

# JBANC Chronicle

An Overview of Baltic Events With a Washington Perspective



JOINT BALTIC AMERICAN NATIONAL COMMITTEE INC.

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## Congressman Shimkus Honored at Annual Victims of Communism Foundation Event

**Washington, DC (JBANC) ---** On December 1, 2004, the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation held its sixth annual Truman-Reagan Freedom Awards reception. The event was hosted by

the Czech Embassy and Ambassador Martin Palous. Truman-Reagan Freedom Medal honorees feted were the Lockheed Martin Corporation, Maj. Gen. John Singlaub and Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL).

co-chairman of the House Baltic Caucus, a group of over 70 Members of Congress sharing a common interest in the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, sponsored H. Res. 752, legislation which supports the

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*Photo (from left) - Czech Ambassador Martin Palous, 2004 Freedom Award recipient Congressman John Shimkus (R-IL), JBANC Managing Director Karl Altau, Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation Chairman Lee Edwards [photo by Raits Eglitis, American Latvian Association]*





Dr. Ramunas Kondratas



**“Will Putin continue to be viewed as a good friend in spite of growing totalitarianism and reviving imperialism in Russia?”**

‘Tis the season for elections. Let’s start at home with the November presidential election, which saw George W. Bush emerge victorious with 51% (59.5 million) of the popular vote and 286 electoral votes to John Kerry’s 48% (56 million) popular and 252 electoral votes. What will this mean for Baltic-Americans? Kerry’s presidential campaign made greater efforts to reach out and listen to the concerns of the Balts as well as other Central and Eastern Europeans. Will Bush’s second administration be preoccupied with the war in Iraq and the spread of democracy in the Middle East to the detriment of already weakening transatlantic ties and the spread of democracy in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus? Will Putin continue to be viewed as a good friend in spite of growing totalitarianism and reviving imperialism in Russia? It’s still too early to tell. But let’s hope not.

Let us go back a month and across the Atlantic to parliamentary elections in Belarus and Lithuania. To no one’s surprise, the October 17 elections to the largely powerless 110-seat House of Representatives in Belarus (to which not a single member from an opposition party was elected) and the refer-

## Elections



*JBANC Chairman Dr. Ramunas Kondratas presents a copy of the White Paper to President Valdas Adamkus in Vilnius on September 29*

endum to scrap presidential term limits went the way President Alexander Lukashenko and his henchmen orchestrated and, according to election observers, did not meet democratic standards. Alas for the people of Belarus, democracy is still a dream deferred. We need to work hard to seek funding for the Belarus Democracy Act passed by the last Congress.

In Lithuania, the parliamentary elections on October 10 and 24 were more democratic, but even there foreign influences were

felt. The new, left-leaning Labor Party headed by Russian-born tycoon Viktor Uspaskich and other oligarchs and former members of the *nomenklatura* won the single largest bloc of deputies in the new parliament by duping rural voters, pensioners, and others left behind by the Lithuanian economic boom with their populist promises of wealth redistribution and fighting corruption. Lithuania again is at great risk of being influenced by Russia, especially in the area of energy resources. Hopefully,

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## Legislative Update - A Look at 2005

2005 is officially underway, with the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress convening on January 4. Let's take a look ahead at the coming year, while we also keep in mind developments during the last quarter of 2004.

Besides the November elections in the United States, two very relevant elections took place over the last two months - in Belarus and Ukraine. There were elections in Lithuania and there is also a new government in place in Latvia. For the Central and East European region, the next critical elections are coming up in Moldova on March 6, 2005.

While the elections in Ukraine turned out well, the work for Viktor Yushchenko and company is just starting. The U.S. should do its best to support the democrats there, including helping Ukraine graduate from the provisions of the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which affect normal trade relations. Such measures will ensure that Ukraine will be a closer and more effective partner of the United States.

The situation is not as optimistic in Belarus, following the shady efforts of Alexander Lukashenko to ensure

his tenure as President continues, and to completely stifle any opposition to his rule. The Belarus Democracy Act (H.R. 854) passed in both the House and Senate during the first week of October and was signed into law by President Bush on October 20 (Public Law No. 108-347). The Act authorizes assistance to promote democracy and civil society in Belarus while also outlining sanctions directed against the leadership of that country. Since the Act does not appropriate funding, one of JBANC's priorities in the coming 109<sup>th</sup> Congress is to make sure that the provisions of the Act can be effectively implemented and resourced.

Another issue looming ever larger in 2005 is over the process of granting U.S. visas, specifically whether to open up the U.S. Visa Waiver Program (VWP) to additional countries. Currently, 27 nations benefit from this program, which offers three month visa-free travel to the U.S. Nine of the ten new EU members (Slovenia being the exception) are left outside, including the three Baltic countries.

A resolution (S. 2844) supporting the designation of Poland as a program coun-

try under the VWP, was introduced on September 24 by Sen. Rick Santorum (R-PA), and co-sponsored by Senators Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK). House measures had been introduced earlier by Rep. Nancy Johnson (R-CT 5) and Rep. Rahm Emanuel (D-IL 5). Although it never made it to the floor, it is predicted that with strong backing by the Polish American community, this legislation will be introduced again in 2005.

Another bill related to the VWP supported a waiver of the \$100 visa application fee to citizens of the ten countries now aiding the United States in Iraq and Afghanistan, including the three Baltic countries. This also stalled as the session came to a close.

The Administration opposes such amendments to the VWP. The main technical hurdle listed for the countries not in the VWP is the 3% visa refusal threshold. Other factors must be fulfilled in order to meet VWP criteria, including minimizing overstay rates in the U.S., which have also been portrayed as exceedingly high. There are no public figures for refusal rates, or explanations as to

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**"The Belarus Democracy Act (H.R. 854) passed in both the House and Senate during the first week of October"**



Simonas Girdzijauskas

## Orange Christmas in Ukraine

Christmas came late in Ukraine this year and it was in the color of orange. December 26<sup>th</sup> - the re-run of the second round of the presidential elections, was the day which everybody waited for with great suspense. In their

second chance to cast a vote for one of two Viktor - the pro-western opposition leader Yushchenko and the government supported current Prime Minister Yanukovich - the people of Ukraine have chosen Yushchenko to lead the

country. With preliminary results announced by the Central Election Committee (CEC), the opposition leader received 51.99% against 44.19% cast for Yanukovich.

“For fourteen years we have had our independence, but now we are free. The era of the great democracy is starting,” claimed Yushchenko in a victory speech before thousands of his supporters gathered in Independence Square in Kiev. However, Yanukovich is refusing to accept the defeat, claiming that his observers filed over 500 violations during the elections and that he will challenge the results in court.

The unprecedented third round of the presidential election was ordered by the Highest Court of Ukraine, which voided the official second round results citing massive evidence of fraud. Election violations during that second round were reported by thousands of observers and international organizations, including the OSCE.

The December 26<sup>th</sup> election was important because it represented a chance for justice for the Ukrainian people to decide the future political faith of their country. Furthermore, this election was crucial for the future geopolitical map of Eastern Europe and for the projection of democratic values to the East. Under the rule of President Leonid Kuchma, Ukraine has been an economic and political satellite of Russia to project and advance its interests. The government supported, Russian-

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“For fourteen years  
we have had our  
independence, but  
now we are free “

*-Viktor Yushchenko*



*Independence Square in Kiev, December 2004*



# JBANC

Representing  
the Estonian American National Council, Inc.,  
the American Latvian Association, Inc.,  
the Lithuanian American Council, Inc.

Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc.

November 24, 2004

The President  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of the Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC), representing one million Baltic Americans, we urge you to continue to make clear that the fraud that accompanied the Ukrainian presidential elections is not acceptable. In addition, it should also be evident that the Russian Federation should not be interfering in the internal affairs of sovereign nations.

This is an especially critical moment in the post-Soviet era. Given its size and population, the course that Ukraine chooses, whether to embrace the West or East, will have a profound effect on the entire region. The gains the region has made in the last ten years may be in jeopardy if Ukraine chooses the wrong path. The United States must continue to make its voice heard on this matter.

Sincerely,

Karl Altau  
Managing Director

cc: The Secretary of State  
The National Security Council Advisor  
Chairman and Ranking Member,  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee  
Chairman and Ranking Member,  
House International Relations Committee  
Hon. Richard Durbin/Hon. Gordon Smith  
Co-Chairmen, Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus  
Hon. John Shimkus/Hon. Dennis Kucinich  
Co-Chairmen, House Baltic Caucus

## “Elegant Victory” for Lukashenko Or Why Democracy in Belarus Will Have to Wait

Democracy in Belarus suffered a crushing defeat as a result of the October 17 referendum. Alexander Lukashenko, the last dictator of Europe, can now run for an unconstitutional third term as president and may remain in office for life. By official count, 86.2% of voters supported the referendum's presidential term provision. The international community dismissed the election's legitimacy by citing constitutional and procedural violations, furthering the isolation of Belarus. The next presidential election there will take place in 2006. Under the earlier Belarus constitution, the President is elected for a five-year term and cannot serve more than two consecutive terms.

Lukashenko ordered the 2004 referendum on September 7. He insisted that his rule is necessary to continue the reforms in Belarus and to assure the well being of its citizens.

The referendum was held in conjunction with elections to the internationally unrecognized National Assembly, serving as a puppet-legislative body to legitimize the president's authoritarian policies. The Assembly was formed after Lukashenko dismissed the 13<sup>th</sup> Supreme Soviet in 1996 in an earlier illegal referendum and handpicked all the deputies himself. Still, a small opposition group formed in the parliament, resisting the president's initiatives and working hard to publicize Lukashenko's authoritarian rule. Lukashenko promised prior to the new election that no opposition candidates would be elected. He kept his word. The newly elected parliament does not have even a single representative from the current opposition coalition “Five +”, which unified the main Belarusian opposition parties, NGOs, and thousands of individual activists.

Expecting large-scale election fraud, international attention was high. Concerned by the Belarus government's oppression of the opposition, registration procedures, suppression of independent media outlets and other authoritarian activity, the EU, European Council, and the OSCE suggested a number



*Belarus security forces dispersing a peaceful protest*

of requirements for the election. They asked the government of Belarus to make “political peace” with the opposition, ensure free and equal access to the media by all political groups, initiate reforms of election laws, and to reform the parliament's powers, giving it actual legislative force. Fulfillment of these conditions was seen as necessary for the reintegration of Belarus into the international community of democratic nations. The United States insisted on the eve of the election that the government of Belarus “take strong steps to protect democracy and human rights.”

It became clear that Lukashenko would ignore these international pleas. He chose nefarious means to remain in power, to further oppress the opposition, and to prevent the development of a liberal-minded society immune to his Soviet-style propaganda. He thus closed numerous independent schools and universities and suspended independent media outlets. He was setting the stage for his life-long rule of Belarus and was not planning to play fair.

According to results published by the Gallup Organization/Baltic Surveys in January 2004, 60% of Belarusians stated that they wished for a replacement for Lukashenko. Still, the official results of

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**“The newly elected parliament does not have even a single representative from the current opposition coalition “Five +””**

## Conference in Washington, DC Marks Second Year of E-PINE

A two-day conference on the Enhanced Partnership in Northern Europe (E-PINE) brought together a number of outstanding speakers from Northern, Central and Eastern European countries. The October 13-14, 2004 event was jointly organized by the U.S. State Department and the Swedish Institute of International Affairs and the Johns Hopkins University Center for Transatlantic Relations, with support from the Swedish and Norwegian Ministries of Foreign Affairs. The event kicked off with a reception at the residence of Finnish Ambassador to the United States Jukka Valtasaari.

The meeting was intended to raise awareness and generate dialogue with respect to issues of the Northern European region after the accession of the new NATO and EU members. It also aimed to give enhanced substance and longer-term perspective to the E-PINE 8+1 cooperation process launched by the Bush administration in 2003. The conference addressed a number of issues, mainly falling under a two-part agenda:

- Defining a new wider Europe as a result of the last round of NATO-EU enlargements; and consequently extending partnership;
- Addressing issues more specific to Northern Europe.

Possibilities of new “transatlantic societal security” were considered, as an initiative bringing together the U.S. and Europeans on common challenges of homeland security, including:

- Launching of a multilateral training initiative – the “Baltic Storm” security simulation exercise;
- Concentration on “soft security” for the Baltic countries within a wider neighboring region. It was remarked that the enlargement of NATO and the EU has not diminished Russia’s ambitions and capabilities to influence the course of events in neighboring countries. Thus, e-PINE countries should not reduce their attention to the security of the Baltic countries.

Recommendations for solving some of these crucial issues included creating mechanisms to facilitate change in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. Participants stressed that the latter must involve actions by Western governments, and not merely limited statements. A wide range of recommendations were offered to solve some of the issues in every region discussed.

### **Russia**

Considering Russia’s situation it was admitted that current strategies have not been successful in creating a more democratic Russia. Therefore, more active efforts must be made towards supporting democratic forces in that country. E-PINE countries should clearly engage in immediate response when disintegration of democracy and human rights appears, including support for movements supporting those issues. The voice of the broader Russian population should be listened to and communication should not be limited to strictly with the Kremlin. In addition, more attention should be paid to events in Chechnya and within the overall security situation. Apparently Russia has no clear strategy to effectively deal with terrorism in Chechnya. The potential spread of terror emanating from there may reach Western Europe. Western inaction in such a case will facilitate further destabilization of the region and strengthen the network of international terrorism. In efforts to solve the latter issue, accountability of international and non-governmental organizations must be increased.

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## An Open Letter to the Heads of State and Government Of the European Union and NATO

September 28, 2004

As citizens of the Euro-Atlantic community of democracies, we wish to express our sympathy and solidarity with the people of the Russian Federation in their struggle against terrorism. The mass murderers who seized School No. 1 in Beslan committed a heinous act of terrorism for which there can be no rationale or excuse. While other mass murderers have killed children and unarmed civilians, the calculated targeting of so many innocent children at school is an unprecedented act of barbarism that violates the values and norms of our community and which all civilized nations must condemn.

At the same time, we are deeply concerned that these tragic events are being used to further undermine democracy in Russia. Russia's democratic institutions have always been weak and fragile. Since becoming President in January 2000, Vladimir Putin has made them even weaker. He has systematically undercut the freedom and independence of the press, destroyed the checks and balances in the Russian federal system, arbitrarily imprisoned both real and imagined political rivals, removed legitimate candidates from electoral ballots, harassed and arrested NGO leaders, and weakened Russia's political parties. In the wake of the horrific crime in Beslan, President Putin has announced plans to further centralize power and to push through measures that will take Russia a step closer to authoritarian regime.

We are also worried about the deteriorating conduct of Russia in its foreign relations. President Putin's foreign policy is increasingly marked by a threatening attitude towards Russia's neighbors and Europe's energy security, the return of rhetoric of militarism and empire, and by a refusal to comply with Russia's international treaty obligations. In all aspects of Russian political life, the instruments of state power appear to be being rebuilt and the dominance of the security services to grow. We believe that this conduct cannot be accepted as the foundation of a true partnership between Russia and the democracies of NATO and the European Union.

These moves are only the latest evidence that the present Russian leadership is breaking away from the core democratic values of the Euro-Atlantic community. All too often in the past, the West has remained silent and restrained its criticism in the belief that President Putin's steps in the wrong direction were temporary and the hope that Russia would soon return to a democratic and pro-Western path. Western leaders continue to embrace President Putin in the face of growing evidence that the country is moving in the wrong direction and that his strategy for fighting terrorism is producing less and less freedom. We firmly believe dictatorship will not and cannot be the answer to Russia's problems and the very real threats it faces.

The leaders of the West must recognize that our current strategy towards Russia is failing. Our policies have failed to contribute to the democratic Russia we wished for and the people of this great country deserve after all the suffering they have endured. It is time for us to rethink how and to what extent we engage with Putin's Russia and to put ourselves unambiguously on the side of democratic forces in Russia. At this critical time in history when the West is pushing for democratic change around the world, including in the broader Middle East, it is imperative that we do not look the other way in assessing Moscow's behaviour or create a double standard for democracy in the countries which lie to Europe's East. We must speak the truth about what is happening in Russia. We owe it to the victims of Beslan and the tens of thousands of Russian democrats who are still fighting to preserve democracy and human freedom in their country.

*The letter was signed by 100 international dignitaries, policy makers, experts and others*



**“we are deeply  
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## Legislative Update—A Look at 2005



**“Many applicants who have been denied feel, perhaps rightly so, that they have been victims of an unjust quota system”**

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why applications are rejected, but recent rates for Poles were reported by one Senate office to be nearly 50%. It is suspected that the rates for the Baltics are much lower, but still considerably above the 3% level.

Arguments for dropping the strict criteria for the Baltics and other countries, are very compelling. First, on a technical level, visa application decisions are made by a very small number of officials, who as part of the reforming Immigration services, are said to be over-taxed. Many applicants who have been denied feel, perhaps rightly so, that they have been victims of an unjust quota system.

Other arguments for visa waiver status include prestige (although their countries assist the U.S. in Iraq

and Afghanistan, visa applicants are treated with suspicion), cost (non-refundable fee and loss of tourist dollars), and convenience (why battle the American bureaucracy when it is easier to go to Spain, for instance). In the end goodwill towards the U.S. is the biggest casualty.

The U.S. stands firm for now, despite the personal appeals of Polish President Kwasniewski, and a growing chorus of other voices in Europe, especially after EU enlargement in May. The best European hopes now appear to be lobbying for a blanket waiver for all EU countries. Fourteen pre-May EU nations are in the VWP; Greece remains the exception.

Overstaying in the U.S. is linked to economic factors back home, but it appears

that conditions in the Baltics are certainly improving, especially following EU membership. This being so, there would be less of an inclination for travelers to consider illegal work here.

Another issue which JBANC will advocate for in 2005 is to prevail on Russia to apologize for the illegal occupation and annexation of the Baltic countries. This is necessary to help Russia come to terms with its past and help in reconciliation between Russia and the Baltic countries. This is especially critical now since the Russian Federation has invited the leaders of the three Baltic countries to Moscow in May 2005, to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II. The end of the war was a disaster for the Baltic countries, as independence was lost, a

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## Elections

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most of the Lithuanian people and opposition parties will not let down their guard and remain vigilant, keeping in mind the lessons learned from the impeachment of President Paksas.

The most remarkable election of all took place in

Ukraine. The rigged results of the Nov. 21 runoff election launched a popular revolt and the “Orange Revolution”- shades of the ‘singing’ revolutions in the Baltics and the more recent ‘rose’ revolution in Georgia. A new runoff election took place on December 26. The greatest Christmas

gift to us all this year would be the triumph of democracy and freedom in Ukraine. Happy holidays!

*Ramunas Kondratas  
Chairman, JBANC*



## JBANC Welcomes New Addition to Office Staff

The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) is pleased to announce the addition of Dalia Grobovaite to the office staff. Ms. Grobovaite joined JBANC in late September, to begin assisting JBANC with preparations for its next conference, scheduled for March 3-5, 2005. Her duties also include coordinating outreach between Capitol Hill and the Baltic-

American community and preparing educational materials.

Before coming to the U.S. in 2002, Ms. Grobovaite graduated from the Lithuanian Law University (LLU) with a Bachelors degree in law and with a non-degree certificate in political science from the Vilnius Open Society Collegium. In 2001 she entered master degree studies at LLU and started working as a Chief Legal Advisor for the International Relations and

European Integration Department at the Ministry of Interior.

Awarded a Fulbright Scholarship in 2002, she arrived in the United States to study for a Master of Arts in Inter-



national Relations at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. At Syracuse Ms. Grobovaite received scholarships to participate in a multilateral peacekeeping seminar in New York and to work as an intern at the Labor Management Facilitation Project with Prof. John Murray. In the summer of 2003 she was hired as a teaching assistant for conflict resolution classes at the Program for Analysis and

Resolution of Conflicts (PARC) Institute at Syracuse University.

A grant from the EU Center and a Robert Shuman Scholarship provided her with an opportunity to spend her last semester interning at the Legal Services Department at the European Parliament in Luxembourg.

After returning from Luxembourg Ms. Grobovaite

defended her master's thesis on the "Strength and Weakness of the European Parliament: Past and Future" at LLU, and obtained her Masters in EU Law. Her master's thesis for Syracuse University was on "Testing Alternative Models to EU Elections". She graduated with her Master of Arts in International Relations in June 2004. Dalia spent the rest of this past summer interning at the Embassy of Lithuania in Washington D.C.

## Learning the Dangers of Democracy in Lithuania

The second round of elections to the Lithuanian parliament (Seimas) on October 24 2004, culminated with a record-high seven parties and coalitions receiving seats to the parliament, creating a mix of left-wingers, right-wingers, populists, and populist wannabes. The new government finally took office on December 15 and the current Seimas formation was set on December 21.

The 141 seats in the Seimas include the following (as of 12/21/04):

- Labor Party Group (led by Viktor Uspaskich) **40 seats;**
- “Working for Lithuania,” the incumbent governing bloc - Group of the Lithuanian Social Democratic Party (led by Algirdas Brazauskas) **21** + New Union (Social Liberals, led by Arturas Paulauskas) Group **10** (+ Chairman Palauskas = **11**);
- Homeland Union Group (Conservatives, led by Andrius Kubilius) **26;**
- Liberal and Center Group (led by Arturas Zuokas) **19;**
- Group of Liberal Democrats (“Coalition for Order and Justice,” led by Rolandas Paksas) **10;**
- Farmers and New Democracy Group (led by Kazimira Prunskiene) **12;**
- Non-affiliated members **2**

At first glance, the conservative Fatherland Union and the Center-Liberals were big winners, gaining on their 2000

parliamentary results. The right-wing bloc did not receive a majority but secured more seats than the left-wing coalition of Social Democrats and Social Liberals. A negative anti-right campaign before the election included accusations of bribery and corruption, and searches and seizures. While the charges were dropped, the right’s political image was jeopardized. Pundits doubted whether the Center-Liberals would even reach the 5% parliamentary threshold. Nonetheless, the right emerged as a strong political bloc and possible coalition partner.

This election pitted the “traditional” parties against the populists, which have risen in Lithuania over the last few years. The traditional left and right wing parties made an unofficial pre-election agreement to form a so-called “value based” or “rainbow” coalition. This was seen as necessary to prevent the populist Labor party, led by Russian-born Viktor Uspaskich from coming to power.

Immediately after the election, negotiations began to form the new governing coalition. Their hope was to create a close to 80 member majority, leaving Uspaskich and the populist-leaning, left-wing Prunskiene, along with followers of impeached and dismissed former President Rolandas Paksas out of the government and in the opposition. The next four years will be crucial for shaping Lithuania’s role in the EU and NATO

while the country tries to continue the momentum of dramatic economic growth that it has enjoyed since 2001.

Distribution of ministerial portfolios soon became a main issue during the negotiations. This was most apparent in the case of the Working for Lithuania coalition (Social Democrats and Social Liberals), which was determined to keep Algirdas Brazauskas as Prime Minister and Arturas Paulauskas as Chairman of the Parliament. In addition, the left coalition requested at least six of the thirteen ministerial posts in the government. With the right-wing parties having an advantage of a combined 45 seats versus the left’s 31, such demands seemed to question Brazauskas’ willingness to cooperate. The Conservatives responded with their own demands to create a more proportionate government.

There were other signs that pre-election promises were premature. The ruling coalition opened parallel discussions on forming a governing majority with the Labor and Farmers’ political bloc. The left attributed this to the “inflexible” position of the Conservatives. In short, when the left, having won fewer seats than the right, realized that they would not get their desired top posts in the government, they went “fishing” for a better deal.

The final nail driven into the coffin of the “value based” coalition was a promise by

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**“This election pitted the “traditional” parties against the populists, which have risen in Lithuania over the last few years”**



## Congressman Shimkus Honored at Annual Victims of Communism Foundation Event

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construction in Washington, D.C. of the memorial to the victims of communism.

In his introduction of Rep. Shimkus, JBANC Managing Director Karl Altau spoke about the importance of memory and thanked Congressman Shimkus for his role in remembering a sorrowful period in history for the Baltic countries and other former "captive nation" countries that suffered or still suffer under communist rule.

As a point person on the Baltics in Congress, Shimkus actively interacts with the Baltic-American communities and is also in close touch with the three Baltic countries. Along with his work with the Caucus, the fourth generation Lithuanian American is also a member of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly.

Shimkus recently stated his firm belief "that if we forget the repressive regimes of the former Soviet Union and other eastern European countries, we cannot move forward with democracy in those nations. We see this today in Ukraine and Iraq." ("The Southern Illinoisan," December 4,

2004)

Efforts to erect a memorial to the estimated one million victims of communism are steadily moving forward. Fund-raising efforts have brought in approximately \$300,000 of the half a million dollars needed to construct a ten-foot statue of the Goddess of Democracy on Capitol Hill, a block from the Supreme Court building. San Francisco sculptor Thomas Marsh has been commissioned to create the monument.

It has been fifteen years since the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. Congress gave authority in 1993 to build the memorial, with the federal government providing the land. The Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation has since then led the effort to raise the necessary money to build and maintain the memorial.

Plans are already underway for the 2005 awards ceremony and fundraising event, to draw attention to others affected by this legacy. The National Capital Memorial Commission gave its blessing in July 2004 to the proposed memorial site. However, before construction can be-

gin, approval on the design also needs to come from the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Planning Commission. Recently, opposition to the memorial has come from a local Washington, DC neighborhood commission, which has expressed sensitivities to the proposed construction.

Foundation Chairman Lee Edwards is vowing to move ahead with plans, and recently characterized the significance of putting up the memorial ("The Washington Post", December 2, 2004): "It is, of course, a matter of simple decency to memorialize the millions of victims, many of whom were buried like rubbish without even a simple stone to mark their graves."

The memorial, which will also "honor those who successfully resisted communist tyranny, educate current and future generations about communism's crimes against humanity, and to pay tribute to those who helped win the Cold War," is to be complemented by an online Virtual Museum – an Internet portal to like-minded museums and research areas around the world.



**"It has been fifteen years since the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989"**

## Orange Christmas in Ukraine

(Continued from page 4)

speaking Prime Minister Yanukovich from the Donetsk region vowed to continue a path of closer ties with Russia, including declaring the Russian language as the second official language of Ukraine. On the other hand, Yushchenko is a strong supporter for Ukraine's closer political and organizational integration into the family of Western democracies. Considering Ukraine's importance for Russian ambitions to keep its influence in the region, Yanukovich's victory became a "must-happen" matter for Moscow. In a blunt demonstration of biased Russian interest in the political developments of Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin visited the country twice – before the first and second rounds of the election, to show his support for Yanukovich. In return, Yanukovich visited Moscow during his election campaign.

With stakes set high, it was suspected before even the first round that a pro-Russian government led by Kuchma would do everything possible to not allow Yushchenko to win. The first act of this



Leonid Kuchma



Valdas Adamkus, President of Lithuania (right), with Viktor Yushchenko. In the middle - Alexander Kwasniewski, President of Poland

drama became evident when the opposition candidate was suddenly hit by a "mysterious illness" in September. It has been determined since, that his "illness" was caused by dioxin poisoning, confirming fears of a murder attempt against the opposition leader. Yanukovich and the government have fiercely denied any connection to the poisoning, although Yushchenko remains confident that it was the government that tried to kill him.

During the immediate aftermath of the November 21<sup>st</sup> runoff election, the opposition realized that "democracy" is playing out by the rules set out by Kuchma, Yanukovich and their Moscow election strategists. Under these rules, Yushchenko was a loser regardless of the actual vote, considering the signs of the rigged election in favor of Yanukovich. Not willing to let the government steal the election and single-handedly decide

the future of Ukraine, the opposition called for its supporters to take to the streets to demand a fair vote count. Hundreds of thousands of people responded and filled the streets of Kiev and other cities marking the start of popular protest. During the few days it took for the CRC to "tally up" the votes, tensions were building in the streets of Kiev and internationally as well. Putin and Belarus President Lukashenko were quick to applaud Ukraine's "successful" elections and to officially congratulate Yanukovich on the victory. These congratulations came even before the CEC published official elections results. On the other hand, President George W. Bush, joined by many other national leaders, demanded a fair ballot count.

When the CRC finally gave victory to Yanukovich by a 3% margin, western Ukraine filled

(Continued on page 18)



**"a pro-Russian government led by Kuchma will do everything possible to not allow Yushchenko to win"**

## Learning the Dangers of Democracy in Lithuania

*(Continued from page 11)*

Uspaskich that he was willing to give the Working for Lithuania coalition the posts of Prime Minister and Chairman of the Parliament, and seven of thirteen ministerial portfolios. After repeated refusal by their negotiation partners to break off consultations with Uspaskich, Andrius Kubilius announced that the Homeland Union would pull out of talks, effectively ending hopes that a “value-based” coalition would be formed. After briefly considering a minority government with the Central-Liberals, which would not include, but would be supported by the Conservatives, the Working for Lithuania coalition instead turned to the Labor Party and started finalizing the shape of a future government.

Subsequently, the left blamed the right for the failed opportunity to form a “value based” coalition. Although Brazauskas faulted the Conservatives for withdrawing, it seems that he and his partners were never serious about the rainbow coalition. They realized that a “value based” coalition meant giving away influence they would have with the populists. Brazauskas admitted that he did not “see the reason why we should give away our strong position.”

There is concern that the new government could be counter-productive for Lithuania. Could fault lie with the Conservatives and the Center-Liberals? They were in effect blocked by the left, which used Uspaskich as leverage. Brazauskas knew that

the right would dismiss any possibility of joining into any coalition that would include Labor. Since the coalition with the populists appeared to be a strong option for the left, they were in a position to demand key ministerial posts. Furthermore, it was rumored that Paulauskas would join the Labor Party if his demand that he remain as the Chairman of the Parliament was not met. Brazauskas was also intent on remaining as Prime Minister.

Under these conditions, cooperation with the left could have had serious long-term consequences for the Conservatives and Center-Liberals. First of all, it is doubtful that such a coalition would have survived until the next scheduled parliamentary elections four years from now. With 77 members in a 141 seat parliament, this prospective shaky coalition would not be nearly enough to maintain a well functioning government. The right does not need a repeat of the post 2001 election scenario, when their minority coalition held up for only eight months. Failure to keep together a functioning government would betray their incapacity while the left, under Brazauskas and Palauskas, would continue building its political capital.

Finally, a “value based” coalition would have allowed the Labor Party, in opposition, the comfort of continuing its populist agenda by criticizing everything and not taking shared responsibility for inevitable snags awaiting Lithuania during the next four years. These hurdles

include a projected slowdown of the Lithuanian economy, the closing of the first block of the Ignalina nuclear power plant - the country’s main energy source - by the end of 2004, rising oil prices, emigration of skilled labor and the brain drain, etc. The fall of a “value based” coalition under such circumstances would be a failure for the traditional parties and may pave the way for the populists to gain even more ground.

The Labor Party’s success was not an accident. It reflects the psyche of a section of the Lithuanian electorate that fails to see the dangers of populism and which blames the government for failing to give Paksas a chance to develop and prove his worth to Lithuania. There is danger that the Labor Party can claim four years from now that problems in Lithuania exist because elected politicians ignored the people’s will by not giving Labor a chance to work. Keeping Labor out of power by a “value based” coalition would not deter populism or the voter’s incapacity to elect credible leaders.

A Lithuanian says that a fire is not hot until someone gets burned. Likewise, Lithuanian democracy is still developing and sometimes a step backwards is taken before two can be made forward. This may be the case with the entrance of the populists into government.

*Simonas Girdzijauskas  
Program Director, JBANC*



**“Under these conditions, cooperation with the left could have had serious long-term consequences for the Conservatives and Center-Liberals”**

## “Elegant Victory” for Lukashenko Or Why Democracy in Belarus Will Have to Wait

*(Continued from page 6)*

the election and the referendum did not come as a surprise. Widespread reports of procedural voting and ballot counting violations showed that Lukashenko manipulated voting results to legitimize his authoritarian rule. Some observers were kicked out of voting places, none were allowed to supervise ballot-counting results, and only final and not intermediate vote counting results were announced. Numerous observers and independent media outlets reported many other election violations.

Although official numbers showed Lukashenko's initiative received 86% support, exit polls by independent survey interpreted matters differently. According to a Gallup poll only 48.4% of voters supported the initiative. Vincuk Viacorka, head of the opposition BNF party called the election “cheating on the greatest scale.” However, Lidia Yermoshina,



Alexander Lukashenko

head of the Central Election Commission, hailed the final result of the referendum, calling it an “elegant victory for Lukashenko.”

The OSCE determined that the elections and the referendum in Belarus did not correspond with international standards and failed to meet democratic norms. The Belarusian Foreign Ministry expressed regret that the OSCE “failed” to overcome its biased and predetermined negative view on the elections and the referendum under pressure by the EU and the United States. Furthermore, the Belarus government expressed its doubt about the legitimacy of the U.S. presidential election, citing alleged violations.

For Belarus to return to a democratic path and regain its credibility, it had to permit free and fair elections and restrain from manipulating the results, allowing the formation of a legitimate political system. In case of fraud, credibility could be gained by a successful popular movement leading the government to a fair vote recount, revote, or resignation. Both scenarios proved impossible under the current political environment.

If the opposition were to be blamed for not being united in their failed attempt to organize a legitimate presidential election in 1999 and with their loss during the election in 2001, it clearly was not the case this time. Forgoing their political differences and ambitions, the opposition presented a united

political block led by the coalition “Five +” as a clear alternative to voters. The coalition launched an organized pro-democratic political campaign hoping for a legitimate chance to gain parliamentary seats and to advance their democratic cause. However, Lukashenko proved that democracy had no chance. He made sure that not even a single opposing candidate gained a seat in the parliament. It was naïve to hope for a miracle.

Lukashenko also violently dispersed peaceful protests after the results of the elections were announced. Anatoly Lebedka, chairman of the United Civil Party, was brutally beaten and detained while participating in one such demonstration. Lukashenko, mindful of the “Rose Revolution” that took place in Georgia in 2003, stated that he would not allow a similar scenario to play out in Belarus. The opposition, fearing a crackdown, suspended their demonstrations. They have retreated to revisit and rethink their strategy for future survival in a state where a constitution and political system serve only as cover for Lukashenko's oppressive regime. It is evident that for now democracy in Belarus will have to wait.

*Simonas Girdzijauskas  
Program Director, JBANC*



**Vincuk Viacorka,  
head of the  
opposition BNF  
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election “cheating  
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foreign regime occupied the country, and the land and populations were devastated. Russian President Vladimir Putin, to entice the Estonian and Latvian governments to attend, has stated that Russia will be prepared to finally sign border treaties with those two countries, something the Estonians and Latvians have been ready to do for a number of years. If the Estonian and Latvian leaders do go to Moscow in May, they should make it clear to the world why they are there and that it remains Russia's historical responsibility to come to terms with the occupation.

To help with this process, JBANC has drafted a resolution which it is sharing with Members of Congress explaining the importance of letting Russia correct the historical record. Hopefully, such a resolution will be introduced during the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress.

Besides the Baltic countries themselves, other European governments, and institutions such as the Baltic Assembly and the Council of Europe are considering legislation related to acknowledgement of the crimes of totalitarianism, communism, and restitution for losses suffered at the hands

of the USSR, such as for the deportations of 1941 and 1949.

President Bush will meet with President Putin in February, which will be an opportunity for the two leaders to take stock of relations. Baltic-Americans will certainly be paying great attention to what is discussed. Later, in July, there will be an Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) meeting in Washington, DC. The OSCE PA has been a forum in which the Baltics have to routinely fend off Russian attacks. JBANC has met recently on a number of occasions with the Helsinki Commission to discuss the issues and the work of the PA and also of the OSCE itself. New OSCE PA president Rep. Alcee Hastings (D-FL), participated in a conference in Vilnius in early December and will be presiding over the July meeting.

Besides the Belarus Democracy Act and Russia apology resolution, JBANC is also working on gaining additional support for the building of the Victims of Communism monument. Congressman John Shimkus' resolution (H. Res. 752) passed the House on September 28. Working

with the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, JBANC hopes to bring in increased awareness to the cause.

As the 109th Congress begins, some events of note are coming up soon on the radar screen. On the eve of the Presidential inauguration are confirmation hearings in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (SFRC) on January 18-19 for Condoleezza Rice, the nominee for Secretary of State. It should also be noted that the new U.S. ambassador to Latvia – Catherine Todd Bailey of Louisville, Kentucky - was confirmed by the Senate on September 29. She will be sworn in on January 13.

In Congressional committees, the SFRC will be gaining new members Lisa Murkowski, Mel Martinez, and Barack Obama. The committee lost Democrat Jon Corzine, who is leaving to pursue the governorship of New Jersey, along with Sen. Sam Brownback, who is expected to be named as Senate co-chair for the Commission for Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE, known also as the Helsinki Commission). His predecessor, Sen. Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-CO) retired after the 108<sup>th</sup>

*(Continued on page 20)*



**“it remains  
Russia’s historical  
responsibility to  
come to terms  
with the  
occupation”**

## Conference in Washington, DC Marks Second Year of E-PINE

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### Belarus

Support for independent media and domestic sources of resistance in the country are needed. Student groups, non-governmental organizations and domestic human rights movements must be encouraged. Some specific measures include a “blueprint” strategy for post-change Belarus and continuing support of NGOs in Lithuania, Latvia and other neighboring countries; promotion of the U.S. Senate approval of the Belarus Democracy Act in Congress. As a side note, one of the speakers, Anatoly Mikhailov from the European Humanities University in Minsk, cannot return to his home Alma Mater as the university was closed by the Belarusian Government.

### Ukraine

There is a clear choice between a Ukraine oriented to East or to West depending on the results of the elections. Thus, more support and attention must be paid to the elections. The U.S. and Europe need a new “open

door” vision of a wider Europe, which would be applicable to Ukraine. However, Western efforts are plausible only if Ukraine indicates that it is serious about reforms.

Some comments pointed out that Western policy towards Belarus and Ukraine must be revised because it is ineffective and even counter-productive.

### Black Sea region

Resolution of “frozen conflicts” in Moldova (Transnistria), Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was indicated as a top priority. Euro-Atlantic strategy should include support for civil society and independent media and remove politically affiliated organized crime. Russia’s policy in the Black Sea region is aimed at regaining and maximizing influence. Russian troops still occupy parts of Moldova and Georgia. It is in its interest to keep conflicts “frozen” by manipulating the sides of the conflict. As Oazu Nantoi from the Institute of Public Policy

in the Republic of Moldova pointed out, the “main causes of the conflict do not reside inside the Moldovan state, but outside. As a result, solving the conflict in the circumstances of weakness and corruption of the Moldovan state can be achieved only by involving new players (EU, NATO, USA) in order to counterbalance the negative influence of the exterior that unleashed the conflict in 1990-1992, as well as its further preservation”.

The last hours of E-PINE conference were spent in a joint meeting with E-PINE Political Directors at the U.S. Department of State. The participants were invited to the closing reception hosted by the Swedish Ambassador to the United States Jan Eliasson.

JBANC’s White Paper was circulated among participants in the conference. Karl Altai and Dalia Grobovaite of JBANC participated in the conference.

*Dalia Grobovaite*  
JBANC



“Student groups,  
non-governmental  
organizations and  
domestic human  
rights movements  
must be  
encouraged”

## Orange Christmas in Ukraine

*(Continued from page 13)*

with the color orange – the trademark color of the opposition, marking the start of the Orange Revolution. Protesters numbering in the hundreds of thousands blocked access to all government buildings, paralyzing its work. The government responded by mobilizing riot police and special military forces that were on standby for the command to disperse the crowds. A spark of violence or an order to use force against the protesters would have created chaos and human tragedy. Fortunately, the sense and responsibility of the people of Ukraine prevailed and Kuchma, even under pressure from his key advisors, refused to order the use of force against the popular movement.

One of the key roles in finding a peaceful solution to the situation was the role played by international mediators: Valdas Adamkus, President of Lithuania, Alexander Kwasniewski, President of Poland, and representatives from the EU and OSCE, which also included Javier Solana, the EU's head of foreign policy. Their efforts to bring all the conflicting parties into a round table discussion were crucial in resolving the crisis and avoiding possible bloodshed.

The break that everybody was waiting for came from the

Highest Court of Ukraine, which ordered a repeat of the second round of elections. December 26 was the day the people of Ukraine got their well deserved chance to elect its rightful leadership. The opposition was able to pass amend-



Viktor Yushchenko greets his supporters

*Picture: Oulala.net*

ments to the election law to curb possible election manipulation, and the chairman of the CRC together with three other members of the committee were replaced by objective election officials, making it possible for the will of the people to be respected during the December 26 repeat vote.

It may still be too early to celebrate, though. There were disturbing news accounts, confirmed by Yanukovich himself, that special groups are being formed in the Eastern Ukraine for one purpose only - to cause disturbances in the immediate aftermath of the election.

Prime Minister Yanukovich, during a televised presidential

debate announced that he and 17 million Ukrainians who voted for him will not accept Yushchenko's victory and will defend their rights against "unconstitutional attempts by opposition to replace the elected president." In short, he was calling for violence, because it was and still is the only way he can prevent Yushchenko from claiming victory. Although Yanukovich asked his supporters to not accept the results of the election, stating that he will never recognize Yushchenko and "the methods he is using," the streets of the Eastern part of Ukraine – the stronghold of the Prime Minister, were empty in the aftermath of the election with no visible disturbances.

Victory for the people of Ukraine is now very close with the resignation of Viktor Yanukovich from the post of Prime Minister on January 3, and a new beginning is rising. We can only be thankful that the streets during this Christmas in Ukraine (occurring almost two weeks later, according to the Orthodox calendar), will be marked by bright orange, rather than a bloody red. Viktor Yushchenko told his supporters on election night that "I am certain that we will live in a new Ukraine – one that is free, democratic and prosperous." Well, Mr. President, we join you during this magical Christmas in our hopes for the bright future for the brave Ukrainian nation.

*Simonas Girdzijauskas  
Program Director, JBANC*



**"The break that everybody was waiting for came from the Highest Court of Ukraine"**




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## Next JBANC Baltic Conference to be held March 3-5, 2005 in Washington, DC

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**Washington, DC (JBANC)** --- The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) has announced that it will hold its sixth biennial Baltic conference on March 3 - 5, 2005 in Washington, DC. JBANC will be coordinating its conference with the US-Baltic Foundation's A Baltic Celebration, which will be held the evening of March 5, 2005.

The conference theme will be "Baltic American Political Activity: A Vision for the Future." It is based on JBANC's White Paper of the same name, which was published in mid-2004 and which defines some of the major issues and concerns for the Baltic-American community in the post-NATO and EU enlargement era. The main topics and panels of the conference will focus on: the legacy of communism, promoting democracy in the Baltic neighborhood (Belarus, Ukraine, Moldova), relations with Russia, transatlantic relations as well as NGO and business development and networking.

Please contact JBANC for details about the program and participation and sponsorship opportunities. Conference program information will be updated regularly on JBANC's website: <http://jbanc.org>

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## JBANC meets with Latvian Foreign Minister



*Representatives of Latvian American organizations and JBANC met with Latvian Foreign Artis Pabriks (center) in Rockville, Maryland on September 24, 2004*

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session of Congress. The House co-chair of the CSCE is Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ). In the Senate Appropriations Committee, Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS) takes over from Ted Stevens (R-AK).

JBANC will continue working with both Baltic Caucuses in the House and Senate to promote awareness of the Baltic countries and to recruit new members.

As the President's new budget request will soon be released, military-related funding to the Baltic countries, through Foreign Military Financing (FMF), and International Military Education Training (IMET) will come up. Figures for both these programs for all three Baltic countries has hovered around \$20-25 million for the last few years. SEED (Support for Eastern European Democracy) programs have dried up, including the last funding for e-PINE, which was expensed in the fall of 2004. JBANC is helping to seek other sources of funding for programs involving the Baltics and the Baltic region, including for educational, cultural, and civil society programs. With the Maryland-Baltic European Council (M-BEC), JBANC is helping to fund travels for Baltic students to participate in an American studies program in Maryland this coming summer, and for other related programs.

*Karl Altau*

*Managing Director, JBANC*