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The Estonian Centre Party is mobilising the ethnic Russian electorate

A solemn ceremony of fixing a cross on the dome of an Orthodox church, which took place on 19 February in Lasnamae, a district of Tallinn where ethnic Russian residents are predominant, became an element of the Centre Party's campaign before the parliamentary elections due to be held on 6 March. The Centre Party led by the mayor of Tallinn, Edgar Savisaar, and which is supported mainly by the Russian minority, is very likely to become the second major player on the Estonian political scene. According to forecasts, the party expected to have the largest number of seats in the Riigikogu is the Estonian Reform Party led by Prime Minister Andrus Ansip, who stands a strong chance of forming a government again.

The celebrations in Lasnamae were attended by a few thousand people. This is Tallinn's largest high-rise housing estate and was built in the 1970s. It is one of the two places in Estonia (the other one being Narva), where the concentration of the Russian-speaking population is the highest. The Russian minority accounts for over 25% of the country's residents. The ceremony of raising the cross was solemnised by Cornelius, Metropolitan of Tallinn and All Estonia. Public speeches were also given by Edgar Savisaar and the main sponsor of the temple's construction, the president of Russian railways, Vladimir Yakunin. According to the Estonian Security Police, Savisaar has also made efforts to receive financial support from Yakunin for his party. No evidence was presented to prove that the party had been financed by a foreign entity, which is forbidden under Estonian law. However, President Toomas Hendrik Ilves declared that he would never nominate Savisaar as prime minister, and Prime Minister Ansip ruled out any possibility of collaboration with the Centre Party as long as Savisaar remained its chairman. <pas>