

The Balkan Wars, 1912-13



Ever since the Bosnian disaster of 1908–9 (see p. 16) Russia had tried to get the Balkan states to form an alliance. In this way Russia hoped to block an Austrian takeover of the Balkans. In 1912 Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria and Montenegro formed a group called the Balkan League. In October the armies of this League attacked the Turks to drive them out of the small area they still controlled. They were very successful and drove Turkey out of Europe.

This alarmed Austria, particularly because Serbia had emerged as the strongest Balkan state. The Austrian generals now wanted a quick war to crush Serbia once and for all. Fearing this could well trigger off a major European war, the Great Powers stepped in and forced a peace settlement on the victorious Balkan states. At the peace conference of 1913:

- Serbia gained much territory because the Turkish lands were shared out among the Balkan League.
- The Austrians, however, managed to defeat Serbia's plans to gain a coastline by having a new country, Albania, placed between Serbia and the Adriatic Sea.

Within a month the Balkan League had fallen out and there was a second Balkan war. Bulgaria quarrelled with Serbia and Greece. In June 1913, the Bulgarians attacked their former allies. They were, however, quickly defeated. In the peace settlement that followed, Bulgaria surrendered nearly all the lands it had won in the first war to Greece and Serbia. Serbia gained even more land.