Belarus Democracy Resolution Passes in U.S. House

Washington, DC (JBANC) --- A resolution expressing support for democratic processes in Belarus on the eve of the presidential election there, passed in the U.S. House of Representatives by a commanding margin on March 8. The vote gained 419 "yeas," with only one dissenting vote. Two members voted "present."

The legislation urges the "Government of Belarus to conduct a free and fair presidential election on March 19" and also "pledges its support to the Belarusian people, their commitment to a fully free and open democratic system, their creation of a prosperous free market economy, and their country's assumption of its rightful place as a full and equal member of the Western community of democracies."

H. Res. 673 was introduced by House Baltic Caucus co-chairman John Shimkus (R-IL), who waved a denim ribbon on the House floor in solidarity with Belarusian democracy advocates during discussion prior to the vote. Congressmen Tom Lantos, the Ranking Member of the House International Relations Committee, and Christopher

(Continued on page 15)
Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania have successfully been integrated into the society of democratic nations. With their acceptance into NATO and the European Union, the Baltics can be optimistic about their political and economic futures. The gains in the Baltics contrast sharply with the ever-widening repression and loss of freedom under the regime of Alexander Lukashenko in Belarus. The planned March 19th presidential elections are being held under a backdrop of harassment and arrest of opposition activists. The state-controlled media does not allow for any real opposition to mount a successful campaign, and Belarusian President Lukashenko has already warned protesters of possible repercussions. These warnings are to be taken seriously, given that activists and journalists have “disappeared” during Lukashenko's rule in the past.

Thankfully, the international community has taken notice and has stepped up its own campaign. March 16th will be another day of solidarity, with protests planned in many cities around the world. President Bush has voiced his concern about the situation in Belarus, and the United States Helsinki Commission held a hearing on March 9th concerning the lack of freedom in Belarus. Americans can also do their part.

Congressman John Shimkus has introduced legislation (H. Res. 673), urging the Government of Belarus to conduct a free and fair presidential election on March 19th. Please support this most important initiative, for the sake of the citizens of Belarus, as well as for the future of democracy in Eastern Europe, by thanking those members of Congress who voted for this legislation.

President George W. Bush greets Irina Krasovskaya, left, and Svyatlana Zavadskaya, widows of a pro-democracy businessman and an independent journalist who "disappeared" in Belarus in 1999 and 2000 respectively. During a meeting on Monday, February 27, 2006 at the White House, the President discussed the state of democracy and human rights in Belarus in the run-up to the March 19 Belarusian presidential election, and stressed his commitment to support the people of Belarus in their effort to determine their own future. The United States is deeply concerned about the Belarusian government's conduct leading up to the election, harassment of civil society, and failure to investigate seriously the cases of the disappeared.

White House photo by Paul Morse
What is Plan B for Belarus?

On Tuesday, March 14, voters in Minsk, Belarus, lined up to cast their vote for the next president of their country in “early-bird” voting. The actual elections will take place this Sunday, March 19. Four candidates are competing for the post – Alexander Milinkevich, a candidate from the joint opposition, Aleksander Kozulin, former speaker of the National University, Sergej Gaidukevich, member of Parliament and, surprise surprise, after two consecutive terms and 12 years in office, yours truly, incumbent Alexander Lukashenko.

The pre-election campaign process and the government’s preparation for the final showdown was full of “exemplary work” by the Belarus special forces and intelligence personnel. On an almost daily basis they “uncovered” supposed plots against Lukashenko and the government of Belarus. One may wonder why Lukashenko is wasting his time, efforts and money for this “democratic” process. Everyone, including the candidates, voters and the “army” of international observers know that Lukashenko will gain about 70% of the popular vote during this election and will remain in power for countless other consecutive terms, since this was allowed by the highly questionable referendum of 2004. Why bother with this cat and mouse game of Belarusian democracy? Why not just declare democracy the product of “consumptionist and evil” Western culture, a threat to national security and the stability of peoples’ livelihood, and initiate another referendum, which, surely after another suspicious count, would give Lukashenko the lifetime mandate to run the country and stop giving the opposition false hope that it can actually change something?

These questions naturally come to mind, because in reality, this game of democracy may come at a high price for Lukashenko. The opposition,
Victims of Communism Memorial Update

Former Polish President Lech Walesa will be the guest of honor on April 26 at the Victims of Communism fundraising event in New York City. The goal of the gathering is to cross the fund-raising finish line, in order to begin construction of the memorial in Washington, DC by this summer.

Co-chairs for the New York City event include commentator William Buckley, former Congressman and Vice-presidential candidate Jack Kemp, Senator Joe Lieberman, and former presidential candidate Steve Forbes. Pfizer Inc., the world's largest research-based pharmaceutical company, is the principle corporate sponsor for the event. Cost is $1000 for individuals.

The Baltic-American communities have over the years given excellent support, and this year has been no exception. The recent response from the Latvian community is particularly encouraging, with the World Federation of Free Latvians and Daugavas Vanagi providing substantial contributions, along with the Cleveland Baltic-American community.

Over $600,000 has been raised of the $750,000 needed in order to start construction of the monument. Construction should be completed by the middle of 2007.

JBANC is planning to coordinate events in Washington, DC in the first part of next year to draw additional attention to this project as it nears completion, and to the legacy of communism in general.

(Continued on page 16)
Energy Update

Since the energy conference in Vilnius on January 26-27, several important events have occurred.

On February 26, the prime ministers of Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia met in Trakai, Lithuania, where they signed an official communiqué agreeing to formulate a common energy policy in 2006, to support the initiative to build a new nuclear plant in Lithuania, and to invite the region’s three dominant power producers – Lietuvos energija, Latvenergo and Eesti Energia – to invest in the planning and the construction of this new reactor.

On March 7, the three major power companies signed a memorandum of understanding in Ignalina, Lithuania concerning the preparatory work for the construction of the new reactor. The three companies will be equal partners in the deal and an executive committee made up of their managers will oversee the project.

The first step is a feasibility study, which is to be completed by November 1. For that purpose, technology and environmental, finance, legal, and electric energy transmission work groups will be formed. Unless the feasibility study reveals any problems or obstacles, the project will move forward and a modern nuclear power plant at Ignalina in Lithuania should be completed by 2015. This plant will be near the site of the current Soviet-era nuclear facility, which is scheduled to be decommissioned by 2009.

The technological know-how to build a reactor already exists and the energy companies also have a track record of working together on the electrical transmission line “Estlink” between Finland and Estonia.

Baltic Energy Concerns Take New Turns

As concerns about energy security grow in the Baltics following the recent Russia-Ukraine gas pipeline standoff, and in the face of development of the Russian-German Baltic Sea gas pipeline, the Baltic-American community is growing increasingly nervous about future prospects.

These concerns have led to increased efforts of cooperation between experts and the Baltic governments.


130 experts and representatives from government, national energy companies, corporations and state institutions from Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, Finland and Sweden took part.

The participants in the conference passed a declaration, which states that:

“Taking into account the forecasted deficit in electricity generating capacities in the Baltic region after 2015, the necessity to secure a reliable energy supply after closure of the Ignalina nuclear power plant and the older parts of the Narva power plants; considering the establishment of interconnections from Baltic states with the Nordic and UCTE electricity systems with the view to integrate Baltic electricity (Continued on page 17)
Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus

Co-Chairs

Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL)
Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR)

Caucus Members

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-CT)
Sen. Charles Grassley (R-IA)

Sen. Robert Menendez (D-NJ)
Sen. George Voinovich (R-OH)

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)
Sen. Barbara Mikulski (D-MD)

Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-CA)
Sen. Robert Bennett (R-UT)

Sen. Ben Nelson (D-NE)
Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA)
Sen. George Allen (R-VA)
House Baltic Caucus

Co-chairs:
Rep. John SHIMKUS (R-IL)
Rep. Dennis KUCINICH (D-OH)

Arizona:  Jim Kolbe

California:  Xavier Becerra, Howard Berman, Mary Bono, Ken Calvert, David Dreier, Elton Gallegly, Tom Lantos, Gary Miller, Grace Napolitano, Nancy Pelosi, Dana Rohrabacher, Lucille Roybal-Allard, Edward Royce, Loretta Sanchez, Adam B. Schiff, Brad Sherman, Henry Waxman

Connecticut:  John Larson, Rob Simmons

Florida:  Tom Feeney

Illinois:  Judy Biggert, Jerry Costello, Luis Gutierrez, Bobby Rush, John Shimkus

Maryland:  Chris Van Hollen

Massachusetts:  James McGovern

Michigan:  Dave Camp, Vernor Ehlers, Peter Hoekstra, Dale Kildee, Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick, Joe Knollenberg, Sander Levin, Thaddeus McCotter, Candice Miller, Michael Rogers, Bart Stupak, Fred Upton

Missouri:  Roy Blunt

Nebraska:  Lee Terry

New Jersey:  Robert Andrews, Frank Pallone, Bill Pascrell, Steve Rothman, Christopher Smith

New York:  Gary Ackerman, Joseph Crowley, Sue Kelly, Peter King, Carolyn Maloney, Michael McNulty, Louise Slaughter, Anthony Weiner,

North Carolina:  David Price

Ohio:  Sherrod Brown, David Hobson, Marcy Kaptur, Dennis Kucinich

Pennsylvania:  Robert Brady, Phil English, Tim Holden, John Peterson, Joseph Pitts, Curt Weldon

Texas:  Lloyd Doggett, Kay Granger

68 Representatives Total (as of March 1, 2006)

Party Breakdown:
37 Democrats
31 Republicans

Top Five States (55 Members):
California 17
Michigan 12
New York 8
Pennsylvania 6
Illinois/New Jersey 5/5

www.jbanc.org
Belarus Demonstrations in Washington, DC Attracting Growing Attention

Washington, DC (JBANC) --- About seventy people gathered outside the Belarus Embassy in Washington, DC on February 16 in support of democracy in that country and to insist that the regime of "Europe's last dictator" Alexander Lukashenko hold free and fair elections in March.

Members of the Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) joined the protesters at the daylong gathering organized by the civic initiative Poglyad ("Vision"). Stopping by to address the protestors was Michigan Congressman Thaddeus McCotter. Others participating at the event included Slovak ambassador Rastislav Kacer, We Remember Foundation President Irina Krasovskaya, and student journal editor Iryna Vidanava, featured in a December 28 article in The Washington Post.

Joining from JBANC were Board members Ramunas Kondratas (Lithuanian American Council), Janis Bolsteins (American Latvian Association), Erik Puskar (Estonian American National Council), and Managing Director Karl Altau.

(Continued on page 14)
Latvian NATO Efforts Chronicled in Newly-Published Book

Washington, DC (JBANC) --- A copy of the just-published book documenting Latvia’s efforts to join NATO was presented to Edgars Rinkevics, the State Secretary of the Latvian Ministry of Defense, on March 1 at the opening of the new Latvian Embassy in Washington, DC.

“The Campaign to Admit Latvia into NATO” book was published by the World Federation of Free Latvians at the initiative of its president Janis Kukainis, who made the formal presentation. Mr. Kukainis earlier served as president of the American Latvian Association (ALA) and the Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC).

The book is composed of two primary sections, the first being a comprehensive overview of the history of the Baltic countries joining NATO written by the current Latvian NATO ambassador Janis Eichmanis, who earlier served as the Deputy Chief of Mission of that country’s embassy in the United States. The second part is a chronology of noteworthy events during the campaign and related documents, compiled by the book’s editors, Anita Terauds and Karl Altau, JBANC’s Managing Director. Mrs. Terauds was the Secretary General of ALA from 1974-1998.

“The Campaign to Admit Latvia Into NATO” chronicles the dedicated work from 1991-2004 of not just Latvia, the United States, and other allies, but of the Baltic-American community, particularly the Latvian-American community and its organizations, to support the aim of NATO membership for Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania. The three countries joined NATO in 2004.

(Continued on page 15)
MBEC News

The Consortium for Mid-Atlantic / Baltic Education & Commerce has changed its name from the Maryland Baltic European Council but is still MBEC. It now will not only look at Maryland but the whole Mid-Atlantic region of the USA especially Maryland, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia plus Washington, DC. On the European side of the Atlantic, it is linked with the whole Baltic Sea region, especially Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

MBEC has two main branches:

A) The Council for Maryland / Estonian Education & Commerce (MEEC) is an outgrowth of the parent organization of MBEC that was formed in 2001 called the Maryland Estonian Education Council (MEEC). The purpose of this council is to sustain and further the historic and special relationship between Maryland and Estonia that developed out of the State Partnership Program (SPP) between the Maryland National Guard and the Estonian Kaitseleit.

B) The Baltic / American Institute’s (BAI) main purpose is to promote understanding and relationships between the Baltic and Mid-Atlantic regions through scholarly preparation of credentialed professionals. BAI will develop undergraduate and graduate programs in both American Studies for Baltic students and Baltic Studies for American stu-

(Continued on page 18)
Half a Loaf...is Better than None?

In late January, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe passed a landmark resolution (see below) condemning communism. Leftist parliamentarians in the Assembly had long resisted the resolution, but this time it passed by majority vote.

This is a very high level of government to make a condemnation of that kind. Kudos to the Assembly for that.

The resolution is well thought out and comprehensive and could serve as a model worldwide. It will, however, receive much less attention than it should because a companion measure to the resolution, which recommended that certain committees and other structures be created to study communism and issue reports of their findings, was not passed. Such an analytical effort would truly have been commendable and would have led to a thorough documentation of that unholy system that brought ruin to much of the world. This would have consigned communism to the same fate as nazism, its twin ideology.

But it was not to be. The recommendation failed on a two-thirds vote. Again, leftist members of the Assembly voted against the proposal in adequate numbers to defeat it. Many of them made the false argument that communism as practiced in some places has a human face and cannot be condemned worldwide. This flew in the face of the findings of the resolution that all forms of communism inevitably led to loss of freedoms.

The JBANC Board feels this resolution and especially the recommendation to create structures to study communism is well worth pursuing. The European effort was commendable, but it fell short. JBANC will consult with other affected nationality organizations and with congressional aides to see if legislation creating such structures in the United States would be feasible.

Ideally, like structures should be established in Europe, the U.S. and in Asia, to reflect the once broad sweep of that failed and murderous means of governance.

Janis Bolsteins

The PA resolution 1481 (2006) can be found at
http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta06/ERES1481.htm

“...is Better than None?”
The Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies (AABS)
20th Conference on Baltic Studies

http://www.aabsconference.org

June 15-17, 2006
The George Washington University
Washington, DC

Re-Imagining the Baltic Region:
Perspectives on the Past, Present, and Future

The central theme of the AABS 20th Conference is “Re-Imagining the Baltic Region.” Participants are encouraged to consider, among others, the following questions:

What is the “Baltic region?” Has the meaning of this concept changed over time?

What are the cultural, social, economic, environmental, military, legal, and political implications of expanding the borders of the “Baltic region” both westward and eastward?

How are the changes reflected in ideas and practices regarding ethnicity, nationhood, and citizenship? Wealth, poverty, and free markets? Gender norms and roles? Memories and the writing of history? Cultural representations of the region in film, music, literature, and art?

For additional information, please contact Daina Stukuls Eglitis, conference chair, at dainas@gwu.edu.

Tentative Conference Schedule

*Special events appear in italics*

**Thursday, June 15, 2006:**
11:00-5:00 Registration
10:00-12:00 Board Meeting (Old Board/New Board)
1:00-1:45 Opening Remarks
2:00-3:30 Session I
4:00-6:00 Plenary Session
7:30-10:00 Conference Reception

**Friday, June 16, 2006:**
8:00-5:00 Registration
8:30-10:00 Session II
10:00-10:30 Coffee Break
10:30-12:00 Session III
12:15-2:15 Conference Luncheon and Keynote Address
2:30-4:00 Session IV
4:15-5:30 Plenary Session
7:00-10:00 Books and Authors Wine Reception

**Saturday, June 17, 2006:**
8:00-12:00 Registration
8:00-9:30 Session V
9:30-10:00 Coffee Break
10:00-11:30 Session VI
1:00-2:30 Session VII
3:00-5:00 Plenary Session
5:00-6:00 AABS Membership Meeting
7:00-10:00 AABS Banquet and Presidential Address
What is Plan B for Belarus?

(Continued from page 3)

which was not united during the presidential election “show” in 2001, is rapidly learning from its mistakes and is uniting under one flag. After a string of questionable elections during the last decade, the international community has declared Lukashenko “the last dictator in Europe.” The EU and the U.S. are openly talking about possible economic sanctions against Belarus if this election is not free and transparent, knowing perfectly well that it will not be. So Lukashenko, knowing that the West, as it has done since 1996, will denounce the election results and will probably impose economic and political sanctions against Belarus, is heading straight towards a head-on collision with the democratic world. Why? Possible answer – because he needs it. He needs an enemy that he could then “protect the people of Belarus” from and remain in power as a heavy-handed ruler. He needs to create a crisis that he then can manage – it is the basic principle of public relations and team management. He needs the

West to impose crushing economic sanctions, close its borders to Belarusians and, in a perfect scenario, to locate a few NATO bases on its border, so he could lie to the people of Belarus that the West is the evil they need to be protected from and that he is the only one who can do it.

So, knowing that Lukashenko is not in the mood to take chances in fair elections, the final hope for freedom in Belarus – and at the same time the biggest risk for Lukashenko in his democracy game - is the hope for a revolution. Imagine the people of Belarus, outraged by their government’s attempts to rig the election results, filling the streets of Minsk and

(Continued on page 18)
Demonstrations have been held in Belarus and throughout Europe and the U.S. on the 16th of every month since last September, the sixth anniversary of the 1999 disappearance and presumed murder of opposition leaders, including the husband of Ms. Krasovskaya. The Lukashenko regime has been increasingly and aggressively suppressing dissent and freedom of speech in that country in what observers believe is an effort to intimidate voters before the March 19 presidential election.

The "16" symbol has become synonymous with the pro-democracy movement and lighting of candles on that date. In addition, the wearing of jeans has led to labeling of this struggle as the "denim revolution."

Each Washington, DC gathering has drawn increasing interest and attention, witnessed by the presence on February 16 of representatives from the Voice of America, Radio Free-Europe/Radio Liberty, National Public Radio, the London Times, and The Washington Post.

Solidarity protests were to be held again on March 16.

In preparation for that demonstration, a nationwide call has been made to stitch together a “rally flag” made up of ribbons and pieces of blue jeans. Following a Helsinki Commission hearing on Belarus on March 9, participants, including Kansas Senator Sam Brownback, who led the hearing, signed a pair of blue jeans destined to be part of the Belarus rally flag.
Belarus Democracy Resolution Passes in U.S. House

(Continued from page 1)

Smith, the Co-chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, also made floor statements, which pointed to the “downward trajectory” of the decade-old regime of Alexander Lukashenko.

The Lukashenko regime continues to harass and intimidate opponents and suppress opposing views. On the same day as the vote in the U.S. Congress, Belarusian Popular Front party leader Vincuk Viacorka was detained and was sentenced to a 15-day prison term for "organizing an unsanctioned meeting," which is becoming an increasingly common charge in Belarus. Viacorka spoke at JBANC’s March 2005 conference in Washington, DC.

Thirty-eight members co-sponsored the resolution, which was introduced by Congressman Shimkus on February 14. They are Representatives: J. Gresham Barrett (R-SC), Melissa L. Bean (D-IL), Judy Biggert (R-IL), John Boozman (R-AR), Kevin Brady (R-TX), Michael C. Burgess (R-TX), Dan Burton (R-IN), Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), Mike Conaway (R-TX), Joseph Crowley (D-NY), Geoff Davis (R-KY), Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL), Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), John T. Doolittle (R-CA), Eliot Engel (D-NY), Phil English (R-PA), Lane Evans (D-IL), Mark Foley (R-FL), Elton Gallegly (R-CA), Melissa Hart (R-PA), Kenny C. Hulshof (R-MO), Darrell E. Issa (R-CA), Mark Steven Kirk (R-IL), Ray LaHood (R-IL), Tom Lantos (D-CA), Daniel Lipinski (D-IL), Thaddeus McCotter (R-MI), Frank Pallone (D-NJ), Mike Rogers (R-MI), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Christopher Shays (R-CT), John H. Smith (R-NJ), John Sullivan (R-OK), Lee Terry (R-NE), Edolphus Towns (D-NY), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Harry Waxman (D-CA), and Jerry Weller (R-IL).

Latvian NATO Efforts Chronicled in Newly-Published Book

(Continued from page 9)

The next NATO Summit will be held in Riga, Latvia on November 28-29, 2006.

Following the presentation of the book to Mr. Rinkevics, an official opening ceremony for the new Embassy of Latvia was held. Latvian President Vaira Vike-Freiberga, Latvian Ambassador Maris Riekstins, Washington, DC Mayor Anthony Williams, and ALA President Martins Duhms presided over the ceremony, which was attended by about 150 guests.

President Vike-Freiberga is on a trip to the United States, visiting U.S. government officials, members of Congress, and was the guest of honor and keynote speaker at the U.S.-Baltic Foundation’s gala event in Washington, DC on March 4.
Victims of Communism Memorial Update

(Continued from page 4)

At the seventh annual Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation award ceremony in Washington, DC on December 13, 2005, Poland’s Anna Walentynowicz accepted the Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom on behalf of the Solidarity trade union during an event at the Embassy of Poland.

Walentynowicz said she was “happy to be able to take the medal to Poland and present it to the people as a sign that their work, courage and devotion have been appreciated.”

Walentynowicz’s firing sparked the first strikes and protests in the Gdansk Shipyard in August 1980. These and other events led to the birth of the Solidarity trade union in that country.

Other 2005 recipients were Pope John Paul II and retired U.S. Army General Edward Rowny, a prominent Polish-American. 2005 was the 25th anniversary of the 1980 Solidarity movement, and December 13 was the date of the declaration of martial law in Poland in 1981.

For more information about the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation, please visit: http://www.victimsofcommunism.org

Karl Altay
Baltic Energy Concerns Take New Turns

(Continued from page 5)

markets into the electricity markets of Western Europe and the Scandinavian countries. There is a need to prepare a common strategy of the Baltic states during 2006 and to prepare a common policy towards energy supplies from third countries of the EU.”

Lithuanian economics minister Kestutis Dauksys highlighted the current energy security situation in Lithuania and Europe as well as conditions for such security: trans-European energy network projects, increase in electricity efficiency, plans regarding a new power plant in Lithuania.

The minister stressed the importance to guarantee reliable and safe energy supply: “Trans-European energy networks are especially important to our country. Lithuania must join common EU electricity market as this would reduce the dependency on the supply from Russia.” The minister also touched upon the importance of reducing environmental damage and increasing energy consumption efficiency. Gradual increase of local renewable resources of electricity is inevitable.

Latvian economics minister Krisjanis Karins emphasized similar goals for Latvia: to diversify the consumed energy resources and build new capacity. Only the latter will ensure enough energy supply in Latvia after 2015 (all speakers noted that all Baltic countries will have enough energy till 2015 by increasing efficiency of energy consumption). The representative from the Ministry of Economics of Estonia noted that efficiency improvements should reduce the need for imports. He also said that Baltic states and Finnish companies are cooperating in the energy sphere.

Overall, all of the speakers stressed the following:
- Development of new technologies is needed;
- Cooperation in ensuring efficiency of energy and energy supply is essential;
- Common projects, programs and positions on future energy supplies in the Baltic region and beyond is needed;
- New power plant in Ignalina is a reasonable plan;
- Energy efficiency must be increased.

Prof. Jurgis Vilemas announced the results of the study “Analysis of Energy Supply Options and Security of Supply in the Baltic States,” and noted that results of the study prove that a common Baltic energy strategy is needed. The study also indicated that the demand for electricity will continue to grow about 3 percent/year in all three Baltic states. Analysis of different scenarios and models based on very high or high natural gas prices indicated how energy markets would act in short-term and long-term periods.

Polish representative Hanna Trojanowska, Director of the International Cooperation Department at PSE SA (Polskie Sieci Elektroenergetyczne SA), emphasized the need for common Polish and Lithuanian investments in the energy sector.

Finnish and Swedish colleagues presented the situation in Nordic countries, indicating that they have sufficient energy supply in years of normal operation and depend on imported energy during very cold winters and severe peak demand periods. All speakers from the Nordic countries stressed the interconnections in the Nordic area, hardly mentioning any interconnections with the Baltic states, except for Estonia.

Other notable participants:
- EU Commissioner Andris Priebalgs (he was represented by Andris Kesteris at the conference) (Latvia)
- Sture Larsson - Technical Director, Svenska Kraftnät (Sweden)

Dalia Grobovaite

“There is a need to prepare a common strategy and a common energy policy for the Baltic states during 2006”
MBEC News

(Continued from page 10)

MBEC is assisting with 14 partner city/county relationships between 14 communities in Maryland with 12 in Estonia, one in Latvia and one in Lithuania. These connections were also funded with grants from the U.S. State Department.

Questions should be addressed to:
*President of MBEC, Dr. Steve Herman sherman@garrettcollege.edu
*Executive Director of MBEC, COL (Ret) Milton Davis at mdeso@starpower.net or
*Karl Altau, the Managing Director of JBANC at jbanc@jbanc.org

Milton Davis, with Karl Altau

What is Plan B for Belarus?

(Continued from page 13)

other big cities, and, under the guidance of even more outraged opposition leaders, singing patriotic songs and waving denim flags in front of government buildings and forcing Lukashenko to step down from his throne, to give up the power he so brutally fought for all these years. While a credible and a hopeful scenario to free the people of Belarus, it most likely will not happen. And there are two reasons for that. First, is Lukashenko himself, who almost without a doubt will not hesitate to use force to bring down any popular movement. Second, is that unfortunately, after events in Ukraine and Georgia, the government in Belarus is very familiar with this revolution scenario and will do everything to prevent it from playing out – starting with the arrests of popular opposition leaders for “unsanctioned rallies” and finishing with the use of special militia forces.

So in the end, we should really ask ourselves what is Plan B for Belarus? How will the West engage with this autocratic country after yet another questionable election gives Lukashenko six more years?
JBANC Board changeover

As is the custom, the JBANC Board recently made its annual rotation of leadership. The American Latvian Association (ALA) has taken over the reigns from the Estonian American National Council, which led JBANC in 2005. Peteris Blumbergs became JBANC chairman for the 2005-2006 term, taking over from Dr. Lya Karm.

Peteris, a Washington D.C.-area lawyer, has been active in Baltic organizations for over 10 years. Most recently, he served as ALA's Vice President and Head of its Information Division. A native of Chicago, Illinois, Peteris has been living in Arlington, Virginia since 1992 - he is married and has four children, all of whom speak Latvian.

ALA President is Martins Duhms of Boston, Massachusetts, and the other local Washington, DC ALA Board representative to JBANC is Janis Bolsteins.