

## ***The Unfinished Revolution***

**Klāvs Zichmanis – 17 September 2011**

The 2011 extraordinary parliamentary election is only days away, and is perhaps the most important election in the renewed Latvian state's history. President Zatlers' decision to dismiss the 10th Saeima (parliament) gives an opportunity to correct the error made in the early years of reestablishing the Latvian state. At that time, Latvia compromised with the former regime and did not make a break with it as did Estonia. As a result, the old party nomenclatura, the former KGB workers and bureaucrats largely continued to administer and rule Latvia in the accustomed Soviet manner. The effect of this compromise decision is seen in the economy and social structure of today. This election makes it possible to correct that decision, replace the old ruling elite with younger individuals without the Soviet era background and who grew up in post-Soviet times. If the election results give Parliament a majority to what is called the 51+ coalition (Vienotība + Zatlera reformu partija + Nacionālā apvienība), it will be the first government in restored Latvia, in which the coalition partners will not include the Soviet era elite.

If the Saeima had not been dismissed, the current coalition government led by Vienotība would most likely have fallen this September. In its stead, a new coalition, led by SC with ZZS and LPP/LC, as coalition partners, would rule until 2014, the next scheduled election, and theft of state property and corruption of state institutions would continue, and the result would probably be irreversible.

It is often asked whether the ZRP (Zatlers Reform Party) was necessary and that it splits the ethnic Latvian vote. This is unlikely. It should be pointed out that President Zatlers' decision to dissolve the Saeima affected a change in public opinion: firstly, the public came to understand that the oligarch-led parties ZZS and LPP/LC and their associate (SC) are the cause of much of the failure in Latvia's statehood and that cooperation with these parties in correcting structural weaknesses is impossible. The ZZS is not an Ulmanis successor party, but a crude manipulation of Ulmanis heritage by Lembergs in order to further promote his interests and in the last government, hinder Vienotība's hoped for reforms.

Secondly, the dissolution stirred society by finally giving it the power to express its relationship to parliament, and as the referendum showed, people did it with enthusiasm. The referendum also showed that voters are not completely helpless, that they can influence public policy. A prediction that participation in this election will be greater indicates the voters' newfound sense of power.

Thirdly, the dissolution rescued the country from a three year wrecking spree and made it possible to stop it. Will voters seize this opportunity and use it will be seen by the 18<sup>th</sup> of September? Dainis Īvāns, former LTF (Latvian

Popular Front) leader, recently said that Latvia is in danger from three parties, the SC, ZZS and the LPP/LC.

In Latvia, small political nuances, envy, and rigid personal views often affect the choice of party. Major political issues or problems are often not considered a high priority. Largely due to media influence, by the spring of 2011 Vienotība experienced a drop in ratings from which the party has partially recovered; however, it will not fully regain its previous parliamentary popularity. Part of former Vienotība voters will vote for the NA, but without the ZRP other ex-Vienotība supporters would not have an acceptable party to vote for. The ZRP vote is a younger, protest, or first time voter, and those who see the ZRP as a new outsider party. To achieve the objective of forming the 51+ coalition of positive political forces, the ZRP is a necessary component.

All votes from foreign based polling stations are added to the Riga constituency. The hoped for 51+ coalition party lists do not contain erasable candidates in Riga, however, one should support Western candidates as there are still voters in Latvia who are skeptical of exile (Trimdas) candidates.

The outcome is now in the hands of voters. The LTF launched Latvian renewal revolution must be completed. All those who care about the future of Latvia must overcome all obstacles to get to a ballot box anywhere in the world on the 17<sup>th</sup> of September to cast their ballot to complete the unfinished revolution.