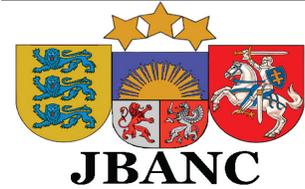


JBANC Chronicle

An Overview of Baltic Events With a Washington Perspective



JOINT BALTIC AMERICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE, INC.

Baltic-Americans Help to Break Ground During Victims of Communism Memorial Ceremony

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Chairman's Corner By Peteris Blumbergs	2
Standing Together for VWP	3
Legislative Update	4
Political Repressions in Belarus	5
Member Org Reports	7-9
Estonian President Elected	10
Lithuanian Energy Sector	12
Review of Latvian Elections	13
Baltic Cooperation in Czech Republic	14
Maryland-Baltic Update	15
Latvian Cultural Garden Inaugurated	16

Ground was broken in Washington, DC on September 27 to begin construction of the Victims of Communism memorial. Nearly 200 people attended the ceremony, which featured speakers Paula Dobriansky, the Undersecretary of State for Democracy and Global Affairs, and Congressman Dana Rohrabacher, one of the sponsors of the memorial's authorizing legislation passed in the U.S. Congress in 1993.



JBANC Board members Eric Puskar, Ramunas Kondratas, and Marju Rink-Abel help to break ground for the Victims of Communism Memorial (photo by Andrew Blasko.)

The completed memorial is expected to be dedicated in June 2007, on the anniversary of President Ronald Reagan's memorable challenge to the Soviets to tear down the Berlin Wall.

At the groundbreaking ceremony, VOC Memorial Foundation chairman Lee Edwards underscored the efforts of a wide array of supporters of the memorial, from individuals to large private foundations to foreign governments, including Estonia, Lithuania, and Latvia. The support of ethnic communities was also highlighted, led by the Latvian, Estonian, and Lithuanian communities in the United States.

A reception followed in the U.S. Capitol with remarks by Baltic Caucus co-chair Rep. John Shimkus, along with Congressmen Thaddeus McCotter and Mario Diaz-Balart. Ambassadors Jüri Luik of Estonia, and Petr Kolar of the Czech Republic were among other participants who reflected upon the symbolic importance of the memorial.

JBANC Managing Director Karl Altau welcomed and thanked the guests, which included many members of the Baltic commu-

nity, including EANC President Marju Rink-Abel, JBANC chairman Peteris Blumbergs, Ramunas Kondratas of the Lithuanian American Council, Mati Kõiva and Erik Puskar of the Estonian American National Council, Janis Gramatins of the World Federation of Free Latvians, Raits Eglitis of the American Latvian Association, Inga Lukaviciute of JBANC, Marija and William Mather, Vello Ederma, Veljo Areng, Mark Bablin, and others.

Latvian Ambassador Maris Riekstins and Kornelija Jurgaitiene, the Deputy Chief of Mission of the Lithuanian Embassy also attended the ceremony, along with ambassadors and officials from about a dozen embassies. Many colleagues from Central and East European Coalition (CEEC) member organizations were also present.

For more info, visit:
<http://victimsofcommunism.org>



Estonian Ambassador Jüri Luik at reception in U.S. Capitol (Photo by Inga Lukaviciute)



Peteris Blumbergs



For more information about the Feb. 9-10, 2007 JBANC Baltic Conference, contact us at: jbanc@jbanc.org or call: 301-340-1954 or visit: <http://jbanc.org>

Chairman's Corner by Peteris Blumbergs

Baltic security has been JBANC's top priority ever since the Baltic countries regained independence in the early 1990s. Without security guarantees, the newfound freedom on the Baltic shores could be jeopardized. Thus, JBANC led a multi-year campaign for Estonia's, Latvia's and Lithuania's admittance to NATO and the EU.

A cornerstone of this campaign was the biennial JBANC Conference on Baltic Security. Five separate conferences were organized during the crucial NATO-enlargement process, raising awareness of the Baltics' candidacies and providing a vital forum for Baltic advocates to propose and sharpen their arguments for NATO enlargement.

Baltic security remains a priority, but now the focus is on energy security. We are also concerned with historical memory – documenting the crimes of communism and the suffering of its victims. Thus, we are proud to announce that the long tradition of JBANC-sponsored conferences will continue in 2007. Our major themes will energy security and ways of documenting the crimes of Soviet communism and commemorating its victims.

Recent headlines demonstrate that the oil and gas supplies to Eastern European nations can be shut off with the mere flip of a switch. This type of coercion must be stopped – we must use political pressure in the short term to police Russia and over the long term, lower dependence on the Russian energy supplies.

The 2007 Conference will feature panels of experts who will highlight and publicize the problems caused by coercive energy policies. Other experts will examine the Baltics' options for lowering their dependence on Russian oil and gas. Others will explore the use of biofuels and alternative energy sources. Our special keynote speaker will be Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus, who will share his vision of Baltic energy security and discuss how energy independence is a guarantee of political independence.

To be sure, no JBANC conference would be complete without general information on recent political developments in the Baltic region and updates on other important JBANC projects. The conference program will include areas of interest for everyone.

We look forward to seeing you on Saturday, February 10, 2007 at the L'Enfant Plaza Hotel in Washington D.C. for the 2007 JBANC Conference on Baltic Energy Security and the Legacy of Communism. That same evening we invite you to attend the American Baltic Celebration 2007 Gala Awards Dinner & Silent Auction honoring Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the U.S.-Baltic Foundation.

For more information about the February 10, 2007 American Baltic Celebration 2007 sponsored by the U.S.-Baltic Foundation, contact Brett Gerson at: brett@usbaltic.org or call: 202-785-5056 or visit: <http://www.usbaltic.org/>

House Baltic Caucus Co-Chairmen Join Seven Embassies to Stand Up for Visa Freedom

Congressmen John Shimkus and Dennis Kucinich, co-chairs of the seventy-member strong House Baltic Caucus, joined diplomats from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic, to hold a September 26 press conference on the Visa Waiver issue. The briefing took place outside the Cannon House Office Building in Washington, D.C.

Representatives Shimkus (R-IL) and Kucinich (D-OH) announced plans to send a joint letter to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice in support of those new European Union and NATO member countries wishing to join the visa waiver program (VWP), which allows visa-free travel to the United States. The letter is to be signed by both congressmen and circulated among members of Congress.

Rep. Shimkus underscored sentiments that those countries have done what was asked of them in preparation for the visa waiver system, and stressing that policies for all U.S. allies should be fair.

“We do not represent any security problem, or immigration problem. We should unite allies and divide enemies,” said Petr Kolar, Czech Ambassador to the United States.

Ambassador Kolar further pointed out that American investment is growing in these countries and if U.S. businessman trust them to conduct business there, Americans should trust them in the U.S. too. He added that “If our countries are included in visa waiver program, it is a win-win situation for the U.S. and us.”

Rep. Kucinich stressed that “this is not an immigration issue, but a travel issue among friends.”

“We are not talking about people trying to sneak [across] borders here. We are talking about friends and allies,” Kucinich said. He also noted that many members of Congress have constituents from the countries concerned about this issue.

Rep. Shimkus stressed the progress that these countries have made. He admitted that the problem was that the visa waiver issue is tied to the immigration debate. Rep. Kucinich joined by saying that it is important to make sure people understand that this is not an immigration but a travel issue.

Kornelija Jurgaitiene, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Lithuanian Embassy underscored the sentiment that since Lithuania is a friend and ally of the U.S. and has troops in Iraq and Afghanistan, it deserves a reciprocal 90-day visitors visa waiver. Lithuania, for example, granted a visa waiver to U.S. already in 1994.

Other ambassadors at the press conference were Janusz Reiter (Poland), Jüri Luik (Estonia), Maris Riekstins (Latvia), Andras Simonyi (Hungary), and Ratislav Kacer (Slovakia).



“This is not an immigration issue, but a travel issue among friends.”



Ambassadors of Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovak Republic, and Lithuania's Deputy Chief of Mission joined Baltic Caucus Co-chairs Dennis Kucinich and John Shimkus (center) at the September 26 press conference (Photo by Inga Lukaviciute)

Legislative Update – Looking Towards the 110th Congress



Following the November 7 elections, Congress returns to finish business for its 109th Session. This will provide a limited window for work on two legislative initiatives of interest to JBANC before the new legislators convene as the 110th Congress in January 2007.

One bill would continue democracy promotion in Belarus, while another effort supports granting visa waiver privileges to allies of the United States, including the Baltic countries.

Introduced by Helsinki Commission co-chairman Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ) on July 27, the Belarus Democracy Reauthorization Act of 2006 (BDRA) targets democratic assistance, funds media programs, and establishes additional sanctions against the regime of Belarusian dictator Alyaksandr Lukashenka.

The original Act was signed into law in 2004, and the new bill would authorize \$20 million in assistance for both 2007 and 2008 for democracy-building activities, such as support for NGOs and international exchanges. \$7.5 million would be applied annually for radio and television broadcasting to the people of Belarus.

Both the House and the Senate must pass the BDRA (H.R.5948), after vetting by a number of committees with jurisdiction over such legislation. The House measure currently has the support of 11 Members (Berman, Evans, Lantos,

Lipinski, McCotter, McIntyre, Pallone, Shimkus, Van Hollen, Wexler, and Wolf).

JBANC is working closely with Congress and supporters of the bill to pass it in as timely a fashion as possible.

Regarding the Visa Waiver Program (VWP), there has been growing pressure to deal with the issue – both on the Hill and in the White House. While it is likely that current legislation to support increasing the VWP to include new NATO and EU members, including Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, will not pass during this session of Congress, there is hope that a solution is not far around the corner. One small break was Canada's announcement on September 27 that it had removed visa requirements for Estonian citizens.

A letter signed by 25 Representatives and sent to Secretary of State Rice on September 29 urges that the U.S. ease travel for temporary visitors from EU states such as the Baltic countries, Hungary, Czech Republic, Poland, and the Slovak Republic. These seven countries are all NATO allies, and would benefit greatly from the reciprocal visa free travel, enjoyed by 27 countries already beneficiaries of the VWP. Baltic Caucus co-chairmen John Shimkus (R-IL) and Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) are leading this effort.

NATO Summit – Developments in Europe

While U.S. domestic focus is now on the midterm elec-

tions, America is internationally preoccupied by Iraq, Afghanistan, the Middle East, North Korea, Darfur, etc.

At least for a moment, this will change on November 28-29, when the NATO Summit convenes in Riga, Latvia. The heads of states of 25 NATO member countries, including President Bush, who visits Estonia the day before, will join together to discuss next steps for the Alliance. JBANC will be represented in Riga that week as well.

It wasn't that long ago when Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were on the outside of NATO looking in. It is quite an accomplishment considering that only 15 years ago the Iron Curtain had just been lifted. It has been an important affirmation that these countries, which never voluntarily left the West, are now firmly a part of it as fully engaged allies.

While NATO membership was achieved for the Baltic countries, we should be mindful that NATO's door remained open for us, and this now presents a great opportunity for other new prospective members to join the ranks. We should be supportive of these aims to help broaden the scope of shared transatlantic values.

When Congress convenes, these and some other issues should be of great concern

(continued on page 6)

The Political Repressions in Belarus

Belarus is officially called a democratic republic, yet the advancement of democracy in Belarus has gone stale, earning it “the only remaining dictatorship in Europe” title. The international community and democratic neighbors often express their concern for the democratic process in Belarus and the reigning role of its ever self-empowering leader Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Constant human rights-, media- and civil-freedom violations by Lukashenka’s regime have been met with resistance and criticism both at home in Belarus and abroad. While there are now international sanctions in place, visible results and changes are yet to be seen.

If not a revolution, at least some change was expected in Belarus during the March 19-25, 2006 protest actions, reminiscent of the “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine and the earlier Baltic “singing revolutions.”

Over 10,000 people in Minsk joined to protest the March 19 election in which Lukashenka “won” his third consecutive presidential term and to call for new elections. Lukashenka claimed to have won a whopping 82% of the vote with an extraordinary turnout of over 90% eligible voters. The United States, European Union, and independent observers called the election unfair, non-transparent and failing to meet international democratic standards, and thus refused to accept its results.

In democracies citizens can voice their views peacefully and openly. Yet, the Belarusian government continues to persecute and undermine those opposed to its rule. Political



On October 15 2006, demonstrators gathered again in front of the Embassy of Belarus in Washington, DC to protest against the Lukashenka regime and growing repressions in Belarus (photo by Inga Lukaviciute)

arrests are increasingly common, and a number of leaders have simply vanished. The March protests were no different. Many opposition leaders, their followers as well as members of the international community were arrested and some even severely beaten for expressing their views and calling for a new election.

Presidential candidate Alyaksandr Kazulin; Anatoly Lebedzka, leader of the United Civil Party (UCP); Alexander Dobrovolsky, a senior UCP official; Vincuk Viacorka and Alexei Yanukiyevich, both members of the Belarusian Popular Front group; were only a few of those arrested in March. Over 200 other protesters were jailed including citizens of sympathetic countries, such as Poland and Georgia. Many journalists were detained for covering the protests.

The repeat election never happened and the voices of the opposition and pro-democratic youth have been silenced with the constant arrests, beatings and detentions. The civic youth orga-

nization Zubr (Bison), for instance, has disbanded hoping now to unite with the remaining opposition.

The independent media, scarce to start with, is now non-existent, as the Lukashenka regime has closed remaining independent newspapers and TV stations. Journalists are still being arrested and detained for criticizing Lukashenka’s rule or for siding with the opposition.

The Lukashenka regime has dealt harshly with external opposition as well. Many foreign diplomats have been harassed, or sometimes even worse. Mystery still shrouds the death of the Polish deputy consul in Hrodna (Grodno) Ryszard Badon-Lehr, who was found unconscious in his apartment on March 22 and died at a hospital a few days later. In another unsettling case, Lithuanian diplomat Vytautas Pociunas fell to his death from the 9th floor of the hotel he was staying at in Brest on August 23.

(continued on page 6)



The Washington Post reported on October 27 that opposition leader Alexander Milinkevich was awarded the Sakharov Prize, the European Union’s top human rights prize, for his fight for democracy in Belarus. Milinkevich ran unsuccessfully for president in that country’s sham March elections and was thrown into jail for 15 days for his efforts.

Legislative Update-Looking Towards the 110th Congress



(continued from page 4)

For one, there should be immediate focus on the situation between Georgia and the Russian Federation, which has descended into some saber rattling. The Georgians would certainly like to exorcise the spirits of colonialism and be free of meddling from Moscow, especially with regards to “frozen conflicts” in its border regions. Fears of Russian xenophobia are also growing, witness recent mob actions against residents of Georgian nationality, and the continuing blockade of Georgian agricultural products, wines and mineral water to Russian markets.

Another issue of immediate concern is the very sinister gunning down of independent Russian journalist Anna Politkovskaya on October 7. Her death and the growing list of political murders of independent voices in Russia raise questions about Moscow’s state of affairs.

It is essential that Russia chart a safe, secure, and stable course, but one that is non-threatening to its neighbors, and its own citizens.

Karl Altau

JBANC Managing Director

The Political Repressions in Belarus

(continued from page 5)

Unofficial reports from Lithuania claim the diplomat may have been murdered, while the Belarusian authorities call it an accident.

On March 24 a former Polish ambassador Mariusz Maszkiewicz was beaten, arrested, and jailed for 15 days for protesting the reelection of Lukashenka. After being hospitalized for cardiac arrest, he was released on personal demand from the Polish president. In July 2006 the home of Latvian diplomat Reimo Smits was raided, his possessions confiscated and he was accused of distributing pornography, a charge that was dropped in October.

Although civil, political, and human rights are fundamental in a democratic society, in Belarus they have been increasingly violated. Democratic NGO’s in Belarus are denied registration, which hinders the existence and development of a civil society. With opposition leaders in jail and youth activists silenced through threats

and arrests, the prospect of democracy overcoming the totalitarian Lukashenka regime in Belarus seems bleak. people, and especially the opposition, need to be united and that the independent media has to be supported.

Citizens of democratic societies should be supportive of others striving for democracy and freedom. What is happening in Belarus continues to starkly undermine the democratic process. It is concerning especially for its neighbors and other democratic societies. With a unified opposition and free flow of information, Belarusians perhaps have a chance for a peaceful revolution, which would eventually bring about these freedoms.

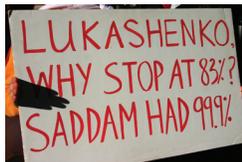
The Belarus pro-democracy movement has been accused of not being unified or proactive. Some skeptics question whether Belarusians really want democracy. We should continue to support the pro-democratic movement so that people in Belarus would know that their efforts are not in vain.

Some activists, such as Iryna Vidanava, have dared to keep the criticism flowing. Vidanava, a leader of the Belarus democratic youth movement and editor of a now underground, and digital-only student journal in Belarus, continues to call out for assistance and attention from the democratic world. She believes the Belarusian

With their first-hand experience in peaceful revolution leading to liberation, the Baltic countries know about getting successful results in building a democratic, civil society. We should be mindful of this, and help those in Belarus who prefer this course.

Inga Lukaviciute

JBANC Program Assistant



“We should continue to support the pro-democratic movement so that people in Belarus would know their efforts are not in vain.”

Review of American Latvian Association Activities 2005-2006



Information and political arenas:

ALA's delegates maintained close contact with the U.S. Congress and the Administration.

One of ALA's JBANC delegates, Janis Bolsteins, helped initiate a congressional resolution asking that the Russian Federation acknowledge the unlawful occupation of the Baltic countries. Both bodies of Congress passed the resolution.

Representatives of ALA and JBANC met with Congressman Alcee Hastings, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), to discuss the status of minorities in the Baltic countries. At the OSCE PA's annual meeting in 2005, this point was no longer raised.

ALA supported the fundraising for and erection of a monument in Washington, DC to the victims of communism. The plans and location have been approved.

ALA informs its members about current political events via e-mail (ALA Infograms), the magazine "Latvian Dimensions," and web page: <http://alaua.org> - in both Latvian and English.



The ALA Board at its annual meeting in Los Angeles, April 2006: Front row (from left): Valdis Ronis, Karlis Kirsis, Inara Jansons, Martins Duhms, Sarma Muiznieks-Liepins, Marcis Voldins, Viestars Rutenbergs; Back row (from left): Valdis Karklis, Janis Gramatins, Eriks Krumins, Valdis Pavlovskis, Visvaris Giga

Culture, education and charity:

Through ALA's "Office of Support and Aid to Latvia" \$83,705 (\$640,317 since 1994) was sent in 2005 to the Latvian Children's Fund. Each month, 47 economically disadvantaged families (more than 250 children) receive aid.

ALA acknowledged 35 individuals in 2005 for their contributions to the pursuit of Latvian traditions and culture in their respective communities.

ALA provided financial support to several small Latvian communities in the United States, so that they could organize cultural events. In 2005, ALA's Cultural Foundation granted \$35,000 to 16 different projects.

ALA is developing a computer database on Latvian organizations in the United States.

ALA's Office of Education supported Latvian schools throughout the U.S. with new textbooks, programs, teacher conferences, and examination materials. In 2005 ALA awarded 12 scholarships to Latvian university students, as well as those pursuing special projects. The development of a home schooling program in Latvian was supported. Currently, 450 students and 150 teachers are in Latvian schools throughout the United States. Student enrollment has increased in Washington DC, Los Angeles, Denver, and Chicago.

ALA continues to organize very successful "Sveika, Latvija" and "Sveika Dzimtene" tours to Latvia for young people and adults, with both Latvian and English-speaking guides.

ALA's Social Welfare Office, in conjunction with the Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration in Latvia, published a guide book for Latvian-Americans traveling or re-locating to Latvia.

ALA's Sports Office organized and helped sponsor competitive games in New York for 120 athletes. 24 Latvian-American athletes traveled to Latvia to participate in the "Kurzemes Tournament", with the assistance of ALA.

Other accomplishments:

ALA's Office of Fundraising reached its goal of \$75,000 in donations in 2005.

ALA's Annual Membership drive reached 109% of the projected budget; however Lifetime-, Gold Lifetime-, and Amber Lifetime Memberships were quite short of its projected budget.

ALA's membership reached 5,665 members in December 2005, about 3% less than the previous year. During the past year 141 ALA members passed away.

ALA's Century Bequest Fund has been underway since the beginning of 2005. Initial bequests totaled \$212,000, short of the \$5,000,000 goal. The core capital that ALA hopes to reach would ensure ALA's work for many years to come. Interest and dividends from that core capital would help defray ALA's annual expenditures.

The Lithuanian American Council: Going Strong at 90



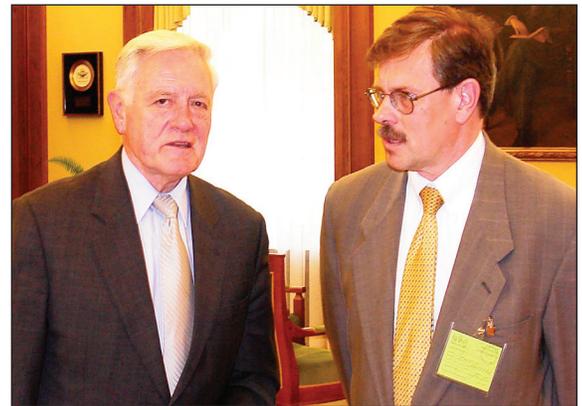
Last November, the Lithuanian American Council (LAC), representing 17 national Lithuanian American organizations commemorated its 90th anniversary of promoting democracy and freedom in Lithuania, with a three-day Jubilee Congress in Chicago.

LAC commemorates JBANC in Chicago

In addition to the official JBANC Commemoration marking its 45th anniversary held in Washington, the Lithuanian American Council hosted a special commemoration in Chicago on the 4th of July weekend. This coincided with the Lithuanian Song Festival which was opened by its guest of honor, President Valdas Adamkus. The Chicago JBANC 45th Anniversary commemoration took place at the Balzekas Museum, home of the national offices of the Lithuanian American Council. In his opening comments Saulius Kuprys emphasized the critical role that JBANC plays today in promoting the Baltic cause. The Vilnius Jesuit high school youth chorus presented the musical program. President of the Chicago Latvian community, Janis Vilcins gave an incisive historical review of the Baltic struggle for freedom, culminating in membership in the Western alliance. Proceeds from the Chicago commemoration went towards underwriting future JBANC activity.

Presidential Visits

In August LAC representatives visited Lithuania and were received by President Adamkus in Vilnius. President Adamkus met with LAC president Saulius Kuprys in a private meeting, at the Presidential Palace. The President had been an active member of various Lithuanian American organizations including the Board of LAC. Discussion ranged over a broad array of issues including the prospective visa free regime and the state of organized Lithuanian activities in the U.S. In a separate meeting Dr. Ramunas Kondratas also met with the



President Valdas Adamkus of Lithuania meets with LAC President Saulius Kuprys in Vilnius in August.

President and informed him about JBANC activities and invited President Adamkus to the JBANC conference next year. Dr. Kondratas presented President Adamkus with a copy of the latest issues of the JBANC Chronicle.

LAC Scholarship

The LAC works closely with the Chair of Lithuanian studies at the University of Illinois in Chicago. On October 2 Saulius Kuprys delivered a lecture on the historical and political development of the LAC, including JBANC, at the University of Illinois.

Honored Guest at the Draugas gala

On October 21, LAC helped in the organization of the annual gala for the Lithuanian daily paper Draugas. The capacity crowd gathered at the historic Willowbrook Ballroom was especially gratified by the presence of the most recent U.S. ambassador to Lithuania, Stephen Mull. He addressed the gathering entirely in Lithuanian. His entertaining and insightful commentary on his term as the Ambassador in Vilnius was greeted with a standing ovation. Draugas, now in its 97th year, extensively covers LAC and JBANC activities.



A small reception for Amb. John Cloud and his wife Mary in Vilnius on August 29. Vidmas Kondratas, Leonidas Donskis, Jolanta Donskiene, Ramunas Kondratas, Mary Cloud, John Cloud, Skirma Kondratiene, Inga Giedraitiene, and Vincas Giedraitis (Photo by Saulius Kuprys).

Review of Estonian American National Committee Activities 2006

EESTI RAHVUSKOMITEE ÜHENDRIIKIDES
Estonian American National Council, Inc.

The Estonian American National Council, Inc. (EANC) continues its work with a newly elected slate of representatives and Board of Directors. Our primary goal continues to be representing and supporting the Estonian-American community in the United States. In addition, we support worthy projects in Estonia, as well as monitor and respond to events there. EANC representatives have worked actively to represent the views of the Estonian American community, together with those of other Baltic and East European Americans, on national and foreign policy issues to the Congress and the Administration. The EANC has continued contacts with the Estonian Embassy in Washington, D.C., and Estonia's Consulate General in New York City.

Elections for the new EANC Council members took place this spring, and at the annual meeting in June, the newly elected representatives, who are in office for four years, voted in its new board of directors. The new president, Marju Rink-Abel, who received on the previous day JBANC's recognition for ten years of service on JBANC's board, will now again participate in JBANC activities. Other EANC board members are: Mati Kõiva, vice president; Ülle Ederma, secretary; Erik Puskar, treasurer; Lya Karm; Gilda Karu; Erik Suuberg; Airi Vaga; Ilmar Vanderer, and Viuu Vanderer. Mati Kõiva, Lya Karm and Erik Puskar are also closely tied to JBANC activities - Mati as the former EANC president, and Lya and Erik as the EANC's representatives to JBANC's Board.

The EANC has financially supported a number of projects, both in the U.S. and in Estonia. We have provided an extraordinarily high level of assistance this year because of some very important initiatives – in particular, the Victims of Communism memorial, whose groundbreaking took place in Washington in September, and the documentary film “The Singing Revolution,” which depicts Estonia's path to re-independence (it premieres at the Black Nights Film Festival in Tallinn on December 1, 2006). In addition, we regularly support Estonian American girl guides and boy scouts, the children's summer day camp in Long Island, and the Estonian Archives in Lakewood, NJ., and special projects throughout the year. The EANC has scholarship



The EANC Board, meeting in , 2006: Front row (from left): Mati Kõiva, Viuu Vanderer, Marju Rink-Abel, Ülle Ederma; Back row (from left): Eric Suuberg, Gilda Karu, Airi Vaga, Erik Puskar. Missing from photo: Lya Karm and Ilmar Vanderer.

funds at the major Estonian universities, and this year we enlarged several of them to increase the level of support available for students. Other support went toward the restoration of the Aleksander Church in Narva, a historically significant structure located on the border with Russia, and to a conference in Estonia on the reknowned Estonian-born architect Louis Kahn.

We have several major projects underway or planned. A book on the history of the Estonians in America since World War II is currently being edited. Our budget has funding for a history of our own organization, which was founded in 1952.

We are planning a congress of Estonian organizations in conjunction with the West Coast Estonian Days being held in Los Angeles in August 2007. And of course, we look forward to ESTO2008, the worldwide Estonian festival, to be held in London, England, in August 2008, under the auspices of the Estonian World Council, of which we are a member, representing the United States.

The EANC recently sent congratulations to the new president of Estonia, Toomas Hendrik Ilves, who is an Estonian-American, and who assumed office on October 9. He was born in Sweden, but grew up and received his education in the U.S. After Estonia regained its independence, Mr. Ilves renounced his American citizenship, and held a number of important Estonian governmental posts, including Ambassador to the United States, Foreign Minister, and most recently Vice-Chairman of the European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Commission. We hope that his election will further strengthen ties between Estonians in the U.S. and in Estonia.



For more information on the EANC's activities, please visit our website at estosite.org.

Victory For Ilves the - Lynx

“...the results gave Ilves 174 votes- just enough to secure an absolute majority...”

As the 345 members of Estonia’s Electoral College gathered in Tallinn on 23 September 2006, the nation held its collective breath knowing that their decision would impact the future of the nation. Will the reluctant incumbent Arnold Rüütel stay for a second term, or will the populist (and popular) former Foreign Minister and Ambassador to the United States Toomas Hendrik Ilves claim victory? Or worse, will the Electoral College deadlock and send the presidential election process back to the parliament and into uncharted constitutional territory? Whatever the outcome, the impact on this nation of 1.3 million people would be dramatic.

As the votes were counted, the results gave Ilves 174 votes – just enough to secure an absolute majority in the body and the electoral victory. Incumbent President Rüütel garnered 162 votes and within seconds of the confirmation congratulated the president-elect. His gracious move soothed the tensions that had built up over months of contentious and heated campaigning, and his call to support and assist the new president’s endeavours marked the beginning of a positive new direction for this nation.

The Campaigns

The campaigns from both sides – at times bewildering the candidates themselves as they seemed to take a life of their own – over the months saw heavy bickering and spin, degrading into accusations of media bias and personal attacks.

Having just marked the 15th anniversary since the restoration of independence, the Ilves campaign employed symbols from the “Singing Revolution” to project a link between their candidate and the freedom struggles – also at the same time reminding the public that President Rüütel, after all, was the former head of Soviet Estonia. The passing earlier in the year of former President Lennart Meri, who embodied the foreign policy successes of Estonia after the restoration of independence, also bolstered the challenger’s campaign as Ilves had modeled himself much in the same mold as the late President – who ironically was the main rival of Rüütel. In many ways, this was a campaign fought on the present, past, and future.

On the other hand, the campaign of the reluctant incumbent candidate President Rüütel also pushed ahead, accusing Ilves – who was born in Sweden and lived a good part of his life in the United States (and a former U.S. citizen) – of being in Washington’s pocket and being a stooge of the Bush Administration. The President’s campaign, led by controversial politician and Economics Minister Edgar Savisaar – the prime minister of the country during the “transition” period during the restoration of independence – portrayed Ilves as unstable and corrupt. Later, Savisaar accused Ilves’s campaign of manipulating the media, noting the excessive positive coverage of the challenger in print and on TV juxtaposed to negative focus on President Rüütel.



Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves.

The presidential electoral process began in the Parliament on 28-29 August, where a two-thirds supermajority of the 101-member body would elect the head-of-state. If the body fails to garner such a supermajority for one candidate in three rounds, the process moves to an Electoral College comprised of Parliament members and representatives of local government bodies. Just before the proceedings, Savisaar ordered his candidate’s supporters in the Parliament to boycott the event, arguing the Electoral College is a fairer representation of the nation’s wishes. No candidates, including Ilves, managed the supermajority with the boycott, ending the farcical session and sending the process to the Electoral College.

As the Electoral College represented mostly local council representatives, polling its members proved to be exceedingly difficult. Both campaigns went into overdrive with massive amounts of spin and negative attacks – often beyond the control of the two candidates. Footage of Rüütel speaking in the presence of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev during the “bad old days” about how Estonia would remain in the “socialist world” ran against smear campaigns against Ilves’s Russia-born mother.

(continued on Page 11)

Victory For Ilves the - Lynx

(continued from page 10)

However, when polls suggested a slight lead for Ilves, the Rütitel campaign, embodied by Edgar Savisaar, even suggested that the process was unfair and the nation would be served better if the process moved back to the Parliament. Ironic, as he was the person who ordered the boycott of the parliamentary round of the presidential elections earlier.

As noted earlier, with the 15th anniversary of the “Singing Revolution” having just passed, the Ilves campaign featured many of the same themes to inspire the public. Many of the nation’s most prominent figures in culture, music, and the arts all publicly endorsed Ilves and performed at mass rallies to support the challenger – with the entire picture reminiscent of the independence struggle. The metaphor worked, as the public (which had no direct vote in this process) overwhelmingly supported Ilves in every poll. This no doubt put pressure on some of the electors in the run-up to the vote. As the campaign ended at the meeting of the Electoral College, both sides realized they had been fighting a campaign for the future – and the soul – of the nation, and waited with nervous anticipation for the decision of the 345 people inside the Estonia concert hall.

Whither Estonia Now?

The presidency of Estonia holds relatively little power in this parliamentary democracy, but nevertheless has the ability to exert influence especially in foreign policy. It is clear that Toomas Hendrik Ilves will revert back to the style of the late President Lennart

Meri, to take a pro-active role in policy. Although this at times clashed with the government, a focused effort by the president would help Estonia pursue its foreign policy post-NATO and EU membership. The five years under President Rütitel, despite winning membership to both organisations, was relatively lacklustre and hands-off. The return of an active presidency would likely cause clashes with the government, especially after the parliamentary elections in March 2007

Ilves, known for his pro-European and hawkish views, will likely pursue a vigorous agenda for Estonia within the European Union. Having served as the Vice-Chairman of the European Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee, Ilves boasts excellent connections within the corridors of Brussels and in member states’ capitals. And with his past as ambassador in Washington and analyst at U.S.-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, his familiarity with Capitol Hill and Washington in general will give Estonia a more effective voice on the Potomac. Ironically, within a short time after his inauguration, President Ilves hosted Queen Elizabeth II and will soon be welcoming President George W. Bush in Tallinn.

However, his greatest challenge will be bilateral relations with Estonia’s biggest neighbor, Russia. While Ilves was foreign minister years ago, he remarked that Estonia’s three main foreign policy priorities were NATO membership, EU membership and relations with Russia.

With the first two priorities met, his challenge remains the third. Again, known for his hawkish views, his election brought pseudo-negative remarks from various Russian officials. And as a “foreign” president, growing up in the United States, his lack of Russian language skills distances him from a quarter of Estonia’s population whose mother tongue is Russian. Estonia, despite being a member of NATO and the EU, still does not have a border treaty with Russia. Ilves would need to work hard to earn enough trust from Moscow to enable further dialogue to lead to some border agreement.

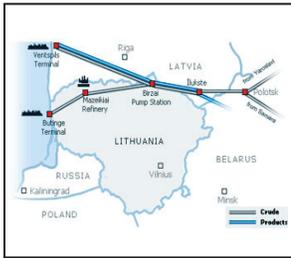
Nevertheless, the election of Toomas Hendrik Ilves as president, supported by the Estonian public and cheered by influential individuals throughout Europe and North America, will be a boost to Estonia’s reputation around the world. If Ilves lives up to his promise of being Lennart Meri reincarnate, it will help revive the dynamism of this small nation of 1.3 million that has charmed the world and earned the admiration of the international community.

*Mel Huang
Freelance Baltics Analyst*



“... the election of Ilves as president...will be a boost to Estonia’s reputation around world.”

Future Prospects For the Lithuanian Energy Sector



The growing concern in Lithuania due to constantly increasing prices for main services (i.e. energy, fuel, food) has intensified national debate on the decommissioning of the Ignalina Nuclear Power Plant (INPP) and Lithuania's dependency on energy supplies from the East.

Higher rates for heating and hot water in most Lithuanian cities are directly related to the increased price of natural gas imports from Russia. Bearing in mind the approaching closure of Ignalina and a growing reliance on energy supplies from the East, such issues as the future of the energy sector and the Mažeikių Nafta situation are especially sensitive and crucial for the country.

“Energy independence is a guarantee for our political independence,” stressed President Adamkus.

INPP, with two Soviet-designed RBMK-1500 reactor units, is the only plant of its type in the European Union. When originally constructed, it was to supply the northwest region of the Soviet Union rather than just Lithuania. As INPP was not constructed specifically for national electricity needs, the collapse of the USSR meant that Lithuania had approximately three times more generating capacity than required for national consumption.

Since 1990, INPP has typically contributed around 80% of the national power supply. As a consequence, during the 1990s INPP frequently did not operate at full capacity; however, subject to the availability of customers and the restrictions of the network, INPP has been able to export to Latvia, Belarus, and Kaliningrad.

Lithuania's commitment to the closure of the plant is reflected in the Accession Treaty to the European Union (EU). Protocol No. 4 contains an expression of solidarity on the part

of other EU Member States in providing financial support to Lithuania for the decommissioning of INPP and certain consequential measures in the energy sector.

When Unit 2 of INPP shuts down permanently at the end of 2009 there will still be sufficient capacity to meet national consumption up through 2010, according to forecasts. The main replacement capacity will be the Elektrenai (Lithuanian Power Plant) and Combined Heat & Power (CHP) plants.

It should be underlined that as soon as it loses nuclear power, Lithuania turns its face to the East. Experts predict that starting in 2007 prices of natural gas will increase by 20-30 percent. Replacement capacity is largely based on natural gas as fuel supply and so it is perceived that the closure of INPP will increase the dependence of the Lithuanian economy on imported gas from a monopoly supplier. This leaves the country more vulnerable to political pressures and does not contribute to the political stability of Europe.

The draft National Energy Strategy discusses the possibility of building a 720 million litas gas turbo block at Elektrenai. According to the Minister of Economy Vytautas Navickas, the most difficult period for electricity production in terms of cost will be 2009-2013.

Public and political support for the construction of a new nuclear power plant at the INPP site is growing. Most intergovernmental meetings of Baltic and Nordic countries include discussions on this topic. The new plant would cost 10 billion litas and could be built by 2015. Such expenses may be shared by all Baltic countries in close cooperation with the Nordic countries. Recently, other

foreign companies have shown an interest in investing in the construction of the new nuclear reactor: E.ON of Germany, Mitsubishi Heavy Industry of Japan, Areva of France, and AECL of Canada.

Similar discussions on future cooperation are ongoing with Poland. During their September 29 meeting in Vilnius, Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus and Polish President Lech Kaczyński discussed energy problems. President Adamkus raised the question of the electricity bridge to the West. He also invited Poland to join the three Baltic countries in their determination to build together the third block of INPP.

“Energy independence is a guarantee for our political independence,” stressed President Adamkus.

President Kaczyński agreed, noting that, “Having solved this issue [the electricity bridge] we may further consider the prospects of building of a new nuclear power plant block.”

While the future generation of electricity poses an urgent need to look for outcomes, the supply of oil has grown of crucial importance as well.

The proposed purchase of Lithuania's Mažeikių Nafta refinery by the Polish oil consortium PKN Orlen has increased the geopolitical stakes.

Moscow is displeased with this proposed sale and a number of politicians and analysts believe it is punishing Lithuania by delaying the repair of the Druzhba Pipeline, which leaked in July, by about a year, further cutting

(continued on page 13)

(continued from page 12)

off Russian oil supplies to the Lithuanian refinery.

In a similar fashion, Russia has used energy supply as a political weapon against Ukraine by cutting off gas in January and against Latvia by limiting oil supplies to the Ventspils oil terminal.

Mažeikiu Nafta is the largest enterprise in the Baltics and accounts for some ten percent of Lithuania's gross domestic product

Lithuania's new prime minister, Gediminas Kirkilas, tried to downplay Russia's actions, saying it was not unexpected and that a contingency plan was ready for implementation.

"We do not consider the current circumstances as a blockade. We are not dramatizing the situation. The reasons are said to be technical, and this seems to be true," the prime minister said.

However, according to the Baltic Times, the Naftan chemical refinery in Belarus, "which is located on the same spur as Lithuania's Mažeikiu Nafta, was still receiving its scheduled supplies. Reuters quoted a spokesman for the state energy holding company Belneftekhim, which controls Naftan, as saying, "Naftan is working as normal and will meet all its targets." (<http://www.baltictimes.com/news/articles/16055>)

Lithuanian President Adamkus expressed hopes that matters over crude oil supply would be solved in a business-like manner.

"I hope that Mažeikiu Nafta will not turn into a political football, that the decisions will be made on commercial grounds. And even if we happen to face some curbs, we will definitely have alternative routes and Mažeikiu Nafta will work," Adamkus told journalists on August 7.

*Dalia Grobovaite
JBANC Program Consultant*

Review of Latvian Saeima Election 2006

Latvia's governing coalition remains in power after the October 7, 2006 general elections by winning six extra seats and a stronger mandate. It is the first time a sitting government has won a second term in Latvia since regaining independence 15 years ago.

The three-party center-right coalition led by Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis got a combined 44.8% of votes and 51 seats in the 100-member Parliament in a 62.3 percent election turnout. Kalvitis was nominated to lead the new government on October 9 amid speculation that this government might last longer with voters opting for stability. Latvia has had 12 governments in 15 years. The ruling coalition is a union of the People's Party, the Greens and Farmers Union, and Latvia's First Party/Latvia's Way. Prime Minister Kalvitis is a member of the People's Party.

The main opposition, the New Era Party (formerly in the governing coalition but dropped out earlier this year), won 16.38% of the vote. The governing coalition held talks on Oct. 11-12 with representatives from the New Era and the nationalistic For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK about a possibility of joining the governing coalition.



Aigars Kalvitis



According to preliminary results the People's Party won 23 mandates, the Greens and Farmers Union and New Era parties each received 18 mandates, the Latvia's First Party and Latvia's Way alliance earned 10 mandates, and For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK collected eight mandates.

A total of 901,796 voters cast their ballots in this election, with turnout about 10 percent lower than during the last parliamentary election in 2002.

(From CNN and Baltic Times reports)

The Baltic Sea Union in Prague

A Soviet Era Underground Organization Supporting the Baltics



Before the founding of the Czech-Estonian Club in 1991, there existed in Prague the illegal “Baltský svaz” or Baltic Sea Union.

The idea for the founding of the Baltic Sea Union came during a meeting between two good friends – Vladimír Macura and Vladimír Novotný. It’s not certain if this idea came about during a visit with the bohemian Leo Metsar, or if there was something else behind this. In any case, January 14, 1974 entered the annals of the history of the Baltic Sea Union primarily because subsequent conferences were to happen during the second weekend of January. Leo Metsar brought to Prague a number of Estonian language textbooks and Vladimír Macura began to study this very difficult language for Czechs to learn. His enthusiasm inspired others.

The Baltic Sea Union had its own charter, newsletter, and anthem. Becoming a member had its particular conditions, such as being “proud enough to pronounce the “õ” letter” (the Estonian “õ” letter is practically impossible for a Czech to pronounce). In the February 1991 issue of the newsletter of the Baltic Sea Union “TEREKÄTT” (“Greetings”), one can read that it was established as a “strictly illegal organization” and was so secret that it isn’t clear even today who belonged to it. Certainly, it was very difficult to decode all the aliases of the first ten members, whose soul was Vladimír Macura, alias Kreutzwald. Other members were the clever Aavik, Tere-naine [Hello Lady], Mesilane [Honey-bee], Sitikas [Dung Beetle], Vana-Tigu [Old Snail], Ilmarine [from Estonian mythology], and Öökull [Night Owl]! In addition,



Former Latvian Ambassador to the Czech Republic Ivetta Šulca with Charles University lecturer Ivi Zajedova November 16, 2005 (<http://www.mfa.gov.lv/en/prague/news/photogallery>)

there were some figures like Kalevitütär [Daughter of Kalev, a literary figure] and Kaarditark [Card Shark] (Naděžda Slabihoudová), in whose name was convened the congress and whose assignment was to present the keynote address. In attendance were also the opponent, in the role of “Venepagan” (analogous to Vanapagan from the literary epic “Kalevipoeg”) [a play on words, as “Vanapagan” is “Old Heathen/Devil” but here “Venepagan” is “Russian Devil”]. Members were translators, literary critics, philosophers and supporters of all three of the occupied Baltic countries. Slovaks also took part in the actions of the Baltic Sea Union.

The Baltic Sea Union began its Congress with the anthem: “When the Tálina lake fills with water” (there is a Tálina lake in the southern Czech Republic) [another play on words, as according to legend the lake by Tallinn, Estonia - Lake Ülemiste - will overflow its banks and flood the city below on the day that the city is no longer being built]. The flags of the three occupied countries were raised, and national anthems were sung in the original languages. The singing of the Estonian national anthem in perfect Estonian by Baltic Sea members

even astonished Lennart Meri (on his first official visit to Prague as President of Estonia). He was no stranger to the Baltic Sea Union. Meri, who at the beginning of 1991 was still foreign minister, mentioned close ties to the Baltic Sea Union during the broadcast of a Czech-language program at the Voice of America. He paused with emotion, saying finally that hearing the Estonian anthem in Central Europe was certainly a rare opportunity.

As to themes presented at the congress, discussion centered primarily on the three Baltic nations, travel impressions, plus existing and possible future translations into Czech, among other topics.

Awards were also presented during the congresses: the acclaimed “Golden Sardine” but for sullied behavior, one could be granted the “Devil’s Shite.” “For the latter, the awardee might be one who, after the Russian language, wrote Tallinn with one “n.” The official languages of the congresses were Estonian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Czech, and Slovak. Guests were various – well-known Czech literary figures, sometimes Estonians from the homeland (Jaan Kaplinski, for instance), but also local persons of Estonian heritage.

(continued on page 15)

(continued from page 14)

Thanks to the work of the Baltic Sea Union, momentum was created in the publishing of books translated from Estonian, Latvian, and Lithuanian. About 100 works were translated. While literary exhibits were attempted on numerous occasions following the Velvet Revolution, the first eagerly awaited exhibition on books translated from Estonian was, after many obstacles, finally put together in September 2003, thanks to the joint efforts and exertions by the members of the Baltic Sea Union and Czech-Estonian Club. A few years earlier a literary evening was organized dedicated to [the famous writer] Anton Hansen Tammsaare, opened by the then representative of the Republic of Estonia to the Czech Republic, Riho Laanemäe. Vladimír Macura and Naděžda Slabihoudová introduced the work of Tammsaare that evening

followed by a presentation of Tamberg's short ballet work "The Boy and the Butterfly." At the same event was an introduction of Macura's analysis of Tammsaare's work, published by Antonín Drábek's company Balt-East in conjunction with the Czech-Estonian Club, and translated also into Estonian. Personally, my contacts with Vladimír Macura and the Baltic Sea Union began in 1982-1983, which led to the foundation of the Czech-Estonian Club in 1991 during a Res Baltica evening at the Prague Realism Theater. The evening was also dedicated to Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians who were still being subjected to Soviet occupation. The actors presented scenes showing how Soviet bases were forced onto the Baltic countries [from 1939]; discussions between Stalin and Molotov; and the secret protocols of the Molotov-

Ribbentrip Pact. Representatives of Charter 77 and the Foreign Minister of the Czech Republic were present at this theatrical evening with a political twist. Vladimír Macura (who died in 1999) dedicated a large part of his energy towards Estonia, the Estonian language, and much more related to Estonia. Thanks to his constant pressure, the Czech-Estonian Club was created.

While the Baltic Sea Union, as an organization, has become inactive, its members still take an active part in actions related to Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

*Ivi Zajedová, Ph.D.
Member of the Baltic Sea Union
since 1983, and a founding member
of the Czech-Estonian Club.*

Maryland Estonians Join to Strengthen Maryland-Baltic Relationship

A group of Estonian-Americans living in Maryland have joined forces with The Consortium for Mid-Atlantic/Baltic Education and Commerce (MBEC), to reform one of MBEC's sub organizations: the Maryland/Estonia Exchange Council (MEEC). The organization promises to further strengthen ties between Maryland and the Baltics.

MEEC's new chairman is Toivo Tagamets, who is also president of the Baltimore Estonian Society. MEEC's new executive vice chair is Mati Kõiva, past president of both the Estonian American National Council and JBANC.

MEEC hopes to assist in the process of building an official Sister State relationship between Maryland and Estonia as an outgrowth of the State Partnership Program. The latter program was originally conceived at the end of the Cold War between the Maryland National Guard and the Kaitseliit (Home Guard) of Estonia. Presently over a dozen partner city relationships exist between cities and counties in Estonia and Maryland, along with many educational and cultural links, and some newly developing business associations as well.

Related programs have started with Latvia and Lithuania. One of the most successful recent projects funded was a two-week American studies program in the Washington, DC area with fourteen Baltic students participating during the summer of 2005.

*Col. Milton Davis (Ret.)
MBEC Executive Director*



During the August 25, 2006 meeting to elect officers are (from left): Erik Puskar, Mati Kõiva, Anneli Hurt, Col. (Ret) Milton Davis, Toivo Tagamets, Jüri Taht, Karl Altai, Elizabeth Davis, and Dr. Bill Busch.

Latvian Cultural Garden Inauguration (Cleveland)



On October 8, 2006, the Latvian community of Cleveland inaugurated their addition to the Cleveland Cultural Gardens during a ceremonial salute. Among the many guests were a representative from the office of Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), the Latvian Embassy in the United States, and members of the Latvian-American community.

The Cleveland Cultural Gardens are a unique chain of memorials located in Cleveland's Rockefeller Park. Each garden is distinctive, but collectively representative of the city and its diverse heritage. Although the first garden was dedicated in 1916, the Garden wasn't formally established until 1926. There are now nearly 30 separate ethnic groups represented, including Estonians and Lithuanians.

Latvian sculptor Girts Burvis designed the monument and the architect is Kalvis Kampe.



Latvian-American war veterans attach the Latvian flag to a flagpole donated by the Cleveland Cultural Garden Federation. The veterans paid for the flagpole foundation and furnished American and Latvian flags for the inauguration ceremony. Pictured are (from left): Peteris Noviks, Vilmars Kukainis, Ojars Klans (back turned), Olgerts Kubulins, and Janis Zakis.

The project manager is Silvija Rutensbergs, chair of the Latvian Association of Cleveland. Rev. Pauls Barbins, current chairman of the Baltic Committee of Greater Cleveland, gave the blessing.



Latvian Cultural Garden Committee representatives Dzintra Kukainis, Baiba Apelis, and Ilze Resnis at the monument.

For more information, see article in the September 8, 2006 (Cleveland) Plain Dealer: <http://www.cleveland.com/news/plaindealer/index.ssf?/base/cuyahoga/1157704345124680.xml&coll=2>
Additional information from: <http://www.universitycircle.org/>
(Photos and information courtesy of Vilmars Kukainis)



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