

105TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

S. CON. RES. 18

Recognizing March 25, 1997, as the anniversary of the Proclamation of Belarusian independence, and calling on the Government of Belarus to respect fundamental freedoms and human rights.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

MARCH 20, 1997

Mr. LAUTENBERG (for himself and Mr. D'AMATO) submitted the following concurrent resolution; which was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations

CONCURRENT RESOLUTION

Recognizing March 25, 1997, as the anniversary of the Proclamation of Belarusian independence, and calling on the Government of Belarus to respect fundamental freedoms and human rights.

Whereas the seedlings of an independent and democratic Belarus, for which generations of Belarusian patriots have fought and died, are in danger of being swept away as a result of the policies of Belarusian President Alaksandr Lukashenka and the efforts of Russian nationalist leaders to recreate the Soviet empire;

Whereas March 25th is the date that Belarusians throughout the world salute the sacrifices and bravery of the members of the Council of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, who in 1918 liberated their country from czarist rule;

Whereas the Russian Duma in March 1996 voted to declare void the 1991 agreement dissolving the Soviet Union;

Whereas the referendum adopted in November of 1996 expanded President Lukashenka's already considerable powers in violation of the Constitution of Belarus and basic democratic principles;

Whereas on January 16, 1996, the Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for the Security and Cooperation of Europe urged the Government of Belarus "to enter into dialogue with the opposition and to ensure freedom of media and not restrict access to the media for members of the opposition";

Whereas on March 14, 1997, the United States Department of State issued a statement that calls on President Lukashenka's Government to exercise restraint and to observe the international human rights agreements to which it is a party; and

Whereas the Government of President Lukashenka has monopolized the mass media, undermined the constitutional foundation for the separation of powers, suppressed the freedom of the press, undermined efforts to restore the Belarusian language, and undercut the ground for all-Belarusian unity: Now, therefore, be it

1 *Resolved by the Senate (the House of Representatives*
 2 *concurring)*, That it is the sense of Congress that the
 3 President should urge President Lukashenka and the Gov-
 4 ernment of Belarus to—

5 (1) abide by the provisions of—

6 (A) the Helsinki Final Act; and

- 1 (B) other agreements of the Organization
2 for the Security and Cooperation of Europe;
3 (2) guarantee human rights and fundamental
4 freedoms, including freedom of the press, assembly,
5 and expression; and
6 (3) guarantee separation of powers.

7 **SEC. 2. SUPPORT OF INDEPENDENCE.**

8 It is the policy of the United States to support the
9 people of Belarus in—

- 10 (1) maintaining independent statehood;
11 (2) promoting the rule of law, human rights,
12 and fundamental freedoms; and
13 (3) assuring that Belarus has the opportunity
14 to survive as an equal and full-fledged member-state
15 among the sovereign nations of the world.

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