

## World War I: 1914-2014

## The Lighting Of The Powderkeg

100 Years Later,  
Recalling The Crucible  
Called World War I

BY HENRY CHU  
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LONDON — The shot that changed the world rang out on a sunny summer's morning in Southeastern Europe. No one knew then that the assassin's bullet would spell the death not just of an Austrian aristocrat but the entire global order, with four empires and millions of lives lost in a conflict on a scale never before seen.

Exactly 100 years ago Saturday, Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian empire, and his wife, Sophie, were shot at close range by a young Serbian nationalist on the streets of Sarajevo.

The assassination set off a chain reaction that, barely a month later, culminated in a continent at war.

What many thought would be a brief, even heroic, conflict metastasized into a four-year nightmare that engulfed dozens more nations, including the United States, redrew the map of Europe and introduced the world to new horrors such as chemical weapons and shell shock. A second, even deadlier global catastrophe, which had its seeds in the first, struck within a generation.

For many modern-day Europeans, the conflict is emblematic of the madness of war.

In such a cataclysm there are no winners, many say, and it's fruitless to seek logic, meaning or justification in soldiers asphyxiating in gas attacks, or waves of men charging over the tops of trenches only to be mowed down by machine-gun fire within seconds.

This week, European leaders gathered to remember those sacrifices at a solemn ceremony in Ypres, Belgium, where countless soldiers fell on the muddy fields of Flanders.

"This commemoration is not about the end of the war or any battle or victory," said Herman Van Rompuy, a former Belgian prime minister. "It is about how it could start, about the mindless march to the abyss, about the sleepwalking — above all, about the millions who were killed on all sides, on all fronts."

Van Rompuy is now president of the council of the 28-nation European Union, an expression of regional comity and solidarity that could scarcely have been imagined 100 years ago.

The union is far from perfect: Leaders bickered

publicly this week over who ought to be handed one of the EU's plum jobs, and recent elections to the European Parliament produced a crop of winners from parties avowedly hostile to further integration. But in 2012, the EU was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in recognition of how far Europe has put its blood-soaked past behind it.

In another sign of healing divisions, French President Francois Hollande will dedicate a memorial in November inscribed with the names of all 600,000 troops who perished in northern France during World War I, regardless of which side they fought on.

That seems to mirror a new tendency to gloss over the question of who was to blame for the war — many label Germany the chief aggressor — and focus instead on what happened, said Anika Mombauer, a historian at Britain's Open University. Such an approach sits uneasily with her.

"Given the countless victims the war claimed, the unimaginable horrors that were inflicted all over the world, it is fair and justified to pose the question of who was ultimately responsible for this," she said. "Of course, we have not managed to agree on an answer in a hundred years, and doubtless we never will."

"The crisis of 1914 shows us that it is dangerous to be too complacent, to assume that bluff will work and that the other side will not ultimately be prepared to go to war," Mombauer said. "The decision-makers of Austria-Hungary and Germany deliberately took the risk that the crisis they provoked might escalate into a full-scale war. The other governments were prepared to call their bluff."

The Great War also underscored the rise of the United States and the dawn of an American century. The principle of self-determination of nations took root, which continues to be tested. Three months from now, Scotland will vote on independence from Britain; Catalonia seeks a similar referendum on secession from Spain.

The idea of bringing nations together in an international talking-shop aimed at keeping the peace also crystallized in the ashes of World War I.

In some ways, the Great War was a family affair: King George V of Britain, Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and Czar Nicholas II of Russia were cousins.

June 28, 1914 • Assassination of Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo, Bosnia



## Assassination of Austrian noble lights the fuse

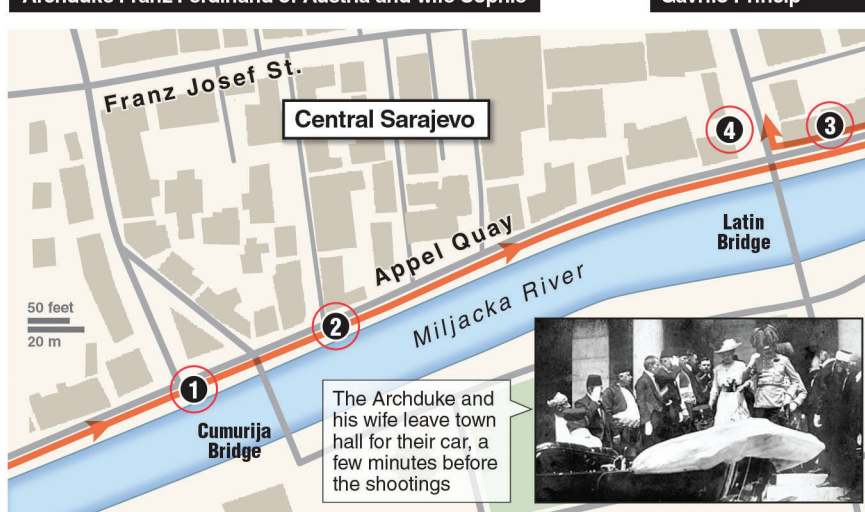
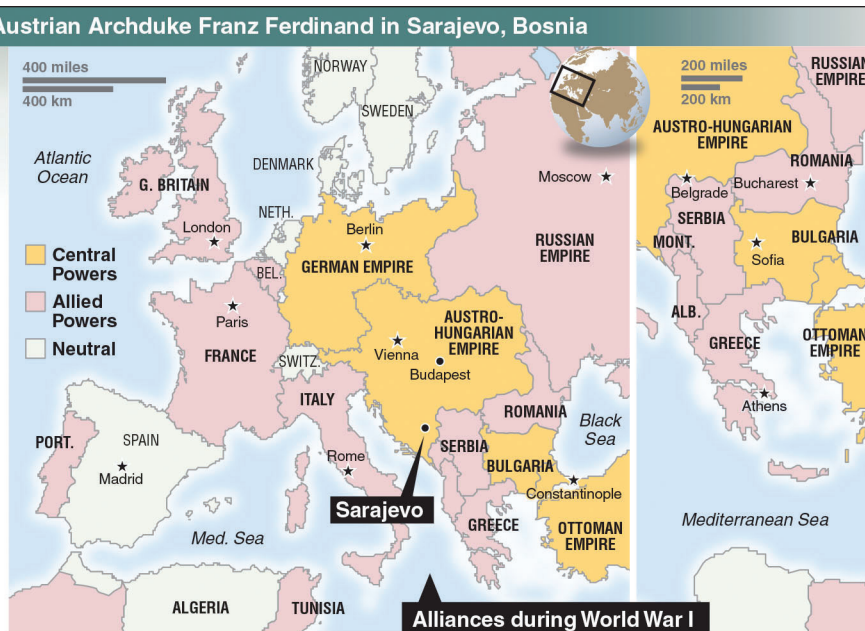
In 1914, Europe's geography was very different from its familiar, modern form. The continent was dominated by the Great Powers: Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire.

The assassination in Sarajevo was committed by Serbian nationalists outraged over Austria-Hungary's control of several southern Slavic territories within their empire, and particularly its 1908 annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

But because of a complex series of international alliances — Britain allied with France and Russia and Germany with Austria-Hungary — the resulting mobilization of huge armies created a crisis from which the powers could not back away. The result was the first truly global war, which claimed more than 16 million lives before ending in 1918.

### Detailing the assassination

1. Conspirator Vaso Cubrilovic threw a bomb at the archduke's car, but it detonated under the following vehicle.
2. The driver sped away from the site; Cubrilovic tried to escape capture by jumping into the river, not realizing it was only 5 in. (13 cm) deep.
3. After a speech at the town hall, Ferdinand decided to visit the bombing's injured victims at a hospital; the car doubled back along Appel Quay.
4. The driver became confused and made an incorrect right turn near the Latin Bridge, then tried to back up; Princip, who had lingered in the area, stepped forward and fired two shots, hitting the archduke in the neck and his wife in the abdomen; they died soon after.



July 28, 1914 • Austria-Hungary attacks Serbia, setting off a chain reaction among the Great Powers

The war swept away most of those dynasties. The Russian Revolution ushered in the world's first communist state; a defeated Germany witnessed the birth of the Weimar Republic. The Ottoman Empire was broken into pieces, and the map of the Middle East was redrawn as well.

Islamic militants this month tore down border posts along the frontier between Iraq and Syria, a line drawn after the Turkish empire was dismembered. The central question for Iraqis is whether their country, defined by those borders, can survive.

Across Europe, not just the political but the old social order crumbled as a result of World War I.

"The Great War ... was a rupture," Van Rompuy said. "This is the end of

yesterday's world, the end of empires, aristocracies and also an innocent belief in progress."

Nenad Prokic, a Serbian playwright and former lawmaker, struggles to make sense of the conflict a century after his compatriot, 19-year-old Gavrilo Princip, angry about Austria's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, gunned down Franz Ferdinand. A month after the assassination, Austria-Hungary retaliated, its ally Germany moved on France, Russia and Britain mobilized their forces, and within a week, all had formally declared war.

The repercussions were enormous on Prokic's country, which lost a quarter of its people, including more than half its male population.

"We could not recover from that," he said.

The nation of Yugoslavia, and a fragile hope, emerged from the rubble. But that fell apart violently, too, in the Balkan wars of the 1990s, which gave the world the brutal euphemism of "ethnic cleansing." Serbia, an international pariah for years afterward, is hoping to rehabilitate its image and gain a foothold in the EU.

"Now we are trying for a quarter of a century to organize a new state for us — very unsuccessfully, I must say," said Prokic, who lives in Belgrade.

In his new play, "Finger, Trigger, Bullet, Gun," Prokic explores the buildup to World War I and the "human stupidity" that tries to turn mass carnage into virtue. The drama premieres Saturday at the London International Festival of Theatre, which is devoting the entire

weekend to works dealing with the war's enduring aftermath.

Onstage will be more than 19,000 dominoes, for the number of British soldiers killed on the first day of the Battle of the Somme. At the close of the play — which ends in the present, with the characters discussing Europe and the crisis over Russia's seizure of Crimea this year — the dominoes will be toppled.

Naturally, the first domino represents Franz Ferdinand, whose death June 28, 1914, touched off the war that was supposed to end all wars.

"One hundred years ago, the butchery began, and so many lives disappeared," Prokic said. "We must at least try for a moment to avoid such a big catastrophe in the future."

## In Sarajevo, Assassin Is Remembered With Mixed Legacy

BY AIDA CERKEZ  
Associated Press

SARAJEVO, Bosnia-Herzegovina — A century after Gavrilo Princip ignited World War I with a shot from his handgun, the baby-faced Serb teenager who assassinated the Austro-Hungarian crown prince in Sarajevo in 1914 still provokes controversy.

His legacy has been molded time and again to meet political agendas in the Balkans, which remains a smoldering patchwork of ethnic and religious rivalries.

Nikola Princip crossed himself and stood silently recently in front of a Sarajevo chapel plaque that read "The Heroes of St. Vitus Day." The list starts with Gavrilo Princip's name for the assassination he carried out on that sacred Serb holiday of June 28.

"He lived and died for his ideas to liberate and unite the southern Slavs. May he rest in peace," the 81-year-old man said, lighting a candle.

A few blocks away, another plaque marks the spot where Princip killed Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand. There, Halida Basic, a 72-year-old Bosnian Muslim, has a different view.

"He was a killer, a terrorist. He did it because he wanted Bosnia to be part of Greater Serbia," she said.

Barely a month after the 19-year-old fired his shots, Europe, and eventually the world, was at war.

Austria accused Serbia of masterminding the assassination. Backed by Germany, Austria attacked Serbia, whose allies, Russia and France, were quickly drawn in. Britain, its sprawling Commonwealth empire and the United States also joined the fighting.

When the mass slaughter known as the Great War ended in 1918, it had claimed some 14 million lives — 5 million civilians and 9 million soldiers, sailors and airmen — and left another 7 million troops permanently disabled.

For his part, Princip was immediately arrested and died in captivity months before the war ended.

With the centenary remembrance of the assassination approaching in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, the old entrenched positions are resurfacing.

"Gavrilo Princip will, just like the past 100 years, remain a hero for some and a terrorist to others," said the head of the Sarajevo History Institute, Husnija Kamberovic. "It is a matter of feelings toward what he did, and not a matter of serious historical arguments."



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