

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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## Fixed boundaries as the key to peace in Balkans

By B. Walsh

One who has known the region well for over 20 years endorses many of the views expressed by Dr Karadzic, the Bosnian Serbs, in his letter of August 19.

In the case of Slovenia, the arbitrary administrative boundaries have become recognised as sacrosanct for sovereign states. The views of large parts of the population, trapped within the borders in Croatia did not count for good reason, given the circumstances of the first elected government.

It is like it in Bosnia when the result of an election is based on arbitrary boundaries, separated from their geographical where and, in all political terms, powerless. So the other minorities are being driven to battle, the inevitable atrocities of civil war.

Western policy in the region has been to encourage a break-up along ethnic lines wherever possible.

Western policy. All this is frustrated impetuosity (the non-recognition of Croatia), and powerlessness (the condemnation, and the greatest damage done to Serbia whose borders are being tattered.

Western policy always lay in the promotion of national boundaries. Those of Serbia, the minorities who cannot be given their own state, until recently, themselves only as Yugoslavs, ensuring that thereafter

no newly sovereign state has the power to run amok among its neighbours or oppress those within its power.

This is what Western governments should now concentrate on, not on trying to support the unsupportable.

Yours faithfully,  
P. B. WALSH,  
28 Shawfield Street, SW3.  
August 20.

From Dr John Yarnold

Sir, The government is right to press for more humanitarian aid to a million refugees in Bosnia threatened with death from a brutal military occupation, starvation, disease and sub-zero temperatures in the winter months ahead. It is also right that UN food convoys negotiate rather than fight their way to besieged populations for as long as this policy works.

But humanitarian action alone will not save the legitimate government of Bosnia-Herzegovina and its 5,500,000 population from the territorial ambitions of a Greater Serbia. It is pointless for the British government to insist on respect for recognised national boundaries unless it has the political will to enforce them.

Are the boundaries of Bosnia still worth bothering about? If the London peace conference next week says they are, economic blockade will not be enough to bring the Serbian war machine to a halt and politicians to serious negotiation. The most effective strategy is the provision of weapons to strengthen the multi-ethnic defenders of Sarajevo and Gorazde, so that territorial gains by Serbia are better resisted.

This has to be done without undermining the UN humanitarian mission in the region. Traditionally, governments do this covertly, accord-

ing to the brutal logic of war. It is a tough decision to take, but the alternative is equally cynical: leaving two million Muslim citizens to their fate.

Yours faithfully,  
JOHN YARNOLD,  
Citizens' Appeal for Bosnia,  
PO Box 904,  
London SW18 2XB.  
August 20.

From Lord Hylton and Mr David Alton, MP for Liverpool, Mossley Hill (Liberal Democrat)

Sir, Can Bosnia-Herzegovina be reconstituted as an independent multi-ethnic state within its recognised boundaries? Or, after so much killing and violence, will it have to be cantoned along tribal lines? Dependable guarantees are necessary to protect the interests of the majorities of Kosovo and Macedonia, and of the minorities both there and in Vojvodina.

Up to now aggression has prospered, and illusions may still be hanging in the air of a Greater Serbia, recreating its 14th-century empire. The Western powers have a duty to dispel such illusions, making it plain that Serbia-Montenegro will lose not only trade and aid, but also its air force, navy and armaments industry, unless it starts to comply with recognised standards of national and international behaviour.

Air power could achieve this, without involving additional land forces. The time has come to move from crisis management to conflict resolution. To avoid raising hopes that cannot be fulfilled, the London conference should be postponed.

Yours faithfully,  
HYLTON,  
DAVID ALTON,  
Palace of Westminster.  
August 23.

## Need for warning of civil disasters

From Sir Clive Rose

Sir, A decision is to be made later this year by the Home Secretary on the replacement of the existing wartime siren system. Its equipment is coming to the end of its life expectancy and will not function much longer; it is not generally used for emergencies in peacetime, but it still has a role in providing flood warnings in certain parts of the country.

A limited number of hazardous sites in Britain have already installed sirens, but there is no standardisation of either the warning sound or actions to be taken. There are also no provisions for warning of incidents arising from the transportation of hazardous material to these sites.

The estimated cost of replacing the existing warning system is £30 million; at 55p per person this would appear to be good value for money. Whilst the current international situation may cast doubt as to the need for such expenditure solely for use in time of war, there remains a peacetime need to warn the public of dangers from flooding or the release of hazardous chemicals or radioactive materials.

A national system for alerting the public in the event of a civil emergency is long overdue. These systems exist in several of our neighbouring countries in the European Community, and Holland, Denmark and Germany have recently invested heavily in new warning and public information systems.

These requirements have been under consideration within the Home Office for several years, at the instigation of the professional emergency community. The Home Secretary should now give further consideration to the actions taken by his European counterparts, and to making this necessary investment for the protection of the British public.

Yours faithfully,  
CLIVE ROSE  
(Chairman, Civil Protection Co-ordination Group),  
Chimney House,  
Lavenham, Sudbury, Suffolk.

## Court anomalies

From Mr P. G. Wardle

Sir, Last Monday a £250 fine with £1,450 costs was imposed by Haywards Heath magistrates' court on Mr Chris Eubank for driving without due care and attention, which

## For purity

Director General of Manufacturers

In your leading article "Paying for purity", you cannot decide on the balance between the quality of service and the cost of it. They can properly be weighed. True: but common to the judgment also. It comes from a natural matter and is

## Restrictions on private prosecutions

From Mr Francis Bennion

Sir, The citizen's right at common law to initiate a prosecution, referred to by Lord Robertson of Oakridge (letter, August 19), is matched by the state's right at common law to terminate any prosecution.

The latter exists because the overriding criterion in a particular case is whether it accords with the public interest to prosecute. The state, in the form ultimately of the Attorney General, is the judge of that.

Of course it can be argued that the public interest test is wrong. Where there is evidence that an offence has been committed, why not in every case prosecute to conviction? If leniency is called for, cannot it be left to the judge or magistrate in sentencing, or the exercise of the prerogative of mercy?

There are answers. I give just one example. Lord Robertson instances the offence of possessing indecent photographs of a child as requiring