rūta Piliukaitė's discussion of "*A Drunk Man*" and an old woman's efforts to help him:

A drunk man got into a trolley-bus. There were few people in it. He slowly reached a seat. The man was especially sociable as only a drunk can be. In a polite and friendly way he offered the seat beside him to everyone who came near him. But his offer did not tempt anyone; people quickly stepped aside. He lost the hope of having someone to talk to and concentrated his attention on something invisible in front of him.

Suddenly he lost his balance and fell off the seat. Falling, he struck his head. People looked at him indifferently. The idea of helping him did not rush into their thoughts. *Unexpectedly an old woman came up and began to lift him* [emphasis added]. Her toil attracted attention but no one hurried to help her.

She was not strong enough to lift the tall and somewhat fat man. So she asked the nearest man to help. The man replied, "He is drunk." The old woman retorted, "It is not important if he is drunk or not. He is human." It is difficult to say if this argument persuaded him, but he stood to help seat the drunk man. When he was lifting the "guzzler" it seemed as if he was holding something dirty and unpleasant in his arms. His motions were rough. He threw the drunk man on the seat rather than seating him. Afterwards, this reluctant

helper disappeared. At that time the “guzzler” sincerely thanked the woman and begged her pardon.

Those who are currently pensioners have experienced an incredible amount of change, and trauma, in their lifetimes. For example, a person born in the early 1930s would be able to recollect aspects of the relatively tranquil and independent interwar years. They would recall the arrival of the Russians in 1940; their departure, and the arrival of the Germans in 1941; and the departure of the Germans, and the return of the Red Army in 1944. They would also recall exiles, disappearances, arrests, incarcerations, the drafting of people to forced labor, the killings, and the deportations of Lithuanians to Siberia and elsewhere which took place during these early years of occupation.

Concerning the years from 1944 until the early 1950s, many pensioners would remember the continuing deportations¹⁵ as well as the armed resistance carried out by Lithuanian partisans who took to the woods. Indeed many pensioners would themselves have had personal experience of deportation, forced labor, and resistance, and would know numerous others who were oppressed and were killed or died under such circumstances. And all of this during the first few decades of their lives.

More recently, in the 1980s pensioners would have witnessed, and often taken part in, the revival movement and the struggle to restore Lithuanian independence. They have heard the optimism, and lofty social, economic, nationalist, and cultural aspirations of political leaders. They have witnessed the demise of the Soviet Union. And in the 1990s they have experienced the results of all this, whereby politically they may be better off, but economically life seems more difficult than ever.

How do pensioners feel about all that they have seen and experienced? Answering this important question is well beyond the scope of this research. But, while students often focused on their grumpy dispositions, as Audra’s account of the old woman assisting the drunk man indicates, older people also display feisty and courageous characteristics. These characteristics—and some pensioners’ stoicism in face of adversity—are further evident in Linita Aleksūnaitė’s observations of two old people chatting. Again, this encounter—titled “*Empty Refrigerators*”—takes place on a bus:

Everyone knows that life in Lithuania now (and other East European countries) is rather hard. Our economy is broken and many people live on the poverty line. And, I think, the hardest time now is for old people who live only on their poor pensions and must pay a very big tax for their apartments.

Once I was going home in the bus from my rehearsal. I was tired and angry because I was thinking about the empty refrigerator in my dormitory.

And accidentally I began listening to two old people (a man and woman) who were talking about their lives. As I understood it, they were strangers — they had met for the first time on this bus. They were talking about the same things people often talk about on the buses.

But this talk was very strange for me, because of the fact that they talked about their hard lives, and their empty refrigerators — and laughed! These two old people made jokes about their cold apartments, poor clothes, and other unhappy things. I was really surprised!

I'm so young and had thought about the same things with anger. And these pensioners had so much strength and could make jokes. And then I thought that it was possible to think about our hard life with a smile. It is the only way to survive difficult times and not lose optimism and trust in the future.

As well as dealing individually with their difficult circumstances, some pensioners in Lithuania have been quite organized and vociferous in articulating their concerns to the government. It is not unusual to see political demonstrations comprised primarily of older people. Pensioners have campaigned for greater public recognition of past abuses and have sought access to the KGB archives and acknowledgement of unjust convictions and punishments.¹⁶ They have also campaigned for compensation to victims of deportation and oppression. In addition, pensioners have continuously campaigned for improvements in their pensions and have gained modest increases.

Cash-strapped Lithuanian governments have also tried to appease pensioners by acting upon what might be described as their symbolic concerns such as mass media that advertise unaffordable luxuries. For example, pensioners (and other low-income groups) who might not have eaten meat for months were irritated by TV advertisements showing dogs being fed Pedigree Pal and other kinds of pet food. With the support of several members of Parliament, "Lithuanian State television . . . placed restrictions on advertisements of dog food by several western companies on the grounds that they irritate too many viewers living below the poverty line" (*Baltic Independent*, 11–17 February 1994, 8). These advertisements subsequently could not be shown immediately before or after the major evening news program.

Such modest gains do not radically change the reality of poverty faced by pensioners. In April 1994, for example, I noted that pensioners, then living on pensions equivalent to US\$25 or less, would have had little hope of buying foodstuffs such as a head of cauliflower (US\$2) or a carton of fruit juice (US\$1). Items such as meat, coffee, and cleaning products have been similarly unaffordable. As a result, many pensioners are forced to survive on a limited diet of potatoes, beetroot, and other lower-priced basics.

Even descriptions such as this do not adequately illuminate the everyday reality of life as a pensioner. The following interview by Tadas Leonikas with an old woman living alone does a far better job. The woman he interviewed is a forced migrant from Russia who came to live in Lithuania after the Second World War. The reader may recall that ethnic Russians account for nearly 10 percent of Lithuania's population, and close to 20 percent of Vilnius's residents. Between 1945 and 1959 over 225,000 people moved to Lithuania from Russia and other Soviet Republics. Many of these, if not most of them were, like to the interviewee, forced migrants (Sipavičienė 1995,a; 97).

At the end of the interview the pensioner indicates that she has not experienced much conflict arising from her ethnicity. Her experience is in keeping with the relatively harmonious relations between Lithuania and Russia, and between Lithuanians and Russians. This harmony is in sharp contrast to the situations in Latvia and Estonia where ethnic Russians constitute a far higher proportion of the population — over 30 percent in each country, and over half the population in many of the cities.¹⁷ Where ethnic Russians in Lithuania have ready access to Lithuanian citizenship and the vast majority appear to have accepted it (Sipavičienė 1995,b; 97), in Latvia and Estonia citizenship and related language issues have been overwhelmingly conflictual (Karklins 1998; Milevska 1998).¹⁸

“An Old Woman Living Alone”:
An Interview by Tadas Leonikas

This interview was conducted to clarify some aspects of how old people living alone perceive their situation. The subject was a seventy-eight-year-old woman, a Russian Orthodox believer, who lives alone in a one-room apartment in an ordinary district of Vilnius. We spoke in Russian.

I met the woman at the local social welfare office. She had gone there to inquire about the possibility of material support. When it was explained to her what my interview would be about she didn't mind participating. When asked if I could visit her, she readily agreed. Perhaps the assistance of the inspector of social care with my request for an interview was significant; in other cases a couple of old women at the office had refused (one had to go to the doctor, and another didn't want to become excited because of her health). Some old men whom the guardianship inspector phoned didn't feel ready or eager to meet or receive a stranger.

The “external” characteristics of this woman are typical of many old people: she gets an ordinary average pension and continually confronts poverty. At the beginning of the interview she showed me a photograph of her son. He died some years ago . . . of a heart attack. After this we sat down on the sofa and started our talk in the room which was not smart, but very tidy.

Tadas Leonėikas: *I would like to talk with you about old people who are living alone, like yourself. Old people, especially if they are alone, sometimes have difficult problems. I suppose that some of these problems are similar among old people, but, wanting to understand them better, I'd like to look at someone's situation in a deeper way. I want to learn about these problems, as they say, “from the first lips.”*

It's great that you have agreed to give time for our conversation. So, first, can you please tell me if you have problems, and what are the major ones among them today?

Woman: It's clear what the problems are: money and hunger. The pension is not enough.

T.L.: *How much do you get?*

W.: Last month it was 70 litas.¹⁹ Look, I paid 29 litas for utilities for the apartment, 29 litas.

T.L.: *Is this apartment your own?*

W.: We (my husband and I) got it from our workplace; we worked at the railway. So my husband got it. He died when he was fifty, in a train crash. So the apartment was the state's. But now it's mine, my son helped to privatize it. [*She explains how that took place.*]

T.L.: *So, returning to today, you say that there are problems connected with your material conditions?*

W.: Of course. It's impossible to afford to buy something to wear, and to eat. Eh! [*with a light smile*] I keep myself on potatoes and cabbage. And vegetable oil. That's my main meal. I rarely, very rarely, buy meat. How could I?

T.L.: *The welfare office organizes charitable meals, perhaps you know that?*

W.: Yes, yes. She [the inspector] offered that to me, and if everything was as it was earlier that would be good. But my legs . . . they hurt a lot and it's hard to walk. I'm happy the shop is nearby. I couldn't walk to the charitable canteen every day.

T.L.: *So sometimes your health situation creates trouble?*

W.: Of course. And medicines are so expensive. Not to mention other things. You see, I always have to use heart medicines. My heart is getting weaker. But what can I do? I have to think before buying medicine, I have to buy cheap ones. The discount we get doesn't help much. I always have to ask the physician to prescribe something cheaper.

And food — you have to eat something, don't you? So what remains after all this? You get a pension just once a month. I get it on the twenty-fourth, and I have to wait until the next twenty-fourth. Then there's more to pay for — laundering, washing. I haven't anything special, but I like to keep everything clean and in order. Though I'm not smart, everything is in as much order as possible. And those soaps are so expensive — as is everything else.

T.L.: *On what do you mostly spend your money?*

W.: Oh, on food. It's dear, food. Almost all the rest goes on that [after paying for the apartment].

T.L.: *And how long is it since you bought any clothes?*

W.: Oh, a long time ago. I bought a coat five years ago or more, when my son was alive. But buying clothes now — no, I cannot. And a funeral is very expensive. After my son's I was heavily in debt.

T.L.: *In your everyday life, what takes most of your time?*

W.: Finding medicines. You see, I try to find them as cheaply as possible. I try with all my strength to somehow keep things in order until it's time to get the pension. I desperately don't want to get into a situation where it's necessary to ask the neighbors for help.

Looking for food also takes time. You see, I made a mistake this year with the potatoes [*she explains how her pension had not arrived in time to buy good quality and cheap potatoes in bulk directly from farmers in the autumn, and now she had to pay high prices for lower quality ones in the shop*]. So I cannot even think about buying something to wear. An acquaintance advised me to visit the welfare office. But they only had summer shoes and they weren't right for an old person's feet. I had hoped to get some shoes — I like to attend church.

T.L.: *Does anybody help you with your affairs?*

W.: Who could . . . ?

T.L.: *Don't you have any relatives?*

W.: Relatives? All my sisters are dead. My grandson, he has his own family, and lives on another side of town. My other grandson is not married; he is doing military service.

T.L.: *Perhaps he helps?*

W.: Oh . . . [*with tears in her eyes*] . . . if he thought of helping it would be much better. But no. And more, he wanted me to give him this apartment.

T.L.: *Excuse me, what exactly do you mean?*

W.: He wanted me to write on documents that he lives here. You see then, after my death, he would get this apartment.

T.L.: *And what do you think?*

W.: I don't agree with him. First, I don't know how much longer I shall live. Second, payment for two registered persons in an apartment is larger than for one. So when I make a will perhaps I shall leave it to someone else. I don't know yet.

T.L.: *You haven't made a will?*

W.: No. But I shall. I have to look carefully at my financial affairs because my friend says that making a will is an expensive thing [because of the cost to notarize it].

T.L.: *And to whom do you think you will leave the apartment? Not to that grandson?*

W.: No, I don't trust him. There have been many cases . . . Once I met a woman near the church. I saw her standing in the yard and crying. I asked, "What's happened?" And she told me, "My dear, I don't know where to go." I asked, "Why?" She replied, "I have a son, a soldier. When I still lived in the countryside he said 'Mummy, sell your house and let's buy an apartment together in town.' So up to now we lived together. Now his daughter is already a big girl, and she tells me, 'Grandmother, this room is mine.' So I don't have anywhere to stay. Perhaps I'd like to move to the country, but I don't have any money." And she stood there and cried. So, I am not in a hurry to sign this apartment over to anybody.

And another example — of a grandmother from the building next door. She worked in a shop. I knew her. Now she's dead. She brought up the children, but one son and his family stayed with her. Little by little he began to drink a lot. And his wife wasn't much better. He even beat the grandmother. They say it was he who killed her.

T.L.: *His old mother?*

W.: Yes. She helped, she loved the grandchildren, and did everything well. But — you know what alcoholics are like. She spent the nights in the corridor and later slept in the room of the lift operator. But now she's dead — God take her to You. [*She sits silently for a while.*]

T.L.: *Do you think your grandsons might be similar?*

W.: No. No. But . . . I don't trust him [*the military one*]. Maybe I'll leave the apartment for the married one in town. He's a nice man. He works well and a lot.

T.L.: *So you say your grandsons don't help. They really don't?*

W.: No. No.

T.L.: *What do you think in general? Ought relatives help to support or maintain someone old from their family, whether it's necessary or not? Maybe the state is the first with a duty to do this?*

W.: I don't rely on others and haven't the hope of it. Look, in my life I have lived through three times of starvation. Since childhood my parents accustomed me to work hard. You know, life in a [Russian] village was hard in those times. Oh, how I wanted to learn things . . . but it wasn't possible. Therefore, I am accustomed to having to do everything by myself. I somehow don't like to borrow, and I'm used to economizing.

My grandson — the married one — is a really good man. He has two jobs, doesn't smoke or drink. But he has his own family to think of — his wife, two children, and mother-in-law.

T.L.: *So you don't expect attention from them?*

W.: No . . . I simply would like to have money for my funeral. I had some money in Museum Street [a branch of the savings bank]. When I was working, I just sought to save in my savings bank book. Little by little, I worked and saved, worked and saved. . . .

But now, what remains? Nothing. When my son was still alive we even saved a little together. Then I sold my check book to put more in my savings bank book, for some black day.²⁰ But now [*sorrowfully*] nothing remains because of inflation.

T.L.: *By the way, perhaps you heard about the demonstration by elderly people, requesting the government to index their savings?*

W.: No, I didn't. Those demonstrations don't help in any case. Everyone is becoming poor. Where can the government get money from? I don't know about these things. I just hoped to have enough for my funeral. Now I have prepared a funeral shroud for myself, and perhaps somehow the government will buy a coffin.

T.L.: *We met at the inspector of social care's office at the welfare office. What did you ask for?*

W.: Anything, it doesn't matter. For example, maybe to get some products. I use vegetable oil very often.

T.L.: *Do you know exactly what they can offer, or did you ask without knowing?*

W.: I know one woman living not far away. She wrote an application too. She told me that she got some butter and a little oil . . . and later a coat. Even a husband and wife living not too badly received some products. I simply didn't apply for a long time. Pensioners near the shop — they gather there you know — they sometimes said to me, "Oh why don't you go there? We got this, we got that." I didn't go. I tried to somehow put things in order myself. You know, it's somehow shameful to have to go there and ask [*sadly, she brushes tears away*].

T.L.: *And now, have you changed your mind or what?*

W.: How to say it? You see, I just heard that someone got this, someone got that. I decided to apply also. My grandson was told "they won't give her anything," and he laughed. But what was I to do?

And these pensioners at the shop — they gather and boast about what they got. And they are not invalids. My legs get so bad, I decided to go.

T.L.: *Did you write an application by yourself?*

W.: I asked my grandson to do it. And he said, "Grandmother, it is necessary to learn, you see you can't write by yourself now." I said, "My dear, if I could have [learned to write] I would have." I cried a lot thinking about how I had wanted to learn how to write. But look, in the countryside my parents were illiterate.

T.L.: *But you read some newspapers, don't you?*

W.: Thanks be to God, I read. I learned how to by myself. Look, I have a Gospel here, I read it. . . . To write, it is true, I cannot . . . but of course I can sign my name. So I read the Gospel, the newspaper, and other religious papers that I have.

T.L.: *Do you know old people who get support, and where do they get money and things from?*

W.: God knows. . . . One acquaintance, she lives well, really well. She goes to Pėvėrynas church. I usually go to another one. And I saw her with one new coat, and later with another. She got them through the church. That's support. But all the best things were received by those who were better acquainted with the church authorities. The poor stayed poor.

T.L.: *Do you feel that you should get a bigger pension?*

W.: Surely. Now it's too little. If I could get a bigger one, my head would be calmer. Then I could buy a little meat, a little sour cream. Now, I just go past them in the shop. I only look at them, and leave. A dry sausage — ask me, when have I bought it? — never [*sorrowfully*]. On the current pension you'll never buy it. I'm a frugal woman . . . but if only I could get a little oil which is necessary in the time of fasting before Christmas.

T.L.: *How much money would you like to get?*

W.: I don't know. . . . You know I'm a modest woman. I don't drink, I always economize. I have always lived in a modest way. I like to attend church — and candles are expensive there too.

T.L.: *But try to imagine how much would make things normal.*

W.: Maybe at least more than 100 litas²¹ . . . one could have a calmer head.

T.L.: *And please tell me — with whom are you acquainted, who are your friends, whom do you meet?*

W.: My friend . . . she lives alone too, she gets the same pension.

T.L.: *Do you have more friends — maybe somebody in church?*

W.: I haven't many friends. You see, I like to visit church and pray. And, you know, after the service you ought to remain calm, especially after confession, to carry the Holy Spirit home. I'm not very fond of friends who just gossip. One can often meet a group of pensioners near the shop . . . but I don't like such friends. I prefer to read the Gospel.

T.L.: *But don't you sometimes feel lonely?*

W.: I don't know. No. I know my grandson's family is well, the children are healthy. I'm calm and that's enough. My acquaintance always sits in the shop; she says it's boring to be at home. But I find it's a shame to spend all your time in a shop. I'd rather read quietly. I'm a believer and don't like all those things - that gossip.

T.L.: *Do you see other old people who are similar to you?*

W.: I don't know [*thinks for a minute*]. You see, most of the old women like me — grannies — who I see in church, they cry there. You can understand the situation.

T.L.: *I suppose there are some differences among old people. For example, one can see beggars . . .*

W.: Yes, yes, I always meet them near the church. I give them money. Not much of course, just some change. But I believe they pray for us. I don't begrudge them — because of our giving our dead parents are satisfied.

T.L.: *But what explains the different reactions by old people who are living alone? One simply visits the welfare office; another, with all their strength tries to put things in order by themselves — as you do; a third begs . . .*

W.: I find that people are different. One has something yet wants more. I know such people. In their situation I would be strongly ashamed to show my face at the inspector's office. But they live well and want more.

Others are poor but not so impudent, and they suffer. Those who beg are perhaps in the most extreme situation. Though my friend never gives them money and says that we all get the same pension. But I'm a believer — I give. But God

save me from such a destiny! . . . I experienced it during a time of starvation, with my little child. There in the village, we had nothing [*becomes distressed, cries, and is silent for a while*]. I know what it is like. Oh God, save me from this now.

T.L.: *And now, please tell me how do you see the future of people who become old and lonely — will it get better?*

W.: I don't know. I don't expect much. How can it get better? Perhaps until the end of the world it will be the same. People who read the Bible say that it will get worse, and the end is near.

T.L.: *Do you think that we have to wait for something to happen, or to try and make something happen?*

W.: Of course, to try and make something happen. But I don't expect that anyone can or knows what to do.

T.L.: *How do you imagine your personal future will be — do you have some plans?*

W.: I don't think about it. I have no plans. I ask God to give me health. It's interesting . . . as some people say: "to live means to suffer but there is no wish to die."

T.L.: *Please, compare the situation of old people now, and especially those living alone, with those in the time of your youth. How was it then? How do you see this now that you are old and alone?*

W.: Then, old people could be calmer — they didn't need to worry so much. You see, younger people then were not as they are now. Especially in the countryside it was different. Neighbors and acquaintances respected and helped elderly people. Now, no one cares. And now, it's dangerous to walk outside, especially in the evenings. Everyone is so nervous.

And now, you know about youth . . . it seems they don't notice an old person. In the trolley-bus, for example, younger people never give their seat.

T.L.: *Have you personally experienced some incidents with young people?*

W.: I try to avoid them. My acquaintance, she was coming back from church in the evening (I'm afraid to go in the evening). And there, in the area near the airport, a young man struck her on the head with some iron thing.

So I go to church only in the morning. If someone injures you then you can become an invalid — God forbid. I haven't experienced such unpleasant encounters, but my acquaintance — she slices bread at the shop — was already met twice by some men near the lift . . . young people. But happily, she says, some elderly men came and those young ones didn't succeed in taking her bag.

Thanks be to God, my son was a really virtuous man.

T.L.: *And, returning to our theme, I'd like to ask you about your church: after praying, don't you have gatherings, doesn't anybody organize some support?*

W.: In my church—no. But I have heard about this in Þvėrynas.

T.L.: *Haven't you been interested in going there?*

W.: You see, I'm strongly accustomed to attending my own church; and secondly, the candles there are cheaper.

T.L.: *Please tell me, how old are you?*

W.: Seventy-eight.

T.L.: *You are Russian, aren't you?*

W.: Yes I am. I'm from Karsk — not from the town, but from the countryside. My family was big — seven persons. We were taught to work hard in the village. Later when we (my husband and I) worked for the railway, we were sent here [to Lithuania]. And here we worked hard too. . . . At first, we lived near the airport, and all were together — Russians, Byelorussians, Ukrainians, Lithuanians - various nationalities. And it was good then.

T.L.: *Haven't you experienced some conflict on the basis of nationality?*

W.: Nothing serious. If a person is good and honest, he can find a place everywhere.

We finished our conversation by thanking each other.

2.

Observations on the Economy and Services Unsatisfactory Public Services

Just as the students tended to be critical of traditional living conditions in multi-unit housing, they were also critical of public services. Overall, the state and its employees were viewed with derision. Elena Danileviėiūtė, for example, provides the following commentary on “*State Services*”:

If you want to spoil your good mood I can make a helpful suggestion to you: go for a health examination, or try to manage your affairs. Of course, I don't advise you to go to a private institution — there you'll be met with a pleasant smile and expressions of concern for your business. I counsel you to go to the student polyclinic or to state institutions — the office of local administration or a government ministry. There you will be able to meet officials who are more or less angry, or are at least irritated and tired.

If you want to make him or her more angry you should try to interrupt their phone calling or tea-drinking. Then you will be got rid of in a not very polite way. After this accident you will have to wait a very long time for attention. And when you begin to feel the loss of your patience you will at last be asked

to come in. But first you will have to hear out a monologue of the employee about how busy they are, and how people trouble them with insignificant problems. . . .

It is difficult to predict the outcome of your efforts to solve some of your problems at the state institution. Maybe you'll settle it the same day, or maybe after a week. But I'm sure some questions will occur to you: What are these damn officials doing? Is their responsibility to help as much as possible important to them or not? Do they have to serve me, or do I have to serve them?

Employees of specific occupations are also criticized. Reda Ðtaraitė, for example, does not retain fond memories of "*The School Dentist*":

At the mention of my secondary school the first thought that comes into my mind is the school dentist. She is stamped in the memory of every schoolchild as the most distinct person of all.

I simply have no words to describe her. A procedure of treating teeth is terrible in itself (at least for me). I cannot stand that smell of different drugs and the sound that drilling machines produce. But the way in which our dentist treated teeth was a real execution. You could not avoid it in any way —there used to be compulsory checking of all children once a year. You could not refuse to come or to let her treat your teeth when she asked you. But usually we gave no resistance because we were awfully afraid of her.

The dentist was very old and had a terrible voice. I have never heard her speaking: she only shouted at us. She shouted at you all the time you sat on the chair. Patients simply did not have a right to cry, or to scream if they could not bear the pain. They did not even have a right to slobber because it impeded her work. But the most noticeable thing is that she simply adored gossiping with somebody on the telephone at the same time as boring a hole in your tooth. Sometimes she even used to forget what she was doing. That used to be the culmination of the execution. Actually, she spoiled teeth rather than improved them. We used to lose the fillings after a period of a month or two. During next year's compulsory examination she shouted at us that we did not take care of our teeth and proceeded to "treat" them again.

Now when I think of it I pity my own teeth that experienced such spoiling. But at that time fear of the dentist was much stronger than pity for my teeth.

Eglė Rudalevičiūtė provides a critical portrait of the men who came to fix her door in "*The Masters of My Apartment*":

There is something that is usual in Lithuania, and it is a problem. I'd call this phenomenon communistic. This incident is just a moment in time, but a very expressive one. . . . Because of it I didn't give my sociology essay in on time. In the morning — two days before my essay was due — two men came to me. I was surprised. They explained to me that they must change a door in my apartment. Well, I remembered I had ordered a new door, but that was several months earlier. And now I was very busy because exams were drawing near. I asked them to come back a month later. They said that they didn't want to

know anything. The director had given them my address and had chosen a new door. So I had to stay with them.

I spent the whole day looking for a lock for my new door. The workers had also forgotten an axe. . . . In addition to that I had to listen to the questions and advice of my neighbors. They said I was so lucky because I succeeded in finding these masters. They couldn't understand my complaints about my lack of time, my lectures, and the essay I had to write.

I thought the workers tried to do their work well. That's why I didn't say anything when I saw that my bottle of French wine in the kitchen was empty. But I didn't catch this allusion until my uncle explained everything to me. I didn't know before that in addition to the official price I must "provide" the masters with alcohol.

The next morning a bottle of Smirnoff vodka waited for my masters. They were so happy and so kind. They invited me to drink with them. In the evening when they were going home, one of them called me an angel.

I've done this work of being host at my apartment for two days. Now I'm afraid that someone will come to improve the sockets. I called for a sockets master over a month ago.

Divilė Janukonienė does not have much faith in those who ought to deal with her "*Plumbing Problems*":

One Sunday evening I drank a cup of tea and wanted to wash my cup, when suddenly something happened to the tap. I couldn't turn it off! It was late Sunday evening and my husband wasn't there. And there is no working plumber on Sunday anywhere. Of course I began to cry for a moment. Afterward I took a piece of wire and tied the tap with it. The flowing water was stopped. But I couldn't use the tap in the kitchen. Thank God I have a bathroom. The bright side of life appeared again.

On Monday afternoon I tried to call a plumber on the phone. The woman who answered said it was too late, as the plumber only works until midday. OK, I said, let him know that I will wait for him on Thursday morning.

It's Thursday today. I'm sitting here and waiting for the "saint" plumber. It's 11.30 a.m. and he hasn't come yet.

Oh my dear plumber! I know in advance that when you come (if that happens), you will look at my tap with your clever, soft glance and you will say: "I'm sorry madame, but I haven't got the part your tap needs."

One occupation almost universally criticized was that of salespeople in shops, specifically in state-run shops. As in critiques of other state employees, the problems are linked with traditional, Soviet-style ways of doing things. Here, Renata Pradzevičiūtė's description of "*Supermarket Salespeople*" is typical:

I don't like Lithuanian salespeople. In fact they are not Lithuanian but represent some kind of Soviet salespeople. Especially I don't like salespeople who work in supermarkets. Very often they are fat, impolite, and even unclean, women

that never smile. If there are few customers in the shop they stand around chatting and pay no attention when you are waiting near the counter. They will use any instrument for cutting cheese. If the customer wants to make a complaint they start to shout at him. It often seems to me that salespeople are the masters, and customers are the servants in Lithuania.

It is not only the manner of selling that makes me nervous. Salespeople are always cheating. They take at least five cents from every customer. For example, my friend saved 500 litas during two months working in the bread section, though her wage was only 80 litas a month! The cheese and meat sections are the most profitable in the shop. Every time you want to buy some cheese you can see the table of the electronic scales because they stand slantwise. If you can see the table you will see that it shows two grams weight even when nothing is on the scales. The salesperson puts on the paper. Now the table shows five grams. After that he weighs a piece of cheese. In the end the salesperson adds at least five cents to the sum that shows on the table. You never pay the real price.

I know that disorder in the Lithuanian food industry creates problems not only for customers but for salespeople too. Most products are not wrapped and salespeople have a lot of work. But salespeople, not customers, make a big profit from this fact.

Positive and Negative Aspects of Recent Developments

With the transition, many services that were previously run by the state are now provided through the private sector.²² For example, doctors, dentists, and other professionals are setting up their own practices. Hotels, restaurants, and shops are increasingly being operated privately rather than publicly. The results of these forms of privatization were often viewed positively by the students. In particular, the “culture of service” associated with privatization is appreciated. Reda Staraitė’s comments on “*Private and State-Owned Shops*” are typical:

Recently, more and more new shops have been opened in Vilnius. You can easily notice a great difference between these shops and very old state-owned ones. I think there is no need to enumerate all the differences concerning the assortment, the quality of goods, and the interiors of the shops. The most attractive thing I find in the new shops is a culture of service. It fascinates me, and, at the same time, sometimes this demonstrative obligingness even embarrasses me.

Such helpful behavior on the part of shop assistants seems extraordinary to us. We have already got accustomed to being shouted at everywhere, including in those old state-owned shopping centers. It became a norm.

Giedrė Rindzevičiūtė also comments about an obliging worker’s response to her in “*Seeing Stikliai Beer Bar.*” In her opinion, the worker’s friendly attitude is evidence of a positive change in social relations that is taking place more generally:

I was passing by the restaurant Stikliai with my friend some days ago. We noticed that the restoration work on the new beer bar was almost finished, and we became curious about how everything looks inside there.

We saw a man standing near the door and decided to ask if we could look around. I was very much astonished to hear him saying that we were always welcome. I thought it was really unusual because people are not very attentive and pleasant with you — unless they see you are going to buy something or they expect to get something from you. That man showed us around and told us a lot of interesting things I didn't know about their restaurant and bar. He was very pleasant and took his time so we could see everything.

Kind people make me feel good. . . . Some years ago people seemed indifferent to others and looked as if they didn't see other people. But I'm glad that things are changing very fast, and people are becoming more polite, kind, helpful, obliging, and cheerful.

Between the time that the students wrote their observations in 1993–1994, and my trips to Lithuania in 1996 and 1997, the pace of privatization continued unabated. When I first arrived in the summer of 1993, one would have difficulty finding somewhere to go and have a drink after 10 p.m. By the end of 1997 the variety of cafes, restaurants, bars, and nightclubs was astounding. Where in 1993–1994, one would rarely find either a bank or business that would take a credit card, within a few years it was possible to use cards more often than not. Where in 1993 public phones often did not work, or if they did, required the use of old Soviet coins, by 1996 card phones were in abundance. Other business services, such as access to fax machines and photocopies had similarly multiplied. Prices on taxi meters sometimes corresponded to the actual fare. Gas stations had become common. Foodstuffs, pharmaceutical items, clothing, and other goods were notably more plentiful and diverse. Many old state shops had disappeared, and numerous brighter, more pleasant ones — with the friendlier service noted by students — had opened. Even fast food had arrived, including McDonald's.

The flavor and speed of some of these changes is evident in the Summer (May-June) 1996 issue of the privately published city guide, *Vilnius in Your Pocket*. The guide first appeared four years earlier, and this issue commented on how some of its observations had changed — on accommodations, for example: “[F]our years ago . . . we somehow managed with great difficulty to recommend a grand total of eight hotels and one pension. . . . Just three were privately-owned. Thankfully the accommodation scene in Vilnius has since changed beyond recognition — as the 40-plus places to stay we now list (and that's not all of them), ranging from upmarket hotels to roach motels and camping sites, proves! These days telephones and televisions in rooms are taken for granted” (12).

With respect to restaurants and bars the guide remarks:

[F]our years ago . . . Vilnius boasted just 23 restaurants, almost all of which were state-owned and closed by midnight. In sharp contrast to Vilnius' contemporary culinary scene, dining out then was totally dictated by who you were and how much money you appeared to have. Customers lacking the right connections (or necessary cash) to convince that ubiquitous doorman — a remnant of Soviet time and a feature of every establishment — to admit them into his empty restaurant were left out in the cold. . . .

Thankfully today, the sun shines all year round in Vilnius' countless restaurants which boasts cuisines of all nationalities and are multiplying all the time.[F]or those once accustomed to Soviet scarcity the party scene is now absolute bliss! . . . When we launched our first issue, drinkers were faced with two choices — *Alaus baras* (the traditional/raucous Lithuanian beer bars) or *Valiutinis baras* (the hard currency bars selling Western alcohol at a hard price). At least it was easy to track down your friends then (they'd all be in the same place). Now there is so much choice. (20,30)

What is far less obvious than this flowering of goods and services is the fact that access to them is by no means equally distributed. Many Lithuanians (in addition to the pensioners already mentioned) find that their ability to pay for newly available products is severely limited. Put simply, with prices rising faster than many people's incomes, the standard of living of parts of the population has substantially declined. As a result, many people take two, or even three, jobs — if they can find them.

In this context, professionals face a special dilemma: those working in low-paid jobs funded by the state find that they can make more money by moving to the private sector. For example, teachers of German and English seem to have moved *en masse* from the world of education to that of newly established businesses, banks, and translation services. Other professionals (including doctors, engineers, and scientists), if they cannot get work in the private sector in their chosen field, find that they can make more by buying goods abroad and selling them in the local market. But, while such a transition may increase their income, it also brings a decline in their social status (especially when the businesses they are involved in are of a quasilegal nature or involve smuggled or stolen goods). Sometimes people attempt to retain both social status and income by working by day at their profession and in the evening for the private sector (for example, renovating an apartment belonging to one of the newly rich).²³ In short, norms are confused. Consumer goods may be flooding the market, but, for numerous people in Lithuania, a shopping spree consists of wistfully looking at unaffordable goods. And everyday life provides constant reminders (through the media, for example) of the increasing availability of such goods, along with a severely diminished ability to acquire even the necessities of everyday life.

At the same time, many people know, at least casually, individuals who — legally or otherwise — have become wealthy. Expressed sociologically, Lithuanian society — like others in the Baltics and Eastern Europe more generally — reflects an acute case of anomie, and many people have experienced a growing sense of relative deprivation. This socioeconomic situation is in dramatic contrast to that which existed as recently as 1990. Then, although Soviet occupation may have been resented, most people were also assured of a home, work, food, and other social supports. Now, classes are emerging, and the gap between rich and poor has rapidly increased.

The transition period has not only been associated with a decline in some people's living standards, but also with a new social threat: unemployment.²⁴ Lina Gudelionytė was among the students who commented on the advent of this phenomenon:

Unemployment. Losing a job. No vacancies for people looking for work.

Unemployment is a very new problem in Lithuanian society, after our fifty years of "paradise" on earth. And it brings elements of conflict to everyday life. Those who have a job are members of a better class than those who do not — the latter are the "rubbish" of society. People who had a job and who still have the same one — a stable job — blame the unemployed for being unprofessional.

In former times, you could be sure that you would have a job. It might be better or worse, but you would be offered something, maybe not only one job, but a number of them. You could choose what you wanted. Now the number of positions is decreasing. Some people have two jobs. A lot of people have no job. How can they survive on only a government subsidy?

Unemployment is a new reason for serious social problems — divorces, murders, depression, starving, and begging. The employment service officially exists, but it is not really working. People know this and it makes them weak and lacking in hope. There is no help for them. The state cannot ensure their survival. There is no information about the real unemployment situation, about new jobs, or about new projects and plans. This leads to an unstable situation — people look for someone to blame.

Elements of capitalism have changed people's psychology: they are always in danger and fear losing their source of living.

Jurgita Gintilaitė also discusses unemployment and the current lack of correspondence between education and income:

Now unemployment is growing in our country and it can be a problem to get a job. It's a problem not only for those who haven't any speciality, but also for those who have higher education too. It's difficult for those who are

young and have just finished university to find a job. And it's also difficult for a young woman who has given birth to a baby and now wants to get work. Work in state and government isn't paid enough. Because of this, educated people are going to work as baby-sitters and as housemaids in hotels. People are choosing the best paid work. Sometimes the salaries of state executives are less than the salaries of office-cleaners for private firms. It isn't worth it now to study for five or six years and then get paid less than office-cleaners. But I think that the number of students isn't decreasing, because they believe that in the future things will become normal.

Overall, where services and the economy are concerned, the current situation in Lithuania, as in many East European countries, is one fraught with contradictions. On the one hand, old problems, particularly that of unsatisfactory service, are declining. On the other hand, new problems are arising — including the increased polarization of Lithuanian society and the emergence of unemployment, poverty, and attendant social problems. Clearly, research continues to be needed to structurally analyze the scale and anatomy of these issues, with due attention to the impact of the requirements imposed on Lithuania by the World Bank and other such agencies.

Organized Crime and Devious Entrepreneurs

One of the most frequent topics of conversation in Lithuania, among the public in general, as well as politicians and the media, is organized crime and the “mafia.” Indeed it is difficult to discuss business and the economy without this topic arising. Here again, the situation in Lithuania is similar to that in many other East European countries.

There are various reasons why sustained discussion of various forms of organized crime occurs so frequently. In the first place, an extensive black market and illicit forms of entrepreneurial activity already had a long history during the Soviet period (Joutsen 1993b). Second, the speed of economic transformation has been truly remarkable, resulting in a somewhat chaotic situation with respect to the regulation of business: many laws, often hastily introduced, currently contradict each other; some spheres of economic life are overregulated, at least on paper, but lack practical enforcement; and some spheres of economic life are hardly regulated at all. With such legal and administrative confusion, those who wish to engage in illicit economic activities have ample opportunities. And even those who wish to conduct a legitimate business may find themselves unwittingly on the shady side of the law.²⁵

While the image of a mafia dominates political discussions of organized crime, the reality is far more complex. As Anatol Lieven comments with respect to the Baltics more generally, the word *mafia* is “one of those western terms

which, enthusiastically adopted by post-Soviet vernacular, and played back to Western journalists, causes general confusion” (1994; 345). More appropriately, one can state that the mafia in the Baltics involves a series of criminal methods and activities rather than a coherent organization. In this, the mafia in Lithuania is similar to those elsewhere (Beirne and Messerschmidt 1993, 205).²⁶ Overall, the term covers a broad range of activity, including individuals peddling smuggled and other dubious goods; loosely gangs involved in smuggling, extortion, and prostitution networks; and members of the former Soviet establishment who have profited from the transition in various ways.

Those students who wrote about organized crime tended to focus on its petty, rather than more dramatic, forms. The one exception was murder of the journalist Vitas Lingys, which several students wrote about. This killing was the most dramatic crime attributed to organized crime in 1993 in Lithuania. Mr. Lingys was an investigative journalist and subeditor of the newspaper *Respublika*. He published numerous articles on organized crime and sometimes named individuals alleged to be involved. Following his murder, numerous rumors circulated, including that he was soon going to publish information about links between organized crime and the higher levels of government.

The crime shocked Lithuanians. Giedrė Rindzeviūtė wrote:

The murder of the journalist V. Lingys of the daily *Respublika* was very shocking news to hear. I knew the situation with criminals was really serious here in Lithuania, but it never occurred to me that a newspaper reporter could be killed. Who was afraid of that much publicity?

Though I read a lot about murders or various incidents happening on the streets, I never thought that life wasn't safe in Lithuania. Probably it's becoming dangerous because the police aren't strong enough to secure people's safety. And, on the other hand, many criminal offenses aren't disclosed and those who commit crimes can continue "doing their job." I know it's very difficult dealing with organized crime. Perhaps criminals are better prepared than the police are. But I hope things are going to improve and we won't hear that much about crimes or murders on the news any more.

But for now, I couldn't say that you can go out onto the street late in the evening and be safe. One can't be sure of what is going to happen. . . .

Jurgita Gintilaitė also wrote about the crime and people's response to it:

Vitas Lingys, a correspondent with one of the daily newspapers, was killed on the morning of 12 October 1993, near his home. This murder was ordered by Lithuania's Mafia. Mr. Lingys wrote articles about criminal cases, and especially about the Mafia. He had a lot of information about them. So they killed him. Everybody was shocked by this news.

The government has declared war on the Mafia. But people don't believe that the killers will be found. Many murders ordered by the Mafia have not been exposed. But earlier murders were within the Mafia — because of disagreements. Now it was different — a man was killed who was not connected with the Mafia, and it wasn't for money. People understand that the executive of our country has not got any power. They cannot stop these murders. Maybe the next victim will be from the Seimas [Parliament] or government.

The journalists at the newspaper are unanimous about continuing Vitas's work and writing about crimes and the Mafia.

People talked about this event everywhere — at their jobs, in their houses, on the buses. But some people are angry that there is more interest in this murder than in other ones, where victims are ordinary people — not journalists, and not criminal. And the majority of people are very skeptical about the chances of finding the killers.

As it turned out, suspects were apprehended, and a trial took place in the fall of 1994. Four people were convicted. Three of them received lengthy prison sentences. The alleged ringleader received the death sentence and was executed in 1995.²⁷

As noted above, students tended to focus on petty, rather than dramatic, aspects of organized crime. In particular, they discussed what might be termed “devious entrepreneurs.” These are people who, in one way or another, try to take advantage of the current unstable situation and to profit from it. Moreover, while their actions can be described as petty (at least when put alongside the killings, bombings, and other serious acts associated with organized crime), they nonetheless constitute substantial, and ongoing, irritants in the everyday lives of Lithuanian people.

Rita Dimkutė describes some of these annoying behaviors in “*A Legalization of Deception*”:

Several years ago, when the social situation in our country changed, many people started their own businesses. But — and it isn't strange in our country — many of them did their business in an unlawful way. In many cases we find goods of poor quality. There are numerous examples where the packaging does not correspond to the content. I mean that on the package it is written that the goods (for example, coffee) are of high quality — but when you open it, you see that the goods are of poor quality.

There is another example, similar to the one mentioned above. When our so-called businessmen sell ready-made clothes which are locally produced, they sew on labels such as “Made in the USA” and “Made in Italy.” So the businessmen buy such labels, sew them on clothes made in Lithuania, and sell them as if they had been made abroad. The most interesting thing is that clothes with such labels sell in many markets quite openly and legally.

For us, statements such as “Made in Italy” and “Made in the USA” have an association of being goods of a higher quality. In such situations, naive

buyers pay a high price for such goods, a price which doesn't correspond to the quality.

Only the businessman wins: he gets a higher price, and sells more products. And again, I'd like to emphasize that products with such labels are legally selling in our markets, stores, and shops. It symbolizes a legalization of deception.

Artūras Valionis reports another type of fraud in "*A New Form of Business*":

You want to go to Kaunas by train. In the Vilnius station, where there are some very long queues, some people meet you. "Are you going to Kaunas?" they ask. Then a ticket is offered to you. It is a very comfortable transaction. You pay less money for a ticket. When there are only a few minutes left before departure, you aren't worried that long queues for tickets will prevent you from taking the train.

When, after two hours in the train, you get out, you are met with another question. "Maybe your ticket is useless to you?" Then, if your answer is positive, that you don't need the ticket, the event goes full circle. Tickets are supplied at one end and collected at the other. They can be used all day, as they don't have a time on them.

When people encounter this situation for the first time, they might think: "This man can't go to the place for which he bought the ticket; now he wants to sell his ticket and save money."

When the situation is discussed by the public, almost everybody condemns it. But when a condemner encounters the situation himself, he isn't so strong or strict in his views. Some people refuse to buy tickets "by hand." But as far as I know, most of them buy.

Precautions are now being taken in Kaunas Railway Station. False tickets are distributed in the ticket office corridors to try and cut down on the number of illegal transactions. There are articles in the media with the following theme: people are told that such actions are illegal, that people are transferring money from the state budget to private pockets, and that this will have detrimental consequences — the price of tickets may be raised.

But for those who accept the situation, it seems quite normal to try and make their lives easier.

Rita Ėimkutė reports on the shady process involved in the establishment of a parking lot:

When Lithuania acquired independence and became a democratic republic, many people wanted to create their own businesses. There are various kinds of people among these new businessmen. Some of them do business honestly and in conformity with law. But there are others who think only of themselves. They do things that are profitable only for them, and they do not care about other people around them. The most important thing to them is the end of making money. They will adopt any means necessary, including illegal ones like bribery and simply ignoring the law.

I would like to give an example of such activity. In many places near apartment buildings there are spaces where people can leave their cars. These grounds belong to the residents of the apartments.

These days, it is a good and profitable business to have private car parks, in which people pay to leave their car. Cars which are left in public places are more likely to be broken into, and stolen. But private car parks are surrounded by a fence and have a watchman, so there is less risk of your car being stolen.

There was one businessman who wanted to establish a private car park so he could profit from it. He found a good space near some apartments (which belonged to the residents) and began to work. First he started building a fence. The residents, when they saw such self-centered activity, asked where were the documents which permitted that man to build a car park. The businessman presented documents, but they weren't in order. I think they were signed by an official who didn't work for the government any more. The fact is, the documents were not proper.

The work was stopped, but it hadn't ended. Two days before the Easter holiday, all the materials necessary for building a fence were brought. Then six or eight workers came and began to work. They worked quickly — from early morning until late evening. At last they completed the fence. They had chosen the right moment to do this work, because before holidays people (in this case, the residents) are reluctant to argue.

Nevertheless, the residents didn't waste their time. They asked for documents once again. And again something was incorrect. But the workers continued their work and finished the fence.

Now the fence is standing and no one knows yet — will it be a car park in which you pay for a place? Or will the fence be destroyed and the parking spaces returned to the residents?

This example of self-centeredness isn't the only one. We are facing many different aspects of the phenomenon. Another example is when rich people begin to build their homes on property that is supposed to be under government protection (for example, a forest, or the green zone surrounding a town). Sometimes the green movement is able to prohibit the activity, and sometimes these houses are torn down. But that is not very frequent. Such a situation shows that the government is unable to regulate greedy private activity.

Rita's concluding comment that the government has limited success in controlling such deviant activity is typical. Students generally, in common with the population at large, have little faith in the authorities. Rather the authorities themselves are seen as part of the problem, not only because of their lack of resources, but also because of their own willingness to operate on the shady side of the law. In this respect little seems to have changed since the Soviet period. Ingrida Geėienė sums up the situation in "*Bribery and Corruption*":

Corruption, bribes, and abuse of position . . . everybody in Lithuania knows that these sorts of economic crimes are widespread from the lowest to the highest spheres of power. The problem is an old one, but the disorder of the

transitional period after the restoration of independence, and the frequent changing of officials and ensuing lack of control, have increased the frequency of such crimes. And there are few facts available about this situation, because the problem is like an iceberg: one can see only a small part of the crimes. The reason for this is that, in the case of bribery, both sides often receive a material gain and they are not interested in disclosing the facts of their agreement.

During the Soviet time the salaries of state-paid workers (such as teachers, doctors, police and traffic inspectors) were quite low. This hasn't changed. Therefore, giving bribes remains a way of paying additional sums of money to get something better. People pay money, or give a present, to the doctor so the patient will be better cared for. Or they may pay a sum to the director of a prestigious school in return for a child being admitted who doesn't belong to that school district. Also, it is known that it is possible to reward teachers and professors for passing someone's exams or course papers (to "buy" a necessary mark).

Drivers encounter many facts of bribery. They pay traffic inspectors sums of money which are higher than the official fine for infringing traffic regulations, because they want to escape official procedures which can be time-consuming.

In my opinion, it will not be possible to end the old habit of small bribes in society until there is no necessity to earn bribes and an atmosphere of nontolerance toward bribes has been established. In the current situation of general anomie, and shortages of money for living on, it is difficult to speak about professional honor and honesty. In the business sphere such bribery of the authorities is especially frequent.

Having found an official accomplice or having paid enough money, it is quite easy to escape court or to change the results of a report by the economic police. Some cases of this have been disclosed. For example, there was one company that, without a license, was buying and selling hard currency. But the economic police, after checking it, did not start a case but transferred their material to the archives. A second check was undertaken and it was found that four of the officers involved in the earlier one had big deposits in this company and that the deposits had been made immediately after the first checking of the company. But in such cases it is very hard to prove the fact of bribery, and very few cases of corruption and abuse of position come before the courts. It's even more difficult to determine cases at the highest level of society. The situation may improve with the law of income-declaration. This will provide a possibility not only to collect taxes, but also to disclose income received by way of bribery.

In dealing with bribery and corruption, the police should be among those on the front line. But here again, the students have little faith. For, as Ingrida's account above indicates, the police themselves seem to be no more immune than other sectors of this society to this phenomenon. In "Paying the Police," Viktorija Dilinskaitė describes one of many situations where bribery became a necessity:

A lot of people working in the police are not suited to the job. They are not interested in the profession, and do not do what they should do. Victims and witnesses live in fear of persecution, but the police don't do anything. This story which I want to tell took place recently. The family of a dead artist was robbed. After some time the person that committed the robbery was found. It was one of the family's friends. The victims offered to not go to court if all the paintings and other things were returned. Only half of the belongings were returned. And the person who robbed their house is free.

Now the robber and his friends are persecuting the victims. Every day he hangs around and asks the family to withdraw its claim to the stolen goods. He has threatened to burn the house down if this isn't done. The family doesn't have expensive things and is primarily worried about the father's paintings.

The family asked the police for protection. The only answer it got was: "If something happens, you call us." Is this what the police should say? By the end of the period allotted for the return of the goods, and when the court process could proceed, the family was being subjected to more aggressive threats.

The police did not do anything, but just offered their help in return for money. This means that after finishing their working day, the police officers — for big money — will stay around the house to try to prevent reprisals against the family. The family considered the possibility of inviting mafia guys to do this. But it was afraid the mafia members might also make threats when the immediate problem had faded.

So now the family pays the same money to police officers for doing a job that police should do. This is not the only story I know about the police being paid by individuals to do their own job. The police do not do much to prevent crime. Police can be bought by both sides — criminals and victims. Criminals pay the police to close their eyes. Victims pay the police to stay within the law and do police duties.

Corruption also occurs in key sectors of the Lithuanian economy. Here, the issue of bankruptcies is a case in point. During the transition, many businesses, including banks, have been set up under shady circumstances. Meanwhile, the vast majority of Lithuanians had little or no experience in dealing with such institutions, especially as investors. Many people took at face value exorbitant claims by banks and other businesses about the returns they would make. They invested their savings. When many of these businesses failed, as much through design as through misfortune, they lost their investments. Without the legal mechanisms established to protect investors in other countries, there has often been little hope of compensation.

Various aspects of this phenomenon are discussed by Algė Makulaviėienė in "*New Companies and Bankruptcy*":

Along with the establishment of a free market in Lithuania, a lot of disorder has come to our country. This has happened because everyone only has vague

ideas about what the free market is. In addition to this, almost everybody wants to keep the rules of behavior of Soviet times. And those who don't want to are forced to by circumstances. Soviet times were rich with bribery, protection rackets, and bureaucracy. But as far as I can see, it's the same now, and even more so. The only difference is that in former times, white-collar crimes were even better hidden.

In the early 1990s commercial operations involving currency began to expand. And a few years ago many private banks and credit and trade companies began to be established. So now it is a "hot" time for bankruptcies and illegal financial activities. The laws to regulate such businesses are only being created now, so they don't work, and they are not much use — especially to people who easily trust such credit "companies" which are offering crazily large dividends.

People invest their last bit of money with such companies. They hope to get additional money to live on because their salaries are not enough. Often they lose everything with the bankruptcy of a doubtful company within a short period of its coming into existence. Many proceedings are instituted against such firms. Nevertheless, new ones are being founded all the time. And again, nobody controls the legitimacy of their activity until the economic police start to receive new reports by unhappy "investors."

Algė concludes her observations by stating that: "white-collar crime has found a golden place in Lithuania. There is a lot of disorder, and bribery lives on from Soviet times. And I have no illusions about the future."

Algė's pessimism was more than justified. Bankruptcies and financial crises continued to occur, not only among relatively small companies, but also at the highest levels of the financial sector. In late 1995, the Lithuanian economy was rocked by crises in the largest banks. "In December 1995, Lithuania was shocked by the suspension of two of its largest banks, the Litimpeks Bank and the Lithuanian Joint Stock Innovation Bank. At the same time, a number of bank directors were arrested for suspected fraud, and both the Prime Minister and the Chief of the Central Bank were forced out of their posts, the former being discredited by revelations that he had removed his own deposits from one of the banks shortly before it was suspended. The banking crisis has been widely seen as a major setback to the progress of economic reform in Lithuania, but the full magnitude of impact on the economy is at present uncertain."²⁸ (Nomura East 1996, 15)

Among the immediate impacts of the demise of the banks was a crisis of confidence in banking generally. Foreign reserves declined as clients switched their currency from litas to dollars. As the rules of the Lithuanian economic sector require a linkage of local currency to foreign reserves, 15 percent of currency was withdrawn from circulation in early 1996. This was expected to have a negative impact on GDP growth.

Overall, as the students' writing makes clear, the transition from a command to a market economy in Lithuania has been taking place in a remarkably speedy way. Many improvements have been observed in the day-to-day provision of various services. But not all sectors of society benefit equally from the transition, and those groups which are vulnerable to start off with — especially pensioners — appear to be suffering most from the changes taking place. Meanwhile, many elements of deviance and corruption, which were present under the Soviet regime, have adjusted and continue to thrive under the new economic arrangements. With individuals at the highest levels of public life being implicated in shady activities, economic stability and public satisfaction remain under threat. In short, the market economy appears no less fraught with ambiguities, problems, and contradictions, than the command economy that preceded it. No doubt Lithuanian society will find its own unique way to chart a course through the challenges it faces, both old and new.

3.

Conclusion

Additional Topics Addressed by Students

In addition to the topics discussed here, students wrote about politics — on issues ranging from bad memories of the KGB to preparations for the papal visit in 1993; about schools and universities, and especially about the unsatisfactory conditions which they experienced in doing their studies; about social relations, including the situation of women in Lithuania, social interaction in shops, and norms in social life; and about arts, media, and public culture, including the demise of theater and other classical forms of entertainment, the impact of foreign advertising, the influx of new religious groups, and traditions in Lithuanian weddings. They also wrote about their perceptions of foreign languages, people, and places, with titles ranging from “*Learning Foreign Languages*” to “*The Totalitarian Embassy of the USA*”. In addition, the students conducted interviews not reproduced here, for example with a young woman who had an abortion, with two student policewomen, with a leader of the Green Movement, with a director of a school for the blind, with a teacher of foreign languages, and with an engineer responsible for street lighting in Vilnius.

Why Are the Students Negative?

Those who have already read the students' writings have made some interesting comments. These readers included consultants from various countries visiting Lithuania to assist the Lithuanian government with reform; Lithuanian

academics and scholars and other academics in Norway, Sweden, Poland, Canada, and the United States (with some of those in North America being East European émigrés); people affiliated with the Open Society organization in Lithuania; Canadian government workers involved in East European affairs; and friends and relatives of mine in Canada, and Ireland.

Most of these readers were appreciated the students' writings. In particular, foreigners welcomed the students' "inside" view of the transition. This appreciation was strongly expressed by foreigners whose occupations brought them into contact with Lithuania and Lithuanian issues. They felt that the students' accounts provided a refreshing complement to the more formal texts that they typically had to read in the course of their work.

At the same time, readers often commented on the negative tone of the students' work. Some people described them as "moaners." This view was most strongly expressed by some older Lithuanians who felt that "nobody would be interested in this . . . it's giving bad news about Lithuania." Their preference would have been for a stronger emphasis on the positive accomplishments of their country. Although these Lithuanians could themselves also provide a litany of complaints, they seemed uncomfortable to see them actually written down.

As the "moaning" of the students was so frequently commented upon, it seems appropriate to speculate about the reasons for their negativity.

In the first place, it is important to note that the students were asked to write observations on everyday life. They were *not* specifically asked to write critical observations. However, perhaps asking them to write primarily for a foreign audience may inadvertently have had the effect of fostering a critical approach on their part. In short, the students may have assumed that foreigners would primarily focus on "problems" in Lithuanian society, and they themselves may therefore have focused on problematic aspects of everyday life. In turn, this tendency may have been reinforced by the fact that sociology as a discipline is inherently critical: sociologists raise questions, try to take nothing for granted, and deconstruct disjuncture between official rhetoric and private reality.

Personally, I think that much of the "moaning" tone also has a quite straightforward origin. Life in Lithuania during the transition period *is* very difficult. Many of the observations made in this essay will seem familiar to western readers. Like Lithuanians, many westerners do not like traveling on overcrowded public transport, have fears about their job prospects, live in unsatisfactory housing, experience surly service in shops, get frustrated when the plumber does not show up at the appointed time, feel that their doctor or dentist is not giving them good treatment, think that old age pensions and social security do not provide enough for people to live on, and so on. But what is difficult to convey to the

person who has not been there is the degree, intensity, and frequency of the frustrations experienced by people living in Lithuania (and other East European countries).

Certainly, in my own case, although my partner Michael and I were financially very well off by Lithuanian standards,²⁹ and although the Civic Education Project had seen that we were well prepared for our trip, to actually experience some of the difficult conditions was surprisingly hard.

Soon after our arrival, a typical day might begin this way: waking up to see my breath in the air (although it was only September it was already very cold, and there was no heating) . . . reluctantly stepping out of bed (leaving its, and Michael's, comforting warmth behind) and removing a pair of thermal knickers from my head (wearing these proved a very effective way of keeping's one's head warm during the night!) . . . stepping into the chilly bathroom, turning on the tap, and figuring out the quickest and most effective way to get clean in cold water³⁰. . . getting dressed in clothes which (due to the lack hot water, and of a washing machine, coupled with our dismal proficiency in washing clothes clean in the absence of such luxuries) had a distinctly grubby aura . . . boiling the kettle twice so as to be able to have a cup of safely drinkable tea.

Then leaving the house and heading for the bus stop, hoping to make it across the road without being hit by a badly maintained Lada whose brakes had chosen that moment to fail, or by a glossy BMW driven by a young man (fashionably dressed in a track suit and gesticulating a cellular phone) determined to show everybody just how fast the car can go, or by either of the above as they routinely swerved to avoid one of the road's many potholes . . . reaching the bus stop safely and noting with dismay that a large crowd was already gathering, and waiting . . . joining the crush surging toward the bus as soon as it came into view. . . not pushing and shoving quite hard enough to join the lucky group that actually made it onto the bus (learning to completely abandon any semblance of manners and respect for others while boarding buses took some time) . . . marveling at one or two truly hardy souls who managed to hurl themselves onto the overstuffed bus by grabbing the clothes of those already hanging onto the doors . . . joining the grumbling unlucky commuters in retreating to the bus stop to wait for the next bus . . . surging ahead even more ardently as the next bus came into view and feeling surprised by a sense of pride at having actually made it on . . . experiencing a dramatic rise in body temperature from now being in such close proximity in a confined space with so many others . . . breathing stuffy, putrid air and realizing that many others had been even less successful than I in getting themselves and their clothes clean . . . repeating the surging, pushing, and shoving process in reverse in an effort to get off at the university's suburban campus.

Then gazing at the drab, depressing, high-rise apartment blocks, the graffiti-covered walls, the muddy grounds, at the chain of kiosks selling goods, and at individuals selling their few apples, jars of jam, plastic bags, and other potentially remunerative items . . . deciding to buy an apple juice at the kiosk where I had noticed it on display the previous day . . . queuing up at the kiosk only to find eventually that they have no apple juice today . . . repeating the process at the next three kiosks in a row . . . resolving always to think ahead and buy lots of what is good whenever and wherever it was available and never to actually wait until something is immediately needed before going looking for it . . . and thinking: “Is it really only two hours since I got up? I feel absolutely exhausted already! And all I’ve done is get up and take the bus!”

While each of the frustrations described here, and by the students, is minor taken in isolation, they can be cumulatively very wearing. It is little wonder that people become grumpy and snarly, particularly in public domains. To give another example, while inefficient service in shops is by no means unknown in the West, it is certainly a rare event for a customer to enter a shop, stand at the counter that has the product she wants, and still be standing there (along with a queue that expands and contracts as some people arrive and others get frustrated and leave) a full quarter-hour later—while two shop assistants are busily chatting to each other at a counter merely feet away and bereft of customers.

Such a circumstance was no rarity in Lithuania in 1993–1994. Shopping could be further time-consuming because state-run shops often required that the customer go to individual counters and salespeople for different groups of products (for example, a cheese counter, a bread counter, a meat counter, a fish counter). Moreover, some purchases could involve three separate steps: first, queue up to look for the product and find out how much it will cost; second, go to the cashier’s desk, queue, pay the required sum, and obtain a receipt; and third, go back to the original counter, queue again, hand over the receipt, and receive the product. Faced with such conditions, shopping that might take between ten and twenty minutes in a typical North American or West European supermarket, could easily take two, tiring hours in Lithuania.

For me, these frustrating aspects of life in the public sphere in Lithuania threw the warmth of its private sphere more clearly into light. For Michael and me, Lithuanian hospitality was no mere stereotype. Lithuanians really go all out in welcoming those whom they invite to their homes. On more than one occasion we were pleasurably embarrassed by tables laden with food and drink in cheerful, spotless apartments (in stark contrast to their dreary exteriors and the dilapidated, vandalized staircases). Family entertainment of guests can involve an excess of consumption and can be overwhelming. But to enter the homes of Lithuanians

is to enter their hearts, and, for us, these opportunities to participate a little in Lithuanian family life provided a welcome contrast to the surly encounters of the streets and shops.

Having come to our apartment several times for (highly enjoyable) parties, the Lithuanian students also invited us to their socials, as well as to a special party held in our honor before our departure. And, on one occasion, thanks to the generosity of a visiting Norwegian colleague, a large group of us rented a van for the day and toured some of Lithuania's national treasures and highlights, including the castle at Trakai and the devil's museum and art galleries in Kaunas. From all of these social events, and from our interaction more generally, it was clear that this group of Lithuanian students were by no means a grim or grouchy bunch of youths, embittered by their own situation and that of others around them. On the contrary, for the most part they were an upbeat group of people — curious, adventurous (mostly in a polite and modest way, but with a few people being somewhat mischievous in their pursuit of experiences and pleasure), and fun-loving.

While the students may not have had much money, nor pleasant cafés to relax together in, they created their own forms of entertainment — chatting in the campus café; eating at each other's rooms in the student hostel; singing and dancing with cultural groups; attending operas, ballets, concerts, and recitals; knitting and sewing beautiful outfits; writing to pen pals; hitchhiking to both near and distant places. So it is indeed a shame that their many pleasures in life were not given more attention in their observations.

Perhaps it is simply a human condition (particularly when young) to pay attention to whatever ails us, and to take our pleasures for granted.

Concluding Comments

As noted at the outset, the aim of this project has been modest: to provide some informal insights into aspects of everyday life during the transition period in Lithuania, and in particular, to share some young people's perspectives on their society during 1993–1994.

This manuscript is contemporary in that the transition is still in progress. But, as of 1999, many of the phenomena discussed by the students were no longer accurate. Going over a draft of this essay with some of the students in Vilnius in 1996 and 1997, I was surprised that they viewed their own observations as “quaint.” In part, their comment reflected the many changes that have taken place in Lithuania over the past few years. But it was also due to the fact that they, as individuals, have moved on. They had completed their undergraduate degrees. Over a third of them had begun graduate studies abroad (three in the

Czech Republic, six in Poland, and one in Canada). Others continued their graduate studies in Vilnius. And many were working full- or part-time — with foreign companies in Lithuania, in government or in universities. Overall, they can be described as a well-educated, cosmopolitan, multilingual, and resourceful group of people, among those best able to engage in, and contribute to, the ongoing process of change in Lithuania.

The students will probably find their observations of 1993–1994 even more quaint as the years go on. Some of those who have continued their studies have already provided more sophisticated social scientific accounts of the transition, its antecedents, and its consequences.³¹ They will, no doubt, continue to do so. But I hope that the reader will agree with me that this youthful work by the students — despite, and because of its critical perspective — will retain its value in providing unique insights into everyday life in Lithuanian society at a special moment in time.

Appendix I

Lithuania: A Brief Historical Overview

Geopolitically, Lithuania's position is not enviable. As an extension of the east European plain, Lithuania lies at the southern Baltic crossroads between Western Europe and Russia, which in the past has been trampled upon by European and Russian conquerors.

Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 1

Lithuania has a rich and complex history. No brief account can do it justice. Nevertheless, this essay would not be complete without a sketch of Lithuania's major historical contours. For those interested in more detailed accounts there is a rapidly growing literature on the subject. Some of the recent publications provide not only historical analysis, but also eyewitness observations on the events leading to Lithuania's break with the Soviet Union.³²

The Emergence of a Lithuanian State

Today's native inhabitants of the three Baltic countries — Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia — can trace their descent directly from tribes who settled four thousand years ago on the eastern shores of the Baltic Sea. Baltic peoples thus have resided in the area far longer than those who often became their rulers from the Middle Ages onward: Poles, Russians, Germans, and Scandinavians (Hiden and Salmon 1994, 9).

While the very first mention of Lithuania dates back to the year 1009 (Pauli 1994, 36), the idea of Lithuania as a nation arose around 1230. At that time, Duke Mindaugas, who became the first grand duke and later king of Lithuania, integrated Lithuanian tribes into a single state (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 7).

As a pagan state, Lithuania faced a major adversary in the Teutonic Order.³³ However, the Teutonic Order's efforts to subjugate Lithuania and incorporate it into the Livonian state which they had established in the Baltics in 1201 were thwarted when they were defeated by the Lithuanian princes in the Battle of Saulė in 1236 (Chase 1946, 2). In 1251, Mindaugas did convert to Christianity for the tactical purpose of seeking additional protection "against the marauding Germans" (Krickus 1997, 6). Two years later he was crowned king, but was assassinated in 1263 by his successors who returned to paganism.³⁴

Historical Alliances with Poland (1386–1795)

The days of paganism ended in 1386, when the Lithuanian Grand Duke Jogaila was betrothed to Queen Jadwiga of Poland.³⁵ As part of their boarder agreement, Lithuania was required to adopt Latin Christianity. Newly baptized and married to Jadwiga, Jogaila was crowned king of Poland on 4 March. With these events Lithuania became the last western state to adopt Christianity and had done so after over a century of “often fierce battle” against Rome and the Teutonic Order (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 1). As Krickus (1997, 6) wryly notes, “once again the dictates of realpolitik forced Lithuania ž (‘œ s hand.” And as he further observes (ibid.), “the stage was now set for a long union between Poland and Lithuania.”

Although Lithuania is a relatively small country today, this has not always been the case. By the end of the fourteenth century, in dynastic union with Poland, Lithuania stretched from the Baltic to the Black Sea, thereby including much of present day Belarus and Ukraine, as well as parts of Latvia, Estonia, and Russia. Under Grand Duke Vytautas (1350–1430), Lithuania reached the height of its medieval power.

Following the death of Jadwiga, Lithuania and Poland agreed to continue their alliance (Chase 1946, 45). In 1410, under the directorship of Grand Duke Vytautas, they inflicted a “decisive defeat” on the Teutonic Knights at Tannenberg (Hiden and Salmon 1994, 12). Thereafter, the fortunes of the two countries “rose and fell together” (ibid.). In 1569, the alliance between Lithuania and Poland was formalized by the Treaty of Lublin which established the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. By this time, Lithuanian autonomy had already declined (Lieven 1994, 48), with serious consequences for both the Lithuanian nobility and peasantry. The nobility had become Polonized as “the older and culturally richer Polish society proved irresistible to the Lithuanian nobles” (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 3). Although Lithuanian political identity had initially been maintained, over time, the Lithuanian nobility became “indistinguishable” from their Polish counterpart. Meanwhile, the Lithuanian peasantry, like those of Latvia and Estonia, had been subjected to “enforced Christianization and enserfment to a nobility which could not speak their language” (ibid.).

Each of these trends continued subsequent to the Treaty of Lublin. Therefore, according to Lieven (1994, 46), although the Lithuanians had “triumphed” through their association with Poland since the 1300s, “in doing so they lost their souls. They conquered what was for a time the largest European state but, even while this was happening, weaknesses in their own culture and society were opening the Lithuanian rulers themselves to cultural conquest by their Polish neighbors.”

Lithuania's willingness to ally with Poland and to strengthen the link through the Treaty of Lublin was largely motivated by its wish to protect itself from foreign attack, including that by Russia. In the longer term, however, this strategy was not successful. In the eighteenth century, the commonwealth "fell victim to the anarchic politics of its nobility, and the rise of powerful predatory neighbors: Prussia, Austria and Russia" (Hiden and Salmon 1994, 12). Poland was first partitioned in 1772, and, in the two partitions that followed in 1793 and 1795, the Lithuanian state came almost completely under Russian rule. With the Germans retaining Lithuania Minor, the people of Lithuania "remained divided and stateless until February 1918" (Krickus 1997, 7).

Russian Rule After 1795

The period of one-hundred-twenty years, during which the major portion of Lithuania remained under Russian occupation, was characterized by constant efforts on the part of the Lithuanians to regain their right to direct their own political, cultural and economic destinies in a manner they saw fit... Instead of annihilating the Lithuanian nation, this period rather represented its true and thorough regeneration.
— Chase 1946, 199

In the 1800s, Lithuania experienced domination, and during the second half of the century, intense efforts at Russification. Yet both despite and because of this, the period was also one of intense renewal of Lithuanian culture, language, and consciousness.

This reinvigoration of national identity is all the more striking in light of the conditions that prevailed at the beginning of the nineteenth century: most of the population was agrarian, and the abolition of serfdom did not take place until the 1860s — much later than elsewhere in the Baltics. The cities were largely populated by Poles and Jews, and there was no Lithuanian urban intelligentsia or educated middle-class to rally the indigenous population. Most of the gentry were Polonized (and later Russified) and did not speak Lithuanian. Early in the century, the clergy similarly remained very much under the influence of the church in Poland (Krickus 1997, 7).

In large measure Lithuanian revival took place in the shadow of a Russian-Polish political and cultural crossfire. As Vardys and Sėdaitis (1997, 16) observe: "The political factor that most profoundly affected and even defined the process

of Lithuanian cultural and political emancipation was the Polish conflict with Moscow. Polish patriots refused to accept Tsarist rule. The University of Vilnius became a hotbed of Polish nationalism. Two insurrections against Moscow rocked the country, in 1831 and again in 1863, in which Lithuanian peasants and clergymen collaborated with the Polish, Lithuanian, and Byelorussian gentry.” Each of these efforts at resistance was suppressed by Moscow. In 1832 Vilnius University was closed, and the 1831 and 1863 rebellions were “brutally repressed” (ibid.).

Significantly, the rebellions also stimulated a new tsarist policy directed at overcoming the Poles through a strategy of divide and rule. The “Polish Question,” as Vardys and Sėdaitis explain, “was to be solved by suppressing Polish influence, recognizing Lithuanians as a separate culture, then splitting them away from the Poles and assimilating them into the Russian nationality and Orthodoxy. The Russians identified Polishness with Catholicism and therefore adopted not only a strong anti-Polish but a sharply anti-Catholic policy in Lithuania” (ibid.).

Accordingly, Catholic monasteries and churches were closed following the 1863 rebellion, and the rights of the church were generally limited. Sermons, for example, had to be approved in advance by Russian authorities. Religious repression continued until the end of the century. In the early 1890s the Russians tried to close a convent, church, and cemetery at Kražiai. Protests about this led to violent battles between the protestors and Russian police and troops, in which hundreds died (Chase 1946, 243). As of 1894, Roman Catholics were barred from positions in local government (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 7). Overall, in the latter half of the nineteenth century Lithuania’s national struggle became directly intertwined with that for religious freedom.

Cultural oppression by Russia in Lithuania also focused on language and education. In 1864, Lithuanian schools were forbidden. The printing of Lithuanian books in Latin characters was also banned, on the grounds that the use of Cyrillic characters would foster assimilation (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 17).

In 1861 a program for the Russification of schools was introduced. It was implemented in an ever more stringent way to the point that the use of both Lithuanian and Polish were proscribed in favour of Russian. The classes were taught by Russian-speaking teachers, and the schools were run by Russian authorities, with ministers of the Orthodox church often being entrusted with organizational and administrative work. The Lithuanian gentry and the Catholic clergy were prohibited from any involvement (Chase 1946, 231).

Each of these efforts to eliminate Lithuanian identity failed. The attack on the church coincided with a period when it was being “reinvigorated by the influx of sons of ordinary peasants into the priesthood and into positions of

clerical leadership” (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 17). The church’s link with the peasantry was stronger than it had ever been, and the clergy used their talent in resisting attacks both on the church and on the Lithuanian language. Most notably, Motiejus Valanėius (1801 – 1875), bishop of Samogitia, himself wrote and published, and surreptitiously encouraged theological and other writing and publication. He also organized a network of secret Lithuanian schools in people’s homes (ibid.). Numerous other secret societies were soon created throughout the country, which were very active in importing and distributing Lithuanian books (Chase 1946, 240).

In addition to resistance on the part of the church and secret societies, another factor that greatly facilitated the revival of Lithuanian identity was the existence of a concerned group of ethnic Lithuanians in the nearby region of east Prussia. The regime in east Prussia had been more liberal in various ways than that which prevailed in Lithuania: serfdom had been abolished in 1807, and economic conditions had improved in the early part of the century. In the 1860s, land reforms provided the peasants with enough free land “to achieve a measure of prosperity and to eventually send their sons to schools and universities” (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 18).

In short, a “new, secular intelligentsia” (ibid.) had developed, and it was this group that began to publish Lithuanian journals, thereby producing much of the literature which would foster Lithuanian consciousness. In the words of Chase (1946, 238), the journals emanating from east Prussia “all had one common goal: namely, the preservation of the Lithuanian nation from the extinction to which it had been condemned by Russian rulers.” Early journals included *Aušra* (The Dawn), which first appeared in 1883, and *Varpas* (The Bell), about five years later. This literature, circulated among Lithuanians, played a pivotal role in Lithuanian reawakening.

The Achievement, and Loss, of Lithuanian Independence (1918–1940)

The two giants, the Russian and Germanic empires, whose alliance had spelled the doom of the old Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth at the end of the eighteenth century, lay prostrate in the aftermath of World War I. In this environment, Lithuania was able to emerge as an independent nation-state.

-Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 25

By the time of the revolts in the Russian empire in 1905, a variety of political groups had emerged in Lithuania. Restrictions on the church and press, as well as on publications in Lithuania, had been eased. The “spirit” of the Russian revolt “also embraced the Lithuanian territories, where agitators of all sorts sought to arouse the population to a revolt against the Tsarist regime” (Chase 1946, 248). In December 1905 a National Congress was held in Vilnius. Two thousand participants made their demands to the tsar.

The congress expressed a precedent-setting demand for national autonomy within ethnic boundaries in federal ties with the neighbouring lands of Russia (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 19). It also demanded a Lithuanian parliament with free elections and the use of the Lithuanian language in schools and the state. Following heated debates, the delegates opted for nonviolent methods in pressing these demands. Lithuanians were asked, for example, to refrain from paying taxes, to keep children away from Russian schools, and to refuse military service (Rauch 1974, 22-23; Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 19-20).

The general uprising that followed was quickly suppressed by the Russian administration and army. Many revolutionaries were imprisoned and exiled.

In 1915, following the outbreak of World War I, the Germans occupied Lithuania; over a quarter of a million Lithuanians fled to Russia. In 1917, Germany allowed the formation of a Lithuanian Council (Lietuvos Taryba), which included elected representatives of political groups and local governments. The Taryba immediately began to press for much broader powers than Germany had in mind (Hiden and Salmon 1994, 28), and several declarations of independence soon followed. On 16 February 1918, the Taryba proclaimed Lithuania an independent democratic state, omitting any reference to Lithuania as a German protectorate (*Ibid.*, 28–29).

For the next two years, Lithuania fought a war of independence against the Red Army, the Polish army, and German troops. In October 1920 Poland annexed Vilnius, and Kaunas became the capital of Lithuania. But, for the most part, Lithuanian control was maintained.³⁶

In 1919 Lithuania’s bid for sovereignty was strengthened by *de facto* recognition from Britain. In 1920 Lenin signed a treaty with Lithuania, renouncing “forever, any claims on Lithuanian territory” (Krickus 1997, 11). In 1922, the United States gave diplomatic recognition, and Lithuania joined the League of Nations. In 1920 the Lithuanian parliament had begun to operate, and in 1922 a liberal democratic constitution was adopted.

This phase of Lithuanian democracy was to be short-lived. In 1926 the elected government was overthrown in a military coup. Antanas Smetona, who had been a leader in the independence struggle, became President. He remained

in power until the Republic lost its independence. While Smetona initially ruled with the support of the military and of Catholic political forces, the regime evolved into one of personal rather than party or class dictatorship. Smetona displayed “considerable ability to balance military and social forces in such a way as to control top positions and enforce his will” (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 37; Lieven 1994, 66).³⁷

The Lithuanian “autocracy” during the interwar period has been described as “benign” because it “did not rest on a police state and the oppression of ethnic minorities as was typical of Europe’s fascist states” (Krickus 1997, 13). But at the same time, the regime was “authoritarian” (Gerner and Hedlund 1993, 57). It developed “distinctly totalitarian overtones” (Hiden and Salmon 1994, 55), and, from 1930, “fascist tendencies” (Lieven 1994, 66). Some attempts were made to depose Smetona. Although none succeeded, by 1940 his power had eroded. But any prospect there might have been for the reemergence of democracy disappeared with the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and the advent of World War II.

When the Soviet and Nazi foreign ministers signed a nonaggression pact on 23 August 1939, the process of ending Lithuanian independence was put in motion. The pact as published freed Germany to attack Poland, which was to be partitioned between Germany and the Soviet Union. But the ministers also signed secret protocols, redrawing East European boundaries. Initially Lithuania was left to Germany, while Estonia and Latvia were assigned to the Soviet Union. However, after Poland had been invaded by both the Germans and the Soviets, a modification to the pact reassigned Lithuania — now including Vilnius — to the Soviet sphere. As Diuk and Karatnycky (1993, 109) observe, subsequent to the signing of the secret protocols, “for almost fifty years the people of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia lived in a twilight zone. No democratic state would sanction their annexation by the Soviet Union, but neither would any power support their desire for independence.”

On 3 October 1939, the Lithuanian foreign minister, Juozas Ūrbsys, was called to Moscow to meet with Stalin and Molotov.³⁸ He was told that Lithuania had to accept the deployment of Soviet troops and that Vilnius would be returned to Lithuania.³⁹ The Lithuanians were “powerless to resist” (Vardys and Sedaitis 1997, 37) and Soviet control was imminent.

Soviet and German Occupations (1940–1944)

After establishing Red Army garrisons throughout the Baltics, in the spring of 1940 Stalin moved to subjugate the three countries.⁴⁰ On 15 June 1941, the same day that Germany occupied Paris, the Red Army occupied Lithuania. Almost

immediately the Soviets set about exerting their power. According to Misiūnas and Taagepera: “All non-Communist-controlled public activity was proscribed: political, social, ideological and religious groups which could not be subsumed into the circle of communist fronts were disbanded. . . . By the end of [July 1940], even the Boy Scouts had ceased to exist” (1993, 22).

Changes also quickly took place in the administration. There were “massive layoffs of leading officers,” and the police force was replaced with a special militia (*ibid.*, 25). In July rigged elections were held in all the Baltic countries, and they were subsequently “legally” annexed (Krickus 1997, 15)⁴¹. Later in the year Baltic currencies were abolished in favor of the Russian ruble, and the expropriation of industrial and commercial enterprises, as well as of housing, proceeded apace. In the cultural sector, private schools were taken over, and the curricula revised. The media as well as publishing and printing houses were subject to censorship and control (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 31–34, 36–38).

On 13–14 June 1941 massive deportations began. While “it is difficult to determine the actual number of persons deported,” Misiūnas and Taagepera observe that “the general estimates of population losses from all causes—deportations, mobilizations, massacres, and unexplained disappearances during the first year of Soviet rule—hover around . . . 34,000 for Lithuania” (1993, 42).

⁴²

This wave of deportations was halted with the outbreak of war between Germany and the USSR. On June 22, 1941 the Germans attacked and the Red Army departed within a matter of days. The deportations, as well as the previous measures taken by the Soviets, help to explain why the subsequent Nazi occupation was initially “greeted . . . with intense relief” (Vardys and Sėdaitis, 1997, 55). As Misiūnas and Taagepera observe: “The deportations, coming as they did on the eve of the German-Soviet war, no doubt had an effect opposite from that intended by those who conceived them. While they undoubtedly instilled fear in the population, they also deepened hatred for the regime, especially among those who might otherwise have remained neutral. Despite the efforts of the regime’s propaganda in heralding popular Soviet resistance to the German onslaught, there are hardly any known instances of spontaneous native Baltic opposition to the German advance. This developed only after some time, as the negative side of the German occupation began to be felt” (1993, 43). Internationally, the German occupation in Lithuania is commonly associated with the appalling massacre of the Jewish population, in keeping with the Nazis’ larger program of a genocidal “Final Solution.” Within the Baltics more generally,

while Germany's immediate goal was to win the war, its longer term plan was to annex the entire region to the Third Reich, to deport 85 percent of the Lithuanians, and to introduce German immigration⁴³.

Lithuanian hopes for improvements in their situation were soon disappointed; the ruble was replaced with the German mark, and the population lost out financially once again. Nor was private property restored to any significant extent. Cultural life also suffered with the closing of Vilnius University in 1943, the continuation of press censorship, and the introduction of Nazi tenets into school curricula (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 53–54)

The Germans solicited Lithuanian manpower in pursuit of their goals. When they invaded, Lithuanians who had served in the Red Army surrendered *en masse*. They were given the option of becoming prisoners of war or fighting for the Germans. Faced with this choice, “most chose the latter option” (Krickus 1997, 16), and it is estimated that about twenty thousand Lithuanians served in German battalions.

More general attempts at mobilizing Lithuanians to join the military did not succeed. In 1943 the Germans therefore offered Lithuanians the possibility of forming “local detachments” which would be specifically Lithuanian units and directed solely against the Soviets. Seeing this as an opportunity to reestablish the Lithuanian army and fight the approaching Soviets, about thirty thousand volunteers came forward. The Germans then switched the plan and sought to incorporate the newly formed units into the SS, to be used for military purposes elsewhere. The Lithuanian military leader General Plechavičius resisted the plan, and threatened to disband the battalions. He was arrested and taken away from Lithuania (Chase 1946, 318). When the Germans tried to arrest members of battalions in Kaunas and Marijampolė, battles ensued; some Lithuanians were killed and the remainder were sent for duties in Germany and Norway (*ibid.*; Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 59).⁴⁴ Other battalions, including those in Panevėžys and Vilnius, were more fortunate in escaping (with many men taking to the forests).

Lithuania's initial hopes of Germany were also dashed by the imposition of forced labor. It is estimated that at least seventy-five thousand people were sent to Germany for this purpose. As resistance grew stronger, conscription methods grew harsher. By the fall of 1942 the Nazis were surrounding churches in search of their quota.

The story of the Holocaust in Lithuania and that of Lithuanians participation in it, is still waiting to be fully told. Sources generally agree that over two hundred thousand Jews lived in Lithuania (including Vilnius) at the beginning of the 1940s. However the literature gives varying estimates of the numbers killed,

with figures ranging from about one hundred forty thousand (Krickus 1997, 17) to well over two hundred thousand (Hiden and Salmon 1994, 119). Approximately 90 percent of the Jewish population was extinguished. Those who survived did so only because they had been deported by the Soviets in 1941 prior to the arrival of the Germans, or because they had managed to hide or escape. According to Hiden and Salmon of two hundred fifty thousand Jews living in Lithuania prior to the war only two thousand were left by the time of the second Soviet occupation in 1944. Approximately twenty-three thousand other survivors were “on Soviet territory or elsewhere in German-occupied Europe” (ibid.)⁴⁵.

Where the participation of Lithuanians in the genocide is concerned, some accounts suggest that merely a handful of “local rabble” was involved. However, other accounts strongly support the contention that anti-Semitism, acceptance of the genocide, and even participation in it, were by no means rare.⁴⁶ It has also been alleged that Lithuanian partisan forces were centrally involved in exterminating Jews, even before the Germans arrived.⁴⁷

Explaining why some Lithuanians complied with, and participated in, the Holocaust is a complex, and understandably controversial, subject. Goldhagen notes in his book *Hitler's Willing Executioners*: “The circumstances and character of the non-Germans who helped to kill the Jews should be investigated in depth. We currently know still much less about them than about the German perpetrators. The most important groups who aided the Germans in slaughtering Jews were the Ukrainians, Latvians and Lithuanians. . . . Much work remains to be done on these people.” (1996, 409). Goldhagen goes on to say that the groups mentioned were “profoundly antisemitic cultures (ibid.)” But this had not been the case in Lithuania historically. The Jewish community Lithuania dates back to the fourteenth century and arose from “royal Lithuanian charters that granted Jews important business, housing, and religious rights unusual in Europe at that time” (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 11). After World War I, Jews were pledged “full national and cultural autonomy, and in 1920 the Jewish community was recognized as a legal institution with the right to legislate binding ordinances” (Ibid., 39). At that time, when the Lithuanian population was largely agrarian and relatively lacking in education, Jewish communities were urban-based, educated, and strongly represented in the professions and upper echelons of the administration.

From the mid-1920s, however, influenced by a variety of factors, the situation of Jews deteriorated, and anti-Semitism was evident. Nonetheless, by all accounts anti-Semitism was “less virulent” (Krickus 1997, 11) than in other East European countries during the interwar period, and historically “Lithuanian behaviour towards the Jews had always been less violent than that of most peoples in the

region” (Lieven 1994, 139). Within this context questions about the extent of Lithuanian involvement in the Holocaust, and the explanations for it (insofar as such horrific events can ever be explained) remain unresolved.⁴⁸

Prior to independence, acknowledgement of the genocide was extremely limited. One guidebook to Vilnius in 1987 “contains not a single reference to the Jewish tradition in the city” (Lieven 1994, 155), and official publications generally avoided the subject.⁴⁹ Such strategies of denial and avoidance, and the lack of awareness of related events, brought further negative consequences. As observed by Lieven soon after independence: “The massacre has of course cast a deep shadow over Jewish-Lithuanian relations, and also over Western perceptions of Lithuanian nationalism in general. It would be wrong to speak of an indelible stain on the Lithuanian nation, because collective responsibility cannot be attributed to Lithuanians, as to Jews or anyone else. What is true however is that Lithuania’s refusal to acknowledge and discuss the full import of the tragedy continues to cast a stain over, or rather to blur, large parts of Lithuanian historiography and culture. It contributes to the survival of primitive chauvinist ideas, and to Lithuania’s cultural isolation from the West” (139).

Since independence, however, important efforts have been made toward lifting the veil which had been drawn over the Holocaust in Lithuania. Political steps include expressions of regret about any involvement by all three Baltic governments (Lieven 1994, 156). In 1992 Lithuania decided to mark 23 September as the Day of Genocide. The liquidation of the ghetto in Vilnius was commemorated, and those who had helped survivors were honored. While many disputes have continued (e.g., about the rehabilitation of war criminals), there has also been the establishment of Jewish monuments. In 1995, the visit of President Brazauskas to Israel was an important symbolic step. Public awareness of the Holocaust within Lithuania should also continue to increase as scholars bring this dark period of Lithuanian history more clearly into light.⁵⁰

Soviet Rule After World War II

With the return of the Red Army in 1944, Lithuania was reincorporated into the Soviet Union. The following years — until the death of Stalin in 1953 — again saw a myriad of disappearances, imprisonments, killings, deportations, and exiles. It is estimated that, in the six years following the return of the Soviets, at least one hundred forty thousand (Anušauskas 1997, 112), and perhaps as many as three hundred and fifty thousand people were deported (Krickus 1997, 19). Many lives were also lost on both the Lithuanian and Soviet sides as a

consequence of the partisan resistance movement which was played out in Lithuanian forests. Modest estimates suggest that each side suffered at least twenty thousand deaths. There were also thousands of noncombatant deaths.

With the death of Stalin the era of atrocities came to an end. By the late 1950s, with Khrushchev in power, the three Baltic countries were experiencing a thaw even greater than in other parts of the USSR (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 126)⁵¹. A wait-and-see stance seems to have predominated among the populace, and some deportees returned to Lithuania. Cultural rebirth began and repression of the Catholic church was reduced. At the same time, during the late 1950s and early 1960s atheism was the official doctrine, and there were periodic efforts at cultural suppression. Most significantly however, in light of Lithuania's immediate history, "there was no return to mass terror" (Sužiedelis 1997, 36).

Misiūnas and Taagepera sum up the period after the thaw as follows: "The decade after the Thaw was a period of clear re-emergence of national, Western-oriented, and modernistic aspects of culture. While the organizational form saw little change toward autonomy, the effective increase in cultural autonomy was considerable as far as the content was concerned. Broadly speaking, under Stalin only a few specified topics were allowed, and everything not explicitly authorized was forbidden. By 1968 quite a few topics remained on the forbidden list; but everything not explicitly forbidden was allowed, or at least negotiable. For the national cultures it meant the difference between suffocation and ability to develop within limits" (1993,172).

This relatively positive stance in Lithuania was supported by economic developments in the 1960s. Although the quality of life in the Baltic countries was still problematic, it had improved from the earlier postwar period and exceeded conditions elsewhere in the USSR.

The elements of optimism and cooperation in Lithuania's attitude to the Soviet Union in the years following Stalin's death diminished radically after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The mood of the people now became one of resignation and cynicism coupled, in a period of economic development, with a focus on the pursuit of material goods. In the words of Misiūnas and Taagepera (1993, 194), August 1968 was a "psychological watershed" after which previously muted dissent began to be expressed.

The period 1968 to 1980 has been described as the "years of contradictions" (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 195) for Lithuania and the other Baltic countries⁵². Russification was again pursued, most notably in the educational sphere. Yet, at the same time, cultural autonomy was evident. Moscow also strengthened its grip economically and politically, but this did not prevent the development of Western orientation. Although freedom of movement continued to be severely

curtailed, most people had increased contact with other countries and people, for example, through visits by foreigners, and through performances abroad by Lithuanian artists who were allowed to travel for this purpose. Dissent, albeit usually confined to seeking a better deal within the Soviet system, coexisted with Soviet conformism, and it was not unusual to encounter the “schizophrenic” combination of “public collaboration with private dissent.” (ibid., 201)⁵³.

By the time of Brezhnev’s death in October 1982, with living standards declining throughout much of the previous decade, people in the Baltics found it hard to maintain stances of either “cynical consumerism” or “schizophrenic collaboration” (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 201). With concerns growing about ecological, cultural, political, economic, language, and lifestyle issues, and with some relaxing of the regime taking place, dissent began to be expressed more strongly, directly, and openly. The stage was set for a new wave of resistance which would be most clearly articulated in the late 1980s.

A New Wave of Resistance: Independence Regained

Soon after Mikhail Gorbachev . . . was elected to the position of CPSU general secretary in March 1985, he set out to restructure and energize the economic sector of the country and turn around its drastically declining productivity. Persuaded that the obstacle to restructuring was rooted in the inefficient and dogmatic party and government bureaucracy, the new leader chose new tools for their rejuvenation, namely, democratization and openness (*demokratizatsiia i glasnost*).

-Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 97

Perestroika (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) came late to Lithuania. This was in part because “like most Soviet citizens, Lithuanians greeted official proclamations with fear, apathy and alienation” (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 97). In addition, Lithuania’s Communist regime was led by a “particularly mediocre and conservative apparatchiks” (ibid., 97–98). However, once relevant events got under way, they would often proceed with dizzying speed, to the point that Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to unilaterally shed the Soviet mantle and gain independence.

A flashpoint in this new independence movement was the establishment, in the summer of 1988, of the Lithuanian Movement for Restructuring (Lietuvos Persitvarkymo Sąjūdis, more generally referred to as Sąjūdis, or “the movement”).

Sajūdis was born in the Lithuanian Academy of Science and held its first meeting on 3 June “ostensibly to discuss upcoming amendments to the Soviet Constitution proposed by Gorbachev” (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 101). The movement soon became centrally engaged in Lithuania’s struggle for democracy and national liberation. At the first meeting an “initiative group” was elected, involving thirty-six scholars, professionals, and intellectuals. Seventeen of the chosen group belonged to the Lithuanian Communist Party (Krickus 1997, 51). The fact that there was such strong Communist representation in Sajūdis initially left the movement vulnerable to charges that it was merely a tool of the Soviet state. Some dissidents in Lithuania and leaders of the Lithuanian community in North America were of this view⁵⁴. Changes within the organization and visits by Sajūdis activists to the United States allayed these concerns⁵⁵.

Sajūdis held its first congress in October 1988 in Vilnius, using the National Congress of 1905 as a model. Over one thousand delegates attended, 96 percent of them Lithuanian.⁵⁶ While at first the movement resisted having an identifiable leader, Dr. Vytautas Landsbergis was elected chairman the following month and was able to retain the position of leader thereafter. Described as a “compromise candidate,” Landsbergis was able to unite disparate elements in the movement — “the Vilnius liberal intellectuals who had founded it; the Kaunas nationalists who had penetrated it; and the reform Communists who continued to build a bridge between it and its main rival, the Communist Party” (Lieven 1994, 231).

Although the movement existed only in embryonic form for most of 1988, Sajūdis made much progress forging links with diverse groups with overlapping interests and in gaining, and building upon, popular support. For example, Algirdas Kaušpėdas, an architect and leader of the rock group Antis, as well as a member of the National Council of Sajūdis, organized a tour of rock festivals in July 1988. Kaušpėdas was also involved in a huge rally for the environment, sponsored by the environmental group Atgaja and held in Kaunas in early August. The rally, attended by half-a-million people, combined rock music and political speeches (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 106).

The summer of popular protest and demonstrations reached a peak on 23 August when an estimated quarter-of-a-million people gathered in Vingis Park in Vilnius to commemorate the forty-ninth anniversary of the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, which had spelled doom for Lithuanian independence (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 126–27). In September, at least ten thousand people gathered at the Ignalina nuclear power plant and called for a halt to the construction of a third Chernobyl-type reactor. Sajūdis also gathered

over quarter-of-a-million signatures to a petition asking the United Nations and the International Atomic Energy Safety agency “to establish an international commission for the examination of the plant’s safety” (ibid., 108).

During 1988, this shift to greater protest activity within Lithuanian civil society paralleled, and intersected with, developments within the Lithuanian Communist Party. As of May 1988, while the party had “reluctantly begun to listen to Gorbachev’s drums” (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 128), its initial response to Sajūdis was traditionally Soviet in style. Members of Sajūdis were denied access to state media, and coverage of their activities was biased. Many officials discouraged participation in Sajūdis by party members and demanded resignations from those who did participate (ibid., 128–129).

In response to this, Alexander Yakovlev was sent by Moscow to Vilnius in August 1988. He spoke with Sajūdis leaders and “instructed the party to accept Sajūdis’s existence and motives” (Senn 1995, 23). Strongly supporting *glasnost*’ he encouraged the party leadership to become more involved in actively promoting change. The Lithuanian Politburo was further advised to “avoid confrontation and to harness the ‘national factor’ as a force for reform” (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 129).

Gorbachev and his progressive colleagues, like Yakovlev, believed that the economy of the Soviet Union was a single one and would remain so, even in face of democratic and ethnic development. The latter therefore “was not dangerous. It might even be helpful to perestroika” (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 129). As Vardys and Sėdaitis observe, “taking this view was the most serious mistake Gorbachev made” (ibid.). For, once the Lithuanians had passed through the door opened by Yakovlev, “Moscow could no longer restrain them” (Senn 1995, 23).

As a consequence of Yakovlev’s visit, various concessions were made by the Lithuanian Communist Party. For example, flying the national flag and singing the national anthem became acceptable. More attention was to be given in schools to Lithuanian history, geography, and language. Communist membership in Sajūdis was declared legal because it was not a party and did not contravene the one-party system. Television coverage of Sajūdis’s activities increased.

At the same time, the Lithuanian Communist Party’s position vis-à-vis Sajūdis remained ambiguous and often critical. Sajūdis-related events were moving too rapidly for the traditionally oriented communist leaders. Their response was more conservative than that favored by much of the party leadership in Moscow. In October 1988 a very significant development took place when Algirdas Brazauskas (who later became the first democratically elected president of Lithuania) was appointed leader of the Lithuanian Communist Party.

Brazauskas had attended meetings of Sajūdis, was sympathetic to the movement's causes, and was regarded favorably by many as a moderate in his views. He was sometimes described as "Gorbachev's man in Lithuania" (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 133). With events in Lithuania increasingly focusing on issues of sovereignty, however, Brazauskas, along with the Lithuanian Communist Party and Sajūdis, would soon be better described as proverbial thorns in the side of the Soviet president.

While initially the appointment of Brazauskas was welcomed by Sajūdis, within a matter of months the party and Sajūdis became political adversaries. Sajūdis was gaining power, and while Brazauskas supported much of what it sought, he felt the pace of the demands was too fast. He was also constrained by rebukes to that effect from Moscow. When in November of 1988 Brazauskas joined Moscow in blocking a sovereignty declaration by Lithuania, popular support for him and the Lithuanian Communist Party declined radically (Lieven 1994, 227). The decline was expressed concretely in the elections to the Congress of People's Deputies in Moscow in March 1989: Sajūdis candidates won a remarkable thirty-six of forty-seats (*ibid.*; Smith 1991, 357).

The pattern of protest and demand continued throughout 1989. On 23 August an apex of pressure by the Lithuanians was reached when on the fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact "1.25 million Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians linked hands in a human chain extending from Tallinn to Vilnius, a distance of some 470 miles" (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 151). Politically much of the action focused on the secret protocols asserting that Soviet rule in the Baltics was legal, even in face of the unlawfulness of the protocols themselves. Within Lithuania, a precedent-setting decision was made by the Supreme Soviet in early December when it legalized a multiparty system. In December 1990 the Lithuanian Communist Party further expressed its rejection of Moscow's leadership when it voted to separate itself from the all-union organization.

In response, Gorbachev visited Lithuania on 10-13 January 1990. The purpose of his trip was "not clear" (Diuk and Karatnycky 1993, 133) and his efforts were fruitless. Upcoming elections became, in effect, referenda on independence (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 330). In February-March the first multiparty elections in the Soviet Union were held in Lithuania. The elections were a decisive victory for Sajūdis and its candidates, who won 80 percent of the seats.⁵⁷ On 10 March, at the first meeting of the new legislature, Vytautas Landsbergis was voted two-to-one as chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Council, and thereby head of state. The next day the parliament proclaimed "the restoration of Lithuania as an independent democratic republic" (Vardys and

Sėdaitis 1977, 156). With the USSR adopting legislation the following day to hinder secession, Lithuania's struggle then became one for the "implementation of its declaration of restored independence" (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 333).

On 15 March, Moscow formally expressed opposition to Lithuania independence, and declared it legally "invalid." On 22 March, Soviet tanks poured into Vilnius, and the military took over the central press and other buildings which it claimed belonged to the Communist Party (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 163). A month later Lithuanian efforts at negotiation had not been successful and Gorbachev imposed an economic embargo, blockading supplies of oil, gasoline, and natural gas. Transportation was greatly reduced, and buildings were without hot water or heat. Many factories lay idle, and hospitals ran short of medicines (Diuk and Karatnycky, 1993: 135).⁵⁸

The blockade only lasted until the end of June and was lifted when Landsbergis agreed to sign a temporary moratorium on the reestablishment of an independent state. Despite its relatively short duration however, the blockade brought heavy political, as well as economic, costs for Sajūdis. As Vardys and Sėdaitis (1997, 166) express it: "the unexpected economic crackdown killed the euphoria of independence." It also brought disagreements in Parliament, and in the country more generally, about relations with the Soviet Union. The political fortunes of Brazauskas and his independent Communist Party began to rise, while those of Landsbergis and Sajūdis fell. The first concrete indication of this had been in local elections in early April where the independent Communists had made a strong showing in winning over one-third of seats on local councils.

During the remainder of 1990 relations between each of the three Baltic countries and Moscow had reached a "stalemate" (Hiden and Salmon 1994, 187). Meanwhile, Gorbachev was perceived as moving away from the agenda of *glasnost* and *perestroika* and toward a harder, and potentially military, line; in early 1991 in the Baltics, "the tension was palpable" (Senn 1995 124, 126).

The feared repression was not long in coming. On Monday 7 January, Soviet paratroopers entered all of the Baltic republics. They claimed to be looking for draft dodgers, but few believed this. On the night of 7-8 January over one hundred Soviet tanks "rumbled through Vilnius in an obvious effort to intimidate the locals" (Senn 127). Additional paratroopers arrived during the week, and on Thursday, Gorbachev sent a telegram warning the Lithuanian Parliament that it would be responsible for whatever might happen if the "unconstitutional" acts which had been adopted were not immediately and completely revoked (ibid.). On Thursday night an estimated one thousand paratroopers and thirty tanks "roamed" the city "passing by the Press House and television tower" (ibid., 131). Lithuanians went to both locations.

No blood was spilled until the next morning. As the military were seizing the Press House, at least seven people were injured. Thousands of Lithuanians who had gathered in the streets prepared to defend the television tower and the Parliament. Repeated telephone calls to Moscow trying to contact Gorbachev were unsuccessful. By contrast, Yeltsin denounced the use of force.

During the night of 12-13 January, Soviet tanks and paratroopers advanced on the television and radio stations and the television tower. Demonstrators attempted to impede their progress. Thirteen people were killed that night, and two others died later. Over five hundred people were injured (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 176). Krickus (1997, 146–47) provides a graphic account of the scene:

About 1:30 a.m. on Sunday, January 13, Soviet paratroopers and members of the KGB Alpha unit attacked the tower, with the expectation that the crowds would flee in the face of small arms fire and body-crushing tanks. . . . [The KGB Alpha unit] struck the demonstrators with their rifle butts, fired into their midst with live ammunition, and badly burned several of them with blank shells from their tank cannons. TV footage showed one man atop a bus being struck by a bullet and slumping to his knees and then a moment later several men trying to hold back a tank that had crushed a young woman under its treads. All the while a tall figure in a leather trench coat walked among the killers, obviously one of the commanders of the operation. From the bowels of a tank the recorded voice of Jermalavičius [a pro-Soviet Lithuanian Communist Party leader] could be heard in spite of the roar of tank engines, small-arms fire, screams, and voices singing in defiance⁵⁹. The civilians responded to demands that they disperse with shouts of “Lithuania” and taunted their attackers with the word “fascists.” They were clubbed and shot . . . but they did not run.

The Lithuanian defenders were unarmed and did not respond in a violent manner but stood their ground in a heroic display of civil disobedience.

Reputedly, Gorbachev would later exclaim to Brazauskas: ““Only fourteen killed and all that fuss!”” (quoted in Krickus 1997, 147). In the aftermath of “Bloody Sunday” he refused to travel to Vilnius to seek forgiveness (Senn 1995, 143–144). In stark contrast, Yeltsin traveled to Tallinn (as he was not allowed to land in Vilnius) on 13 January, and co-signed a document with the Baltic leaders. The document denounced the use of armed force in the Baltics and recognized their ““state sovereignty”” (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 178–179).⁶⁰

The actions of the Soviets on “Bloody Sunday” did “irreparable” damage internationally to Gorbachev’s reputation and credibility (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 180), although it was still to be some months before conclusive recognition would be given to the Baltic countries’ independence. That moment finally came after the unsuccessful coup in Russia in August 1991.⁶¹ When Yeltsin subsequently took power in Moscow, he recognized Baltic independence, as well as that of the

other republics. It is at this time that “real independence” (Lieven 1994, 221) was achieved in the three Baltic countries. International recognition and support for Baltic independence soon followed (Diuk and Karatnycky 1993, 112).

In August 1991, Soviet troops left the buildings that they had occupied in January. Lenin’s statue was removed from the central square, and many other Soviet icons were dismantled. In September, all three Baltic countries were readmitted into the United Nations.

One might think that, with independence achieved, Sajūdis would have reached the peak of its power and popularity. But, for a variety of reasons, this did not happen. In the October 1992 election the Democratic Labor Party of former Communists, under the leadership of Brazauskas, won a “landslide” victory (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 197). In February 1993, Brazauskas was again successful in becoming the first freely elected president of Lithuania.⁶²

In part, the demise of Sajūdis was a reflection of the populace’s frustration with the harsh economic conditions which they faced in the wake of the transition to independence. As Vardys and Sėdaitis express it: “The pendulum’s swing from support for nationalists to support for communists did not signify return to communism but disappointment in Sajūdis for unfulfilled hopes and expectations. . . . On one level, Sajūdis simply paid the price for governing during trying times (1997, 198, 199).” The former Communists profited from this, as well as from the high popularity enjoyed by Brazauskas. In their campaign, the Democratic Labor Party promised to push for full Soviet troop withdrawal and to work on economic reform within the free market framework (with an emphasis on agriculture). The party also reiterated its commitment to democracy.

The months after the election of Brazauskas as president were eventful ones. In May, Lithuania became a member of the Council of Europe. In June, the lita was reintroduced as the Lithuanian currency. At the end of August, the last group of Russian soldiers left the country.

Also in September 1993, the students of Vilnius University commenced their research on “everyday life” during the transition period. At their writings testify, life continued to be trying for Lithuanians and appeared likely to be so for some time.

Appendix II

Vilnius University Student Contributors (1993–1994)

Linita Aleksiušaitė
Aida Baibokaitė
Elena Danilevičiūtė
Audra Dargytė
Ingrida Gečienė
Jurgita Gintilaitė
Lina Gudelionytė
Gitana Kuojtė
Rivilė Janukonienė
Tadas Leonėikas
Algė Makulavičienė
Diana Mapeikytė
Dalia Mikalauskaitė
Jonas Ožkinis
Renata Pradzevičiūtė
Giedrė Rindzevičiūtė
Eglė Rudaleviciūtė
Eglė Datkovskienė
Rita Dimkutė
Lina Smaliukaitė
Reda Žtaraitė
Linas Turauskas
Artūras Valionis
Viktorija Pilinskaitė
Rūta Piliukaitė

Notes to Appendix I

1. Recent English-language titles include: Clemens (1991), Diuk and Karatnycky (1993), Gerner and Hedlund (1993), Hiden and Salmon, (1994), Krickus (1997), Levin (1996), Lieven (1994), Misiūnas and Taagepera (1993), Senn (1995), Smith (1991), and Vardys and Sėdaitis (1997). Other historical studies include Chase (1946), Oakley (1992), and Rauch (1974).
2. The pagan Lithuanian state encompassed many groups. According to Vardys and Sėdaitis (1997, 7): “The pagan Lithuanian state, ethnically composed of minority Lithuanians and a majority of Russians as well as Byelorussians, put pagans, Russian orthodox Christians, Moslems, and a sprinkling of Latin Catholics and Jews into close proximity. It was known for its unusual, for the times, religious tolerance and for the adaptability of power to local conditions.”
3. For a detailed account of Mindaugas, see Chase (1946).
4. The recently crowned queen of Poland, Jadwiga, was twelve years old at the time of the agreement (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 12). She died, childless, in 1399 (Chase 1946, 44).
5. Klaipeda-Memel was administered by an Allied-appointed French military commissioner. For discussion of this and of subsequent events in the area, see Vardys and Sėdaitis (1997, 29 et seq.).
6. “Democratic disintegration” also occurred in Estonia and Latvia during the interwar years (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 11-12). In Lieven’s opinion one of the reasons for this was that “all three Baltic constitutions were too democratic for their own good. Parliaments, elected by universal suffrage and full proportional representation, were given almost complete control over governments” (1994, 64-65). He goes on to discuss the consequences of this and the danger of it happening again.
7. Similar meetings had already taken place with the Estonian and Latvian foreign ministers.
8. In September, Lithuania had rejected the German proposal that they seize Vilnius because they did not wish to use force nor become “a virtual German protectorate” (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 47).
9. For an eyewitness account of conditions in Lithuania in March 1941, see the report by John Mažionis (1995), a visiting U.S. diplomat.
10. About two thousand people were arrested on the night preceding the election, and most of these people were deported (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 40).
11. In presenting estimates about this and other events, Misiūnas and Taagepera (1993, 354) generally warn their readers: “The figures presented are often very approximate ‘guesstimates,’ and should not be requoted without inclusion of this warning. Presenting these guesstimates . . . serves two purposes: to give the reader *some* idea of the type and order of magnitude of [the phenomenon at hand], and to induce scholarly readers (East and West) to come up with better documented figures.” A similar warning applies with respect to all of the estimates

presented in this appendix. More recent archival research suggest that there were “about 23,000 people deported and taken to prison camps from Lithuania in 1941” (Anusauskas 1997, 10), and an anonymous reviewer of a draft of this essay suggested that “the number of deportees was at most 18-19,000.”

12. The Germans planned to deport a little under 50 percent of Estonians and over 50 percent of Latvians, with the “remaining fraction” in each case deemed “racially as Nordic (and thus worth Germanization)” (Misiūnas and Taagepera 1993, 49).

13. Misiūnas and Taagepera (1993, 59) estimate that one hundred men were “shot indiscriminately” and about three thousand were sent to Germany or Norway.

14. Lieven (1994) provides an extensive discussion of the genocide of Lithuanian Jews. Other sources consulted include Chase (1946), Hiden and Salmon (1994), Kirby (1995), Krickus (1997), Levin (1997), Misiūnas and Taagepera (1993), Vardys and Sėdaitis (1997), and Schoenburg and Schoenburg (1991).

15. Levin’s (1996) article is one of the most detailed English-language accounts of the Holocaust in Lithuania and identifies individuals from various sectors of Lithuanian society who participated in it.

16. For example, Lieven (1994, 152) suggests that over two thousand Jews in Kaunas were killed by partisan forces while the Soviet Army were retreating and before the Germans arrived.

17. Research to date suggests that important factors included Jewish attraction to Russian culture, coupled with fear of Nazi Germany and fascism. It is not surprising therefore that Jews were overrepresented in the Lithuanian Communist Party during the 1930s and that many worked with the Soviets during the occupation of 1940-1941. This involvement, and Lithuanian perceptions of it, left Jews even more vulnerable in face of Nazi occupation. Lieven (1994, 148) observes that “while most Jews feared the Germans more than Moscow, most Lithuanians “feared Moscow more than they did the Germans. With two peoples, living in the same land but obeying the dictates of opposed national priorities, ignorant of each other’s culture, indifferent to each other’s interests, in an atmosphere in which anti-semitism was fed by Nazi propaganda as well as by indigenous prejudice, the stage was set for catastrophe.”

18. For a discussion of the paucity of publications on the genocide of Jews in Lithuania and an examination of the themes which have been predominant in the literature at various historical points, see Levin (1996).

19. Professor Saulius Šupiedėlis is among those pursuing related research in the Lithuanian archives. I thank him for communicating with me on several occasions about this work. His assistance was particularly useful in familiarizing me with the findings of recent archival research and the content of publications in Lithuanian. This recent research suggests that the figures for deportations (for example, the deportations of Jews in 1941) may actually be much lower than previously thought.

20. In October 1964 Khrushchev was removed from power and Brezhnev succeeded him as party secretary. Following Brezhnev’s death in 1982 he was replaced by Andropov (1982–1984)

and Chernenko (1984–1985). Within Lithuania, Antanas Sniečkus, a native-born Communist, occupied the position of first secretary of the Lithuanian Communist Party from 1940 until his death in 1974. He was succeeded by Petras Griškevičius until his death in 1987. Ringaudas Songaila then held the position for eleven months. In October 1988 reform-oriented Algirdas Brazauskas was appointed, pursuant to events which are discussed in the next section.

21. For an extended discussion of the postwar period in Lithuania, see Misiūnas and Taagepera (1993, chaps. 4–6).

22. There were also more radical expressions of dissent. For example, in May 1972 a young student, Romas Kalanta, protested Soviet rule in Lithuania by immolating himself. He later died in hospital. His actions and death precipitated other self-immolations and days of rioting by other youths in Kaunas calling for freedom. Paratroops and the KGB were used in containing the riots, and hundreds of arrests were made.

23. Dissidents were upset partly because Sajūdis initially did not welcome former political prisoners so that their “‘soiled’ names would not offend high functionaries” (dissident quoted in Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 103). This barrier was later removed.

24. See Krickus (1997, 52 et seq.) for a discussion of early contacts with North America.

25. Arising from this overwhelming representation of Lithuanians in Sajūdis during its early days the movement was initially accused of being “racist.” As of 1990 ethnic Lithuanians made up 79.6 percent of Lithuania’s population. Other groups included: Russians, 9.4 percent; Poles, 7 percent; Belorussians, 1.7 percent; Ukrainians, 1.2 percent; Jews, 0.3 percent. Several other groups accounted for less than 0.1 percent each (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 7). It should be noted that Lithuania was one of the most ethnically homogenous of the USSR’s republics. For analyses of Lithuania’s demographic characteristics, both historically and recently, see Stankūnienė et al. (1995), Stankūnienė (1996), and Sipavičienė (1997).

26. Sajūdis was not registered as a party, and Sajūdis-supported candidates included independent Communists elected with Sajūdis endorsement. A majority of the membership of the new Parliament was nominally Communist (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 155).

27. Moscow also suffered from the blockade because Lithuania had produced a large proportion of certain items for the USSR. For example, Lithuania produced “95 percent of all the compressors used in pneumatic brakes for Soviet trucks and cars” (Vardys and Sėdaitis 1997, 166).

28. Jermalavičius was the spokesperson for the recently formed (and mostly anonymous) pro-Soviet Committee for the Salvation of Lithuania. The taped message proclaimed the committee’s authority and told the Lithuanians to go home (Senn 1995, 134). Even Moscow would soon attempt to distance itself from the committee (*ibid.*, 137–138).

29. For a detailed discussion of various protests between 7 and 14 January, and of related communication between Vilnius and Moscow, see Senn (1995, chap. 11). Krickus (1997, chap. 8) also provides an extended account of related events, including the reaction, and lack thereof, by the U.S. government in light of its plans to drop bombs during the Gulf War on January 16.

30. Significant events in Lithuania in the interim included a poll of all voters in February, with 85 percent of the eligible population voting on the issue of independence, and 90 percent voting in favor. Also in February, Iceland became the first country to formally recognize Lithuania. In late July, six border guards were killed, apparently by Soviet-backed OMON troops.

31. Politically and electorally Lithuania has experienced a number of “firsts.” It was the first country to break the Soviet tie. With the elections of 1992 and 1993 it became the first country in the ex-USSR to vote the former Communists back in, and in 1996, Lithuania became the first country to vote the former Communists out again. Landsbergis led a party of conservatives to power when they won seventy of the Parliament’s one hundred and forty-one seats, and formed a center-right coalition with Christian Democrats and the Center Union. Landsbergis became parliamentary chairman, and Gediminas Vagnorius was elected prime minister. Brazauskas and the Democratic Labor Party secured only seven seats and less than 10 percent of the vote. The turnout was 54 percent, far lower than the 75 percent of the 1992 elections. The Conservatives projected themselves as a “modern” party that could deliver a “European” standard of living. They promised significant tax cuts and increased social spending (Frierson 1996a, 1996b, 1996c). For a discussion of factors affecting the power shifts, see Nekrađas (1996). Brazauskas remained president until the next presidential elections in 1998. He chose not to run, but supported the candidacy of Arturas Paulauskas, the former prosecutor general. Landsbergis supported Valdas Adamkus who was initially nominated by the Center Union. Adamkus is a retired environmentalist who lived in Chicago for over fifty years. There were other candidates but the race condensed into a tight one between these two, with an extremely close finish: 49.69 percent for Paulauskas and 50.31 percent for Adamkus (Traėevskis, 1998a, 1998b).

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Notes

1. Zlata's Diary (1994), based on the diary of a schoolgirl, Zlata Filipoviè, also provides a searing account of everyday life during the Balkan conflicts as experienced by her in Sarajevo.
2. Other projects funded by Mr. Soros include the Central European University (located in Warsaw and Budapest) and offices of the Open Society Fund in many East European countries. This fund provides financial support for cultural, educational, legal, economic, and social projects that contribute to local democratic development.
3. The volume *Everyday Life in the Baltic States* (1997), edited by Meilutė Taljūnaitė, does include some qualitative data analysis of Lithuanian topics (see especially the articles by Ėsnavièius and Taljūnaitė; Kasatkina; and Geèienė). By far the majority of the material however, continues the tradition of quantitative and survey-oriented analysis.
4. Twenty one of the students submitted all the required assignments and formally completed the course. The others participated informally and completed some of the assignments. All but four were female.
5. The students conducted the interviews in Lithuanian and translated them into English.
6. For a discussion of demographic trends in Lithuania, see Stankūnienė (1996), and Stankūnienė et al, (1995).
7. For example, see Gaidys (1995, 1996).
8. For a discussion of social networks in Lithuania more generally during the transition, see Geèienė (1997).
9. At the end of 1994, real income in Lithuania was only 40 percent of what it had been in 1990. The average monthly income stood at 210 litas, or marginally over US\$50 (Ėsnavièius and Taljūnaitė 1997, 31).
10. Part of the man's difficulty in getting a job, says Giedrė, is the fact that, because his wife would not let him come back to live at home, he couldn't get the registration stamp (concerning accommodation) in his passport which is necessary to find work legally. He couldn't afford to rent a place to live, and only temporary accommodation was available through social services.
11. During the Soviet period, the currency was the Russian ruble. In the early 1990s the talonas, an intermediate currency, was introduced. In 1993, Lithuania reintroduced the litas, which had been the prewar currency. From that time, 4 litas have been roughly the equivalent of US\$1.
12. As of 1994 life expectancy for men was sixty-three years, and for women seventy-five years, which had decreased from all-time highs in 1989 of sixty-seven for men and seventy-six for women (Ėiurlionytė 1995, 80). It is highly likely that the harsher conditions under which pensioners now live partly accounts for this decrease in life expectancy.

13. See the interview with an old age pensioner.
14. Pensioners also seem to be a neglected topic thus far in Lithuanian social scientific literature (or at least that in the English language). A notable exception is Paluckienė (1996).
15. Authors often cite the number of deportations following the second Soviet occupation at over three hundred thousand people (e.g., Kasatkina 1995, 51; Mankevičius 1997, (53- 54). But some recent archival research suggest that the number of deportees may have been lower. For example, Arvydas Anušauskas (1997, 112) states: "The total number of prisoners taken away to the GULAG prison camps in 1944–52 amounted to 142,575 people." Anušauskas additionally states (ibid.): "Not less than 456 thousand people . . . fell victim to Soviet genocide and terror, were subjected to compulsion of one kind or another. As many as 332 thousand people were imprisoned, deported and sent to GULAG camps. Another 26.5 thousand people were killed in Lithuania." It is not clear but presumably this statement includes both periods of Soviet occupation, but does not include the Holocaust and other atrocities perpetrated under German occupation.
16. One example of such political involvement by older people is at the former KGB prison in Vilnius. The prison cells — where thousands of people were detained prior to deportation — are now open to the public, and the tour guides are usually former inmates.
17. For example, Riga — the capital of Latvia — is only 39 percent ethnic Latvian (Milevska 1998, 6). There, even in the late 1990s, the reality has been that "since many Russians do not know any Latvian, or know it only poorly, there still are innumerable instances when Latvians have to speak Russian whether they want or not" (Karklins 1997, 3).
18. For historical and contemporary discussions of Russians in Lithuania, see Kasatkina (1995, 1996), Lieven (1994, chap. 7), Sipavičienė (1995), and Vardys and Sėdaitis (1997: 212 et seq.).
19. US\$ 17.50.
20. The "check book" was a payment that citizens received from the state before privatization; it could be used to invest in state property when it was privatized.
21. The inspector at the local guardianship office made just a little over 100 litas (i.e., US\$ 25) at the time of the interview.
22. For an analysis of various aspects of privatization, see Taljūnaitė (1995).
23. Ėsnavičius and Taljūnaitė (1997) provide an informative and qualitative analysis of the strategies adopted by twenty-five diverse families in securing income and meeting expenses.
24. For a discussion of changing patterns of unemployment and employment in the 1990s, see Gruževskis (1995).

25. This can occur, for example, when someone who buys goods from a “middleman” to sell on the market later finds out that they were originally acquired illegally.
26. For an extended discussion of the “mafia,” organized crime, and broader issues of crime, justice, and human rights in Lithuania and the other Baltic countries, see McMahon (1995). For a discussion of imprisonment in Lithuania, see Justickis (1996).
27. Until recently Lithuania used the death penalty several times a year. Aida Baibokaitė observes that perceptions of increased crime during the transition period have been associated with increased support for the death penalty: “The number of people who approve of the death penalty is rising . . . research was done on this problem in 1990 and 1992. [D]uring that time, the number of people strongly opposed to the death penalty decreased by 9 percent, and those who expressed strong support for the death penalty increased by 9 percent.”
28. Latvia and Estonia experienced similar banking crises.
29. The Civic Education Project provided me and other lecturers with a monthly stipend of several hundred U.S. dollars, as well as other financial assistance (e.g., for travel, housing, and health insurance). While this income was modest by western standards, in most East European countries in the early 1990s, Civic Education Project lecturers had an income substantially above the local norm.
30. In the fall and early winter of 1993, hot water was only sporadically available. Conditions were not as bad then as during the previous winter, when hot water was available only at Christmas and central heating was kept at a maximum of 13 degrees Celsius.
31. See, for example, Geèienė (1997) and Turauskas (1995)