

FLASHPOINT

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Sleep did not come easy that night. In the darkened confines of his bedchamber, Bishop Joseph Lanyi of Grosswardein tossed and turned in the grip of a nightmare so intense it brought beads of perspiration to his brow. He had just dreamt of the death of one of his ex-students, a promising young man of royal lineage. The Bishop awoke with a heavy heart and with leaden feet made his way to his desk where he began to record his dream. His hand trembled and tears welled in his eyes. The time on the clock read 3:45 a.m. as he captured and relived his fears and sadness all over again. Gripping his hands together tightly he fell to his knees and began to pray, hoping the dream would melt away in the light of day.

Sunday morning dawned bright and sunny in Sarajevo. The rain had stopped, the mist had dissipated and by 9 a.m. it was already hot. Appel Quay was bustling with curious flag waving locals and bystanders waiting for the royal motorcade of the heir presumptive to the Austro-Hungarian empire, Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Franz Ferdinand and his wife Duchess Sophie of Hohenberg were visiting Sarajevo to inspect military manoeuvres by the XV Corps. The parade of six automobiles cruised down the street with local officials, the mayor and the chief of police seated in the second car with the guests of honour in the third car.

The 28th of June was a memorable day for both the onlookers and the guest of honour. It was St. Vitus' day, a Serbian national and religious holiday. It was also a Memorial Day to the Serbian martyrs who died during the Battle of Kosovo against the Ottoman Empire in 1389. The Archduke's 14th wedding anniversary also fell on this day of celebration.

Among the crowds was Radon Fabijanic, dressed in nondescript clothes and munching on a sandwich he had just purchased from Moritz Schiller's. There was nothing notable about this young man and any onlooker could be forgiven for thinking he was a farmhand or labourer for his rough exterior and sinewy limbs. But a more perceptive person would have seen the intelligence in his coal black eyes and the way he stood alert, muscles tensed like a tiger ready to pounce. In fact, he was a spy for the unofficial secret military organisation called Bela Ruka or White Hand. He had been sent on a mission by Colonel Petar Zivkovic to apprehend three men from Belgrade who had crossed the border into Serbia armed and dangerous. Radon had received information that one of the wanted men was nicknamed 'Trifto' but his task of finding and foiling their plot was like finding a needle in a haystack. Besides Serbian military intelligence was riddled with collaborators and informants of Black Hand. It was only a week ago he had been summoned to the office of the Colonel. "We have received intelligence that three conspirators have been supplied with false documents, weapons and given access to safe houses to aid in their fiendish plans. I am sending you on a mission to stop them. Beware Rade Malobabic, the master spy is their controller."

If Radon was overwhelmed by the enormity of the task given to him he did not let the emotion show. Young and ambitious he wanted to become a master spy himself as the world of cloak and dagger appealed to his devious and cunning mind. Growing up on the streets of Belgrade after he was abandoned by his mother, he learnt to survive the squalor and danger that prowled the seedy lanes and alleys. He won

every fight and never backed down even when he was out numbered. The Colonel became his mentor when Radon saved him from a brawl in a bar. He became his father figure and taught him how to use his street skills to gather information and spy on the enemies of the regime. 'I will leave tonight,' Radon replied. The Colonel gave an absentminded nod. "You have to pass on any information you gather to Governor Oscar Potiorek or General Michael von Appel who is in charge of security."

Standing on the cobbled street, Radon felt the weight of the task on his young shoulders. He had a vague premonition that he was caught up in something dark and unfathomable that he could not stop. He had experienced such moments when he had come very close to death.

Danilo Ili, secret leader of the Black Hand cell in Sarajevo sat in upstairs in a boarding house run by his mother. The plot was now fully operational. The conspirators were in Sarajevo armed and ready to execute their orders. St. Vitus' day would be a day to be remembered on more than one count he thought with triumph. Apis had passed on crucial information to the group of the planned visit of their target and everything seemed to perfectly fit together. Tomorrow Appel Quay would see the power of Black Hand in no uncertain terms.

"Zivio, Zivio," the crowds chanted as the Graf and Stift double phaeton with its canvas top down, coasted down Appel Quay towards Cumurija Bridge on that sunny Sunday morning. The heir to the throne was dressed in the ceremonial uniform of a cavalry general with a blue tunic, high collar with three stars, black trousers with red stripes down the sides, a Bauchband around his waist and a hat adorned with green feathers. Beside him sat his wife resplendent in a white veiled hat and a white silk gown with red and white fabric roses into a red sash. There was a deep connection and closeness between them which was evident to all onlookers.

Muhammad Mehmedbasic was stationed near the bridge, clutching a bomb in his right hand coat pocket. He was gripped with nervous tension, his heart beating furiously as the car drew near and his moment would come. "Step back, man" a tall policeman drew near. His truncheon held aloft. Mehmet took a step back not wanting to get into an argument at this crucial time. He looked up trying to find that opportune moment to throw the bomb at the motorcade but his view was blocked by the surging crowds that moved and shifted to get a clear view of the spectacle. He had missed his chance but he was certain that someone in his team would succeed.

Aloud bang rocked the street. Radon was propelled forward by the impact. He regained his balance and in one lithe movement he lunged through the shocked crowds. He had caught sight of a man wearing a long black coat and a black hat vaulting over bridge into the River Miljacka. He was being pursued by four men of whom two appeared to be detectives who went in after him and dragged him out. Radon could see the perpetrator retching on the bank. It was standard for such men to carry cyanide capsules to avoid interrogation but in this case it seemed to have failed. Radon scanned the crowds looking for any suspicious activity but all was confusion and mayhem. The bomb had injured a few of the Archduke's bodyguards, one soldier and several spectators. There was glass strewn on the streets from shop windows that had shattered from the blast. A huge crater yawned in the centre of

the street. The occupants of the Graf and Stift had escaped unharmed. The car sped off to the Town hall. Radon could see a very anxious and tense Count Harrach standing on the side board.

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Leopold Loyka focused on the lead car carrying Duchess Sophie and Archduke Franz Ferdinand. The crowds were waving flags and applauding as the motorcade proceeded down Appel Quay. He was a professional chauffeur in the service of Count Harrach and was honoured to be entrusted with the task of driving the heir apparent around Sarajevo. He was tense and alert as he drove the phaeton amid the cheering onlookers. The failed bombing earlier had unnerved him. It was fortunate that the bomb had rolled off the canvas top of the car and fallen onto the road. He was aware of the dangers lurking in the street and hoped this trip would soon be over and he would be back home.

Count Franz von Harrach was riding on the left sideboard of the Graf and Stift to shield the Archduke from the south side of the Quay from which the first attack had come, when Leopold took a wrong turn onto Franz Joseph Street. Governor Potiorek shouted to the driver, "You are going the wrong way." As the chauffeur attempted to turn around the Count noticed a break in the crowd in front of the café on the right side of the car. A split second later, a short man, with a blank look, stepped forward. Loyka slammed on the brakes, intending to switch to reverse. Instead, the air was filled with the scream of steel grinding against steel. The gears locked and the car stalled. The strangely intense young man suddenly drew a 9mm Browning 1910 firing two bullets in quick succession, the sound thundering through the ears of every onlooker. Count Harrach turned, and a thin stream of the Archduke's blood spurted on to his cheek. "For God's sake! What has happened to you?" the Duchess enquired before slumping forward onto the floor of the car. In the shattering silence Count Harrach heard the words "Sophie, Sophie, don't die. Stay alive for the children." When the Archduke convulsed Count Harrach seized the collar of his uniform to stop his head dropping forward asking if he was in great pain. The Archduke answered distinctly, "It is nothing!" before losing consciousness.

Radon Fabijanic sprang into action pushing through the crowd to reach the side of the car. His heart sank at the sight before him. He knew that it was all too late for the Duchess but maybe there was a chance the Archduke could be saved. The unhurt occupants of the car were stunned and speechless at the sudden turn of events. Radon noticed that the shocked driver was seated unmoving at the wheel. He realized it was imperative the royal couple be driven away before any further attacks on their person. Luckily Count Harrach recovered his presence of mind and instructed the driver, "Drive on to the Konak immediately. God save us." The shaken driver started the car and sped off. Radon eyes swept the crowds hardly taking in the mayhem and confusion, hardly noticing that the musicians had abruptly stopped

playing. A deadly calm had fallen over everyone. Something did not feel right. It seemed like a strange stillness descended over the quay. It felt like the world would never be the same again. Radon had witnessed many a death and many violent human confrontations in his chequered life and never lost much sleep over them. This time however he felt sadness and disquiet cast a dark shadow on the day.

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A gaunt man huddled in his seat on the train to Montenegro. His angry and frightened eyes darted here and there settling on a person before furtively glancing away. He had long ago got rid of the bomb he had been given by Illic but kept the cyanide hidden on him in case he might have to use it. He was elated that the plot by his co-conspirators had succeeded and his revolutionary fervour still raged within him, though it was now tinged with fear. He had witnessed the arrest of Cabrinovic and Princip and knew that when they were interrogated, the rest would soon be arrested. He felt like a coward slinking away into the night but he believed he had to live for another day to see the dream of an independent Bosnia. Muhamed Mehmedbasic was overjoyed that the assassination had succeeded but disappointed that it was not he who had fired the fatal shots. He felt he always failed especially this time when standing outside the Austro-Hungarian bank he lost his nerve when he saw a policeman standing behind him and had not acted as the cavalcade passed by. He writhed with shame at his earlier failure to kill General Oskar Potiorek when the appearance of a policeman had panicked him and he had flushed his phial of poison down the toilet and tossed the dagger he was to use, out of the train window. He was inept but Illic had still selected him as a backup for the Belgrade cell. Now he was running away hoping the gendarmes would not get him.

The train drew into Montenegro station. He slid out of the carriage and mingled with the crowds hurrying out loaded with their luggage and pulling their children along. Heading to the nearest road side café he ordered a meal and slaked his thirst with a cup of strong local coffee. A large crowd had gathered at the till gesticulating and nodding their heads in sober manner. Curiosity got the better of Mehmedbasic and he soon joined in the conversation. The discussion was about the assassination of the Archduke and his wife and its repercussions. Mehmedbasic soon got embroiled in an argument of the rights and wrongs of the plot with a bearded elder smoking a pipe and forgetting himself declared boasting, "Standing before you is one of the conspirators. I am a member of the Crna ruka, 'Union or Death.'" Astonished and frightened faces greeted this announcement. Had he gone too far? Before the onlookers could react he fled the café mingling with the evening crowds, melting into the dusk. He thought he heard an outcry but his fleeing feet carried him away. He had been foolish. He hoped that Cabrinovic and Princip had not broken under interrogation and revealed the names of their group. He repeated silently, "...before

God, on my honour and my life, that I will execute all missions and commands without question. I swear before God, on my honour and on my life, that I will take all the secrets of this organisation into my grave with me.”

Boastfulness was Mehmedbasic’s undoing and very soon he found himself in a Montenegrin prison in Niksic. Word had reached the local authorities that he was one of the wanted assassins and on 12th July 1914, the carpenter from Stolac in Bosnia was arrested for complicity in the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife. The Austro-Hungarian finance ministry sought his extradition. Mehmedbasic admitted to the prison authorities that he was a part of the assassination attempt and accepted that all was over for him. But as luck would have it, he had won the approval of some of the ethnic gendarmes who harboured a hatred of the Hapsburgs and of their growing power in the region. Two days after his arrest, he was smuggled out in a basket of dirty prison clothes on its way to the laundry.

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Radon Fabijanic was part of the interrogation team assigned to Investigator Judge Leo Pfeffer. Within hours of Princip firing those fatal shots, he was brought before the court. Radon noticed that he looked ‘undersized, emaciated, sallow, sharp-featured’ and frail- looking. At first Princip was unable to speak but when the judge addressed him he replied with clarity and in a voice that grew steadier and steadier. The judge enquired sternly, “Do you consider yourself guilty?” Gavrilo deliberated and responded slowly, “I am not a criminal, because I destroyed that which was evil. I think I am good.” A brief pause followed, the only sound was that of the scribe’s pen. When questioned about the killing of the Duchess, Princip appeared remorseful, “I did not wish to kill her, I killed her accidentally.” Princip claimed in that first interrogation that he had acted alone and denied any link with Cabrinovic saying, “When I heard the explosion, I said to myself: here is someone who feels as I do.” Radon noticed that Judge Leo Pfeffer was listening intently he brow furrowed and his face stern. When the Chief Prosecutor Franjo Svara asked, “What kind of ideas did you have?” Gavrilo defiantly declared, “I am a Yugoslav nationalist and I believe in the unification of all South Slavs in whatever form of state and it be free of Austria.” It became apparent that the motives for such an attack ran far deeper than previously expected.

The truth finally came to light on Monday 29 June when Cabrinovic revealed that he and Princip were accomplices who planned the crime in Belgrade. Radon felt that the Judge was not aggressive with the assassins and believed that physical intimidation and threats would have enabled them to get at the truth faster. He was critical of the reluctance to even pressurise each suspect with incriminating or contradictory revelations. Nether less, his respect for Pfeffer grew when he realised

that the Judge saw unforced testimony as the soundest way of getting at the truth. Radon carried out his own investigation on the streets of Sarajevo using his network of informants. He learnt that one Danilo Ilic was a known associate of Princip and that he was affiliated with Serb nationalists. Local police had him arrested and brought in for questioning. It was then that they hit pay dirt for Ilic thinking that his two co-conspirators had already incriminated him proposed a plea bargain. The investigating team learnt of the whole plot and soon a search began for the rest of the seven-man team. Trifko Grabez was the first to be captured near the Serbian border. His arrest was soon followed by the apprehending of Vaso Cubrilovic, Cvijetko Popovic, Miso Jovanovic and Veljko Cubrilovic. Muhamed Mehmedbasic however had escaped to Montenegro where it was hoped he would be found and handed over to the authorities. Radon had himself dispatched a team of spies to find him. It was his belief that all the conspirators were merely pawns in the hands of more powerful men. He learnt that three of the conspirators had tuberculosis and it was only a matter of time before they died. This was convenient for the masterminds behind the plot.

The investigation now grew wider as information was gathered from the conspirators. Radon and his team poured over the details, following up every lead especially focusing on the workings of the Narodna Odbrana. Soon influential Serbian figures Dragutin Dimitrijevic or 'Apis' Chief of Serbian Military Intelligence, Major Voja Tankosic and Milan Ciganovic an official with the Serbian State Railways were implicated in the conspiracy. The findings of Radon and his team were passed on to Judge Pfeffer. Soon telegrams were fired off demanding Serbia hand over the men to stand trial. Serbia refused to comply. The trial ended on 28th October 1914 and the verdict read, "The court regards it as proved by the evidence that both the Narodna Odbrana and military circles in the Kingdom of Serbia in charge of the espionage service, collaborated in the outrage."

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A tense and uneasy Radon sat at Colonel Zvikovic's office. While he was relieved that the conspirators had been identified he was alarmed at the way tension was building in Serbia and Austro-Hungary. The Balkans were seething with unrest. He had witnessed riots and violent marches both in Sarajevo and Belgrade and he feared the world was at a terrible point in its history. He couldn't tell why but he felt fearful. A man of the streets who had seen so much of death and evil suddenly felt afraid. He felt he was experiencing the tense, unnerving quiet before a storm.

A newspaper boy stood at the corner of a busy street in Belgrade waving a copy of the *Wiener Reichsport* trying to attract a buyer amid the confusion of honking cars and hurrying pedestrians. A passer-by drew near peering at the headline 'The Foreshadowing' by Bruno Grabinsky. Curiosity got the better of him. He bought a copy, his eyes falling on a picture of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Duchess Sophie of Hohenberg lying in state. Below it he read a curious account of a dream that Bishop Joseph Lanyi of Grosswardein had in the early hours of 28th June 1914. The Bishop dreamt that he had gone to his desk and found a black-bordered letter bearing a black seal with the Archduke's coat of arms. Recognising the Archduke's handwriting he had opened the letter. He found at the top of the letter a post card like picture of a street and a narrow passage with the Archduke and his wife seated in a car with a general facing them. There was another officer seated next to the chauffeur. The picture showed crowds on either side of the street. In the foreground were two young men firing shots at the occupants of the car. Accompanying this picture were the words:

"Dear Dr. Lanyi,

I herewith inform you that today, my wife and I will fall victims to an assassination. We commend ourselves to your pious prayers.

Kindest regards from you

Archduke Franz

Sarajevo, the 28th of June

3:45 A.M"

Folding the newspaper, Radon Fabijanic felt a shiver run down his spine. He knew deep in his heart that the world would never be the same again.

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