



Information taken from *The CIA World Factbook* at: <http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>.  
 Information also taken from the U.S. Department of State, Background Notes at: <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3846.htm>.  
 Information also taken from The Christian and Missionary Alliance Web site at: <http://www.cmalliance.org/>.  
 Information also taken from: <http://www.crisisweb.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=226>.

# FACTS: BALKAN NATIONS

\* All information dealing with population is subject to considerable error due to the dislocations caused by military action and ethnic cleansing.  
 \*\* Percentages for religious information not available.

	Bosnia-Herzegovina	Macedonia	Kosovo
Official Name:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia	Republic of Kosova
Capital:	Sarajevo	Skopje	Pristina
Total Area:	31,700 square miles	9,928 square miles	4,203 square miles
Current Estimated Population:	3,964,388*	2,054,800	2,100,000
Official Language:	Croatian, Serbian, Bosnian	Macedonian	Serbian, Albanian
Imports:	machinery, equipment, food	machinery, equipment, chemicals, fuels	building material, food
Exports:	misc. manufactured goods, raw materials	food, beverages, tobacco, iron, steel	agricultural products
Literacy:	Not available	Not available	25%
Religious Status:	Muslim 40%, Orthodox 31%, Roman Catholic 15%, Protestant 4%, Other 10%	Eastern Orthodox 67%, Muslim 30%, Other 3%	Muslim, Orthodox, Roman Catholic**

# Hope and Healing

## Bosnia-Herzegovina

In the vast land of the Balkan Peninsula, which stretches from the Mediterranean Sea to Central Europe, three distinct cultures have evolved where the former Ottoman, Byzantine and Holy Roman empires once converged. The distinguishing features of these cultures rose from the faiths of the old empires: Eastern Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism and Islam. Today, the cultures of the people living in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Macedonia and Kosovo are distinguished not by language or custom, but primarily by religion.

## Crossroads

The country of Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH) is a prime example of this crossroad of faiths. While Bosnia is a mix of Croats (Roman Catholic) and Muslims, Herzegovina is primarily Serbian, the vast majority of whom are Orthodox Christians. In addition, there are a number of people who consider themselves atheist, a carry-over from the communist days that ended back in the early 1990s.

While Bosnians are ethnically Slavic, they have been greatly influenced over the years by a number of external cultures. The Turkish invasion introduced Islam, which dominated the region for over 400 years. Later the Austro-Hungarian Empire extended into present-day Bosnia, bringing a strong Germanic influence until the end of World War I. After World War II, Bosnia—along with several of its neighboring countries—was brought under communist control. Over the centuries, the influences of these various cultures have created a culture in Bosnia that is a mixing pot of eastern and western values and concepts.

The many cultures and religions converging in BiH are a challenge to the work being done by the Alliance. Although much of the population would be considered to have only nominal faith, the veneration of religion has made it difficult to share the hope of Christ. However, years of war and economic collapse have caused the proud Bosnians to reconsider what their empty faiths hold. Now, many are opening their hearts to Jesus.

In the city of Zenica (Zen-e-tzia), approximately 80,000 of the 100,000 residents are Muslim. In 1998 the Alliance sent a missionary couple to partner with national workers and the Evangelical Church of Bosnia-Herzegovina to plant a church in Zenica. Known as a center for Muslim operations during the recent civil war, mission workers expected Zenica to be hostile toward the gospel and its presenters. Instead, the church-planting team found many people who were open to hearing about the One who provides hope and forgiveness.

## FAST FACTS . . . FAST FACTS . . .

### Bosnia-Herzegovina

- ◆ An estimated 4 million people live in Bosnia-Herzegovina (BiH).
- ◆ Over 250,000 people lost their lives in the three-year Bosnian War.
- ◆ Only 15% of the population lives at a government-accepted standard of living. An average wage is \$50 per month.
- ◆ The most popular car in BiH is the Volkswagen Golf, but the most appreciated car is the reliable Mercedes.
- ◆ The five top sports played in BiH are soccer, basketball, handball, skiing and volleyball.
- ◆ All children enter grade school at the age of seven. However, in order to gain entrance into a specialized high school, they must complete difficult entrance exams.
- ◆ Coffee shops abound throughout BiH, but there is not one McDonald's restaurant.

Source: Rev. Mark Eikost, C&MA missionary to Bosnia-Herzegovina.

### Macedonia

- ◆ Bordered by four other nations, Macedonia sits north of Greece and south of Kosovo.
- ◆ Although the war of 2001 may be over, the vivid pictures and wounds caused by bombings, fires, car raids and sabotages have not been forgotten.
- ◆ Lunchtime begins at 3 p.m., while dinner or suppertime is not until 9 p.m.
- ◆ A family of four consumes approximately two to three loaves of bread *each day*.
- ◆ Instead of a handshake, three kisses on the cheek is the traditional greeting of friends.

Source: Mark and Becky Mindek, C&MA missionaries to Macedonia.

# BALKAN NATIONS/YUGOSLAVIA

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Several churches were started in Zenica as a result of relief work which was backed by the national church. This aid was given, in the name of Christ, to all of the war-ravaged Bosnians, regardless of faith or creed. Today there are two congregations, including a congregation among the Gypsy population, and a new church plant is in the planning stages. In the last year seventy people have made professions of faith in Christ and thirty have been baptized. A second national couple and single Alliance missionary have recently joined the Alliance team to reach Zenica.

### A New Generation

As believers come to Christ, there is a need for discipleship and trained leadership. One of the key projects completed by an Alliance couple over the last two years was the translation of a Theological Education by Extension (TEE) course from English into the national languages. Mark and Kathy Eikost used the course to instruct over twenty students in the fundamentals of the faith and to encourage young believers in their pursuit of God.

The Alliance has also partnered with the Evangelical Church of BiH to establish Mostar Bible School (MBS). The Alliance contributed significant funds to the renovation of a building in the city of Mostar, which is the operation center for the school. Through MBS, several partnering missions (including the Alliance) are helping in the development of a program to train new national leaders—the future pastors and church workers of BiH. Alliance missionaries have also contributed to the teaching program by taking responsibility for key subjects taught at the school. Currently the Mission stands poised to have an Alliance missionary become a regular, on-location professor at the Bible school.

### Won by One

In the Balkans, the key to evangelization has not been in fancy, impressive programs, but in deliberate, intentional outreach and relationship building. Bosnians unwind through a variety of means. Two of the most popular methods are evening strolls and sharing coffee with a friend. The Bosnian word describing this culturally important concept is *chafe*. *Chafe* is part of most Bosnians' daily routine, and as such it provides a great opportunity for Alliance workers to build relationships with local Bosnians.

Relationships are so important to Bosnians that it has been the primary focus of one Alliance mission family during their first term in the city of Tuzla. Their job has been to develop significant relationships within the local Evangelical Church of BiH. The mission team works directly with the pastor of the congregation to build his leadership team and develop a viable outreach and discipleship strategy. Missionaries working in Tuzla strive to develop bridges with people in the community and to gain an understanding of the

## FAST FACTS . . . FAST FACTS . . .

### Kosovo (Kosova)

- ◆ Kosova and Kosovo are the same country; the former is the Serbian spelling while the latter is Albanian.
- ◆ Prishtina, Kosovo's capital city of approximately 300,000 people, sits in a large plain called the "Field of the Blackbirds."
- ◆ The province, largely agricultural and rural, consists of two large valleys broken up by hills and mountains.
- ◆ Since the Kosovo war, the nation has been directed and run by foreigners. Plans for a new parliament are currently underway.
- ◆ Kosovo Albanians were originally pagan, but later converted to Catholicism. Then, 600 years ago, they converted to Islam.
- ◆ Although calls to prayer from the nation's numerous mosques can be heard five times daily, today Islam provides more of a cultural identity than religious practice.

Source: Mark and Pattie Brinkman & Diana Ulrich, C&MA missionaries to Kosovo.

### Yugoslavia (Serbia)

- ◆ After World War II, the country of Yugoslavia was formed out of the remnants of several people groups (Serbs, Croats and Slovenes) and the former Ottoman Empire.
- ◆ At the fall of the Iron Curtain, the rival republics of Croatia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina seceded from Yugoslavia.
- ◆ Flowing southward out of Hungary, the Danube River continues its course through Yugoslavia to the border of Romania.
- ◆ Belgrade is the capital city of Yugoslavia, with roughly 1.1 million inhabitants. The second largest city is Novi Sad.

Source: "Yugoslavia." *Compton's '99 Encyclopedia Deluxe*. The Learning Company, 1998.

culture. By building relationships with individuals, missionaries are paving the way for future church plants.

### Macedonia

The capital city Skopje and its surrounding villages paint two very different cultural pictures. Cell phones, Internet cafés and modern-style stores from Italy and Greece fill the city. High-rises and monasteries, Orthodox churches from the third century and money machines share the same street. Grandmothers dressed in traditional headscarves walk with teenagers decked out in the latest fashions.

In the villages, the picture is much more pastoral. Many farmers still employ horse-drawn plows. There are no high-rises and the houses are much older. The mix of old traditions and new technology are still evident in the villages. Many homes have video games and televisions, but no inside toilet.

This paradox of the modern and traditional mirrors the religious condition of the people. Much of the population places the highest value on money and material possessions. They strive every day to keep up with the modern world and its appearance of ease. However, their hearts are laden with the weight and unknown purpose of the traditional religious practices of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

After Macedonia's civil war of 2001, life *appears* to be back to normal. However, in reality people live in constant fear that uprisings will begin once again. Bordered by four other nations, Macedonia is, like many of its Balkan neighbors, comprised of a melting pot of nationalities. Each of the nations—Greece, Bulgaria, Kosovo and Albania—believe Macedonia should come under their jurisdiction. Thus, “normal” in Macedonia means living in constant conflict. The façade of normalcy continues through daily routines, but for family members who experienced bombings, fires, car

raids, sabotages and the deaths of loved ones, the past is not easily forgotten.

The Macedonian people will never find peace and forgiveness for what has happened to their families and their country until they find it in the power and love of Jesus. This is why Alliance mission workers labor intensely to build friendships with those in the evangelical church and communities of Skopje and Bitola. Studying the languages, customs, history and thought patterns has been the focus of much of the mission work so that missionaries may better understand how to proceed in this new mission territory. Alliance workers have become all things to all people in order to win some for the sake of Christ. Slowly, as they eat, drink and live in Macedonia, they are learning to love their lost neighbors and new friends into the kingdom of heaven.

### Kosovo

Just across the border from Macedonia, tucked in the mountains, lies the town of Kacanik (KA-cha-neeek). Before people reach the border to enter Macedonia, they see the hillside speckled with the red clay tile roofs typical of Kacanik. The city's 40,000 residents are awakened every morning by a call to prayer resounding from the missile-like minaret that stretches up from the middle of town. Although the call is heard, just a few faithful Muslim men rise at dawn to go to the mosque to pray. Islamic in name, the true religion of Kacanik is patriotism with a call to national preservation.

Most people living in Kacanik confess that they do not truly follow any specific religion. For many, religious practices mean nothing and they long for something to fill the void in their souls. With the exception of one Alliance mission worker and a few United Nations (UN) police officers from Ghana, Africa, there are *no* Christians living in the spiritually dark city of Kacanik.

North of Kacanik lies Prishtina, Kosovo's capital and home to 300,000 people. The city is a mix of Soviet-style buildings, dusty, pot-holed roads, old cobblestone streets and electric wires running in all directions. The inhabitants of Prishtina endured terrible hardship during the devastating war that ravaged Kosovo. However, healing is beginning to take place. Three Alliance missionaries have joined the three Albanian-led Protestant churches of Prishtina in order to develop a rapport with the leadership of the churches. In time, the goal of the Alliance is to work with these national churches to develop church leadership and plant new churches. In one congregation, Bible studies, mentoring, women's and children's programs and a new youth group are all tools being used to reach the thousands searching for hope.

At this time, despite a genuine concern for unsaved family and friends, the church in Prishtina has not expressed an interest in or vision for missions. However, it is only about fifteen years old, and there are other churches in the area which are even younger. As Alliance missionaries work with the churches, they hope to cast a vision for a lost world and eventually send out laborers from Kosovo congregations into other regions of the world.

### Relief to Belief

The physical needs resulting from the Kosovar war combined with the emptiness of the Orthodox and Islamic religions have opened doors for the Alliance to bring the message of Christ through CAMA Services into Kosovo. In 1999, at the invitation of the Evangelical Church of Macedonia, the Christian and Missionary Alliance joined the national church by assisting in war relief efforts through CAMA Services. CAMA joined the national church's relief organization called AGAPE at the end of the war. CAMA assisted by rebuilding houses in and

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around Kacanik and followed up with refugees registered with AGAPE by supplying food, clothing and seeds for planting new crops. Additionally, CAMA began a micro-enterprise program, allowing the women of Kacanik—many of whom lost their husbands in the war—to sell their crochet work in the United States. This project has enabled over 200 women to help support their families in a region of seventy percent unemployment.

Through the skill and expertise of a first-term Alliance missionary, the AGAPE Center is also able to provide occupational therapy services to the hundreds of disabled people living in Kacanik. Additional services provided through the center are English classes for children and adults, many of whom are police officers and translators who want to improve their English. Over 200 students attend the classes, and new students sign up every week. A library filled with English texts provides an opportunity for students to improve their reading skills. Christian literature in the Albanian language is also available. In just

two weeks, fifteen or twenty Bibles were handed out to those with a hunger for the truth in their hearts. It is the sincere prayer of those serving at the AGAPE center that the relief experienced through the meeting of physical needs would translate into a belief in Jesus Christ.

### Yugoslavia (Serbia)

The Alliance first formally entered Yugoslavia in 1993, but God had been working in the lives of Alliance missionaries years in advance. Daniel Kuranji was born in the former Yugoslavia and later immigrated to Canada where he became burdened with a need to reach his home country for the Lord. After marrying, Daniel and his wife, Vera, were sent by the Canadian Alliance as the C&MA's first missionaries to Yugoslavia.

The Kuranjis have been working in Novi Sad in a number of ways to build the church and prepare trained leaders to reach into other parts of Yugoslavia. Vera is gifted in evangelism, and has led several people to Christ, ministering to them di-

rectly from her home. Humanitarian aid has become another avenue of ministry, with those involved providing immediate physical relief to people of all faiths. Many Serbians have seen the generosity and unconditional love provided through this service and are consequently drawn to faith in Christ.<sup>1</sup> As the Kuranjis continue to live and labor in Yugoslavia, one of their greatest prayers is for these new converts to be well grounded in the faith and for them to have a consistent walk with God.<sup>2</sup> Serbs in the former Yugoslavia have been plagued with war and uncertainty for decades, but the Lord has seen fit to bring His servants to share the hope and peace available through Christ. May He be glorified through the work of His servants and the salvation of souls.

### Notes

1. Personal Interview with Mark Eikost, September 27, 2002.
2. "Yugoslavia (Serbia)," *Prayer Connection* (Colorado Springs, CO: The Christian and Missionary Alliance, 2002), p. 185.

## Resource Materials

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- Goodwin, Stephen. "When Friends Become Targets," March 2001, p. 26.  
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### Children's Books

- Fessenden, David. *The Waiting Missionary*. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1995.  
Weinrich, Mark. *Missionary—That's Right*. Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1995.

### Web Sites

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<<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/bk.html>>  
<<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/2868.htm>>

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- <<http://www.cmalliance.org/missions/world/fields/countries/macedonia.htm>>  
<<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/mk.html>>

#### Kosovo

- <<http://www.albanian.com/main/countries/kosova/factbook.html>>  
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