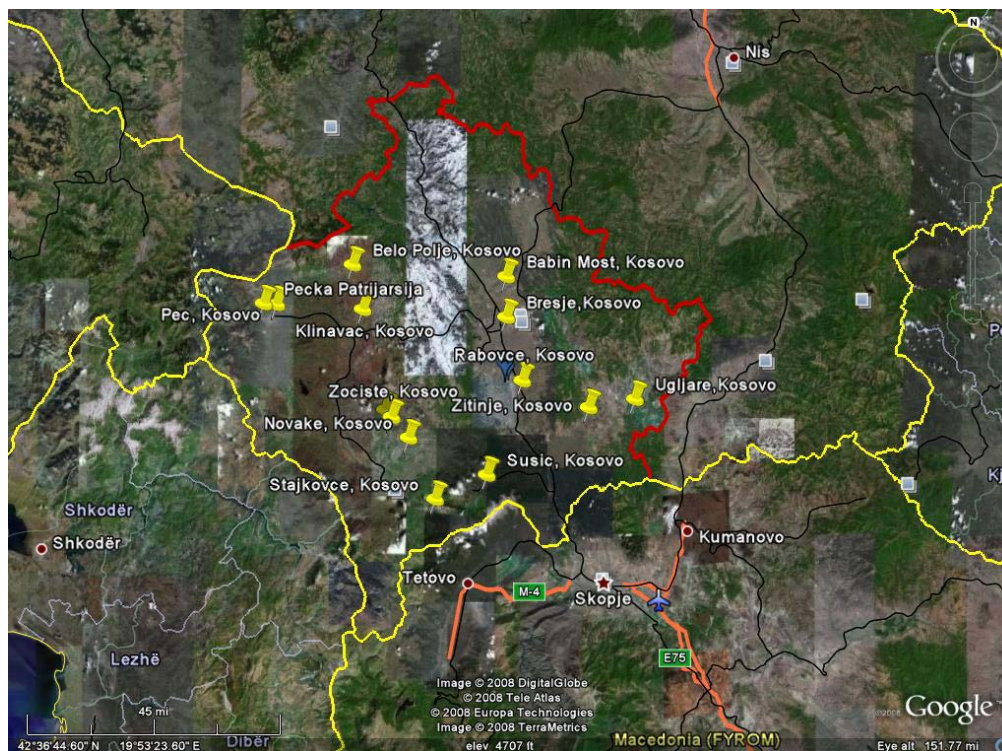




helsinki committee for human rights in serbia

»Forgotten World – Kosovo Enclaves«



Belgrade, September 2008

The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia finalized the project “Serb-Serb Dialogue in Serb Enclaves in Kosovo.” The project aimed at encouraging the Serbs in the enclaves south of the Ibar River (that make about 80 percent of the total Serbian population in Kosovo) to fully exercise their human, minority, socio-economic and political rights through Kosovo institutions instead of remaining on the margins of Kosovo society and a window-dressing for the official Belgrade’s territorial claims. The project also tried to sensitize domestic authorities, international organizations, the general public in Serbia proper, as well as the Serbs in the solidly Serbian north of realistic needs, anxieties and interests of the Serb community living in self-isolation in today’s independent Kosovo.¹

Within this project HC had 6 visits as well as many preparatoy visits, and this comprehensive report is a product of our intensive field work during the period of 8 months.

The objectives of the first visit in the series of four were as follows:

- 1. To monitor the overall situation of and living conditions in enclaves;**
- 2. To gain a deeper insight into inhabitants’ perception of their position;**
- 3. To assess the impact of Belgrade’s, Prishtina’s and the international community’s policies on the lives of those people;**
- 4. To explore the avenues for NGOs more active engagement in solving the problems that plague the people ‘imprisoned’ in their enclaves and in fostering multiethnic life in the territory of Kosovo;**
- 5. To lay the foundations for continual cooperation between the NGO sector and both Serb and Albanian communities in Kosovo that may bring about more creative and/or alternative solutions vis-à-vis those coming from official sources – either in Belgrade, Prishtina or the international community;**
- 6. To extend effective cooperation with representatives of the Albanian community (officials and civil players) to the domain of Serb enclaves.**

¹ The project was realized with the assistance of the Rockefeller Brothers Fund /RBF/.



In the organization of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia and with the support of the RBF, a team of experts visited a number of the Serb enclaves in Kosovo from January to July 2008. A more comprehensive insight into the situation in these enclaves was largely enabled by the professional composition of the team. Apart from human rights specialists, the team included sociologists, psychologists, lawyers and historians. The different approaches with the same aim – to perceive reality – proved to be very productive.

The talks with the Serbs living in the enclaves and then with the Albanians, based on a random sample, as well as equal treatment and mutual respect resulted in the confidence of the collocutors or in other words, they expressed their views freely. From this aspect, it is not only unbelievable, but is also very harmful that members of various professions in Serbia do not carry out research on the Serbs living in the enclaves and that they even contribute to the enhancement of political stereotypes.

During the past few years, both communities underwent transformation that was the result of the new reality created after

the NATO intervention. Both of them underwent the period of mutual distrust, especially after the March events in 2004. The Serb community was exposed to brutal propaganda, which was also reflected in its position relative to the Kosovo authorities. However, the uncertainty of Kosovo's status extended influence on the behaviour of both communities. However, once the possibility of division was eliminated and the process leading to Kosovo's independence began, the Albanian community rationalized its behaviour and assumed a constructive attitude towards the Serbs, especially those in the enclaves. This change in the attitude of the Albanian community also exerted influence on the Serbs living in the enclaves.

The picture of the Serb enclaves in Kosovo not only differs from the one created by the media and political propaganda, but even stands out from it. The team moved around freely, without any escort (except during the first visit), and communicated loud enough in Serbian everywhere. In the enclaves, the team of the Helsinki Committee was openly received: nobody asked its members to introduce themselves, or explain the purpose of their visit. Such a reception is evidence that the people are lonely: only few

visits and few talks about their problems (employment, education, health care). Election campaigns are an exception. The promises given to them on that occasion turn out very soon to be pure propaganda. Hence they are distrustful of all political parties.

Despite their marginalization, the settlements in the enclaves are well kept: the façades have been painted and gardens are full of flowers. The people are tidy. Regardless of their poverty, the settlements leave a much more favourable impression on the passer-by than, for example, many settlements in eastern and southern Serbia. The roads are equally bad.

In the strata of the life of the Serbs living in the enclaves, which can be revealed underneath the mentioned external picture, there is a drama, but not the feeling of hopelessness, as one might conclude on the basis of the media and political propaganda. It is necessary to explore what causes this difference and the separation of political institutions in Serbia from reality; the use of Kosovo Serbs so as to instil hope that the current situation is transient, that the greater state project is still valid and that it should be realized by using different means.

The people in the enclaves leave in limbo of which they are increasingly aware: Belgrade promises them the solutions which do not fall

within its competence any more, while at the same time exerting pressure on them not to accept the Kosovo institutions, although their personal and property security will depend on an increasing scale.

Despite their problems, the people in the enclaves do not easily express their readiness to leave Kosovo. Some of them might shout the slogans “Kosovo is Serbia” and “Kosovo is the heart of the Serbian state” at a rally but, in real fact, they regard Serbia as the country in which they seek a job and find security. Most collocutors own 3-8 hectares of land, which has become their main source of income. However, most of them, especially young people, have an urban perspective. They wish to work in the administration, in industry or for a small business. And this is not only so because they live in Kosovo. Modern technology makes any conceived or actual isolation senseless. Mobile telephony and the Internet bring them into contact with others, through whom they acquire new knowledge. From this viewpoint, the story about their obsession with the myth resembles abuse leading to the destruction of real historical consciousness.

The Albanians are the side which the Serbs in the enclaves imply, but do not comment, or do that in a restrained way. Their caution may be the result of their fear of the majority, as well as the awareness of the crimes committed by Serbs against

Albanians. In any case, the Serbs are more inclined to the indigenous Albanians, giving a number of examples of their helpfulness, than to the Albanians who came to Kosovo after the NATO intervention.

Being cautious toward Priština, the Serbs in the enclaves do not place much trust in Belgrade either. They are very critical of the favouring of northern Kosovska Mitrovica and speak openly about the corruption of its local leaders and their links with the Serbian security services. They hold that the settlements where the concentration of Serbs is higher are neglected (e.g. Studenica with 30,000) and where, in everyday life (treatment in the first-aid station, handicrafts), the relations between Serbs and Albanians, for which they say that they have been “dehumanized”, are gradually being improved.

The relations among the Serbs are surprisingly strained. The Serbs living in the enclaves give a number of reasons for that. Namely, the Serbs, mostly those being better-off, were the first to sell their property and leave Kosovo. However, they still keep their jobs there (in first-aid stations, schools, etc.) and perform them on weekends (“weekenders”), receiving double pay. At the same time, the Serbs living in the enclaves cannot find employment. (A shop attendant in a barrack on the road, who has five children, asked the health centre to take his two daughters, who had completed the secondary medical school, without any remuneration.

This was not done because the nurses, who worked in it in the past, come there on Sundays). The Serbs in the enclaves rarely receive the assistance intended for them. Thefts, deceptions, usurpation of the authority are a regular feature. The situation is often not less difficult than the economic one and its improvement will require great and multiple efforts. In any case, any assistance without control over its distribution and use will not have the desired effect, but just the opposite one. The people, but just the opposite one. The people in the enclaves try to organize themselves for which, most frequently, they lack minimum funds (the women engaged in handicrafts, whose products can sell well on the market, do not have a room or chairs). The structure of local bosses, clever usurpers, has also been set up. They work on behalf of the enclaves, but their connections are very non-transparent. They appear in the role of propagandists and political “educators”. Their favourite topics are the NATO intervention “which was not provoked by anything” and colonial policies in Europe and the United States towards the Balkans.

Interestingly enough, the Serbian Orthodox Church was not mentioned in any conversation, although it is the only Serb institution in Kosovo. It is evident that priests rarely visit their flock in the enclaves.

In contrast to the Serb community, the Albanian one underwent both visible and non-visible changes: the number and youth of the Albanian population, as well as its great mobility are noticeable. The greater presence of women in

public life can be seen with the naked eye. The process of women's emancipation is also noticeable: they are in the streets, shops, working places. A great number of Albanians sent their children to study in the West (at present, there are three thousand students abroad); many of them remain there. After 1999, financial assistance provided by the Albanians living abroad was reduced: the aim was achieved; the diaspora is now aspiring to a higher standard of living (better housing, education of children). Younger generations are concentrated on the nuclear family. It is much more frequent that the whole family lives together in the West.

Kosovo's independence is absolutely a universal value: there is an absolute consensus on it. Everything else is subject to wide criticism: government institutions, crime, corruption and, in view of the tribal character of its society, nepotism.

The parallel institutions (health care, education, etc.) were important for self-preservation, but they led to a decline in the quality of health care and education, in particular. This created a generation vacuum with respect to the ability to conduct affairs in the state. At the same time, some old institutions (e.g. the Academy of Sciences) have no influence any more and are almost dead. Their historical role in the earlier form has been finished.

Naturally, the liberation of Kosovo resulted in more intensive relations with

Albania. Its progress (especially in the southern part of the country) is acknowledged and the competence of its governing elite is emphasized (many of them were educated in the West and acquired high academic titles). Tirane is regarded as an important regional centre.

Albanians speak about their recent past with restraint and matter-of-factly, although the facts given to us as an illustration are brutal. Regardless of their experience, they believe in the need to have relations with Belgrade, with Serbia, especially economic ones. Both Serbs and Albanians point out that mutual trade has never stopped. It was carried out even under the most difficult circumstances.

The Albanian collocutors, who belong to the politically more qualified part of their society, are sceptical about Serbia's real readiness to join the EU. It is incomprehensible to them that Serbia, despite the advantages it had in the 1990s, could come to an impasse. This experience is instructive for them and they speak about it with anxiety rather than with malicious joy.

In a word, in entire Kosovo one can feel the dynamism of its numerous and young population being in search of the new perspective. However, this is ignored in Serbia. Nobody is thinking of long-term harm that may have. The new reality is regarded as a transient situation. However, there is no answer, but there is no question either: can it

be replaced, to whose benefit and to whose disadvantage? If political rhetoric conceals the old nationalistic aims, then Serbia will lose time once again and this may lead to an irreparable situation.

On the basis of its multi-month research and talks with numerous Serbs and Albanians, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia has concluded that – for the sustainable survival of Kosovo Serbs – it is necessary to have a strategy, which implies the serious projection of the capacity of the enclaves and their development. To stop the continuous outflow of the Serbs from the enclaves, especially younger generations, it is necessary to have the projects that will ensure their employment. The Kosovo Government and international community should seek long-term solutions, which would guarantee the prosperity of the enclaves. To avoid the solely ethnic principle, it is also necessary to anticipate joint projects (which would include Albanians and others), especially in the enclaves such as Orahovac, Štrpci, etc.

It is evident that Gračanica will be promoted into the centre of Kosovo Serbs, with Belgrade's support. Considering the vicinity of Priština, it is necessary to start thinking about the projects that will lead to the linking of Gračanica and Priština over a long term.

After the Russian military action in the territory of Georgia and its recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, the Serbian political elite and domestic analysts stated that this was the confirmation of something

that they had warned about – Kosovo's recognition will have a domino effect on the global plane. They now explain that this precedent was the trigger for instability in the whole world. So, the former Prime Minister, Vojislav Kostunica, stated that "redrawing the borders of Serbia marked a new era in international relations, featured by the revision of many borders and an increase in instability".²

The statements carried by the media refer to the superiority of the Russian military might, while those being more extreme also mention the presence of Russian troops in Kosovo. The severe anti-Western campaign is now conducted through this support to Russia and, in particular, through the resistance to the EULEX mission in Kosovo.³ The orchestrated campaign against the coming of the civilian and military EULEX mission has been going on for months. The situation is similar with the request that the UN General Assembly should ask the International Court of Justice to give a consultative opinion on the legality of Kosovo's unilaterally proclaimed independence. All these decisions, especially the one resisting the EULEX mission, create an atmosphere of instability in Kosovo, both

for Albanians and, even more so, for Serbs whose security is, thus becoming even more complicated. And within Serbia this is one of the messages that – by refusing to cooperate with Europe in Kosovo – it does not wish to join the EU.

The messages coming from Kosovo are manipulative. The Vice-President of the Assembly of the Communities of Kosovo and Metohija Municipalities, Marko Jakšić, and the President of the Serbian National Council of Northern Kosovo, Milan Ivanović, called on Serbs to leave their workplaces in the Kosovo institutions. Marko Jakšić stated that Serbia should provide salaries for Kosovo Serbs in the police and judiciary: "But, Belgrade must pay those people. If they are not paid by Belgrade, they will be paid by Hashim Thaqi. The police belongs to the one who pays it". On that occasion, they protested once again against the deployment of the EULEX mission in the Serb environments in Kosovo and pointed out that this mission should be boycotted by all Kosovo Serbs and those who respect the Serbian state.⁴

In that context, the EULEX mission stands on the same plane as the KFOR – the anti-Western stand is dominant and is more evident among the opposition than in the Government.⁵ Rhetoric about Serb victims is

conspicuous ("If the victims are exposed to violence by those who should curb it and maintain peace, then they endure the consequences with even greater difficulty. Kosovo Serbs are just in the position of such victims")⁶, but without any argument, because the ideology itself is only the pretext for compromising the new state of Kosovo, or international missions. Thus, for example, the conflict between Serbs and Albanians, which broke out in northern Kosovska Mitrovica on 28 August, at "Tri solitera", is explained as an act of Albanian aggression, because Albanians were allegedly encouraged by the arrival of a greater number of UNMIK policemen from Kosovo and the announced arrival of EULEX" (Milan Jovanović, President of the Serbian National Council of Northern Kosovo and Metohija).⁷

The Ministers from the ranks of the new governing coalition of Serbia consider the EU mission in Kosovo from the perspective of the non-observance of international law (the arrival

against the new Government ("The replacement of the UN mission by the EU one, on the orders of the UN Secretary General and without the approval of the Security Council, confirms the practice of series of compulsions in Kosovo, about which official Serbia reacts irresolutely, Svedok, Rade Brajović).

⁶ *Svedok*, 26 August 2008, journalist Rade Brajović.

⁷ The investigation into the conflict in which four persons were injured – three Serbs and one Albanian, is underway. The commander of the police station in northern Kosovska Mitrovica, Milija Milošević, assumes that the motive for fighting was the football match between Belgrade's Partizan and Fenerbahce from Turkey.

² *Danas*, 28 August 2008.

³ The Russian Ambassador in Belgrade, Aleksandr Konuzin, said on 18 August 2008, that Russia would send a démarche to the United Nations over the EULEX mission in Kosovo and Metohija.

⁴ *Večernje novosti*, 23 August 2008.

⁵ That it is the policy towards Kosovo stands on the same plane as that of the DSS-SRS, but being of lower intensity, is evidenced by criticism levelled

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of the mission without the approval of the UN Security Council) as well as the concern over the security of Kosovo Serbs. In his interview with *Večernje novosti*, Goran Bogdanović says that his work will be focused on Kosovo itself, coupled with the non-approval of the EULEX mission:

The new Minister for Kosovo, G. Bogdanović, stated that the Serbian Government would do everything falling within its competence that the government institutions and bodies servicing the Serb and other non-Albanian population in the Province could function without any obstacle and at full capacity. In his opinion, the downsizing of the UNMIK mission can exert influence on the security vacuum in the Province, which can enhance the feeling of insecurity and non-safety among Serbs. In addition, he argues that the EULEX has no legal ground for operating in Kosovo and that it cannot be a partner for cooperation.⁸

⁸ *Večernje novosti*, 12 July 2008. It is interesting to note that the “logic” of the current Minister for Kosovo and Metohija concerning an increase in the security of Kosovo Serbs is based on non-cooperation with the mission which already is on site. The question remains as to how the Serbs will be guaranteed security now and whether it will be done at all! It must be noted that this type of propaganda about the permanent threat of Albanians was made up by the Government, but if it is so, then it is bound to provide Serbs with the mechanisms of cooperation with the existing security bodies.

The Serbian Government holds that the EULEX commenced its work illegally and without Serbia’s consent and participation and that it is practically realizing the Ahtisaari plan which was rejected by the Security Council. Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković emphasizes that Belgrade must participate in the reconfiguration of the UNMIK, since it has a great interest in Kosovo and responsibility towards the Serbian population living in the Province, whose status should be improved. He strongly supports the stand that the Serbian Government should continue to insist that the stationing of the EU mission in the southern Serbian province must be regulated exclusively by the resolution of the UN Security Council. In the opposite case, Serbia will regard it as an illegal act.

At the press conference in the Serbian Government, Vuk Jeremić stated that the reconfiguration of the UNMIK, without the consent of all parties and the support of the UN Security Council, was a great mistake. He also repeated the views on the Russian support: “Russia continues to support Serbia, including the draft resolution we have submitted, and there will be no change in its stand. This was confirmed during my conversation with the Russian representatives to the UN when I was in New York”. Serbian Chief of Staff Zvonko Ponoš stated: “We have been brought into the situation that our cooperation with the KFOR is business and technical one, in addition to the exchange of

intelligence data. However, since the KFOR’s involvement in the formation of the Kosovo security forces, we have not been partners any more”.⁹

It is evident that the issue of Kosovo’s independence will continue to play a significant role in the Russian strategy in the Balkans. Namely, the Russians will maintain instability in the region just through Serbia with a view to tying it to itself from the energy aspect as much as possible. The new Government will also stand on the same plane like Koštunica, but with more moderate rhetoric. The discussion in the Parliament about the signing of the energy agreement with Russia shows that they all, with the exception of the LDP, support the agreement, although the one on the Oil Industry of Serbia (NIS) is extremely unfavourable for Serbia.

The work of the new Government in Kosovo should be monitored very carefully. As it seems now, although being pro-European, its strategy will continue to rely on Russia to a considerable extent. In that sense, the fate of the Serbs living in the enclaves will also depend on the relations between Russia and Serbia, and between Russia and the West.

⁹ *Danas*, 28 August 2008.

At the beginning of the negotiations on Kosovo's future status, the majority Albanian community, that is, its elite, acknowledged the fact that, despite the difficult past, it had to make a special effort towards the integration of the Serb community into the Kosovo society. Over the past few years, the Kosovo institutions, assisted by the international community, have made an evident effort to enable Kosovo Serbs to have a normal everyday life in Kosovo through systemic measures and, in particular, legal and institutional solutions. This refers, above all, to laws regulating the status of Serbs in the fields of labour, health care, security, education, culture (including specifically the right to use Serbian as an equal language), etc. Apart from the institutional and legal regulation of the minority issue, the Kosovo officials often sent the signals to both the Serba and Albanian communities. By their clear, everyday messages, the Kosovo officials inform their own Albanian community that the democratic and economic consolidation of Kosovo society would be more difficult should the incidents against minority communities continue. It seems that such a message was met with the understanding of a great number of Kosovo citizens. Indeed, during the seven-month presence of the Helsinki Committee in the Serb enclaves and talks with Kosovo Serbs it was possible to make only one conclusion: the Albanian community does not pose an obstacle to Serbs to have a normal life in Kosovo. Almost as a rule, Kosovo Serbs do not mention their Albanian neighbours and Kosovo institutions.

One problem is the common denominator of both Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo and that is poverty¹⁰. It is a fact that better living conditions in a society, which was destroyed by war and multi-decade devastation, can hardly be expected. But, it is also a fact that, despite a strong international (primarily financial) presence, economic processes in Kosovo have not yet began to move in the desired direction. The pension system, the lowest salaries in the regions, disastrous health and school systems, corruption¹¹ and nepotism in state institutions are only some of the major problems emphasized by both the Serb and Albanian communities in Kosovo. The only difference between the Serb and

¹¹ In its six-month report, the Kosovo Anti-Corruption Agency states that 68 cases of corruption were reported during 2008. Out of this number, 33 cases are being processed. The Prosecutor's Office received 21 suspected corruption cases and the greatest number of them was associated with the Kosovo Government. It was followed by the judiciary (six cases), bodies of local self-government (four) and public enterprises (three). Hasan Preteni, Director of the Agency, said that, according to the estimates, the Kosovo budget suffered the loss of six million euros as the result of these corruption cases.

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Albanian communities lies in the fact that Kosovo Serbs have their reserve pension, payments, health and educational systems being called the state of Serbia.

In general, Kosovo Serbs were accustomed to a special status since 1912. Serbia was encouraging the stay in Kosovo by special pay scales and other benefits for decades.

However, this system, which was completely institutionalized by the state of Serbia during the past few years, has become the major source of frustration of the Serb community in Kosovo. At present, this frustration is certainly unrelated to Kosovo's independence, or the attitude of the Albanian community towards Kosovo Serbs.

It is the question of the system that was established by the state of Serbia and whose consequence is the ultimate ontological division within the Serb ethnic community. The substance of this division lies in social differences arising from corruption, nepotism and, above all, partocracy, which remains a *modus vivendi* when Serbia's activities and its institutions in Kosovo are in question.

Partocracy, as a system in which political parties are the major factor of overall social life, has taken an especially retrograde form in the everyday life of Kosovo Serbs. Namely, among Kosovo Serbs there are, as a rule, at least three political currents: the members of the old Milošević regime (reinforced by the very strong Serbian Radical Party), who governed Kosovo autonomously from 1987 to June 1999; then the members of Koštunica's nomenclature, who ruled over the lives, feelings and common sense of Kosovo Serbs during the last eight years and there is the network of more rational, opposition leaders, such as Rada Tajković, Oliver Ivanović and Slobodan Petrović. Finally, it must be noted that the new, parallel government network will soon be established in Kosovo. It will be comprised of the Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija (headed by Goran Bogdanović from the Democratic Party), on one side, and the network of municipalities which will remain under the influence of the SRS and DSS, on the other.¹²

¹² The Assembly of the Communities of Kosovo and Metohija was constituted in northern Kosovska Mitrovica on 28 June 2008. Radovan Ničić, a

Conclusions and Recommendations:

- In general, the collocutors of the Helsinki Committee did not display resistance to the organization we represent. After the initial reserved behaviour and distrust, caused, above all, by their negative experiences with the previous visits of the representatives of various governmental and non-governmental organizations, they were ready to openly provide the data on the situation in their villages, methods of solving their problems, contacts with their neighbours – Albanians, visits to Albanian settlements, contacts with Kosovo institutions. The distrust and reserved attitude of our collocutors vanished very fast thanks to our sincere approach – the clear presentation of the members of our team and the motive for our visit, respect for their views and opinions and, finally, the presentation of the instruments for solving at least some of their problems. As a rule, the conversation with them was going within the “right now here” framework, except when we asked them about their past experience. We did not hear of any incident during the past one year anywhere, if we exclude the thefts of cows, vehicles and agricultural machinery, which was regarded by many collocutors as a crime, rather than as an ethnic incident. Cooperation with the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) is satisfactory.

- The exception are the collocutors who have, or had, a strong political influence on the local population, and are now well-off and move freely through Kosovo doing business, while at the same time keeping the local population under “patriotic” discipline and stirring up their fears of the neighbours, integration and future.

- Contacts with the neighbours, cooperation with Albanian traders and trips to towns for trading, or to Albanian hospitals in emergency cases are a rule, rather than an exception. According to our collocutors, these “ventures” are successful and they emphasized

delegate of the Serbian Radical Party, was elected President, Marko Jakšić (DSS) and Srdjan Nikolić (SRS) were elected Vice-Presidents, while the Radical Bojan Savić became the secretary. In its founding declaration, the Assembly rejected “the illegal and unilateral proclamation of Kosovo’s independence”.

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kindness, attentiveness and even concessions (they did not pay for the services which are usually paid for). In some cases, trading has become a routine – in Babin Most, Albanian traders buy up the whole potato crop for a chips production plant and pay a very good price, while in other places they regularly buy up wheat.

- They are aware of the new Kosovo reality, but they are also under a strong influence of the Belgrade authorities so as to be able to accept it. They criticize the international mission in Kosovo and Kosovo institutions, but also the Belgrade authorities, because nobody has improved their living conditions. One gets an impression that they – just due to the insecurity of their own position and the feeling that they are betrayed by all political actors (they are especially bitter towards the Serbian Government) – are more ready for new ventures and cooperation with organizations that would act as the mediators between Albanians and Serbs, for example.

- The main problems of the majority of the Serbs living in the enclaves are not security, freedom of movement and access to public services any more. Their key problems are unemployment, return, protection and use of personal property, education of their children, use of health services, as well as the efficient and effective implementation of laws. The problem is also posed by the slow pace of local bodies of government in the decision-making process and implementation of policies in practice.

- They point out that nobody is interested in them, that young people in those enclaves have no perspective. They also emphasize that they do not receive any assistance, that they have no agricultural machinery and the like. It is noticeable that they are not adequately informed about the most important events in Kosovo and Serbia.

- They criticize and display revolt against so-called false returnees, who have sold their houses and estates, and have settled in the interior of Serbia, but come to Kosovo from time and time, presenting themselves as the leaders in order to enjoy returnee benefits.

- In the enclaves there are no concrete activities that can contribute to the creation of an atmosphere of inter-ethnic tolerance.

- In most villages, our collocutors are in contact with the municipality; they delegate their representatives in local government bodies or security committees. In some villages they appeal to the municipality or the KEK (Kosovo Electro-Energy Corporation), together with their Albanian neighbours, so as to solve the problems of rural infrastructure.

- The rural population is increasingly less engaging in agricultural production. Elderly households focus mostly on the satisfaction of their personal needs, while the greatest part of their land remains uncultivated. Most of them are waiting for a favourable opportunity to sell their land.

- There is great discontent over the uneven distribution of assistance from Serbia – some villages did not receive Russian assistance; financial assistance is not obtained by all and double pay is received only by the employed in health services and schools (many of them do not live in Kosovo – they call them “weekenders”). The firemen, who are a part of the Serbian Ministry of the Interior, do not receive double pay; their uniforms are not coming, while firefighting equipment is worn-out; they have a great amount of work – they distinguish fire in the entire territory, while forest fires are especially frequent; they also distribute water for water tanks. After the proclamation of Kosovo’s independence, they were forbidden to take oil from the UNMIK, while oil from Serbia is not coming, so that the problem is currently insoluble. They expect that the new people in the Ministry of the Interior will allow them to take oil which is offered to them.

- A gynecologist from Čaglavica gave us a very bleak picture of women’s health – ignorance and conservativeness - he had never experienced while working in Priština before the war - prevent women from using the latest preventive devices, so that patients come for treatment only when it is too late. He holds that it is necessary to provide for basic health education, as well as visits of physicians and

public-health nurses to villages. Interestingly enough, he was the first collocutor who gave us, as he said, the reasons of “a first order“ for leaving Kosovo – he is satisfied with his job, pay and the working and living conditions, but he will move out, because he wishes better education for his children and better general conditions for the development of their abilities.

- Bearing in mind the similarity of the samples of our collocutors during this visit and the previous one, we could observe greater openness, relaxation of tensions, greater readiness for cooperation and active surmounting of their difficulties.

- The new Government proposes that Gračanica becomes the administrative centre of Kosovo Serbs. This would objectively offset the negative influence of Kosovska Mitrovica, which criminalized the attitude towards the Serbs living in the enclaves. It is necessary to carefully monitor Belgrade’s policy in Gračanica as the new centre. This refers especially to its attitude towards the enclaves and conditioning when the assistance received by the Serbs living in them is in question. The initiative to have a Kosovo Serb institute for science and culture constructed in Leposavic (the only enclave considered Serb territory) was launched in parallel with Gračanica’s transformation into an administrative center. This initiative is being advocated by NIS /Petroleum Industry of Serbia/.¹³ The basic idea is to create a Serb elite in Kosovo that would be connected with Belgrade rather than with Kosovo. The entire project is estimated at 57 million US dollars. Russian presence would be secured through various donations such as books and thus turning the Kosovo Serbs to the Russian instead of the EU option. That is yet another attempt to keep Kosovo, as long as possible, a point of divides among Serb political elites. As for the governmental strategy for Kosovo, the projects either initiated or backed by the Kostunica cabinet still dominate, which indicates the domination of the policy supported by the Russians.

¹³ The industry has been sold to the Russians.

Recommendations:

- The unemployment problem should be solved by building joint industrial facilities. The construction of a thermal power plant, in which both Serbia and Kosovo would participate, would solve the unemployment problem of Serbs and Albanians alike, as well as the power supply problem of Kosovo and Serbia. The Serbs employed in the electric power sector before the war now live in Serbia and receive government assistance amounting to 2.5 million Euros a year.

- Encourage and support the formation of cooperatives which would professionalize and modernize agricultural production. Kosovo land is very fertile and could meet the food demands of the entire region, the more so when one bears in mind the constant food price increase worldwide. The Serbs were traditionally more engaged in agriculture and grape growing, so that the modernized type of cooperatives would be an incentive for their stay. Generally speaking, the Albanian rural population is fewer and fewer as well. NATO intervention sped up Kosovo’s urbanization. Therefore, it is necessary to as much as possible orient the Serbs in enclaves (mostly rural population) towards urban areas and thus prevent their further isolation.

- Health care poses a problem both to Albanians and Serbs. It is necessary to build a big clinical centre that would serve the whole region, including Albanians, Serbs and other communities. It is known that Albanians still come to Belgrade for treatment (especially children) and that Serbs go to Albanian health institutions in emergency cases. On the macro plane, it is necessary to ensure general health education, especially for women and the rural population.

- Renovate schools and, where this is not possible, ensure separate classes for Serb children in Albanian schools. Organize the programmes that will include both Serb and Albanian children, as well as children from other communities. Encourage the formation of youth groups on both sides and, where possible, joint youth groups. Conceive the programmes that will encourage them to get together and carry out joint activities. Organize inventive, alternative educational programmes

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for all communities. Make it possible for young Serbs to apply to international universities in Kosovo (scholarships) – for, nowadays they are generally educated at universities in Serbia and, as a rule, never return to Kosovo; at the same time this would be the best guarantee for raising a multiethnic management elite in Kosovo.

- Establish youth cultural centers that would regularly run Serbian and Albanian language programs. Organize multiethnic summer camps for elementary and secondary school students that would boost socialization. Organize, for Serb children, excursions to Kosovo towns and tours of major institutions (e.g. parliament, courts of law, etc.), exhibitions, concerts, etc. Organize creative workshops for children, as well as multiethnic excursions to neighboring countries with a view to establishing communication with regional peers. Mobilize the youth for sport activities and, for that purpose, construct recreational centers.

- Provide infrastructure support for the activities of women's groups, which show greater dynamism and interest in various activities. Support their inclusion in the Albanian network of women's organizations, which cooperate very actively with some NGOs in the enclaves. Organize educational programmes for women, especially those devoted to health and other topics being important for their emancipation.

- Increase the level of information about the current public administration issues, which is provided to the population, including specifically the improvement of the status of minority communities (available funds, open competitions to fill vacancies, regulations, etc.). It has been shown that, at present, the non-Albanian population cannot obtain such information from the Albanian media (due to the language barrier), while the Serb media do not deal with such topics, or their local leaders do not do that.

- Set up a team of lawyers (of Albanian or mixed nationality), which will work on the protection and restitution of usurped property, whereby the greatest number of cases refers to the usurpation of land. Such an initiative would increase the confidence of

Serbs in Kosovo institutions to a considerable extent, since it has been shown that the right of access to information has frequently been violated, especially in judicial practice (this also applies when the civil rights of Roma, Ashkali and other minority communities are in question). The legal team should operate as professional, non-governmental citizens' association.

- Open a greater number of soup kitchens (to be financed by the Kosovo Government), which will especially contribute to a rise in the employment of women in rural areas. This initiative will be useful in two respects if they are opened in ethnically mixed regions, especially if one bears in mind that poverty and unemployment are the common problems of Serbs and Albanians.

- In their political statements, the representatives of the Kosovo authorities should plead for full respect for the rights of minority communities, as well as for the development of a multiethnic Kosovo society. Their message to Serbs must be clear: Kosovo is the state of all its citizens; the Serb community has full control over the process of improving its life and it has the prospects in Kosovo.

- Parallel institutions have an adverse effect and must be abolished as soon as possible. The same laws must be enforced in the entire territory of Kosovo and Kosovo should function as a unique, multiethnic society, with full international support.

- The right to use the Serbian language in Kosovo is guaranteed by law. However, there are many instances that this right is violated. The Kosovo institutions often fail to apply the principles of this law. The Priština authorities must provide an adequate mechanism for the full respect of this right, since the right to use one's language is an important element in starting dialogue and cooperation between Albanians and Serbs.

- After the proclamation of Kosovo's independence, the return of displaced Serbs was considerably reduced. Displaced Serbs do not return to Kosovo mostly for two reasons: usurped property and social problems, including specifically the impossibility to find a job. Serb returnees live under very difficult conditions and most of them

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still have housing problems. Also, they often have no electricity and water. Many Serbs who had owned flats cannot return to them, because they have been usurped. Returnees have almost no possibility to find employment.

- This return process must be empowered, especially by the organized and more massive return of displaced Serbs who live in collective centres in Kosovo and in the interior of Serbia. To that end, the Ministry for Communities and Return in the Kosovo Government and the UNMIK bear a special responsibility for launching the initiative and supporting the projects which promote the return process. It is necessary to depoliticize the return process, which calls for the relaxation of tensions, restitution of usurped housing facilities and greater financial assistance to returnees.

- Since the Serb members of the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) left this service, the Serbs living in the Kosovo enclaves have been feeling less secure. It is necessary to ensure an adequate presence of Serbs in the KPS and adjust its ethnic composition in the enclaves to that of the population. This would increase the security of the Serb enclaves and improve their official communication with the Kosovo institutions.

- Most media in the Albanian and Serbian languages inform about Kosovo Serbs selectively, attaching importance only to the topics being in accordance with the policies pursued by their governments. They often disregard the real situation in the field and rarely carry affirmative stories about multiethnicity, commonness and

tolerance. The influence of the Belgrade media on the security of Kosovo's Serb community is mostly negative. On the other hand, the Serb media in Kosovo are insufficient and nonprofessional. It is necessary to professionalize the Serb media and provide one TV channel and the network of radio stations, which will broadcast their programmes in Serbian, as well as a daily newspaper and news agency which will impartially inform the public about everything that is going on in Kosovo in Serbian.

- It is high time to start working on a (multiethnic) Kosovo identity, which would in itself be a regional precedent. In other words, at this stage of Kosovo independence, efforts should be exerted to create a political community encompassing all citizens of Kosovo. The fact is that interethnic relations have been disturbed in all parts of the former Yugoslavia experiencing conflicts and that mostly everywhere all sides see themselves as victims – and this additionally burdens the process of normalization. This calls for a strategy for the establishment of multiethnic confidence that, among other things, implies thorough reforms of educational systems. Speaking of Kosovo, it is most important that minorities, including Serbs, learn to speak the language of the majority. Besides, Kosovo is the only state that is not etymologically named after its majority population but after a territory – and this additionally benefits the emergence of a new cultural model and specific identity.

INTRODUCTION

I. The New Political Context

The proclamation of Kosovo's independence, protests in Belgrade, early parliamentary elections in Serbia and the victory of the Coalition for European Serbia (KES) exerted a significant influence on the frame of mind of Kosovo Serbs in the enclaves. The new reality, objective circumstances under which the Serbs in the enclaves live and the feeling of being abandoned by Belgrade led to the rationalization of their attitude towards the state of Kosovo and the perspective of their stay in Kosovo. In their conversation with the representatives of the Helsinki Committee, one could observe a significant change in their expectations and much more critical attitude towards Belgrade and Kosovska Mitrovica.

On 28 June, the Assembly of the Communities of Serb Municipalities was formed in Kosovo Mitrovica, despite the negative stance of the international community. The main protagonist was Slobodan Samardžić. The reactions of the Serbian ministries to Kosovo's independence were geared to the undermining of the new Kosovo authorities and the obstruction of independence. The Serbian side rejected the Ahtisaari plan – it even isolated Serb policemen in the common Kosovo Police Service. The real Serbian plan for Kosovo is its division in proportion 12:88, which means that Belgrade wishes to annex five northern municipalities to Serbia. To this end, Belgrade will maintain a low-intensity conflict through the infiltration of its security services throughout Kosovo. The mainstay of Belgrade's overall activity is the Serbian Orthodox Church.

In all projections of the Belgrade authorities concerning Kosovo's future, an important role is played by Russia, which blocked the adoption of the new UN Security Council resolution.¹⁴ Although

¹⁴ Some individuals, like historian Veselin Djuretić, hold that the installation of Russian military bases in Serbia (on Mt Kopaonik) would provide an important counterbalance to the US Bondstil base. Djuretić also holds that the Serb Assembly in

Russia is now less visible, it is still expected that, over a long term, it will stand behind the plan about Kosovo's division. That Kosovo's division is a topical issue was also corroborated by Russian Ambassador to Belgrade Aleksandr Konuzin in his recent interview for *Danas*. Namely, he said that there would be no division of Kosovo. However, he emphasized: "If Belgrade and Priština decide otherwise during their direct talks, we are ready to consider that".¹⁵

Although the new Government formally retained the position on Kosovo's independence, its rhetoric changed to a considerable extent. In his exposé, the new Serbian Prime Minister, Mirko Cvetković, announced that all members of the coalition agreed that the new Serbian Government would never recognize Kosovo's independence and that it would take all legal and diplomatic measures for the preservation of Kosovo. This formulation differs considerably from those used by the former Minister for Kosovo and Metohija, Slobodan Samardžić. However, this formulation also means that the Serbian question is still open and that its solving is only postponed.

It remains to be seen how the new Government will act in concrete situations when Kosovo is in question. The arrest of Radovan Karadžić pushed the Kosovo issue into the background, although Serbia's diplomatic action against Kosovo's independence is still underway.

The Attitude of the New Government Towards Kosovo

The arrest of Radovan Karadžić and a specific drama which accompanied his handover, shifted the focus away from the situation in

Kosovo should ask Russia to win over its partners for the execution of the military agreement of 1999 and that, instead of the anticipated Serbian troops, Russian military forces (about 10,000) are installed in the Kosovo enclaves, which had been in the Serbian hands prior to the NATO aggression (*Glas javnosti*, 7 July 2008).

¹⁵ *Danas*, 5-6 July 2008.

Kosovo, although the installation of the EULEX mission is underway. However, the new Government continued its campaign for the non-recognition of Kosovo and, to that end, is involved in a very dynamic diplomatic activity through its **Foreign Minister Vuk Jeremić**. His activity is geared, above all, to non-aligned countries. However, Jeremić emphasizes that the “new Government will be ready to cooperate with the UN in finding an adequate solution for the reconfiguration of the civil mission in Kosovo”. However, it still insists that “the reconfiguration of the international mission in Kosovo is possible only with the adequate support of the Security Council”.¹⁶ Jeremić is warned that not one mission in Kosovo could implement the rejected Ahtisaari plan and that Serbia would not agree to any action that could bring the country’s sovereignty and territorial integrity into question.

At the conference of the Non-aligned Movement in Tehran, Vuk Jeremić called on its members to support Serbia’s initiative to seek the opinion of the International Court of Justice whether the proclamation of Kosovo’s independence was in accordance with international law. Jeremić is still insisting on this initiative although he received the suggestion from Brussels that the Serbian Government should withdraw it.¹⁷

In the meantime, the Government brought the decision to return some ambassadors to the countries which recognized Kosovo, since

¹⁶ www.B92.net, 6 July 2008.

¹⁷ Beta, “Srbija da odustane od zahteva”, 22 July 2008.

Bernard Couchner asked that Serbia should give up its request that the International Court of Justice should give its opinion about the recognition of Kosovo’s independence. According to him, it is surprising that Serbia intends to request from the UN General Assembly that the International Court of Justice should give its opinion about the decisions of some countries to recognize Kosovo’s independence.

British Ambassador Stephen Wordsworth also stated that Serbia’s initiative that the International Court of Justice should give its opinion about the legality of Kosovo’s unilaterally proclaimed independence was wrong. According to him, it represents a direct challenge, which will only aggravate Serbia’s cooperation and integration into the Union (source: B92, Beta, 5 August 2008).

such a decision of the Koštunica Government was particularly harmful to the Serbian interests. Serbia’s ambition to become a candidate for EU membership as soon as possible, requires active diplomacy, which also implies full diplomatic relations with EU countries. Through its representatives, the EU is sending a message to Serbia that its recognition of Kosovo is not a requirement for EU membership. So, the German representative of the European Parliament, Elmar Brock, who is the author of the European Parliament’s draft resolution on EU enlargement strategy, stated that the recognition of Kosovo’s independence should not be necessary for the continuation of Serbia’s convergence towards the Union. However, on the eve of the debate on the resolution on EU enlargement in Strasbourg, Brock emphasized that the door to the EU was open to all West Balkan countries, but that they would “pass through it at different time intervals, because they are not at the same development level and do not have the same capacity”. He turned attention to his position in that document that any country wishing to join the EU should solve its greatest internal problems, especially those regarding its territorial and constitutional system, prior to becoming a EU member.

The new Minister for Kosovo, Goran Bogdanović, is more focused on the return of Serbs to Kosovo in its statements, which is, essence, the continuation of the same policy. It is questionable how much the Serbian Government will provide substantive support to the return process, or the problem will serve again for blackmailing the international community. He announced the adoption of a new strategy for Kosovo whose aim would be “the preservation of sovereignty but, above all else, that the Serbs remain on their centuries-old hearths”. He also stated that “the return has so far been minimal and spontaneous. We must do our best to make it sustainable, that the returnees and Serbs who have survived there since 1999 are economically empowered. It is impermissible that they live on social assistance and alms coming from Belgrade”.¹⁸ The new strategy will be focused on a sustainable return to the Province, which will be based on the economic empowerment of

¹⁸ Beta, 29 July 2008.

the Serb communities. He pointed to the need for job creation, the activation of small and medium-sized enterprises and the encouragement of Serbian firms wishing to invest in Kosovo.¹⁹

According to him, the strategy first anticipates the “scanning” of the complete situation in the field, how many Serbs have remained in the Province, how many of them stay only temporarily there and how many of them have been displaced. He also announced “the prerparation of the social map of the population that recognizes the Serbian state institutions”. Bogdanović also said that the so-called social map of the population would be prepared so as to ensure a more rational allocation of the funds earmarked for Kosovo. In other words, it can be concluded that this is a specific form of blackmailing the Serbs who are prepared to cooperate with the Kosovo Government and keeping them under control or, better said, drawing them into economic dependence on Belgrade. Bogdanović also pointed out: “We will compile the data on the earnings of the people that live there, people who only work in the Province and come there from time to time, as well as displaced persoms who were forced to leave the Province”.²⁰

He announced the termination of employment-related abuses and that, to this end, he already informed the representatives of local self-governments that there would be no more employment without an open competition. He also announced that he would send a request to local self-governments to check the lists of the employed very soon. According to him, this is necessary so as to find out who they are and where they live – in Kosovo or elsewhere. He disclosed the data that only seven or eight per cent of the funds was coming from the Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija, while the remainder was provided by the Ministries of Health, Education, Culture and Finance. Therefore, all abuses would be jointly identified. He said that some irregularities were possible and added that this was pointed by “the data that about 40 billion dinars (or 500 million euros) are earmarked for Kosovo and Metohija.” One must bear in mind that the budget of the Kosovo

Government is 670 million euros, of which 470 million euros are earmarked for infrastructural projects and Kosovo Electro-Energy Corporation (KEK), and the remainder for salaries.

It is evident that the new Government will not rely on the opposition parties DSS and SRS which, during the previous mandate, dominated Kosovo and shaped its policy. This fact points to the more modest behaviour of the new authorities. But, he also pointed out that “Kosovo cannot be a partisan issue or be used for the purposes of daily politics. It must be a state issue. The Ministry and I will do our best to cooperate with all representatives of local self-governments and organizations which respect Serbia and consider it to be their state”.²¹ He also expressed his conviction that the UNMIK would also understand over time that it could cooperate only with the legitimate Serb representatives, elected at the local elections on 11 May. He announced earlier that he would resign if these elections in Kosovo were not recognized.

As for the reconstruction of the destroyed monasteries and churches, Bogdanović said that the Ministry would do anything that was in the interest of Serbs and other non-Albanians and that it would support all projects of significance to the Serbian Orthodox Church and its members. However, he said: “I do not know whether cooperation with the Council of Europe, which has financed the reconstruction of a great number of churches and monasteries, will be continued, but this depends on the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church which is the only one being competent for making such a decision”.²²

Serbian Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković said that the new Government would never recognize Kosovo’s independence. At the ceremony, which was organized on the occasion of the successful completion of the General Staff training of the 51st class of the Serbian Army National Defence School, he said that, in cooperation with other state bodies, the Government would take all measures in its diplomatic struggle for the preservation of Kosovo within its borders.

¹⁹ Beta, 29 July 2008.

²⁰ *Večernje novosti*, 29 July 2008.

²¹ Beta, 29 July 2008.

²² Beta, Tanjug, 9 July 2008.

It seems, however, that the statements of the new government representatives are still more moderate and that Kosovo will not be in the focus of the new Government, although one must not lose sight of the fact that the long-term strategy is Kosovo's division. It is questionable how much Serbia will have a chance to pursue any policy in Kosovo under the new circumstances. The statements by Goran Bogdanović point out that he will be concerned with the improvement of the everyday life of Serbs and that there will be no politicization or engaging in petty politics. "The motto of the Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija will be 'To live in Kosovo, for Kosovo and not on account of Kosovo'".

He stated that in the past there were complaints that the Serbs in northern and central Kosovo did not enjoy equal treatment, adding that the Ministry would to its best to improve the situation. "My first step will be just to set up the Coordination Centre in Gračanica, in central Kosovo, because I hold that their problems are much greater, that the life of Serbs is much more difficult there, but this does not mean in any way that northern Kosovo will be neglected". He said that, in the future, the local problems in the Serb community should be dealt with by the legitimately elected bodies of local self-government, that they should assume one part of the responsibility for the situation in Kosovo and Metohija and that they could not expect any more that everything should come from Belgrade.

All representatives of the new Government emphasize that the UNMIK is the only legitimate representative of the international community in Kosovo, since the "EULEX has no legal ground for its activity and cannot be our partner in the talks about solving the problems, unless its stay in Kosovo and Metohija is legalized by the new UN Security Council resolution or by modifying Resolution 1244".²³

It is evident that the new Government will also obstruct the normalization of relations with Kosovo, both with Serbia and the region. **Serbian Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Ivica**

²³ Fonet, 11 July 2008.

Dačić said that the Republic of Serbia would not recognize Kosovo passports any more. In response to the announcements of Montenegro and Croatia that they would recognize Kosovo passports, he said that this is "part of their national policies towards the unilaterally proclaimed independence of Kosovo, which has been recognized by some countries" and which is not in conformity with international law. Dačić also announced that Serbia would not recognize the passports of the so-called independent state of Kosovo. Any Serbian citizen who possesses a Kosovo passport will not be allowed to cross Serbia's administrative line and border crossings.²⁴ In addition, all stamps of the so-called state of Kosovo in the passports of foreigners entering Serbia from Kosovo will be cancelled and over them the stamp of the Republic of Serbia will be affixed. On the other hand, Goran Bogdanović said that the presence of customs border posts in the northern Kosovo was absolutely unacceptable: "We cannot allow the return of customs border posts in northern Kosovo, at Donje Jarinje and Brnjak".

The Governor of the National Bank of Serbia, Radovan Jelašić, who represents Serbia on the Board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund, stated that he would request from IMF member countries not to support the membership of Kosovo, or any other form of its participation in the Fund's work. This was said for Tanjug News Agency in the central bank. **Serbian Deputy Prime Minister Božidar Đelić** said that Serbia would never trade Kosovo for faster European integration and that the Serbian Government passed the new resolution on the continuity of the national policy towards Kosovo. In Paragraph 6 "it is clearly stated that Serbia will ratify the Stabilization and Association Agreement with Kosovo as its integral part and that Serbia will enter the European Union with Kosovo".²⁵ According to him, "this is the way to enter the European Union and defend our territorial integrity at the same time".

²⁴ Fonet, Beta, Tanjug, 18 July 2008.

²⁵ Fonet, 11 July 2008.

The Kosovo Reality

The Republic of Kosovo poses one of the moot problems in now the neighbouring Republic of Serbia. In the public discourse of internal policy the formulation which anticipates Kosovo as a “neighbour” is not used. This is not unusual because – when considered from a broader historical perspective – there is a striking similarity or identity with Milošević’s hegemonistic policy towards the secession of the former Yugoslav republics. It is an open question how much the newly elected pro-European Government is on the path towards the termination of such a policy.

At present, the discrimination of the Serbs living south of the Ibar by Belgrade has a positive effect on the political sobering up of the people relative to the “Radical” north, which is yet to plunge into a crisis due to Serbian nationalism. Although the new Government is a reflection of the greater awareness of the citizens and has the real capacity to draw the country closer to the European option, it is questionable how much it will be efficient. The new Government has not yet articulated a rational policy²⁶ towards Kosovo. The previous government organized the rally entitled “Kosovo Is Serbia” only to protest against Kosovo’s independence, which escalated into “planned” violence. The Ministry for Kosovo in the new Government will be led by Goran Bogdanović (ZES-DS).

The formation of the Assembly of the Communities of Kosovo and Metohija Municipalities, as parallel institutions, is most likely an

²⁶ Irrational policy implies that one regime, in the first place, deceives the citizens of its own country due to numerous interests, and those interests are shaped into the ideology of so-called “national policy”, stirring up various forms of violence and chauvinism both towards external and internal “enemies”. An example of irrationality is the official text of the oath of office for newly appointed ministers, which was adopted by the previous Government: “I swear to royalty to the Republic of Serbia and bind myself with my honour to respect the Constitution and laws, to conduct my duties as the government member conscientiously, responsibly and with dedication, and to be committed to the preservation of Kosovo and Metohija within the Republic of Serbia”.

integral part of the Action Plan of the previous Government because, as stated by Slobodan Samardžić, these «representative political» and not «executive legislative» bodies will initiate the creation of institutions with full competences in due time²⁷ (why would anyone spend money and energy on something that is only a symbol, unless these representatives are there only to perform “other tasks”, while waiting for further instructions from Belgrade).

The policy implemented by the Serbian Government towards the enclaves is still manipulative. Although Koštunica was defeated, his power structures, especially those in Kosovo, have survived and use the previous corruption channels. This refers primarily to the thefts of large amounts of money earmarked for the Serbs living in the enclaves. There are strong arguments that confirm the incidence of such corruption, since in every village that was visited by the representatives of the Helsinki Committee the people told absolutely the same things. In most cases, they mention the village presidents (local leaders) who distribute assistance only to some households, whereby it is unknown what amount is in question and where the undistributed money ends up.

Local residents are especially frustrated (which is absolutely justified) about the unequal treatment of Kosovo refugees who live in Serbia, but still receive assistance, obtain the houses intended for returnees and then sell them, or receive double pay if they have two jobs. They call them “weekenders” or “false returnees”, since those people usually come to the village only when they hear that some assistance will be distributed. The financial crisis felt by local residents is enhanced by their dependence on the funds coming or not coming from Belgrade. The financial crisis could be a catalyst for the readiness of Serbs in the enclaves to include themselves in the Kosovo

²⁷ On 28 June, on the day when the Assembly of Kosovo Serbs was founded, Minister Samardžić said: “The Albanians have chosen their path, we have chosen ours and we will defend our task in our institutions. Rest assured that they will agree to that we are doing now, they probably won’t say that immediately and loud, but they will agree to that and will cooperate with the municipalities elected by Serbs and with the Assembly we have constituted today”.

institutions by taking Kosovo citizenship, pensions, health insurance cards and licence plates. Those are the channels which Serbs have at their disposal and the sooner they accept them, the sooner they will be the recipients of the funds planned by the Kosovo Government (Ministry for Return).

Many of them are already prepared to take such steps, because their discontent has reached its apex. Their discontent with the “treason” of their homeland reveals the political background of the state (Koštunica’s) project. The financial reasons are increasingly driving the people to choose more rational solutions (e.g. they will accept the Kosovo pension if it is higher than the Serbian one, or “we will go to Serbia when there is no job any more”). The politicization of assistance from Belgrade causes their disappointment and apoliticization (they say, for example, that they are not interested in politics any more, or that “they all are equal”) and, not rarely, they express their critical attitude towards the past and the policies pursued by Milošević and Koštunica²⁸. While coping with their daily challenges, such as the shortages of water, electricity, health care and transport for their children to distant schools, they understand that their future depends exclusively on the new state in which they live and that they and their Albanian neighbours are now responsible for their future. Political sobering up comes with poverty and the feeling of abandonment, especially in villages with an extremely disturbed age distribution.

There are also the examples of very successful co-existence of Albanians and Serbs. So, for example, at Rabovci, a village with 50 Serb and 85 Albanian households, there is no spatial segregation, since the houses are not grouped (e.g. 2-3 of them), consisting only of “Albanian” or “Serb” houses. The village is an example of successful

²⁸ The statements like: “The elections (local) were wrong”, “Serbia brought even greater discord”, “the parties will not help you in the village to solve the problems”, “it is already felt that there will be some division, but that will not pass without unrest”, “The Serb Assembly is NOTHING...corruption is now there”, “Albanians are not so guilty as Serbs”, “local authorities are the greatest thieves”, “Nobody has done anything, they all think how to keep their position”, “To work on the laws civilizational values, tolerance”.

co-existence thanks largely to reasonableness of its president. Serbs and Albanians organize working groups and solve some common problems (e.g. they have jointly paved the road from the village to Lipljan). Such examples of successful co-existence are still hampered by strong manipulation by pro-Serbian leaders and messages coming from Serbia.

Manipulation is done primarily by non-informing the local population. Most of them were not acquainted with the existence of the funds and the possibility to compete for various investment programmes intended for minority communities. In these cases, the representatives of such villages bear the greatest responsibility and their strategy of rejecting any cooperation with the Kosovo Government is clear. And when the people are informed, they usually listen to Serbian radio stations²⁹ which broadcast nationalistic programmes. This stirs up their fear, which is one of the major barriers to the communication with Albanians, or travelling Priština or Prizren.

Health care deserves special attention. Most Serbs living in the enclaves are oriented to larger centres like Gračanica or northern Mitrovica. Only in emergency cases patients are referred to Albanian health institutions in their immediate neighbourhood. So, for example, the nurses in the first-aid station in Čaglavica say embarrassingly that they still do not refer emergency cases to the hospital in Priština, which is only three-minute drive from the billage, but to Gračanica. To the interviewer’s question why that is so, they had no answer. Truly, they sent one patient, who was injured in a car accident, to Priština and there was no any problem. It is assumed that their fear is groundless, or that fear does not exist, but that lower-level personnel acts on the instruction received from the superiors (this is why they had no arguments to justify such medical practice). The fact that it is the question of manipulation by local leaders was confirmed by their attempt to manipulate us, as their collocutors, providing false information.

²⁹ The Albanian media are not accessible to them and the issue of language poses another problem for their active inclusion in Kosovo institutions, so that it would be desirable that new generations learn Albanian at school as a compulsory language.

In view of the fact that the respondents mostly confirmed the fact that there were no ethnic incidents, it can be concluded that it is the question of fear caused by an anti-Albanian campaign from Belgrade. There are incidents, but they mostly include thefts, especially cattle stealing, or intrusions into estates. Most respondents have concluded that they are aware that the “Serb” police should not have left the KPS and that the police should not be ethnically structured. Kosovo is still a young and insufficiently regulated, so that it can be expected that professionalization, especially that of the police, will be improved over time.

II Visits of the Helsinki Committee to the Enclaves

During July, the representatives of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia paid three visits to Kosovo and visited three groups of enclaves, thus completing the programme anticipated under the project. From 1 to 4 July 2008, Kosovo was visited by two teams, which visited and interviewed the members of the Serb community in the following enclaves:

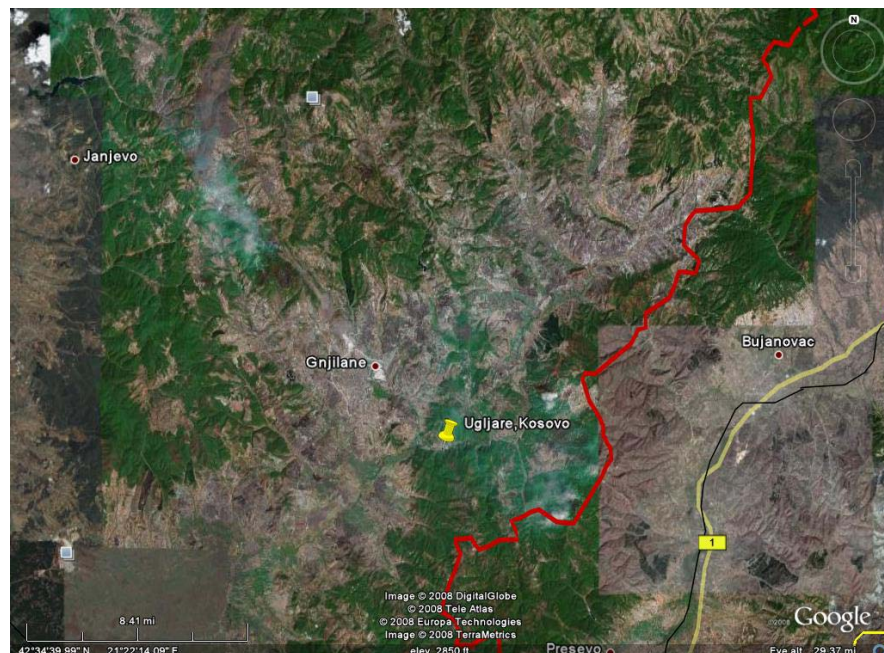
I Municipality of Kosovo Polje (Fushë Kosovë) – Villages: Ugljare (Uglarë) and Bresje; **II Municipality of Peć (Peja)** – Village of Belo Polje (Bellopojë), Patrijaršijska Street-Pec (Peja) and the Patriarchate of Peć; **III Municipality of Lipjan (Lipjan)** – Village: Rabovce (Rubofcë); **IV Municipality of Prizren** – Villages: Novake (Novakë) and Stajkovce (Stajkovcë); **V Municipality of Priština (Prishtinë)** – Village of Čaklavica (Çakllavicë); **VI Municipality of Obilić (Obiliq)** – Village: Babin Most (Babimoc); **VII Municipality of Orahovac (Rahovec)** – Villages: Velika Hoča (Hoça e Madhe) and Žočište (Zoqishtë); **VIII Municipality of Klinë (Klinë)** – Klinavac (Klinavcë); **IX Municipality of Vitina (Viti)** – Village: Žitinje (Zhiti); **X Municipality of Štrpce (Shtrpcë)** – Village: Sušice (Shusicë).

I. Municipality of Kosovo Polje (Fushë Kosovë)

The Municipality of Kosovo Polje is located to the south-west of Priština. This is a town in which, before an armed conflict in Kosovo, the Serbs accounted for a high share of its ethnic composition. It is estimated that the municipality now has about 40,000 inhabitants. There are nearly 34,000 Albanians, over 3,400 Serbs and as many Ashkali and Roma. During the NATO intervention, Albanians were the first to be exposed to prosecution and after the arrival of the international forces in Kosovo a certain number of Serbs was forced to leave their homes. The emigration of Serbs continued especially after the March violence in 2004. The municipality of Kosovo Polje has projects for the return of displaced persons. They are implemented through the Ministry for Return and Integration in the Kosovo Government and the UNDP.

After the May elections in Serbia, the deputies of the Serbian Radical Party (SRS) held, without the deputies of other political parties, the constituent meeting of the Municipality of Kosovo Polje, at which they elected the municipal leadership without the necessary two-third majority. Dragiša Stakić was elected President of the Municipality, while Slaviša Mitrović was elected Deputy President. The elected officials are members of the SRS. The results of this constituent meeting are not recognized by the deputies of the Democratic Party (DS), Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) and New Serbia (NS). In this municipality, Serbs live mostly in the villages of Ugljare and Bresje. The Serbian authorities tried to take control over Kosovo Railways, which caused an incident. This made more difficult for Serbs from these two villages to travel freely to Kosovska Mitrovica and in the interior of Serbia, since transport on the route Kosovo Polje-Lesak-Kosovo Polje was suspended.

a) The Village of Ugljare



Before the conflict in Kosovo, the village of Ugljare had a little more than 1,000 Serbs and about 700 Albanians. Although some villagers left it, the number of people is not smaller, since the village is now populated by displaced Serbs from other communities in Kosovo. Their housing facilities are poor. During the unrest on 17 March 2004, 23 Serb families from Kosovo Polje, whose houses were burnt down and destroyed, found temporary accommodation in the village in Ugljare. They live in 17 containers which were sent by Russians after the March violence. According to its residents, the village of Ugljare itself did not suffer greater damage. Only several houses were set to fire.

In April 2007, during the search in the house of Siniša Jovanović (Ugljare), KFOR members, together with the members of the

Kosovo Police Service (KPS), found two hand grenades, one semi-automatic shotgun and one automatic shotgun, handcuffs, one Yugoslav Army uniform and four gas masks. For this reason, the owner was arrested. During the routine control of Dragiša Mijatović's car in the same village, KFOR members found a large amount of illegal weapons. This had an adverse effect on ethnic relations in the region. Nevertheless, in this village there have been no more serious ethnic incidents over the past years. Some Srbs from this village are still selling their houses and other property, especially if those are located near the trunk road connecting Priština and Kosovo Polje. The main reason for sale is solely a financial one, since the land in this belt is sold at a very high price. The sale of land in this village is the most lucrative business, since one are of land (100 sq.m.) costs more than 10,000 euros. From March 2004 to the present day more than 40 Serbian houses in this village were sold. Apart from severely criticizing the Belgrade authorities, the Serbs from the village of Ugljare express their discontent with their local political leaders. They blame them for not working sufficiently on the protection of the Serb population and for frequently abusing their functions for personal enrichment.

In this village there are about 30 young persons who are mostly jobless. The only source of income is agriculture. The produce mostly for their own needs and not for the market. If there are some surpluses, Albanians buy up all at a very good price, especially wheat.

Although they do not complain about security, there are only a few Serbs in the KPS. They complain about thefts and intrusions of cattle into their estates. The village has only one café and a betting place, which are the only gathering places. Many of them would stay should they have a job. They have engaged in small business, but they need assistance for it. They make their purchases mostly in Kosovo Polje. As for health care, they have drugs, but when any more serious problem is in question they go to Kosovska Mitrovica.

They all complain about the behaviour of the state (Serbia) which, according to them, is spreading hatred among Serbs by giving preference to some groups, while at the same time leaving others to live

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with meanimum means, especially those whom they probably wish to go away. The presidents or representatives of local authorities are controlled by the coordination centre. Many of them have already sold everything and come occasionally to the village because of the functions they perform. This irritates the permanent residents of the village very much, because, in their opinion, they do not represent their interests.

They say that at one time they were told that each unemployed person would receive 200 euros, but that was just an empty promise. The people mostly survive thanks to their resourcefulness. Those who have a chance to find a job, leave the village. There were attempts by some donors to donate a tractor and other agricultural machinery to individuals and the cooperative, but these were mostly sold and money was taken away.

The villagers say that there is no authority or law and that everything is in a state of lawlessness or, better said, left to several strongmen who dominate the village. The donors (both domestic and foreign) do not control how their donations (primarily equipment) are used. Those who receive donations mostly sell everything.

Jovica Andrejević, (57) a worker in the Kosovo Power Plants “in reserve“, does not want to talk with the activists of the Helsinki Committee. He is angry with the state of Serbia, it abandoned them, betrayed them, but assistance, that is, his unemployment benefit arrives regularly, in dinars. Serbs live and work indoors, in thirty or so houses (grouped, encircled...). They have a pharmacy, while for medical reasons they go to the health centre in Gračanica; the Serbian Government started building a first-aid station under the National Investment Plan (NIP). They say that about 300 children attending school; kindergartens are organized in private homes, they come from Bresje and the neighbouring villages.

They all want sell their property, they are only waiting for the price! And that someone takes the lead! For the job he does not perform in the Kosovo Power Plants, Jovica Andrejević receives about

20,000 dinars from the Serbian budget each month. With this money he supports his son and daughter-in-law, as well as two grandchildren. He says that for the past one year or one year and a half, security has been improved and there have been no incidents. They have an elementary school, provisional first-aid station and local authorities (the Radicals won at the May elections).

In the centre of the village, vis-à-vis the first-aid station under construction, there are ten or so containers, brotherly help from Russia for accommodation of the refugees from Kosovo Polje, after the proclamation of Kosovo's independence.

Jovica does not speak Albanian; while he was working in the Kosovo Power Plants, the Albanians communicated with him in Serbian, so that he did not need to learn their language to understand them. To the question where are his grandchildren (4 and 6 years old), he said simply “with us“, without explaining how they would go to school, after completing elementary education, whether they would stay in Kosovo or leave it. Jovica is Orthodox, he was baptized at Gračanica, but he did not say whether he was a church goer and whether the church was providing assistance to the Serbs in Ugljare. Although he “did not want to speak with the activists“, we spent about 30 minutes talking with him.

Mladen Krstić, a pensioner (Kosovotrans, the firm was moved to Kraljevo and then closed down), says that there are no problems, no provocations. He points to the settlement on the other side, Ugljare, with the Albanian population, and Kosovo Polje, where Serbs sell their property and Albanians buy it. Allegedly, one of his relatives sold his land near the trunk road for one million euros...!!! He may have invented this, who knows?!

He regularly receives his pension from Serbia, his daughter-in-law works in the pharmacy at Ugljare and has the salary of 50,000 dinars; he points to one of the villagers who is transporting threshed wheat by tractor, claiming that he works in a bank in Gračanica.

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He also does not speak Albanian, but they have no problems while travelling between the enclaves, regardless of the licence plates, whether they are old Serbian licence plates, or new Kosovo ones.



A woman from Ugljare, in the waiting room; her husband work in the school, he is paid by Serbia and that is good, but her son and daughter-in-law do not work; the son is registered as employed in the electric power sector; they have some minimal earnings, about 10,000 dinars, and three pupils. They manage as well as they can; the village has no good representatives, they care only about themselves; they divide everything that comes from Serbia in halves; for example, they are building the playground in Ugljare for the third time and cannot finish it. Finally, the UNMIK (KFOR) undertook to build it. My brother-in-law asked for help so as to repair his house and he got nothing! As for jobs, the people do not dare to take up employment with Albanians, they are afraid that they would be rejected by the state of Serbia with the justification that they have “accepted Kosovo’s independence”.



A man from Ugljare, the waiting room in the first-aid station in Čaglavica; he worked in the power plants in Serbia; he now receives minimum guaranteed pay, which is provided by the Serbian Government. When Serbia stops sending this assistance, he will leave Kosovo.

The opinion of several persons in the waiting room – the young would stay in Kosovo if there were jobs.

M.Z.: *"I am the only teacher with the appropriate diploma in the village. I have three children, my husband does not work. I competed three times for a job in the kindergarten and each time I was rejected. Do you know who got this job? The wife of the village priest, who is a local leader on behalf of the Serbian Government, her sister and one woman with elementary school, but her husband was the president of the municipality at the time of Sloba".*

The statement by a local fireman, employed by the Serbian Ministry of the Interior:

"After the proclamation of independence, we were forbidden to take petrol and stand-by equipment from the UN. We cannot work normally any more".

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HC: "You extinguished fire wherever it broke out, including the villages populated by Albanians, didn't you?"

K.K.: "Well, yes. To tell the truth, fire does not ask you for nationality and Albanians also do not ask us who we are while extinguishing fire".

HC: "Would you take petrol if the Serbian Government tells you that you can?"

K.K.: "Well, we cannot work without any basic means, but the problem will be solved, one way or the other".



The Conference in the Village of Ugljare, Kosovo Polje

The female representatives of the HC participated in the conference which was organized by the Association of Women Lawyers *Norma* from Priština on 1 July 2008. This conference, entitled "WOMEN AMBASSADORS FOR PEACE, CO-EXISTENCE AND TOLERANCE", was supported by the UNIFEM.

The participants from Serbia were Marija Radoman, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, and Vera Marković, Vice-President of the Social Democratic Union. The conference was opened by Valbona Salihu, President of the Association *Norma*, and the co-organizer of this conference, Nevenka Rikalo from the organization

"Ruka ruci" ("Hand to Hand"), Ugljare. The women's problems in Kosovo were addressed by members of minority and Albanian non-governmental organizations. The participants in this conference also included the representatives of the Ministry of Justice, Family Violence Department, Ministry for Communities, Return and Minority Rights and Kosovo Agency for Gender Equality, head of the KPS Family Violence Department, as well as the UNIFEM representative.

They discussed the topics related to the status and quality of life of the women living in the enclaves, as well as all other women in Kosovo. Among other things, it was emphasized that women were not informed and that the information about the possibilities for solving their problems were inaccessible; confidence in the institutions was poor due to numerous unsolved cases of violence; the position of women deteriorated due to the closing down of factories, children's departure for school in Kosovska Mitrovica or in Serbia, denial of privatization rights; it was also emphasized that the family status of women was changed due to the impossibility to secure income.

The representative of the Ministry for Communities, Return and Minority Rights called the members of minority non-governmental organizations to enter their projects in the competition for the funds for infrastructure reconstruction (one million euros) and for return and stay (million euros) in September. The representative of the municipal office for gender equality called for cooperation in all cases of discrimination. The head of the KPS in charge of family violence explained the application procedure and the KPS measures for an efficient prevention of repeated violence. The representative of the municipal centre for social work described the modalities of assistance to the Serb community, especially women, and called for cooperation. One lawyer from *Norma* presented the Gender Equality Law, especially its articles concerning economic equality.

The interest of the participants in this conference was especially aroused by the report on the joint activities of the Serb NGO "Luna" from Priluzje and the Albanian NGO "Open Door" from Priština. They organized psychosocial workshops which were attended by 60 women

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from Priluzje, two trips related to the exchange of experiences in the work of NGOs in Kosovo and four informative meetings of Albanian and Serb women with physicians and lawyers. The sale of the traditional handicraft work of Plementina women was organized at the Boro and Ramiz shopping centre.

b) Village of Bresje



Bresje is an ethnically mixed village, located in the immediate vicinity of the municipal centre of Kosovo Polje. The Priština-Peć trunk road passes through it. This is the only road leading to the Slatina international airport. Before the war, Bresje had more than 200 Serb households with more than 1000 members, about 150 Montenegrins, 330 Roma and more than 350 Albanians. During the March unrest, one part of the village was burnt down, after which the Serbs began to sell

their houses and estates. This increased the number of Albanians in this village. Although it would be normal that the Serbs from this village go to Kosovo Polje, which is only a few hundred metres far from Bresje, for administrative and medical reasons, they are still oriented to Gračanica or Kosovska Mitrovica.

The villagers wanted to leave their homes and go to central Serbia several times, but most of them gave up the idea in the end. Those who had left the village, come to it from time to time in order to receive humanitarian assistance, which is still occasionally distributed. The villagers now emphasize that their position is especially aggravated by unemployment. Pursuant to the UNMIK decision, the municipality of Kosovo Polje is in a “special zone”, which means that it is necessary to obtain approval from the civil administrator of the municipality for each sale of a house, before its registration in the court. The villagers say that the issuing of approvals is a rather simple process and does not pose any problem when it comes to signing contracts of sale.



In the past, this was the village with a Serb majority. However, judging by the fact that only one third of Serb houses remained (74), out of about 200, Bresje will not remain as such too long. One person from the group of Serbs with whom the HC talked, said that he wanted

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to sell his estate. He said that “the khoja came to see it but gave up for the moment, because he asked a lot (7,000 euros per are). The price of land near the asphalt road is even higher – it can reach 10,000 euros per are. Our collocutor has two jobs and still has to sell his house and estate; he already sold some land and used this money to build a house in Kraljevo.

Božo, a refugee from Uroševac, lives in the house in which Serb refugees from Croatia were settled until 1999 and then fled. He has a small “tobacco shop“ where he sells black-market cigarettes, cans, juices, beer... He receives assistance from the state of Serbia. To the question they have some plans for the future, do they think that assistance from Serbia may stop coming one day, he was astonished – **assistance must not be stopped!!**

In the conversation with a family, which was close to Milošević’s Socialists at one time, the HC got an impression that they were evidently well-off. The family engages in agriculture and sells food grains throughout Kosovo. They also lease their business premises to Albanians.



II MUNICIPALITY OF PEĆ (PEJA)

a) Village of Belo Polje (Bellopojë)



Before the war, the village of Bjelo Polje near Peć, in the vicinity of the Italian KFOR camp, had 752 Serb and 112 Montenegrin families. After the NATO bombing they all left the village. In this village three persons were killed and one person is registered as missing. After the war, the Greek non-governmental organization “European Perspective” reconstructed 73 houses. On 14 July 2003, 24 families from that village came back. At the moment, 15 families live in the village, while several of them come to the village from time to time. They all work for their own subsistence. They engage mostly in agriculture and receive pensions. The returnees point out that they do not receive any assistance from Belgrade or the Kosovo authorities.

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Those who are here do not plan to leave the village. There is a very small number of young people. Only three pupils go to the secondary school in the neighbouring village of Goraždevac. They emphasize that their greatest problem is unemployment. They have only one villager who is employed in the Kosovo Police Service (KPS). None of the Serbs from this village are employed in the local bodies of government. They move freely not only in the village, but also go freely to the town of Peć. There are no ethnic incidents. At times, the sherheds taking livestock to graze in the vicinity of village demolish the renovated houses in which nobody lives. According to the villagers, neither the KPS nor the bodies of local government take any measures to prevent them. The village representative, Moma Savić, emphasizes that until 14 June 2008 about 40 villagers sold their property – more than 20 hectares of plough land. Nobody sold the house.

They complain that Serbia does not invest anything and that they do not have their representative in the municipality of Peć. It is noticeable that women are better organized and that they engage in various activities (handiwork, work with children, etc.).

To improve its organization and functioning, the village needs support and financial assistance:

- Room for the gathering of the women's group
- Soup kitchen for elderly and solitary people (most people are infirm)
- Well-equipped ambulance car
- Van for travel to other enclaves

b) Patrijaršijska Street at Peć

Since 2003, there has been an ongoing project at Patrijaršijska Street in Peć for the return of 51 Serb families with 247 members. The project is realized by the UNCHR and non-governmental organization "At Lorenc Mazreku". Only several families returned, but then moved out again. A number of reconstructed houses is now empty. The Serbs

from this street require the joint meeting with all political parties and church representatives so as to obtain support for return. However, it has not yet been organized.

c) Patriarchate of Peć

The representatives of the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights also visited the Patriarchate of Peć. They talked with one representative of the Patriarchate, who informed them about the status of the Serb community in Kosovo and the problems relating to the Patriarchate's property.



III MUNICIPALITY OF LIPLJAN (LIPJAN)



a) Village of Rabovce (Rubofcë)



Rabovce is the only mixed village in the municipality of Lipjan. There are 210 Serbs, or 50 Serb households, and about 500 Albanians, or 85 households. The situation was similar before the war, but there were more Serb families. Immediately after the NATO bombing, 5 Serb families left the village, while another 5 bought plots in Serbia, built houses and later on, after 1999, left Rabovce. During the war, none of the Serbs and Albanians in this village was killed. They all stuck together and lived normally. The interpersonal relations were good. After the war and arrival of the NATO troops, three Serbs were kidnapped that same day (22 June 1999).

From the arrival of the NATO troops in Kosovo until 2003, the KFOR base was located at Rabovce. The British KFOR was the first and then the Gurkhas (special forces from the Far East under the British flag). They were followed by the Finish troops, while now there are Irishmen who are in charge of security in the village, together with the KPS. During the March unrest in 2004, two houses on the outskirts of the village of Grabovce were burned down. Both houses were reconstructed by the international humanitarian organization ARC. The relations between Albanians and Serbs in the village are good and there are no security problems. They cooperate in agricultural activities. There are no ethnic incidents and they live normally. Serb and Albanian children go to the same school which has two entrances. Serb children learn according to the curricula and syllabi of the Government of the Republic of Serbi, and Albanian children according to the curriculum of the Kosovo Government.

The village has no joint leadership, but villagers meet informally to agree on various issues. They worked together during the paving of the road to Lipljane and help each other in agricultural activities. The greatest problem in the village is also posed by unemployment. Apart from several Serbs employed in the educational and health care sectors and five young men in the KPS, others are jobless. In the past, they worked in the Electric Power Industry of Serbia (EPS), on the railway, in the post office, as well as in various firms. Most of them turned to agriculture and bull-calf and pig

fattening. However, according to them, they have problems in selling their surpluses on the market.

Mladen Jovanović (67): *He receives social assistance from Serbia, 4,000 dinars, plus something that is provided by the Kosovo civilian authorities. He does not want to speak for newspapers and non-governmental organizations and refers us to his neighbour, a Serb, who, after an accident in which he lost his child, accepted the assistance of the Kosovo Government to renovate his house and buy a tractor. In the village there are 40 Serb houses, the elementary school (13 pupils, grades I to VIII) and the church (freshly renovated). Mladen's nephew, who was employed on the railway and now receives "minimum guaranteed pay", refuses stubbornly to talk with us. The grandson Vladimir says that he is an excellent pupil and that he has no problems with Albanian pupils.*

Staro Gradsko

Mirko Šešlija: *In Staro Gradsko there were 100 Serb houses. Today, there are hardly fifty or so of them. Staro Gradsko experienced a massacre during the return of Albanians after the war in 1999. Health care is good and they obtain whatever is available. The Priština licence plates are dangerous, because Albanians know that there are no Serbs there. Those are actually old licence plates from the time before the arrival of UNMIK... Ambulance cars mostly have Vranje licence plates; the explanation is that there is also a considerable number of Albanians there and that is why they come here. He worked in the Goleš Mine in Slatina, but not any more. He receives "minimum guaranteed pay" from the state of Serbia; he is satisfied with what he receives from Serbia. Mirko claims that the people would be more willing to stay if there were more justice in the distribution of assistance, so that everyone can satisfy at least the basic needs and that there are no great differences. If someone goes to Belgrade to complain about something, they refer him most often to the bodies in which there are the representatives of Kosovo Serbs and these are, all things*

considered, in the chain which is suitable for corruption. Thus, discontent in increasing and correct information does not reach the competent bodies in Serbia, says Šešlija.

The elections were of no use; they were rigged, says a woman from Ugljare we met in the waiting room. The elections in Serbia were held and the new government (in Belgrade) will be formed, so that it remains to be seen how the promises will be fulfilled. The chance is also given to the new Assembly of the Communities of Kosovo Municipalities. Šešlija is willing to stay, he hopes that he will not be expelled. He also thinks that there will be no assaults any more, but that there will be provocations. He still remembers assaults and shootings that took place several years ago. Therefore, he is afraid of any provocation. He has two pairs of licence plates, Kosovo and Serbian ones... Serbs do not allow entry into Serbia with Kosovo licence plates; they must buy temporary ones (2,400 dinars, including insurance; they say that this is valid for one day). This also applies to Kosovo Serbs. The state of Kosovo still does not do that with respect to Serbian licence plates and old Kosovo ones, which were valid before the arrival of UNMIK. A special problem is posed when someone goes to a physician in Kosovo or somewhere else in Serbia with Kosovo licence plates... In Staro Gradsko there are few returnees. They come mostly from Uroševac, Štimlje and Štrpce but, after selling their property, they leave for Serbia.

V. MUNICIPALITY OF PRIZREN

a) Village of Stajkovce (Stajkovcë)



The village of Stajkovce is situated in Sredaka Župa, about 15 km far from Prizren. In this purely Serbian village, thanks to the funds of the Kosovo Government, European Agency for Reconstruction and the German humanitarian organization ASB, 35 houses were renovated, the road was paved and sewerage and water supply were constructed, but have not yet been put into operation. The villagers emphasize that they have no security problems. Despite all this, only several elderly people returned to the village. They emphasize that they wish to stay. They ask to be provided with water, health care, telephone, radio and TV reception, as well as a police station. They praise the Bosniaks from the neighbouring villages with whom they always had good

neighbourly relations. Until the war, there were a few hundred Serbs in Sredaka Župa. Today, there are only one hundred or so Serbs.

The collocutors of the HC complained about corruption. They say, for example, that all “houses” had received the assistance of 100 euros each. According to the respondents, the president of the village (Mile Vučević) lives in Belgrade. He comes to the village very rarely and on that occasion the anticipated amount of money is received only by a few persons, while others – in inter-neighbour discussions – were proclaimed as those who did not live long enough in the village so as to deserve any assistance. This only points to the lack of transparency and tactics in the distribution of money.



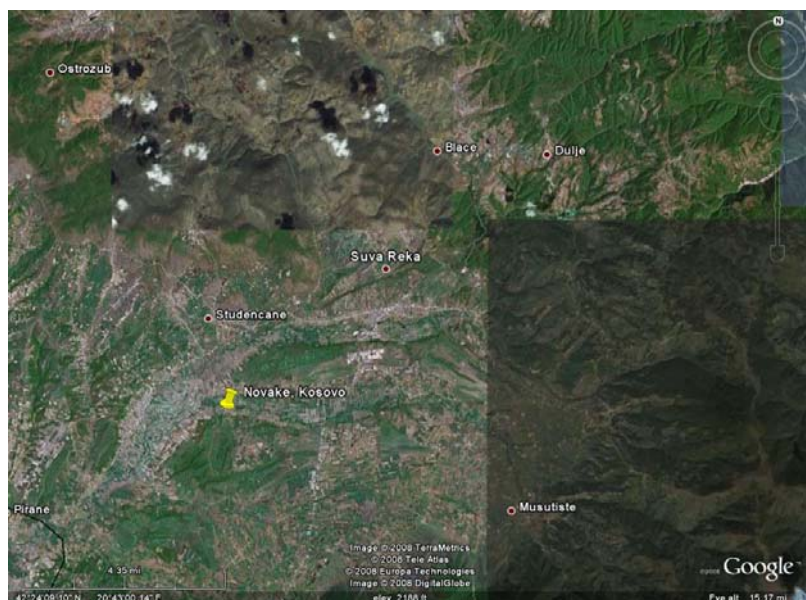
Krunoslava Uštević, a pensioner, reflects the villagers' profile: *she worked as a coffee maker in a bank in Priština until the war in 1999. She was born in the village, they had an old house, uphill; the cottage in which she lives was built in the 1970s and was not destroyed during the war. Krunoslava does not speak Albanian. Her son and daughter-in-law live in Belgrade; the son worked in the power plants in Obilić, he is now in Obranovac. They sold their flat in Priština and settled in Belgrade, her grandchildren also go to school there. In Stajkovci, the UNMIK built twenty or so houses for returnees, but nobody came back except for the elderly who, I suppose, look over the*

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property until they receive a good price for it. They especially need a pump for the village water tank.



b) Village of Novake (Novakë)



The village of Novake is located about 10 km northwest of Prizren. It is one of the most urbanized and richest villages in the Prizren municipality. They have a school, first-aid station, water supply and the tank having the water-holding capacity of 50,000 litres, transformer station, asphalt road from the Prizren-Priština trunk road to the centre of the village. The village has an area of 350 hectares of fertile land and vineyards. Most villagers engage in agriculture. Before the NATO intervention and until the arrival of the international forces to Kosovo, the village of Novake had 97 households with 570 members. In this village there are also 7 Albanian families, which were always in good relations with the majority Serb population in the village. After the arrival of KFOR in Kosovo, the residents of this village were the last Serbs who left the Prizren region. Thereafter, the greatest part of their property was destroyed.

On 15 March 2003, 58 villagers, heads of household, returned to the village in an organized way in order to renovate their houses and, later on, bring other members of their families. However, they have not done that to the present day, although the German humanitarian organization ASB built 61 houses for returnees and renovated the school and infrastructure. The total amount invested in this project was about 800,000 euros. So far, there have been no ethnic incidents in the village. The villagers move freely and in an organized way, without a police escort, go to Prizren and other settlements in Kosovo. The freely cultivate their land and sell their products. Nevertheless, in the village there are almost no young people and elementary school pupils.

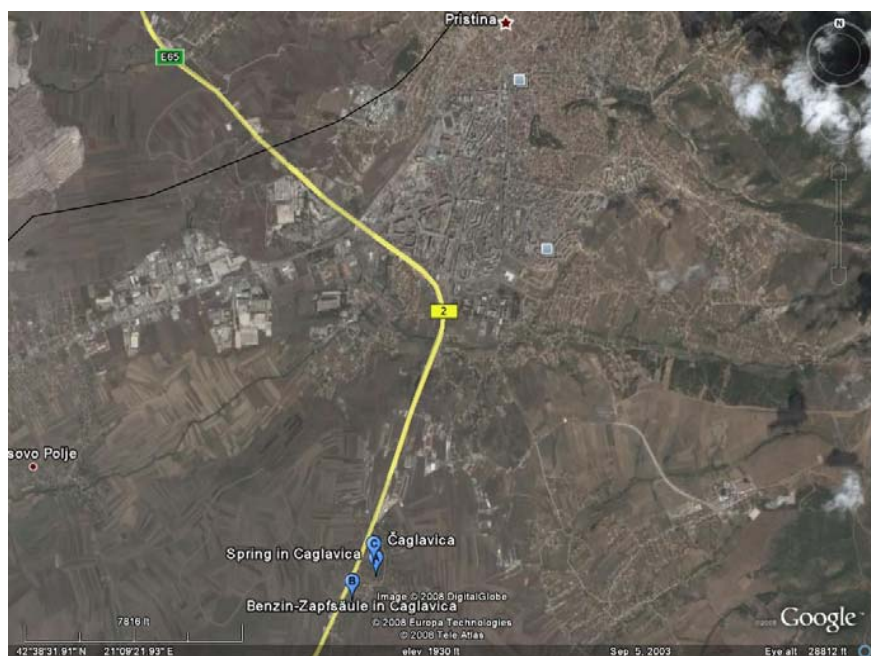
In March 2004, they did not want to leave the village; after the call of the villagers and Baskim Hisari, the KFOR arrived with several vehicles and prevented the burning of the village by Albanians. Twenty five families returned and now live in 63 newly built houses. The health service comes from Prizren comes once a week, and from Gračanica (Štrpce) three times a week.

Spasa Andrijević, (45), has been working on the minority issues in the Prizren municipality since July 2008. He represents Serbs

and is a member of the SRS. He says that his party has no objections to his engagement in the local government, i.e. in the state of Kosovo. He may probably be there on their orders. His wife and grandchildren live in Gnjilane, his father is sick (he worked on the railway), they speak Albanian. They have no problems with Albanians in the neighbouring village, although they claim that there is cattle rustling. Spasa claims that Serbs have no perspective in the state of Kosovo, whereby he thinks of the Serbs living in the enclaves, but Serbia must not forget them.

V. MUNICIPALITY OF PRIŠTINA (PRISHTINË)

a) Čaklavica (Çakllavicë)



The village of Čaklavica had more than 1,000 Serbs. There are no precise data on how many Serbian families there are now in this

village, which is situated on both sides of the Priština-Skopje road, in the immediate vicinity of Gračanica, where there is one of the largest Serb enclaves in Kosovo.

The most pronounced problems in this enclave are posed by the usurpation of and obstacles to the restitution of property, as well as the consequences of the construction of one section of the road passing through the village. This is also why the return of displaced Serbs to this village is poor. A special problem is posed by courts which, according to the villagers, recognize even the forged contracts of sale of various criminal groups. They point out that the settlement of property disputes in Kosovo courts last very long and when a court hearing is held, the Law on the Official Use of the Language is not observed. There are instances that court decisions were submitted only in Albanian. The Serbs living in the village of Čaklavica request the termination of highway construction work. They emphasize that the building contractor usurped several private estates and that during the execution of work the underground telephone cable, to which about subscribers were connected, was damaged.

M.M.: *"I am the mother of two children, my husband disappeared in 2000, we live, as you can see, in this humid house. I work for Elektro Kosovo and receive the minimum guaranteed pay of 8,000 dinars. Ask those across the road how much they receive, 200 per cent. This means that they receive over 50,000 dinars, both the husband and the wife. But, you cannot ask them, because they live in Serbia, they have a house in Vranje. But, he is a leader, he is a power holder".*

A young man:

HC: *"How young people live here?"*

A.O. and M.R. *"Well, there are not many of us, we go mostly to Gračanica, there are more young people there.*

HC: *"How about a job?"*

A.O. and M.R. *"Yes, you can find a job if you have money to pay for it. They asked me to pay 7,000 euros for a job in the municipality. I*

have two-year post-secondary education, where can I find so much money?"

HC: "Who asked that from you?"

A.O. and M.R. "Someone from the SPS, you know him for sure, he held public office in Priština".

VI. MUNICIPALITY OF OBILIĆ (OBILIQ)

a) Babin Most (Babimoc)



The village of Babin Most in the municipality of Obilić is a multiethnic village situated alongside the trunk road connecting Priština and Kosovska Mitrovica. Serbs constitute a majority in the village, with about 900 inhabitants living in 220 houses. Among them there are about 30 children aged up to 18 and more than 50 young people who have completed secondary school, but are jobless. The village has the

first-aid station which provides primary health care, elementary school (grades 1-8) and the church. In Babin Most there are about 40 Albanian houses. Most of them are the indigeneous population, but there are also some people who came to the village after the arrival of the international forces in Kosovo, in 1999. At that time, two Serbs were killed and 5 disappeared.

Befote the war, about 80 per cent of the residents of Babin Most was employed in the Electric Power Industry. Today, most of them are jobless and engage in farming, which is the main source of their subsistence. They sell surpluses on the marked. There is no organized buying up of their products. They produce food grains, fruits and vegetables in large quantities. However, their only markets are northern Kosovska Mitrovica and Gračanica.

After 1999, about 40 per cent of villagers left the village. Ten or so houses were built for returnees. The owners are satisfied with the quality of executed work. More than 30 per cent of displaced persons returned, whether in an organized way or individually. Others, ten per cent of them, come from time to time to visit their elderly family members and property.

In January 2007, near Babin Most, one Albanian, KPS officer Avni Kasumi, was killed. The assassination of a policeman was the reason for the search of 11 Serb houses, but not of Albanian ones in the vicinity. The Serbs from this village hold that KPS members abused their position, overstepped their authority and violated their rights during the search. They say that during the search policemen were brutally breaking their property and that those arrested were beaten. The villagers **Srećko and Slaviša Simić** claim that during their detention they were mistreated and beaten by policemen, which was denied by members of the KPS. After this incident, villagers organized a protest, while the members of the Simić family were received by Prime Minister Koštunica, who qualified the incursion as "being savage and brutal and the culmination of pressure on Serbs, whose aim is the ethnic cleansing of Kosovo". The residents of Babin Most hold that the real reason for such a behaviour of the KPS is decentralization, that is,

the formation of the Serb municipality, which would be comprised of the villages with a majority Serb population, including Babin Most. This municipality would be called the municipality of Priluzje. They point out that there was one more attempt to frighten the Serb population so as to leave the village.

Boban Dančetić, kindergarten teacher, football referee (philosopher of a general type):

The Serbs have been living here like in a concentration camp since 1999, while the Albanians have become more flexible since the proclamation of the independence only because of Western politics. He has a great number of Albanian friends, they still see each, but great hatred is evident. Whatever happens in the decision-making centres is reflected here, in the field. According to him, Kosovo is building a state based on some model conceived in the West. In Babin Most they have sewerage and water supply, the electricity problem is faced throughout Kosovo. In the kindergarten there are two mixed groups, with about 35 children, the kindergarten has been operating about 4 months. After completing elementary school, children go to the secondary school in Plemetina, Priluzje, where there are the technical school centre, the department of the secondary medical school, etc. The Albanian part of the village has its own school. Transport connections are good, transport services are provided by a Danish firm. In the past, they had to travel to Mitrovica by truck.

VII. MUNICIPALITY OF ORAHOVAC (RAHOVEC)

The municipality of Orahovac has about 75,000 inhabitants, of whom Albanians account for 95 per cent, Serbs for 3 per cent, and Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians for 2 per cent. Before the armed conflict in Kosovo, the municipality of Orahovac had about 60,000 inhabitants. There were more than 4,000 Serbs and Montenegrins. After the arrival of the international peace forces in Kosovo, a greater number of Serbs and Roma left their homes. The Serbs who remained in the

municipality of Orahovac now live in the upper part of the town, more than 400 of them, as well as in the village of Velika Hoča, where there are more than 700 Serbs.

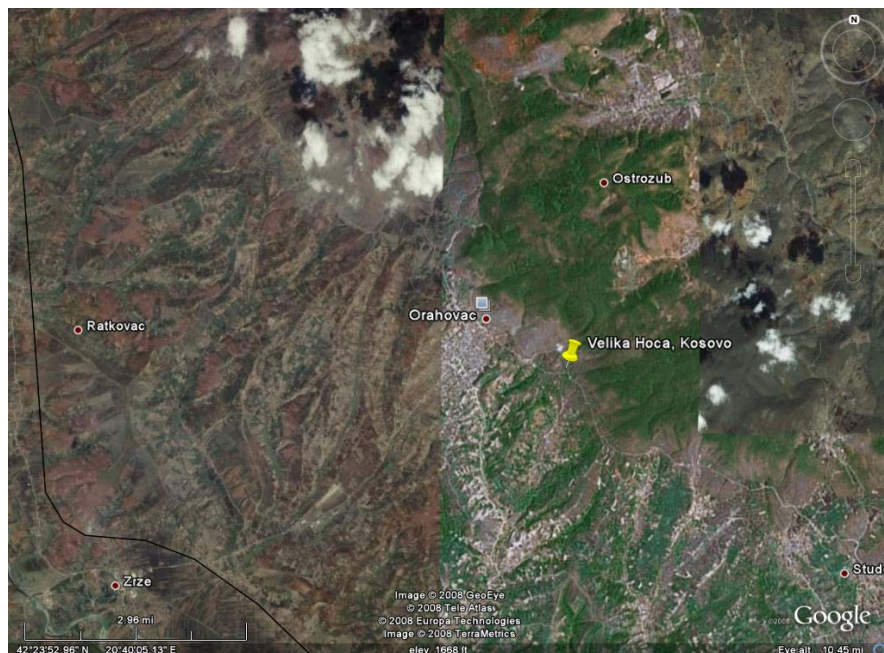
The consequences of the war in this municipality were disastrous for the Serbs. Eighteen Serbs were killed, more than 60 were injured, 66 were kidnapped, while 16 Serbs were arrested by the KFOR and UNMIK. Their houses were set to fire and destroyed. Their flats and business facilities are usurped.

The municipal structures in this town emphasize that the political situation in the municipality is now peaceful and stable. There are no more serious problems. There are no ethnic incidents and conflicts. They point out that there have been no such things during the past 5 years. The security situation for Serbs is increasingly better. The Serbs from the upper part of the town and Velika Hoča began to move freely in the town. Those Serbs who are employed in the municipal services go to work on foot and so far they have not had any problem. At times, there are some minor incidents, such as petty theft shop lifting. There are cases that some young men, while passing through the Serb section of the town or by the village of Velika Hoča by car, turn on louder music than necessary. Although they do the same thing in the Albanian part of the town of Orahovac and in the neighbouring Albanian villages, Serbs consider this a provocation. But, the police did not confirm this. A number of privatized, former socially-owned enterprises did not employ members of the minority communities. Serbs rightfully complain since even those individuals, who had made a significant contribution to the development of those enterprises, such as ORVIN winery and 17. Novembar factory, were not employed.

The Serbs living in the municipality of Orahovac (in the upper part of the town and in the village of Velika Hoča) travel to Mitrovica or Gračanica by bus or by their own car without any problem, where they meet their basic needs and trade, as well as further on, to Serbia. One of the Serb problems, which is still evident in the municipality of Orahovac, is posed by the usurped houses and flats. These houses and flats, about 150 in the upper part of Orahovac, were plundered and

burnt down first and then usurped. One part of their land, mostly vineyards, was also usurped. So far, almost nothing has been done for the restitution of usurped property. Usurpers do not pay anything for the use of that property.

a) Velika Hoča (Hoce e Madhe)



The village of Velika Hoča is a purely Serbian village, about 3 km far from Orahovac. Before the armed conflict, there were about 1,250 Serbs in Velika Hoča, while now there are 650-700. The village has the elementary school “Svetozar Marković”, which has 80 pupils, while before the war there were 170. Some Serbs left the village in the fear of retaliation. At present, there are 10 returnees, who receive social and humanitarian assistance. Three persons are employed in the judiciary, but do not hold executive functions. There are no Serb

judges. The Vice-President of the Orahovac Municipality is a Serb from Velika Hoča. Three more Serbs from this village work in the Kosovo municipal bodies. The villagers hold that Serbs are not adequately represented in public services and municipal bodies, so that they cannot influence the adoption of important decisions. From the security aspect there are positive results. As for their security position, there are some positive results. Serbs move more freely, but hold that they are still not absolutely secure. Many of them still cannot use their property, flats and houses. Velika Hoča is a grape growing region and all Serbs own vineyards, but hardly anyone can tend his vineyard which is far from the village. These vineyards have now been destroyed, since they have not been tended for nearly nine years.

When the residents of Velika Hoča speak about the conditions for return to their village, they emphasize that there are still minor problems related to the freedom of movement, but that a great problem is posed by unemployment and the use of their property. They say that Kosovo institutions and international organizations are doing almost nothing on that plane.

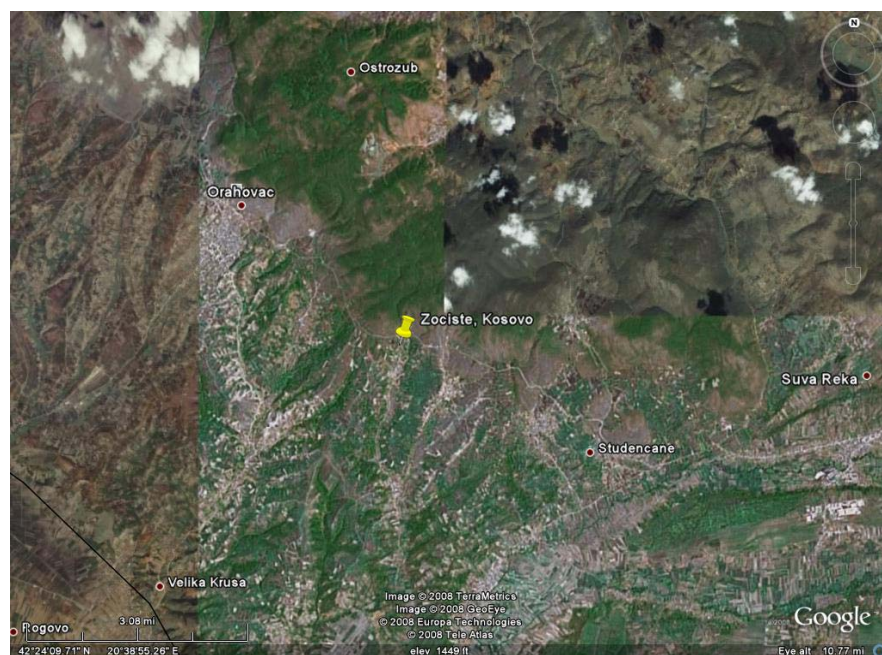
The representatives of the Orahovac municipality and the international community have recently opened a new KPS substation in Velika Hoča, in the presence of members of the KFOR and Kosovo Protection Corps (KPC), which caused the discontent of Serbs in this village. None of the villagers have been present at the ceremony of opening a police substation. According to them, the reason for their boycott was the fact that none of the Serbs from Velika Hoča have succeeded in passing the test for the KPS school since 2000.

Velika Hoča represents an especially interesting example of transformation of an enclave which was considered “tough” until a few months ago. Under the action plan of the Serbian Government, this enclave was considered as a strategic area. Today, the picture is quite different. There are no Serbian policemen, that is, members of the Serbian secret service any more. Everything that has remained from the state of Serbia is one outlet of the Serbian Postal Service. According to the representatives or, more exactly, leaders of the village, the

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inhabitants of this enclave have realized that the reality is different than before the elections and that “their current” in Serbia’s political life did win at the parliamentary election in May 2008. Under the new circumstances, the villagers are afraid for their survival, because they think that the Serbian Government’s assistance will be significantly reduced. To the question whether they are ready to start a more serious dialogue with the Priština administration after the proclamation of independence, the answer was: “*We’ll see*”.

b). Zočište (Zočištë)



The village of Zočište belongs to the municipality of Orahovac. It is about 6 km far from the municipal centre. Before the war, Albanians and Serbs lived together. The village had a little more than 1,000 inhabitants, of whom 280 were Serbs. The ethnic relations were

very good. After the armed conflict in Kosovo, all Serbs left the village. Thereafter, all their houses were burnt and completely destroyed. In the village of Zočište there are no Serbs any more. There are about 1,200 Albanians.

The Serbs from Zočište expressed their wish to return to their homes. The Kosovo Government earmarked one million and 880 thousand euros for the reconstruction of their houses. In the first of 2007, the reconstruction of their houses was completed – 41 for Serb returnees and 3 for Albanians. The village also obtained its first-aid station, while some work on water supply and sewerage was also done. The newly built houses are nice. Their size corresponds to the number of household members. There are houses with 2-4 rooms. All houses have a courtyard and power grid, water supply and sewerage connections. The houses have no furniture and household appliances. The Ministry for Minorities and Return in the Kosovo Government, which realizes the project, promised that this would also be provided within the shortest possible time.

However, none of the Serbs have returned and moved into these newly built houses to this date. The first-aid station is very modern, but there are no physicians and nurses in it. Sewerage was not properly constructed, while the manholes were broken and not properly installed. There are also problems with water supply. During the NATO intervention, the source of water – the water tank in the village was bombed. It was later repaired, but not properly. This source of water also supplies the neighbouring village of Opterushë (Opteruša), which has over 4,000 inhabitants.

During the building of these houses for Serb returnees more than 3,000 truckloads of earth and waste were removed, due to which one section of the village road, to the length of 1 km, was damaged. It is now in a very bad condition. It was promised that the road would be repaired, but nothing has so far been done. The monastery of SS Cosmas and Damian in the village was destroyed to the ground by Albanian extremists in the summer of 1999. The reconstruction of this monastery is underway. At present, there are 4 monks and the abbot

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Petar Ulemek in this monastery. Petar Ulemek is also the abbot of the monastery of Djurdjevi Stupovi near Novi Pazar.

The Serbs from this village visit it from time and time, requesting the provision of some more conditions for their return. They were mostly engaged in farming, primarily in viticulture. Their vineyards have mostly been destroyed, since they have not been tended for years, i.e. since the war. They ask to be granted credit for the revitalization of vineyards, purchase of agricultural machinery and the like.

The Albanians from Žočište have nothing against the return of their Serb neighbours. They emphasized that in public, at the meetings with the UNMIK, KFOR and municipality's representatives on a number of occasions. Albanians claim that the door is always open to their Serb neighbours. During the visit of Serbs to this village there was no accident. None of the newly built houses for Serb returnees was damaged. There are no graffiti or broken window glass in 44 houses built for returnees. However, the village is not visited by all Serbs. Albanians claim that some of them committed crimes during the NATO bombing. They were drafted and armed, and then joined Serb paramilitaries. They were often drinking, cursing, insulting, shooting, beating and arresting Albanians in the village. They were expelled from the village and their houses were plundered and destroyed. In the village elementary school there were twenty or so Serb pupils, while Albanian ones were not allowed to attend classes. Each day, about 300 Albanian pupils had to go on foot to the nearby village of Reti (Retimlje), which is 6 km far from their village, in order to attend classes in its school. Those are some of the reasons why Serbs do not return to the village.

The residents of the village of Žočište: *"We are forbidden to receive assistance from the UNMIK in Priština. We, the teachers, had to receive the monthly assistance of 150 euros"*.

HC: *"Who has forbidden you?"*

S.K. *"I do not know, I think that the Belgrade Government has said so, but this has been communicated to us by the local coordinator from the DSS. As he explained, if we take money, this means that we have recognized Kosovo."*

HC: *"OK, but have you been compensated by the state?"*

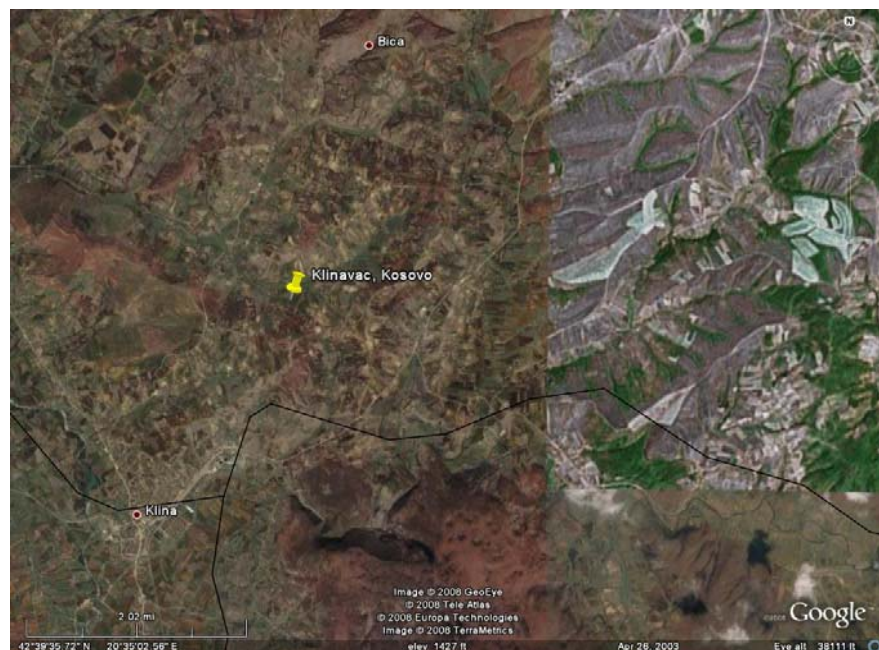
S.K. *"Son, what state! It was here only when I had to send my children to war"*.

VIII MUNICIPALITY OF KLINA (KLINË)

In the municipality of Klina, which has 55,000 inhabitants, there are no 212 Serb returnee families (in the villages of Bica, Grabac, Vidanje, Drsnik, including 59 Serbs who returned to the town of Klina). Several months ago, 15 Serbian returnees, whose property was restituted, also returned to their houses in the village of Klinavac. They can freely dispose of their property. Compared to the past period, their freedom of movement is much better. All returnees use the Serbian language freely and so far there have been no complaints about this problem by members of the Serb community. Serbs are satisfied with service at retail stores and with other customer services provided by Albanians. They all have access to the municipal services. They can obtain their documents whenever they need them without any problem. In the Klina municipal bodies there are only three Serbs. Two of them work in the office for communities and one is in charge of return. Returnees point out that this is very small number of employed Serbs compared to the pre-war period. They also emphasize that the media are poorly accessible. Only those with satellite antennas can watch the Serbian TV programmes. With ordinary antennas they cannot watch the programmes in the Serbian language. They do not have a local radio and TV station, while Serbian newspapers do not come here. Most returnees in this municipality say that they placed their lives in the Albanian hands. They hold that the international community cannot protect them if this is not done by Albanians. They emphasize that they came to live on their hearths, that they do not wish someone else's

property or to hurt anybody. They only want to be equal and have the same rights like others. Therefore, they expect that Albanians make a greater effort to improve their security and grant them all rights, so that they can live a peaceful, safe and dignified life, coupled with mutual respect.

a). Klinavac (Klinavë)



The village of Klinavac is located in the immediate vicinity of the municipal centre of Klina. Before the war the Serbs constituted a majority and lived in harmony with Albanians, Roma and Ashkali. The project for the return of 15 Serb families, which had lived in collective centres in the interior of Serbia, has been realized. Their houses were destroyed during the NATO intervention. Under this project, the village obtained infrastructure, roads, water supply and the power grid. The

project was implemented by the municipality of Klina and its project value was over 800,000 euros. The funds were provided from the budget of the Kosovo Government, through the Ministry for Return and Communities and the UNDP, which supervised the realization of the project. Returnees are satisfied with the realization of their return and expect that this will promote return in this municipality.

P.K. *"I do not know who you are, but I am fed up with all of them. With Koštunica and the yellow ones and the Radicals, they all are the same. I am eight years here and there is no assistance. Where is assistance, I ask? Go to Mitrovica and ask where is assistance for us here, beneath this mountain".*

IX. MUNICIPALITY OF VITINA (VITI)

The municipality of Vitina covers the south-eastern part of the Kosovo territory. It borders on the municipalities of Gnjilane, Uroševac and Kačanik, as well as on Macedonia. The municipality is populated by the Albanians, Serbs, Croats and members of the RAE community. Before the war, there were 11,500 Serbs in the municipality of Vitina. Today, there are about 4,200 of them. They live in the enclaves and are mostly concentrated in the villages of Vrbovac (Vrbofcë), Klokot (Kllokot), Mogila (Mogille), Grnčar (Grnqarë), Podgorce (Podgorcë), Žitinje (Zhiti) and in the municipal centre of Vitina where, before the war, they constituted a majority. There were about 5,000 of them while now there are only 169 Serbs. About 5,500 Croats lived in the villages of Letnice (Letnicë), Vernez (Vërnez), Šasare (Shasharë) and Vrnakolo (Vernakollë). There are 58 today. Most Croats left Kosovo before the war, in 1994 already. The members of the RAE community lived mostly in the town of Vitina and there were few of them in Vrbovac. Before the war there were about 1,000 of them and today – only 28. None of Roma people came back, nor any of them was offered to return, as if they did not exist at all.

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The members of the Serb community emphasize that they are often faced with the problems related to their security, as well as with some other problems. They say that there are various forms of discrimination with respect to access to the public services, courts, police, postal services, utility services, employment, use of their language and the like. They point out that the right to use their language and alphabet on equal terms is not observed, although it is regulated and guaranteed by the law and the statute of the Vitina municipality. The documents of all municipal services are often issued only in Albanian and not in Serbian. Many of them do not understand the content of those documents, which causes misunderstandings and errors. The figures, names and the like are erroneously written.

The situation in the judiciary is unfavourable. There is no Serb judge. Court summons are written in two languages. However, when the parties in dispute come to the court, they are faced with serious errors in the translation of their cases. Albanian judges do not speak Serbian. They speak Albanian, while interpreters do not gladly perform this job. They do not make an effort to do that professionally.

The Serbs have numerous employment problems. The socially-owned sector in Vitina does not function and they have no access to private firms which are owned by Albanians.

In the municipality of Vitina there is still no real return of displaced Serbs. In the entire territory of the municipality only 15 families came back. After the March unrest in 2004, about 40 internally displaced Serbs, whose houses had been burnt down and renovated in the meantime, returned to the town.

For promoting return and stay in Vitina, members of the Serb community emphasize that it is necessary to create more tolerant relationships among all communities. Every man must have equal rights without regard to nationality and religion, and they all must have a normal life. They also point out that usurped property must be returned and that Kosovo institutions, together with international organizations, must be more resolute in realizing the rights of all people in Kosovo.

a). Žitinja (Zhiti)



The village of Žitinja is situated on the left side of the Uroševac-Gnjilane trunk road. It is a little more than 3 km far from Klokot Banja. This is a mixed village where, apart from 1,200 Albanians, there were about 600 Serbs. Most villagers engage in agriculture. The relations between Albanians and Serbs were good. However, their relations began to deteriorate after 1980. Around 1983, Serbs accused a group of Albanians that they allegedly raped a 7-year old girl. For this reason, the police arrested and detained 23 Albanians in the police station in Vitina, where they were beaten and mistreated. In the end, it turned out that the girl was not raped, but hurt while

playing with her friends.³⁰ The relations between Albanians and Serbs in the village of Žitinje deteriorated still further when Serbs forbade Albanian children to go to the village school. Before this incident, children attended the same “Boro and Ramiz” elementary school. Until then, there were no ethnic incidents among pupils. They were always going to school together and they were also learning and playing together.

On the eve of the NATO intervention, the relations of Albanians and Serbs were completely broken. After the arrival of KFOR in Kosovo, some Serbs remained in Žitinje. They remained there until August 1999. However, after the killing of 4 Serbs from Žitinje, Petar Vasiljković, Spasoje Djorić, Vlasta Stanković and Milica Arsić, all Serbs left the village. Their houses were destroyed and burnt down.

After the war, several meetings were organized by Albanians with the villagers of Serb nationality. Albanians said that there would be not problem for those who had not been involved in dirty business to come back.

In the village of Žitinje, 29 Serb houses were reconstructed. The funds were provided by the European Union and the international organization CARE. The work was executed by the private firm “Agrohermet” from Gnjilane. Not all Serbs came back. The Serbs whose houses were reconstructed are mostly satisfied. Albanians receive them normally, they greet each other, talk to each other and meet, mostly at the store where, over a drink, they have longer talks. Sometimes, they obtain help in cultivating their land, which is done without any hindrance. Despite all this, some Serbs sell their estates.

Apart from agreeing on the reconstruction of Serb houses and the return of Serbs, the Albanians and Serbs living in the village of Žitinje formed the village council consisting of 7 Albanians and 3 Serbs.

³⁰ An intensive campaign against Albanians began at that time. One of the main elements of that campaign were the accusations for the alleged rape of Serbian girls and women. It turned out that the least number of ethnic incidents of this kind was recorded just in Kosovo.

This is where they agree on investment priorities in their village, such as: water supplí, sewerage, road repair, power grid, building of a school, first-aid station, sports facilities and one mini plant so as to employ young people from both communities. They are jointly involved in these projects.

L.A. *"My children left the village in order to go to school five years ago. There is no school here, no teacher. I remained alone, just me and the dog".*

HC: *"Do you receive any assistance?"*

L.A. *"I receive the pension of 43 euros from the UN."*

HC: *"Does any assistance come from Serbia?"*

L.A. *"They sent me 5 food cans before the elections. Greek stew and Russian fish. The stew was good, while Russian fish was spoiled, even the dog did not want to eat it."*

IX. ŠTRPCE (SHTRPCË)

1. Sušice (Shusicë)



The village of Sušice is one of three mixed villages in the municipality of Štrpce, which has 22 Serbian families with 123 members and 11 Albanian families with 87 members. The village is located between Gornja (Upper) and Donja (Lower) Bitinja and is only about 2 km far from the village of Donja Bitinja, through which there is access to the main asphalt road to the municipal centre of Štrpce, which is about 7 km far. The relations between Albanians and Serbs in the village are quite good. They all move freely and have free access to their property. The people have become more tolerant. They go shopping and trade freely. They buy whatever they wish. They travel freely to Uroševac, Prizren, Skopje and other towns and there are mostly no problems. The Serb and Albanian members of the Kosovo Police Service (KPS) patrol jointly in this region. The villagers emphasize that, at present, the greatest problems are water supply and one unpaved road section. They say that they are not helped either by the Albanian or Serbian side. The former do not want to help them because there are Serbs in the village, while the latter do not want to help them because of Albanians.

Villager T.P.: *"We have three presidents of the municipality. One was appointed by the SPS in 1997 and he is the valid president of the municipality. The second was appointed by the DSS, but it did not relieve the previous one of office. The third was elected by us. They sit in the same building and all three of them have the seal of the Municipal Assembly. The one from the SPS is bothering us the most; he asked from my son 5,000 euros so as to employ him in the local post office".*

Villager A. Janičević: *"We always had good relations with our Albanian neighbours in the village of Sušice. We never had any problem with them and we always reached an understanding with them. We did not achieve that with the institutions in Serbia and Kosovo. Our village needs the paving of the road to the length of about 2.5 km and water supply. However, we were not met with an understanding. They in Serbia told us that this could not be done because of the Albanians living in Sušice, and they here say that this cannot be done, since there are Serbs in the village."*

Coming to terms with reality

On May 31, 2008, the Helsinki Committee's fact-finding team came to Prishtina. The team (Sonja Biserko, chairwoman of the Helsinki Committee, Ivan Kuzminovic, political analyst, and Marija Radoman of the Helsinki Committee, and Vera Markovic, vice-president of the Social Democratic Union) paid visits to the following Serb enclaves: Staro Gracko (Lipljan municipality), Srpsko Babus, Babljak (Lipljan municipality), Gojbulje and Novo Selo Madjunsko (Vucitrn municipality).

After the initial fact-finding mission to the above-mentioned enclaves, another group (lawyer Ljiljana Palibrk, Pavel Domonji, head of the Committee's branch office in Novi Sad and expert in the minority issue, Biljana Kovacevic-Vuco, president of the Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights, journalists Fahri Musliu and Slavija Stanojlovic, and project assistant Bashkim Hisari) joined the team. Later on, the entire team was divided in two groups – one set for fact-finding missions from Prizren, and another from Prishtina. Such arrangement secured more dynamics to the entire mission.

Over the first exploratory missions the team made sure that residents were willing to engage in conversation with the Committee's representatives and associates. In the second stage, the two teams spent about three hours in each of the enclaves, talking to resident, local leaders, members of municipal work groups for the return of displaced persons, representatives of political parties, influential civil society figures and teachers at local elementary schools. While listening to residents' problems, the team was compiling information about the size of enclave population, history, relations within communities and beyond them, wartime experience, the process of the return of displaced persons, reconstruction of destroyed property, freedom of movement, security, cooperation with Kosovo institutions, representatives of the international community, etc.

In the course of eight days the teams visited each of the enclaves twice at least.

Visits to enclaves made one segment of the Helsinki Committee's activity in Kosovo this time. The other included meetings with representatives of the international community and Kosovo

authorities. The purpose of those meetings was to inform international and Kosovo officials with the situation of Serb enclaves. The meetings served the purpose of the project, the more so since they provided the opportunity to lobby for the residents of the enclaves with various foundations and embassies – and primarily vis-à-vis their access to the funds and organizations willing to finance the activities of different enclave-based associations. Those meeting opened yet another avenue for communication between Serbs in enclaves and Prishtina-based institutions. The meeting with Kosovo Deputy Premier Hajredin Kuchi and his associates should be singled out in this context – it provided the Kosovo government with valuable information about Serb enclaves.

On June 8, 2008, in tandem with the UNMIK office in Prishtina, the Helsinki Committee's teams organized an excursion to Prizren and the Visoki Decani monastery for the group of 60 elementary schools students and their parents. That was the first excursion the people from the Serb community made to Prizren since the 1999 intervention.

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Political Context

Political circumstances have rather changed since the first mission to Serb enclaves. Kosovo had proclaimed independence and the Kostunica cabinet responded fiercely to the act. On the very day of independence declaration (February 17) several rallies were staged along with attacks against local offices of the Liberal Democratic Party, the only party in Serbia recognizing the new reality in Kosovo. The massive rally organized against Kosovo's newly proclaimed independence on February 21 was also meant to send a message to all those opposing the governmental stance that Kosovo is an "unalienable" part of Serbia.

Vojislav Kostunica's option for early parliamentary elections was also related to Kosovo. Actually, he hoped that insistence on the Kosovo issue would secure him the upper hand in the elections and reverse his party's downswing. The announcement of the then unofficial radical-populist coalition that parliamentary and local election would be called in Kosovo communities inhabited by Serbs questioned the UN Resolution 1244.³¹ The intention of the outgoing

³¹According to Resolution 1244, the international civilian mission in Kosovo is supposed to "organize and supervise development of provisional institutions for democratic and autonomous self-

government thus negatively affected the position of Kosovo Serbs: it was not only contrary to the international document the government itself has too often invoked, but also manifested insensibility for the people living in enclaves, whose overall position heavily depended on improvement of Serb-Albanian relations.³² Long before the UNMIK official decision (of April 9, 2008) that calling local elections in Kosovo was contrary to the Resolution 1244, Minister for Kosovo and Metohija Slobodan Samardzic was announcing that the elections will be held no matter what UNMIK decided.³³

UNMIK decision was seriously breached by the Serbian Radical Party that as early as April 5 started election campaign in Gracanica and Kosovska Mitrovica.

government till final political settlement, including the elections."

³²Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu responded to Minister Samardzic's announcement that Serbia would do everything in its power to secure equal rights to Kosovo Serbs. Sejdiu said Kosovo would respect the principle of dual citizenship but would "not allow any turbulence in its territory by which some would like to question Kosovo as an independent and sovereign state." (<http://www.mtsmondo.com/news/world/text.php?vest=92038>).

³³UNMIK decided to decline its support to the elections but not to impede their holding (Ivanko), as well as that the results in the event of the vote would be considered invalid (Rucker).

Addressing the Gracanica rally, the party leader, Tomislav Nikolic, appealed to Kosovo Serbs to remain in their homesteads. "I beg you not to sell your real estate and not to move out of Kosovo. Call us to move with you instead," said Nikolic. The slogans such as "Russia now, while EU only if it recognizes our legal borders" were meant to incite anti-European sentiments. The manipulative rhetoric of the election campaign mostly negated Kosovo was no longer a part of Serbia, and either ignored actual problems plaguing Kosovo Serbs or claimed that all those problems would be solved due to the fact that Serbia was a "link" between Russia and Europe. The slogans of the Kosovska Mitrovica election rally messaged the Serbs that they were the bravest of all, standing in the forefront of Serbia's defense. Unlike in earlier election campaigns, the Kosovska Mitrovica gathering was marked by billboards with Seselj's portrait. By imbuing Kosovo Serbs with extreme nationalism the Radicals were mobilizing their potential electorate. The so-called populist bloc used the same ideological matrix, best mirrored in the activity of the Ministry for Kosovo and Metohija.

The support some foreign official have been giving to the statements by Serbian former negotiating team seem to

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open the door to Kosovo's partition against new political constellation.³⁴ The Radicals' leader in Kosovo, Marko Jaksic, also advocates the so-called functional partition. He criticizes President Tadic for the stance (about Ahtisaari plan) that, as he put it, "absolutely coincides with that of /Kosovo Premier/ Hashim Tachi."³⁵ Minister Samardzic denied all allegations about his advocacy for Kosovo's partition. However, all those allegations are fully justified – by the official Belgrade's dictate, Samardzic has been systematically generating rancor between Kosovo Serbs and Albanians. He firstly called for the boycott of local elections in Kosovo, and then called Serbs to quit their jobs in Kosovo institutions when Kosovo proclaimed independence. He promised them monthly subsidies in the amount of 16,000 dinars (since his Ministry never met those promises the staff of the

³⁴ Minister Samardzic's proposal about functional separation between Serbs and Albanians is still under the UN consideration. According to Samardzic, functional separation implies that "Serbs would have to work in their own institutions." "This is not about a territorial division, no one has ever referred to such a thing," he said (<http://www.mtsmondo.com/news/world/text.php?vest=92038>).

³⁵ www.b92.net, March 31, 2008.

Lipljan penitentiary cold-shouldered him).³⁶ While appealing to assembled people to leave their jobs in Orahovac, on February 4, 2008, Minister Samardzic said, "We have assembled here to tell them that the state will invest in Orahovac, open new vacancies and enable people to earn their living rather than live on social or humanitarian aid."³⁷

And yet, the most problematic statement by Minister Samardzic was the one related to torching of checkpoints on February 19, 2008. Samardzic said, "In my opinion, that's legitimate. It might not be nice, but is definitely legitimate."³⁸ He also underscored that by the governmental policy

³⁶ The decision affects everyday existence of 2,300 employees of Serb origin at the moment of Kosovo's independence declaration. While workers in Lipljan, the town south of the Ibar River, would be left jobless but hoping to get subsidies from Serbia, plans about Kosovo's partition are being forged. In the event of Kosovo's partition, i.e. in the event North Kosovo unites with Serbia, 80,000 people south of the Ibar River would be "crossed off." So, one of the Kosovo Serb leaders, Oliver Ivanovic, hypocritically tells the Kurir daily, "I don't believe there would be any incidents or that people would be endangered since Americans, the EU and NATO have warned the Albanians against any acts that could jeopardize their plan for independence." So, between the lines he messages that "Albanian terror" is only the matter of time.

³⁷ www.b92.net

³⁸ TV show "Polygraph," February 19, 2008.

checkpoints were not under the jurisdiction of the EU mission and that Serbia planned to keep extending its authority in the territory of Kosovo. Judging by such statements, the functional division scenario firstly implies establishment of "Serb institutions" (in other words, institutional segregation along ethnic lines), and then further destabilization of the crisis region. The arguments about Kosovo being dysfunctional and false state prepare the terrain for territorial partition.

When it came to holding elections in Kosovo, the Democratic Party (DS) passively supported the decisions of the populist bloc and the motions of the outgoing government. By failing to distance itself from the nationalistic propaganda, DS actually sided it despite its pro-European rhetoric. According to what Boris Tadic said, his party would cooperate both with Kostunica's DSS and LDP if DSS "genuinely resumes European course" and LDP "changes its Kosovo policy." One cannot but conclude that Tadic manipulatively presents two diametrically opposite options as his potential coalition partners, despite the fact that one of them is evidently fatal for the future of both Serbia and Kosovo.

Political developments in Serbia considerably influence the behavior of Serbs in enclaves. However, many of them have

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obviously distanced themselves from Kostunica's policy, particularly after Kostunica's poor electoral score mostly to be attributed to his insistence on the Kosovo issue. At the same time, in Serbia proper public opinion shifted towards rationalization. The great bulk of the overall election campaign focused on Europe almost totally marginalized the Kosovo problem. Now, in the post-election period, it is almost non-existent in the public discourse. Only DSS and Vojislav Kostunica dwell on the slogan "Kosovo is Serbia." "The safeguard of Kosovo and Metohija, and Serbia's territorial integrity and sovereignty is still a challenge for me," said Kostunica.³⁹ The analysis of the SAA made by the DSS-NS team of experts leans on the argument that the SAA disregards Serbia's Constitution and its integrity. The team insists that the circumstances in which the SAA was negotiated have changed since Kosovo's independence declaration.

While in North Kosovo the official Belgrade pursues the policy that negates the Resolution 1244, the UNMIK opposes the establishment of a Serb assembly in Kosovo. Rada Trajkovic, vice-president of the Serb National Council, said that such an assembly would play into the hands of the Radicals

and DSS. According to her, the two parties count on taking over the power in Belgrade and want such an assembly to be the only representative of Kosovo Serbs' interests. "This compromises the official Belgrade's policy in the event the pro-European bloc forms the parliamentary majority," says Trajkovic.⁴⁰

Though the great majority of Kosovo Serbs have sobered up, they are still hostages to Kosovska Mitrovica and Belgrade. This particularly refers to the Serbs in enclaves close to Mitrovica or in those in which Belgrade has economic interests such as Srpci and Orahovac.

Now in the finals of the negotiations on the new government, the prospects of a pro-European cabinet seem to be closer and closer. That means that the Serbian parliament will ratify the SAA with the EU, paraphrased on April 28, 2008, by President Boris Tadic and Vice-premier Bozidar Djelic. However, the act of ratification will be accompanied by adoption of the Declaration on Kosovo whereby Serbia insists on its right to the territory. Such scenario has already been agreed on by all actors except for the LDP. The declaration actually leaves the Kosovo issue open until a change in international constellation that

would allow for rearrangement of the Balkans by the plan of Serb nationalists. Such rearrangement implies Kosovo's partition (12 percent of the territory would go to Serbia) and Republika Srpska's unification with Serbia.

National homogenization around "the state issue" and postponement of its settlement till "some more favorable time in the future" is a new "Balkan challenge" for the international community, the EU in the first place. By admitting all the states emerging from the former Yugoslavia under its umbrella, the EU will be faced with two major problems: the integrity of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the integrity of Kosovo. Therefore, when it comes to Kosovo, the work on Serbs' integration into Kosovo society should be a top priority. The Helsinki Committee's visits to Serb enclaves indicated that improved economic conditions for Serbs could affirm the new reality and help to dispel the illusions imposed on them by Serb nationalists. At the same time, EULEX should place the entire Kosovo under its authority so as to create conditions for Serbs' integration.

³⁹ *Pravda*, June 7-8, 2008.

⁴⁰ *Danas*, June 9, 2008.

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Visiting enclaves

I . Vucitrn municipality (Vushtrri).

a)The village of Gojbulje (Gojbujë)

Gojbulje is a “pure Serb” village bordering on the Prishtina-Kosovska Mitrovica highway, and some 5 kilometers away from the downtown Vucitrn. Before 1999 there were some 90 Serb families in the village, i.e. about 500-600 villagers. Now there are only 280-300 people living in Gojbulje. Young ones were mostly those to move out. After the arrival of international troops in Kosovo, 12 villagers were either murdered or abducted. Villagers claim they feel unsafe and cannot freely move outside the village. For necessary errands they take a bus that takes them 3 times a week to Kosovska Mitrovica. Secondary school students travel the distance by a special bus on daily basis and free of charge. Children from neighboring Albanian villages hurl stones at the bus from time to time. The village church has been demolished and plundered several times. Though no houses have been usurped in the village, most of the villagers’ farmlands are by Albanians. Local Serbs tend their farms only if they are located close to the village. Close to Gojbulje is the village of Miroce (Miracë) where Serbs used to have some 20 houses. Now not a single Serb lives in this village. Actually the only resident of Miroce is Albanian Abaz Ademi, who has worked as registrar in Gojbulje for 14 years. He bought a Serb house and tends 26 cows and 70 sheep. He has four sons and that’s the reason why none of former villagers wants to return. The villagers of Gojbulje take that the Kosovo authorities and international organizations have done little for the village and made no investment. Actually, the elementary school, presently attended by some 30 pupils, has been constructed, along with several hundred meters of road connecting the village with its local church. The road was constructed with international donations,

American in the first place. Representatives from Kosovska Mitrovica intervened and prevented construction of yet another road that would have improved the village’s infrastructure.

Over the meetings with the Helsinki Committee villagers underlined unemployment as their key problem. Sixteen people up to 30 years of age have left for Norway. The great majority of young men are bachelors. The married ones try everything to leave for Serbia or abroad so as to support their families.

No serious incidents have been registered over the past year. The villagers cannot tend over 300 hectares of their distanced farms for security reasons. Though security is not such a serious problem now, they still dare not go to their farms. They cultivate only 22 hectares with obsolete machinery, and mostly sell their products in Sremska Mitrovica. To manage this business they need an Albanian as an intermediary. The village of Gojbulj was not evacuated during massive expulsion of the Serbs south of the Ibar River on March 17, 2004. That’s the main reason why so many of them still live there.

The villagers of the Security Committee say thieves are operating in the village and mostly at night when there are no policemen.

They were mostly critical of the representatives from Kosovska Mitrovica, who, as they put it, constantly obstruct their integration into the Kosovo society. Those people are coming but offer almost nothing but “patriotic” slogans. They promise to help the villagers but never keep their promises. For instance, they refused to pay the driver of the bus traveling twice a week the Gojbulje-Kosovska Mitrovica distance. They forbade the villagers to accept any subsidies (170 Euros per person) from the Kosovo government. However, the amounts are regularly paid to their bank accounts and they can use their money at will. Despite the fact that they fear reactions from Kosovska Mitrovica, most villagers are aware of the new reality in Kosovo and would gladly change their lifestyle.

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The Serbian Orthodox Church – the only institutions with influence on Kosovo Serbs – is not present in the village and probably due to the vicinity of Kosovska Mitrovica.

The villagers communicate with the Albanians, who buy the fodder they produce. Some Albanians cultivate Serb farm by agreement. The only organization the village has is the local football club registered in Kosovska Mitrovica. There are many children in the village – 22 up to 14, and 30 secondary school students.

The Helsinki Committee's teams also talked to the officers of the local Kosovo police (KPS) and KFOR. Out of 149 KPS policemen working in the municipality, 10 are Serbs. They said there were not in the position to prevent Albanians' stock from trampling on Serbs' farms for they could not watch all locations all the time. Obviously, the problem can be solved only through direct communication between local Serbs and their Albanian neighbors, with KFOR mediation.

The village of Novo Selo Madjunsko (Novosellë e Maxhunit)

The village is located some 5 kilometers away from Vucitrn, bordering on the Vucitrn-Prishtina highway. It was ethnically mixed (Serbs and Albanians) before the war. Albanians were in the majority. There used to be some 70 Serb houses – all in all over 500 Serbs. Not a single Serb remained in the village – they left after the international troops arrived to Kosovo. Most Serbs used to work in state-run enterprises, the tin factory in Vucitrn and in the electrical power plant in Obilic. Inter-ethnic relations were very good. There has never been a single ethnically motivated incident.

However, a number of incidents along the Mitrovica-Prishtina highway, in the vicinity of the village, took place on the eve of NATO intervention. Members of the Kosovo Liberation Army /KLA/ were attacking Serbs. The area also swarmed with Serbian army and police troops. Some of them were stationed in the village. During NATO

bombardment Albanian residents left their houses, while Serbs remained. Though none of them was killed or beaten up after the arrival of international troops, they left either for Serbia or Kosovska Mitrovica. In the meantime some sold their houses and farms.

Some three years ago, 36 Serb houses were reconstructed with the assistance of the UNDP and UNHCR. Some former Serb inhabitants came back just to leave the village after few days. They were dissatisfied with the quality of the houses. Actually, all those houses were unpainted, unfurnished, with no electrical power or plumbing, and with no access roads. In the meantime they were totally demolished. Presently, French KFOR is stationed in the village.

The village of Novo Selo Madjunsko is an illustrative example of misuse of financial assistance by Serb population. Namely, despite the fact that none of them actually live in the village, they are all formally registered as inhabitants. They have registered themselves so as to keep receiving financial assistance from donor organizations and the Serbian government, and to be treated as legal owners of the houses they plan to sell once the price of real estate spirals.

Recommendations:

- Enclaves as this one – without returnees – should be identified and systematized. For, the people who are not actually living in Kosovo are consuming the limited funds that could be used by those who really need it but do not get it. Such an analysis would greatly upgrade the process of defining real needs of the people living in enclaves.

II. Urosevac municipality (Ferizaj).

a) The village of Srpski Babus (Babush)

Srpski Babus is an ethnically mixed village bordering on the Prishtina-Skopje highway. After arrival of international forces in Kosovo, all Serbs left the village and their houses were destroyed. A project implying construction of 83 houses for Serb families, a school, sewage and electrical supply utilities was launched to secure people's return and safety. The project worth 2.7 million Euros was financed from the Kosovo budget and by international donors. Though over 70 houses have been erected so far, just few displaced persons returned. Former villagers blame UNDP and the Kosovo Ministry for Return and Communities for the failure. Some of them live in nearby Serb enclaves and occasionally come to see the newly constructed houses.

There is no telling how many people actually live in those houses. Many Serb villagers moved to Serbia or to Kosovska Mitrovica. Neither the Albanians interviewed by the teams could tell the number of the people living in the houses or visiting them from time to time. The teams left under the impression that "visitors" were more interested in keeping their property than in return. Hectares and hectares of farmland are left uncultivated. Unpainted houses that have not been fenced off indicate that the return is still a faraway prospect. Actually, house owners just come to the village to receive humanitarian aid from the Greek KFOR and other donors. All the Serb villagers complained of was that Albanians' stock tramples on their land. Given that their farms are close to Prishtina and the highway, the price of real estate would surely grow. As it seems, house owners are waiting to sell their farms at better price. The local Kosovo police (KPS) are composed of Albanian officers. The villagers do not complain of policemen's attitude towards them. Moreover, they often ask policemen to accompany them to nearby stores.

b) The village of Babljak (Bablak)

The ethnically mixed village of Babljak is quite close to Srpski Babus and about one kilometer away from the Prishtina-Skopje highway. Until the war broke out, some 290 Serbs lived there in 65 houses. Only 30 of them remained. The international non-governmental organization UMKOR constructed 31 houses in Babljak and plans to erect yet another 15. The Urosevac municipality donated furnishing and equipment for the local out-patient facility. Presently, some 300 Albanians live in 30 houses. Relations between local Serbs and Albanians are good. Many Albanian locals have worked on the construction of Serb houses erected on the foundations of those torched in 1999.

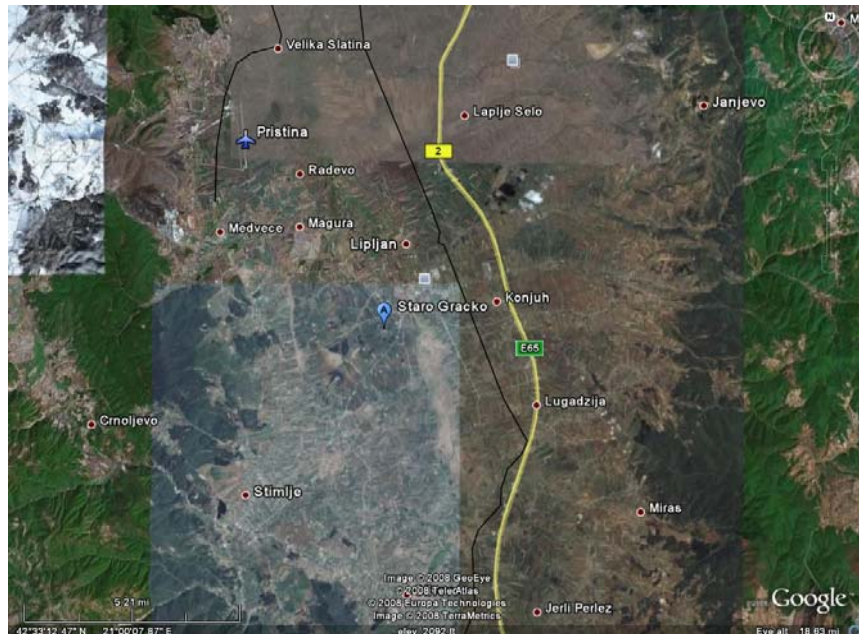
The Helsinki Committee's team talked to the Stefanovic family, one of the 13 that remained. Since no villager was killed in the March 17 riots there are no bad feelings or tension. The only problem, according to the Stefanovic family, is the stock trampling on their land that has not been fenced off. The same as in other enclaves, few young people live in Babljak. The rest have left either for Serbia or Kosovska Mitrovica. The team's interviewee complained of the behavior of the Serb representative mediating in the distribution of humanitarian aid. According to him, the packages either do not reach them at all or are half-empty. He also said that any criticism of Serb representatives usually backlashes against the complainer.

Several pieces of agricultural machinery have been donated to Babljak recently. However, the villagers cannot use them as they lack a tractor. The villagers could live on farming should they have adequate machinery.

The interviewees mostly criticized Serb representatives from Kosovska Mitrovica and Belgrade. They freely trade with Albanians, who are selling them goods at lower prices than Serbs from North Mitrovica, Gracanica and other Serb villages.

III. Lipljan municipality (Lipjan)

a) The village of Staro Gracko



Staro Gracko is on the Sitnica River, some 4 kilometers away from Lipjan and 15 from Prishtina. All of the village population are Serbs – 350 people, i.e. 95 families. Staro Gracko is surrounded by Albanian villages. The highway leading to Central Kosovo is the village's only connection with the outside world. After the 1999 intervention the villagers had to organize themselves in utterly difficult circumstances. They were exposed to constant attacks. On July 23,

1999, 14 reapers were killed while working in the field. This made 44 families, i.e. 188 people, to leave their homesteads.⁴¹

Villagers' spontaneous response to the killing, followed by the murder of two young people on February 19, 2004, was total self-isolation from the Albanian majority. Despite the fact that freedom of movement has improved since the aftermath of the war, the villagers remained fully separated from the life in Kosovo. The question whether it is all about self-isolation or actual threat to their lives is still open.⁴²

And yet, this enclave considerably differs from other Serb communities in Kosovo. Due to the village's geographical position, that is vicinity of Prishtina, the villagers realized soon that the capital is the center of financial and social power and, therefore, they should cooperate with representatives of the international community and the Kosovo government. However, such realization by itself could not have solved their problems. Therefore, a group of villagers founded a non-governmental organization – actually, a cultural and sports association – to imbue some quality into everyday living. But they faced the problem of financing the organization. So over the meeting with the Helsinki Committee team they presented their projects in writing. As it turned out, their problem was not so difficult to solve. The team arranged them meetings with several donor organizations in Prishtina.

⁴¹ Unfortunately, this massive murder has only been partially solved up to now. In October 2007, the police arrested Albanian Mazlum Bitici of the Veliki Alas village as a suspect. The crime committed in Staro Gracko is one of the most serious ones since the arrival of the UN mission and KFOR. Investigation into the murder produced poor results due to, as many claimed, systematic intimidation of witnesses.

⁴² According to a young woman the team interviewed, after all hardship young people began travelling more and more often, primarily to Serbia and the parts of Kosovo with Serb population. „I would be lying to you should I say the life here is the same as it was in 1999 or in 2004. Everything changes, slowly, but changes. People feel a bit more at ease, though they still live in fear someone might kill them. Fear has become a reflex we cannot get rid of,” she said.

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Funds for their activities were available and the group's projects met all the criteria for grants. .

Some villagers are full-time employees at the Lipljan penitentiary, which secures their families regular income.⁴³

It is interesting to note that despite all the hardship after 1999 none of the villagers has sold his or her property. They said that having houses and land of their own makes them feel safer and hopeful about future.

Eight families with total of 28 people have returned to the village so far. All returnees, the same as other villagers, feel safe during daylight but avoid any movement at night. In daylight they freely travel to Lipljan, Gracanica and Kosovska Mitrovica. They travel by a van owned by a villager and by UNMIK minibus. Students drive daily to schools in Lipljan and Gracanica. The villagers, the same as other Serbs in the Lipljan municipality, are dissatisfied with the process of return. Few people have returned by their own will, while no organized return has taken place, they say.

The Lipljan municipality encompasses 72 villages and has always been ethnically mixed. Before the war Serbs lived in 22 villages, and now in 13 only. Before the war there were 15,051 Serb inhabitants, now only 9,200. In the aftermath of the war 251 Serb houses were torched, while in the March 2004 riots another 32 houses went on fire.

Presently, the security situation in the municipality is adequate. No serious cases of ethnically motivated violence have been registered

⁴³ After Kosovo's independence declaration of February 17, a number of Serb quit their jobs in KPS and other institutions. They did it by the dictate of official Belgrade and local leaders in Kosovo, who promised them steady jobs and pays from Serbia's budget. However, those were nothing but empty promises. Thanks to the international community's and the Kosovo government's good will Serb policemen from KPS and prison guards in Lipljan were not left jobless. They are presently under suspension but do receive their paychecks regularly.

since March 17, 2004. The last incident was in the summer of 2006 when unidentified persons fired from shotguns at the vehicle of the Djokic family on the road between Staro Gracko and Lipljan.

Serbs have two deputies in the Lipljan municipality and the office of deputy major. No Serbs are employed in other municipal institutions. The authorities have promised two vacancies for Serb judges and one for a court clerk but nothing came out of it so far. For Serbs, unemployment is the biggest problem of all, some say even bigger than safety. Few work in schools, medical centers and the Lipljan District Prison. Considerably parts of Serb real estate have been usurped. Actually, in the area of the Lipljan municipality Serbs tend only 30 percent of their farms. The rest is either neglected or used by the Albanians from neighboring villages.

The people who remained do not intend to leave their homesteads or sell their property. They display interest in cooperation and readiness to partake in Kosovo institutions. The village has an elementary school, an out-patient facility, a cultural society and a football team. Secondary school students daily travel by bus to Lipljan and Gracanica.

The meeting with the villagers made it possible for the team to identify the following problems plaguing their everyday life:

- KPS, KFOR and UNMIK policemen in charge of the enclave's security (and supposed to track down the perpetrators of the crimes committed in its territory) are replaced on monthly basis. Such unfortunate arrangement negatively affects the villagers' sense of security and constantly traumatizes those who have eye witnessed tragic events.

- The villagers live in fear of being assaulted by their /Albanian/ neighbors. According to them, incidents are no longer frequent as they used to be, particularly after a group of Albanians attacked an Albanian family accidentally.

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- The villagers do not have free access to the village graveyard, which is situated outside the enclave. This is particularly problematic for them at the time of religious holidays. Besides, the graveyard is neglected and landmines placed there during wartime have not been removed.

- In the cases of urgent medical problems or births they have to wait for KPS or KFOR policemen to accompany them to hospitals. The policemen and NATO troops usually react with unnecessary delay because of bureaucratic obstacles.

Recommendations:

- With little effort and good will the Staro Gracko enclave could become a model of Serbs' integration into the Kosovo society. For such a model to become true, the following steps need to be taken at the level of everyday life:

- Communication between the villagers and representatives of the Kosovo authorities and international community should become a regular practice. Such communication should particularly focus on capacity building of the local NGO.

- The avenues of communication between the villagers and the residents of neighboring villages should be opened through meetings and, possibly, working groups composed of the representatives of both ethnic communities.

- Officials from the Lipjan municipality should contact the villages so as to help them solve their everyday problems such as renovation of the graveyard and removal of landmines.

- The villagers' meetings with police and army representatives in charge of the enclave should be arranged.

The excursion to Prizren and the Visoki Decani Monastery



On June 8, 2008, with the assistance of the UNMIK Outreach for Political Issues, the Helsinki Committee team organized an excursion to Prizren and the Visoki Decani monastery for the group of 59 pupils of the local “Braca Aksic” elementary school, their teachers and parents.

The group arrived in Prizren by bus in the morning. They toured the town unescorted by policemen. After spending some time in the town's main square, the group visited the Serb Eastern Orthodox Seminary, the St. George Church and the Raska-Prizren Eparchy, presently under reconstruction. Then they went to see the 14th century St. Archangels' monastery some 3 kilometers away from downtown Prizren.

When they stepped down from the bus, most of them seemed anxious. That was the first time ever they left their enclave. They said nothing and kept together. When they realized that no one was paying any special attention to them, they felt relieved and even begun to communicate among themselves in Serbian. They split in smaller groups and went from store to store, looking around and taking photos.

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The entire group – students, teachers and parents – enjoyed ice-cream in an Albanian sweetshop and, later on, had their hamburgers in a pub also owned by an Albanian. Some bought themselves souvenirs and other stuff.



In the St. Archangels' monastery they were welcomed by the deputy chief priest in the absence of father Benedict, and were allowed to make a tour of the monastery.



The group had a lunch in the Veliki Decani monastery, prepared specially for them by monks, and talked to the monks.

The group returned to Staro Gracko in the evening satisfied with the excursion. They had not been exposed to any provocation whatsoever, on the contrary – everyone they met in Prizren was kind to them, no one looked them suspiciously, even a group of Albanian students riding in buses waved to them. All of them thanked the organizers for the opportunity to get out of the enclave and see Prizren.



General conclusions and recommendations

- The team was strongly impressed by the change in villagers' perception of the difficulties facing them, and the ways to solve those difficulties. Generally speaking and when compared with earlier meetings in Serb enclaves, the "topic" of discussions were now individualized. By referring to "we," villagers no longer imply Serbs in general but residents of their enclaves, or just those with the same status vis-à-vis distribution of humanitarian aid or decision-making. The term "they" no more refers to all Albanians in general but to people with

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names, who have usurped their property, to groups of people from neighboring villages or to concrete individuals violating their rights. Besides, unlike earlier, generalized description of situation, hardships and security risks, this time people spoke in detail and referred to various aspects of their everyday life. All in all, they were more straightforward, less anxious and did not leave the impression of helpless people looking up to Belgrade, as they had last time.

- Besides being more straightforward, they are visibly ready to communicate with their Albanian neighbors and speak of the experience with Kosovo and international institutions. They place more trust in KPS than they used to, but still distrust Kosovo courts they have been turning to for their property claims. They are overtly dissatisfied with the work of the Coordination Center, and suspicious about the criteria for distribution of humanitarian aid.

- The great majority of the people the Helsinki Committee talked to have no dilemmas or doubts when it comes to the support of the international institutions, the Kosovo authorities and non-governmental organizations.

- Bearing in mind the success of the excursion organized for children and their teachers and parents from a Serb enclave, the Helsinki Committee takes that such practice should be continued and enriched with novel ideas and contents. That would help to shut the door to the policy of self-isolation pursued by the official Belgrade, imposing on Kosovo Serbs, young people in particular, negative perceptions and sense of insecurity in enclaves.

- Through such and similar actions tolerance should be promoted both among Serbian and Albanian children. All the Serbs recognizing the new reality in Kosovo should be encouraged, while those disseminating ethnic hatred or manipulating unverified facts and half-truths unmasked.

- All those goals could be more efficiently attained in close cooperation with UNMIK and other international organizations.

The media in Kosovo could greatly contribute to those objects by covering various positive events and promoting inter-ethnic tolerance. This particularly refers to broadcast media that play crucial role in Serbs' integration into the Kosovo society.

- Establishment of women and youth organizations – meant to activate those vital segments of population – urgently needs assistance in the village of Gojbulje. The Albanian Women Network and the Helsinki Committee can lend a helping hand to local women. Relevant officials in Prishtina manifested readiness to finance any project whatsoever.

- Summer camps for children – either regional or international – should be organized to open up new vistas for young ones and help them overcome their present-day isolation.

- The influence of Kosovska Mitrovica should be minimized through efficient involvement of the Serbs in enclaves in a variety of projects.

- Access to the lands located outside the enclaves should be secured as soon as possible so as to create preconditions for farming and better earnings. In this context, thought should be given to establishment of “communes” that would be more efficient in planning and marketing farm products.

- Younger generations – i.e. people of 25-35 years of age – should be in the focus of Serbs' sustainable life in Kosovo. For this purpose, vacancies capable of motivating them to stay should be carefully planned.

- When it comes to Kosovo Serbs' identity, their integration into the Kosovo society would gradually help them to build “a Kosovo identity” as well – the identity implying a cultural model that is by far richer than the one (exclusively ethnic) advocated by the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Stepping into the forgotten world



Political Context

The first visit under the project took place after the proclamation of Kosovo independence, itself resulting in the fall of the Kostunica cabinet. Premier Kostunica and Serbian President Tadic had differently perceived the state priorities. While the former kept insisting that Kosovo should top the list, the latter seemed to prefer Serbia's European course. All in all, the slogan "Kosovo is Serbia" became Alpha and Omega of the Serbian political arena and a precondition for signing of the SAA with the EU. The attempt to declare Tomislav Nikolic the moral winner at the February 21 Belgrade rally failed, the same as the endeavor to mobilize citizens for spreading violence to other towns in Serbia.

The flunked rally clearly indicated the state of mind in Serbia where citizens are still kept in dark about the sum and substance of the so-called governmental action plan. Citizens can only guess – by following some governmental moves - what the plan is actually about. Despite the intensive "Kosovo is Serbia" media campaign, the

public response to Premier Kostunica's plan to turn Kosovo into national issue No. 1 was somewhat lukewarm.

Torching of the American Embassy, fierce assaults at other diplomatic missions and company branches, as well as the 'siege' of the Kosovska Mitrovica municipal court, just added to the Kostunica cabinet's negative image. The Premier himself crossed the red line and finally unveiled his intentions. Simultaneously with the government-orchestrated actions, academic circles started debating the revision of Kosovo's independence. This produced a new partition proposal, now by the formula 12:12 (i.e. Kosovo got 12% of Serbia's territory, so Serbia now gets 12% of Kosovo's territory). *The Hereticus* (subtitled 'the journal for reconsideration of the past'), Vol. V /2007/, No. 3-4, was almost entirely focused on the Kosovo issue. According to its authors, this novel partition plan would optimally safeguard peace and stability in the region. Dobrica Cosic, the first advocate of Kosovo's partition in 1970s, also contributed to deliberations. The centuries-long Serb-Albanian enmity can be solved through a

compromise between the historical and the ethnic right, takes Cosic. In his view, the said compromise implies Kosovo Albanians' right to unite the territories where they are in the majority with Albania. "Territorial partition of Kosovo and Metohija and the demarcation between Serbs and Albanians should not aspire to establish ethnically clean territories but rather to provide reciprocal guarantees for minorities' national and civil rights," says Cosic. Should Kosovo remain a part of Serbia, Serbia, "biologically dried up and demographically depressed," would in two decades from now become a federation of two "permanently contested nations."⁴⁴ And yet, such partition implies Serbia's moving closer to Republika Srpska. In this context, Dobrica Cosic argues for a dignified acceptance of the Kosovo defeat, Serbia's commitment to its own renewal, development of close economic and cultural cooperation with Republika Srpska, and the safeguard of the entirety of the Serbian nation though the policy of democracy and

⁴⁴ *Vecernje Novosti*, March 22, 2008.

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enlightenment.⁴⁵ Slobodan Samardzic, minister for Kosovo and Metohija, submitted to the UNMIK a draft agreement on ‘functional demarcation’ between Serbs and Albanians. In fact, he requested a Serbian entity in Kosovo.

Serbian political and intellectual elite has not given up its goals. Its actual engagement in Kosovo is nothing but an attempt to face the international community with a fait accompli. Serbia banks on Russia’s support and a change in international constellation. This is why, at this stage, it insists that negotiations should be resumed. Further developments will be considerably determined by the attitude the international community takes and its resolution to place the entire Kosovo under its control thus hinder Serbian secret services’ operation in enclaves. For, those services are the most responsible for preventing Serbs’ integration into Kosovo institutions and normalization of their relations with the Albanian community.

I. Visits to Enclaves: General Circumstances

The first in the series of visits was realized in the traumatic period in the wake

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

of the proclamation of Kosovo independence. It was only natural that the Serb population was more anxious than ever before about the present and the future alike. Such general psychosis became an even more fertile soil for political manipulation by the official Belgrade. Belgrade’s policy fuels high hopes of the Serbian population on the one hand, and blocks their rational perception of the situation on the other. It hinders positive processes among Serbs and Albanians no matter how uncertain and far-fetched they might seem today. Further, the plan for ‘functional separation’ of Kosovo’s North, leaves Serb enclaves south of the Ibar River in a dangerous and problematic situation. No wonder, therefore, that the mood in the enclaves we visited dramatically oscillates from the irrational hope that Kosovo would reunite with Serbia to total despair. Objectively, due to Serbia’s policy, inadequate efficiency of Kosovo and international institutions and prevalent absence of goodwill on the part of the Albanian majority, the Serb population is still seriously endangered, literally and in terms of everyday existence. No matter how understandable considering recent history, the Albanian majority’s lack of goodwill produces brutal economic effects. Namely, economic difficulties that affect both Serbs and Albanians encourage some Albanians to

illegally profit from “advantageous political circumstances” to the detriment of Serbs whose homes and lands they usurp. The attempts to establish the rule of law – particularly by Kosovo courts – are abortive, more often than not, since sentences are not effectuated mostly under overt pressure.

Life in Enclaves

The life of Serbs in enclaves mirrors the grave challenges facing the revival of the entire region. Even priorities are hard to set when it comes to the two ethnic groups’ coexistence. Albanians are on the one side, performance of KFOR and UNMIK mission on the other, while the official Belgrade’s huge machinery of decision-making fatal for both states on the third. Somewhere in the midst of it all, politically invisible, are some 80,000 people south of the Ibar River. And their everyday existence is being “solved” by the statements such as the one made by, say, ex-Prime Minister of the Russian Federation Primakov suggesting “a collective move to the north.”

All those factors affect everyday life of the Serbs in enclaves. The great majority lives in extreme poverty and are elderly people. What they need is to have their economic, housing and other ‘petty’ problems solved, rather than high politics.

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Mission to Enclaves⁴⁶

Before March 21-23, 2008, the Helsinki Committee team has made several tours of all the enclaves planned for this mission. The team made the program of the visit, which set aside the first day was for the area of Brezovica, i.e. Strpce as the biggest enclave (16,000 inhabitants), and the second for Musnikovo (Sredacka Zupa), including the villages of Recane and Novake. Visits to Orahovac and Velika Foca were planned for the third day. During that preparatory stage the team contacted local leaders, who manifested readiness for communication and discussion. All the informal meetings planned as question-answer events, were supposed to take place in the public places selected by local leaders themselves.

The visit to Brezovica (Annex 2) was obstructed by local members of the Serbian

Radical Party and the Security Service.⁴⁷ Posters carrying the names of Rada Trajkovic and Sonja Biserko appeared in the streets in early morning of the day of the planned visit.

Namely, the Helsinki Committee's monitoring team was having lunch in the "Luboten" restaurant in Brezovica when a group of some 20-30 young men assembled outside it. The message that the team was unwelcome was more than obvious – some of the young men were repeatedly going in and out of the restaurant, one was taking pictures of the team, while the rest were waiting in the lobby. Policemen of the Kosovo Protection Corps, accompanying the team, decided when the time was right for it to leave the restaurant. The number of the people waiting outside the restaurant grew to some 60 men in the meantime. The moment the Helsinki Committee team stepped out they began throwing stones, eggs and snowballs at it. No one was hurt except for Prof. Obrad Savic of the Belgrade Circle who was lightly hit in the head. Cameramen of the local TV Herc – evidently informed

that there would be some kind of incident – were shooting the scene. And their recording was immediately sent via cable to Serbian diaspora organizations. The team left in a bus for Hotel "Narcis" where it waited for two hours to be driven back to Prizren. Smaller groups of people were hurling eggs and snowballs at the bus on the way back. It is interesting to note that a reporter for the Belgrade-seated Kurir daily called Sonja Biserko on her cell phone during the very 'incident' outside the restaurant. "The word has it that the people would not have you there," he said. "It is the Security Service that would not have us here," she replied. The incident was manifestly prearranged to put through the message "Keep away from enclaves." And yet, this "spontaneous happening of people" lacked the energy characteristic of similar gatherings in the past. In a way, by people's somewhat half-hearted and stage-like performance it more resembled the Belgrade rally of February 21.

It should be noted that the Strpce municipality is one of the five municipalities to be included in the Serbian entity by the plan Minister Samardzic submitted to the UNMIK. On the second and the third day, the monitoring team was talking to the people in Musnikovo (Annex III) and Orahovac (Annex IV). And its experience was quite the opposite to the one of the first day.

⁴⁶ The Committee's monitoring team included Ms. Borka Pavicevic of the Center for Cultural Decontamination, Mr. Miroslav Isakovic, human rights activist, Ms. Vera Markovic of the Social Democratic Union, Mr. Obrad Savic of the Belgrade Circle, Ms. Sonja Biserko (coordinator), Mr. Ivan Kuzminovic and Mr. Bashkim Kisari (assistant coordinators), as well as Miss Marija Radoman and Mr. Ivan Zivkovic of the Helsinki Committee's youth group.

⁴⁷ *Koha Ditore* issue of March 27, 2008, reported that UNMIK intelligence service had identified 10 branches of Serbian Interior Ministry in Kosovo. According to a fascimile of the document the paper publicized, "Security-Information Agency /BIA/ and Anti-Organized Crime Department /UBPOK/ smoothly operate from a branch office in North Mitrovica."

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In the village of Musnikovo, people mostly complained of transportation to the nearest hospital in Gracanica. Even when transportation is provided to them, they travel in fear. Getting medicaments is also problematic. When medicaments are delivered to state-run pharmacies the people running them often claim there is nothing on the stock and direct customers to privately-owned apothecaries. Further, people complain of corruption among municipal officials when it comes to 40 Euros per person subsidy by UNMIK. For instance, an official in Orahovac has been telling citizens that no assistance whatsoever ever reached the town. But when the team talked to him his prior claims turned untrue. The general impression is that most people are confused, particularly those in small and faraway places with smaller Serbian communities. Unlike them, people in Orahovac – the place with bigger Serbian population – do follow political developments (no matter how little they actually can decide on their own lives). They manifest more interest in Kosovo status and political moves by the leaders of the Serbian National Council and Belgrade-seated parties, Democratic Party of Serbia and Serbian Radical Party. They are, therefore, easily manipulated since only carefully selected pieces of information reach them via ‘trustworthy’ municipal

officials. The atmosphere in Musnikovo is different. People feel abandoned. Local ‘pawns’ are few and, therefore, the village itself is not exactly an attractive target of nationalistic propaganda. Younger generations have already left for Serbia or North Kosovo. The more so the elderly people who remained feel lonely. And they are notably disappointed in Kostunica’s policy. An old man told the team that he and his Bosniak neighbors were socializing, and regularly visiting one another for, say, Christmas or Ramadan. The media in Belgrade or, for that matter, Serbian politicians, never refer to such positive models of coexistence. For, positive models do open the door to the hope that coexistence is possible. And this is why the capacity of the people such as the above-mentioned interviewee – the people who would not yield to the ideology of ‘higher goals’ or ‘Kosovo ethics’ – need to be harnessed.

II. Some Lessons Learnt

Challenges to NGOs engagement in Serb enclaves are diverse and many. First of all, the official Belgrade has been imposing for years on local Serb population that NGOs are ‘traitors.’ Further, the population’s memory of quite recent past and their present life in actual danger totally overcloud the re-

membrance of Milosevic’s brutality to the Albanian population. In other words, they seem not to recall that era at all. The Belgrade regime - through its ‘envoys,’ i.e. secret agents and outposts of the Serbian Radical Party in the first place - unscrupulously plays on people’s negative perception of NGOs so as to prevent any contact. The motives are clear: any exposure of local Serbs to alternative and, in particular, creative ideas for settlement of their problems weakens the official policy’s manipulative potential. And that policy is shaped for ‘domestic’ use only and aimed at fueling people’s unrealistic expectations, rather than at betterment of their position and their rational behavior in the ethnically complex territory of Kosovo. The Helsinki Committee’s monitoring team experienced the effects of such policy when the group of manipulated people attacked it in Strpce. However, informal meetings in other enclaves showed that the regime’s anxiety over the contacts between local population and NGO activists was fully justified. Though initially biased about the Committee’s group, people were soon displaying more and more trust, and readiness to openly discuss their concerns. It would be naïve to expect that the informal meetings basically changed people’s perception of the realities. But be that as it may be, communication turned easier than expected at the beginning.

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And that is in itself an encouraging advance in the project implementation.

Though the objective of the visit generally focused Serb enclaves, impressions about overall environment were unavoidable. The latter mostly relates to the engagement of the international community, as well as to the potential of both Albanian and Serb elites for positive modification of the Kosovo society. This aspect necessitates careful consideration since it can significantly channel NGO activism in Kosovo. Further, it is important to assess the extent to which economic potential of Serb enclaves can be harnessed to their advantage. This potential is presently dormant because that suits the official Belgrade's policy for Kosovo and, as it seems, because of the absence of ideas how to use that potential within the Albanian society as a whole.

All in all, despite possible pessimism and doubts that certain negative processes are irrevocable, NGO activism in the region, and particularly among Serb population, must not be ruled out. Some small steps in a positive direction can be made without delay.

Conclusions and Recommendations:

The credibility the Helsinki Committee earned in Milosevic's era and

later on can be put to good use for encouraging the Prishtina authorities and the international community alike to creatively settle the problems facing the Serb community in Kosovo. It is in the interest of both the Prishtina authorities and the international community to promote this credibility among Serb population. For their part, the Kosovo authorities could effectuate this interest by assisting the organization to solve some specific cases it identified during this first mission. The bottom line here is that good news travel fast. Namely, 'solved cases' can gradually strengthen people's trust in the Committee and other NGOs and thus turn them into useful partners in the resolution of the problems facing the Kosovo society. At the same time, 'good news' would positively resound among Serb population and fuel their cooperativeness.

- Municipal authorities in Strpce (Shtrpcë), Prizren and Orahovac (Rahovecë), and outstanding local figures should be encouraged to focus on Serbs' security and free movement, pay more frequent visits to the communities inhabited by Serbs and talk to them about the possibilities for the return of internally displaced persons.

- The activities aimed at the Serb community's integration into new realities in Kosovo should be intensified.

- Kosovo Police Service (KPS) and the UNMIK police should get more involved in Serb-Albanian confidence-building initiatives.

- In Strpce and Orahovac, the UNMIK should continue to work on the transformation of parallel institutions and structures, judicial and security in particular.

- Relevant educational authorities should develop an all-inclusive plan for a more adequate education system and equal rights to education for all ethnic communities.

- Municipal services should apply the Administrative Instruction 2003/2 for the implementation of the UNMIK Decision No. 2001/36 dealing with public services in Kosovo, and pay special attention to the provisions on communities' proportional representation (the positive discrimination plan).

- Medical centers should take steps for the implementation of the integrated healthcare system in the service of majority and minority communities alike.

- *Habitat*, in tandem with municipal law-enforcement bodies, should take steps to prevent illegal use of apartments, houses and farms owned by members of the Serb community, and restore them to their legal owners. All those

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usurping other people's property should bear adequate consequences.

- Return of internally displaced persons, reconstruction of their houses or compensation for the houses damaged in the March 17, 2004 riots should be on the priority list of all municipal authorities. The latter should cooperate with the UNMIK so as to identify optimal solutions for Serb and



other returnees, and strengthen the institutions set up to answer their needs.

- Efficient measures – legal, economic and financial – should be taken to open new job vacancies.

- Serb returnees, particularly those in rural areas, should be provided assistance in the form of agricultural machines, artificial fertilizers, seed, stock, etc. or subsidies for farming.



- Relevant municipal bodies should secure regular and safe transportation from villages to nearby towns, and back.

- All Kosovo institutions should engage in fostering interethnic dialogue and tolerance as preconditions for the return of internally displaced persons.



Annex I

The Helsinki Committee took upon itself two cases that could be solved in relatively short time with the assistance of the international community and the Kosovo government.

Case 1

Vekoslav Ilić /73/ of the village of Musnikovo

Mr. Ilić presently lives with his son in Musnikovo.

He has lived in Prizren for years and wants to return there once his case is solved.

He has a long career as foreman in the PRINTEX Company.

He returned from Vranje in 2002 where he had sought refuge.

According to him and other witnesses, he has lived in good neighborly relations with Albanians and Turks of Prizren (his old neighborhood would only gladly have him back).

Mr. Ilić's house in Prizren, Kozara Street # 69 was usurped.

(Usurper: Besim Kokolari of the village of Budakovo.)

Mr. Ilić has filed a restitution claim with both the police and the international court. However, his house has not been returned to him yet.

Note: Bashkim Kisari, assistant project coordinator, will forward the Helsinki Committee more detailed information and copies of relevant documents.

Case 2

Arsenije Grković /70/ of the village of Orahovac

Mr. Grković lives with his wife and son in Orahovac. His other son's family with three children had to move to Krusevac because he needs kidney dialysis treatment twice a week, which cannot be provided to him in Kosovo.

Four hectares of Mr. Grković's farmland were usurped.

(Usurper: Žunuić Šemhija of the village of Bela Crkva.)

The court ruled that the farmland shall be restituted to Mr. Grković (P. br. 100/2005 of Dec. 12, 2005 and of August 8, 2007).

The higher court (municipal) in Orahovac decided in favor of Mr. Grković's appeal (P. br. 233/2007). However, despite Mr. Grković's repeated demands to the police to enforce the court decision, the police have done nothing about the matter.

On November 11, 2007, he filed a claim with the Kosovo Property Agency (No. KPA 11 778).

Annex II

The Strpce (Shtrpcë) municipality is in the South-East Kosovo and neighbors on the municipalities of Prizren, Suva Reka (Theranda), Uroshevac (Ferizaj), Kashanik and the FYR of Macedonia. This ethnically mixed municipality has some 13,000 residents and over 1,000 IDPs mostly from Prizren and Uroshevac. Not so many refugees from Bosnia and Croatia are accommodated in collective centers, mostly in the Junior Hotel and in private houses. Serbs make the majority population (about 80%). According to OSCE, the ethnic structure in Strpce in 1991 was 4,125 (33%) of Albanians, 8,303

(66%) of Serbs and 158 (1%) of people of other ethnicity – all in all, there were 12,586 residents at the time. In September 1999, according to the same source, the municipality was inhabited by 1,830 (16%) Albanians, 9,182 (83%) Serbs and 175 (1%) “others” – the total of 11,187 residents. Apart from Strpce (Shtrpcë), Serbs dwell in the villages of Brezovica (Brezovicë), Berovce (Berolcë), Drajkovce (Drajkofcë), Gotovusa (Gotovusha), Izance Izhancë), Jazince (Jazhincë) Sevice (Sevcë), Susice (Sushicë), Kostanjevo (Koshtanjevë), Vrbestica (Vërbeshticë), Donja Bitinja (Bitija e Poshtme), as well as in ethnically

mixed villages of Gornja Bitinja (Bitija e Epërme) and Vica (Vicë). The villages of Firaja (Firaj) and Brod are inhabited by Albanians solely.

Serbs and a symbolic number of Albanians work for the municipal assembly that is under UNMIK administration. A new municipal assembly could not have been formed since Serbs boycotted last local elections. The international administrator of Kosovo, Mr. Rücker, opted for a compromise: the assembly was to function with ‘old’ Serbian councilmen.

The following Serbian parties are active in the Strpce municipality: Serbian Radical Party (SRS), Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS), Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS), Democratic Party (DS), Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO), Socialists of the Sijaricka Zupa (SZP) and some smaller ones. As for local Albanians, they are mostly followers of Democratic Party of Kosovo (Partija Demokratike e Kosovës /PDK/) and Democratic Alliance of Kosovo (Lidhja Demokratike e Kosovës /LDK/).

The Serb population is under strong influence of the official Belgrade and boycotts Kosovo institutions. Serbs have established parallel institutions of their own – a municipal government, a court,

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schools, a medical center, financial institutions and the Red Cross branch office. Albanians are banned from those institutions. Strpce also has the Department of the /Serbian/ Coordination Center for Kosovo and Metohija (presently, the Ministry), forest rangers wearing Serbian uniforms and even Serbian policemen and undercover agents of the State Security. Serbs and Albanians work for the Kosovo Police Service station. Immediately after proclamation of Kosovo independence, some Serb policemen left the Kosovo Police Service (KPS). Members of the Kosovo Protection Force are not employed in the municipality. The KFOR base at Mt. Brezovica is a command center mostly for soldiers from Ukraine, Lithuania and Poland. Together with the UNMIK police they regularly patrol in the entire territory of the municipality. Representatives of the UNMIK administration and OSCE mission also operate in Strpce. Most Serbs in the municipalities drive cars with Serbian plates, which they replace by Kosovo plates whenever they leave the territory. The currency in use is dinar, rather than Euro. Pensioners get their checks from both Serbia and Kosovo.

Citizens use cell phones with Serbian 063 and 064 codes rather than 900 of Kosovo's Vala provider. A considerable part of the territory is covered by the signals of Radio and Television of Serbia /RTS/ and other Serbian broadcasters. The local "Herc" TV airs program in Serbian only. Copies of Belgrade newspapers are regularly delivered by buses that make daily round trips, including Kosovska Mitrovica and Gracanica several times a week.

The Strpce municipality has 14 elementary schools with 190 Serbian and around 70 Albanian teachers. Some 1,600 Serbian and 400 Albanian children attend classes. Until recently Albanian students from the ethnically mixed villages of Gornja Bitinja (Bitija e Epërme) and Vica (Vicë) were banned from the classrooms used by both Serbian and Albanian students before the war. Therefore, they had to attend classes organized in private houses. In 2007, a special school was constructed for Albanian students.

Some 2,000 people mostly work in the domains of education, healthcare, administration and tourism, while over 1,800 are farmers. The municipality has more than 100 shops and tourist facilities. Albanians from Kosovo and Macedonia visit Brezovica skiing resort in great numbers. No serious incidents have been registered so far.

However, local Serbs oppose the return of Albanians to their houses in the territory of the municipality. In 2002, American soldiers within KFOR arrested policemen of the KPS Srdjan Stanisic and Nebojsa Kuzmanovic, as well as Serbs Cvetko and Danijel Staletovic and Ivica Boskovic for preventing erection of a tent in the village of Gornja Bitinja (Bitija e Epërme) meant to cater for Albanian returnees. The two afore-mentioned policemen were taken into custody for interfering in the arrest.

As of February 17, 2008, several hundreds of have been organizing daily marches, starting at 12.44 sharp, to protest against Kosovo's independence. According to KPS sources, some 1,000-1,200 people were marching on March 21. Serb residents of the municipality have never left their homes.

Annex III

Sredacka Zupa or the Bistrica Valley (Lugina e Bistricës), as Albanians call it, is a relatively small valley between Mt. Brezovica and Prizren, with several Serbs and ethnically mixed villages inhabited by Bosniaks and Albanians. Serb villages are Sredcka (Sreckë), Bogosevci (Bogoshevcë), Racajci (Racajcë), Pejçici, Milacici and Stajkovce (Stajkovcë) while those ethnically mixed include Musnikovo (Mushnikovë), Planjane, Gornje Selo, Nebregoste (Nebregoshtë), Manastirica (Manastiricë), Recane (Recanë), Gornje Ljubinja (Ljubinja e Epërme), Dornje Ljubinja (Ljubinja e Poshtme), Drajcici and Lokvica (Lokvicë). Before NATO intervention, some 2,500 Serbs and over 15,000 Muslims (Bosniaks) and Albanians dwelled in the valley.

The ethnically mixed village of Musnikovo is the biggest of all. Some 70 Serbs have never left the village with Albanian and Bosniak majority. As for other ethnically mixed villages, 11 Serbian families with 20 members live in Sredcka, 20 families with 36 members in Drajcici, one family of two in Stajkovce, two 3-member families in Planjane two 2-member families in Lokvica and 9 families in Gornje Selo. All of them are mostly elderly people. No schools have courses in Serbian since there are no school children at all.

The Prizren municipality and international organization funded construction of 32 housing facilities for Serb returnees in the village of Stajkovce. However, just two former dwellers returned. Several Serbian houses were reconstructed in the villages of Sredcka (Sreckë), Musnikovo (Mushnikovë) and Gornje Selo.

German troops are stationed in the KFOR base in Sredcka. They are in charge of protecting the St. Archangel monastery. Outposts of the Kosovo Police Service are situated in Sredcka and Musnikovo. Both

villages have out-patient wards for Serbian patients attended by medical officers from Strpce.

Some Bosniaks in the village of Musnikovo declare themselves as Albanians, They insist on being 'historical' Albanians despite the fact that most of them do not speak Albanian at all. As of 1971 their children have been attending elementary curricula in Albanian though at home they only use Bosniak or Serbian languages.

No Serbs from Musnikovo were killed, abducted or reported missing during the war and after it. There are two churches in the village. Serb villagers socialize with their Bosniak and Albanian neighbors. Most of the Serbian population were at their homes at the time of the March 17 riots but were not affected in any way. Some regularly go to nearby towns and face no problems whatsoever.

And yet, local Serbs, returnees in particular, underline freedom of movement, unemployment, property rights, healthcare, transportation in wintertime, inadequate information in their mother tongue (via the media), etc. as their major problems. According to them, humanitarian organizations and institutions in charge of minority issues and return of IDPs have made tons of promises but met just few – all of which has a negative impact on the process of return. Serbs of the Sredacka Zupa do not possess tractors and other farming machinery. Many are not engaged in farming at all.

Annex IV

Before NATO intervention the Orahovac (Rahovecë) municipality had the population of 59,942 out of which 4,080 were Serbs and Montenegrins. The great majority of inhabitants occupied rural areas, 34 villages all in all. Nowadays, some 1,300 Serbs live in the municipality – around 450 in the northern, Serbian section of Orahovac, and 850 in the village of Velika Hoca (Hoca e Madhe).

Orahovac is among the municipalities mostly affected by the war. Considering its population, the municipality has suffered the biggest material damage and loss of human lives. Though the overall situation has considerably improved thanks to the international community's investment in infrastructure, education and healthcare, Albanian-Serb relations are still tense. Serbs live in isolation in northern section of the town. Few of them freely go to the southern, Albanian section where all major local institutions are located. Only the Serbs whose lands (mostly vineyards) neighbor enclaves can freely tend them. Serbs' lands further from enclaves are mostly usurped by Albanians. *Habitad* is inefficient when it comes to restitution of lands, houses and apartments.

A new, multiethnic school was constructed in the Serbian section of Orahovac. However, Serb students do not attend it but rather go to their own schools and follow the curricula developed by the Serbian Ministry of Education (which pays teachers as well).

Forty-six housing facilities for the Serbs whose houses had been destroyed in the war were built in the village of Zociste (Zeqishtë)

nearby Orahovac. The cost of the construction amounted to 1.6 million Euros and was paid by the Kosovo government. The latter also funded reconstruction of local monasteries Kozme and Domjane. And yet, not a single Serb has returned to the village so far.

Representatives of Kosovo institutions, international organizations and non-governmental activists often visit Orahovac, talk to its residents and appeal to the Serbs on northern section to integrate into the local society, partake in the process of privatization and cooperate with local institutions. On their part, Serbs complain that they cannot move freely and trust not the Kosovo Police Service. Over those informal meetings, they regularly raise the questions of missing persons (during NATO intervention and after the arrival of international forces), unemployment and decentralization. They also complain that they stones are often hurled at them in the area of the Malisevo (Malisheve) municipality on their way to Kosovska Mitrovica.

Some Serb houses in the Orahovac municipality were torched. Though those houses were empty when torched, repeated accounts of the incidents make local Serbs feel unsafe and distrust the Kosovo Police Service and the UNMIK police. Few Serbs are engaged in the Kosovo Police Service. Anxiety about the future and adverse experience of the past still dominate their lives. In their view, therefore, only KFOR is capable of guaranteeing security and safety. In spite of all, even after proclamation of Kosovo independence local Serbs have not left their homesteads.

Annex V

The Committee's meetings in Prishtina

UNMIK:

1. Joachim Rücker, Special Representative of the Secretary General at the United Nations Mission in Kosovo
2. Jolyon Naegele, Director, Office of the Special Representative of Secretary General
3. Oleg Y. Egorov, Head, Multi-Ethnicity and Outreach
4. L. Rossin, Principal Deputy Special Representative
5. S. Bangash, Head, Office of Communities
6. Teuta Haxhibeqiri, National Outreach Officer

EULEX Mission:

1. A. Zuccarini, Deputy Head
2. H.J.Feliks, Legal Adviser
3. T. Krumova, Legal Adviser

OSCE:

1. Tim Guldemann, Ambassador, Head of Mission
2. S.G. Oliver, Head of Communities Division
3. C. Decker, Head of HR Division

U.S. Embassy:

1. Alex Laskaris, Deputy Principal Officer
2. Thomas Yazdegerdi, Political Section Chief
3. Gregory Lehman, Department of State, Political Officer
4. Dvaid Muniz, Political Officer

British Embassy:

1. David Blunt, Ambassador
2. Stephenie Cooper, Political Officer

Swiss Embassy:

Luaks Beglineger, Head of Mission

British Council:

Ajreta Emra, Director

International Civilian Office:

1. Fletcher Burton, Deputy ICI Representative
2. Henry Kelley, Political Adviser

Kosovo Government:

Hajredin Kuci, Deputy Prime Minister

Other figures:

1. Slobodan Petrovic, Autonomous Liberal Party/ President

2. Azem Vlasi, lawyer
3. Rada Trajkovic, politician
4. Sqeljzen Maliqi
5. Albin Kurti

Interviews with the media in Kosovo:

Kosovo TV RTK, RTV 21, Top Channel, etc.

Mission accounts by the media in Serbia:

BETA News Agency
TANJUG News Agency
Politika
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Pescanik (Radio B92 talk show)

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Upon return from Kosovo, on March 25, 2008, the Helsinki Committee organized a panel discussion in the Belgrade Center for Cultural Decontamination:

Panel: "Forgotten people – Kosovo Enclaves"

Panelists (members of the fact-finding team):
Borka Pavicevic, Miroslav Isakovic, Vera Markovic, Marija Radoman, Ivan Kuzminovic, Ivan Zivkovic and Sonja Biserko