

CHAPTER
13

Section 1

PRIMARY SOURCE

The Murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand

by Borijove Jevtic

On June 28, 1914, Austria-Hungary's Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated by Gavrilo Princip in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia. This excerpt from an eyewitness account by a fellow conspirator in the assassination plot explains why the attack took place, what happened during the attack, and how Princip, the 19-year-old Serbian assassin, was captured. Why did the Archduke's plan to visit Sarajevo on June 28 prompt such a violent response?

The little clipping . . . declared that the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand would visit Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia, June 28, to direct army maneuvers in the neighbouring mountains. . . .

How dared Franz Ferdinand, not only the representative of the oppressor but in his own person an arrogant tyrant, enter Sarajevo on that day? Such an entry was a studied insult.

June 28 is a date engraved deeply in the heart of every Serb. . . . It is the day on which the old Serbian kingdom was conquered by the Turks at the Battle of Amsselfelde in 1389. It is also the day on which in the second Balkan War the Serbian arms took glorious revenge on the Turk for his old victory and for the years of enslavement.

That was no day for Franz Ferdinand, the new oppressor, to venture to the very doors of Serbia for a display of the force of arms which kept us beneath his heel.

Our decision was taken almost immediately. Death to the tyrant!

Then came the matter of arranging it. . . . But here Gavrilo Princip intervened. Princip is destined to go down in Serbian history as one of her greatest heroes. . . .

The fateful morning dawned. . . .

When Franz Ferdinand and his retinue . . . passed Gabrinovic . . . he threw his grenade. It hit the side of the car, but Franz Ferdinand with presence of mind threw himself back and was uninjured. Several officers riding in his attendance were injured.

The cars sped to the town hall. . . . After the reception in the town hall General Potiorek, the Austrian commander, pleaded with Franz Ferdinand to leave the city, as it was seething with rebellion. The archduke was persuaded to drive the shortest way out of the city and to go quickly.

The road to the maneuvers was shaped like the letter V, making a sharp turn at the bridge over the River Nilgacka. Franz Ferdinand's car . . . was forced to slow down for the turn. Here Princip had taken his stand.

As the car came abreast he stepped forward from the curb, drew his automatic pistol from his coat and fired two shots. The first struck the wife of the archduke, the Archduchess Sofia, in the abdomen. She was an expectant mother. She died instantly.

The second bullet struck the archduke close to the heart.

He uttered only one word; 'Sofia'—a call to his stricken wife. Then his head fell back and he collapsed. He died almost instantly.

The officers seized Princip. They beat him over the head with the flat of their swords. They knocked him down, they kicked him, scraped the skin from his neck with the edges of their swords, tortured him, all but killed him.

*from Borijove Jevtic, "The Murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Sarajevo, 28 June 1914" in the *New York World*, 29 June 1924. Reprinted in John Carey, ed., *Eyewitness to History* (New York: Avon, 1987), 441–443.*

Activity Options

1. **Recognizing Point of View** Draw an editorial cartoon about the Archduke's assassination from the point of view of a Serbian nationalist or a citizen of Austria-Hungary. Display your cartoon in the classroom.
2. **Writing for a Specific Purpose** Write a newspaper headline about the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and share it with your classmates.