

# Assassination of Archduke Ferdinand

The event that is generally considered the “cause” of World War I was the assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Ferdinand was the heir to the throne of Austria-Hungary. His uncle was the emperor.

The southern part of Austria-Hungary was an area called Bosnia. Many Bosnian nationalists wanted to be their own country, independent of Austria-Hungary. Serbia, a neighboring country, wanted Bosnia to be its own country too. Both Austria-Hungary and Serbia had powerful allies.



When Archduke Ferdinand traveled to Sarajevo, some of the Bosnian nationalists felt that this was their opportunity to make a move for freedom. With the help of Serbia, they hired assassins, who were part of a terrorist group called the Black Hand, to kill Ferdinand.

On June 28th, 1914, assassins were positioned along the road where the Archduke’s motorcade would be traveling. The first attempt on his life was a bomb thrown into the car the Archduke and his wife were traveling in. The bomb bounced off the car and landed underneath the car behind the Archduke’s, and the Archduke was able to make it safely to the Town Hall. But the assassins kept trying. On their way back from the Town Hall, the motorcade turned the wrong way. When they tried to back up, an assassin who was standing next to the Archduke’s car began shooting. Both Ferdinand and his wife were hit. The crowd pounced on the assassin, who was arrested. But both the Archduke and his wife died before they could receive medical help.

The government of Austria-Hungary saw the attack as a declaration of war. Their harsh demands on Serbia were refused. Serbia’s ally, Russia, began positioning themselves to come to Serbia’s aid. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia. Austria-Hungary’s ally, Germany, declared war on Russia. France stepped up to help its ally Russia, and Germany then declared war on France. World War I had begun.