

# Time Machine (1914): Assassination of Archduke Ferdinand starts WWI

By Washington Times, adapted by Newsela staff on 04.26.16

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Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary and his wife, Sophie, emerge from the Sarajevo Town Hall to board their car, a few minutes before the assassination that sparked World War I. Photo: Karl Tröstl

*Newsela Editor's Note: This article originally appeared in the Sept. 23, 1914, edition of The Washington Times. Its tone of voice and style of multiple dispatches are typical of the newspapers of the time.*

On June 28, Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria-Hungary was assassinated. Now, three months later, war is breaking out across Europe.

## **Austria-Hungary Enraged**

The archduke was killed during a visit to the city of Sarajevo, where a young man named Gabriel Prinzip shot him. Prinzip was part of a group of Serbians fighting for freedom from Austria-Hungary.

Some Serbians see Austria-Hungary as an oppressive foreign power. Prinzip hoped that killing the archduke would help bring about freedom for Serbia.

The government of Austria-Hungary, however, was enraged by the assassination. Twenty-five days later, it sent a note of demands to the Serbian government, accusing the Serbians of helping Prinzip carry out the assassination.

### **You Have Just 48 Hours ...**

Austria-Hungary made several demands of the Serbian government. The government had to publicly support Austria-Hungary, the note said, and had to pass laws against saying or writing bad things about Austria-Hungary.

Serbia was given just 48 hours to meet these demands. If Serbia was unwilling, Austria-Hungary would declare war.

A war between Austria-Hungary and Serbia, however, would set off a war across Europe. Germany had promised to defend Austria-Hungary. Russia had pledged to protect Serbia. So, if Austria-Hungary and Serbia were going to fight, so would Germany and Russia. If Germany began gearing up for war, France and England would as well.

Now, all of Europe is preparing for war.

### **Russia Decides To Fight**

On the night of July 23, a few weeks after the assassination, government workers in Russia received a message from Serbia.

"Help!" it said.

The Russians talked about the message for four hours. Russia was Serbia's friend, but taking Serbia's side meant risking war with Germany. The Russians reached a secret decision at 7 o'clock in the evening and dashed off to their various offices, each doing his part to prepare for what was coming.

Meanwhile, the armies of Europe were already getting ready to fight.

### **Armies On The Move**

Serbia's 48 hours were up on July 26 at 6 in the evening. By that time, the Russian army was moving toward Germany, and the German army was moving toward Russia, and in a dozen other different directions.

Prinzip's bullet set all that in motion. It lit a fire in Serbia, and the fire spread across Europe. Now, the war that is about to break loose will probably kill a million men. It may do more damage than any other war in human history.

Did Prinzip know what he was doing when he killed the Archduke? He may not have realized how much his action would change the world. According to the Serbian government, following the assassination, he said:

## **Real Reasons For The War**

"I was not influenced by any other person or persons... When in Belgrade I read that the archduke was going to Serajevo, and so I bought a gun and went there."

What he said or thought matters little now, though. Europe is not fighting because Prinzip is a murderer. The real reasons for the war have to do with the long and ancient quarrel for land and power in Europe. Each nation wants to protect its place among its neighbors.

Given the delicate balance of power in Europe, perhaps war was unavoidable. Something would have set off the fighting, at some time. It just happened to be Prinzip's bullet that did it.

**Quiz**

- 1 According to the article, what was the REAL reason for World War I?
- (A) Austria-Hungary ruled Serbia too harshly.
  - (B) Gabriel Prinzip killed the archduke of Austria-Hungary.
  - (C) Germany, Russia and other countries decided to get involved in the war.
  - (D) There was a long-lasting fight over power and land between countries.
- 2 What effect did the assassination and Austria-Hungary threatening war on Serbia have on other countries like Germany, Russia and France?
- (A) They were upset with the Serbians for killing the archduke and declared war on them.
  - (B) They they tried to get Austria-Hungary and Serbia to talk to each other to solve the disagreement.
  - (C) They became pulled into the war because they had made promises to defend Serbia or Austria-Hungary.
  - (D) They tried to stay neutral and avoid war, but the war between Serbia and Austria-Hungary crossed into their borders.

- 3 Read the last paragraph.

*Given the delicate balance of power in Europe, perhaps war was unavoidable. Something would have set off the fighting, at some time. It just happened to be Prinzip's bullet that did it.*

What does the author mean by saying "perhaps war was unavoidable"?

- (A) Maybe it is impossible for anyone to win the war.
- (B) Maybe war was going to break out eventually in Europe.
- (C) Maybe the war could have been stopped if someone had taken action sooner.
- (D) Maybe European countries are more interested in war than other countries.

- 4 Read the paragraph from the section "Austria-Hungary Enraged".

*The government of Austria-Hungary, however, was enraged by the assassination. Twenty-five days later, it sent a note of demands to the Serbian government, accusing the Serbians of helping Prinzip carry out the assassination.*

Which word is the BEST replacement for "enraged" in the paragraph?

- (A) hurt
- (B) angered
- (C) confused
- (D) concerned

## Answer Key

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