

Twin Cities man challenges No. 3 finish in Croatian vote

By Ivo Scepvanovic
Special to the Star Tribune

SPLIT, CROATIA — A Twin Cities businessman who returned to his native Croatia to run for president finished third in the election Sunday and is claiming he was cheated out of a spot in the upcoming runoff between the top two finishers.

Shortly after the polls closed Sunday night, exit polling suggested that Boris Miksic had come from virtual obscurity just a few months ago to finish second

in the 13-candidate field. That would have qualified him for a runoff with President Stipe Mesic, who received 49 percent of the vote.

But when the actual results were announced around midnight, Miksic had 17.8 percent, placing him third behind government minister Jadranka Kosor, who had 20 percent.

Miksic likened the outcome to the recent disputed voting in Ukraine.

MIKSIC continues on A9:
— "Elections were fixed," he says.



Denis Lovrovic/AFP/Getty Images

Supporters surrounded presidential candidate Boris Miksic, center, in Zagreb on Monday. Miksic, a North Oaks resident who holds dual citizenship, finished third in Croatia's election.

MIKSIC from A1 Candidate calls for peaceful protests

"I call for people to come out on the streets in main Croatian towns and sign petitions to repeat the elections," he said Monday.

Miksic, who holds U.S. and Croatian citizenship and who said he spent nearly \$900,000 of his own money on the race, also announced that he would file a challenge with the Constitutional Court if necessary.

"I'll fight for the truth and justice till the last drop of my blood," he said in a message sent to the State Election Commission, adding that he had information that he was cheated and that the "elections were fixed."

Moved to Minnesota

Miksic, 56, came to Minnesota in 1973, fleeing Yugoslavia with his pregnant wife. He eventually founded Cortec Corp., a successful White Bear Lake firm



Tom Dubravec/Special to the Star Tribune

Supporters of presidential candidate Boris Miksic marched through an old Roman square in Split, Croatia, on Monday. They carried a banner with a message meaning "Boris Fight."

that makes anticorrosion products. Miksic, who lives in North Oaks, also befriended the late Gov. Rudy Perpich, who was of Croatian descent and who encouraged Miksic to someday run for the Croatian presidency.

In September, Miksic did just that — returning to Croatia

and fashioning a campaign that promised to invigorate the economy of the Balkan country.

"I want to make Croatia a highly developed country, and I have more experience in that than all the other politicians," Miksic told voters. "I made my money on my own and invested

my money in a campaign while most of other 12 candidates were using funds of their political parties."

Miksic had run in parliamentary elections in 2003, but at the outset of the presidential contest, he was virtually unknown in Croatia. Early polls showed

him pulling just 1 percent or 2 percent support.

But his appeal as a political independent and the \$885,000 he says he spent on his campaign catapulted him into the ranks of the contenders.

Exit polling conducted Sunday by the nonpartisan agencies Puls and GfK projected that Miksic would finish second with 19 percent or 20 percent of the vote and ahead of the HDZ Party's Kosor.

"It is suspicious that I've lost the election... because both Puls and GfK did independent exit poll research and had similar results," Miksic said.

He said he believes he would be a stronger contender than Kosor in the runoff with Mesic.

Miksic complained that his representative was not allowed to be in the State Election Commission offices as the vote was being tabulated but that both of his main rivals had observers there.

He also questioned the results of absentee votes from Croatians living abroad, a group he had tried to target.

He cited information that he said had been passed on to his campaign "about stealing our votes" at a polling station in the Croatian consulate in Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Miksic's lawyer, Mico Ljubenko, said that if the campaign's concerns were not resolved within 48 hours, it would file a complaint with the Constitutional Court in Zagreb, the capital. But Ivica Crnic, president of the State Election Commission,

said that election observers did not point out irregularities and that "there were no serious complaints placed."

The election was held as Croatia prepares for negotiations to enter the

European Union. Both Mesic and Kosor are pro-European and hope to lead Croatia into the E.U. during the five-year presidential term. Croatia is scheduled to start negotiations with the E.U. in March.

Mesic came to power in 2000, succeeding the nationalist and autocratic Franjo Tudjman, who had died two months before.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

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— Boris Miksic, in a message to Croatian election commission