

# Mission of mercy



Boris Miksic, of North Oaks, has led efforts to provide relief to his native Croatia during the 22-month war in the Balkans. Pictures of Croatia's new president,

Franjo Tudjman, on his office wall are graphic examples of Miksic's continued involvement in his homeland. (Photo by Laura Petersen)

## Boris Miksic organizes to help homeland survive the wars that plague the Balkans

by Laura Petersen  
Staff Writer

Imagine leaving your country because the government offered no hope for young college grads dreaming of opportunities and freedom. Imagine over the years watching your homeland fight for its own freedom and successfully claim its right to a democratic government.

Then imagine that freedom threatened as your people's land and lives become immersed in a destructive civil war.

When Boris Miksic left the city of Zagreb, Croatia, 20 years ago, he sought freedom from an oppressive Communist government in Yugoslavia. He now is president of Cortec Corp., a high-tech manufacturing company located in White Bear Town-

ship, but strong ties to his native land evoke a passionate response to the ongoing war in the Balkans and America's role in it.

A North Oaks resident, Miksic originally helped gather together the 35,000 fellow native-Croats who live across the state of Minnesota in various cultural events.

When the fighting broke out near Zagreb, the group's attention turned to providing humanitarian relief for their native country. Over the last 22 months, the group organized collections of medical supplies and money from residents in the Rochester area, the Twin Cities and Iron Range communities. Truck loads of supplies were brought to Miksic's White Bear Township business and were then distributed to Zagreb, the cap-

ital of Croatia.

Croatia's needs for supplies has diminished some what, but Miksic said financial donations still are being collected.

Miksic more recently was named an Honorary Consul for Croatia to help encourage trade and exchange programs between the United States and the new country.

Miksic grew up in Zagreb, attended the university there and received a degree in engineering. As a student he took part in a 1971 grass-roots movement to liberalize Croatia. When the effort was crushed by the military, the city became bleak and backwards, Miksic said.

"All those hopes young people have, they got pretty destroyed," he said. "We were then faced with really no light

at the end of the tunnel. Everything was gray."

"I couldn't see myself living there. That's why I left."

So Miksic and his former wife came to America with \$25 in their pockets to begin a new life.

Sitting casually on one of the leather couches in his well-appointed office, Miksic describes how he got to where he is now. Graying hair crowns a kind, open face that shows his readiness to smile. His eyes reveal an intensity and determination.

When he first arrived in Minnesota, Miksic got a job as an engineer in a Twin Cities firm. Soon after, he wanted to start out on his own. In 1977, he took a second mortgage out on his home and began Cortec