

**The Balkan Morass – II**

**Lead: Most Balkan countries during the medieval period lost their independence.**

**Intro: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Consider the former Yugoslavia geographically. It runs from northwest to southeast along the Adriatic Sea across from Italy. A line bisects this region, a line that had its origins during the reign of Emperor Constantine who divided the Roman Empire into east and west for administrative efficiency.**

**This line runs through present day Bosnia-Herzegovina divided the territory in more ways than one. On either side of the line there were several ethnic groups. In the northwestern quadrant were Slovenes, Dalmatians, and Croats with Croatia dominating. In the southeast the Serbians tended to dominate an ethnic mix that included Macedonians, Montenegrins, and Albanians. The Northwest was Roman Catholic and under the European influence by the larger powers which surrounded it Austria-Hungary and the Republic of Venice. The Southeast was generally Eastern Orthodox in religion and after the twelfth century came under the control of the Ottoman Empire.**

**By AD 1000 the Croatians and Serbians had established powerful states in their respective regions but gradually outside forces cut off their independence, the Croats by 1100 and the Serbs by the mid-1400s.**

**The Ottoman Empire gained a foothold on the European mainland in 1354, but its subsequent effort to digest the nations of the Balkans was not an easy one. Often the threat of the Turkish advance was enough to force the fractious clans to unite in an effort to stem the flowing tide of Islamic power. At other times enterprising local chieftains would ally themselves with the Turks in order to retain a measure of independence for awhile. A**

**combined force of Serbs, Bosnia's and Bulgarians inflicted a heaving defeat on the Turks at the Battle of Plocnik in 1337, but shortly thereafter, the Bulgarian Czar Ivan Shishman abandoned his Slavic partners and accepted the rule of the Turkish empire. This set the stage for one of the most tragic events in Balkan history and one that retains a powerful emotional pull even today. Next time: the Battle of Kosovo.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

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**Resources**

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