

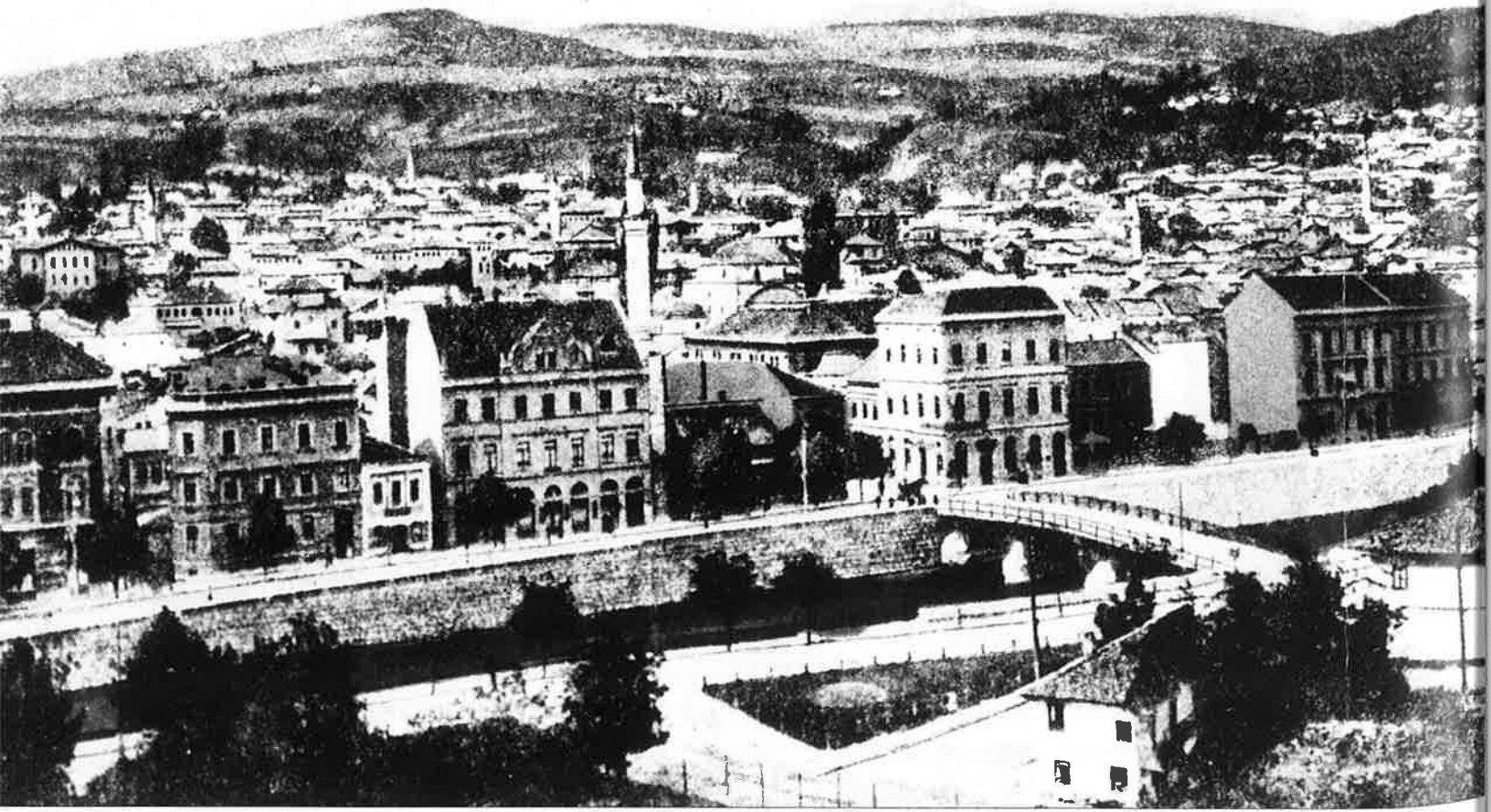


The Bosnian capital, Sarajevo.

Assassination in SARAJEVO

When Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austrian throne, visited the Balkans, he knew that his life would be in danger.

It seemed that Gavrilo Princip had lost his chance. Together with a handful of fellow Serb students he had traveled to the Bosnian city of Sarajevo to assassinate Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the unpopular heir to the Austrian throne. They had failed. One of Princip's colleagues had thrown a bomb at the archduke's car but failed even to injure him. Now security would be tightened. But as Princip stood on a crowded street, he looked up to see the archduke's car. It had taken a wrong



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turn and the driver, realizing his mistake, stopped beside the young man. Princip took out his revolver and stepped forward. The shots he was about to fire would plunge the whole of Europe into war.

The warm summer of 1914 had almost promised a return to normal life for Europe. The wars in the Balkans had ended with Serbia greatly enlarged. Decrepit Ottoman Turkey retained just a foothold in Europe around its capital, Constantinople. The naval race between Britain and Germany seemed to have exhausted itself, with each side wanting to cut its spending on battleships. And the political balance of the continent was approximately equal: the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Italy, and the Triple Entente of France with Britain and Russia.



Franz Ferdinand poses with his family. His wife Sophie, was a commoner and their wedding had been boycotted by the royal families of Europe.

Not everyone was content, however. In Serbia a group of young university students met to plan a blow against Austria and stake Serbia's claim to Bosnia-Herzegovina. In Austria, meanwhile, nervous officials advised Archduke Franz

OFILES

vrilo Princip
95–1918
b assassin

ory remembers
cip as the assassin
started World
I.
ncip was typical of
ian revolutionary
onalists. He was
cated in literature
history, and was
ired by tales of
ier Serb martyrs for
cause of freedom.
nationalists feared
as emperor, Franz
linand would
ertake reforms to
Austria's Slavs
in the empire. If he
eeded, he would
Greater Serb
itions to tear the
ic regions away
Hapsburg rule.
cip believed that
z Ferdinand had to
f the reforms were
e prevented.
rested after the
ssination, Principp
in jail.



rilo Princip, the
ian student whose
plunged Europe
war.

Ferdinand not to attend summer military maneuvers in Bosnia or tour the recently annexed territories. To the worries of one friend the archduke replied: "I am sure your warning is justified, but I do not let myself be kept under a glass cover. Our life is constantly in danger. One has to rely upon God."

There was ample evidence of danger. The Balkans were a hotbed of conspiracy and assassination. The aging Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph, who disliked his heir's

The Black Hand

Serbian nationalist and revolutionary societies dated back to the 19th century. After the Austro-Hungarian Empire annexed Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908, however, fanatical new organizations sprang up. They combined fiery, romantic declarations, mystical initiation ceremonies, and a program of Greater Serbian nationalism, all aimed first and foremost at their Hapsburg enemies.

One group, called the "National Defense," which had links in the United States, sponsored cultural education and military training for young Serbs. Another group, the "Union of Death" or "Black Hand" – which included Gavrilo Princip among its members – was more militant.

The Black Hand's leaders came from the Serbian army. Its commander was the Serbian chief of intelligence, a fanatical colonel known by the codename "Apis." Its goal was to gather all "historically Serbian" lands and peoples by revolutionary violence against any power in its way. Its agents assassinated so-called enemy officials, such as police officers and local political administrators who served the Hapsburgs, as well as minor Austrian or Hungarian nobles. The Black Hand's weapons came from Serb arsenals, provided by Apis, who also assisted its cross-border terrorism into Austria-Hungary.



Gavrilo Princip right, poses on bench with two fellow plotters the assassinati



bove: Franz
rdinand and his wife
phie head for their
r in Sarajevo, shortly
fore they were killed.

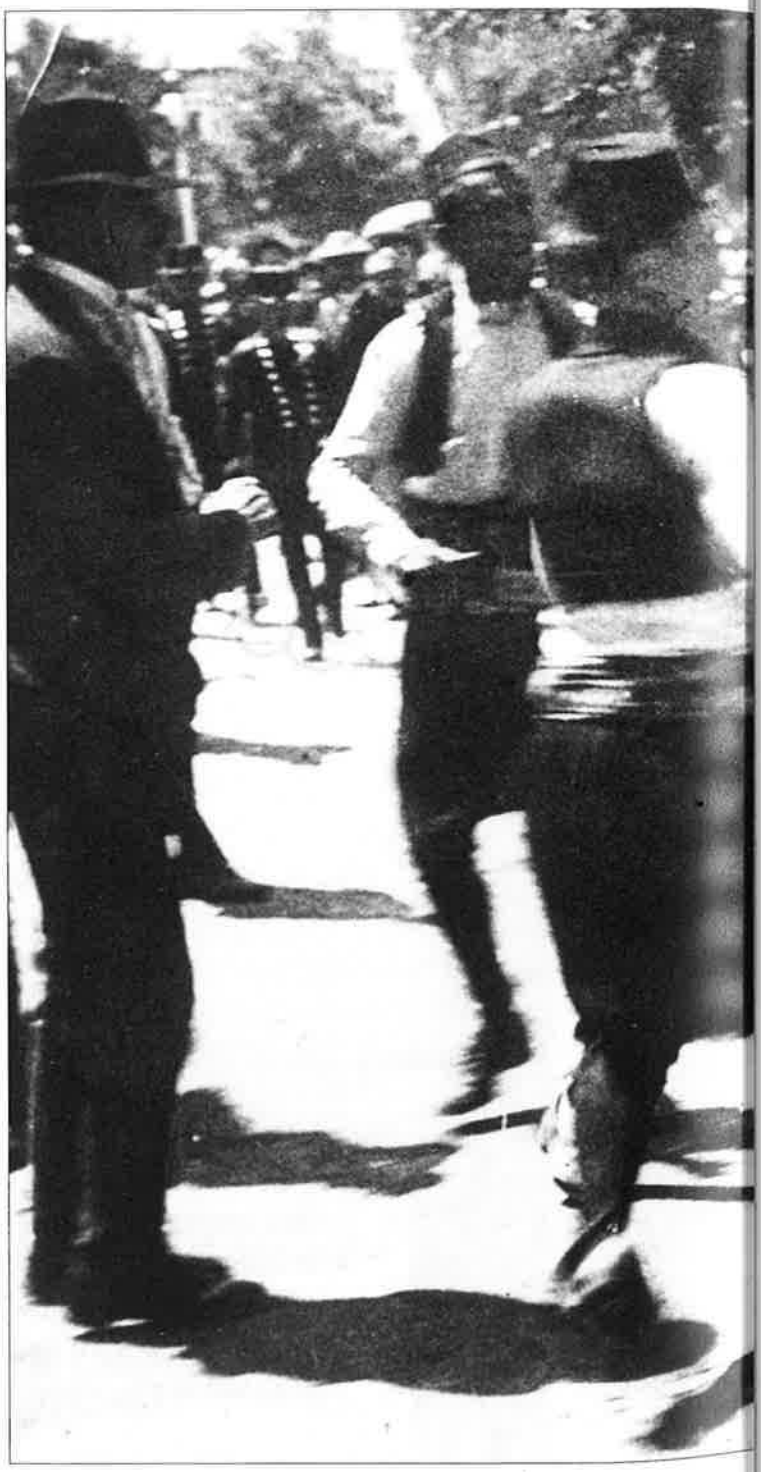
liberal plans for the monarchy, commanded Franz Ferdinand to press on with his visit to Sarajevo. It was planned for June 28, a Serbian national holiday. The danger was so great that even the Serb government had warned against the visit.

An inept gang

Also heading for Sarajevo were six students from Serbia who belonged to "Young Bosnia," a radical secret society that was against Austrian rule. They wanted Bosnia returned to Serbia. Aiding the students were members of another revolutionary organization, the "Black Hand."

The students were inept terrorists, but they were helped by even more inept security arrangements. As the archduke's car drove down Sarajevo's packed boulevards, one of them simply leaped from the sidewalk and threw a bomb. It wounded numerous people, but the imperial couple escaped injury. Franz Ferdinand remarked, "The fellow must be insane. Gentlemen, let us proceed with our program."

The driver continued through the city. A few blocks later the long-haired, blue-eyed Princip waited. Someone shouted, "Stop. You are going the wrong way." Princip stepped up to the car and fired repeatedly at the archduke and his wife. They both



r right: One of the
otters, second from
e right, is arrested in
e chaotic aftermath of
e shooting. For many
ears this photograph
as thought to show
incip; now experts
elieve the man is more
kely to be one of the
her conspirators.

died a few minutes later. Chaos enveloped the scene. Princip, quickly seized, declared himself a Serbian hero as he was rushed to police headquarters.

News of the assassinations caused little alarm in other countries. Europe had regularly heard similar news from the Balkans: the Austrian Empress Elizabeth had been killed there in 1899, for example. Vienna itself seemed more concerned with a quick, clean burial of the emperor's nephew than in punishing the culprits,



Far right: Franz Ferdinand's funeral cortege passes through the city of Trieste on July 2, 1914. When the archduke was buried, it still seemed that his killing might not have violent consequences.

alternatives

What if Gavrilo Princip had missed his target? Assassins in the 19th century had a poor record against royalty. Revolutionaries tried to kill Alexander II of Russia a dozen times before they succeeded in 1881. It would have been easy for Princip to miss. Austria-Hungary might have gone on to meet the grievances of the empire's minorities by gradual change.

But the Balkan crisis was not the only reason the Central Powers went to war in August 1914. Germany's fear of Russian, French, and British rearmament was just as important. Any later crisis would have still sparked the war.



Below: Residents of Sarajevo survey the damage caused by anti-Serb riots that broke out in the city after the assassination.



whoever they proved to be. On first receiving news of the assassination, Franz Joseph remarked: "In this manner a superior power has restored that order which I unfortunately was unable to maintain."

But the leisurely way Vienna considered its next step was misleading. It left the rest of Europe expecting nothing of the coming crisis that would engulf the continent. War was only four weeks away.



EYEWITNESS

A passenger in the archduke's car recalled the scene following the shooting as the archduchess sank to the floor of the vehicle:

"His Royal Highness said: 'Soferl, Soferl, don't die. Live for my children.' I asked him: 'Is your Highness in great pain?' To which he clearly answered: 'It is nothing.' His face was distorted, and he repeated six or seven times, every time losing more consciousness and with a fading voice: 'It is nothing.' There came a brief pause followed by a convulsive rattle in his throat, caused by loss of blood."

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WAR PROFILES

Franz Ferdinand 1863–1914
Austrian archduke

Franz Ferdinand, nephew of the emperor, became heir when Franz Joseph's son committed suicide in 1889. A virtuous but conservative monarchist, Franz Ferdinand rejected his uncle's solution to the empire's problems. The "Dual Monarchy," sharing power between Austrians and Hungarians, insulted all of his instincts.

Franz Ferdinand's ambitions for when he came to the throne were unpopular. He would break the nobility's privileged status and introduce national equality throughout the empire. He hoped that this would empower and enfranchise the huge number of southern Slavs and make all minorities loyal to him. His marriage to a commoner also made him unpopular with his uncle, the emperor.

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