



JBANC

Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc.

American Latvian Association
Estonian American National Council
Lithuanian American Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2010-2011



Ninth Baltic Conference

50
JBANC

Anniversary
April 1-2, 2011
Washington, DC

Presented by
Estonian American National Council, Inc.
American Latvian Association, Inc.
Lithuanian American Council, Inc.

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Promoting freedom and justice for 50 years

JBANC marks a half century of advocacy
Organizes 2011 Baltic Conference

The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) held its ninth biennial Baltic conference in Washington, D.C. on April 1-2, 2011. The conference, which also marked JBANC’s fiftieth anniversary, brought together policymakers, analysts, and constituents to discuss a range of issues facing the United States and the Baltics today. More than 130 people attended the conference, which took place in three separate venues throughout Washington.

Speakers included Latvian President Valdis Zatlers, Lithuanian parliamentarian Emanuelis Zingeris, Paul Goble of FSI, Keith Smith of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, U.S. Ambassador to Latvia Judith G. Garber, Atlantic Council scholar Damon Wilson, former Belarusian Presidential candidate Aleksandr Kozulin, and “The Economist” journalist Ed Lucas.

Read more about the founding of JBANC and the 2011 Baltic Conference on pages 2 and 3

JBANC at 50

Representing Baltic interests since 1961

The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc. (JBANC) was founded on April 27, 1961.

The Committee was founded during a period of great political and social upheaval: the Cold War had been going on for 15 years, and would last for another 30. The Berlin Wall would go up in just over three months. John F. Kennedy had become U.S. President three months earlier. Sierra Leone declared itself independent that day from British rule. Colonialism was crumbling around the world, everywhere but within the expanding Soviet empire.

In 1961 it had been over twenty years since the Baltic countries of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania were occupied and illegally annexed by the Soviet Union. The Second World War had ended 16 years earlier in 1945, but the Baltic struggle would continue – in the forests and on the home front, but also across the Baltic Sea and further away across the Atlantic Ocean. The United States, thanks to the Welles Declaration of July 23, 1940, had not and would never legally recognize the Soviet takeover of the Baltic countries nor the legitimacy of Soviet rule. This non-recognition policy would last for over fifty years until 1991.

The largest migrations, however, of post-war Balts arrived in the United States about ten years prior to JBANC's founding, following the signing of the Displaced Persons Act into law in 1948 by President Harry Truman. This allowed tens of thousands of Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians to come to the United States, mostly between 1948-1952. These newly-arrived Balts joined or set up organizations, schools, and cultural and religious institutions, and thus established their presence throughout the United States, from small farming communities to the



One of many JBANC Washington, DC meetings. Baltic representatives meet with President Ronald Reagan at the White House.

largest urban centers, especially in the Northeast and Midwest. It was during this time, in the early 1950's, when the American Latvian Association and the Estonian American National Council came into being. Lithuanians historically had a larger presence in America than Estonians and Latvians, primarily due to earlier waves of immigration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Lithuanian American Council was established in 1915, and was reorganized in 1940 to address new wartime concerns and challenges.

As newly-arrived Baltic-Americans were settling in to new lives in the United States, there were a number of factors that intensified their desire to attain freedom in their homelands. The Captive Nations movement started in the 1950's to raise "public awareness of the oppression of nations under the control of Communist and other non-democratic governments." A Captive Nations Week resolution was signed into law in 1959 by President Dwight Eisenhower. This brought greater awareness to the plight of the Baltic countries and others suffering under Soviet misrule. As the Baltic communities in the United States coalesced, growing to be one million strong, the call to work together politically in a unified Baltic fashion was soon necessitated...and expedited.

The flame of freedom would and could not be vanquished, and JBANC and the Baltic-American communities would work together for its united goal of the restoration of freedom and independence for the Baltic countries.

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2011 Baltic Conference

Major Baltic conference draws attendees from both sides of the Atlantic

The Joint Baltic American National Committee's (JBANC) ninth conference, held in Washington, DC, on April 1-2, 2011, commemorated fifty years of struggle and ultimate achievement in the quest for Baltic freedom.

JBANC was founded in 1961 by the principal Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian organizations in the United States. The conference was held at the Washington Court Hotel on Capitol Hill.

This year's honored guest, the President of Latvia, Valdis Zatlers, delivered the keynote address at the conference's official opening on Saturday, April 2.

Friday's pre-conference program included a congressional briefing at the US Capitol building and a gala reception at the Latvian Embassy.

The conference addressed the following issues over the two day program: A retrospective review recounting JBANC's accomplishments over the past 50 years, with a

particular emphasis on JBANC's unique role since the restoration of Baltic independence 20 years ago; current transatlantic and security issues (energy and cyber security); military and economic concerns; Baltic involvement in ongoing challenges, including support for democracy in Belarus; and confronting historical revisionism misrepresenting the Baltic struggle for freedom.

Among the distinguished speakers were British journalist and editor of *The Economist* Edward Lucas, foreign affairs analyst Paul Goble, congressional staff members, State Department officials, Baltic ambassadors, and other members of Washington's diplomatic corps.

A significant presence of students and young adults bodes well for JBANC's continued development.

The conference was a resounding success and confirmed JBANC's unique role as an established forum, ably dealing with a multiplicity of Baltic issues.



JBANC's 2011 Board of Directors (L-R): JBANC Chairman Henry Gaidis, JBANC President Saulius Kuprys, Markus Videnieks, Lya Karm, Managing Director Karl Altau, JBANC Secretary Marju Rink-Abel, Latvian President Valdis Zatlers, JBANC Treasurer Juris Mezinskis, Ingrida Lusia, Jaak Pedak, and Peter Chereson.

Photo by Inga Lukavičiūtė

<http://jbanc.org>

2011 Baltic Conference speakers and guests



JBANC Board members meet with President Zatlers before his remarks at the April 2 conference



JBANC Managing Director Karl Altau



United States Ambassador to Latvia Judith G. Garber



JBANC President Saulius Kuprys



"JBANC's Role Since 1961 and Baltic Activism" included Janis Kukainis, Paul Goble, Edward Lucas, Mel Huang, and Mari-Ann Kelam.



Ambassador Michael Kozak, Special Advisor on Human Rights to the Department of State, served as the luncheon keynote speaker



A large number of students actively participated in the conference. First row, l to r: Karolina Zigmantaitė, Laura Stankevičiūtė, Margarita Pupšytė, Aldona Gintautaitė, Linas Vaitkus, second row: Dalius Savickas, Paulius Stasiukonis, LAC pres. Saulius Kuprys, Paulius Vertelka, JBANC Chairman Henry Gaidis and Marius Bulskis.

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Latvian President Valdis Zatlers attends 2011 Baltic Conference



Latvian President Valdis Zatlers in an animated discussion with Dr. Stan Backaitis, LAC representative at The Baltic Institute, and Algis Lukas of the Lithuanian Community.



JBANC Board member Lya Karm greets Latvian President Valdis Zatlers

State Department and National Security Council Meetings



CEEC members meet with officials from the National Security Council and the Vice President's office

JBANC representatives met with State Department officials several times throughout the year, both to work with them in coordinating our conference and to express JBANC's concerns about issues in Central and Eastern Europe. JBANC also met a number of times with members of the National Security Council, in conjunction with the Central and East European Coalition.

Right: CEEC meeting with Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Philip H. Gordon



Dump the Stalin Bust Campaign

JBANC efforts succeeded in dethroning the tyrant

JBANC worked with members of the American Legion to campaign against the installation of a Josef Stalin bust at the National D-Day Memorial in Bedford, Virginia. D-Day Memorial sponsors installed the bust with the claim that Stalin helped defeat Hitler's troops in World War II, but ignored the crimes against humanity perpetrated by Stalin and his troops. It was removed in September, but could possibly be reinstated later in 2011.



Harry Wu was honored for his work in promoting democratic reforms in China

Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation's Medal of Freedom Award

JBANC members also helped organize the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation's November 2010 Truman-Reagan Medal of Freedom awards ceremony at the Embassy of Lithuania. Honorees Robert Conquest, Emanuelis Zingeris, and Harry Wu were lauded for their efforts in combatting communism throughout the world.



A pedestal without a bust. The bust of Soviet dictator Josef Stalin was removed from the Bedford, Virginia, D-Day memorial.

Baltic Democracy Awards

JBANC presented Baltic Democracy Awards to Representative Christopher Smith (R-NJ) and Senator Benjamin Cardin (D-MD) in recognition of their work in promoting human rights and democracy. Smith and Cardin are co-chairs of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission). JBANC representatives met with Rep. Smith on April 14, 2011 to present his award.



(L-R) JBANC's Karl Altau, JBANC Board member Markus Videnieks, Representative Christopher Smith, JBANC's Peter Cherson, Piret Laverik of the Central and East European Coalition, and Orest Deychakiwsky of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Embassy Outreach

JBANC sponsored and organized three embassy meetings throughout the year that gave Board members an opportunity to meet with representatives of all three Baltic embassies – a September 2010 meeting at the Embassy of Estonia, a March 2011 meeting at the Embassy of Latvia, and a June 2011 meeting at the Embassy of Lithuania. These gatherings allowed participants to explain their interests, discuss their accomplishments, and brainstorm for possible courses of action in the future.

Central and East European Coalition Advocacy Days

JBANC joined its partners in the Central and East European Coalition, an organization representing more than twenty million Americans of Central and Eastern European descent, to hold two Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C. These events allowed participants to meet Congressmen and staffers and to express their views on topics pertinent to Central and Eastern Europe. The CEEC's first Advocacy Day, held on September 23, 2010, drew participants from around the country and included more than 20 meetings with key Congressional figures. The CEEC also held an Advocacy Day on April 13, 2011 that focused primarily on CEEC representatives in the Washington, D.C. area and comprised eight meetings with key Congressional staff.



Participants in the CEEC's April 2011 Advocacy Day included JBANC's Karl Altau, JBANC Board member Markus Videnieks, JBANC's Peter Chereson, and Stanley Backaitis of the Lithuanian American Council, Inc.



JBANC representative Peter Chereson and Senator Claire McCaskill



CEEC members and Elyse Anderson, foreign policy advisor to Congressman Frank Wolf.



JBANC Managing Director Karl Altau, JBANC Chairman Henry Gaidis, Eric Lausten (Assistant to Congressman Daniel Lipinski), JBANC President Saulius Kuprys, and Paulius Vertelka

JBANC at 50, *continued*

Today, fifty years later, we commemorate the vision, fortitude, and common purpose of our JBANC founders, and celebrate twenty years since the restoration of independence and freedom for the Baltic countries.

The declaration of the founding of JBANC was

signed by Julius Kangur (Chairman of the Estonian National Committee in the U.S.A.), Peter P. Lejins (President of the American Latvian Association Inc., in the United States), Leonard Simutis (President) and Pius Grigaitis (Executive Secretary of the Lithuanian American Council, Inc.) in Washington DC, on April 27, 1961.

The Joint Baltic American National Committee, Inc.

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American Latvian Association

STAFF

Karl Altau, Managing Director

Peter Cherson, Program Manager

Legislative Advocacy and Congressional Outreach

JBANC urged lawmakers and constituents to support several pieces of legislation related to its central mission this year, promoting Baltic interests and human rights throughout Central and Eastern Europe. These included H.Con.Res.267, legislation commemorating the Baltic nations on the twentieth anniversary of the restoration of their independence from the Soviet Union, and H.Res.515, calling for U.S. sanctions against the Belarusian government in light of Aleksandr Lukashenka's continued repression of Belarus' democratic opposition. H.Con.Res.267 passed by unanimous floor vote in December 2010, while H.Res.515 is currently being debated in the House of Representatives.

JBANC representatives also invited more than 100 members of the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate to join the House Baltic Caucus and the Senate Baltic Freedom Caucus. In addition, JBANC members regularly met with legislators and their aides throughout the year to discuss JBANC's accomplishments and to raise awareness of issues confronting the Baltic region today.



Advocacy Day participants meet near the U.S. Capitol building in September 2010