**Assassinations in Sarajevo**

In June 1914 the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, decided to visit Sarajevo to inspect the army. Sarajevo was the capital of Bosnia, in the very south-east corner of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and some people there wanted to be independent from Austria and set up their own state. Franz Ferdinand had been warned that his visit could provoke trouble, but he ignored this advice. He wanted to demonstrate his family’s control of Sarajevo. To have stopped the tour would have been seen as a sign of weakness. He arrived in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914 and was met at the railway station, to be taken on to the **City Hall** for a reception and speeches.

Seven members of the **Black Hand** (a secret military society aiming to unite all territories with a South Slavic majority)lined his route. One of the men, **Nedjelko Cabrinovic**, threw a **hand-grenade** at the Archduke's car. The driver took evasive action and sped away. The grenade bounced off the back of the Archduke's car and rolled underneath the next car, exploding seconds later; two of its occupants were severely wounded. Following the reception the Archduke decided to visit those injured by the grenade at the city hospital. It was decided that the motorcade should take an alternate route to the hospital, avoiding the city centre altogether. However, the driver of Ferdinand's car was not informed of this. Turning into **Franz Josef Street** General Potiorek, who was a passenger in Ferdinand's car, told the driver to take the alternative route. The driver slowed the car and began to reverse out of the street. **Gavrilo Princip** who happened to be in Franz Joseph Street, buying a **sandwich** at a cafe, seized his opportunity. He took aim at Ferdinand from a distance of **five feet**. His bullets struck the Archduke in the neck and his wife, Sophie, who was travelling with him, in the abdomen. They both died.

**The July Crisis**

**Austria** blamed **Serbia** for the assassinations. Serbia was near to Bosnia, it had encouraged the Black Hand and given them weapons. Austria decided that Serbia must be punished and planned to invade her. Serbia called on her old friend **Russia** to help. Serbia would have been easy for Austria to crush, but Russia had a huge army and Austria would not have coped with an Austro-Russian war. Austria called on **Germany** for help. The German Government agreed to this and their response upset the French government. Unknown to anybody other than the German Government, the German Army had already created a plan to defeat **France,** in 6 weeks, before fighting Russia. This plan involved an attack on France via **Belgium**. **Britain** had given Belgium a guarantee in 1839 that if anybody attacked her, Britain would go to war against that attacker.

During July 1914 much diplomacy took place to try and avert a war, see timeline on the table, but these efforts failed for several reasons. Some people in the Austro-Hungarian Government had wanted to strike at Serbia anyway so the assassinations simply gave them a good excuse. A Franco-Russian Military Convention of 1892 meant they would help each other if either found itself at war with Germany or Austria-Hungary. Britain was in effect (because of a number of agreements, although not technically), bound to aid France should she be at war with Germany, although Germany hoped Britain would stay out of the war as they had no obvious direct quarrel with either Austria-Hungary or Germany. However, many in Britain did not like Germany’s recent policy of expanding its navy and empire, and wanted to protect Belgium as they had promised.

TIMELINE (FOR TABLE).

28 June 1914; The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife in Sarajevo in Bosnia.

5-6 July; Austro-Hungarian envoy Count Hoyos, travels to Berlin to establish level of German support for Austrian action against Serbia. Kaiser Wilhelm II and Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg encourage Austrian action, and Germany issues ‘blank cheque’ promising unconditional support to their ally.

7 July; Austro-Hungarian Ministerial Council decides on (deliberately unacceptable) ultimatum to Serbia to initiate military action, or Serbia’s humiliation. Delay delivery to coincide with end of French state visit to Russia, and to give army chance to get ready.

20-23 July; French state visit to Russia (French President and Prime Minister absent from France from 16th to 29th July). The military alliance between the French Third Republic and the Russian Empire ran from 1892 to 1917.

23 July; Austria issues ultimatum to Serbia, giving Serbia 48 hours to reply.

25 July; Serbia replies to the ultimatum, surprisingly meeting almost all demands. Nonetheless, Austria-Hungary breaks off diplomatic relations with Serbia.

26 July; Britain proposes mediation conference; ignored by Berlin and Vienna. Partial mobilisation of four Russian districts.

28 July; Austria-Hungary declares war on Serbia.

30 July; Tsar Nicholas II authorizes Russian general mobilization for the next day.

31 July: Germany sends ultimatum to Russia and France.

1 August; Germany declares war on Russia. France and Germany begin general mobilisation.

2 August; German troops invade Luxembourg as part of its deployment plan (‘Schlieffen Plan’). Germany issues ultimatum to Belgium. British cabinet approves protection of French coast and of Belgian neutrality.

3 August; German troops invade Belgium; Germany’s declaration of war on France. Italy decision to stay neutral announced.

4 August; Britain declares war on Germany.

6 August; Austria-Hungary declares war on Russia.

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