ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND

POSITION:	*Heir to the throne of Austria*
DATE:	*June 28, 1914*
PLACE:	*Sarajevo, Bosnia*
HOW:	*Gunshot*
WHO:	*Gavrilo Princip*
CONVICTED:	*Yes. Died during 20-year prison sentence*
MOTIVE:	*Anger against repression of Serbian autonomy*
DIRECT CONSEQUENCE:	*World War I*

FOR ALL its prestige and foresight as the first multinational state, Austro-Hungary in the spring of 1914 was a powderkeg anxious to explode. The nobility flaunted its irresponsible lack of concern for a backward peasantry, thus setting the stage for the growth of a socialist working class. The Austrian-Magyar minority that ruled under the 83-year-old Emperor Franz Joseph of the house of Hapsburg governed many factions and former nationalities—among them Croatians, Slovenes, Bosnians, and Serbs, and seemed to have little care for or understanding of any of them.

Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the 55-year-old heir apparent to the Austrian throne, was a particularly unlikeable man, both in person and as a royal and political symbol. Paunchy and bullnecked, with cold, grey, accusatory eyes, an oversize moustache even for that day and age, and a tart tongue that insulted before it inquired, he had an enormous temper that led some in the court to whisper that he was actually insane.

In addition to this, he had broken court etiquette by marrying Sophie Chotek, a Czech of low nobility—a fact that would prevent their children from ascending to the throne. His interests were chiefly in things military, and in 1913, he made himself Inspector General of all the armed forces, a move that was seen by his enemies as an assurance that he would have the power to crush reform and impose centralized rule under himself in Vienna.

Add to this his well-known detestation of Hungarians and Slavs, and his well-advertised view that the introduction of a democracy and the expressions of minorities were ruinous to the Empire, and the formula was complete to ignite negative emotions, which ranged from mild dislike to murderous rage.

THIS RAGE was particularly rampant among those Serbs within the Austro-Hungarian empire who hoped for a federation with the independent South Slav nation of Serbia. As early as 1911, secret revolutionary societies of South Slavs, calling themselves Young Bosnians, were firmly planted within the recesses of the Empire. The cells had links with Serbia's Black Hand group, dedicated to unifying all Serbs through revolution if necessary.

To the less sophisticated members of any of these revolutionary cells, assassination was a path toward the overthrow of the government, and 19-year-old Gavrilo Princip, a Serb from a West Bosnian family of poor peasants, was one of these unsophisticates. When he heard that Archduke Franz Ferdinand was coming to Sarajevo to celebrate the Feast of St. Vitus, inspect army maneuvers in Bosnia, and generally assert his power over this particularly rebellious part of the Empire, Princip knew his opportunity had arrived.

Had he been of a more subtle mind, Archduke Franz Ferdinand might also have noted that the Feast of St. Vitus was the anniversary of two major Serbian battles which were symbols of Serbian bravery and independence. But he paid no more attention to this than he did to his own intelligence service, which warned him not to go to Sarajevo.

MEANWHILE, the conspiracy grew. According to one version of the story, the slight, intense Princip gathered six bombs, four revolvers, and three accomplices: Milan Ciganovic, Nedelko Cabrinovic, and Trifko Grabez. According to another version, Colonel Dragutin Dimitrievich, known within the Black Hand as "Apis", planned the assassination, and recruited the four secondary school students himself. The truth is probably somewhere in between. There was certainly Black Hand

involvement in the plot, since the conspirators hid out beforehand in the house of Danilo Ilic, a member of the Black Hand in Sarajevo, and all carried with them signature vials of cyanide, designed to be taken should they be caught.

The team practiced their marksmanship in a park in Belgrade during the week preceding the late June visit of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie to Sarajevo, and by all accounts, Princip became a better marksman than the other three.

THE ROYAL couple arrived in the Bosnian city on June 26, attended a bazaar and a state dinner, and generally enjoyed themselves. The crowds were large and friendly, and Sophie assured a nervous local dignitary that his fears for their safety had been proven unnecessary.

At 10 a.m. on the morning of Sunday, June 28, 1914, the six cars of the royal motorcade rode rapidly through the city on the way to the town hall. Lining the route along the Appel Quay, a street on the embankment above the Miljacka River, seven potential assassins waited—the original four, plus three more backups, and Ilic, who had hired the second team in case the first failed.

At 10:10 a.m., the open car containing Franz Ferdinand and Sophie—he in a feathered helmet and imposing royal uniform, she in a white dress and gloves, and carrying a white parasol—drew parallel with the first two killers.

They did nothing. One, Mehmed Memedbasic, became confused, and the second, Vaso Cubrilovic, held his fire out of sympathy for Duchess Sophie. The third assassin, Cabrinovic, was less befuddled. He flung his bomb, which ricocheted off the hood of the royal car, rolled under the vehicle behind it, and exploded, wounding members of the royal escort and some spectators. Cabrinovic, pursued by spectators and police, dashed to the river, swallowing the contents of his cyanide vial on the way. Police caught up with him. He vomited up the poison, and was beaten to a bloody pulp by the police.

The royal caravan stopped momentarily, then continued on its way, confident that the assassination attempt had failed. And, in fact, the four remaining killers then did nothing. Popovic, the youngest, was frozen in fear. Grabez had a rush of conscience, deciding not to throw a bomb that could injure innocent bystanders. Princip failed to recognize the royal vehicle until it had gone past him and out of firing range. Disgusted, he walked to a coffee house on Franz Joseph Street, where he gloomily brooded over a cup of sweetened coffee.

And so the assassination attempt had turned into an abysmal failure. The royal procession proceeded to the town hall ceremony, which unfolded smoothly.

AND NOW, an important and portentous decision was made. Instead of returning to the museum by way of Franz Joseph Street, Franz Ferdinand decided to go to the military hospital to visit the men who had been injured in the bomb blast. The way to the hospital was along the Appel Quay, which had been cleared of crowds. And had Franz Ferdinand been able to follow this change in his planned route of return, history might have been enormously different, and two world wars might never have been fought.

But fate took a hand in two ways: First, a jealous disagreement between Sarajevo's chief of police and the provincial military governor had removed a police cordon that should have lined the streets—particularly Franz Joseph Street—and stood between the royal entourage and any would-be assassins. Second, when the caravan resumed its trip at 11:15, it did not proceed, as the Archduke had directed, back through the Appel Quay, but into Franz Joseph Street.

Sensing possible treachery, the military governor shouted to the lead driver to stop and take the other road. As chance would have it, this halted the royal vehicle so that it stood directly in front of the coffee house to which the frustrated Princip had retired. He had finished his coffee, exited the coffee house, and now stood just three yards away from the halted royal carriage. It was almost too good to be true. Without hesitating, he drew his revolver and fired two shots.

The first hit the Archduke in the chest. The second crashed into Sophie's abdomen. There was a moment of shocked silence, a flash of stillness, while the royal couple remained frozen and upright. Then, the car leaped forward, and Sophie plunged backward against her husband. "Sopherl, Sopherl, don't die," the Archduke pleaded. But she was already dead, and in a few more minutes, he would be dead too.

The conspirators were arrested, jailed, and beaten, Princip so severely that he lost an arm. The

Police arresting suspected conspirators in Sarajevo on the day of the assassination

adults were sentenced to death; Princip, who was now really 20 years old, but, through a clerical error in his papers, was still officially considered to be 19, was given 20 years hard labor. He would die within two years, of tuberculosis. Danilo Ilic and two more conspirators were condemned to death.

THE ASSASSINATION was treated at first in a low key manner in Bosnia, in Austro-Hungary, and throughout Europe. Even the funeral was small and private, and Sophie was buried with two white gloves on her grave—a mark of a mere lady in waiting. The old and ailing Emperor Franz Joseph reportedly sorrowed only for his nephew's orphaned children, and rivals of Franz Ferdinand in the Imperial Court secretly rejoiced.

But then, an accusation that there had been Serbian involvement in the planning of the assassination began to surface. The weapons, the story went, had originated in the Serbian army, and a Serbian army major was deeply involved in the plot. Then it spread. According to the augmented story, the Serbian cabinet, including the Prime Minister, knew of the plot and could have prevented the assassination, but chose to remain silent and allow it to happen.

The rumors were only that, but they were enough for Emperor Franz Joseph to contact his ally Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and forge an alliance to go to war with Serbia—ostensibly to avenge the assassination, but incidentally to satisfy Austria's territorial imperative.

It was a risk-filled venture. Serbia's most powerful ally was Russia, who in turn had potential allies in the United Kingdom, France, and Italy. But Austria and Germany nevertheless formed a fateful alliance, and demanded that Serbia cease anti-Austrian propaganda, dismember the Black Hand and any other nationalist groups that advocated the incorporation of the South Slavs into Serbia, fire all anti-Austrian officials, allow Austrian police into Serbia to round up the last of the conspirators involved in the assassination, and cease arms smuggling. All in 48 hours.

The reply came back on July 25, two minutes after the deadline, and it was more than accommodating. It only refused to fire anti-Austrian officials and let in the Austrian police—two absurd requests anyway. But Austria and Germany had apparently only made the demands in the expectation that they would be rejected out of hand, so that war could be blamed on Serbia. The Austrian

ambassador had already packed his bags when the acceptance arrived. He ignored it and left for Vienna.

On July 28, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. By August 1, Germany had declared war on France and Belgium. On August 4, the United Kingdom declared war on Germany, and by the end of the month, World War I was a reality.

It would rage until November 11, 1918, kill 10 million people, destroy the Hapsburgs, form the country of Yugoslavia (translated, it means "Land of the South Slavs") and lay the groundwork for Nazi grievances that would lead to World War II.

And when the cold war between the western and eastern blocs ended in 1991, and Yugoslavia began to come apart, Serbs and Croats would the playing out of an ancient enmity, enter into a civil war, and that war would threaten the peace of the rest of the world.

It is doubtful that the 20-year-old Gavrilo Princip dreamed that his two pistol shots would ignite that much horror. He only saw a tyrant sitting beyond the barrel of his gun. But the dominoes of fate and ambition were set to falling that June morning in Sarajevo, and the world would never be the same again.