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## WORLD WAR I BEGINS

World War I was started by a teenager with a pistol. He was aided by a chauffeur who got lost and took the wrong turning. The war would probably have started at sometime over some issue. It just so happens that the sparking point was an assassination on June 28 1914.

Both the assassin and the chauffer quickly disappeared from history. Countries were too busy fighting the war to worry about how it got started.

Gavrilo Princip, a Bosnian Serb, killed the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife Sophie. The assassination took place in Sarajevo, the sleepy capital of the Austro-Hungarian province of Bosnia.

Princip belonged to the Young Bosnian Society, a group of students, workers, peasants, Croats, Moslems and intellectuals, who wanted to free the Slavic populations from Austro-Hungarian control. This group was part of a larger movement of peoples in the Balkans who wanted to free of Austro-Hungarian control.

The 20th Century began - and ended - with wars in the Balkans. There had been struggles to gain control over the Balkans – the crossroads of Eastern Europe – for centuries. The Turkish Empire was in decline and countries were trying to get pieces of it.

A century ago, the Russians were trying to expand their influence into the west via the Balkans. The Russians supported the independent country of Serbia and the nationalist movements in the rest of the Balkans. It wanted to destabilize the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

The Germans had become an ally of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, based in Vienna, in 1879 and so it opposed Russia. France supported Russia. It was fearful of Germany's growing might and thought that its 1894 military pact with Russia might discourage German aggression because Germany would not want to fight a war on two fronts.

Therefore the European continent was highly inflammable. It only required a spark to trigger off the long-awaited showdown.

The spark was so bizarre that if it were the basis of a novel no one would believe it. Fact is stranger than fiction.

June 28 is a special day for Serbs. It is the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo when six centuries ago the Serbs lost their empire to the Turkish empire. That shame was erased in 1912 by the Serbian victory against the Turks at Kumanovo. Other parts of the Balkans remained under foreign control but the Serbs were encouraged by their victory to hope that the Austro-Hungarians could also be removed.

Two years later tensions were still running high. The Archduke must have known that he was hated throughout the Balkans. But he scheduled military training operations to be conducted just before June 28 and said that he would attend them.

It was as if he were saying that although the Serbs had got rid of the Turkish Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire still controlled other Slavs in the Balkans. The Serbian Government warned him not to go to the Balkans because of the anger against the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

But he not only ignored that warning – he also deliberately added to his own insecurity. He failed to tell the authorities when and where he would be going. No one in charge of security knew his itinerary. When his father visited Sarajevo seven years earlier all strangers had been removed from the town, the streets were lined with troops and detectives patrolled the crowds. This time the royal budget did not allow bodyguards and the military who would normally have done the protection work were still away in the training area.

On June 28 the Archduke, his wife and other dignitaries wanted a change of a pace: a series of official visits in Sarajevo.

There were two assassination attempts. On the morning of June 28 seven Serbian nationalists mingled with the crowd to greet the Archduke and his wife. They carried bombs and pistols.

One of his Princip's conspirators, named Cabrinovic, threw a bomb that hit the folded back hood of the royal car as it left the town hall and it then rolled off onto the road. Two people from the royal entourage were slightly injured and 16 spectators were hurt by shrapnel.

The potential assassins escaped detection in all the chaos. Having failed, they dispersed. Only Princip stayed in the area.

The Archduke returned to the town hall. He should have waited for some of his troops to be brought from the training area into the city to provide protection. Instead he decided to visit the victims in the hospital. Heading down the road, the driver turned right rather than left and got lost in the town.

Meanwhile, Gavrilo Princip was sitting on the pavement. He was very unhappy at the failure of the assassination attempt and was working out what to do next. To his amazement, the Archduke's car drove past him at 10 miles per hour. The chauffeur was lost and the Archduke was

giving instructions on which route the car should follow. None in the car knew Sarajevo well. The car stopped to work out the route.

Princip got to his feet and walked over to the car. He was a bad shot and so he lent on the side of the car to get a steady hand, and fired virtually point blank at the Archduke. The first shot hit the Archduke. Princip fired again and Sophie threw herself across the car to deflect the second bullet.

Sophie died instantly. The Archduke died about 15 minutes later.

The assassination gave Austria-Hungary the excuse it needed to bring the troublesome Serbia into line. It held Serbia responsible for the assassination. On July 28 it declared war on Serbia. Russia mobilized to protect Serbia. Germany mobilized in response to Russia and declared war on August 1. The slide to world war was underway.

Gavrilo Princip was not acting on behalf of the Serbian Government. He was just a nationalist working for his own ends. He was a misfit: undernourished, tubercular and unfit for military service.

Having shot the Archduke and Sophie he tried to turn the gun on himself but he was caught and taken into custody. He could not be executed because he was too young (he was born in 1895). He was confined to a military hospital (owing to his poor health) and then kept in a foul little cell. He died forgotten in April 1918, just before the end of the war.

The chauffeur who took the wrong turning disappeared even quicker from the history books. In 1997, British journalist John Dodd – reflecting on all the publicity given that year to the poor driving of Princess Diana’s chauffeur – tried to piece together what happened to the Archduke’s chauffeur.

Despite all his research little information could be located. Leopold Lojka was born in 1886. He was a former soldier with a record for bravery. He survived the war and in 1918 he became a citizen of the new republic of Czechoslovakia (created from some of the remnants of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). He ran a pub in Znojmo (Znalm) but it failed. He moved to Brno, where he opened a new one. He died there in 1926. Graves in that part of the country are quickly recycled and so there are no traces of his.

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