

THE FIRST WORLD WAR

IN EUROPE

AND

THE CROATS IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR

ASSASSINATION IN SARAJEVO

The First World War began with the words of Emperors who signed it under the pressure of national will and their own ministers, contrary to their own wishes.

Austro-Hungarian ruler Franz Joseph, after signing stated: „I did the best I could, but now it`s all over“. German Emperor Wilhelm II signed with words:

„You will regret this gentlemen“, whilst Russian Tzar Nicholas during the signing of the order on partial mobilization on 24 July stated: „The war will be disastrous for the world and once it starts it will be difficult to stop“.

The reason for the First World War was the assassination in Sarajevo, which was carried out by members of Young Bosnia, supported by a Serbian terrorist organization Black hand. The reason for the assassination was the annexion of Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1908 by Austro-Hungary. Young Bosnia wanted to liberate Bosnia and Herzegovina from Austro-Hungarian government. The Serbian organization Black hand had begun thorough preparations for the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. It was decided to carry out the assassination in Sarajevo. Assassins were given weapons from Belgrade – 6 grenades and an automatic pistol. Assassins had passed training, got the money and pills for suicide. The identity of the assassin was concealed carefully. The brain of the assassination of Ferdinand was an operative Danilo Ilić – the member of Black hand, otherwise a school teacher.



Picture 1 Danilo Ilić

On 28 June in 1914 in Sarajevo had arrived Austro-Hungarian heir apparent Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sofija. Firstly, they had visited the barracks and then the Townhall. The whole route of the visit was published in the local newspapers, therefore the inhabitants of Sarajevo could greet their future Tzar. Particularly this had facilitated things to assassins, who were familiar with the movements of the future Tzar. Security was left to Sarajevo police only.

Ilić had deployed his assassins along already familiar route. In front of the cafe Mostar stood the first assassin Muhamed Mehmedbašić, (A carpenter from a poor Muslim family. At the time of the assassination he was 28. He managed to escape to Montenegro, he was arrested there, but he escaped from prison to Nikšić. After the First World War he had received forgiveness and returned to Sarajevo. He was killed in 1943 by the Ustasha.) Ferdinand had passed by, and Muhamed did nothing. Behind him there was another assassin Vaso Čubrilović, who also didn't commit assassination, because there was a policeman near them.



Picture 2 Muhamed Mehmedbašić

Two more opportunities remained to assassins. The convoy had moved on, nothing happened yet. Franz Ferdinand and Sofija were driven in the middle of the line of 6 vehicles. Their car was a roadster, they were greeting the citizens of Sarajevo, who were greeting them likewise. No one could imagine what was going to happen soon. Approaching the river Miljacka – on the opposite side of the street there was standing ready, the third assassin, Nedeljko Čabrinović (A son of an Austrian police spy, who was changing his jobs easily, as well as his political beliefs. At the time of preparation of the assassination he was in Belgrade, where he was recruited by a Serbian major Tankosić. He joined Gavrilo Princip in a military training camp. After the assassination he was arrested, sentenced to 20 years in prison, where he died in 1916 of tuberculosis). He didn't hesitate. As the car was approaching he threw a bomb. He targeted well, straight onto the third car in which Franz Ferdinand was, but the bomb (with a timed detonator) had rejected and ended underneath the car behind – it exploded, 20 people were injured but not the target.

Čabrinović wasn't sure about what had actually happened, but exactly as he was trained, he continued with the next steps: he had swallowed a cyanide pill and jumped into the river Miljacka. Čabrinović failed to kill his target and he also failed to kill himself – cyanide had caused vomiting only, and Miljacka as it

was hot summer, was deep 13cm only. Police pulled him out of the river, and gathered locals beat him well before he was eventually detained by the police.

It looked as if the plan had failed – the assassination didn't succeed. The rest of the convoy was speeding towards its destination, Townhall. On their way there were other remaining assassins – Cvjetko Popović, Gavrilo Princip and Trifun Grabež, but the vehicles were just racing past them and simply there wasn't any chance to do anything.

With the crunch of tires convoy with Franz Ferdinand had come to Townhall. There had been, according to the protocol, already waiting Mayor of Sarajevo Curčić which immediately started with his speech prepared for the dear guest. Ferdinand had interrupted him protesting: "Sir Mayor, I came here to visit and I welcome bombs. This is outrageous!".

His wife, duchess Sofija, whispered him something and then Franz, still bloody from explosion in the car behind, said to Mayor: "Well, finish your speech." After finishing it, Franz Ferdinand held his speech and then he referred to the previous event: "I want to thank the people of Sarajevo who expressed happiness when seeing that the assassination attempt failed." According how they had beaten Čabrinović after pulling him out of Miljacka, Franz Ferdinand was probably partly right. The truth is that he was greeted nicely on the streets of Sarajevo, except the assassins of course.

After the ceremony in Townhall, Austrian officials were discussing what to do next. Logically, it might have still been bombers on the streets – baron Rumerskirch had proposed that the couple would have remained in Townhall until extra troops were brought to come out on the streets. But, general Oskar Potiorek (governor of Bosnia and Herzegovina) had rejected such a proposal. In the meantime Ferdinand and Sofija had given up protocol to visit that morning injured in hospital.

Picture 3 Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sofija



They sat in convoy again, in the same car, and at 10.45 a.m. they went from Townhall to hospital of Sarajevo. If they had stayed in Townhall and waited for the backup forces of security, maybe the history of the next 100 years would have been quite different. Ferdinand had obviously thought it would have been a good move to visit the injured, with that he would have certainly received sympathy of Sarajevans.

General Potiorek pointed out that they were to go towards the hospital by a route different than previously provided one, because of their security. But, because of the obvious misunderstanding in communication, the first driver, Leopold Lojka, turned into the street Franz Joseph. The Police Chief of Sarajevo, Edmund Gerde – who had earlier protested because of the small number of security forces on the site – should have given to drivers a new route, but had forgotten to do so in confusion.

The wrong turning of the driver, back onto the route where there were assassins, would show as fatal. In the same time Gavrilo Princip (a young Serb from Bosnia, began his education in Sarajevo, but was expelled from school because of connecting with an anti-Austrian student organization. He was

sentenced to 20 years in prison, where he died in 1918 of tuberculosis.), who had no bomb with him (organizers assassins thought that he was too weak for such a weapon, he had only a pistol), heard that the attempt of assassination had failed. He had decided to leave his location and headed for a shop (Schiller delicatessen) nearby a famous Latin Bridge.



Picture 4 Leopold Lojka - Franz Ferdinand`s driver

Princip couldn't have even thought that the convoy with Franz Ferdinand would be back soon by the same route. Potiorek (who was in the second car in line) perceived that the driver in the first car had turned wrongly and he informed him to stop and move backwards. Do not forget that the year is 1914 – automobiles couldn't have been moved back easily. Nevertheless, the driver stopped, the convoy stopped – whilst he was shifting gear into back position (a process that then took a couple of seconds), Gavrilo Princip couldn't have believed his eyes. Franz Ferdinand had just stopped in front of him, just a few metres away.



Picture 5 Gavrilo Princip

Princip didn't think a second, he went towards the car and shot two snapshots from a distance of a metre and a half (five feet). He shot from a 9x17mm semiautomatic pistol Fabrique Nationale of Belgian production.

Picture 6 A pistol that caused the First World War



The first bullet struck Archduke Ferdinand straight into a vein in the neck and scored into the spine. The second bullet struck Sofija into the stomach through the corset. Princip later said that he hadn't intended to kill Sofija but he had tried to hit general Potiorek.

Princip was arrested and disarmed immediately by the security forces. Automobile with the injured sped towards the hospital of Sarajevo. „Sofija, Sofija! Don't die, live for our children!“, were reportedly last words of the heir apparent. Sofija had died on way to hospital, 10 minutes later Franz Ferdinand was dead too. His assistants were trying desperately to tear the clothes off him, but soon they had realized that without scissors it wouldn't have been possible. But, it had already been late, Archduke was dead.

Picture 7 The uniform in which Franz Ferdinand was killed



The news about the assassination had spread across the country and anti-Serbian demonstrations began in Zagreb, Vukovar, Vinkovci, Zadar, Dubrovnik.

Austro-Hungary had evidence of the involvement of the Serbian civil officials, and requested that its police forces investigate the area of Serbia about the assassination of the heir to throne. Serbia refused to do so, getting support from Russia, which threatened with its mobilization. Germany gave „green light“ and Austro-Hungary declared war to Serbia on 28th June in 1914.

Croatian countries were a part of the Austro-Hungary, therefore at the time of the war they were on the side of the Central powers and they fought on battlefields where Austro-Hungary fought. We are not going to describe the battlefields, but we are going to introduce you to some famous Croats who participated in the First World War.



Alojzije Stepinac – a croatian cardinal. He was born in 1898 in Krašić, where he finished elementary school. In 1909 he left to Zagreb to study in grammar school. During his education in Austro-Hungarian army there was a need for new officers, so a decision was made that students had to be educated following shorter high-school programme, to go to war. After graduating Stepinac had gone to Karlovac where he registered himself in the 96th Regiment. After he had finished his officer's training in Rijeka he went on the italian front. He had participated in battles nearby Gorica, and on italian battle-field in Soča. With his soldiers he had passed across Tagliamento towards Piave. In July 15 in 1918 it began a great battle on the river Piave. Austro-hungarian army wined around italian army in the form of a horse-shoe. Stepinac had conducted all his soldiers on the left-wing side. The plan was betrayed by two soldiers who ran over on the italian side. In the italian counter-attack in July 2 1918 Stepinac had lost a great number of his soldiers, only seven soldiers had survived. He was injured and captured. He spent his captivity in italian prisoners camps: Mestre, Ferrara and Noceri. Thanks to Yugoslav Committee he was released in December 6 in 1918 and transferred to Salonika. He had joined Yugoslav Legion there, founded by Yugoslav Committee, whose members were southern-slavic volunteers and captured Home-Guardsmen. The end of the war he met in Priština, Kosovo, as the second lieutenant. After he had come back home he turned to his priest vocation and died in 1960 in his hometown Krašić.



Ante Trumbić – a Croatian politician and jurist. He was born in 1864 in Split, where he finished elementary and grammar school. He was studying and finished Law Faculty in Zagreb, Vienna and Graz. Since 1894 he had been working as a lawyer in Split. Together with Frano Supilo he agitated for „the new course policy“. By the beginning of the war he ran away to Italy. In 1915 he founded the Yugoslav Committee in Paris, whose president was. As a president of the Southern-Slavic Committee in London he had tried achieving from Antanta forces and Serbian government the recognition of the Committee. In 1916 he got involved in conflict with Supilo because of the necessity of unification with the Kingdom of Serbia. He had negotiated with Nikola Pašić, the president of the Serbian government, about the unification of Southern-Slavic countries with Serbia. In July 20 in 1917 he signed the Corfu Declaration (a document considering which the future state would have become the Constitutional and Parliamentary Monarchy with dynasty Karađorđević on throne) with Nikola Pašić. After the Corfu Declaration had been signed Trumbić asked from the Serbian government to demand from its allies a diplomatic recognition of the declaration of „The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenians“. But Pašić had refused to do so, because the moment wasn't right and they got into a conflict. Actually, Pašić had refused the recognition of the Committee by allies, because of his great-Serbian policy. Trumbić had had a support in British and French governments which would have recognized the future state, in case of solving the problem with Pašić, which was again in favour of the Serbian government. By the end of the war Trumbić had continued his conflict with Pašić who, with his skilful diplomacy, led Yugoslav Committee towards future state which was convenient to Serbian part. He died in 1937 in Zagreb.



Frano Supilo – a croatian politician and journalist. He was born in 1870 in Cavtat. Educated in Dubrovnik. He was employed as a teacher in Agricultural school. In 1903 together with Ante Trumbić agitated for „the new course policy“. He was the most meritorious for proclamation of the Resolution of Rijeka in 1905 and formation of the Croato-Serbian coalition. After the assassination in Sarajevo he went to Italy and there together with Ante Trumbić and Ivan Meštrović initiated the action for liberation of Croats, Serbs and Slovenians from Austro-Hungarian power. On his missions in Bordeaux, London and Peterborough in 1914/1915 Supilo rose up against the imperialistic tendencies of Italy towards croatian coast. He had participated in work of the Yugoslav Committee until 1916, when in June 5 in 1916 he resigned. The main reason of his resignation was the policy of the serbian government, that hadn't done anything about the problem of the croatian issue and yugoslav one on the basis of national unity between Serbs, Croats and Slovenians (SHS). He was also dissatisfied with the attitudes of the Committee which didn't want to participate in discussion with the serbian government about the theme. Supilo says: „We are predetermined as loose money, to balance everyone's account, and our destiny, if that comes true, could be compared and led only along with destiny of Poland. My conviction is, that the majority of Croats and Slovenians would show undue favour even to that sad austrian slavery, rather than the attitude of such references.“ He died in 1917 in London of stroke.



Ivan Meštrović – a Croatian sculptor. He was born in 1883 in Vrpolje nearby Slavonski Brod. He spent his childhood in Otavice, Dalmatia. At the age of 16 he became a novice of a stone-mason Harold Bilinić in Split. His education in Vienna was rendered possible by Bilinić's wife, he finished his studies there. At the time of assassination in Sarajevo he was in Venice on XI international exhibition. Coming back to Split, he had found out about his possible arrest so he ran away to Italy. During the World War I he was travelling and participating on expositions in Paris, London and Cannes. The first steps of our emigration were connected to personality of Ivan Meštrović, who was in Belgrade in 1913 and thence he had gained the conviction from Nikola Pašić that Germany and Austro-Hungary wouldn't have been waiting for Russia to arm itself, but they would have caused the war themselves. Such a persuasion was confided to Frano Supilo and Ante Trumbić. Since he was in Rome in 1914 he had invited all our emigrants to meet there. Meštrović, Supilo and Trumbić were received by French, Russian and British deputies, where they were discussing about the question of the Eastern-Adriatic coast which was promised to Italy, but the negotiations were unsuccessful. Afterwards he participated actively on founding of the Yugoslav Committee, that was founded in May 30 in 1915 in Paris, the president was Ante Trumbić and the headquarters were in London. The goal of the Committee was the unification of the Southern-Slavic countries which didn't belong to Austro-Hungary and the preservation of the Eastern-Adriatic coast from the Italian pretensions. After the war he came back to his homeland, where he continued with his artistic work. He died in 1962 in the town South Bend in Indiana, USA.



Stjepan baron Sarkotić - a Croatian general. He was born in 1858 in Sinac nearby Otočac. After grammar school attended in Senj, he continued his education in Military school in St. Pollen and Military Academy in Wiener Neustadt. After his education he began his military career, being promoted from lieutenant to vice-marshal. After the World War I had started Sarkotić was a commander of the 42nd Home - Guard Infantry Division. Since distinguishing himself in fighting actions on Balkan front, he was nominated a commanding general in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Dalmatia. He organized a raid on Montenegro. In January 7 in 1916 Sarkotić had made a movement from Boka Kotorska onto Montenegrins who were holding Lovćen. He conquered Lovćen and Cetinje. For that success he was awarded a Leopold's badge. Sarkotić was aware of the political situation in Croatia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina and he had tried to change it. Ever since 1917 Sarkotić was one of the leading pleaders of the tripartite unification. He had also worked on unification of Croatia and Dalmatia with Bosnia and Herzegovina, but without success. Austro-Hungarian authorities were deaf for any changes, eventually that paid for Monarchy. In 1918 soldiers' rebellions began, here appeared "a green stuff problem" - runaway soldiers who didn't want to go back onto battle-field. By fall of Austro-Hungary his military career had finished. The rest of his life he spent in Vienna where he died in 1939.

A Song of a Castellan War Mobilization into Austro-Hungarian Army in 1914.

Farewell to fields and all the hamlets

to all the Castles lying by the Sea.
Farewell to my Newcastle the whitest
Home forever dear.

Farewell to houses and lanes,
to War I have to part.
Farewell to relatives and neighbours
to stay with you I shan't.

Farewell to friends my dear,
Who never left me alone.
My parting now is here
Stay with God my sweet home.

I must go to attend the Czar,
by Law hence abide;
To serve faithfully and suffer for,
Even if needed my blood donor.

Farewell to my parents mild,
Rewarded by God our kind!
For that love, that you sustain
That I beg you to be forgiven.

Dove, with God thou stay!
I am leaving, 'cause it's obey.
That's the Order of Czar's will,
Stay with God until.

The day I come from the wars
Be watched by father and mother yours.

For happier our hours,
Pray Stomorija Saint of ours.

I will think about thee, my fairy,
Even if it evil carry
To be wherever is his pleasure,
'Cause thou carry all my treasure.

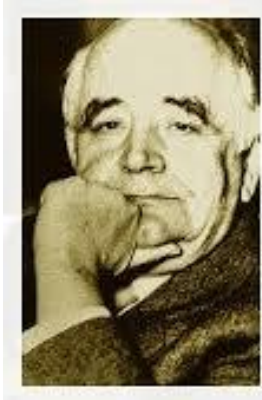
Forget thee I will not,
'Cause in joy I think to float
In any of the world's part
I'll hold thee in my heart.

Long days are yet to come,
In torment passing by.
Longer than a year each one,
Until to my homeland back I come.

By the time when War is over,
Then all blithe I will be,
And enjoying in calm
When embracing the fairy of me.



Vicko Krivić-Cvitić (1873-1950) - is a Castellan poet. He was born in Newcastle (Kaštel Novi). He had started writing since 1903. Two poems are to be mentioned; A Poem in Honour of Blissful Virgin Mary-Stomorija and A Horrid Fire on Trećanica Hill in Castles. Throughout his lifetime Krivić had always been describing in his poems local events, therefore his poems are valuable for the local history. After the World War I had begun he published his poem: A Song of a Castellan War Mobilization into Austro-Hungarian Army in 1914.



The Flags are a chronicle that talks about years stained with blood from 1913 to 1922. It is a panoramic description of the Croatian society before and after the World War I.

Here are some of the citations: Miroslav Krleža speaks about human losses on the eve of Christmas in 1915 in his novel The Flags (quoting authentically newspaper reports from that time): 25th Home-Guard Infantry Regiment - 14000 dead, 26th Regiment - 20000 dead, 53rd Regiment - 18000 dead.

"It had all started in Odessa. In Odessa bloodstained, in "Kanat Institute", where had been massacring en mass and while burying the dead the grave-digger hadn't been told who all those people were "because they were Croats". In Odessa had been slaughter, cracking bones and drowning persons..."

Miroslav Krleža - a leading croatian writer and encyclopedist. He was born in 1893 in Zagreb. He attended Military Academy in Pečuh. In 1913 he had interrupted his military studies leaving via Paris and Salonika to Serbia, with an intention of volunteering in Serbian army. Being suspected of spying he was expelled thence. He had returned into Austro- Hungary and in 1915 was mobilized as a Croatian Home Guardsman and sent to Eastern battle-field. There he had spent a short period of time, and the rest of his war days he spent as a resident of military hospitals and thermal springs in Croatia because of his poor health condition. Helped by professor Josip Šilović he got an employment in the Office for War Afflicted persons, where he remained until the fall of Austro-Hungary. He had started publishing his first literal and newspaper texts. His literary writings connected to war themes are The Flags and The Croatian God Mars.

He died in Zagreb in 1981.