

**SHOREVIEW PRESS > NEWS****North Oaks immigrant takes aim at Croatian presidency**[Print Page](#)**by Josh Wimmer
Contributing Writer**Published:
Tuesday, October 27, 2009 5:05 PM CDT

NORTH OAKS — Second time's the charm? Resident Boris Miksic hopes so, anyway. He left Friday Oct. 16 for his native Croatia to make another attempt at winning the country's presidency.

Miksic, 61, is the owner of White Bear Township's Cortec Corp., an international manufacturer of anti-corrosion products whose annual sales are around \$50 million. He took his first shot at becoming Croatia's president in the country's last election five years ago.

He blamed corruption for his loss to incumbent Stjepan Mesic, saying his opponents rigged the results by, for example, counting dead citizens' votes. (Initially, results had Miksic coming in second to Mesic; later counts had him in third place.) This January's elections, Miksic says, will be different.

"We're going to have observers making sure that the vote count is done correctly," he said. There are about 1,600 polling sites in Croatia, he said. "We'll have our own observers in each and every one of them. That's a big job logistically, but we want to have an organization in place to prevent the kind of fixing that was going on five years ago."

Beyond that, he said, the field isn't quite as tough as it was back then.

"My opponents are pretty weak this time," he said. "They really don't have any major names running for this office, so the competition is much weaker than when I was up against an incumbent."

The Croatian parliament hasn't yet set the exact date of the election, Miksic said. It's supposed to shortly, and official campaigning can't begin until they do: Candidates have to wait until a month before election day to start full-on stumping. But media coverage has already begun, he said.

Miksic is running as an independent, and as a result, he said, his own news exposure "hasn't been the greatest, but isn't the worst either." He's gotten on the air during primetime three times lately, he said. And, he said, his pre-campaign research shows that nearly all of Croatia recognizes his name. But do they see him as an outsider, since he immigrated to the U.S. in 1974?

"That was a challenge for me five years ago, but I've been active in politics (in Croatia) since 2005. They accept me as one of their own," Miksic said. He's served on the City Council of Zagreb, Croatia's capital, for the past four years, spending approximately a week in the city each month.

And, he said, "My American background comes in very handy, because I have a different view on global politics. Also, I've invested my own money in Croatia — in a small country, things like that are very visible."

He said his American ways of thinking are the reason for the nickname given by Croatian news media: "Crobama." And as a candidate, Miksic will have to convince voters he's capable of dealing with some of the same challenges the U.S. president did a year ago.

"Croatia is in a very difficult financial situation," Miksic said. "The economy is even worse than in the U.S. The unemployment is officially over 15 percent, but I think it's actually higher than that." If he gets elected, he said, jump-starting the economy and providing jobs will be his major priority.

Cleaning up corruption will be another goal.

"The privatization process has been a disaster over there," he said. "When they privatized companies that had been owned by the state, there was a tremendous amount of corruption going on, which was fueled by the politicians."

Sanja Bogovic, director of the New York City-based newspaper Croatian Chronicle, which covers Croatian news for the country's expats living in the U.S., said Miksic's business experience should serve him well in the campaign.

"His coming in third (in 2005) was really a success, because he was a completely new face over there," she said. "And between that time and now, he's built a factory there and employed a lot of people. I think people will pay attention to that, especially because of the economy."

She said she thinks Miksic is well regarded in Croatia — and even more so by Croatian-Americans. She agreed his U.S. connection could help him.

"He's very popular in local communities. I think people do believe that his experience outside of the country could really help Croatia, and they like that he wants to share his knowledge and success with them," Bogovic said. "He's really succeeded by himself — he didn't build his life on a political career."

As for the career he did build his life on, Miksic said Cortec won't have any trouble running smoothly while he campaigns — or if he wins and has to take five years off to serve as president.

"We have very capable people, and they're very used to my being absent physically," he said. "A lot of them have been with me 15 or 20 years."

Copyright © 2009 - Press Publications

[x] Close Window