

The Balkan Wars
Economist
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Sir –

When discussing Balkan scholarship in a recent article ("Writing the Past", January 5th), you mentioned the flight in 1995 of ethnic Serbs from the Krajina region of Croatia and noted the uncertainty about whether this incident should be viewed as a case of ethnic cleansing or a consensual exit. The facts strongly suggest that the Krajina Serbs were indeed ethnically cleansed. The memoirs of Carl Bildt, the European Union's mediator, describe how the Croatian armed forces engaged in extensive shelling of Serb civilian areas in Krajina, almost certainly with the intention of triggering a mass exodus. Many of the Serbs who remained after the shelling were killed or brutalised at close range by Croatian assault troops. Leaked transcripts from a meeting of Croatian officials in 1993 leave little doubt. Quoted in Harper's, Franjo Tudjman, the Croatian president at the time, declared at the meeting that: "There is a growing understanding that Croatia must resolve the [Krajina] problem by war, contrary to international norms, meaning ethnically cleansing the Serbs from Croatia." In the larger picture of the Balkan wars there is no doubt that the Serbs were more often perpetrators of ethnic cleansing, rather than victims. But in Krajina at least, the record is clear that the Serb population was ethnically cleansed. Let us not whitewash this fact.

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