

# MURDER IN SARAJEVO

It was a perfect day for a parade. Crowds lined the parade route, waiting to catch a glimpse of Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the imperial throne of Austria- Hungary, seat of the thousand-year-old Hapsburg Empire. Smiling expansively and nodding to the crowd, the archduke was riding in an open car through the streets of Sarajevo on the fateful Sunday morning of June 28, 1914. Sophie, his wife, sat beside him, wearing a broad-brimmed hat to shield her cheerful, plump face from the summer sun.

Franz Ferdinand had brushed aside warnings that his visit was unwelcome and that his presence in Sarajevo might in fact be



dangerous. Sarajevo was the capital of Bosnia, a rebellious province recently annexed by Austria-Hungary, usually referred to simply as Austria. The people of Bosnia included a large number of Serbs, who resented being ruled by foreigners. They wanted to free Bosnia from Austrian domination and make the province part of the independent Kingdom of Serbia, their own national state.

Scattered among the crowds that morning were six young terrorists. Five of them were teenagers, university students of Serbian descent who had been born and raised in Bosnia. All were members of a revolutionary organization called Young Bosnia. They had been recruited, trained, and armed by the Black Hand, a secret group dedicated to the expansion of the Kingdom of Serbia and the liberation of all Serbs living under foreign rule. Their mission was to strike a blow against Austria and the Hapsburg monarchy by assassinating Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Their battle cry was "Death to the tyrant!"

As the terrorists waited in the crowd, events were spinning crazily out of control. The leader of the Black Hand, known by the code name Apis, had masterminded the assassination plot. Now he was having second thoughts. An assassination, he feared, might lead to war between little Serbia and its powerful neighbor Austria. Apis dispatched a message to the terrorists, ordering them to abandon their plan. But it was too late. The assassins were dead set on moving forward. One of them would later tell an interviewer that in going to Sarajevo "he only wanted to die for his ideals."

And while the terrorists did not know it, the man they intended to kill was actually sympathetic to their cause. Franz Ferdinand was to eventually inherit the Hapsburg crown from his eighty-three-year-old uncle, Emperor Franz Joseph, and he planned to give the Bosnian Serbs a greater voice in the Austro-Hungarian government.

As the imperial motorcade drove toward Sarajevo City Hall, one of the terrorists hurled a small bomb at Franz Ferdinand's passing car. The bomb landed in the street and exploded against the next car in the procession, spraying shrapnel and injuring two officers on the archduke's staff. After the would-be assassin was captured and the injured men were taken to a hospital, Franz Ferdinand insisted on continuing to City Hall, where he was greeted by the mayor. "So you welcome your guests here with bombs?" the archduke remarked with some anger.



Above: The assassin, at right, is hauled away by the police.

At the formal welcoming ceremony, the mayor delivered his prepared speech as though nothing unusual had happened. Franz Ferdinand then asked to be driven to the hospital so he could visit the two wounded officers. He wanted his wife to stay safely behind, but Sophie insisted on accompanying him. The governor of Bosnia had assured the royal couple that the police were fully in control. There would be no further trouble, he promised. The terrorists would not dare to strike twice in one day.

And so the imperial motorcade set forth again. On the way to the hospital, the archduke's driver took a wrong turn. Realizing his mistake, he stopped the car, shifted gears, and prepared to turn around. By chance, the leader of the terrorist gang, nineteen-year-old Gavrilo Princip, happened to be standing on the pavement a few feet away. Princip had melted unnoticed into the crowd after his accomplice had thrown the bomb. Now he saw his chance. He stepped forward, pulled out his revolver, pointed it at the archduke's car, and fired twice.

At first it appeared that no one had been hurt. Franz Ferdinand and Sophie remained calm and upright in their seats. But as their car sped away, blood began to spurt out of Franz Ferdinand's mouth.

"For heaven's sake!" Sophie cried. "What's happened to you?" Then she slumped forward, her head falling into her husband's lap.

"Sophie, dear. Sophie, dear, don't die!" Franz Ferdinand pleaded. "Stay alive for our children!" Members of his staff crowded frantically around him, pulling open his coat, trying to see where he had been shot. "It's nothing," he gasped. "It's nothing."

Sophie died almost instantly. The bullet that killed her had passed through the door of the car, striking her in the groin and severing an artery. The archduke, shot in the neck, bled to death within a few minutes.



Nineteen-year-old Gavrilo Princip. He died of tuberculosis in his prison cell four years after the assassination.

Gavrilo Princip, the teenage assassin, tried to shoot himself in the head but was overwhelmed by members of the crowd. As he struggled, he managed to swallow a vial of cyanide, a deadly poison that each member of the gang was carrying. But the cyanide was old and only made him vomit. He was arrested on the spot. Later, in prison, he expressed his regret at Sophie's death. He had not meant to shoot her.

Two of Princip's accomplices had also been captured. They confessed that they had been armed in Serbia and smuggled across the Austrian border with the help of Serbian border guards.

Austria had long regarded the Serbian kingdom on its borders as a threat. The Serbs had won their independence in 1878, after centuries of resistance to Turkish rule. They had greatly expanded their territory and population during the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. The Serbian government was dedicated to the idea of a "Greater Serbia" and to the liberation of all Serbs living under foreign rule.

The assassination of Franz Ferdinand convinced high-ranking Austrian officials that a war was necessary to curb Serbia's ambitions. Serbia "must be eliminated as a power factor in the Balkans," warned Count Leopold von Berchtold, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister. Berchtold predicted a swift Austrian victory over Serbia, with no wider repercussions.

"The Serbs must be disposed of, and that right soon!" declared Kaiser Wilhelm II, emperor of Germany, Austria's closest ally. Other European leaders were not so sure. They feared that an Austrian war against Serbia might set off a deadly chain reaction, pulling in other nations, such as Serbia's ally, Russia.

Europe's Great Powers, as they called themselves, considered their options and began to eye one another warily. Several crises in the recent past had been resolved peacefully by diplomacy. A peaceful resolution was the hope of Sir Arthur Nicholson of the British Foreign Office. "The tragedy which has just taken place in Sarajevo," he wrote, "will not, I trust, lead to further complications."

