

Assassination of Archduke Ferdinand

Source: <https://www.theworldwar.org/learn/about-wwi/june-28-1914>

SARAJEVO, BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA—

At around 11 a.m. today, two shots rang out from a street corner in the center of this city, mortally wounding the archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Sophie the Duchess of Hohenberg, his wife. A suspect, a 19-year old Bosnian-Serb named Gavrilo Princip, was apprehended. Princip is said to be affiliated with the Serbian nationalist society Black Hand, which reportedly has ties to the Serbian government that is dedicated to uniting Bosnia with Serbia.

An earlier assassination attempt had been made on the archduke, around 10:15 a.m., when another suspect, a Bosnian-Serb named Nedeljko Cabrinovic, hurled a bomb at the imperial motorcade as it was headed to a reception at Sarajevo City Hall.

Apparently, there were six conspirators in addition to Princip, who were all armed with bombs and pistols with each possessing a capsule of cyanide.

Security for the motorcade appeared to be limited; no soldiers were used, although approximately 70,000 are billeted just outside of the city. The policemen numbered only 120 for a procession route of four miles. Before the event, one police official stated that “security measures on June 28 will be in the hands of Providence.”

The archduke, as Inspector General of the Austro-Hungarian armed forces, was visiting Bosnia to oversee military maneuvers.

The official schedule for Archduke Franz Ferdinand and Sophie, Duchess of Hohenburg, in Sarajevo, Bosnia, June 28, 1914

9:50 a.m. - Arrive by train from Ilidže, Bosnia and proceed from the station by car to the Town Hall

10:10-10:30 a.m. - Visit the Town Hall

10:40-11:40 a.m. - Open and tour the new State Museum

Noon-2 p.m. - Lunch, then return to the station

The Black Hand

A secret society called Ujedinjenje ili Smrt, ('Union or Death') was founded in Belgrade as an outgrowth of an older Serb nationalist group: Narodna Odbrana. The Black Hand took over the older group's work of anti-Austrian propaganda within Serbia, which included sabotage, espionage and political murders abroad — especially in provinces Austria-Hungary wished to annex. The group included many radicals, government officials, professionals and army officers. When it was learned that the heir-apparent to the Austrian throne, Franz Ferdinand, was scheduled to visit Sarajevo in June of 1914, the Black Hand decided to assassinate him because of his perceived threat to Serbian independence. Three young Bosnians were recruited, trained and equipped: Gavrilo Princip, Nedjelko Cabrinovic and Trifko Grabez, who later added additional conspirators.

Germany Gives Austria-Hungary “Blank Check” Assurance

Source: [history.com/this-day-in-history/germany-gives-austria-hungary-blank-check-assurance](https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/germany-gives-austria-hungary-blank-check-assurance)

Barely a week after Franz Ferdinand’s assassination, the Austrian Foreign Ministry sent an envoy, Alexander, Graf von Hoyos, to Berlin. Hoyos carried a memorandum from the office of the Austrian foreign secretary, Leopold Berchtold, expressing the need for action in the tumultuous Balkans region, as well as a personal letter to the same effect from Emperor Franz Josef to Kaiser Wilhelm. Neither the memorandum nor the emperor’s letter specified that Austria-Hungary wanted war, but the memorandum stressed the need for immediate action, pointed to increased Serbian and Russian aggression and stated as an objective the elimination of Serbia as “a factor of political power in the Balkans.”

Austria’s ambassador to Germany passed Hoyos’ two documents to the kaiser over lunch on July 5, in Potsdam. Wilhelm was outraged by Franz Ferdinand’s murder, and felt a sense of personal loss: the two had met at the archduke’s country estate just two weeks before the assassination to discuss the situation in the Balkans. Though he initially demurred and said he needed to consult the German chancellor he eventually—when pressed by the ambassador— responded by promising Germany’s “faithful support” for Austria-Hungary in whatever action it chose to take towards Serbia, even if Russia intervened. Later that afternoon, Wilhelm assembled a crown council, attended by Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg, Foreign Secretary Arthur Zimmermann, and War Minister Erich von Falkenhayn, among others. From this meeting, a consensus emerged backing the kaiser’s decision, which Bethmann Hollweg subsequently relayed to the Austrian representatives and Hoyos triumphantly carried back to Vienna.

The kaiser’s pledge, which historians have referred to as the *carte blanche* or “blank check” assurance, marked a decisive moment in the chain of events leading up to the outbreak of the First World War. Without Germany’s backing, the conflict in the Balkans might have remained localized. With Germany promising to support Austria-Hungary’s punitive actions towards Serbia, even at the cost of war with Russia, whose own powerful allies included France and Great Britain, the possible Balkan War threatened to explode into a general European one.

The 10 Austrian Demands and the Serbian Responses

Source: <https://teachdemocracy.org/more-standards-aligned-lessons/common-core/did-the-serbian-government-meet-the-austrian-demands>

A few weeks after the murder of Archduke Ferdinand, the Austro-Hungarian government presented Serbia with 10 demands and gave it 48 hours to comply with them.

Austrian Demands	Serbian Response to Demands
1. Suppress every publication that incites hatred and contempt of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and the general tendency directed against the territorial integrity of the latter.	The government will introduce at the first regular meeting of the National Assembly a law severely punishing the press if it incites hatred and contempt of the Monarchy as well as any publication whose general tendency is directed against the territorial integrity of Austria-Hungary. It promises in the upcoming revision of the Constitution to introduce in Article XXII of the Constitution an amendment so that the above publications can be confiscated, which is currently impossible under Article XII of the Constitution.
2. Immediately dissolve the association Narodna Odbrana, confiscate all its propaganda, and intervene in the same manner against other clubs and associations in Serbia that produce propaganda against Austria-Hungary; the Serbian Government must take the necessary measures to ensure that the dissolved associations not continue about their business in a different name or form.	The government has no evidence — and the note of Royal Imperial Government does not contain any evidence either — that the society Narodna Odbrana and similar societies or their members have committed any criminal acts. Nevertheless, the Serbian Government will accept the request of the Royal Imperial Government and dissolve the society Narodna Odbrana and any other society that would act against Austria-Hungary.
3. Eliminate without delay from public instruction in Serbia, both from teachers and teaching aids, everything that serves or could serve to nourish propaganda against Austria-Hungary.	The Serbian Government promises to eliminate without delay from public instruction in Serbia all that is or might be propaganda directed against Austria-Hungary, when the Royal Imperial Government provides evidence of this propaganda.
4. Remove from the military and civil service all officers who are guilty of carrying out propaganda against Austria-Hungary, whose names Austria-Hungary reserves the right to notify the Serbian Government when presenting the material evidence to Serbia.	The Serbian Government will dismiss those military and civil service officers proven guilty of acts directed against the territorial integrity of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, and it expects that the Royal Imperial Government communicate to it for the purpose of beginning the investigation the names and facts about these officers.
5. Agree to cooperate in Serbia with organs of the Royal Imperial Government in suppressing the subversive movement aimed against the territorial integrity of the monarchy.	The Serbian Government does not understand the meaning and scope of the demand of the Royal Imperial Government that Serbia agree to accept on its territory the collaboration of government organs of the Royal Imperial Government, but it will cooperate as long as it does not run counter to international law, criminal procedure, and good neighborly relations.

6. Initiate a judicial inquiry against those participating in the conspiracy of June 28 who are on Serbian territory; delegated institutions from the Royal Imperial Government will participate in these proceedings.	The Serbian Government considers it its duty to open an investigation against all those persons who may have been involved in the conspiracy of June 28 and who are on its territory. As for the Austro-Hungarian authorities participation in this investigation, the Serbian Government cannot accept it, because it would violate the Constitution and the law on criminal procedure. Yet in some cases papers on the results of the investigation might be given to Austro- Hungarian officials.
7. Arrest right away Major Vojislav Tankosic and a certain Milan Ciganovic, a Serbian state employee, who have been compromised by the results of the investigation.	On the night it received the note, the Serbian Government ordered the arrest of Major Vojislav Tankosic. As for Milan Ciganovic, who is a subject of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and who until June 15 was employed on the railways, it has not yet found him and a war- rant has been issued against him. The Royal Imperial Government is asked to supply as soon as possible the grounds for suspicion and any evidence of guilt collected so far by the investigation at Sarajevo.
8. Prevent by effective measures the participation of Serbian authorities in the smuggling of weapons and explosives across the border; dismiss from the service and punish severely those members of the Frontier Service of Schabatz and Losnitza who helped the authors of the crime of Sarajevo cross over the border.	The Serbian Government will strengthen and extend measures taken to prevent illicit trafficking in arms and explosives across the border. Obviously it will proceed at once and punish severely those officials on the Schabatz- Losnitza border who violated their duty and allowed the perpetrators of the crime to cross the border.
9. Explain to the Royal Imperial Government the unjustifiable utterances of high Serbian functionaries in Serbia and abroad, who despite their official position, did not hesitate to express their hostility toward Austria-Hungary since the assassination on 28 June.	The Serbian Government is ready to explain the expressions that its officials in Serbia and abroad made in interviews after the outrage and which, according to the assertion of the Royal Imperial Government, were hostile to the Monarchy. As soon as the Royal Imperial Government shows where those expressions were made and proves they were made in fact by the functionaries, the Serbian Government will take care to gather evidence and prosecute them.
10. Without delay, inform the Royal Imperial Government of the execution of the foregoing points.	The Serbian Government shall inform the Royal Imperial Government of the implementation of measures that have not already been done as soon as the measures have been ordered and executed.

Austria-Hungary Declares War on Serbia

Source: [history.com/this-day-in-history/austria-hungary-declares-war-on-serbia](https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/austria-hungary-declares-war-on-serbia)

Threatened by Serbian ambition in the tumultuous Balkans region of Europe, Austria-Hungary determined that the proper response to the assassinations was to prepare for a possible military invasion of Serbia. After securing the unconditional support of its powerful ally, Germany, Austria-Hungary presented Serbia with a rigid ultimatum on July 23, 1914, demanding, among other things, that all anti-Austrian propaganda within Serbia be suppressed, and that Austria-Hungary be allowed to conduct its own investigation into the archduke's killing. Though Serbia effectively accepted all of Austria's demands except for one, the Austrian government broke diplomatic relations with the other country on July 25 and went ahead with military preparedness measures. Meanwhile, alerted to the impending crisis, Russia—Serbia's own mighty supporter in the Balkans—began its own initial steps towards military mobilization against Austria.

In the days following the Austrian break in relations with Serbia, the rest of Europe looked on with trepidation, fearing the imminent outbreak of a Balkans conflict that, if entered into by Russia, threatened to explode into a general European war. The British Foreign Office lobbied its counterparts in Berlin, Paris and Rome with the idea of an international convention aimed at moderating the conflict; the German government, however, was set against this notion, and advised Vienna to go ahead with its plans.

On July 28, 1914, after a decision reached conclusively the day before in response to pressure from Germany for quick action—apart from Kaiser Wilhelm II, who by some accounts still saw the possibility of a peaceful diplomatic resolution to the conflict, but was outmaneuvered by the more hawkish military and governmental leadership of Germany—Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. In response, Russia formally ordered mobilization along its common front with the Austro-Hungarian Empire. That night, Austrian artillery divisions initiated a brief, ineffectual bombardment of Belgrade across the Danube River.

On August 1, after its demands for Russia to halt mobilization met with defiance, Germany declared war on Russia. Russia's ally, France, ordered its own general mobilization

that same day, and on August 3, France and Germany declared war on each other. The German army's planned invasion of neutral Belgium, announced on August 4, prompted Britain to declare war on Germany. Thus, in the summer of 1914, the major powers in Europe flung themselves headlong into the First World War.

Kaiser Wilhelm and Czar Nicholas Exchange Telegrams

Source: [history.com/this-day-in-history/kaiser-wilhelm-of-germany-and-czar-nicholas-of-russia-exchange-telegrams](https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/kaiser-wilhelm-of-germany-and-czar-nicholas-of-russia-exchange-telegrams)

In the early hours of July 29, 1914, Czar Nicholas II of Russia and his first cousin, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany, begin a frantic exchange of telegrams regarding the newly erupted war in the Balkan region and the possibility of its escalation into a general European war.

“In this serious moment, I appeal to you to help me,” Czar Nicholas wrote to the kaiser. “An ignoble war has been declared to a weak country. The indignation in Russia shared fully by me is enormous. I foresee that very soon I shall be overwhelmed by the pressure forced upon me and be forced to take extreme measures which will lead to war.” This message crossed with one from Wilhelm to Nicholas expressing concern about the effect of Austria’s declaration in Russia and urging calm and consideration as a response.

After receiving the czar’s telegram, Wilhelm cabled back: “I...share your wish that peace should be maintained. But...I cannot consider Austria’s action against Serbia an ‘ignoble’ war. Austria knows by experience that Serbian promises on paper are wholly unreliable. I understand its action must be judged as trending to get full guarantee that the Serbian promises shall become real facts...I therefore suggest that it would be quite possible for Russia to remain a spectator of the Austro-Serbian conflict without involving Europe in the most horrible war she ever witnessed.”

The telegram exchange continued over the next few days, as the two men spoke of their desire to preserve peace, even as their respective countries continued mobilizing for war. On July 30, the kaiser wrote to Nicholas: “I have gone to the utmost limits of the possible in my efforts to save peace....Even now, you can still save the peace of Europe by stopping your military measures.” The following day, Nicholas replied: “It is technically impossible to stop our military preparations which were obligatory owing to Austria’s mobilization. We are far from wishing for war. As long as the negotiations with Austria on Serbia’s account are taking place my troops shall not make any provocative action. I give you my solemn word for this.” But by that time things had gone too far: Emperor Franz Josef had rejected the kaiser’s mediation

offer, saying it came too late, as Russia had already mobilized and Austrian troops were already marching on Serbia.

The German ambassador to Russia delivered an ultimatum that night—halt the mobilization within 12 hours, or Germany would begin its own mobilization, a step that would logically proceed to war. By four o'clock in the afternoon of August 1, in Berlin, no reply had come from Russia. At a meeting with Germany's civilian and military leaders Kaiser Wilhelm agreed to sign the mobilization orders.

That same day, in his last contribution to what were dubbed the "Willy-Nicky" telegrams, Czar Nicholas pressed the kaiser for assurance that his mobilization did not definitely mean war. Wilhelm's response was dismissive. "I yesterday pointed out to your government the way by which alone war may be avoided....I have...been obliged to mobilize my army. Immediate affirmative clear and unmistakable answer from your government is the only way to avoid endless misery. Until I have received this answer alas, I am unable to discuss the subject of your telegram. As a matter of fact I must request you to immediately order your troops on no account to commit the slightest act of trespassing over our frontiers." Germany declared war on Russia that same day.

Russian Mobilization

Source: L.C.F. Turner, "The Russian Mobilization in 1914", *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Jan. 1968), p. 65 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/259967>)

Recent publications on July 1914 have concentrated on German policy and the role of Bethmann Hollweg in the crisis. Although important new evidence has emerged during the controversy on these questions, it can be argued that historians are in danger of concentrating too exclusively on Germany and of treating the policies of Russia and France as mere reactions to decisions taken in Berlin and Vienna. In particular the work of Fritz Fischer's disciple, Imanuel Geiss, seems to be influenced too exclusively by this approach.¹

Most authorities take the view that whatever the degree of responsibility of the various powers for the catastrophe of 1914, a major conflict was rendered inevitable by the Russian order for general mobilization finally issued on the evening of 30 July. J.M.K. Vyvyan says:

The Russian general mobilization was the decisive calamity. This is true even given the excuse that it was merely forestalling German action of the same kind. It is not certain that the Russian partial mobilization was in fact inducing a German counter move in spite of Moltke's telegrams to Conrad. ... There was no question in 1914 but that general mobilization by a great power must be followed by hostilities. The position was too competitive for the professionals to entertain the politicians' pretense that the Russian army could stay inactive on a war footing indefinitely. The German government's immediate declaration of a state of war emergency (Kriegsgefahrzustand) on 31 July, followed by their ultimatum demanding the cessation of Russian military preparations, constituted only technically the initiative in aggression.²

¹I. Geiss, *Julihrise und Kriegsausbruch 1914*, 2 vols. (Hanover, 1963-4); *Juli 1914* (Munich, 1965); 'Le déclenchement de la première guerre mondiale', *Revue Historique*, 1964, 415-26; 'The Outbreak of the First World War and German War Aims', *Journal of Contemporary History*, July 1966, 75-91.

²*New Cambridge Modern History*, XII, *The Era of Violence 1898-1945* (Cambridge, 1960), 354.