

The Economist, letters to the editor, August 16th 2003

Ashdown in Bosnia

SIR - Unfortunately, your report on Paddy Ashdown's work as high representative for Bosnia-Herzegovina gives a misleading impression ("The viceroy rules, OK? Not everyone thinks so", July 26th). Your report is based on an academic article whose authors claim that Lord Ashdown is running Bosnia like 19th-century India. However, this is an extreme (and inaccurate) opinion in what is a diverse and lively debate.

The most authoritative account of Lord Ashdown's first year in office takes a very different view. The report by the International Crisis Group, published around the same time as the article in The Economist, says that "it is too soon either for despair or for neo-colonial guilt" and goes on to say that "in order to get out, the country's foreign guardians will have to get in more deeply. In order to abjure use of the Bonn powers [the high representative's ad hoc powers], Ashdown will need in the short run to use them more intensively."

Analysts will no doubt continue to argue the toss on this. In the meantime, Lord Ashdown intends to get on with his job of helping Bosnia become a fully functioning European state, according to the agreed programme set out in the Office of the High Representative's mission-implementation plan (available on www.ohr.int).

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