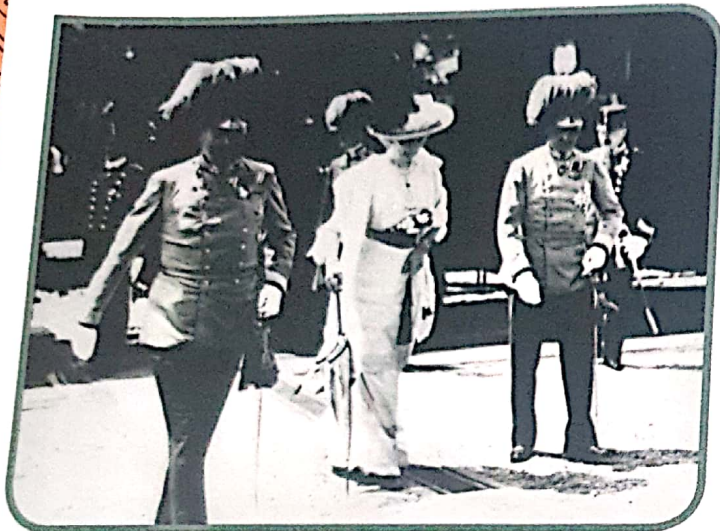


Murder in Sarajevo!

Learning objectives

- Learn about the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914.
- Understand how the murders led to the First World War.



Source A: Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Countess Sophie, arrive at Sarajevo train station.

Bosnian Serbs were causing a lot of problems for Austria-Hungary. The authorities in the empire decided the rebellious Serbs needed showing who was in charge. It was decided that Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, would pay a state visit to Bosnia. As head of the army, he would first watch army displays and then go to the capital, Sarajevo, where city officials would welcome him and his wife. The date chosen was 28 June, the national day of the Serbian people. It was also the wedding anniversary of Ferdinand and Sophie, his wife. The visit was given a lot of publicity. It was going to be a great occasion.

Enter the Black Hand

Thanks to the publicity, the Black Hand knew exactly where Ferdinand would be, and when. To kill the heir to the throne would strike a terrible blow to the empire they hated. On the morning of 28 June, six would-be assassins were in position along the route Ferdinand's official car was going to take. They were armed with bombs, pistols, ammunition and suicide pills. One of them was bound to be lucky, surely?

The route to murder: failure

The royal party travelled by train to Sarajevo. There they were met by an official welcoming party, headed by the governor of Bosnia.

The royal party were then driven in an open-top car through cheering crowds to the town hall. Lurking in the crowds were the six members of the Black Hand, intent on murder. However, when the cars passed two members, they did nothing: one couldn't get his gun out in time and the other felt sorry for Sophie and went home. Then the cars drew level with Nedeljko Cabrinovic, who immediately threw his bomb at Franz Ferdinand. The bomb bounced off the royal car and exploded under the car behind, wounding several people. The undamaged cars sped off to the town hall.

Did you know?

When Cabrinovic saw that his bomb had missed its target, he swallowed his suicide pill. But the pill was out of date and didn't work. It only made him sick. He then tried to drown himself by jumping into the Miljacka river, but it was only 10 cm deep. The police dragged Cabrinovic out and arrested him, but not before the crowd had given him a severe beating.



The route to murder: success!

Franz Ferdinand was furious. His day had been ruined. He decided to abandon plans for the rest of the day. He would go home, calling in at Sarajevo hospital to visit the wounded on his way back to the station.

The route back to the station had to be changed and the drivers took a wrong turn. They were forced to stop and reverse just next to where one of the Black Hand assassins, Gavrilo Princip, was standing. Princip could hardly believe his luck. Reacting quickly, he pulled out his pistol and fired twice into the royal car. One bullet hit Ferdinand in the throat and another hit Sophie in the stomach. With blood pouring from their wounds, they were driven at high speed to the Bosnian governor's house. Sophie was dead on arrival and Franz Ferdinand died soon after.



Source B: A painting of the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on 28 June 1914. The picture was published in a French magazine the following month.

Riots and revenge

Anti-Serb riots broke out across the Austro-Hungarian Empire as news of the assassination spread. Some of the worst were in Sarajevo. Serbs were killed and over 1,000 of their houses, shops, offices and schools were either raided or wrecked.



Source C: Anti-Serb riots in Sarajevo, 29 June 1914.

Did you know?

Gavrilo Princip's suicide pill didn't work either and the police arrested him. He was tried, found guilty and sent to prison for 20 years. He couldn't be hanged because he was under the age of 20 at the time of the crime. He died in prison from tuberculosis in 1918.

Your turn!

- 1 Imagine you are in charge of the Black Hand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914. Write a report to your boss, Apis, explaining what happened. Don't just describe events – Apis wants an explanation!
- 2 You have read a narrative account of events in Sarajevo. Now rewrite the account from the point of view of Oskar Potiorek, the governor of Bosnia.

Countdown to war

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand could have resulted in just rioting. It could have led to just another Balkan war. But instead it ended in the worst war the world had ever seen, involving countries far beyond Europe, killing and injuring millions. How could this have happened?

Figure 2.10 shows how, by 4 August 1914, countries of the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente were at war with each other. The involvement of Great Britain, with its worldwide empire, turned what could have been a European war into a world war.

Timeline

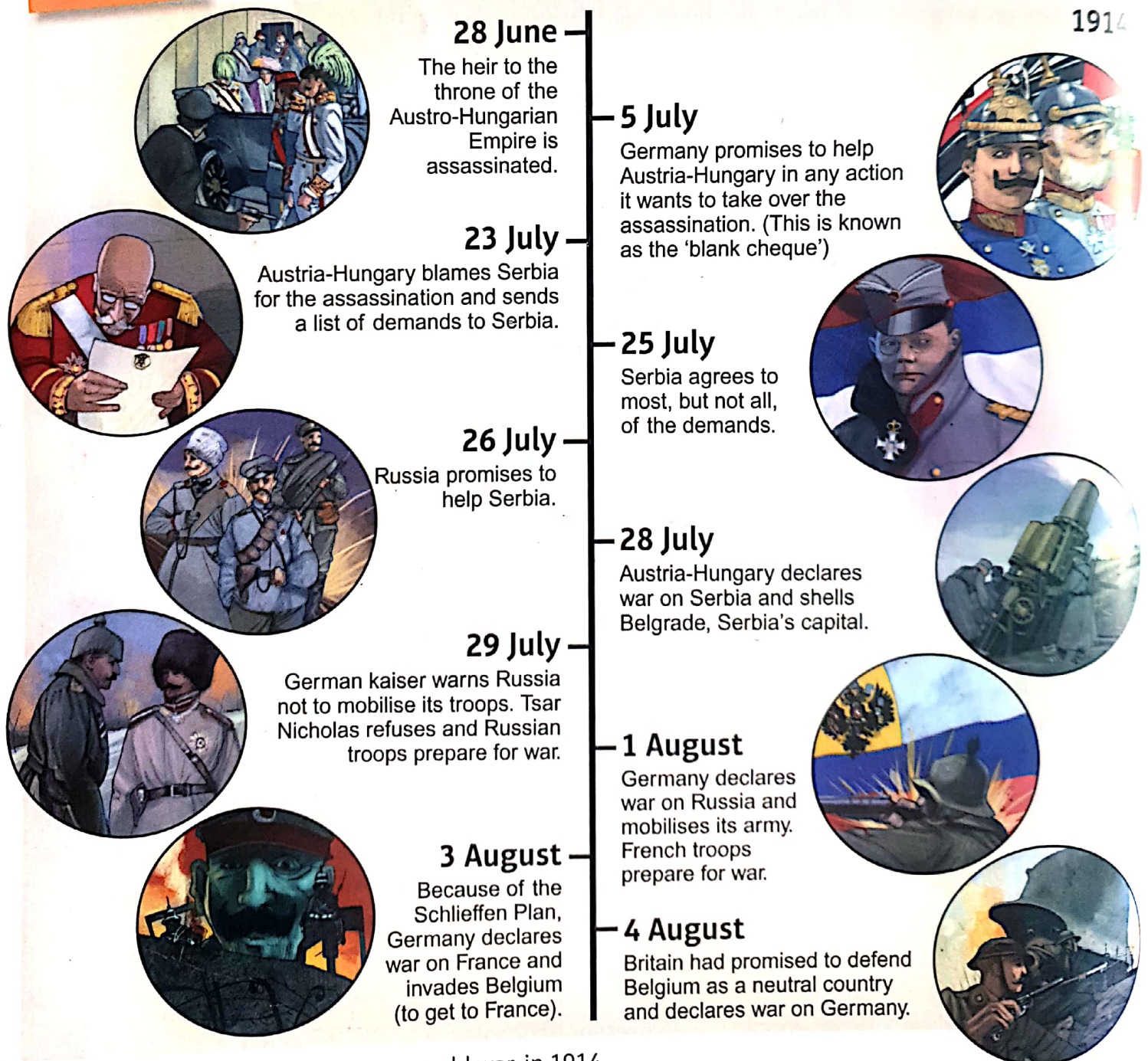


Figure 2.10: From assassination to world war, in 1914.



Who was to blame for starting the First World War?

Historians have argued for many years about who was to blame for starting the First World War. These are three interpretations discussing different possible arguments.

Interpretation 1: From Gordon Corrigan, *Mud, Blood and Poppycock*, published in 2003. Corrigan is a military historian.

All the evidence – and there is much – points to Imperial Germany preparing for a European war of aggression against France and Russia; and, while there were hopes that Britain might remain neutral, against her too if need be.




Interpretation 2: From an article written by historian A.J.P Taylor, *The entente that ended in slaughter*, published in the *Guardian* newspaper on 4 August 1984.

[The system of] alliances dragged the Powers into wars which did not concern them. They were supposed to make for peace, [but] they made for war. They were supposed to make the Powers secure [but] they dragged them into danger.

Interpretation 3: From historian Tony Howarth, *Twentieth Century History: the world since 1900*, published in 1979.

[There was] the nationalism of great powers who wanted to extend their boundaries and their influence to make themselves even more powerful; and the nationalism of groups of peoples who wanted to set up their own independent national homelands and states. In the early twentieth century nationalism dragged Europe down the path to disaster.

Your turn!

-  1 Look at Figure 2.10. In your opinion, was there a point (or points) at which the advance to war could have been stopped? Discuss this in your group.
-  2 Read the three interpretations above.
 -  a How do they differ as to who was to blame for starting the war?
 - b How could you test each interpretation to see which was most likely to be correct?

Checkpoint

- 1 Who was murdered in June 1914 and who did it?
- 2 What did Austria-Hungary do as a result of the murder?
- 3 Which country backed Austria-Hungary?
- 4 How did (a) Russia and (b) France get involved?

Why did the First World War start in 1914?

- 1 Some students are arguing about what caused the First World War. This is part of their discussion:
Charlie: It's obvious. If Franz Ferdinand hadn't been assassinated, the war wouldn't have happened.
Mel: The alliance system was the cause. Europe was divided into two armed camps and something would have triggered the outbreak of war.
Chris: No – it was empires. Germany wanted one, and Britain and France wouldn't let that happen.
 Beginning with the statement 'This was because...', write 2–3 sentences for each student, showing how they could have continued their argument.
- 2 Write a paragraph explaining why you think the First World War started in 1914. Remember to support what you are saying with evidence.