



**A TALE OF TWO CITIES:
RETURN OF DISPLACED PERSONS TO JAJCE AND TRAVNIK**

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A TALE OF TWO CITIES: RETURN OF DISPLACED PERSONS TO TRAVNIK AND JAJCE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Croat-controlled Jajce and Bosniac-controlled Travnik are both municipalities to which displaced persons who do not belong to the majority ethnic group have been returning in substantial numbers. Some 5,000 Bosniacs have returned to Jajce (pre-war population, 44,900) and 2,500 Croats have returned to Travnik (pre-war population, 70,400) since the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) came into force. These 7,500 “minority returns” constitute nearly 20 per cent of the total estimated 40,000 minority returns throughout the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia), although the combined current populations of Jajce and Travnik (less than 75,000) account for less than 3 percent of the Federation’s current population. These two municipalities in the Middle Bosnia Canton thus may be considered successful examples of minority return, if not yet reintegration. Nevertheless, at different times and to varying degrees, the authorities in Jajce and Travnik have obstructed return movements.

In both municipalities, as throughout the Middle Bosnia Canton, politics is dominated by the nationalist parties, the Croat HDZ (which has a narrow majority in the Jajce municipal council) and the Bosniac SDA (which has a large majority in the Travnik municipal council).

To date the return process has taken a number of different forms: pilot projects, a negotiated cantonal return plan, and movements led by displaced persons themselves, so-called spontaneous returns. Both pilot projects -- which were agreed at Dayton in 1995 -- were fulfilled early in 1996 as some 200 Bosniac families returned to Jajce and 300 Croat families returned to Travnik (200 more than mandated by the pilot project).

Orchestrated violence greeted hundreds of Bosniacs who sought to return to Jajce in August 1997. The combination of high-level and immediate political intervention, active steps by the Nato-led forces to re-establish a secure environment, and a prompt and thorough investigation by the UN International Police Task Force (IPTF) succeeded in restarting the return process. IPTF’s investigation found that the demonstrations had been directed by the local HDZ party, and led to the removal of

the Jajce police chief. However, the leaders who masterminded the violence remain in power today.

Following the August 1997 violence, the late Deputy High Representative Gerd Wagner brokered agreements with all 11 municipalities in the Middle Bosnia Canton to kick-start minority return. Though valuable as an expression of political intent, the resulting Cantonal Return Plan has suffered from slow donor response and failure to make any provision for Serb returns. Displaced persons who seek to return continue to face obstructionism, albeit less blatant than in 1996 and 1997.

In Jajce the municipal authorities have registered only 700 returnees, leaving the majority in limbo, without status or entitlement to benefits such as health care. While Bosniac officials have recently begun to work in the municipal offices, they have not been given substantive work and the municipal authorities have clearly failed to make the atmosphere conducive to non-Croats. Symbols of the Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna, declared illegal in various agreements signed by HDZ authorities, are everywhere and the local HDZ headquarters is situated in the municipality building.

HDZ officials continually cite Travnik as an illustration of intolerance towards Croats. This is a result of a string of violent incidents there, including murders, in the late summer and autumn of 1997. Despite high-level attention and IPTF support, the murder investigation has failed to yield any suspects. That said, most international officials in Travnik doubt that the murders were ethnically-motivated. Since September 1997, Croat and Bosniac police have patrolled together wearing the same uniforms. However, separate, informal chains of command continue to undermine the operations of a genuine joint police. The HDZ's proposed solution for Travnik is to restructure the municipality along ethnic lines, replicating the division of Mostar into six municipalities, three with a Croat majority and three with a Bosniac majority.

In both Jajce and Travnik parallel municipal institutions remain in place and education is segregated. In both, double-occupancy (the occupancy of two or more homes by a family unit which pre-war occupied only one home) is a widespread problem, and non-governmental organisations and international agencies have failed to monitor let alone systematically address the problem. The Cantonal Interior Ministry remains divided with separate Bosniac and Croat offices.

Jajce has received approximately 7 million DM and Travnik 8 million DM in housing reconstruction aid. This is considerably less than similar municipalities elsewhere where there have been fewer returns. Aid to returnees in Jajce has been restricted owing to the uncooperative attitude of the municipal authorities, yet donors should be able to target their assistance so as to support return without strengthening the authorities.

The report ends with three pages of recommendations which, if implemented, could help ease reintegration of minority communities and facilitate further returns.

Sarajevo, 3 June 1998

A TALE OF TWO CITIES: RETURN OF DISPLACED PERSONS TO JAJCE AND TRAVNIK

I. INTRODUCTION

Of an estimated 40,000 so-called minority returns¹ which have taken place in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Bosnia) since the Dayton Peace Agreement (DPA) came into force,² some 7,500 have been to the municipalities of Jajce and Travnik. In total, some 5,000 Bosniacs who had been displaced during the war have returned to Croat-controlled Jajce,³ and some 2,500 Croats who had been displaced during the war have returned to Bosniac-controlled Travnik.⁴ At a first glance, therefore, these two municipalities in the Middle Bosnia Canton appear successful, indeed possibly the best, examples of return within the Federation.

This report, the latest in a series of ICG municipality studies, examines the nature of the minority returns which have taken place to date, the approaches attempted, the official obstructionism which has marred the process, and the obstacles to further returns. It analyses the politics of return, the policies of the ruling, ethnically-based parties towards displaced persons, both from their own ethnic community and from Bosnia's other two ethnic communities, and the manner in which the Federation is functioning and evolving in the Middle Bosnia Canton. It also examines the challenges which need to be confronted in the fields of education, employment and religious freedom. It ends with a series of considered recommendations which, if implemented, could help ease reintegration of minority communities and facilitate further returns.

¹ Minority return refers to the return of ethnic minorities to areas administered by another ethnic group.

² In 1996, UNHCR reported 11,666 minority returns. In 1997, the total was 33,837. Of the 1996 and 1997 minority returns, 2,200 were to Republika Srpska. Through mid-April 1998, UNHCR reported 661 minority returns to the Federation (*UNHCR, Statistics Package, 15 April 1998*).

³ Estimate of Jajce Municipal Return Office.

⁴ Estimate of HDZ Travnik and Travnik Municipal Assembly.

II. THE FIRST WAVE OF RETURN

Jajce⁵ and Travnik⁶ are two of the most celebrated municipalities in Bosnia, each with its own rich cultural and historical tradition. Before the war they mirrored Bosnia in miniature, both ethnic mosaics of Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats. Of Jajce's 44,903 inhabitants, 38.8 percent were Bosniacs, 35.1 percent were Croats and 19.3 percent were Serbs. Of Travnik's 70,402 inhabitants, 45.3 percent were Bosniacs, 36.9 percent were Croats and 11 percent were Serbs.⁷

The Bosnian Serb Army seized Jajce in October 1992 and held it until August 1995. The first wave of displacement from the town saw its Croat and Bosniac inhabitants flee elsewhere in Bosnia and abroad. In August 1995, most of Jajce was captured by the Croat Defence Council (*Hrvatsko vijeće obrane* or HVO), which handed a small section of the municipality (Vinac) to the predominantly-Bosniac Bosnian Army for administration. Most of the Croat population returned, and a large part of the Serb population (approximately 5,000) ended up in Brcko.⁸ Approximately 2,000 Serbs from Jajce are in Mrkonjic Grad, Sipovo and Banja Luka.⁹ Bosniacs displaced from Jajce live in Vinac (1,700)¹⁰, Zenica (6,500)¹¹ and Bugojno (approximately 1,200).¹²

Travnik, which is capital of the Middle Bosnia Canton, was held by the Bosnian Army throughout the war. During the fighting, almost all Serbs and approximately 20,000 Croats left the municipality. Serbs displaced from Travnik are spread throughout Republika Srpska and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Most Croats displaced from Travnik now live in Novi Travnik, Nova Bila,¹³ and Vitez. A smaller number live in western Herzegovina and Croatia. The table below gives the 1991 and current population figures by ethnic group.

Pre-War and Current Populations

⁵ Jajce is probably best known as the place in which Josip Broz Tito founded the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1943.

⁶ Travnik is probably most famous as the setting for Ivo Andric's novel *Bosnian Chronicle*.

⁷ 1991 census.

⁸ Estimate of UNHCR Brcko.

⁹ Meeting of Vrbas RRTF, 21 April 1998.

¹⁰ Estimate of Vinac Red Cross.

¹¹ Association of Jajce Citizens, Zenica, letter of 6 May 1998.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Nova Bila is a small Croat-dominated portion of the municipality, to the south-east of Travnik town.

	Bosniacs	Croats	Serbs	Total
Jajce (1991) ¹⁴	17,380	15,811	8,663	44,903
Jajce (current) ¹⁵	6,000	14,900	98	20,988
Travnik (1991) ¹⁶	31,862	26,008	7,751	70,402
Travnik (current) ¹⁷	45,687	5,668	50	52,404

Despite attracting comparatively large numbers of minority returns, Jajce and Travnik have not been recognised as “Open Cities” by the office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).¹⁸ The return process has taken a number of different forms: pilot projects,¹⁹ a negotiated cantonal return plan, and movements led by displaced persons, so-called spontaneous returns.²⁰

A. Jajce

Minority returns to Jajce were initially greeted by orchestrated, and officially-condoned, violence. This early obstructionism dissipated somewhat in the wake of a firm response from the NATO-led Stabilisation Force (SFOR), high-level political intervention, and a timely and conclusive investigation by the UN International Police Task Force (IPTF). As a result, an uneasy stalemate of return without reintegration now prevails.

1. Uncertain Return

The Jajce pilot project called for the return of 200 Bosniac families to Jajce town. By early 1996, the project was concluded successfully, and although pilot project returnees experienced occasional harassment, their situation

¹⁴ 1991 Census.

¹⁵ Vrbas Valley RRTF, 24 April 1998.

¹⁶ 1991 Census.

¹⁷ OHR, Municipality Handbook.

¹⁸ The Open Cities programme, initiated by UNHCR in March 1997, provides additional reconstruction aid to municipalities that demonstrate a willingness to accept minority return. To date, open cities are Bihac, Busovaca, Gorazde, Kakanj, Konjic, Vogosca, Zenica, Laktasi, Mrkonjic Grad, Srbac, and Sipovo. For an analysis of the effectiveness of the programme, see ICG’s recent report *Minority Return or Mass Relocation?*, 14 May 1998.

¹⁹ On 2 November at Dayton, President Alija Izetbegovic and then Federation President Kresimir Zubak signed an agreement for the voluntary return of 600 families to “Pilot Project” towns in the Federation, including 100 Croat families to Bosniac-controlled Travnik, and 200 Bosniac families to Croat-controlled Jajce.

²⁰ Spontaneous return is a term used by the UNHCR to describe returns “not under deportation or part of organised efforts of international humanitarian agencies.” UNHCR 1997 Operation.

stabilised after several months.²¹

Soon after the DPA came into force, displaced Bosniacs began making their way back to their homes in formerly-Bosniac villages in the eastern half of the municipality, principally to the villages of Divicani, Lendici, Bucici and Sibenica. A spate of house burnings in March and April 1997 and an assault on a Bosniac woman in Jajce town failed to deter returns.²² An association of displaced Bosniacs based in Zenica actively prepared for return in July 1997, contacting IPTF and submitting letters from Bosniacs expressing their desire to return. Local authorities, it seemed, did not oppose the return.²³ SFOR, after consultation with Jajce's deputy mayor, established an information centre for returnees that began operations on 16 July 1997.

Returns accelerated at the end of the month as returnees heard that the security situation was stable and that SFOR was registering returnees. A radio announcement explaining SFOR's role apparently sparked the return of several hundred in the last week of July 1997. Returnees came in large numbers and were often equipped with heavy machinery necessary for repairing houses and clearing roads. On 1 August 1997, the illusion of security was shattered. Crowds, witnessed passively by Croat police, gathered at several road junctions. Over the next several days, mobs threatened Bosniac villages, attacked several returnees, and intimidated the rest, almost all of whom were evacuated.

2. Responding to Violence

International agencies were quick to respond to the violence. A joint letter from the Office of the High Representative (OHR), UNHCR and SFOR demanded an immediate restoration of order, the return of those evicted within 48 hours, and a prompt investigation.²⁴ On 5 August 1997, then Federation President Vladimir Soljic and Vice-President Ejup Ganic signed a letter committing themselves to the return process throughout the Middle Bosnian Canton. On 13 August 1997, the Jajce municipal authorities agreed to dates for the return of evicted families.²⁵ The return of those evicted began on 16 August 1997, and the British contingent in Jajce began 24-hour patrolling in and around the villages of principal Bosniac return (Lendici, Bucice, Divicani, and Sibenica) to ensure security. In addition to the political and military steps taken, international agencies applied economic leverage to ensure the return of those evicted. The German and Austrian governments suspended their assistance programmes to the municipality, and the OHR

²¹ UNHCR Pilot Project Update, 4 August 1997.

²² UN IPTF, *Policing Response to the Jajce Incidents*, September 1997.

²³ International organisations in the area even reported that: "The local police ... helped families move back into their houses." (*Human Rights Report*, OHR, 31 July 1997)

²⁴ Human Rights Report, OHR, 6-7 August 1997.

²⁵ Human Rights Report, OHR, 16 August 1997.

conditioned future aid on the return of those evicted.²⁶

A month after the August violence, IPTF published a report that described the police response as “wholly inadequate and in some instances deliberately negligent”. The report also found that: “Bosnian Croat officials themselves acknowledged that the demonstrations were being directed by the local Croatian Democratic Union [HDZ] party organisation.”²⁷ As a result of the report and the political pressure that followed it, the Jajce police chief, Marko Lucic, was removed from his post in November 1997.²⁸ While the steps taken by international agencies were sufficient to undo the expulsions and restart the returns process, the Jajce leadership that masterminded obstruction less than a year ago -- Mayor Jozo Lucic and local HDZ President Ivo Simunovic -- remains in place today.

Nonetheless, the response to the Jajce evictions provides an important model for future such incidents. The combination of high-level and immediate political intervention, active military steps to recreate a secure environment, and a definitive investigation by IPTF, succeeded in restarting the return process.

The high-level attention devoted to central Bosnia after the evictions contributed to broader progress in the Middle Bosnia Canton. Cantonal leaders pledged to speed formation of a joint police force and helped the Federation Ombudsmen open a Travnik field office. Over the next several months, the late Deputy High Representative Gerd Wagner brokered agreements with all 11 municipalities in the Canton. Each agreed to designate villages to which minority return could immediately begin. Jajce's contribution to the eventual cantonal plan called for the reconstruction of 523 Bosniac homes in eight villages.²⁹

3. Returnees in Limbo

Bosniac returns to Jajce slowed for a time after the August violence, but regained momentum in late winter and spring. During March and April 1998, 500 of the 700 minority returns in the Canton were Bosniacs returning to Jajce.³⁰ Villages to which return has been heaviest have been Divicani (145 families), Kruscica (150 families), Lendici (165), and Bucici (66 families).³¹ Observers expect a significant increase in the pace of return when the school

²⁶ After most evicted families had returned, the OHR “recommended to the German and Austrian governments to go ahead with suspended bilateral projects in Jajce and welcomes their decision to do so.” (Second Federation Meeting on the Central Bosnia Canton, 27 August 1997).

²⁷ *Policing Response to Jajce Incidents*, UN IPTF, September 1997.

²⁸ OSCE Monthly Human Rights Report, December 1997.

²⁹ *Middle Bosnia Canton: Operational Plan*, Cantonal Co-ordination Body and IMG, 1 December 1997.

³⁰ Estimate of OSCE field office, Travnik.

³¹ Estimates of the Red Cross/Crescent office in Vinac.

years ends this summer. The absence of functioning schools in the villages is a significant obstacle for Bosniac families returning to Jajce.

All but 700 of the individual Bosniac returnees are unregistered. This is principally because the municipality is unwilling to register them and leaves returnees in an uncomfortable limbo. Few, for example, use municipal health services since, as unregistered residents, they are obliged to pay full fees. Yet many returnees lose their rights to services in the municipalities they have left. Unregistered Bosniac returnees in Jajce who have lost their entitlement to health care in Bugojno complained to ICG that they now had no status or rights anywhere.

A further unresolved issue is the return of Bosniacs to the town centre, which is now populated mainly by Croats, many of whom lived in surrounding villages before the war. The Red Cross office in Vinac estimates that only 220 Bosniac families are now living in the town and its suburbs.³²

Many Croats are reluctant to move out of the town, and the authorities have demonstrated little will to push those occupying homes and flats in town back to their villages. In 1997, an Austrian NGO reconstructed 40 Croat houses in the village of Barevo. Only 15 of the recipients moved from the town back to the village, and several of this number maintained an apartment or home in Jajce as well.³³ The municipality has failed to evict or bring legal proceedings against illegal tenants to address these and other cases of double occupancy. Moreover, NGOs operating in the area have failed to monitor whether pre-war occupants have returned to the homes the NGOs have reconstructed. This is despite the fact that most NGOs require pre-war occupants to sign an agreement promising that they will return to their homes once they have been repaired. German Caritas, which has reconstructed 250 homes in the municipality, was unable even to estimate how many original residents had returned. The lack of follow-up is indicative of a broad problem in the reconstruction effort. NGOs often do not have the manpower or inclination to ensure that municipalities and recipients follow through on agreements. Meanwhile, international organisations have failed to develop a systematic approach to monitoring and dealing with double-occupancy.

4. Opposition to Serb Return

Serb return to Jajce has not yet begun. Before the war, Serbs accounted for more than a third of the town's population (though only about a fifth of the municipality's population). According to returnees and international monitors, a small number of Serbs continue to come to Jajce during the day to repair homes but return to Mrkonjic Grad and Sipovo in the evening. During March and April 1998, Serb visits were frequent to the area of Bravnice, south of the

³² The association of displaced persons in Jajce estimates that 350 Bosniac families are in the town.

³³ Investigations conducted by ICG staff.

town, which was predominantly Serb before the war and is now largely uninhabited. In May 1998, UNHCR and SFOR began funding a temporary bus line between Sipovo and Jajce, which carried 180 passengers during a week-long trial run, most of whom were Serbs travelling to their pre-war homes.

Several recent incidents indicate that Serb returnees to Jajce face intimidation. One Serb who has returned to a home near an HVO base reports recurring verbal harassment and threats from the soldiers. Another Serb couple recently reported to SFOR being fired upon soon after they had crossed the inter-entity boundary line (IEBL). Several Serb homes were burned in the formerly Serb town of Poprzeni in early May. NGOs and international organisations working in the area report that the authorities have consistently rejected plans for Serb return.

5. The Shape of Future Return

Movement since last summer has been more sporadic. Yet Bosniacs returning to the municipality from Zenica continue to enjoy basic support, including valuable information sharing, from the displaced persons association there. The Bosniac administration in Vinac acts as another source of assistance for Bosniac returnees. Officials there keep detailed statistics, provide advice and, on occasion, basic material assistance to returnees. The Vinac office also hosts regular meetings of village leaders to discuss the return situation. This level of organisation, and the presence of a substantial Bosniac population in more than a dozen villages, indicates that return this summer is likely to be heavy. UNHCR estimates that 100 Bosniacs currently are returning every week.³⁴

Institutional support for Serb return, meanwhile, is still in its early stages. UNHCR helped organise a graveyard visit by Serbs from Brcko in March. However, displaced Serbs from Jajce are poorly organised. The official association of displaced persons in Brcko -- run by a former SDS functionary -- discourages return whenever possible. According to SFOR, there are 89 families from Jajce in Mrkonjic Grad, but there has been little movement toward return. Serbs in Sipovo are better organised, and they have been assisted by the UNHCR bus line. The American Refugee Committee (ARC) in Sipovo reported that 131 Serb families have been contacted about return, but that the discussions are in early stages. Given the low level of organisation and the resistance of Jajce authorities, there will likely be little sustained Serb return this summer.

One issue that will require attention in the coming months is the planned relocation of an HVO rapid reaction force from barracks in Kamenice, south of Jajce, to Divicani. Many Bosniacs have already moved back to Divicani and many more are planning to return there in the near future, with the result

³⁴ Estimate of UNHCR sub-office in Zenica, May 1998.

that the presence of HVO units is likely to exacerbate the level of intimidation and harassment of returnees.

B. Travnik

Like Jajce, Travnik quickly fulfilled its pilot project targets. 300 Croat families returned to the town, although only 100 returns were required by the programme.³⁵ Spontaneous returns began both to Travnik town and to villages in the municipality which had been predominantly Croat before the war. Political changes in early 1997, however, ushered in a less cooperative leadership.

1. Scattered Violence, Inconclusive Investigations

In their April 1997 report, the Federation Ombudsmen wrote that: "Freedom of movement was restricted to a great extent in the areas around the villages of Brajkovici and Guca Gora."³⁶ In July 1997, OHR reported "confirmed sightings of circa 100 mujahedins in two villages northeast of the city."³⁷

In the late summer and autumn of 1997, a string of violent incidents in Travnik heightened tension throughout central Bosnia. On 30 August, two Croats were shot through their window in the village of Nula. Then on 10 September, a Croat man died after an altercation with the Bosniac owner of his home.³⁸ On 26 October, another two murders were committed, again in Nula. On 21 March 1998, a visit by some 80 Croats to the village of Bukovica was disrupted when two Bosniacs beat several Croats. Unidentified individuals also burned several Croat homes in the village. A month later, on 22 April, two Croats returning to clean their homes in Bukovica were badly wounded by an explosion. In early May, IPTF reported two further incidents in Travnik: 8 May, two off-duty Croat police were fired upon in the village of Han Bila, and 12 May, an explosion damaged a Croat home in the village of Gavrine Kuce.

The overall effect of the incidents has been to heighten ethnic tensions, slow the return process and hamper the functioning of joint institutions. There has been no official conclusion to the Nula murder investigations, but most international officials in Travnik believe that the murders were not ethnically-motivated. IPTF in Sarajevo told ICG that its monitoring the murder investigations had ended in December 1997. OHR is beginning a review of the investigations.

³⁵ OHR, Municipality Handbook.

³⁶ *Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Federation Central Bosnia Municipalities*, Institution of the Ombudsmen of the Federation, 4 April 1997.

³⁷ *The Cantons of the Federation of BiH: Basic Figures, Facts and Problems*, OHR, 31 July 1997.

³⁸ OHR Human Rights Report, 13 September 1997.

2. Continued Return

Croats have continued to return to Travnik in spite of the incidents. By the end of 1997, UNHCR reported 1,777 Croat returns to Travnik.³⁹ Another 84 Croat returns were registered during the first three months of 1998⁴⁰ and the OHR estimates that approximately 60 Croats are returning every week. Croats have, in particular, returned to Podkraj, Turbe, Nula and other villages in the west of the municipality. Moreover, most of those returns have been spontaneous. Ivo Markovic, head of a displaced persons association based in Nova Bila, told ICG that return to the west of the town is not organised but that more people than ever before have expressed interest in return. There appears little support for these returnees either from the HDZ or from the authorities in Nova Bila.

The prospects for substantial Serb return to Travnik are better than to Jajce. UNHCR organised an assessment visit of 50 Serbs from Kotor Varos to Turbe on 16 May. The visit was a success, as had been an earlier, smaller visit to the Vlasic region. In both cases, Travnik police contributed to creating a conducive atmosphere for return. During the Vlasic visit officers walked in front of Serb returnees to reassure them that there was no mine threat.

The prospects for returns between Kotor Varos and Travnik appear especially promising.⁴¹ The desire of displaced Serbs in Kotor Varos to return to Travnik (against the wishes of the Kotor Varos authorities) is matched by a desire among displaced Bosniacs in Travnik to return to Kotor Varos. The head of the Kotor Varos citizens' association in Travnik says that his group has 2,500 members and that 98 percent of them are currently occupying Croat homes in Travnik.

3. Obstacles to Return

Obstacles exist at various levels of the municipal administration. The Travnik housing department has failed to resolve cases in a timely manner. The Federation Ombudsmen's office in Travnik reports that it has over 80 unresolved property cases, and municipal officials admit that more than 1,500 property claims, most from Croats, are yet to be addressed. Double occupancy remains endemic. In Travnik, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) funded the reconstruction of 164 dwellings, only 77 of which are occupied now. In Turbe, UMCOR paid for 55 houses, only 28 of which are currently occupied.⁴² At a May 1998 meeting with the International Mediator, Dr. Christian Schwarz-Schilling, the Ombudsmen accused Travnik authorities of failing to evict double-occupants because they were often "people in government or people close to government". Even the UN

³⁹ UNHCR, *Registered Minority Returns from DPA to 31/12/97*.

⁴⁰ UNHCR, *Statistics Package*, 1 May 1998.

⁴¹ Kotor Varos, in Republika Srpska, borders Travnik in the north.

⁴² IMG estimates, May 1998.

Development Programme's reconstruction project in Travnik, which reports good co-operation from municipal authorities, has had difficulty resolving 14 double-occupancy cases that have been outstanding since April 1998. Resolution of these cases could immediately free up housing for returnees. In an encouraging sign, municipal officials reported evictions of two high ranking officials in late May.⁴³

Returns to the east of Travnik town will likely continue to be contentious. Bosnian government officials, even within the SDA, admit that this area remains under the influence of hard-liners. SFOR in Travnik expects that Croat returns to the town of Guca Gora, in particular, may be problematic. The village, predominantly Croat before the war, sits on a road that bypasses the Vitez pocket and connects Travnik directly with Zenica. Maintaining the security of the road is a strategic interest of the Bosnian Army. A visit in late May to Bukovica and Guca Gora by Federation President Ejup Ganic was a hopeful sign that some will exist to ease the situation.

III. THE POLITICS OF RETURN

A. The Ethnically-based Parties

Politics in central Bosnia remain the almost exclusive preserve of the ethnically-based parties. The HDZ claims to speak on behalf of all Croats and, given that all Croat councillors elected in the 1997 municipal elections in these municipalities are indeed members of the HDZ, its claim may be justified. The SDA is almost as all-powerful among Bosniacs. Multi-ethnic parties have minimal representation. The SDP won two seats in Travnik and none in Jajce.

1. HDZ: Pressure from Above

Vigorous international reaction to last year's evictions forced the leadership into a grudging acceptance of minority returns, but there has been no obvious change of heart. The HDZ-dominated administration in Jajce continues to construct obstacles wherever possible. Officials complain that Bosniacs are

⁴³ OSCE, Travnik Field Office, 2 June 1998.

receiving disproportionate international support and that international agencies are rushing returns when space is not available.

Obstructionism is no longer as blatant as in 1996 and 1997. Bosniac and Croat police have formally been integrated and international monitors report that they are jointly patrolling all areas of the municipality, including Bosniac villages. Returnees in the villages told ICG that relations with the police have been without incident. The same cannot be said, however, of the municipal administration and the Municipal Returns Office (MRO), which refuse to issue identification cards to most returnees (see section below).⁴⁴

The HDZ leadership has employed Travnik to illustrate the harassment of Croats in central Bosnia as a counter-point to events like those in Drvar, where international agencies have criticised the HDZ's role.⁴⁵ High-level Croat officials have repeatedly cited Travnik to highlight intolerance towards Croats in Bosnia and refused to acknowledge the return of Croats that has taken place.

After the August 1997 murders in Nula, the Croatian Foreign Ministry delivered a "sharp note of protest" to the Bosnian ambassador.⁴⁶ The Croatian press has pointed to the violence as evidence of a continuing campaign against Croats that demonstrates the danger of the Federation to Croat survival in Bosnia. After the October 1997 murders, an editorial in the Split-based newspaper *Slobodna Dalmacija* asked "what kind of sacrifices should Croats suffer on behalf of the name of the Bosnian Federation. How many [Croats] have to die in their homes?"⁴⁷

HDZ representatives in Travnik present visitors with a pamphlet documenting alleged atrocities against Croats in Travnik. One particularly eye-catching document depicts an Islamic eagle poised to attack a bleeding and chained Croat.⁴⁸

In a May 1998 open letter to the international community, the president of the HDZ in Travnik elaborated recent incidents of harassment and concluded that: "Croats of Travnik are intimidated...they are not returning."⁴⁹

A March 1998 visit by Croats to the village of Bukovica is illustrative of HDZ tactics. Because of atrocities committed there in 1993, Bukovica has been a tense area for return and an August 1997 assessment visit had been turned back by Bosniac villagers. The displaced Croats, who were ostensibly

⁴⁴ SFOR in Jajce reports that Bosniacs are occasionally provided with identity cards of a different colour.

⁴⁵ HDZ-led authorities in Drvar, and in Canton 10 more generally, have obstructed, at times violently, the return of Serbs to their homes. This included a riot on 24 April 1998 in Drvar against Serb returnees and international representatives.

⁴⁶ British Broadcasting Company, Summary of World Broadcasts, 2 September 1997.

⁴⁷ *Slobodna Dalmacija*, 30 October 1997.

⁴⁸ *Kronologija i istina*, Travnik-Nova Bila, 1997.

⁴⁹ *SOS for the Croats of Travnik*, Travnik HDZ Municipal Executive Committee, 8 May 1998.

returning to clean their homes, arrived in formal clothes with a television camera crew in tow. And -- according to SFOR -- the visiting Croats emerged from a bus yelling provocatively.

After the predictable altercation occurred, Municipal Council Chairman Rajic sent a letter on 23 March to the High Representative, the US Embassy, the German Embassy, IPTF and SFOR describing the incident in detail from the HDZ's point of view and urging the international community to "do what is in your power to help us in protection of displaced persons and their rights".⁵⁰ International monitors who witnessed the visit say that the letter was "exaggerated" and that the event was designed to exacerbate tension.

Underlying the specific policies of the HDZ leadership in Travnik and Jajce is the broader question of HDZ policy toward central Bosnia. There have been several signs that Croat populations in the region are under pressure to consolidate into areas which are HDZ-controlled and ethnically-pure Croat. Meanwhile, displaced Croats in Herzegovina and Croatia are actively discouraged from organising for return. That as many Croats have in fact returned to Travnik is testimony to the strong desire of individuals to go home.

A rift is emerging between local HDZ leaders in central Bosnia and the party's Federation leadership in Mostar. In April, the leader of the Novi Travnik branch of the HDZ told international monitors that he would resign because of the constant pressure from Mostar. And Rajic told ICG that Croats in central Bosnia must look increasingly to the church as a source of support. This rift is now coming into the open at the Federation level with the apparent formation of a new political party by Kresimir Zubak and Bozo Ljubic.

2. SDA: Mixed Messages

The SDA has predictably been keen to support Bosniac return to Jajce. Enver Sabic, a cantonal SDA official and former mayor of Jajce, played a pivotal role in the summer 1997 large-scale returns. Bosniac officials in Jajce continue to refer to him as the unofficial organiser of the return movement. More broadly, the political climate in Zenica, Bugojno and Travnik is amenable to the creation of associations to promote the return of displaced Bosniacs.

In Travnik, the SDA's stance is more ambivalent. For most of the past year, the local party executive has been more obstructionist than the Sarajevo leadership. The obstructionist approach dates from the end of 1996 when a co-operative acting mayor, Mirsad Granov, was dismissed and replaced by Enver Beganovic.

Officials began to question publicly whether continued Croat return was

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Request for Protection of Croats in Travnik, 23 March 1998.

feasible and the process slowed. At the same time, a series of incidents took place indicative of growing intolerance in Travnik. One that received significant attention was the decision of the municipality to replace all kiosks in Travnik with what have been described as Islamic designs. It seems, however, that this was as much about revenue-generation as religious intolerance: vendors were expected to buy the new kiosks from a company with known SDA affiliations.⁵¹

In April 1998, the local SDA removed Beganovic and replaced him with Munir Karic, a well-known local hard-liner. Karic's accession proved unacceptable to international agencies. On 6 April 1998, in preparation for a meeting of the Federation Forum, the OHR sent Bosniac member of the Bosnian Presidency and SDA President Alija Izetbegovic a note critical of obstruction in Travnik in general and the role of Karic in particular. The High Representative "requested the removal of Karic from all positions of authority based on his responsibility for a climate of intolerance towards minority returnees in Travnik."⁵² Following this, the SDA's executive committee rescinded Karic's appointment, ostensibly on the grounds that Karic was involved in a court case. The SDA appointed a temporary local executive committee in Travnik headed by Granov.

It is not yet clear what effect the shake-up within the SDA in Travnik will have. Besim Halilovic, a businessman and former Cantonal deputy minister for reconstruction, was appointed mayor at a 17 May 1997 session of the Municipal Council. For the moment, the Karic clique is out of the picture, but the receptivity of the new leadership to minority return is still to be demonstrated.

3. Municipal Elections

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has certified the results of last September's municipal elections in both Jajce and Travnik.⁵³ Nevertheless, neither municipality can claim to have fully integrated newly-elected councillors representing minority ethnic communities into the municipal governments.

In Croat-controlled Jajce, which saw large-scale voting by displaced Bosniacs, the HDZ won 16 of 31 seats on the municipal council. The SDA-led Coalition won the remaining 15 seats. Bosniac officials have recently begun to work in the municipal offices. Yet representatives told ICG that they are not given substantive work. Moreover, the municipal authorities have clearly failed to make the atmosphere conducive to non-Croats. Symbols of the supposedly defunct Croat Republic of Herceg-Bosna are everywhere and the local HDZ

⁵¹ Report of Federation Ombudsmen, Travnik office, March 1998.

⁵² OHR, Human Rights Co-ordination Centre, 25 May 1998.

⁵³ The OSCE certified the election results in Travnik on 28 February 1998 and in Jajce on 11 March 1998.

headquarters is situated in the municipality building. Despite this, Bosniac officials have returned to live in the municipality, and, in one instance, to the town itself.

Implementing election results in Travnik has been easier because the SDA-led Coalition won a substantial majority. It controls 18 out of 31 seats in the municipal assembly, the HDZ controls 11, and the SDP 2. However, violent incidents have served to disrupt local politics on several occasions. After the October murders in Nula, the HDZ conditioned further dialogue on the arrest of those responsible for the murder and the expulsion of mujahedin elements from the area. It was only in April 1998 that Croat councillors regularly began participating in municipal affairs, though none are currently living in Travnik. The OSCE has recently broached the subject of speeding the returns of Croat councillors in Travnik. At a 21 May meeting with the Federation Mediator, municipal authorities agreed to facilitate the return of councillors by 30 June.⁵⁴

Meanwhile, parallel municipal institutions remain in place. A small Bosniac administration (employing about 20 persons) continues to operate in Vinac, a small segment of the Jajce municipality controlled since August 1995 by the Bosnian Army. And a Croat administration employing some thirty people continues to function in Nova Bila, the Croat-controlled section of the Travnik municipality. Moreover, this office continues to issue documents, including marriage and birth certificates, of the supposedly defunct Croat republic of Herceg-Bosna. In Travnik, there are signs that this division may soon end: the SDA and HDZ in mid-May agreed on a plan to merge the municipal administrations by 1 June.

B. Canton-Municipality Relationships

More than four years after the Washington Agreement ended the Bosniac-Croat war and created the Federation, the cantonal government is still struggling to assert itself in central Bosnia. A superstructure is formally in place, but its grip on several key areas of governance remains weak. That said, officials at the cantonal level are generally considered moderate. Indeed, it is suggested that the party leaderships send their moderates to the cantonal government-- where their influence is likely to be limited.

1. Joint Policing

Since September 1997, Croat and Bosniac police have patrolled together wearing the same uniforms throughout the Middle Bosnia Canton.⁵⁵ However, separate, informal chains of command continue to hamper the functioning of a genuine joint police. According to IPTF monitors, Bosniac

⁵⁴ Travnik Agreement, 21 May 1998.

⁵⁵ The agreement on the constitution of the police in the Middle Bosnian Canton was signed in Sarajevo on 5 August 1997.

and Croat officers are more likely to report to their former colleagues than to their formal superiors. In addition, on a technical level, the police in the canton are poorly-equipped. According to UN Civil Affairs, the police lack adequate communications equipment, vehicles and investigative tools.

A principal obstacle to more effective joint policing in the Canton is the continuing division of the interior ministry. Though this ministry is supposed to be housed in a single office in Travnik, there remains an administrative centre in HDZ-controlled Vitez. Negotiations on moving the entire ministry to Travnik have broken down over a host of issues, including, at one point, telephone lines (which Croat officials argue have trouble reaching Croat areas).

These obstacles aside, the police in Travnik are developing into a positive force for return. The chief, Franjo Grganovic, firmly insists on joint patrols and investigations at every level. When the cantonal interior ministry sent representatives to monitor an investigation in May, Grganovic rejected, in turn, a lone Bosniac representative and a lone Croat, in each case insisting that they appear together.⁵⁶ The police force in Jajce, while less proactive, refrains from overtly obstructing minority return.

2. Financing

Despite the passage of a unified budget,⁵⁷ the Canton still lacks control over many key financial levers. According to the April 1998 Federation Forum meeting: "The Payment Operations Institution is split between one fund in Sarajevo and one in Mostar through which tax and customs revenue is channelled." These systems undercut the cantonal structure and leave it incapable of playing the integrative role for which it has potential. The Federation Forum required that the dual payment system cease operation by 31 April 1998, a deadline that has not been met.⁵⁸

Both Jajce and Travnik have opened unified bank accounts as required by the Canton. Yet difficulties continue between the municipalities and the Canton. Several large companies in Jajce and Travnik have political protection from the local authorities. Officials working on cantonal finance reform told ICG that Borac in Travnik and Elektroprivreda in Jajce are examples of companies which do not pay all revenue owed to the Canton.

3. Cantonal Court

⁵⁶ IPTF Travnik.

⁵⁷ Middle Bosnia Canton, Budget for 1998.

⁵⁸ Federation Forum of 16 April 1998, Chairmen's Conclusions. The Federation Forum, which meets on a regular basis, was first convened by the U.S. government on 3 April 1996.

Efforts to establish a functioning cantonal court were delayed by the machinations of the HDZ and SDA. In early April, the parties collaborated on a flawed appointment process that the Federation Forum declared invalid. The shortcomings of the procedure included a failure to hold open spots for Serb judges and to approve nominations by a two-thirds vote.⁵⁹ A commission created to oversee a new nomination process finally produced a revised list of nominees, and the judges took the oaths of office on 1 June.

The absence of a functioning cantonal court undermined and delayed the functioning of judicial process in both Travnik and Jajce. The investigation of the Nula murders, for example, fell to an investigative judge in Zenica, who failed to inspire confidence on the Croat side.⁶⁰ Cases are now being shifted to the cantonal administration, but decisions are not yet being issued.

4. Restructuring Travnik

Political horse-trading between the ethnically-based ruling parties HDZ and SDA and the reluctance of any ethnic group, and in particular the numerically weaker Croats, to accept rule by another community, has paved the way for amendments to the Federation constitution making possible a fundamental restructuring of Travnik.⁶¹ This possibility moved a step closer at the Federation Forum meeting of 16 April 1998, where it was recognised that: "It is necessary for the Middle Bosnia Canton assembly to adopt an amendment to the cantonal constitution in its next session on the organisation of Travnik as the seat of a Canton with a Special Regime. This amendment will begin the process of structuring Travnik as a city consisting of more than one municipality."⁶² Following the amendment of the cantonal constitution, a joint commission (with OHR representation) will begin work on a reorganisation plan.

The HDZ proposal for the reorganisation is to replicate the division of Mostar along ethnic lines. A draft HDZ plan -- which begins with the history of Croats in that part of Bosnia since their arrival in the seventh century -- calls for the division of Travnik into six municipalities, three with a Croat majority and three with a Bosniac majority.⁶³ The Croat municipalities would be centred in the towns of Nova Bila, Kalibunar and Brajkovica respectively. None would have a Bosniac population of more than 26 percent. A central district would house the seat of the canton and the municipality, one Catholic Church, one Orthodox Church, the bus station, and the post office. The proposal is almost identical to and based on the division in the city of Mostar. The SDA has to date failed to produce an equivalent plan. However, representatives have

⁵⁹ OSCE Human Rights Monthly Report, 30 April 1998.

⁶⁰ OSCE Human Rights Report, 7 November 1997.

⁶¹ Amendment XXV of the Federation Constitution allows for Travnik, as the "seat of a canton with a special regime" (i.e. a mixed canton), to be organised as a city.

⁶² Chairmen's Conclusions.

⁶³ *Elaborat o ustroju dosadasnje opcine Travnik*, August 1997.

said that they consider the HDZ plan unworkable and are therefore considering proposing the merger of Travnik and Novi Travnik as a preparatory step to restructuring.

IV. INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT FOR RETURN

A. Cantonal Return Plan

This return plan was the eventual outcome of the high-level political intervention which followed the evictions of August 1997. The plan was an important political step, in that all municipalities formally agreed to begin accepting minority returns immediately. The plan was also designed to strengthen the role of the Canton. A cantonal co-ordination body (CCB), comprising seven cantonal ministries as well as representatives from International Management Group (IMG), the OHR and UNHCR, was established to oversee implementation of the plan.⁶⁴ This body has asked NGOs working in central Bosnia to sign a protocol confirming that their work conforms with the cantonal return plan. According to IMG, however, projects outside of the cantonal plan, other than for the return of Serbs, are approved on a regular basis.

Though valuable as an expression of political intent, the plan has suffered from slow donor response. The plan was finalised in the middle of most funding cycles, and many large donors were unable quickly to channel funds to exploit the political opening in central Bosnia. The plan also fails to address the issue of Serb returns, and will likely need to be modified at the Federation level to incorporate this element.

In some cases, municipal authorities have used the plan to oppose returns that occur outside of its prescriptions. Jajce authorities have several times claimed that they cannot register returnees who are not returning within the framework of the cantonal plan. In February 1998, the vice-governor of the canton, Ivan Saric, complained of continued returns outside the framework of the cantonal plan and hinted that these returns might not be safe.

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The cantonal ministries on the co-ordination body are the ministry for labour, social policy and refugees; the ministry for reconstruction and development; the interior ministry; the ministry for urban planning and environment protection; the ministry of science, culture and sport, the ministry of health; and the ministry of industry.

In Jajce particularly, the usefulness of the plan is approaching an end. Return to the eight villages listed in the plan has already exceeded the prescribed numbers. Having played a valuable role in kick-starting returns, the cantonal return plan now risks slowing down the process.

On 10 February 1998, the Federation Ministry of Social Policy, Displaced Persons and Refugees called for the creation of Municipal Returns Offices (MROs) in all municipalities.⁶⁵ UNHCR has pledged support to these offices and plans to establish a technical link between them. Several international donors, including the US Bureau for Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM) and UNHCR, have made the proper functioning of MROs a condition for assistance.

Despite this pressure, Jajce municipal authorities have not yet established a functioning MRO. The RRTF reported that the office is “still not trusted by Bosniacs [and] certainly not by Serbs.”⁶⁶ The office is located next to an HVO military police station, is difficult to find, inadequately staffed, and headed by a particularly unco-operative official, Tihomir Ljubez. Though a Bosniac member has been designated to work in the office, he is not currently working there, and Ljubez was not in contact with him. Several Bosniac returnees managed to register in late May, but the functioning of the office remains erratic at best.

The MRO in Travnik opened in early May and employs both Bosniac and Croat staff. According to UNHCR, the office has already received over 1,000 claims for return, 60 percent of which are from Croats. In a further encouraging sign, Vlado Lovrinovic, a Croat, was recently appointed to head the municipal return and reconstruction office, which has responsibility for the MRO.

B. The Regional RRTF

The Return and Reconstruction Task Force (RRTF) proved a successful mechanism for facilitating the return of displaced persons in North-West Bosnia.⁶⁷ As a result, the concept was endorsed at the December 1997 Peace Implementation Council meeting in Bonn, and the OHR has since expanded the RRTF structure elsewhere in the country, including central Bosnia. The tasks of the RRTF, as outlined in its March 1998 Action Plan, are to guide the allocation of resources, provide a focal point for information

⁶⁵ *The Instruction on the Method of Organising the Return of Displaced Persons and Repatriates to the Territory of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina*, Rasim Kadic, 10 February 1998.

⁶⁶ Vrbas RRTF Meeting, 21 April 1998.

⁶⁷ The North-West RRTF successfully integrated displaced persons organisations into negotiations on return and used the media to effectively explain its plans to the broader public.

sharing, mobilise support for return, and monitor progress on the ground.⁶⁸ An RRTF secretariat opened in Travnik in mid-April and will meet on a monthly basis, alternating between Travnik and Zenica. This regional RRTF will in turn establish local RRTFs for six areas.⁶⁹

Jajce is covered by the Vrbas valley local RRTF, which has already become operational under the chairmanship of OHR. This RRTF chapter benefits from an active and knowledgeable British SFOR contingent that has set up an extensive database on returns. This contingent has become engaged in many areas affecting return, including the registration of minorities and revitalisation of the local economy through the provision of small grants. It is well-positioned to lead the co-ordination effort in Jajce.

The local RRTF that encompasses Travnik has not yet become active. A month-long absence by the UNHCR representative assigned to the area has contributed to the delay.⁷⁰ Moreover, the Dutch SFOR contingent in Travnik has to date not shown the same eagerness as the British in Jajce to work through the RRTF structure. The lack of leadership, particularly on the part of UNHCR, is disturbing given the high potential for minority returns to the municipality and the fact that the crucial months for return in 1998 have already arrived.

C. International Reconstruction Aid

According to IMG, Jajce and Travnik have received less aid than others with far lower return numbers. Jajce has received approximately 7 million DM in housing reconstruction aid while taking in almost 5,000 minority returnees.⁷¹ Travnik has received approximately 8 million DM in housing aid and has accepted an estimated 2,000 minority returns.⁷² Konjic, by contrast, which is a similar-sized municipality to Jajce, received 10 million DM in housing assistance despite accepting fewer than 400 returnees.⁷³

Aid to returnees in Jajce has been restricted by the uncooperative attitude of the municipal officials. This demonstrates a basic dilemma of aid conditionality when return is led by displaced persons and occurs without the negotiated agreement of the municipality. Aid restrictions hurt returnees,

⁶⁸ *An Action Plan in Support of the Return of Refugees and Displaced Persons in Bosnia and Herzegovina*, RRTF, March 1998.

⁶⁹ These are (1) Zenica, Kakanj and Vares; (2) the Vrbas Valley; (3) Fojnica, Kresevo and Kiseljak; (4) Travnik, Novi Travnik, Vitez, and Busovaca; (5) Maglaj, Zepce, and Zavidovici; and (6) Croatia-central Bosnia.

⁷⁰ Regional RRTF Meeting, 14 May 1998.

⁷¹ Because Jajce changed hands at the end of the war, almost the entire population, Croat and Bosniac, can be considered returnees.

⁷² Analysis of the reconstruction aid Travnik has received is complicated by a high number of projects that are not registered with IMG.

⁷³ For a detailed analysis of minority returns to Konjic, see the ICG report, *Minority Return or Mass Relocation?*, 14 May 1998.

potentially hampering further return and thus serving the political interests of authorities who oppose it.

V. REINTEGRATION CHALLENGES

A. Education

Despite the relatively high level of minority return in both Jajce and Travnik, segregation in the schools is pervasive. Bosniacs who have returned to Jajce mainly attend schools in Vinac, or elsewhere in Bosniac-administered territory, though some of those who have been officially registered attend school in the town. Many Bosniac families have not returned to Jajce, in large part because their children would not be able to attend school. Schools are not yet operating in the villages, though the school building in Divicani has been repaired. As most returnees are not registered, attending school in the town (even if desired) is not an option.

Croats who have returned to Travnik, meanwhile, generally attend schools in Croat-controlled Novi Travnik or Nova Bila. The Franciscan priest who runs the monastery in Guca Gora, drives local children every morning to Croats schools in Nova Bila, which use a Croatian curriculum. Pavle Nikolic, the Catholic priest in Travnik, said that there are plans for a Catholic school in the town. The school, modeled on the Sarajevo Catholic School, would be open to all ethnicities and would not employ the Croatian curriculum currently in use in most of Croat-administered Bosnia.

Efforts to overcome the segregation at the cantonal level have stalled. The cantonal education ministry produced a draft law last year which has still not been acted upon. According to the OSCE office in Travnik, it contains liberal provisions, including a requirement that children gain familiarity with Cyrillic.⁷⁴

The lack of action at the cantonal level has left initiative in the hands of the municipalities, who point to the Federation constitution's provision that "each canton may delegate functions concerning education, culture, tourism, local business and charitable organisations, and radio and television to its Municipalities and shall do so to those Municipalities whose majority population is other than that of the Canton as a whole."⁷⁵ The necessity of delegating education functions to municipalities is reaffirmed in the Law on Local Governments' Self-Management.⁷⁶

In Middle Bosnia, and particularly in municipalities like Jajce, where the

⁷⁴ OSCE Human Rights Report, 30 April 1998.

⁷⁵ Federation Constitution, Section V, article 2.

⁷⁶ The law requires that the "Canton shall delegate the following responsibilities from its authority to the municipality: education, culture, tourism, local business operation, social welfare, radio-television."

authorities actively obstruct reintegration, these provisions will be problematic, as Cantonal authorities seem better equipped than their municipal counterparts to administer a unifying curriculum.

B. Employment

Post-war Travnik is almost a one-company town. Borac, a conglomerate that principally produced clothing and footwear, employed more than 6,000 people in Travnik before the war and remains the principal employer. Company officials estimate that 1,100 are employed in the town today. Borac is managed by Mehmed Corhodzic, an influential member of the local SDA executive committee. The privatisation process in the canton has not yet begun.

In Jajce, the economy is more diverse. ElektroBosna employed 2,700 people in Jajce before the war, but currently has a workforce of only 320. The wood plant Sedinac (800 workers before the war) now employs 40. Energoinvest (620 pre-war employees) now has 40 workers.⁷⁷ Political control of the economy is common. Anto Simunovic, brother of HDZ leader Ivo Simunovic, runs the Gradnja Trgovina construction factory.

International aid to the industries in Jajce and Travnik and approval of the privatisation process provide significant leverage for ensuring fair employment practices. A British Department for International Development (DFID) assistance project to Gradnja Trgovina indicates the effect that this can have: a 50,000 DM assistance package was conditioned on the hiring of Bosniacs. The RRTF noted that assistance to industries in Jajce needs to be considered in conjunction with population movements and recognised that: "There is a need to make the move for these Croats [in the town] as attractive as possible."⁷⁸

C. Religious Communities

The Catholic religious community continued to function throughout the war in Travnik and Franciscan monasteries are active in nearby villages, notably Guca Gora. Combined with the planned Catholic school in Travnik, these facilities meet an important prerequisite for Croat returns to the municipality and reintegration.

On the other hand, the re-establishment of a Muslim religious community in Jajce is proceeding slowly, and the atmosphere in the town is more hostile. A mosque has been rebuilt in the village of Divicani and another is under construction in Lendici. The mosque in the town was destroyed during the Serb occupation and is now an empty lot. A conspicuous Croat war

⁷⁷ Repatriation Information Centre (RIC), Municipality Information Report, Jajce.

⁷⁸ Vrbas Valley RRTF Meeting, 21 April 1998.

monument is under construction across the street. The World Council on Religion and Peace (WCRP) has invited religious leaders in the area for an inter-faith meeting.

VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Concerning Both Municipalities:

- Double occupancy is endemic in both Travnik and Jajce. In both municipalities, there are numerous cases of families occupying more than one home (usually the result of a young adult member having moved out to occupy a vacant home during the war) or occupying homes or flats in the town after their original homes have been reconstructed in outlying villages. *International agencies should set up a system for monitoring double occupancy, possibly by engaging ECMM in the task. International donors should insist that implementing NGOs more closely monitor whether recipients return to reconstructed homes, and inform the appropriate Bosnian authorities and international organisations of any problems.*
- The Central Bosnia Return and Reconstruction Task Force, which recently became active, has established local RRTFs in the Vrbas Valley (covering Jajce) and Travnik. The Vrbas Valley local branch is receiving exemplary support and direction from British SFOR, as well as from the local UNHCR office, and should be a model for the Travnik branch, which has begun slowly and has to date received little support from Dutch SFOR. *SFOR and international organisations working in Central Bosnia must actively participate in and contribute to the RRTF structure.*
- The HDZ will likely retain its dominance within the Croat community in both Travnik and Jajce for the foreseeable future. While there is no serious political opposition, there are informal networks of moderates who support reintegration in Central Bosnia, including certain priests and Franciscan brothers, displaced persons associations and moderate HDZ politicians. *International agencies should provide increased support to these moderate voices, through direct assistance as well as by involving them in discussions on promoting reintegration and by helping them disseminate their views and information through the media, in areas where Croat displaced persons currently live.*
- In both municipalities a key challenge is to integrate minority returnees into the local economy. A small British assistance package to a factory in Jajce has demonstrated that conditioning aid on the hiring of minorities can be effective. *International donors assisting industry in the municipalities should, to the extent feasible, use their assistance to promote non-discriminatory employment practices.*
- Most minority return to Jajce and Travnik has been organised by the returnees themselves without the assistance, at least at the outset, of UNHCR. Yet because of donor requirements, most reconstruction funding is allocated well in advance and cannot assist such “spontaneous” returns. *The RRTF should move quickly to set up a flexible fund that could disburse assistance rapidly to support unanticipated returns, as it has discussed doing at several meetings.*

Concerning Travnik:

- The HDZ relentlessly portrays Travnik as a municipality in which Croats are subject to constant threats and intimidation. This image is used both to discourage Croat return and to distract attention from other areas, such as Drvar, where the HDZ has been criticised for encouraging violence against returning minorities. There was some truth to this negative image last year, when four Croats were murdered in Travnik in August and October 1997 and the culprits never found. However, evidence appears to suggest that the crimes were not ethnically motivated. Moreover, the negative image is no longer accurate. The 2,500 Croats who have returned to Travnik since the end of the war have reported few incidents. *International agencies, and particularly UNHCR and the OHR, should step up efforts to counter the HDZ's propaganda. If possible, IPTF should make available the evidence it has concerning the 1997 Travnik murders which challenge the HDZ's claim that the murders were ethnically motivated.*
- The UNHCR office in Travnik is not yet functioning effectively. The international officer assigned to the office has been absent for several months. *Given the importance of Travnik for Central Bosnia and the high potential for minority return now and in the coming months, this office should immediately be strengthened.*
- Demands for the reorganisation of Travnik municipality into a city unit should be delayed at least until the "return months" (through November) have passed. If and when reorganisation does take place, the municipality should not be divided along ethnic lines. *The HDZ's plan for the division of Travnik into three Croat and three Bosniac municipalities, as in Mostar, is unworkable and must be opposed.*
- Croat councillors on the Travnik municipal council have not yet returned to live in Travnik. Seven councillors are awaiting reconstruction assistance for their homes. The Federation Mediator made the return of these councillors a priority in a May mediation agreement. *OSCE, supported by the RRTF and UNHCR, must ensure that the municipality facilitates the return of these councillors and should ensure that funding is available to repair their homes.*
- Conditions are in place for significant two-way returns between Travnik and Kotor Varos in Republika Srpska. Displaced Serbs in Kotor Varos have begun to organise, and an active association of displaced Bosniacs from Kotor Varos exists in Travnik. *The RRTF and UNHCR should actively facilitate returns between Travnik and Kotor Varos, including through such measures as mixed delegation visits and support for information-sharing visits to Kotor Varos by Serbs who returned to Travnik.*

Concerning Jajce:

- UNHCR and SFOR began a temporary bus line between Sipovo and Jajce in May 1997, which has generated strong interest among displaced Serbs. The contact that the bus line engenders will be important in breaking down municipal obstruction to Serb return and creating confidence among Serb returnees. *UNHCR and SFOR should continue running the bus line.*
- The official, SDS-influenced displaced persons association in Brcko is discouraging return initiatives by the large Serb population from Jajce in Brcko. *The Brcko Supervisor's Office and UNHCR should take active measures to bypass this association and reach out to displaced persons interested in return.*
- The Municipal Returns Office (MRO) in Jajce is still not functioning well and remains hostile to many returnees who attempt to register. The office is situated next to an HVO military police station, which serves as a further deterrent to its use by returnees. *The Jajce MRO should be moved to a new location away from the HVO military police barracks, and its director should be replaced.*
- The HVO has intimidated minorities and in other ways obstructed their return in several HDZ-controlled parts of the Federation. The HVO plans to re-deploy a rapid reaction force now in the Kamenici barracks to Divicani, an area that has seen large-scale minority return. *SFOR should closely monitor the re-deployment, and stop it if HVO troops become involved in obstructing minority returns.*
- Jajce has received comparatively little reconstruction assistance given the high numbers of minority returns to the municipality. Donor reluctance is understandable in the face of municipal intransigence on several fronts, including the registration of returnees. Yet returnees, whose situation is already made difficult by official intransigence, should not be further harmed by being deprived of much needed assistance. *Donors should direct increased assistance to repair homes of returning minorities and Croats willing to move from the town to their homes elsewhere, thus freeing up housing in the town. Such reconstruction projects must be monitored with particular care to ensure proper targeting of assistance.*

Sarajevo, 3 June 1998

