SOCIAL SECURITY ASSURANCE FOR LITHUANIAN CITIZENS IN LATVIA IN 1919- 1939

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Acknowledgements

The article was funded by the Research Council of Lithuania implementing Researcher teams' project "The formation of modern social structure in Lithuania in 1918-1940" (No. MIP-069/2014).

Abstract:

After the First World War tens of thousands of Lithuanian citizens lived in Latvia. Men have died in the war, but in Latvia lived their wives, children, parents and grandparents. As well every year about ten thousand Lithuanian citizens went to look for job in Latvia (especially temporary). Lithuanian citizens that lived in Latvia and Lithuanian citizens that came in Latvia needed to ensure social protection. These citizens were faced with a variety of social problems that had to be solved: lack of food, disease, left homeless children and etc. In 1924 Lithuania and Latvia have signed the Convention on social assistance. On the basis of this agreement social support was provided for Lithuanians in Latvia. Meanwhile, the citizens of Latvia in Lithuania did not settled large social problems and this Convention had been rarely applied to them. The Lithuanian diplomatic mission and various public organizations took care to ensure social security in Latvia for Lithuanians. According archival documents Lithuania spent the largest sum of money on social protection for its citizens in Latvia of all the European countries.

Rezumat:

După primul război mondial, zeci de mii de cetățeni lituanieni au trait în Letonia. Bărbații au murit în război, dar în Letonia au trăit soțiile, copiii, părinții și bunicii. De asemenea, în fiecare an aproximativ zece mii de cetățeni lituanieni au mers să caute un loc de muncă în Letonia (mai ales pe baze temporare). Cetățenii lituanieni care au locuit în Letonia și cei lituanieni care au venit în Letonia au fost nevoiți să-și asigure protecția socială. Acești cetățeni s-au confruntat cu o varietate de probleme sociale care trebuiau rezolvate: lipsa alimentelor, bolile, copiii rămași fără adăpost etc. În 1924, Lituania și Letonia au semnat Convenția privind asistența socială. Pe baza

acestui instrument juridic s-a acordat în Letonia sprijin lituanienilor. Între timp, cetățenii letoni din Lituania nu au întâmpinat mari probleme sociale și această Convenție a fost arareori aplicată acestora. Misiunea diplomatică lituaniană și diferite organizații publice au avut grijă să asigure securitatea socială pentru lituanieni în Letonia. Potrivit documentelor de arhivă, Lituania a cheltuit cea mai mare sumă de bani pentru protecția socială a cetățenilor săi din Letonia dintre toate țările europene.

Keywords: Lithuania, Latvia, Lithuanian citizens, social security, assistance, agreement

Introduction

Over the centuries the nations of Lithuanians and Latvians have lived next to one another; they share the same linguistic roots and speak Baltic languages. However, they differ by their historical heritage and experience; that is why, one of the main features defining a nation – its religion – is also different (Latvians are Lutherans, while Lithuanians are Roman Catholics). In the 19th century Lithuanians and Latvians were part of the Russian Empire, but the area inhabited by Latvians witnessed rapid industrialization processes and the growing economic development, while Riga had become an important imperial city and port. Faster economic development and political circumstances in the region of Latvia forced Lithuanians to emigrate to this part of the empire in search of political stability and employment. The first wave of Lithuanian migration was determined by political changes and the uprisings in the period of 1831–1863, while the second migration wave took place at the end to the 19th century–the beginning of the 20th century due to the rapid industrial and economic development in Latvia. It is estimated that in 1914 around 95,000 Lithuanians could live in Latvia and as many as 35,156 in Riga. It was the time when Latvia had become a popular destination where prominent Lithuanian personalities received their education; Lithuanians used to establish schools and various organizations. The situation essentially changed after World War I when Lithuania and Latvia established themselves as free and independent republics in 1918. Lithuanians residing in Latvia returned to their homeland on a mass scale; the majority of Lithuanian intellectuals who could already climb the career ladder in the independent country came back as well. Statistics show that in 1920 25,588 Lithuanians resided in Latvia (the number insignificantly

changed and 22,843 Lithuanians lived in Latvia in 1935)¹, who made up the Lithuanian diaspora and who had to be taken care of by the Lithuanian government, if necessary. In the meantime, in 1923 Latvians accounted for 14,883, or 0.73%, of the Lithuanian population which totalled 2,021,792.

In historiography the main focus was on Lithuanian and Latvian political and diplomatic relations between the wars. It should be highlighted in this respect Zenonas Butkus and Ēriks Jēkabsons works.² Latvian historian Ē. Jēkabsons has written a work on Latvian minority in Lithuania.³ Lithuanian historian Vilma Akmenyte Ruzgienė, in her dissertation, analyzed Latvians' situation in Lithuania, and Latvia and Lithuania particular border issues⁴ Ē. Jēkabsons has also published a monograph on Lithuanian minority in Latvia.⁵ He focused on the Lithuanian minority political and cultural activities in the neighboring country. Lithuanian historian Dangiras Mačiulis analyzed in his article Lithuanian Diaspora in Latvia and its organizational and political ambition to take part in the Latvian parliamentary elections of 1928.⁶ He also analyzed the activity of Lithuanian community in Latvia, the influence of religion on Lithuanian community and the situation of Lithuanian schools in Latvia.⁷ Aldona Gaigalaitė wrote about the activity of Lithuanian organizations in Latvia.⁸ It should be noted that these historians did not investigate the Lithuanian

¹ *Visuotinė lietuvių enciklopedija* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 2007), t.XI, 594.

² Zenonas Butkus, *Lietuvos ir Latvijos santykiai 1919 – 1929* (Vilnius: Mokslo ir enciklopedijų leidykla, 1993); Zenonas Butkus, 'Totalitarizmo poveikis demokratiniam procesams: vyriausybės kaita Latvijoje 1926-1927 metais ir išorės veiksnyms', *Lietuvos istorijos studijos* 30 (2012):92 – 116.; Zenonas Butkus, ed., *Baltijos valstybių vienybės idėja ir praktika 1918-1940 metais : dokumentų rinkinys* (Vilnius: Lietuvos istorijos instituto leidykla, 2008); Ēriks Jēkabsons, Latvijas attiecības ar Lietuvu 1919.–1921. gadā, *Latvijas Vēsture* 2(1997); Ēriks Jēkabsons, 'The Genesis of Latvian Statehood in 1918–1919 and the Main Issues of Latvian–Lithuanian Relations in the Early Stage of Independence', *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 4 (1999): 143-150.

³ Ēriks Jēkabsons, 'Latviešu nacionālā minoritāte Lietuvas Republikā 1918.-1940. gadā', *Latvijas Vēstures Institūta Žurnāls* 4 (2003): 96-111.

⁴ Vilma Akmenytė, *Latvių, Lietuvos-Latvijos pasienio gyventojų, tapatumo raida 1918-1940 m.* Dissertation. (Kaunas, 2008)

⁵ Ēriks Jēkabsons, *Lietuvieši Latvijā* (Rīga: Elpa, 2003)

⁶ Dangiras Mačiulis, 'Lietuvos pasiuntinybės pastangos konsoliduoti lietuvių bendruomenę tarpukario Latvijoje', *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 2 (2007): 25–44.

⁷ Dangiras Mačiulis, 'Lietuvių diaspora tarpukario Latvijoje Lietuvos diplomatų akimis', *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 1 (2007): 73–90.; Dangiras Mačiulis, '1931 m. Lietuvos ir Latvijos mokyklų konvencija ir lietuvių mokyklų padėtis Latvijoje', *Lituanistica* 1 (73)(2008): 35–50.

⁸ Aldona Gaigalaitė, 'Latvijos lietuvių organizacijos ir jų šelpimas 1919-1940 m.', *Lietuvos istorijos metraštis*, 1 (1995): 98-113.

social status in Latvia, so this study is exclusively based on an analysis of Lithuanian archival sources, in particular on the analysis of the documents of Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Lithuanian Interior Ministry.

The article deals with the social assistance for Lithuanians in Latvia in 1919-1939. This assistance was to be granted by the Lithuanian authorities in cooperation with their Latvian counterparts. The aim of the article is to analyze the social assistance for Lithuanians in Latvian welfare environment, the necessity of social assistance, the targeted groups and the methods by which the aid was provided.

Lithuanian community in Latvia

During the first years after the World War I, the governments of Lithuania and Latvia had to take care of tens of thousands of refugees travelling from Russia across the territory of Latvia to Lithuania.⁹ They were in need of transportation services and food supplies; ailing citizens had to be taken care of and a wide variety of social problems had to be solved. In 1921–1922 Lithuania and Latvia signed as many as two treaties regarding the transportation of deportees across the territory of Latvia under which the Latvian Government agreed to transport Lithuanian refugees from Russia across the territory of Latvia and to provide food and other required assistance to them but the refugees could not be transferred to Latvia and settle there. At the same time, the Lithuanian Government had to ensure that the Lithuanians staying in Latvia (those who did not return to Lithuania) acquired Lithuanian citizenship. In 1919 the Lithuanian Representation in Latvia was instructed that in case that Lithuanians were identified who could not afford to pay for their passport, they had to be exempted from the payment of passport fee in part or in full.¹⁰

It should be noted that almost half of the total Lithuanians living in Latvia were citizens of Lithuania. According to the data of Lithuanian envoy Jonas Aukštuolis, there were approximately 15,000 Lithuanian citizens in

⁹ For more information, see Tomas Balkelis, 'Lietuvos vyriausybė ir Pirmojo pasaulinio karo pabėgėlių repatriacija į Lietuvą 1918–1924 m.', *Lietuvių migracijos ir diasporos studijos* 2 (2007): 55–74.

¹⁰ Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (LMFA) report to Lithuanian representative in Riga 1919 December 2. (Lithuanian Central State Archives, LCVA) 383-7-35, 56

Latvia in 1926.¹¹ A similar number is given in Latvian historian E. Jākobsons' researches.¹² E. Jakobsons and Lithuanian historian D. Mačiulis note that in contrast to other national minorities, Lithuanians distinguished by the fact that a very low percentage of them possessed Latvian citizenship: only 35.4 per cent in 1920, 69.1 per cent in 1925, 51.8 per cent in 1930.¹³ About two hundred Lithuanians were Russian citizens, and only a few dozen were Belarus, Poland, Estonia and other countries' citizens. Lithuanian authorities in particular had to take care of Lithuanian citizens. Lithuanian citizens in Latvia and Lithuania's Latvian citizens' rights were guaranteed according the Convention on the rights of citizens, which was signed by Lithuania and Latvia on May 14th, 1921. Historian Vilma Akmenytė noted that although there were some misunderstandings in bilateral political, for Latvians and Lithuanians a special status of ethnic minority was granted, enjoy more than other minorities (such as Polish, German, etc.).¹⁴

The Lithuanian community stood out from among all the national minorities living in Latvia because they were most fluent in Latvian – in 1931 as many as 86 per cent of Lithuanians could communicate in Latvian, whereas, for instance, Latvian was spoken by 81.9 per cent of Germans or 19.5 per cent of Russians.¹⁵

Lithuanians usually resided in Latvian cities, in particular in Riga (7,748 in 1925; 6,817 in 1930), Liepāja (2,637 in 1925; 1,834 in 1930), Daugavpils (309 in 1925; 1,834 in 1930), Jelgava (635 in 1925), Mītava, Ventspils, Bauska, etc., whereas in the 1930s the number of Lithuanians residing in farms or homesteads was on the increase.

Not once had Lithuanian diplomats informed about the social composition of the Lithuanian colony, noting that the circle of Lithuanian intellectuals was rather scarce. Latvian historian E. Jākobsons mentions the social structure of Lithuanians living in Latvia in 1925: 45.3 per cent Lithuanian worked in agriculture, 17.9 per cent in industry, 8.1 per cent in trade, 6.0 per cent in the services sector, 1.8 percent in liberal professions

¹¹ Lithuanian representative in Riga report to LMFA 1926 October 4 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 537; Lithuanian representative in Riga report to LMFA 1930 June 25 (LCVA) 383-7-1038, 7; Dangiras Mačiulis, *Lietuvių diaspora 2007*, 75.

¹² Ēriks Jēkabsons, *Lietuvieši* 2003, 56,57.

¹³ Dangiras Mačiulis, *Lietuvių diaspora 2007*, 76; Ēriks Jēkabsons, *Lietuvieši* 2003, 56.

¹⁴ Vilma Akmenytė 2008, 58.

¹⁵ Lithuanian representative in Latvia secret report to LMFA 1931 January (LCVA) 383-7-1038, 33.

(lawyers, artists, etc.), 14.8 per cent in other activities.¹⁶ In 1930 the Lithuanian colony in Riga mostly consisted of workers, coachmen and maidservants.¹⁷ In 1927 the consul in Liepāja informed that the colony was made of the poor and several intellectuals.¹⁸ By 1934 the majority of Lithuanian citizens residing in Latvia were poverty-stricken people and workers (city workers were especially lacking material supplies) who lived on their salaries exclusively, and once they lost their work they used to apply to consulates for support¹⁹

An agreement on social assistance between Lithuania and Latvia in 1924 and social support for Lithuanians in Latvia

Lithuanians did not only live their usual life, were engaged in various labours, took care of education, founded societies but also continuously faced social problems which they had to solve. The large number of social issues troubled the governments of the two countries. In 1923 the Lithuanian legation in Latvia informed that there were numerous poverty-stricken people, citizens of Lithuania, in Latvia and Riga, who could be called 'beggars'. A lot of Lithuanians working in Riga had perished in the war and their elderly widows, fathers, mothers and relatives lived in poverty.²⁰ According to the data collected by Latvian authorities, there were many professional beggars in larger Latvian cities, such as Riga and Liepāja, who were begging on the streets or apartments and, therefore, made a burden on society. In Latvia, begging was paralleled to a criminal offence, and following the mutual treaties, Latvia did not only have a right to punish such persons but also to drive them out from the country. Therefore, in 1923 Latvia even sent a note to Lithuania.²¹

Not all citizens of Lithuania could expect assistance from Lithuania in the event of disease or other case of emergency – the state of Lithuania could only pay for the treatment of those patients who were hospitalized with the permission of the Lithuanian representation and whose

¹⁶ Ēriks Jēkabsons, *Lietuvieši* 2003, 55,56.

¹⁷ Lithuanian representative in Latvia report to LMFA 1930 June 25 (LCVA) 383-7-1038, 8.

¹⁸ Lithuanian representative in Liepāja report to LMFA 1927 August 20 (LCVA) 383-7-706, 71.

¹⁹ Lithuanian consulate in Latvia report to Lithuania Interior Ministry 1934 April 14 (LCVA) 928-1-630, 39.

²⁰ Lithuanian representative in Latvia report to LMFA 1923 October 23 (LCVA) 928-1-316, 21.

²¹ Latvia's Note Verbale to Lithuania. 1923 (LCVA) 928-1-316, 23

underprivileged status was confirmed by the representation. In other cases – if Lithuanians could not afford to pay for their treatment, they had to be sent away from the country.²² Various societies were preoccupied with the provision of support to Lithuanians, which would also receive financial assistance from the Lithuanian government, e.g. in 1919 the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs paid the debt of the Lithuanian children's shelter in Liepāja equal to 4,000 ostmarks.²³

The governments of Lithuania and Latvia resolved to establish a legal framework for the provision of social support for the citizens of the two countries. On 22 May 1924, an agreement on social assistance, made of 11 articles, was concluded between the two states. Both countries made a commitment to provide assistance to the citizens of the other country through their public and municipal authorities, whereas the expenses had to be covered by the citizen's country of origin. The authorities had to notify the consulate of the assistance provided. Assistance could be offered in the following forms: a) subsistence in shelters and hospitals; b) burial of the deceased; in exceptional cases, assistance could be provided in the form of cash and food. Each country could request the repatriation of the person in need of support, in case the assistance was provided for a period longer than six months or the person was diagnosed with a chronic or incurable disease. The institutions had to be paid for the assistance provided through diplomatic representations. Bills between Lithuania and Latvia had to be paid up every six months but they could not be unpaid for a period longer than a year. Each of the parties could terminate the agreement after two years.²⁴ The agreement took effect on 7 August 1924.

According to archival documents, during the first year the agreement was in force, until the summer of 1925, social assistance was provided to 23 people in Latvia: 4 were placed to shelters, 1 to a kindergarten, 1 was provided a child delivery service and the child was placed to a shelter, 1 received an allowance in bread, 2 were hospitalized, 1 received rye and fuel, 8 were put to an asylum, 1 was provided an allowance in cash, 3 were provided with assistance of treatment in a hospital, 1 was rendered

²² Department of Labour and Social Affairs of Lithuania note to Latvia Ministry of Foreign Affairs 1923 (LCVA) 928-1-316, 33

²³ LMFA report to citizen Jazdauskis in Liepāja 1919 July 18 (LCVA) 383-7-35, 181.

²⁴ *Lietuvos sutartys su svetimomis valstybėmis 1919-1929*, ed. P.Dailidė (Kaunas, 1930), t.1, 296-298.

assistance in the event of funeral.²⁵ The number of people in need of social assistance gradually increased more than twice, and the surviving data entail that from 25 to 50 people used to take advantage of such assistance over a period of six months.²⁶ In contrast to Lithuanians, the provisions of the agreement were applied rather rarely in respect of Latvians residing in Lithuania; up to 10 citizens of Latvia would use the assistance in Lithuania during six months. Thus, the agreement was far more relevant from the perspective of Lithuania.

Following the statistical information and the analysis of archival sources, the principal groups of Lithuanian citizens in Latvia in need of public social assistance can be singled out:

1. Elderly and disabled people. Elderly people without any family members but with serious health problems had to be taken care of. This group was comprised of the people who could no longer earn their living and take care of themselves and would often go begging.

2. Mental patients. The share of people having mental problems and not being able to take care of themselves was rather big among all socially-disadvantaged individuals.

3. Patients diagnosed with illnesses for certain causes.

4. Babies and children. Lithuanian public authorities and diplomatic representations had to take care of babies and children if they were foundlings, their mothers were dead, fell ill or got mentally ill and their close relatives could not take care of them. Quite often mothers themselves, made redundant and facing the shortage of money, would ask to take their children to a shelter or to cover kindergarten bills where children used to receive food and clothing. Mothers would often explain that with children in their care, they were not welcomed by any employer. Usually, single mothers who were not able to indicate the child's father or the child's father used to deny his paternity, run away, hide, etc. would seek a place for their children in a shelter.

²⁵ List of socially assisted Lithuanian citizens in Latvia 1925 October 1 (LCVA) 928-1-401, 26-28.

²⁶ At the second half of the year 1925 social support was granted to 31 persons, at the first half of the year 1926 to 25 persons, at the second half of the year 1926 to 39 persons, at the first half of the year 1927 to 53 persons, at the first half of the year 1935 to 50 persons. Lithuanian consul in Riga report to LMFA 1935 September 14 (LCVA) 928-1-630, 43; List of Lithuanian citizens who are beneficiaries of social assistance (LCVA) 928-1-517, 63,69,71; Lithuanian Interior Ministry report to LMFA 1927 April 25 (LCVA) 928-1-517, 16.

On behalf of Lithuania, social assistance and the implementation of the agreement were the responsibility of the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior and the Department of Labour and Social Affairs subordinated to it, the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Lithuanian Legation in Latvia and Lithuania's consulates in Riga, Liepāja and Daugavpils. Consulates were entrusted a very important role because they used to familiarise themselves with the problem, the people in need of assistance and their relatives and would offer possible solutions. Consular employees would act as intermediaries between the person in need of assistance (his/her relatives), Latvian social care institutions (homeless shelters, hospitals, children's shelters) and Lithuanian public authorities. The surviving documents reveal that in 1933 and 1934 the largest yearly amounts were allocated to Lithuanian representations in Latvia for the support of Lithuanians: as much as 4,000 litas to the representation in Riga, 500 litas to the consulate in Daugavpils and 750 litas to the consulate in Liepāja. Considerable funds – 6,000 litas – were also allocated to the Lithuanian consulate in São Paulo, 4,000 litas to the consulate in Argentina but, for example, the Lithuanian representation in Berlin was assigned 2,000 litas, in Paris – 3,000 litas, in Moscow – 1,000 litas; the funds allocated to other consulates or representations for the support of Lithuanians equalled to around 500 litas. In 1933 the state of Lithuania assigned the total amount of 30,000 litas to diplomatic representations for the support of Lithuanian citizens abroad; in 1934 the sum amounted to 29,000 litas.²⁷ By 1932 the credits for the support of Lithuanians provided to Lithuanian legations and consulates were given from the accounts of the Ministry of the Interior; starting from 1932 they were provided from the accounts of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Before taking a decision whether to provide social assistance to Lithuanians in Latvia in a specific case, citizenship was first checked up – whether the person was really a citizen of Lithuania residing in Latvia. In the framework of this agreement, Lithuania could pay up treatment or shelter bills for those people who resided in Latvia on a permanent basis, were the citizens of Lithuania and were poverty-stricken, and their poverty was confirmed by responsible public authorities. It was inspected whether the applicant for assistance had close relatives, whether he or his relatives had

²⁷ Lithuanian social security inspector information 1934 (LCVA) 928-1-595, 20; Lithuanian social security inspector information 1934 (LCVA) 928-1-579, 49

funds and real estate (e.g. land, buildings) and whether he could pay up social services. In case it was identified that close relatives could take care of their grandfather, child or ailing relative (including financially), public authorities refused to pay for the services provided. For example, Arturo Jozefi, a citizen of Latvia, who had previously resided in Panevėžys, applied to the President of Lithuania with a plea to support him but the Latvian Government disagreed to provide support to him because he had grown-up and employed children.²⁸ Upon discussing the matter with Lithuanian public authorities, consulates used to decide on the assistance to be provided in a specific case – to pay an allowance, to place in Latvian care institutions or to send back to Lithuania (to relatives or specific institutions). Occasionally, consuls did not only have to take care of children but also to initiate the establishment of paternity in order to put parents under an obligation to pay for the maintenance of their child: “The Consulate is taking the necessary steps to make the aforementioned farmer maintain the baby but it is still not clear whether it is going to succeed”.²⁹ There were also other cases when the agreement was applied; for example, in 1928 the Lithuanian Government agreed to pay for the treatment of 24 children from the Lithuanian schools in Riga in Latvian sanatoriums during the summer, though the number of children from poor families in need of medical aid was around 50. Lithuanian social care homes for children had no sanatoriums.³⁰

In the frames of the agreement, social assistance was not provided for the following groups: a) people arriving for temporary employment in Latvia; b) in cases when people from Lithuania used to go for treatment in Latvia on purpose. In case people from Latvia went for treatment in Lithuania and wanted to go back to Latvia afterwards, the family had to prove that it would be capable to maintain the former patient; otherwise, visa was not issued.³¹ Latvian hospitals and other institutions were warned in advance not to admit the arriving Lithuanian citizens without payment.³²

²⁸ LMFA report to Lithuanian social security inspector 1931 January 12 (LCVA) 928-1-533a, 2.

²⁹ Lithuanian consul in Riga report to Lithuanian Interior Ministry 1932 October 19 (LCVA) 928-1-588, 106.

³⁰ Lithuanian consul in Riga report to LMFA 1928 April 13 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 461-462.; Lithuanian envoy in Riga report to LMFA 1929 May 4 (LCVA) 928-1-875, 42.

³¹ Lithuanian Department of Social Affairs director's report to LMFA 1923 January 16 (LCVA) 928-1-319, 84.

³² Lithuanian social security inspector report to LMFA 1927 January 21 (LCVA) 928-1-517, 2.

It should be noted that field workers arriving from Lithuania for temporary employment in Latvia were also posing considerable social problems, though they were not entitled to any benefits under the agreement on social assistance.³³ Some 15,000 people from Lithuania used to arrive every year for work on Latvian fields. In 1936 men were paid 24 lats, women were paid 20 lats, i.e. less than Latvian workers.³⁴ The working season used to last from April to November, i.e. they used to work eight months per year in total. Under employment contracts workers were committed not to change the farmer providing employment because if the worker decided to leave the farmer, he also had to depart from Latvia. In the opinion of the Lithuanian consulate, such a condition provided grounds for Latvians to exploit Lithuanians.³⁵ Those arriving for work were often dissatisfied with working conditions or disagreements with employers; then they used to escape to cities on foot or by train, abandon their babies or children, fall ill, etc. Such workers were subject to the Law on Insurance of Villagers against Illnesses which took effect on 5 June 1928 in Latvia, and Lithuania did not have to pay up their treatment bills. Field workers had to cover up to a third of treatment expenses.³⁶ However, starting from 29 April 1933 the law was amended; it did no longer apply to foreign citizens and all treatment expenses. If the worker was not able to pay himself, the expenses were included in the bill of the Lithuanian Government. In this way, from 1933 the number of people in need of support remarkably increased. Because of low salaries, the workers who fell ill could not afford to pay for their treatment.

In accordance with the bilateral agreement, the state of Lithuania used to pay for the placement of the elderly, the disabled and mental patients in shelters; babies and children in children's shelters and kindergartens; patients in treatment establishments. In exceptional cases, the state of Lithuania would agree to provide a 20 or 30 litas monthly allowance to a person to avoid his placement in a shelter or the transfer to Lithuania.³⁷

³³ Lithuanian social security inspector report to LMFA 1927 September 2 (LCVA) 928-1-517, 31

³⁴ Lithuanian consul in Riga report to President of Latvian Chamber of Agriculture 1936 October 10 (LCVA) 383-7-630, 13

³⁵ Lithuanian consul in Riga report to LMFA 1934 July 24 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 129

³⁶ Lithuanian consulate report to Lithuanian Interior Ministry 1934 April 14 (LCVA) 928-1-630, 40.

³⁷ Lithuanian Interior Ministry report to Lithuanian consulate in Riga 1930 December 6 (LCVA) 928-1-526, 4-5.

Children's maintenance was paid by the state in case their placement in shelters or kindergartens was coordinated with Lithuanian consulates because there were cases when mothers would give away their children independently and bills for their maintenance were forwarded to Lithuania.³⁸

The care of orphans was one of the most acute problems. There were Lithuanian shelters for children in Riga and Liepāja. The Riga City Board maintained one Lithuanian shelter for children from its own funds. The Lithuanian Consulate in Riga was worried that the number of Lithuanian children in the Lithuanian shelter was decreasing because Lithuanians were sometimes placed to Polish shelters or, more commonly, to Latvian "where children were embraced with the foreign spirit". According to the data of the consulate from 1929, there were 17 children in the shelter, compared to up to 80 children 4-5 years ago, but some 50 Lithuanian children could reside in the shelters of Riga.³⁹ The consulate worried about the plans of the Riga City Board to close the Lithuanian shelter: "Such a plan of the city board was posing a serious threat to Lithuanianhood". The Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported the opinion of the consulate in Riga according to which the Lithuanian shelter had to be maintained by all means possible by admitting more children to it.⁴⁰ The shelter of Lithuanian orphans in Liepāja functioned from 1914. During the war it was maintained by the Lithuanian colony and funds were raised from abroad; after the war was over, the shelter faced a difficult material situation. From 1924 it was supported by the Lithuanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs for 3 years by the annual contributions of 6,000 litas. The Lithuanian colony could no longer maintain it; therefore, the state was continuously requested for support because its closure would have "a serious adverse effect on Lithuanianhood". The shelter provided accommodation to 17 children, mostly Lithuanian orphans or children from poor families.⁴¹

³⁸ Lithuanian consul in Riga report to Lithuanian Interior Ministry 1930 September 5 (LCVA) 928-1-526, 24.; Lithuanian social security inspector report to Lithuanian consul in Riga 1930 September 25 (LCVA) 928-1-526, 23.

³⁹ Lithuanian consul in Riga report to LMFA 1929 October 15 (LCVA) 383-7-881, 3.

⁴⁰ Lithuanian consul in Riga report to LMFA 1929 October 15 (LCVA) 383-7-881, 3; LMFA report to Lithuanian consulate in Riga 1929 October 22 (LCVA) 383-7-881, 2.

⁴¹ Liepāja Lithuanian Society "Pašalpa" application to the Lithuanian minister of Internal Affairs in October 1929 (LCVA) 383-7-877, 8.

The Lithuanian government would agree to pay Latvian institutions for temporary care which could last up to six months under the agreement, whereas long-term care was already posing new problems. To solve the problems of the need of social assistance in Latvia, the state of Lithuania followed two major principles – financial capacities and national interest. The country's financial capacities were first evaluated: the social services that were much more expensive in Latvia, compared to Lithuania, were the maintenance of elderly people in Latvian shelters and the treatment in Latvian hospitals.⁴² In the opinion of the Lithuanian Consulate in Riga dating to 1934, Lithuania paid the highest costs for the maintenance of children in shelters, whereas the fees for baby maintenance “were especially high”. Tidy sums had to be paid for the deportation of mental patients to Lithuania due to the costly Latvian escort (the transportation of one patient from Riga to Kalvarija cost around 130-150 lats).⁴³ At the same time Lithuania sought that children would not lose their national identity. According to one of the reports, special attention had to be paid to Lithuanian babies placed in Latvian shelters: “They are nurtured in Latvian spirit; they forget their mother tongue altogether and, naturally, they turn into Latvians but at the cost of the Lithuanian treasury.”⁴⁴ The Lithuanian consul in Liepāja requested to return 9 children kept in children's shelters to Lithuania: “there they would become patriots of Lithuania and learn some craft what they cannot attain here”.⁴⁵

The state of Lithuania could not always pay for accommodation in homeless shelters and children's shelters, repeated treatment in hospitals or mental patients. In 1927 Lithuanian public authorities expressed their concern that the expenses for people in need of social assistance for more than six months accounted for the greater part of the bill for the services provided by Latvia to Lithuania.⁴⁶ It was then resolved that, circumstances permitting, such children and individuals had to be moved to social care institutions and hospitals in Lithuania. Usually, consulates used to provide

⁴² LMFA report to Lithuanian Interior Ministry 1929 December 30 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 378; Lithuanian social security inspector report to St. Vincent Paul Society Management Board 1935 October 16 (LCVA) 928-1-630, 29.

⁴³ Lithuanian consulate in Latvia report to Lithuanian Interior Ministry 1934 April 14 (LCVA) 928-1-630, 39.

⁴⁴ Lithuanian consul in Riga report to LMFA 1927 April 24 (LCVA) 928-1-517, 44.

⁴⁵ Lithuanian consulate in Liepāja report to LMFA 1928 October 18 (LCVA) 928-1-863, 1.

⁴⁶ Lithuanian consul in Riga report to LMFA 1927 March 25 (LCVA) 928-1-517, 64-65.

lists of people every year; the lists were made of people for whom vacancies in the shelters and hospitals in Lithuania were sought as well as children in need of a place in the children's shelter. The deported Jews used to be admitted to the Jewish shelters established in Lithuania, while Lithuanians were provided residence in Lithuanian shelters. Each person was a matter of discussion with Lithuanian institutions. The surviving archival material entails that approximately 10 people used to be moved to Lithuanian institutions every year. It should be noted that Lithuanian social care institutions were continuously completely filled or even overfilled and would accept to admit Lithuanian citizens from Latvian institutions in exceptional cases only. In 1934 the Lithuanian consul in Riga regretted that the replies received from Lithuanian institutions were usually negative and he himself proposed to establish more sheltered housing in Lithuania as well as to expand the existing one; otherwise, social assistance costs would not reduce. It was also asked to move 3 adults and 15 children to Lithuania.⁴⁷ However, only a part of people whose transfer was requested were moved to Lithuanian institutions; those remaining in Latvia were further maintained by Lithuania.

Lithuanian public authorities position on the implementation of the Treaty for social support

Lithuanian public authorities concluded that over nearly ten years, from 1925 to 1934, when the agreement was in effect, Lithuania had already paid 400,000 litas to Latvia, when the annual allocations from the Lithuanian budget accounted for 40,000 litas. Debts grew as well.⁴⁸ In 1934–1935 measures were taken to move as many Lithuanians to Lithuania as possible, thus reducing the expenditure from the budget. Public authorities worried for the inconsistent application of the agreement – social assistance provided to Lithuanians in Latvia was far more extensive than that provided to Latvians in Lithuania. Lithuanian authorities continuously kept track of the information on the assistance provided to Latvians in Lithuania. It was noted in 1927 that there was no need to provide support to Latvian citizens in Lithuania, and in 1930 assistance was provided to one citizen of Latvia

⁴⁷ Lithuanian consul in Riga report to Lithuanian Interior Ministry 1934 April 14 (LCVA) 928-1-630, 39-41.

⁴⁸ The inspector of Department of Labour and Social Affairs of Lithuania report to Lithuania representative in Latvia 1934 March 24 (LCVA) 383-7-630, 66.

only.⁴⁹ It was concluded at the beginning of 1935 that 4 citizens of Latvia resided in Lithuanian shelters on a permanent basis whose maintenance cost 1,600 litas per year, including isolated instances of treatment and payment of allowances, whereas in Latvia, social assistance was provided to 92 citizens of Lithuania during the first six months of 1934, and Lithuania was issued a bill of 28,000 litas for this period.⁵⁰ In 1935, social assistance was provided to 9 citizens of Latvia under the agreement.⁵¹

Despite such mutual inconsistencies, the Lithuanian-Latvian agreement on social assistance remained in effect throughout the inter-war period. After two years the agreement was in effect, in the spring of 1926, Lithuanian public authorities began seriously considering whether the agreement could be extended. Lithuanian public authorities were concerned about the fact that Lithuania had to pay Latvian institutions the average amount of 30,000 litas every year for the provision of social assistance, whereas there was no need to provide assistance to Latvian citizens; therefore, the agreement was clearly not in the interest of Lithuania.⁵² The Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Lithuanian diplomats in Latvia exchanged their opinions. The Ministry of the Interior followed the position that the agreement was not in the interest of Lithuania. According to the ministry, Lithuania had already paid 20,079 litas 72 ct to Latvian institutions for the provision of social assistance to the citizens of Lithuania in one year from the effective date of the agreement (from 6 August 1924 to 1 July 1925) and new considerable bills were expected. The ministry did not even suspect that if assistance was needed by such a high number of Lithuanians in Latvia, perhaps the assistance was also used by those “who did not really need it”. The Ministry of the Interior doubted the benefit of the agreement and proposed to terminate it because assistance could also be provided in the absence of agreements on social assistance, e.g. Lithuania also provided such assistance to foreign citizens even though it had not signed agreements on the provision of social assistance with their

⁴⁹ Lithuanian Interior Ministry report to LMFA 1927 April 25 (LCVA) 928-1-517, 16.

⁵⁰ The inspector of Department of Labour and Social Affairs of Lithuania report to LMFA 1935 March 18 (LCVA) 383-7-630, 212

⁵¹ LMFA report to Latvian representative in Kaunas 1935 September 29 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 62

⁵² Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs report to Lithuanian Minister of Interior Affairs 1926 April 19 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 546; Lithuanian Minister of Interior Affairs report to Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs August of 1927 (LCVA) 928-1-517, 3.

countries of origin.⁵³ On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs accepted the proposal to terminate the agreement with doubts and followed the opinion and “the termination of every agreement is detrimental to Lithuania, unless it is based on undoubtedly important motives”.⁵⁴ Lithuanian representative in Latvia Jonas Aukštuolis asked not to terminate the agreement and not to leave the Lithuanian community “without any assistance”. He reminded once again that Lithuanian citizens residing in Latvia were very poor; most of them were factory workers and coachmen, whereas Latvian citizens in Lithuania engaged in farming were better-off.⁵⁵

On 24 September 1926 the Lithuanian Government resolved to terminate the agreement, and the envoy in Latvia was instructed to inform the Latvian government about it “without specifying the motives”.⁵⁶ On 26 October 1926, Lithuanian Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary in Latvia Jonas Aukštuolis presented a note indicating that from 1 November the agreement on social assistance should be considered terminated at the initiative of the Lithuanian Government.⁵⁷ The agreement remained in effect until April 1927. Following the termination of the agreement at the initiative of Lithuania, Lithuanian diplomats faced certain problems because they did not know what measures should be taken to solve the problems of Lithuanian citizens in Latvia who lived in Latvian shelters and who received an allowance or assistance in the form of cash and food in Latvia.⁵⁸ The Latvian Government wanted to know how to act after the agreement was no longer in effect because according to their data, at the beginning of 1927 social assistance was assured to the following people in Latvia: 7 children in children’s shelters, 5 children in kindergartens, 5 people in shelters for the helpless and 4 people in asylums.⁵⁹ In the meantime, the Lithuanian consul in Riga feared that if the agreement was not extended, 50 patients with chronic diseases, including mental patients, syphilis patients and small

⁵³ Lithuanian Interior Ministry report to LMFA 1926 September 11 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 535-536.

⁵⁴ LMFA report to Lithuanian Interior Ministry 1926 August 17 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 536

⁵⁵ Lithuanian envoy in Latvia J. Aukštuolis report to LMFA 1926 October 4 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 537

⁵⁶ LMFA report to Lithuanian envoy in Latvia 1926 October 8 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 532

⁵⁷ Lithuanian envoy note to Latvian Minister of Foreign Affairs 1926 October 26 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 527.

⁵⁸ LMFA report to Lithuanian Interior Ministry 1927 January 22 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 497.

⁵⁹ Latvian envoy report to Lithuanian Prime Minister A. Voldemaras 1927 February 23 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 498-499.

babies, would have to be taken care of.⁶⁰ Lithuania did not provide specific proposals. It was thought that if Latvia refused to provide social assistance to Lithuanian citizens in the absence of the agreement, “we are determined to transport our citizens living in Latvian shelters for children and the helpless as well as asylums to Lithuania”.⁶¹ The Latvian Legation in Kaunas was also informed about it by a note. In April the Latvian Legation in Kaunas re-addressed Lithuanian Prime Minister Augustinas Voldemaras asking how social issues would be solved; specific proposals were requested.⁶² Having considered all the circumstances and evaluated the situation of Lithuanians in Latvia, the Lithuanian Government promptly changed its mind and resolved not to terminate the agreement, and in the verbal note of 8 April it reported to the Latvian Legation that the Lithuanian Government took a decision to extend the agreement on social assistance “until the agreement is amended or replaced with another agreement”.⁶³ In May the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs submitted proposals on the amendment to the agreement, and the agreement remained in force until the very end of independence. In fact, the Ministry of the Interior followed its earlier position for the time being, believing that the agreement was not in the interest of Lithuania, and in August 1927 it again requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to reconsider the termination of the agreement.⁶⁴

Conclusions

It should be noted that a numerous Lithuanian community that resided in Latvia after World War I continuously faced social problems. The community was mostly comprised of workers who lived on their salaries exclusively. They often had to apply for support from Lithuania in the event of illness, loss of employment or disability. Consulates maintained a direct relationship with Lithuanian citizens.

⁶⁰ Lithuanian consul in Riga report to LMFA 1927 March 31 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 491.

⁶¹ Lithuanian social security inspector report to LMFA 1927 February 15 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 496

⁶² Latvian envoy report to Lithuanian Prime Minister A.Voldemaras 1927 April 6 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 494

⁶³ Lithuanian Government Note to Latvian representative in Kaunas 1927 April 8 (LCVA) 383-7-680, 493

⁶⁴ Lithuanian Minister of Interior Affairs report to Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs at August 1927 (LCVA) 928-1-517, 3

In order to solve social issues in the two countries, in 1924 Lithuania and Latvia concluded the agreement on social assistance whereby social assistance was provided to Lithuanian citizens in Latvia and Latvian citizens in Lithuania. Over twenty years the agreement was more important to Lithuania because Lithuanians were in need of assistance in Latvia much more often than Latvians in Lithuania. Latvian citizens were in need of support in isolated cases only (up to 10 per year), whereas in the case of Lithuanians, around 50 of them used to take advantage of social assistance over a period of six months. As a result of such inconsistency in the implementation of the agreement, in 1926 Lithuania was even willing to terminate the agreement. Lithuania had to pay rather tidy sums to Latvian social institutions.

Usually, social support was provided to elderly people, ailing people, mental patients, disabled people and children. In the framework of the agreement, Lithuania used to pay for the maintenance of these people in Latvian institutions for six months; afterwards, it used various means to move such people to Lithuania where their maintenance was much cheaper. However, Lithuanian care institutions used to admit Lithuanians from Latvia in exceptional cases only because they had no vacancies and that, in turn, increased maintenance costs in Latvia.

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