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## Subsistence and Power in Brezhnev's Lithuania

### Introduction

Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, marked a major transformation in Soviet politics. The short-lived rule of Lavrenty Beria, followed by the short rule of Viacheslav Molotov, brought a liberalization of national politics and, with it, a sense of relief among the rural population in the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> Under Nikita Khrushchev (1953-1964), deportations were discontinued, levies on peasants' products were abolished, and, in the long run, Stalin's politics of terror was publicly condemned and his followers were punished. Leonid Brezhnev's (1965-1983) rule is known as a "soft" regime that struggled to balance investments in the military-industrial sector with attempts to provide everyday amenities for Soviet citizens.

It is common to define the post-Stalin era in the history of the Soviet Union as a "withering away of the state," or a replacement of government over people with the administration of things and production processes.<sup>2</sup> In her analysis of Soviet trade, Julie Hessler (2004) argues that right before Stalin's death a major shift started to take place, as the Soviet governance system began to rely on office clerks, bureaucrats, and quantitative performance indicators, rather than on the state police, the Party cells, and the *Komsomol*—the Communist Youth Organization. Hessler argues that even in one of the most ideologically ambiguous economic sectors—trade—the Party Central Committee left "the formulation of trade policy to the competency of the Ministry of Trade" (Hessler 2004).

While Stalin's regime slowly moved from preoccupation with the malleability of its people to economic matters, it is Khrushchev and Brezhnev who took economy and science as the primary spheres for governing Soviet citizens. They put their energy in strengthening Soviet industry, building housing, roads, and telecommunication infrastructures, launching satellites and space ships, developing new machinery, rerouting rivers, and improving soil with fertilizers, new cultivation technologies, and drainage-irrigation systems. This political transformation went under the banner the Scientific-Technological Revolution (STR). Developed in the mid-1950s by Khrushchev's Politburo, STR culminated under Brezhnev, with technocrats ruling every sphere of the Soviet state.

The STR rested on the proposition that scientific-technological progress would generate "a major set of advances in 'technique'... that transform production forces"

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<sup>1</sup> While in the popular imagination Beria is primarily associated with the terror of the 1930s, his short lived rule brought such radical changes in nationalities and agricultural politics, that rumors spread about the dissolution of collective farms in Lithuania. For an excellent analysis of Beria's rule of Lithuania, see Titinis (2005).

<sup>2</sup> First introduced by Engels, the concept of the withering of the state has been further developed by Lenin (1943) in his treatise *State and Revolution*.

(Hoffman and Laird 1985, 11).<sup>3</sup> Such a Revolution, the Soviet leaders argued, would be followed by a transformation in the larger social system<sup>4</sup> that would in turn lead toward the desired socialism.<sup>5</sup> The power of the STR lay in its emphasis on science and technology as solutions to social problems.

For the local rural landscape, this change in the political echelons of the Soviet Union brought one of the largest transformations—the modernization of agricultural production that included the dislocation of peasants’ households from individual settlements into new villages and the ironing out of natural and man-made irregularities. While under Stalin various local geo-technical arrangements were used to control the peasants, it was Khrushchev and, especially, Brezhnev who developed macro schemes for changing entire socio-ecologies of rural landscape. The purpose of this paper is to examine Brezhnev’s landscaping politics and how it affected the peasants’ everyday practices and experiences of the Soviet state power. I argue that the implementation of these macro-scientific and technological reforms led not so much to the advancement of Soviet agro-industrial complexes than to the modernization of Soviet peasantry who emerged as modern—economic—subjects of the state.

This paper focuses on Soviet Lithuania that was incorporated into the Soviet Union in the 1940s and where Brezhnev’s agricultural reforms brought a radical change into the lives of the peasants. While in the popular imagination and scholarly work Soviet agriculture is primarily understood as operating through large-scale collectivized farms, I argue that the everyday life of the peasants revolved around subsidiary farms that the collective farm members and state farm employees were issued. It is these small-scale allotments that became the key (and oftentimes the only) sources of the peasants’ physical survival, social power and economic wealth. This paper considers subsidiary farms as the primary site where the peasants negotiated political and economic pressures from the state with the material agency of the land, plants, nature and technologies. By examining how the peasants resisted, accommodated and negotiated Soviet state policies

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<sup>3</sup> For an analysis of the Scientific-Technological Revolution see Fortescue (1986), and Spektor and Tolmin (1974).

<sup>4</sup> The politics and ideology of the Scientific-Technological Revolution drew heavily of Karl Marx. In *Capital* Marx places a strong emphasis on modern technology as a necessary material condition in the transformation of social modes from feudalism to capitalism. His position is, however, ambiguous. On the one hand, Marx argues that socialism, by definition, requires the development of ultimately different technologies than those of the repressive capitalist mode. On the other hand, Marx suggests that technology is historically contingent, or at least that there is nothing inherently repressive within modern sciences and technology. This optimistic theory of technology “enables us to envision the development of liberatory technologies in the context of a capitalist society” (Balbus 1994, 153). Through the Scientific-Technological Revolution, the Soviet leaders adopted the second, more instrumental, of the two positions by placing transformative agency onto industrialization.

<sup>5</sup> The notion of a Scientific-Technological Revolution was introduced in the mid-1950s by Khrushchev’s administration and denoted a qualitatively new stage in the development of human civilization. Arguably, the scientific-technological revolution was preceded by: 1) the neolithic revolution that featured the creation of the first labor tools and the emergence of the antagonistic class society, and 2) the industrial revolution that entailed the development of machines and the formation of the capitalist mode of production. The aftermath of the Scientific-Technological Revolution would engage a closer collaboration between science and industry ensuring a more immediate implementation of the scientific achievements into practice and the foundation of socialist society.

with their subsistence, I argue that these farms played an important part in domesticating Soviet agricultural politics and, most importantly, transforming experiences and subjectivities of the Soviet citizenship. Specifically, this paper demonstrates that by working on the allotments, peasants radically changed the Soviet agricultural landscape and, with it, the nature of its power. By outmaneuvering collective farms to make money, the peasants remade themselves into economic actors and by so doing, transformed the social class system in the Soviet state.

To develop these themes, this paper consists of five sections. After this introductory section, the following two sections historicize the politics of allotments in Soviet Lithuania. In Section 2, I provide a general overview of subsidiary farming in the Soviet Union and Lithuania. Section 3 elaborates on the connections between the allotments, peasantry and the power of the Soviet state. Section 4 examines Brezhnev's agricultural reforms. Section 5 focuses on the local experiences and practices of subsidiary farming and offers a sociological reading of the farming practices on the allotments. In Section 6 is a conclusions section elaborating on the issues of resistance and accommodation, while Section 7 draws connections between Soviet agriculture and contemporary agricultural politics in Europeanizing Lithuania.

## **2. The History of Subsidiary Farming in the Soviet Union and Soviet Lithuania<sup>6</sup>**

Small, semi-private land allotments are strange imbroglios in the history of collectivized agriculture of the Soviet Union. From an ideological standpoint they are the remnants of the bourgeois regime that are not amenable to planning, and therefore, always to be condemned, attacked and closely supervised. As an agricultural practice, however, they are enormously productive, feeding entire local rural populations and most of the urban population thereby making Soviet industrialization possible.

The history of subsidiary farms in Soviet agriculture reaches back to forced requisitions in post-revolutionary Russia in the late 1910s and early 1920s. The philosophy of requisitions was based on an implicit contempt held by the revolution's leaders towards peasants who seemed to be predisposed against the abolishment of private property. It was common to argue that after acquiring land from their former exploiters, individual peasants would turn against socialist ideals.<sup>7</sup> The semi-private

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<sup>6</sup> Lithuania was first occupied by the Soviet Union in June 1940. By the time Nazi Germany invaded former Lithuania's territory and pushed the Red Army Eastwards, the Soviet government had started agricultural reforms including nationalization of the land ownership on July 22, 1940 and remaking the peasants as workers or managers (*valdytojai*) of the land, not its owners. Since Germans did nothing to reverse Soviet reforms, the second occupation of July 1944 started with more drastic reforms including food requisitions, increased taxes, dekulakization measures and starting from 1947, collectivization. Collectivization in Lithuania was completed in just four years by 1951. In such a manner, by the early 1950s, Lithuania's agriculture was almost seamlessly incorporated into the Soviet Union's systems of food production, consumption and distribution.

<sup>7</sup> Conquest (1986) provides an extensive if rather disturbing picture on the attitudes of Soviet leaders towards peasantry that is worth quoting here: "The founder of Russian Marxism, Georgii Plekhanov, saw them [peasants] as 'barbarian tillers of the soil, cruel and merciless, beasts of burden whose life provided no opportunity for the luxury of thought [Plekhanov 1927, 128]. Marx has spoken of 'the idiocy of rural life,' a remark much quoted by Lenin. (In its original context it was in praise of capitalism for freeing much of the population from this 'idiocy'). Lenin himself referred to 'rural seclusion, unsociability and savagery (Lenin 74); in general he believed the peasant 'far from being an instructive or traditional collectivist, is in

farms were considered the “relic of capitalism, contradicting the economic conditions of the life of society and negatively influencing the building of communism” (Khiliuk 1966, 60, quoted in Wadekin 1973, 2). This logic permitted the requisition of meats, grains, vegetables and other food resources from peasants as a prophylactic measure against accumulation of the “surplus” in the hands of the malleable class.<sup>8</sup>

In spite of this open hostility towards peasantry, Soviet leaders were aware that “revolution was carried on the peasant’s nag” (Conquest 1986, 38). They knew all too well that the fate of the young Soviet state depended on the peasants’ ability to transform nature into food. Driven by this recognition, in the years following the famine of 1921-1922, the Soviet state made major concessions to the peasantry and briefly reinstated land inheritance laws. The reforms went so far as to even allow hiring wage-labor—the very practice that was considered the source of inequalities in rural communities—on individual farms.<sup>9</sup>

While these policies were soon discredited as counter-revolutionary and by 1929 abolished, they established a precedent in Soviet history over the strategic use of individual peasants’ skills and resourcefulness. By so doing, they tested the grounds for developing a more or less consistent political methodology for extracting private labor from peasantry.<sup>10</sup>

In this political climate, the 1930 Model Charter permitted the issuance of small-scale plots for individual use. After painstaking fights over the definitions of what constituted private and public labor, the plenary session of the Central Committee in January 1933 established an administrative system to implement the supervision and collection of levies from subsidiary farms.<sup>11</sup> Following the years of massive famine in the early 1930s, the Collective Farm Charter allowed and, in some cases, even encouraged individual peasants to use subsidiary plots as well as livestock. In 1934, for example, the Central Committee plenum issued a strict reminder to the local Communist Party cells to immediately implement the politics of “no peasant without a cow” requiring that all the peasants—without exception (Rus., *bezuslovno*)—obtained a cow (Shmelev 1983, 8).<sup>12</sup> During WWII, subsidiary plots became particularly important as a reliable source of food

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fact fiercely and meanly individualistic (Willets 1967, 211-33). More recently, Khrushchev tells us that “for Stalin, peasants were scum” (Khrushchev 1977, 126).

<sup>8</sup> The first wave of forced requisitions swept through the Soviet Union after the May 18, 1918 decree on “the monopoly of food” that assigned the Commissariat of Food to take the surplus of the grain from the peasants (Conquest 1986, 47).

<sup>9</sup> While the land remained in the hands of the Soviet state, the Agrarian Code of 1922 established the principle of inheritance for the families of the peasants. Wage labor was allowed in 1925, as part of the New Economic Policy (NEP) reform that temporarily liberalized Soviet economy.

<sup>10</sup> Even Stalin justified the Soviet state’s reliance on the private labor of peasants: on the eve of collectivization, Stalin suggested that peasants “had their farms to fall back to” and proposed to further increase levies (Stalin 1949, Schlesinger 1959).

<sup>11</sup> For an analysis of the 1930s Soviet laws regulating subsidiary lots, see Lewin (1968). Lewin argues that Soviet agricultural politics in the years of voluntary collectivization, 1927-28, hinged on the opposition between Bukharin and Stalin. See also Jasny (1949), Conquest (1986), Davis (1980), Hedlund (1989, 14-25), and Ostrovskii (1967).

<sup>12</sup> *KPSS v Rezoliutziakh I Resheniakh S’ezdov, Konferencii I Plenumov* [The Communist Party’s Decisions and Resolutions of Meetings, Conferences and Plenums] (1973), 183 quoted in Shmelev 1983, 8.

for the impoverished local population (Shmelev 1983, Ostrovskii *et al.* 1988). Reportedly, the local government turned a blind eye to individual farming by removing the militia that used to supervise the peasants in the Ukrainian villages. But after the war, Stalin's state once again imposed restrictions on subsidiary farms in order to return them to the pre-War levels of control (Smith 2005).

The provisions of the 1935 Model Charter defined the subsidiary farming rules that, with some minor changes, continued to be in effect until 1969. Among other requirements, the Charter described the size of the plot that the peasants were allowed to get once they joined the collective farms as well as the number of animals they were allowed to keep. In terms of the land, the peasant's household was entitled to be between 25 and 50 ares of land (1 are = 1 square decameter = .01 hectares = 0.02 acres = 1,078 square feet). In during collectivization in Lithuania that started in 1948, the limit was set to 60 ares (1.48 acres) ("Del Kolukiu Organizavimo Lietuvos TSR" ["About Collective Farm Establishment in Soviet Lithuania"] (1948)).<sup>13</sup> In most cases, the plot was divided into a garden of about 15 ares near the house and a separate subsidiary plot of 45 ares. Collective farm members and those living in the territory of the collective farm who worked in the public sector such as Machine Tractor Stations, schools or administration were entitled to a plot of smaller size, 25 ares. While the all-Union average plot size was only 30 ares, Lithuania's collective farms allowed its members to take the maximum amount, 60 ares, or twice the size of the subsidiary farms in other Soviet republics. In terms of produce, the peasants were prohibited from growing major grains or fodder beets. This was because grain and fodder beets were most commonly grown in collective farms, and, as one informant interpreted, these restrictions worked as a protective measure against peasants stealing the produce from the collective farm and passing it off as theirs.

In addition to land, peasants were also allowed to keep livestock: one cow (two cows in Lithuania), two calves, one sow with young or two sows with young in cases where collective farm authorities decided it was necessary, ten sheep and/or goats, an unlimited amount of poultry and rabbits and up to twenty beehives.<sup>14</sup> The key phrase in this document was a reference to the needs of specific collective farms. After Khrushchev's government transferred the function of collecting produce and livestock from state agencies to collective farms in 1958, this meant that collective farms could ask, and indeed require, that the peasants grow livestock for the collective farm. This operated through contracts that the peasants signed committing them to grow the livestock and sell it to the collective farm for a pre-agreed price.

The most prominent challenge that the peasants faced in growing the livestock was feeding. Since about 70% of all the subsidiary animal feed came from the public sector, the peasants found themselves at the mercy of external political powers for feeding their livestock. Depending on the political situation, they were either supplied with or granted an easy access to fodder, or, as during Khrushchev's rule after 1958, the

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<sup>13</sup> "Del Kolukiu Organizavimo Lietuvos TSR" ["About Collective Farm Establishment in Soviet Lithuania"] (1948).

<sup>14</sup> The Charter is quoted in Wadekin (1973, 29). In Lithuania, the laws were introduced with the decree of March 20, 1948. ("Del Kolukiu Organizavimo Lietuvos TSR" ["About Collective Farm Establishment in Soviet Lithuania"] (1948)). In this document, each collective farm member is required to complete a minimum of 100 workdays per year.

lack of fodder was supposed to deter peasants from engaging in subsidiary farming (Zelenin 2001, 32, Shmelev 1983, 18, Wadekin 1971, 23). While the peasants were entitled to 1 ha of pasture in addition to their 60 ares, this was far from enough to feed their livestock. Generally, the peasants were allowed to mow the grass in the areas that collective farms did not use, such as by the railways, near the roads, and, very often, near and in the forests, which enabled the Soviet state to use the resources that would have remained unused by the public sector.

Although often “invisible” in scholarly work on socialist agriculture, the small subsidiary plots were enormously productive. Though occupying less than 7% of all agricultural land, more than a half of the key agricultural produce came from the subsidiary farms—even in the times of decline due to Khrushchev’s anti-allotment politics. For example in 1958, 66% of the potatoes, 52% of the meat, 53% of milk, and 85% of eggs produced in the Soviet Union were procured from subsidiary farms.<sup>15</sup> Considering that Lithuanian subsidiary farms were twice as large as the average of the Soviet Union,<sup>16</sup> the proportion of products collected from subsidiary farms was even higher there. Indeed, in Lithuania, the official reports show that in 1958, 12.8% of all cultivated land was used for subsidiary farming. On these plots, the peasants produced 73% of meat, 69.5% of milk and 95% of eggs of all Lithuania’s outputs (*Lietuvos TSR Liaudies Ukis 1960 Metais* [*Soviet Lithuania’s Economy in 1960*] 1962, 85-88, 143-194, *Tarybu Lietuvos Dvidesimtmetis* [*Twenty Years of Soviet Government in Lithuania*] 1960, 143-147, 180-182, 192, 194). Even in 1980, 75% of all pigs grown in Lithuania came from subsidiary farms (*Lietuvos TSR Liaudies Ukis* [*Soviet Lithuania’s Economy*] 1981, 145-157).

It should be noted that these numbers only reflect how much produce was sold directly to the state and do not take into account products sold in markets, given away to relatives living in cities or consumed by the peasants’ families (cf. Smollett 1989). Additionally, as many scholars have pointed out, official statistics in the Soviet Union should be interpreted with a grain of criticism, as collective and state farm books as well as reports coming from the statistics departments were often “cooked” to make them comply with the plan (Viola and Fitzpatrick 1990). Suffice it to say that these numbers could be considered a low estimate of what peasants actually produced on their allotments.

In addition to macro-economic productivity, subsidiary farms were a vital source of income for the budgets of the peasants. In Lithuania, over 50% of all peasants’ earnings came from selling the produce and livestock grown in subsidiary farms. Even in

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<sup>15</sup> Data on exactly what proportion of Soviet agricultural outputs were produced in the subsidiary sector before Brezhnev’s tenure is scarce and contradictory. For example, one of the Soviet experts on subsidiary farms, Shmelev (1981) states that in 1960, 35.6% of all the agricultural output was produced on subsidiary farms, while another authority on the subject, Ostrovskii (1967) states that in 1958, this proportion constituted only 16%. For an in-depth analysis and estimation of the official statistics under Khrushchev, see Wadekin (1973, 43-81).

<sup>16</sup> The all-Union average ranged from 2.5 to 3.4 ares in the period from 1935 through 1980. In Lithuania, from the onset of collectivization in 1948, the peasants were allowed to take the maximum, 60 ares. Such a “preferential” treatment of Lithuanian peasants seems to be a result of Communist Party leadership of Antanas Snieckus who successfully stayed in power not only during Stalin’s times, but survived the reforms of Beria, Molotov and Khrushchev. Snieckus died in 1972.

1960, when collective farms considerably increased their pay for work hours,<sup>17</sup> 67.9% of the peasants' income was earned through subsidiary farms. In 1980, this proportion still constituted 54.3%.<sup>18</sup>

Legally, subsidiary farms were the property of the collective farm, although the national Land Fund that administered the use of land was officially responsible for assigning the plots to the peasants. This meant that the peasant could neither buy, nor sell, nor transfer, nor inherit the plots. Under certain circumstances, such as moving from one location to the other or with a marriage in the family, new plots were to be assigned.<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the fact that the Soviet farms never had full-fledged rights to private ownership of the land, there is a tendency in the Western scholarship to call subsidiary farms *private*.<sup>20</sup> This is primarily because the profits from farming went to individuals/household. Besides, it was individual household members who did the work. Most importantly, by terming subsidiary farms as private, Western scholars attempted to translate the complex assemblage of practices from unfamiliar socialist contexts into Western economic language.

In actuality, however, the Russian *pri-usadebnyje uchastki* and Lithuanian *sodybiniai sklypai* refer not to ownership rights, but to the material space that these plots occupy in peasants' life. More specifically, the terms refer to the proximity of the land plot to the residence—*usad'ba* (Rus.) or *sodyba* (Lith.)—of the peasant. In Lithuanian, the term *sodyba* invokes the lifeworld of the farmstead that included the land, the built structures, gardens as well as human beings.<sup>21</sup> Although economic incentives were extremely important when working on the plots, the land on which farmsteads stood was imbued with multiple symbolic and cultural meanings that went far beyond economic interests or ownership rights. In other words, the economic motivations behind farming on subsidiary farms cannot be equated to private land ownership, as this concept also meant one's belonging to a place.

### 3. Soviet Peasants and the State: Digging into the Allotments

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<sup>17</sup> Starting from 1948, each collective farm member had to complete a minimum of 100 workdays ("Del Kolukiu Organizavimo Lietuvos TSR" ["About Collective Farm Establishment in Soviet Lithuania"] (1948)). One day of labor on collective farms fluctuated between 1.2-1.6 work hour units. Payments for one work hour unit were between 1.3 and 2 kg of grain and .50 to 2.00 Rubles, depending on the collective farm and the harvest. After 1953, collective farms were allowed to decide on the minimum number of workdays to be completed by its members (Central Bureau of Statistics, Soviet Republic of Lithuania 1958). See Lampland (2005) for an in-depth analysis of how workhours as standardized labor units fit into the overall organization of socialist agriculture, specifically when motivating the peasants to work.

<sup>18</sup> Calculated from *Lietuvos TSR Liaudies Ukis 1980 metais*, [*Soviet Lithuania's Economy in 1980*] 1980, 162-170.

<sup>19</sup> The land under the private house was considered public, too. In case of selling the house, however, the land on which the house stood and the up to 25 ares surrounding the settlement were automatically assigned to the new owner. From the perspective of the Soviet state, the citizens were temporary users of the land, but for the locals this did not change their work and care for the land.

<sup>20</sup> See Wadekin (1971), Nove (1971), Hedlund (1989, 2001), and Medvedev (1967).

<sup>21</sup> *Lietuviu Kalbos Zodynas* [*The Dictionary of Lithuanian Language*] (2005).

To conceptualize how the peasants dealt with the Soviet state power through their work on the land, the paper builds on a military metaphor: I argue that by working on the lots, the peasants “dug” themselves into the land in response to enforced labor on collective farms, direct requisitions, levies, and exploitation by the state under Stalin and Khrushchev, but also under “softer” regime under Brezhnev. The metaphor of “digging” is revealing in two ways. First, it involves the transformation of the landscape to shield one’s place from “attacks,” and, second, it captures the significance of strategic thinking when protecting one’s habitat against impinging “dangers.” By creatively rearranging resources on the plots and playing strategic games with collective farms, I argue, the peasants built socio-natural assemblages that remade the face of Soviet agriculture into an amalgam of .

On the surface, this metaphor resonates with the Soviet historiography that utilizes military terms to describe the Soviet politics towards peasantry.<sup>22</sup> As the title of the book *The War Against the Peasantry, 1927-1930* suggests, Lynne Viola *et al.* (2005) define the beginning of the drive towards collectivization as waging war against peasantry. Robert W. Davies’ (1980) widely quoted *The Socialist Offensive* also conjures up an image of war when examining Stalin’s early agricultural politics. Similarly, Robert Conquest (1986) repeatedly calls Stalin’s agricultural politics his “personal war against peasantry,” while Lynne Viola (1996) opens her book with a chapter entitled “The Last and Most Decisive Battle: Collectivization as Civil War” that redefines collectivization as a civil war. In these studies, the protagonist is the state that stomps on the peasantry and forces them into submission.

As effectively criticized by the revisionist school of thought, this approach makes tenuous assumptions about the homogeneity of state power and its imposing nature.<sup>23</sup> This school argues that the stability of the Soviet state cannot be explained simply by brutal violence and suggests that its citizens did (willingly) participate in the upholding of the regime. Grounded in post-structuralism, revisionists propose that state power was produced and reproduced locally, domesticated and internalized by the local populations.<sup>24</sup> According to the revisionist perspective, it is wrong to draw clear boundaries between the state-perpetrator and its citizen-victims.

I agree with revisionists who approach the Soviet state power as diffused in and constructed through local practices, but it should also be noted that, especially in the early years of the Soviet regime in Lithuania, local actors experienced an enormous sense of injustice, exploitation, and terror that they attributed to the omnipresent Soviet force. While the revisionist historiography discredits the description of the Soviet state as an

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<sup>22</sup> The use of militaristic terms in relation to the agricultural politics has its historical roots in the Russian Civil War when military force was used to collect requisitions and nationalize peasants’ property.

<sup>23</sup> Led by Sheila Fitzpatrick, the revisionist school emerged in the 1970s as a response to the classical Soviet historiography that simplistically depicted the Soviet Union as an empire exploiting, terrorizing and victimizing its citizens. See Fitzpatrick’s (1986) foundational article that formulates the premises of revisionism. A more recent overview of the debate, see Fitzpatrick (2000). Stephen Kotkin’s (1995) introduction to *Magnetic Mountain* connects this debate to the actual political processes in post-Leninist Russia, specifically with Trotskyism.

<sup>24</sup> The term “domestication” here refers to Gerald Creed’s (1998) notion of creative adaptation to socialist agricultural reforms in Bulgaria. It relates to local practices through which Bulgarian rural communities have remade collectivized agriculture into their own.

abstract power, it did exist in the popular imagination of the peasants. Such terms as “Moscow” and the “Man” (Lith. *valdzia*) refer less to specific Soviet institutions than to the menacing entity endowed with supernatural powers.<sup>25</sup> To read this from a constructivist perspective, the totalizing Soviet power existed in human imagination and affected their practice and, therefore, it *was* a social fact.

In conjunction of these scholarly debates, I suggest that the metaphor of “digging in” appropriately captures the embeddedness of the state power in specific socio-environmental contexts as well as invokes experiences of the Soviet state. By focusing on agricultural practice on subsidiary farms as a strategic transformation of the environment, I maintain that subsidiary farming was not simply the “weapon of the weak<sup>26</sup>” in the face of the state, but rather its constitutive part. Through farming, the peasants fed the Soviet state and contributed to building its wealth. By working on the allotments, peasants also radically changed the Soviet landscape and, with this, the reconstituted its power. The transformation of the face of Soviet agriculture is manifested best during Brezhnev’s era through the emergence of the peasantry as the wealthiest and the most economically independent social group in Lithuania, while their allotments were fully incorporated into the official structures of collectivized farming.

#### **4. Subsidiary Farms under Brezhnev**

While Stalin and Khrushchev struggled with defining the place of semi-private farms in the socialized economy, under Brezhnev the contradiction between ideology and economy was resolved. In the new scheme, subsidiary farms were included as an important part of the Soviet agro-industrial complex. The first signs of the tectonic change in the ideological interpretation of subsidiary farming appeared in late 1960s, when Soviet scholars started publishing on subsidiary farming. Before then, Soviet scholarship on the Allotments was mute.<sup>27</sup> In the early 1970s, a new generation of Soviets started articulating a novel vision of Soviet agriculture that treated large-scale collectivized farms and subsidiary farms as two complementary parts in the Soviet agricultural production. In his book on subsidiary farming under socialism, for example,

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<sup>25</sup> Ethnographies of socialism have shown that many local actors defined the Soviet state as an abstract menacing power and assumed that they were constantly watched and supervised by it. Daphne Berdahl (1999) provides an example of an East German woman who, after being rejected for a visa to go to West Germany, interpreted this as a result of her church attendance. She thought the visa officer “knew” she was not complying with the rules. As Berdahl demonstrates, many East Germans acted as if they were always observed. In a different way than in Foucault’s panopticon, however, self-disciplining remained on the surface of behavior, the human subjects never fully internalized self-discipline.

<sup>26</sup> In this sense, the revisionist school is also critical of James Scott (1985, 1998). In Scott’s work (as well as many other social thinkers writing in the 1980 and 1990s such as Michel De Certeau or John Fiske) the weak have methods to work in and around the hegemonic systems by dragging their feet at work, being late, or breaking the tools. It should be noted, however, that in her earlier work Fitzpatrick (1995) builds directly on Scott’s work.

<sup>27</sup> Wadekin (1971) traces down the first official publication on subsidiary farms to Shanin (1967). During my review of the Soviet studies of subsidiary farms, I have found that this literature exploded in the late 1970s to early 1980s with publication of the work of Kalinkin *et al.* (1981), Timofeev (1985), and Shmelev (1978).

Shmelev starts off with a broad view of the Soviet landscape and locates subsidiary farms in relation to collectivized farmlands:

If one were to get a bird's eye view of the USSR... then one would see dense clusters of apartment buildings and factories, surrounded by broad expanses of large rectangular fields cultivated by agricultural enterprises. These great patches of land are impressive even from the air and contrast sharply with the motley pattern of small plots typical of farming in the West... But the boundless fields of large agricultural enterprises are not the only thing we see from our vantage in the sky. We also see clusters of houses forming villages and hamlets and adjoining each house are sheds and minute plots, barely distinguishable one from the other at this height. These small plots that contain gardens and orchards are still farmed by traditional peasant methods (the scientific and technological revolution which is having such tremendous impact on agriculture is only just beginning to be felt here). Not only do they exist along side the vast expanses cultivated by cooperatives and state farms but together they form an organic whole which is covered by the term the "agrarian sector" of the socialist countries' economies (Shmelev 1986, 5-6).

In this passage, Shmelev draws a picture of Soviet agriculture in which subsidiary farms are not only geographically present, but an integral part of the "organic whole" of the Soviet agricultural sector. Considering that both Stalin and Khrushchev abstained from talking about the subject of subsidiary farms in public, the recognition of the role of the allotments in the Soviet agriculture marks a major political transformation.

Specifically, the Soviet scholars provided ideological justifications for the significant presence individual farms in the socialist agricultural sector. These justifications included the following reasons: 1) Subsidiary farms were not autonomous economic units; they operated within the official structures of the Soviet planned agricultural economy. 2) Subsidiary farms were established as a temporary means to help the peasants move from private to collectivized farming; they complemented the public sector, and did not hinder its development. 3) They were not private, but rather "personal" property. 4) The existence of subsidiary farms did not deviate from the Marxist-Leninist line: Lenin suggested that for each of socialism's developmental stage, economic policies needed to consider the interests of both the state and individual actors, which was also the case for subsidiary farms (Kalinkin *et al.* 1980, 4). 5) Subsidiary farms served diverse social, economic and psychological functions as well as materialized the right to employment for the social groups that were not employed in the public sector—such as pensioners, housewives, children or disabled. The educational aspect was particularly important as younger generations were acquiring skills when working on the allotments (Kalinkin *et al.* 1980, 5, Shmelev 1986, 8). 6) Subsidiary farms enabled efficient use of natural and labor resources, as the peasants worked the land that would not be used otherwise (Ostrovskii 1988, 17). 7) Work on subsidiary farms involved a collective effort; the peasants were cooperating when working on their plots (Kalinkin *et al.* 1981).

Of these reasons, the idea that subsidiary farms served multiple social and educational roles and that they enabled the efficient use of natural and labor resources are particularly important because they reveal a very different picture of the Soviet

agriculture than that of earlier times. By emphasizing the multiple meanings embedded in farming on the allotments and the melding of small-scale subsidiary farms with large-scale collective farms into an “organic whole,” the Soviet scholars moved from modernist definitions that separated the individual from the collective, the subsidiary farm from the collectivized agriculture, and the modern farming from non-modern or manual agricultural practice. In the new picture, the two parts are combined to produce a hybrid form of Soviet agriculture. In the broader sense, the reconciliation of the ideological and political issues surrounding subsidiary farms marks the emergence of what Amir Weiner calls the “harmonious state.” Weiner argues that after World War II and especially after Stalin’s regime, the Soviet Union began a new cultural project that sought to create a new kind of society that has included the Other. The Other in this case means the rehabilitation of the subsidiary farms that had been pushed outside of the official discourses. In this sense, the rehabilitation of the subsidiary farms means the fundamental redefinition of Soviet agriculture that recognizes the role of the small-scale producer in the Soviet agro-industrial complex as well as in Soviet society.

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While the incorporation of the subsidiary farms into the agro-industrial complexes was designed to make an efficient use of local resources such as labor, nature, and technologies, in local contexts these political transformations did not simply mean that the peasants were allowed to use collective and state farm resources as they saw necessary. Rather, the transformation in the allotment politics took place in an ideological/political sphere bringing about new economic measurement systems and developing bureaucratic mechanisms to account for the agricultural production on the allotments. In other words, subsidiary farms continued to be separated from collective and state farms, the peasants continued to be barred from openly using the resources. In the following section, I examine the strategies and practices used on the subsidiary farms under Brezhnev and then discuss the implications of these practices on local subjectivities.

## **5. Opportunism as a Strategy**

This section examines local responses to Brezhnev’s pro-allotment politics. I argue that at the heart of these strategies was “inward-looking” opportunism that enabled the peasants to make use of every available resource. It is precisely this opportunism that led to the emergence of the Soviet peasant as the modern subject of the Soviet state.

The concept of *opportunism* captures precisely the set of strategies that the peasants were engaged in while trying to outmaneuver collective farms in order to access the resources. While “opportunism” carries a negative meaning implying a drive to act in self-interest beyond consideration of others or moral values, the peasants’ opportunistic strategies were described by the peasants themselves as method of survival. In 1970, two thirds of the peasants’ incomes in Lithuania were still coming from the subsidiary farms.<sup>28</sup>

In the context of subsidiary farming, opportunism involved a wide range of practices that were used to obtain fodder, garner additional labor, and get access to technologies for working subsidiary farms. To shed light on what specifically constituted

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<sup>28</sup> Calculated from Center Bureau of Statistics, Soviet Republic of Lithuania (1980), 172.

opportunism, four elements—diversification, dynamism, strategic use of labor, and informal networks—will be considered here.

### 5.1 Diversification

First, opportunist practices relate to diversification, a strategy of increasing the assortment of the grown produce in order to balance human needs and the material agency of the environment. Instead of focusing on growing potatoes as the sources of survival under Stalin and Khrushchev, the peasants seized the opportunity and started growing labor intensive products—such as poultry, honey, cucumbers, tomatoes, and onions—that collective farms were unable to grow. As a result, many peasants increased the flocks of hens, rebuilt beehives, constructed hutches for rabbits and greenhouses for vegetables that collective farms did not produce. Later, in the mid-1980s, these practices expanded and some of the peasants started growing strawberries, gooseberries, and currants for sale, flowers for seeds, and beavers for fur—everything that was in demand in urban markets. As a result of these practices, rural spaces grew more diverse than they were before. Gardens by the homes were filled with a menagerie of vegetables, berry bushes, and flowers, new sheds were built to accommodate the animals, and greenhouses made out of wooden frames and the newest material—plastic—sprang up.

Additionally, with the dwindling of the resistance movement by the late-1950s, the forests were once again filled with the youth and elders picking mushrooms and berries. These “gifts of nature”—as the peasants call them— significantly helped to diversify and replenish the peasants’ diets. Many peasants told stories how the older females in the households took the berries and mushrooms along with vegetables, eggs, honey, smoked sausages, and cheese to the cities to sell in agricultural markets. Using any opportunity they found, the peasants tried to procure cash to supplement their meager incomes.

### 5.2. Dynamism

Second, opportunism on subsidiary farms relates to always being on watch and seizing any opportunity that comes by. For example, a man who used to work on the pig farm in Village B reported that the chairman occasionally allowed individual peasants to mow the pastures that the collective farm did not use, but they did so on short notice. Considering that after 1958 such practices were criminalized, the peasants appreciated the rare opening to refurbish their scarce fodder resources.

In other case, a woman who was a teenager in the late 1960s told me that their chairman had a “big heart” and sometimes allowed the peasants to unload bags of the pre-manufactured fodder from the collective farms for the peasants’ own subsidiary farms, but they usually had a small window of opportunity to get the task completed. To do so, even young children were enlisted and helped with unloading. Not knowing when an opportunity to access and use the resources would emerge, everybody was kept on their toes and lived in an extremely dynamic and unpredictable environment.

In relation to this dynamic use of time, peasants spoke about being always alert. They said, “something will always crop up and you have to drop what you are doing and do it.”<sup>29</sup> Yet another family suggested that they were always trying to obtain “something” from the collective farm—be it fodder, grain or manure—that could come in at *any time*.

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<sup>29</sup> Interview with an economist of the cooperative, conducted August 2004.

The “something” in this context means the emergence of circumstances that allowed the peasants to gain access to the various locally available resources that officially, they were barred from using.

In short, the politics of agriculture in collective farms under Brezhnev was almost as capricious as nature itself, and both these agencies pressured the peasants into staying alert and making use of every single opening. It is, indeed, ironic that everyday life in the planned socialist economy depended so much on unplanned opportunities.

### 5.3 Informal Networks

From the perspective of the peasants the collective farms operated erratically sometimes spitting golden opportunities, sometimes scolding and punishment. In this context, the only tangible leverage that the peasants had at their disposition to tilt the system in their favor was informal—more precisely, human—connections to the higher-ups as well as technical personnel, administrators, veterinarians or drivers. In order to use technology for cultivating the land or mowing the grass on the pastures, or raising healthy livestock on their farms, the peasants depended on informal face-to-face interactions. For example, to obtain a tractor for cultivation required not only filing the paperwork, talking to the brigadier, and obtaining permission from the collective farm council—which already required a great deal of diplomacy and social intuitions—but also “networking” with the *mechanizatorii*, the tractor operators.

It is in the midst of making these numerous informal arrangements, as many univocally pointed out, that alcohol emerged as the key currency lubricating the exchanges.<sup>30</sup> To get what was needed for their subsidiary farms, the peasants did not simply bribe the involved parties, but they engaged in the prolonged bonding rituals that mixed socializing with drinking (Lith., *sugerimas*). Notably, these activities created highly gendered spaces, when after and during work hours, men congregated in the shops, garages or collective farm storage structures to “finalize” the deals.

This means that these informal networks were extremely important for the lives of the peasants, and also that the peasants themselves contributed to the increasing unpredictability of the Soviet agricultural systems. Constituted through an intricate system of social exchanges and relationships of trust,<sup>31</sup> these informal networks sometimes put an enormous pressure on the collective farm management, making the “outputs” even less predictable. As one chairman suggested, “sometimes you had to think whether to help the single mother with five kids or your own parents.”

As the chairmen and brigadiers were juggling production plans, balancing budgets,<sup>32</sup> Communist Party supervision, unmotivated employees, breaking technologies,

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<sup>30</sup> For an excellent analysis of the changing role of alcohol in socialist and post-socialist society, see Rogers (2005). Thanks to Neringa Klumbyte for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>31</sup> For an in-depth analysis of the personalistic nature of the Soviet economic system, see Ledeneva (1999), Sampson (1985, 1986), Wedel (1998), and Berdahl (1999, 104-140). For informal networks under Stalin, see Berliner (1957), and Hessler (2004).

<sup>32</sup> Janos Kornai (1980) and Katherine Verdery (1996) emphasize “soft budget constraints” as one of the key features that distinguishes the free-market capitalist economy from the bailing out of the specific enterprises by the state. According to the collective farm chairmen I interviewed, such constraints were not quite so soft. The chairmen were often held personally responsible for the failures to fulfill the plans or to

harvests, droughts, and pests as well as informal networks, a different set of human and non-human variables were at play making the system operate even less transparently. While the system had stabilized during Brezhnev's rule, in the 1960s and early 1970s, the operation of subsidiary farms (as well as collective farms) was rather unpredictable. In such a manner, the use of informal networks to access the resources available at the collective farms emerged as the key strategy when ensuring the successful cultivation of the land and the growing of livestock on subsidiary farms.

In contrast to the informal networks in urban and industrial settings that have been the focus of most of the studies related to informal economy, the opportunism in rural communities emerged not because of the absolute shortage of resources, but because of the tantalizing availability of the resources that the peasants were barred from using. In other words, instead of the lack of commodities or materials that seemed to have led to the emergence of the personalized re-distribution system in cities, in the rural settings of Lithuania informal exchanges grew because the organization of the farming system did not grant direct access to these resources. As many peasants still continue to say, "going straight is closer, but going in a roundabout way will get you there faster." Another common piece of folk wisdom says "if there is a rule, there is a way around that rule."<sup>33</sup>

#### **5.4. Strategic Use of Labor**

In addition to strategically organizing the use of land and time, the peasants also sought to squeeze the last drop of labor from all the family members. The old, the young, the sick, the disabled, women, men, and children—all could be found working on the subsidiary farms, depending on the situation and the perceived need. This involvement in the work was important not only in terms of providing help, but served as a way of establishing one's connection to the land.

Perhaps the most illuminating example of the strategic use of labor was the labor of the elders and children. In one case, a woman in her fifties who lives with her mother told about their grandfather who, being blind and physically frail in his mid-seventies, continued to work on the allotments. His help was much needed during the harvest time. To gather potatoes, for example, the old blind man put on three pairs of pants and crawled by the row of potatoes collecting and sorting them according to sizes and the "feel" into three baskets. Pulling the stems of the potato plants and digging his hands deep into the recently ploughed rows, he was as fast and efficient as anybody else in the field.

As his granddaughter reflects, he worked because this made him feel a productive member of the family and because he knew that he contributed to the family by freeing up his children. The story of this man's life is similar that of the majority of his generation. First, he grew up working on manorial estate; then the gruesome experiences of the food shortages during WWI followed. After that, Land Reforms of 1922 gave him a plot of land and allowed to build a home for his family and new hopes for the future. These hopes were quickly stomped by the Soviet-Nazi-Soviet occupations and then, during collectivization in 1949, he lost everything. In the 1960s and early 1970s, as his

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balance the budget. Various commissions, auditing procedures, *Raion* Communist Party meetings put an enormous amount of stress and pressure on their lives.

<sup>33</sup> Lith., *tiesiai arciau, aplink greičiau, and yra isakymas, yra ir apstatymas.*

grandchildren remember, the old man committed himself to the allotments. “He could not stop working,” his other granddaughter said, “The allotments [the allotments] and the garden were his life... He always wanted to know what and how everything grew there... His hands were indispensable.”<sup>34</sup>

### **5.5. Changing Experiences of Time**

In scholarly work on Soviet experiences, the concept of opportunism relates to the informal economy constituted through *blat* (informal exchange of favors), *tolkachi* (industrial procurement agents), and *vozhdi* (“big men” in patron-client networks) (Martin 2000, 350). These concepts emphasize the subjectivities of atomized, self-interested individuals who use various opportunities—anything—to profit for themselves or their networks.

In a different way than assumed in these concepts, opportunism in Lithuanian farms is an “inward-looking” practice that involved one’s intimate and meaningful interaction with the land. Simply put, it means to be clever, creative, and always alert when making the use of social, technological and natural resources that are difficult to obtain, but also to locate these practices within the intimate and personalized connection to the surrounding world. On a more abstract level, I would argue that such practices of “opportunism” created highly personalized experiences of time.

In terms of the social theory of time, Katherine Verdery’s (1996) article on *etatization* of time sheds light on the experience of the flow of time under socialism. Verdery demonstrates that by suspending its citizens’ bodies in queues for a long time, the socialist state got a better grip over its citizens. In other words, time spent in lines was literally stolen from the “private” lives of its citizens who found themselves trapped into slow and cyclical socialist time. In Verdery’s reading, the “effect was an astounding immobilization of bodies that stopped the time contained in them, rendered them impotent, and subtracted them from other activities...” Time slowed up as “urban in its habitat, the food line seized and flattened the time of all urbanites except those having access to special stores” (Verdery 1996, 46).

Ivaylo Ditchev (2004) challenges Verdery by arguing that, under socialism, time flow was not pre-determined, that waiting in lines actually opened spaces for socializing, and that socialist citizens created unexpected intimate encounters, shared jokes, told stories, and learned from each other how to best maneuver in the world. The dynamism of opportunistic strategies suggest that peasants were not suspended in a slow-motion state, as Verdery argues, but lived in a dynamic and personalized world. Without knowing how, when, where and through what network they would get access to the fodder, tractors, manure, seeds, cows, or piglets, the peasants were continuously prepared for the arrival of opportunities. Eventually they came to reducing their uncertainty by arranging “deals” through informal networks. But the core of these opportunistic practices was the work on the land. All these activities served the central purpose of digging into the land and building the world that was outside of the reach of the state.

### **5.6. Economic Status and Flexible Money**

To talk about the allotments under Brezhnev is impossible without addressing the question of incomes. It is during this time that the peasants emerged as one of the richest

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with a woman who now works for the cooperative, conducted July 2005.

groups in Lithuania. The official statistical reports show that under Brezhnev peasants earned almost 20% below the Republic's average salary. To compare, collective farm employees earned 117.0 rubles per month in 1975, including income from subsidiary farming, whereas Republic average income was 142.3 rubles per month. Industrial workers earned 155.4 rubles per month or 32.8% more than the peasants.<sup>35</sup> But it is important to bear in mind that the statistics does not reflect the earnings coming from subsidiary farms. First, the state could not obtain data on how much money were earned in informal markets. Second, what data they did collect was suppressed because it challenged the foundations of collectivized agriculture. Third, in all my interviews with peasants they explained that they were able save more money than their counterparts in industry because they did not have to pay for utilities and they also bought very little food.

What matters here, however, is not income *per se*, but its unique social functions. Indeed, earnings from subsidiary farms were conceptually different from fixed wages. First, payments for selling livestock under the contract came in a lump sum, while wages from collective farms were paid monthly. After the mid-1970s the peasants were able to survive on their monthly salaries from collective farms,<sup>36</sup> and so they set aside their “fatty” paychecks coming from the contracts for purchasing more valuable commodities, such as appliances, or putting the money into saving accounts.<sup>37</sup> Even today many peasants boast about the purchases made after selling their livestock to collective farms. An older woman proudly stated that they had bought jewelry, and her young daughters had been wearing gold earrings, necklaces, and rings to school. Others reported that they had invested in fancy dishes and bedding of “the best quality.” Yet others confided that they hid the money at home. Getting paid in lump sums, therefore, enabled the peasants to separate the money for living and for saving and/or “conspicuous” consumption. This all amounted to the emergence of dispensable income in the family budgets that did not exist before.

Second, in contrast to fixed wages that industrial workers earned, the peasants had more control over their incomes. When signing contracts with collective farms, they could—at least theoretically—negotiate how many sows or cows they raised. By so doing, they were able to control their financial situation in ways that others could not. This meant that in times of need, they could potentially generate more money. In contrast to industrial workers as well as other Soviet working citizens who had fewer opportunities for alternative earnings, the peasants' incomes appeared to be elastic and the peasants socially marked the income as “flexible money” that they could either spend or save. At a fundamental level, money earned from subsidiary farms became a windfall that gave the peasants a sense of wealth and safety.

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<sup>35</sup> Central Bureau of Statistics, Soviet Republic of Lithuania (1980).

<sup>36</sup> The average income from collective farms in 1975, for example, was 68 rubles per month, while the retirement payments—the average of 65 rubles per month—was enough to cover the basic needs. Considering that the peasants spent little money on food, starting from about mid-1970s, they were able to survive on paychecks from collective farms.

<sup>37</sup> The average size of the savings account in rural areas quadrupled in the period from 1970 through 1980. Central Bureau of Statistics, Soviet Republic of Lithuania) 1980, 192.

Such social markings of the money are not unique. As the sociologists of emotion and, especially Viviana Zelizer, have demonstrated the monetary exchanges do not simply replace personalized barter transactions with a universal and homogeneous system of transactions, but that the money, too, is always endowed with social meanings. Zelizer's multiple examples revolve around gendered money such as "pin money," or "men's wages." In another widely quoted study, Cecilie Hoigard and Liv Finstad (1992) examine how differently prostitutes spend money. Receiving money from health benefits and welfare subsidies, the women counted every penny of it and considered it as a legitimate form of income. By contrast, they used up their prostitution earnings on drugs, alcohol and clothes because this money was "dirty."

In a very different place and time, the Lithuanian peasants seemed to have exercised a similar economy of money. While they did not consider the money from allotments as "dirty," they saw the money as a "gift" and allowed themselves to indulge in it; they bought things that otherwise frugal and careful peasants would not have bought; they improved homes, got cars, acquired books, and stood in lines for gold, furniture, household appliances and many more things. In this sense, for the first time in history, the allotments allowed the peasants to become consumers.

## **6. Conclusions: Between Resistance and Accommodation**

During one of the interviews, I heard a story about collectivization that captures one of the underlying paradoxes of Soviet agriculture. A couple of elderly peasants told me:

I remember when everybody was preparing for collectivization. People told horror stories about Russia. We did not know what to expect... We expected something extraordinary to happen. Somebody told me that in communism hundreds of people would live in one huge barn-like structure and share one bedroom... and that the tractors would roll in and unfold one large blanket before the bedtime...<sup>38</sup>

What strikes about the vision of the two peasants is that they expected the Soviet regime to take away their private lives. In the Communist society, they thought, one would always live a public life with no places to hide and time for themselves. Even at night, it was imagined, the peasants would be laying in one big bed under one blanket.

This paper reveals a very different picture. Instead of moving into collective housing, the peasants built their own homes, rather than losing intimate social settings, they developed strong personal ties, and instead of submitting to collectivized farming, they dug into their allotments and through them built autonomous socio-material spaces. Rather than living public lives, the peasants' every day revolved around personal spaces, times, and human interactions. Even though public speeches of the Soviet leaders hinted on plans to modernize the everyday of the peasant,<sup>39</sup> human connection to the land continued to be highly personalized and intimate.

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<sup>38</sup> Interview conducted in August 2003.

<sup>39</sup> While this popular imagination of collectivized farms sounds far fetched, it actually reflects many of the themes in Stalin's speeches from before collectivization started in Lithuania in 1948. In his speech to the Seventeenth Congress of the Communist Party, for example, Stalin explains how Russian old villages are being replaced by new Soviet type villages. In this vision, old bourgeois villages are rebuilt into communities where culture, communal living and agricultural technology share the same space: "The old

On the one hand, the emergence of such autonomous spaces was due to the contradictory policies that both disapproved of un-collectivized labor, but also encouraged the peasants produce as much as they possibly could to feed fast-paced industrialization. This ideologically ambiguous position allowed the peasants to maneuver in the regime. Most importantly, these spaces were built as a direct response to the Soviet restrictions to use local resources. In her analysis of how Javanese peasants seek access to forest resources, Nancy Peluso (1992) describes two major structures of resistances to the imposed restrictions. The first form of resistance is based on the peasants' unity and collective action and the second is that of differentiation. This second structure of resistance resonates with this project because it captures the movement away from collective forms of resistance into the individualized spheres of action:

The second type of peasant response to exclusion from forest lands has been refracted inward, in the increasing differentiation of village society. As population growth and agrarian capitalism (in addition to state or private capitalism in extractive enterprises) increase competition for limited rural resources and laboring opportunities, this differentiation is expected to increase (Peluso 1992, 16).

In the same way as described in this passage, in Lithuania, the peasants' resistance to the Soviet restrictions was "inward" looking. As discussed in this paper, the allotments became a place for not only hiding against the regime, but also resisting the supervision and monitoring. But in contrast to Peluso's argument about differentiation of communities as the underlying reason for the emergence inward resistances, the paper suggests that under socialism the inward resistance was generated because collective action venues have been effectively shut down.

In broader sense, this paper demonstrates that constrained by various resources and pushed hard by the reforms, the peasants were able to not simply hide or outmaneuver the political regime, but they reconstituted its nature of its power. Specifically, by the end of Brezhnev's regime, it was acknowledged that Soviet agriculture consisted not only of agro-industrial complexes, level fields, and massive technological infrastructures, but also of small-scale diverse subsidiary farms. This new vision of the Soviet agriculture praised not only mechanized labor, but also peasants' stewardship of land, mastery of agricultural practice, and craftsmanship in using the resources. At the heart of this transformation was the emergence of the peasant as a modern economic subject who had become relatively wealthy and autonomous consumer and the citizen of the Soviet state.

## **7. Relations to Europeanizing Villages**

"I am not a farmer" insisted most of villagers I met in the summers of 2003 and 2004, as I explained my interest in farming in Lithuania.<sup>40</sup> "Go talk to Jonas. He has 200

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village with its church at the highest point and its best houses belonging to the policeman, priest and kulak [rich peasant] to the fore and the half broken-down huts of the peasants behind is beginning to disappear. In its place a new type of village is developing which has communal buildings, clubs, the radio, cinemas, schools, libraries and kindergartens, and tractors, combines, threshing machines and cars" (Osmolovskii 1951, 12-3).

<sup>40</sup> For more on "non-farmers" identities in Lithuania in the early 2000s, see Knudsen (n.d.).

ha of land, and good machines. Yes, he's the one who owns John Deer tractors and drives the new Jeep. He is the *real* farmer."<sup>41</sup> Needless to say, I was surprised. It seemed obvious to me that farming occupied a central role in the lives of the villagers I met. Antanas, for example, lives in a home with a barn, owns a tractor, land (a total of 7 ha) and a garden. His family keeps four cows, five sows, about a dozen of hens and he grows vegetables, berries, fruit and grain for his family, for fodder and for sale. As in other similar households that are operating as subsistence farms, most of his monetary income comes from selling left-over dairy and produce. And yet, Antanas believes this is not enough to make him a farmer in a Europeanizing Lithuania.<sup>42</sup>

One may argue that this is because Antanas is a small-scale land holder. Yet, the size of the farm is a matter of interpretation. While Antanas' farm could be considered small in comparison to typical British or French farms with an average of 57.4 ha<sup>43</sup> and 45.3 ha respectively, it is of comparable size and production diversity with Portuguese (10.4 ha), Italian (6.7 ha), and Greek (4.8 ha) farms (Eurostat 2005). In other words, such an interpretation of one's social place is not based any objective criteria or even on the local frame of reference where Antanas' farm is of comparable size others.<sup>44</sup> Rather, it is based on the emergence of a qualitatively new connection between the farmer and their land, where the practice of farming, knowledge of agriculture and ownership of the land no longer makes one into a farmer.

The analysis of agricultural politics under Brezhnev, I believe, can shed light on the unmaking of post-socialist farmers in contemporary Lithuania. Unlike peasants under Brezhnev whose gardens and subsidiary farms were incorporated into the official structures of the Soviet state and who emerged as important economic actors in the Soviet state, today's small-scale farmers have lost their place in the European agricultural economy. As the new EU member states—Lithuania among them—have been integrated into the EU's legislative, economic, territorial and political structures, their agricultural sector has been reorganized to comply with the EU's developmental visions that is steering towards post-productivist agriculture. Not surprisingly, with the introduction of fast-paced reforms that favor large, industrialized farming, Lithuania's small-scale farmers can no longer see themselves as part of the new Europe. The fact that so many small-scale farmers in Lithuania are feeling alienated by the new reforms signals fundamental schisms and significant contradictions in how the reforms are mapping onto local imagination and histories.

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<sup>41</sup> Interview with a former Machine-Tractor Station employee, conducted on July 18, 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Lithuania joined the European Union in May, 2004.

<sup>43</sup> Refers to utilized agricultural area per holding.

<sup>44</sup> Lithuania's average farm size was 9.2 ha in 2003 (Eurostat 2005) and estimated 11.2 ha in 2005 (Lietuvos Statistikos Departamentas 2006).

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