

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS

---



# Thirteen Days

Clive Ponting

# Contents

*Cover*

*About the Book*

*About the Author*

*List of Maps*

*Title Page*

*Introduction*

PART ONE: SARAJEVO, SUNDAY 28 JUNE 1914

1. The Assassination
2. The Conspiracy
3. The Reaction

PART TWO: PROLOGUE

4. Europe in 1914
5. The Twenty-Four Days: 29 June - 22 July

PART THREE: THE THIRTEEN DAYS

6. Thursday 23 July
7. Friday 24 July
8. Saturday 25 July
9. Sunday 26 July
10. Monday 27 July
11. Tuesday 28 July
12. Wednesday 29 July
13. Thursday 30 July
14. Friday 31 July
15. Saturday 1 August
16. Sunday 2 August
17. Monday 3 August

18. Tuesday 4 August

PART FOUR: EPILOGUE

19. Aftermath

20. Consequences

*Notes*

*Appendices*

*Appendix One*

*Appendix Two*

*Appendix Three*

*Bibliography*

*Index*

*Copyright*

## About the Book

At the end of the First World War, Germany was demonised. The Treaty of Versailles contained a 'war guilt' clause pinning the blame on the aggression of Germany and accusing her of 'supreme offence against international morality'. *Thirteen Days* rejects this verdict. Clive Ponting also rejects the thesis that Europe in 1914 had reached such a boiling point that war was bound to erupt and the theory that the origins of the War lay in a mighty arms race. He argues that the War occurred primarily because of the situation in the Balkans, while he gives full weight to Austria-Hungary's desire to cripple Serbia instead of negotiating, and to Russia's militaristic programme of expansion. Clive Ponting begins with a dramatic recreation of the assassination in Sarajevo on 28 June. He then examines how things spiralled out of control during the weeks that led to war. The tension builds as his story criss-crosses the capital cities of Europe and describes developments day by day, and, latterly, hour by hour. The First World War destroyed the old Europe. Nearly nine million soldiers were killed and twenty-one million wounded; over ten million civilians died. By the end of the War, three great European empires - Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia - had disintegrated. Why did the War happen? In 1914, the states of Europe had been at peace for forty years, and every diplomatic dispute had been resolved peacefully. *Thirteen Days* describes failures of communication, fateful decisions and escalating military moves; it is an extraordinary narrative of personalities and diplomacy in the dying weeks of an era in which telephone

networks were in their infancy and governments relied on telegrams in code and face-to-face meetings of ambassadors.

## About the Author

Clive Ponting is a Reader in Politics at the University of Wales, Swansea. He has written numerous books including the world-wide bestseller *A Green History of the World*, a highly controversial revisionist biography of Winston Churchill and *Armageddon: The Second World War*. His most recent publications are *The Pimlico History of the Twentieth Century* and *World History: A New Perspective*, also available in Pimlico paperback. He is working on a new book about the Crimean War.

## List of Maps

- [1.](#) Sarajevo, 28 June 1914
- [2.](#) Franz Ferdinand and his assassins' routes to Sarajevo
- [3.](#) Austria-Hungary and the Balkans in 1914

# THIRTEEN DAYS

Diplomacy and Disaster:  
The Countdown to the Great War

---

CLIVE PONTING



PIMLICO



# INTRODUCTION

The reasons for the outbreak of the First World War have been a matter of acute controversy ever since the war began. The debate took a virulent form when, on 28 June 1919 (five years to the day after Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife were assassinated at Sarajevo), the German representatives were given no choice but to sign the Treaty of Versailles drafted by the victorious allies. Germany took particular exception to article 231, the so-called *Kriegsschuldfrage*, or 'war guilt' clause. It stated:

Germany accepts the responsibility of Germany and her allies for causing all the loss and damage to the Allied governments and their nationals imposed on them by aggression of Germany and her allies.

In addition:

The Allied and Associated Powers publicly arraign William II of Hohenzollern, former German emperor, for a supreme offence against international morality, and the sanctity of treaties.

Over the last eighty years scholars have looked for deep, fundamental causes in the European power structure that made the outbreak of war almost inevitable. A number of different features of Europe before 1914 have been allocated primary responsibility. Apart from internal political and social pressures at least three other factors were thought to be crucial. First, the alliance structure that

ensured a limited dispute in the Balkans escalated into a war involving all the major European powers. Second, economic and imperial rivalries stemming from European expansion into Asia and the Pacific and the partition of Africa in the late nineteenth century. Third, a developing arms race between the powers - in particular the building of an ocean-going navy by Germany after 1897 and the British decision that it had to maintain its naval supremacy. The problem with all these interpretations is that they tend to work backwards from the outbreak of war in order to show that it was inevitable and preordained. The common picture is of a Europe reaching boiling point as heat was applied by a number of factors resulting in an inevitable explosion in the summer of 1914. The assassination of Franz Ferdinand was seen as no more than the action that lit the fuse that set off the conflagration.

This book rejects such explanations. It does not deny that the tensions were there, but it does deny that they were inevitably going to cause a European war. Europe had been divided into two alliance structures since the mid-1890s but this had not led to war. Economic and imperial rivalries around the globe were settled by negotiation and Europe was not engaged in a major arms race. On average, defence spending was at the level found in peacetime Europe throughout the twentieth century. Europe did face a large number of diplomatic disputes in the period between 1905 and 1913 - Morocco in 1905-6, Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908-9, Agadir in 1911 and the vast range of problems stemming from the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 - but the crucial point is that they were all settled through diplomacy. The key question that has to be answered is why the crisis produced by the assassinations at Sarajevo was not resolved by diplomatic means. That can only be answered by studying events in detail. A small number of diplomats, senior officials, army officers and monarchs made all the key decisions. They had to act within the

framework established for European relations in the early twentieth century but it was the decisions they made, their mistakes, failures and miscalculations that produced war.

In studying the diplomatic crisis of July 1914, this book rejects the common view of primary German responsibility for the war. That is not to say that Germany can escape all blame for the outbreak of the war. Some of the decisions taken by the German government contributed directly to ensuring that war was the result of the July 1914 crisis. However, other countries cannot escape responsibility. The Russian decision to mobilise was fundamental in tipping an acute diplomatic crisis into war and France did nothing to restrain its ally from pursuing this course. British policy was faltering and unclear and the misunderstandings about its position which this generated contributed significantly to the miscalculations made in Berlin.

This book argues that the First World War only occurred because of the situation in the Balkans. It was the outcome of the two Balkan wars between 1912 and 1913, the changes they precipitated in the strategic balance in the region, together with the struggle for influence between Austria-Hungary and Russia, that led to war. In this respect what began as the 'Third Balkan War' rapidly escalated into a European conflict. The primary responsibility for war therefore lies with three states. First, Serbia, where there was an aggressive, ideologically motivated nationalism, entrenched under the extremists who brought the Karadjordjević dynasty to the throne in the bloody 1903 coup. The extreme nationalists were never reconciled to the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 which they saw as part of historic Serbia, even though the majority of the population of the provinces were not Serbs. The assassinations at Sarajevo were directed, funded and organised by factions within the Serbian administration. They were carried out by extreme Serb nationalist terrorists. The second state which must bear

primary responsibility for the war is Austria-Hungary. It viewed the expansion of Serbia in 1912-13 as a fundamental threat. It was not simply the Serbian desire to gain Bosnia-Herzegovina that made it an enemy of Austria-Hungary. The mere existence of a Serb national state acted as a potential disintegrating force within the multinational Habsburg empire and tended to encourage other minority populations, not just Serbs, to look outside the empire for support in establishing their own national states. It was the determination of the government in Vienna to use the assassinations as an excuse to permanently cripple Serbia through military conquest and dismemberment, and throughout the July crisis to reject any diplomatic settlement, that was a fundamental cause of the outbreak of the war. The third state was Russia. It had been expanding westwards for more than two hundred years and saw the Balkans as an important area which should form part of its sphere of influence, even though the attempt to bring this about inevitably brought it into conflict with Austria-Hungary. Russia supported Serbia simply because it was an enemy of Austria-Hungary, although some elements in the Russian government also saw such actions as support for another Slav and Orthodox state. It was the Russian decision not to allow Austria-Hungary to impose a diplomatic humiliation on Serbia, let alone defeat it in a local war, that ensured the outbreak of a European war.

After looking in detail at the assassinations in Sarajevo and examining the most important features of Europe in the first decade of the twentieth century this book concentrates on the diplomatic crisis that followed the killings. It shows how Austria-Hungary and Germany decided to deal with Serbia, and any problems such action might involve. The majority of the book deals with the 'Thirteen Days', from the presentation of the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia on 23 July to Britain's entry into the war on 4 August. It examines how the situation

escalated out of control, the decisions taken by the various governments that helped ensure this outcome and why diplomatic attempts to resolve the crisis failed. It does so by describing what happened day by day in the various capitals of Europe. The focus of each chapter shifts from capital to capital as the crucial decisions were taken. The book is deliberately structured in this way. Communications between the European capitals were still primitive - telephones and telephone networks were in their infancy and governments had to rely on telegrams that took several hours, often nearly a whole day, to travel from capital to capital. No European politician was able to gain control of the crisis and action was still reliant on ambassadors who might or might not carry out the instructions they were sent. Governments were often unaware of what was happening in the rest of Europe until it was too late. Diplomatic initiatives were frequently started when the problem they were meant to resolve had been overtaken by events. The result was that the crisis rapidly ran out of control. Each chapter tries to gain a dramatic sense of that crisis by showing how each government reacted to the rapidly deteriorating situation.

The thirteen-day crisis led to the outbreak of the First World War, something that no power in Europe wanted. That war ended the old European order for ever. The instability the war produced led to the establishment of Communism in Russia and the rise of Fascism and Nazism. After only a short pause, the second round of what had become a European civil war began in 1939. That in its turn led to the collapse of the European empires across the globe and the eclipse of Europe by the United States and, to some extent, the Soviet Union. It was the assassinations at Sarajevo and the thirteen-day diplomatic crisis in 1914 that were to shape much of European history for the rest of the twentieth century.

PART ONE

Sarajevo, Sunday 28 June 1914

# 1

## THE ASSASSINATION

IN LATE JUNE 1914 Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, was, as Inspector-General of the armed forces, visiting manoeuvres conducted by the 15th and 16th army corps around Tarčin in the mountains southwest of Sarajevo, the capital of the province of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Franz Ferdinand was the nephew of the eighty-four-year-old Emperor, Franz Josef, but had only become heir through a bizarre series of accidents. Franz Josef's first heir, his younger brother Ferdinand Maximilian Josef, was executed by a Mexican firing squad in June 1867. Franz Josef's son, Crown Prince Rudolf, died in January 1889. Next in line was the second youngest brother of Franz Josef, Archduke Karl Rudolf, the father of Franz Ferdinand. He died in May 1896 after drinking the typhoid infested waters of the River Jordan during a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. In 1898 the thirty-five-year-old Franz Ferdinand was designated as heir to the various Habsburg lands that made up the Austro-Hungarian empire.

Like his father, Archduke Franz Ferdinand was strongly religious and dominated by the priests in his entourage. He had never expected to be heir to the throne and his upbringing had been typical of the Habsburg aristocracy. His career was in the army and his main pastime was hunting - by 1913 he had slaughtered over six thousand deer. He was deeply conservative and disliked the Hungarians who made up a large part of the monarchy and who had, in 1867, been granted a large degree of autonomy

and effective equality with the German-speaking part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. He was a supporter of Dr Karl Leuger, the mayor of Vienna and leader of the anti-Semitic Christian Socialist Party, who was a major influence on the young Adolf Hitler. Although Franz Ferdinand also disliked the Serbs, he was generally cautious in foreign policy – he was worried by the growing power of Russia in the Balkans and unwilling to risk a general war. His greatest hatred, however, was reserved for the Italians and he still harboured dreams of regaining Venetia and Lombardy lost fifty years earlier.

Franz Ferdinand's position as heir was deeply affected by his love for Countess Sophie Chotek von Chotkowa und Wogin, who was from an impoverished Czech aristocratic family. Under the German Confederation Act of 1814, the family was not one of those eligible to marry Habsburg princes. In 1898 Franz Josef banned Franz Ferdinand from marrying Sophie (his permission was required under the 1839 *Familien Statut*). Eventually, in 1900, a compromise was reached. Franz Ferdinand was allowed to marry Sophie but the marriage was to be morganatic – their children could not inherit the Habsburg throne. Although Sophie became Princess of Hohenberg on her marriage (and Duchess in 1907) she was not allowed, on Emperor Franz Josef's express order, to have the privileges of the wife of an archduke. In court protocol and on official functions she was ostracised.

The Archduke and his wife travelled by different routes to Sarajevo. Franz Ferdinand left Trieste by boat and arrived in Sarajevo on 25 June. He went shopping in the bazaar that evening before spending the next two days watching the army manoeuvres. The Duchess left Vienna by train and stayed at the Hotel Bosnia in the spa town of Ilidže. She visited Sarajevo on both days of the army manoeuvres, before Franz Ferdinand joined her at the hotel (they had taken over the whole building) late in the



afternoon of 27 June. The programme agreed for their visit to Sarajevo on 28 June called for them to leave Ilidže by train at 9.25 a.m. and, on arrival, to inspect a small contingent of troops. At ten they would drive to the town hall for the official welcome before leaving at 10.30 to open the new State Museum. This would be followed by lunch with the governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina, General Oskar Potiorek, before a drive through the town and a visit to the local barracks and a carpet factory. The royal couple would leave by train to Ilidže where, after a brief walk and dinner, they would board the train at 9 p.m. for their overnight journey to Vienna.

The arrangements for the visit were in the hands of General Potiorek. Compared with Emperor Franz Josef's visit to the town in 1910, when a double cordon of soldiers had lined the route, security was very lax. Dr Edmund Gerde, the chief of the Sarajevo police, had just 120 officers and six detectives to cover the four-mile route through the town. Gerde had warned against the visit, considering it far too dangerous because 28 June was *Vidovdan*, the Serb national day commemorating their catastrophic defeat by the Ottomans at the battle of Kosovo in the late fourteenth century. It was also the day on which the Serb Milōs Obilić had assassinated the Ottoman sultan. Gerde asked for a cordon of soldiers along the route but this was rejected by Potiorek because the uniforms of the 70,000 troops taking part in the manoeuvres would be dirty. Gerde also requested that the route of the procession should not be made public until the day before the visit, but the mayor of Sarajevo published the route on 23 June. Potiorek hoped to use the visit to improve his chances of being appointed Army Chief of Staff when Franz Ferdinand became emperor. His contribution to the arrangements was a long correspondence with Franz Ferdinand's office almost entirely confined to protocol - the menu for the dinner, whether the wines should be sweet or dry, whether they

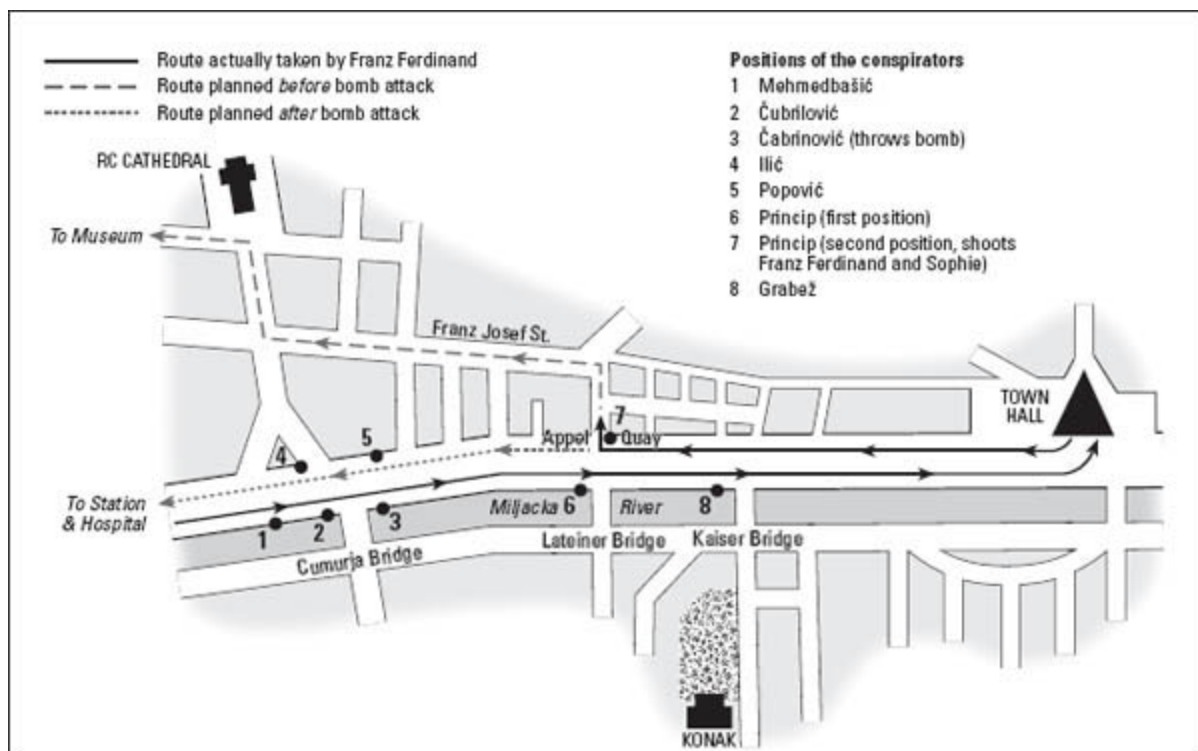
should be served at room temperature or chilled and whether a string quartet should play during the lunch. Finally, he ensured that on the manoeuvres the stirrup for Franz Ferdinand's horse was exactly seventy-two centimetres long.

On Sunday 28 June Franz Ferdinand and Sophie attended mass in a specially converted room at the Hotel Bosna and then left for Sarajevo. It was a brilliant, hot, sunny day and Franz Ferdinand was dressed in the uniform of an Austrian cavalry general - blue tunic, black trousers with a red stripe, a hat with pale green feathers and around his waist a gold-braided ribbon with tassels. Sophie wore a white silk dress, a fur of ermine tails over her shoulders and a large white hat. They were met at Sarajevo station by General Potiorek and inspected the guard of honour - the only troops in the town. They then set off in a convoy of cars for the town hall on Appel Quay which ran alongside the Miljačka river. The cars were supplied by the Imperial and Royal Voluntary Automobile Corps, a unit of reserve officers whose function was to provide cars for official visits. In the first car were a few local detectives who acted as the security contingent. The second contained Fehim Effendi Curcic (the mayor of Sarajevo) and Dr Edmund Gerde. The third car was a *Graef und Stift* Viennese sports car with the roof folded back. It was driven by a Czech, Leopold Sojka, and contained Franz Ferdinand and Sophie together with General Potiorek and Lieutenant Colonel Franz Harrach, the transport officer, who owned the car. The remainder of the official entourage travelled in the fourth and fifth cars. Franz Ferdinand asked for the cars to be driven slowly (about 10-12 mph) so that he could see the town.

At about 10.10 the cars were travelling along the Appel Quay through a thin crowd with the buildings decorated with the Habsburg and Bosnian flags. Near the Čumurja Bridge a young man dressed in a long black coat and black

hat asked a policeman which was Franz Ferdinand's car and then threw a bomb at it. Sojka, seeing what was happening, accelerated and the bomb hit the folded down roof, bounced off into the street and exploded under the rear wheel of the fourth car. The young man then jumped over the wall and fell twenty-six feet into the river below. The first two cars did not know what had happened and continued to the town hall. Franz Ferdinand ordered his car to stop and sent Harrach back to investigate and report. He found that two of the occupants of the fourth car, in particular General Potiorek's aide-de-camp, Colonel Merizzi, were hurt, about twenty spectators were slightly injured and the police were arresting as many bystanders as possible. Franz Ferdinand's car was only slightly damaged and so it continued along Appel Quay to the town hall.

## SARAJEVO 28 JUNE 1914



When he arrived, Franz Ferdinand found the official welcoming party arranged on the front steps. In the centre was the mayor. The Muslim councillors, dressed in open waistcoats, baggy trousers and conical hats, were on one side, and the Christian councillors, dressed in tail coats and top hats, were on the other. There was also a representative of the Jewish community present. Not knowing what had occurred, the mayor began his formal speech of welcome. Franz Ferdinand interrupted and, not surprisingly, complained about being welcomed by bombs. After some awkward moments, the mayor continued with his prepared speech and the party moved inside. While Sophie went to meet a group of Muslim women and children on the first floor, there was a discussion in the lobby about plans for the remainder of the visit following the attempted assassination. Franz Ferdinand asked whether it was safe to go on and whether there might be other attempts. Some in his entourage suggested going direct to the governor's residence (the Konak) a short distance away across the Miljačka river. Others argued for an immediate return to Ilidže. General Potiorek accepted full responsibility for the archduke's safety. He suggested continuing with the visit to the museum, although he recommended travelling along the now deserted Appel Quay rather than through the narrow streets of the old town as originally planned. Franz Ferdinand accepted Potiorek's advice although he decided to go first to the military hospital to visit Colonel Merizzi even though he was told that Merizzi's wounds were very minor. Sophie was not due to attend the museum - that was an official function and her status prohibited her taking part. However, she refused to return to Ilidže and decided to accompany her husband to the hospital. Franz Ferdinand dictated a telegram to Franz Josef about the attempted assassination and then left the town hall.

At 10.45 the convoy of cars, in the same order as before, left the town hall for the military hospital. Harrach stood on the left-hand running board of the Archduke's car to protect him from any other assassination attempts. The cars drove at high speed along the quay but at the junction with Franz Josef Street the first two cars turned right in accordance with the original plan for the visit. Potiorek and his staff had forgotten to tell the drivers about the change of route. Sojka followed the first two cars until Potiorek ordered him to stop and go along the quay. As he was putting the car into reverse, a young man stepped forward from the crowd on the corner of Franz Josef Street. He drew a revolver and when a policeman tried to grab his hand another person in the crowd knocked the policeman over. The young man fired shots at close range (about four to five paces). Franz Ferdinand was hit and Sophie was also wounded, almost certainly by a bullet intended for Potiorek. Harrach was standing on the wrong side of the car. Sojka finally managed to reverse the car and then drove rapidly to the governor's residence.

When the car arrived at the Konak at about eleven, it was discovered that Sophie was already dead. She had been killed by a bullet that had penetrated the side of the car and then entered her right side. Franz Ferdinand had been hit on the right side of his neck and the bullet had severed his jugular vein and lodged in his spine. He was pronounced dead at about 11.15. The last rites were administered and the bodies placed in separate rooms at the Konak. At 11.30 all the church bells in Sarajevo began tolling.

## 2

### THE CONSPIRACY

WITHIN MINUTES OF the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and Sophie, the Austro-Hungarian authorities had arrested the two young men who had thrown the bomb and fired the fatal shots. Within hours, the authorities established the outlines of the conspiracy behind the assassination and arrested all but one of the main participants. They knew that those involved were Serbs and that they were linked to elements in the Serbian government in Belgrade. The statements the perpetrators made demonstrated how far their beliefs and actions had been moulded by the most virulent and extreme forms of Serb nationalism that had emerged in the late nineteenth century.

The tiny mountain kingdom of Serbia was effectively autonomous within the Ottoman empire from the mid-nineteenth century but only obtained its formal independence at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. At that Congress Austria-Hungary took over the administration of the Ottoman provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina although they remained under nominal Ottoman sovereignty. Serbia became a puppet state of Austria-Hungary. In June 1881 a secret agreement bound Serbia not to negotiate or agree a political treaty with another state without Austro-Hungarian approval and not to allow any foreign military forces on to its soil. Serbia also renounced all claims to Bosnia-Herzegovina with its large Serb population. Article 2 of the 1881 treaty stated: 'Serbia will not tolerate political, religious or other intrigues which, taking its territory as a

point of departure, might be directed against the Austro-Hungarian monarchy.' In return Austria-Hungary backed the claims of Prince Milan Obrenović to the throne and supported him when he declared himself king in 1882. As a landlocked state Serbia remained dependent on Austria-Hungary for its communications and its richer neighbour was also the main market for its agricultural products. Nine-tenths of the population of Serbia were peasants and eight out of ten people were illiterate. At the beginning of the twentieth century there were just 4,000 industrial workers in the whole country. A national bank to issue currency was only set up in 1884 and the state remained debt-ridden. Only 200,000 people were allowed to vote and political life, which was deeply corrupt, was run by the small educated elite.

Despite the obvious limitations of the Serbian state and economy it was seen by many as the first stage in the rebirth of the Serb nation. Such ideas reflected the growth of an extreme Serb nationalism which, in some respects, was similar to that found in other parts of Europe in the late nineteenth century. Increasingly, nationalism was becoming a deeply conservative force characterised by a rejection of the modern world, a belief in an illusory past and a desire for a Utopian future of unity, stability and order in a nation without internal conflict. The unique attributes of a people were defined by race, language or religion, by special sacred, religious or national sites and by an identity created over time that separated one group of people from another.

Serb nationalism was one of the most extreme of these sets of beliefs. Its origins can be traced back to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries when Vuk Karadžić created the modern Serbian language out of a dialect found in Bosnia. Dositej Obradović (who died in 1811) first asserted the idea that all the inhabitants of Serbia, Bosnia, Herzegovina, Montenegro, Dalmatia and

Croatia were racially and linguistically part of a single Serb identity even though they were separated by religion and history. The political claims of Serb nationalism were first set out in the *Načertanije* written by Ilija Garašanin, a minister in the 'government' of Alexander Karadjordjević (from the family who were the main rivals to the Obrenović dynasty) which ruled Serbia between 1842 and 1860. In the *Načertanije*, which was written in 1844 but not published until 1906, Garašanin laid out the concept of 'Greater Serbia'. It was to include the population of all the areas claimed as Serbian by Obradović, who would be brought under the rule of the Karadjordjević dynasty regardless of their claims to a separate identity as Croats, Muslims, Montenegrins, Hungarians, etc. The Serb task was to continue building the Serbian empire which had been 'interrupted' by the Ottoman conquest at the end of the fourteenth-century. Greater Serbia would include not just the areas listed above but also the historic area of Kosovo together with northern Albania so as to give Serbia access to the sea. The Serbian state would be created on the ruins of the Ottoman empire by absorbing all the 'Serbian people'. This inevitably meant, as Garašanin stated, 'Austria must always be the eternal enemy of a Serbian state'.<sup>1</sup>

One of the defining characteristics of a true Serb was the Orthodox religion. One of the leaders of that Church, Prince-Bishop Petar II Petrović-Njegoš of Montenegro, who ruled that minuscule mountain kingdom between 1830 and 1851 (the title was hereditary in the family and passed from uncle to nephew), set out the more brutal and genocidal aspects of Serb nationalism in his epic poem *Gorski Vijenac* (or 'The Mountain Wreath') published in 1847. One part of the poem set out to glorify Miloš Obilić, the legendary hero of Kosovo. The aim was to rekindle this old spirit so that all Serbs could become free. The main part of the poem was, however, a celebration of the actions of the Montenegin rulers who, on a future Christmas Eve,



decide to exterminate all Montenegrins who had converted to Islam. The poem rejoices in the slaughter and bloodshed and implies that it should continue - 'our faiths will swim in blood, the better one will not sink'. *Gorski Vijenac* was published in twenty editions between 1847 and 1913 and became the most widely read work among Serbs. It achieved a mythic status, second only to Kosovo, in the creation of Serbian nationalism.

Serbia continued to be ruled by the Obrenović family, who had set themselves up as the royal dynasty in 1882, until the early twentieth century. However, there was increasing opposition to them from extreme nationalists, particularly in the army, who backed the rival Karadjordjević family and their claim to the throne (they had led the 1806 revolt against the Ottomans and ruled Serbia intermittently in the early nineteenth century). In 1900 the Obrenović ruler, Alexander, married his mistress Draga Mašin, who had been a lady-in-waiting to his mother. This action further discredited the royal family among the extreme Serb nationalists and they staged a military coup. On the night of 11 June 1903, army units broke into the royal palace in Belgrade. It took them two hours to find the King and Queen concealed in a hidden clothes closet. The half-dressed Queen was repeatedly shot as she tried to protect her husband and after their deaths the bodies were hacked to pieces with sabres and thrown out into the courtyard.

Following the coup, the army installed Prince Petar Karadjordjević as the new king. He was married to a Montenegrin princess and was strongly supported by the Russians. The new dynasty (which remained unrecognised by most of Europe for several years) was itself strongly nationalist and also encouraged the much more extreme Serbian nationalists who had put the dynasty on the throne together with their belief in a 'Greater Serbia'. Under its new rulers Serbia was soon in conflict with Austria-

Hungary, as it tried to end its subordinate status and achieve some degree of economic and political independence. The decisive turning point came with the Austro-Hungarian decision to annex Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 and incorporate it into the Habsburg empire. This was a deliberate and direct challenge to the increasingly extreme Serbian nationalism which saw one of its main avenues of expansion as being northwards into Bosnia-Herzegovina which the nationalists had always seen as being central to any 'Great Serbia'.

The annexation led to the outbreak of an even more extreme Serb nationalism. A new organisation - *Narodna Odbrana* - was created. Its original role was semi-military - to organise volunteers to 'protect' Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, in 1909, when it was deprived of Russian diplomatic support, Serbia was forced to recognise the Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. As part of the settlement, the Serbian government was obliged to restrict the activities of *Narodna Odbrana*, which the government in Vienna rightly saw as hostile to its interests. Serbia was to ensure that in future it was devoted solely to promoting Serb culture. To a large extent this did happen, although *Narodna Odbrana* continued to maintain a network of agents across the newly incorporated Austro-Hungarian province.

The most important outcome of the restrictions on the activities of *Narodna Odbrana*, as well as the humiliation of Serbia in the 1908-9 crisis, was the creation of a highly secret organisation within the Serbian elite. The new organisation - *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* (Union or Death) - was founded on 22 May 1911 by the group of army officers who had led the 1903 coup. The first president was Colonel Ilija Radivojević who, together with another member of the central committee, Velimir Vemić, had hacked the bodies of the last Obrenović king and queen into pieces. The symbols of *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* were a skull, crossbones, knife,

bomb and poison. Its aims were the 'union' of all Serbs into the 'Greater Serbia' which it defined in Article 7 of its constitution as including Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia, Croatia and Dalmatia. It believed that its aims could best be achieved by 'the racial regeneration of the Serbian people'. However, as an organisation it preferred terrorist action over propaganda (that became the function of *Narodna Odbrana*). It aimed to exercise its influence within the Serbian government, which, it argued, should perform the same role as Piedmont had in the unification of Italy between 1858 and 1870 - it would expand to absorb the Serbs everywhere in the Balkans, including those in Bosnia-Herzegovina. (The newspaper of the organisation, first published in August 1911, was called *Pijemont*.) The members of *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* took a gruesome oath and were identified only by a number - they were not known to each other, only to the central committee of eleven. As an elite group, membership was restricted to those who had something to offer the organisation and in total it probably did not exceed 2,500.

The main driving force behind *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*, and its real controller, was the shadowy figure of Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević (nicknamed 'Apis' after the Egyptian bull god), who had joined the army in 1893. One of the leaders of the 1903 coup, he remained the accepted head of the group of younger officers who had carried out that coup. In August 1913 he was appointed head of army intelligence, a position from which he was easily able to amalgamate his official duties with those as the effective head of *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*. He stated that the title of the organisation meant that 'every member must be prepared to give his life for the unification of Serbdom'.<sup>2</sup>

The conspiracy which led to the assassination of Franz Ferdinand and his wife was deeply rooted in extremist Serb nationalism and, in particular, *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* and its members. The killings, though, were carried out by young

Serbs from Bosnia-Herzegovina. After Austria-Hungary took control of the area in 1878, there was a steady programme of public investment, primarily on roads and railways, and schools were set up. However, there were separate schools for each of the communities - Serb, Croat and Muslim. There was no real 'Bosnian' identity, except among a few Muslims, and when, after the annexation, a largely powerless parliament was set up in 1910, it was fundamentally divided. Out of a total population of about two million, 40 per cent were Serbs who were represented by the Serbian National Organisation. It claimed that Bosnia-Herzegovina was Serbian and that the 30 per cent of the population who were Muslims were really Serbs and that the Croats (about 20 per cent of the total) did not count. This last group were represented by the Croatian National Society, a clerical group organised by Archbishop Josef Stadler which stressed Catholicism as the defining element in Croat identity. They believed the Muslims were really Croats. The Muslims were given effective autonomy in 1909, and they, like the Croats, largely supported Austro-Hungarian rule.

The young man who fired the fatal shots on 28 June 1914, Gavrilo Princip, and his accomplice who threw the bomb, Nedeljko Čabrinović, were both Serbs born into this deeply fractured society. Princip was born in 1894 to a peasant family in the Grahovo valley, a remote and poor area of the Krajina in north-west Bosnia. He attended the local primary school between the ages of nine and thirteen. Then, in August 1907, he made the three-day journey to the nearest railway station to travel to Sarajevo where he refused to sleep for even one night at a Muslim inn. His family intended him to join the military school in the town, but through a chance meeting with a shopkeeper friend of the family he went to the merchants' school instead. While in Sarajevo he stayed with Stoja Ilić, a cobbler's widow, and her eighteen-year-old son Danilo (later a central figure in

the conspiracy). During the school holidays he returned home to work on the farm. In 1910 he left Sarajevo to attend high school in Tuzla but was expelled in 1912 for participating in pro-Serbian demonstrations during the Balkan War. He went to Belgrade and tried to enlist in the Serbian forces but was turned down by Major Voja Tankosić, who ran the guerrilla training centre at Cuprija in eastern Serbia. Tankosić had been a central figure in the 1903 coup and had personally ordered the murder of Queen Draga's brothers. He was a close associate of 'Apis' and a member of *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*. He was to play a crucial role in the Sarajevo conspiracy.

Nedeljko Čabrinović was born in Sarajevo in January 1895. His father ran a café and acted as a spy for the police. Čabrinović joined the merchants' school at roughly the same time as Princip but left in 1908 when he failed his exams. He worked as a typesetter, and at numerous other occupations in both Sarajevo and Belgrade where he met Princip again in 1912. Čabrinović left to work in Trieste before returning to Belgrade where he was employed in the state printing office. He hung around many of the cafés where the irregulars who had fought in the Balkan Wars congregated, talked about Serb nationalism and devised numerous plots. Princip, who was attending the First Belgrade High School and had become a fanatical Serb nationalist, could be seen in the same cafés. He knew the *Gorski Vijenac* by heart and had committed himself to a life of action and self-sacrifice in the Serb cause. In 1910 a fellow Serb nationalist, Bogdan Žerajić, had decided to kill the Emperor Franz Josef during the latter's visit to Mostar on 3 June. At the last moment he changed his mind and decided instead to kill the governor of Bosnia-Herzegovina, General Marijan Varešanin. On 15 June he fired five shots at the governor; all of them missed, but Žerajić committed suicide believing he had succeeded in his mission. In 1912 Princip, then aged seventeen, swore an oath on Žerajić's

grave in Sarajevo to 'avenge' his death. Later, he brought earth from 'free Serbia' to place on the grave.

The conspiracy to kill Franz Ferdinand was put in motion by the announcement, in March 1914, of his intended visit to Bosnia-Herzegovina. Princip had remained in touch with Danilo Ilić after he left Sarajevo to study in Belgrade. Ilić was a member of *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* and the main agent for 'Apis' in Sarajevo. He may have told Princip about the visit, but Žabrinović found out when a friend in Sarajevo sent him a newspaper cutting via the only address he knew for Žabrinović - the Café Žlatana Moruna in Belgrade. Princip and Čabrinović, together with a third Serb, Trifko Grabež, who shared lodgings with Princip, decided they should, in the Serb cause, assassinate Franz Ferdinand. There was no specific reason why they chose Franz Ferdinand - he simply represented the main enemy of Serbia and the country that blocked the attainment of a 'Greater Serbia'. It is almost certain that all three conspirators were members of *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt* and it was to that organisation that they turned for help.

The conspirators faced three problems: how to get hold of weapons, how to raise the money to travel to Sarajevo and how to cross the border carrying the weapons without being discovered by the Austro-Hungarian authorities. Princip went to see another member of *Ujedinjenje ili Smrt*, Milan Ciganović. He was a fellow Bosnian Serb who had lived in Belgrade since 1908 and had helped Tankosić run the irregular Serb fighters in the Balkan Wars. He held a sinecure in the Serbian state railway which enabled him to spend his time on various conspiratorial activities. Ciganović realised that he needed the approval of Tankosić for such an operation. Since Princip refused to deal directly with Tankosić because of his rejection in 1912, it was the third conspirator, Grabež, who went with Ciganović to see Major Tankosić. Tankosić agreed to supply the necessary weapons from the various stocks he had left over from the