

Ultrationalist elected Serbia's speaker

by UPI

BELGRADE, Serbia - Serbia's parliament Tuesday elected Tomislav Nikolic, a 55-year-old ultrationalist, as its speaker after 15 hours of heated debate.

Nikolic, leader of the Serbian Radical Party, won the post with support from the conservative Serbian Democratic Party of outgoing Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica and the Serbian Socialist party of the late Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic.

At a session of the 250-seat, one-house parliament, broadcast live on Belgrade's national television, out of 244 lawmakers present, 142 voted for Nikolic, 99 voted for a Democratic Party candidate of Serbian President Boris Tadic, and three abstained.

The election of Nikolic, whose radicals together with Milosevic's socialists led Serbia to ethnic wars in the former Yugoslavia from 1991 to 1995, prompted opposition leaders to warn the country is facing self-isolationism again, Belgrade's B92 radio reported.

The only way out are new parliamentary elections that should decide whether Serbia advocates a pro-European, reformist policy or a non-democratic, totalitarian policy, opposition leaders said.

If Serbian leaders fail to form a coalition government by Monday, the parliament will be dissolved Tuesday and President Tadic will call new elections to be held by July 13.

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