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# Contradictory Explanations and Elusive Answers: The Historiography of the Sarajevo Assassination

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## **Abstract**

Although the guns have long since fallen silent in Europe, historical debate continues over the true origins of the spark that sent Europe to war in 1914: the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Despite the popular conception of the assassination as having been devised by the Serbian secret organization Ujedinjenje ili smrt (Unification or Death, better known as the Black Hand) and its leader Dragutin Dimitrijevic (or Apis), the historical field has not actually decisively resolved the exact origin of the plot. Literature regarding the origin is primarily divided into two broad camps: one in which the plot was conceived in Bosnia by the Young Bosnia movement and simply received assistance from actors (with how much assistance and which actors also undecided) within Serbia and another according to which the plot was a Serbian creation from the beginning. The publishing of two major works in the last 10 years that essentially reached diametrically opposite conclusions about this issue (Christopher Clark's *Sleepwalkers* and John Zeman's *Folly and Malice*) exhibits the ongoing nature of this dispute. This historiography will track the emergence of these two strains of historical thought in the immediate aftermath of World War I (with developments in Serbian domestic politics exacerbating the bifurcation) and how they developed over the next century. It highlights the difficulty historians face in unravelling complex and murky events in an environment where the reliability of primary sources is frequently suspect, and contradictions are common.

*Keywords:* Historiography, 1914 Sarajevo Assassination, Franz Ferdinand, World War I, Origins of World War I

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## **Introduction**

In June 1914, heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, arrived in Bosnia as part of official visit to the province carried out by the Archduke in his capacity as the Inspector General of the Austria-Hungarian armed forces. After observing military maneuvers, they embarked on a tour of the city on the morning of 28 June. While the Archduke's convoy was travelling down the Appel Quay, a 19-year-old Bosnian Serb named Nedeljko Cabrinovic threw a bomb at the Archduke's convoy. He failed to kill the Archduke, but wounded several members of the Archduke's party, including Eric von Merizzi, the Aide de Campe to the Governor of Bosnia, Oskar Potiorek. Cabrinovic attempted to flee but was captured by police, and the cyanide tablet he carried only succeeded in making him ill. Five other assassins elsewhere along the route were either unable or unwilling to attempt a second attack on the convoy. The Archduke arrived safely at the City Hall, and a decision was made that the Archduke would visit the wounded Merizzi in the hospital. Disaster struck when the Archduke's car came to a stop after making a wrong turn off the Appel Quay, and 19-year-old Gavrilo Princip pulled out a revolver and fatally shot the Archduke and his wife. On 23 July, allegedly in response to the assassination, Austria-Hungary presented an ultimatum to Serbia; Austria-Hungary found Serbia's response to be unsatisfactory, and on 28 July declared war.

The above description is a brief summary of the Archduke's assassination and a hopefully uncontroversial one. Most other elements of the assassination, however, have been the subject of a historical debate that has been progressing for now over a century. This historical

debate began soon after the guns fell silent (at least in Western Europe) in 1918. While during the war the assassination had been overshadowed by the ongoing fighting, after the conflict, interest quickly emerged with regard to the exact sequence of events that had sparked the first major European war in a century. However, there has proved to be no simple explanation for the events surrounding the assassination, and time has done little to clarify exactly what happened in June 1914. There remains substantial disagreement on many aspects of the conspiracy, including, *inter alia*, its exact origins, the motives of the conspirators, and the nature of Serbian involvement in the conspiracy, in particular the exact role played by Dragutin Dimitrijevic, better known as Apis. This historiography tracks the development of different historical explanations for these various aspects of the spark that plunged the world into war in 1914.

### **The Origins of the Conspiracy**

Ever since 28 June, the question of whether the conspiracy originated in Sarajevo or Belgrade has been important. For the Austrians in the aftermath of the assassination, finding links to Belgrade, especially to Belgrade officialdom, was important to help justify the subsequent ultimatum and invasion to other European powers. The Austrian investigation, while discovering the involvement of Serbians Voislav Tankosic (a Serbian military officer) and Milan Ciganovic (an employee of the state railway administration), was not able to connect the plotters to any broader Serbian conspiracy. After the war, historians continued to assess the question of how the conspiracy took shape. One theory has been that the conspiracy began with the Bosnian youth in Belgrade, who, for various ascribed motives, wanted to kill the Archduke, and proceeded to do so, with some assistance from individuals or groups in Serbia. Other historians have proposed that the conspiracy actually began in Serbia, and was the work of the Black Hand, maybe even with the backing of the Serbian government.

One of the earliest proponents of the “Bosnian Initiative” thesis was R.W Seton-Watson, a British historian who travelled to Yugoslavia to interview as many of the protagonists as he could. According to his findings, the conspiracy began in January 1913, when Gacinovic (often cited as a leading figure in the Young Bosnian movement) invited several Young Bosnians to a meeting in Toulouse, where they plotted to kill Oscar Potiorek, the much-hated military governor of Bosnia (Seton-Watson 74). Simultaneously, Danilo Illic was also plotting to kill Potiorek. Illic’s friend Pusara read in the newspaper of the Archduke’s impending visit and cut out a clipping and sent it to Cabrinovic in Belgrade, who then showed it to Princip; the pair then decided to take the opportunity to assassinate the Archduke (Seton-Watson 77). Princip and Cabrinovic approached Ciganovic and Tankosic; the former they knew as a Bosnian émigré, and the latter they knew because Tankosic had been the head of a Serbian irregular band that Princip had tried to enlist in during the Balkan Wars; Princip and Gabrinovic also recruited another Bosnian émigré in Belgrade, Trifko Grabez (Seton-Watson 78). Meanwhile, Illic recruited three more assassins in Bosnia (Seton-Watson 78). In Belgrade, Tanksoic briefly trained Princip and Cabrinovic in how to use a firearm, and then gave them directions for how to be smuggled across the border (Historians with similar accounts include Dedijer and Mackenzie). Various permutations of this version of events have emerged over the years, with the exact roles and identities of the various conspirators (beyond the six assassins themselves) changing slightly from account to account. However, the fundamental features of such theses remain that the Sarajevo conspiracy originated in Bosnia among members of the Young Bosnia movement, who, with slight assistance from several Serbs in Belgrade, assassinated the Archduke. This narrative represents one camp of the historiography regarding the conspiracy’s origin.

The other camp has contended that the conspiracy originated in Serbia among the Serbian secret organization Ujedinjenje ili smrt (Unification or Death), better known in historiography as the Black Hand. The Black Hand, led by Dragutin Dimitrijevic (the head of Serbian military intelligence in 1914), had been formed to unify ethnic Serbs throughout the region, although many historians alleged that it had more of a domestic focus.<sup>1</sup> The possibility of the Black Hand's involvement was first raised at the Salonika Trial in 1917, and later by a pamphlet by a Professor Stanojević in 1923. Despite the questionable credibility of each of these sources (admitted even by those who have cited them), the likelihood of the involvement of senior Serbian officials in the plot was endorsed by other historians. Edith Durham, who published a book about the assassination in 1925, was one such author. Durham, although suspicious of many of the claims in the pamphlet, accepted that the Black Hand did at least have a substantial role in the plot. While Durham did not have direct evidence of greater Serbian involvement in the conspiracy, she found Serbian actions in the aftermath to be suspicious enough to indicate that Serbia bore much greater responsibility for the assassination than had been previously ascribed to them. Durham's attitude towards Serbia earned her Seton-Watson's description that she was engaged in a "violent campaign of defamation of everything Serb" (Seton-Watson 42).

Nonetheless, similar themes emerged in other historical literature. Sidney Fay, an American historian, wrote that Princip was the leading plotter in Bosnia, but "the impulse came from Serbia" (108). Fay was uncertain whether the Bosnians or the Serbians came up with the idea to assassinate the Archduke, however he noted that both during their initial interrogations and during the trial, the assassins tried their best to conceal the involvement of the other conspirators, and only admitted their involvement after Illic's confession left them with little

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<sup>1</sup> Including Dedijer and Zametica, This is contested by Clark, while Schmitt contended that the domestic political turmoil never stopped the Black Hand's work abroad.

choice. Therefore, it is entirely possible (and Fay seems to have viewed it as probable), that they had similarly covered up the culpability of conspirators (or even organizers) in Serbia (Fay 128).

But while previous authors simply hinted at or suspected a Serbian origin for the conspiracy, it was Italian journalist and politician Luigi Albertini who outright charged that the Black Hand had started the conspiracy. Albertini's reasoning for this argument, laid out in his 1952 three volume *The Origins of the War of 1914*, included that (*Vol II; 72-73*):

- Princip already knew who to approach to acquire weapons in Belgrade, as if he had been told whom to go to beforehand
- Apis reportedly told his friends the Archduke's assassination was necessary for the safety of Serbia
- Princip seemed to know about the Archduke's visit before he saw the press clippings reporting this visit; since Apis was head of Serbian military intelligence, he would have been best positioned to find out about the visit before it was reported publicly, and then inform Princip
- To simply passively accede to the assassination on the assumption that it would fail would have been most uncharacteristic of Apis

While Albertini did not provide an exact formula for how Apis organized the plot, he did offer several different possibilities. Similarly, Remak portrayed the Black Hand as having been behind the entire Young Bosnian movement, although in his telling many of its members did not realize their movement's true origins. Tankosic had organized the meeting in Toulouse at which the first conspiracy to kill Potiorek was formed, and similarly planned the conspiracy at Sarajevo and recruited the assassins, at the behest of Apis (55). For Remak, Illic's recruitment of three additional assassins in Sarajevo was not a sign of the Bosnian origins of the plot, but rather a

deliberate attempt to create the impression that the conspiracy was a local, not Serbian, affair (95). Clark, in *Sleepwalkers* (published 2012), provided the most modern version of this thesis. He similarly wrote that “Apis was the principal architect behind the plot, but the idea itself probably originated from his associate Rade Malobabic” (Malobabic was a Serbian spy) (Clark 48). Tankosic then recruited the three Bosnian emigres in Belgrade for the plot, and Ciganovic served as their handler (Clark 53).

In 2017, John Zametica introduced his account of the Sarajevo conspiracy, which, while broadly having similarities with many of the pro-Bosnian narratives, included several new assertions. Like historians such as Seton-Watson or Dedijer, Zametica identified Princip and Cabrinovic as having devised of the idea to assassinate the Archduke and then approaching Ciganovic in Belgrade (because Ciganovic was known for “hoarding bombs left over from various Balkan conflicts,” Zametica 366).<sup>2</sup> But instead of Ciganovic approaching Tankosic with this information, as is normally asserted, Zametica argued that Ciganovic instead approached Duro Sarac (a Bosnian émigré who led a secret organization known as “Death or Life”) (369). “It seems likely,” contended Zametica, “that Sarac and Princip had independently come up with the idea of killing Franz Ferdidnand, but that their two separate initiatives were now morphing into one, with Ciganovic playing godfather by bringing these two acquaintances together in Sarajevo” (369). Sarac and an associate named Slavic (upon whose account Zametica based his claims) then approached Tankosic and convinced him to provide them weapons and help the assassins across the border; however, Tankosic was apparently not informed of the purpose for these

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<sup>2</sup> Zametica’s is not the first to mention Sarac. Albertini highlighted that Sarac was one of those mentioned by Cabrinovic in the trial, but dismissed the mention as an attempt to avoid implicating the true conspirators, while both Dedijer, Mackenzie, and Zametica mentioned Sarac as the individual who may have been sent by Apis to stop the attack; Zametica argued that once Apis found about the plot, he discovered Saracs’s involvement through Tankosic, and managed to convince Sarac the attack needed to be aborted (see pg. 407-408).



weapons and assumed they were meant to kill Potiorek, not the Archduke; Zametica attributed such actions to recklessness on the part of Tankosic (371).<sup>3</sup> Thus, as the competing narratives of Zametica and Clark illustrate, even on a question as purportedly simple as who was involved in the conspiracy (beyond the direct assassins) the historical field remains in disagreement over a century after the assassination. And as will be seen, this matter is far from the only one in dispute.

### **Ideology of the Conspirators**

The question of why the assassins decided to kill the Archduke has proven just as contentious as how they plotted to do so, and not all the conspirators may have had the same rationales. One motive offered is that the assassination was a reaction to Austrian oppression in Bosnia; many such authors focus especially on the *kmet* system, a feudal-like system whose peasantry included many Bosnian Serbs; the Austrians made no attempt to dismantle this system. Dedijer asserts that Princip was affected by his upbringing in a *kmet*, although it is impossible to determine to what extent this led to his participation in the assassination (190). But regardless of any personal connections between the *kmets* and the assassins, multiple historians agree that the perpetuation of the *kmet* system played a significant role in engendering opposition to Austrian-Hungarian rule in Bosnia. Other examples of Austrian oppression which are alleged to have contributed to the motivations of the conspirators include the actions of General Potiorek, who had during previous crises outlawed many Bosnian Serb organizations and organized show trials against Bosnian Serbs (Batakovic 346). On a more general level, Austria-Hungary's attempt to stifle Bosnian national aspirations are alleged to have inevitably stoked nationalist grievances in an era when such conflicts were the norm. By killing the Archduke, the assassins thus hoped to

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<sup>3</sup> Slavic reported that it was Sarac who trained Princip how to operate a handgun, not Tankosic, although Zametica did not assesses the likelihood of this.

spark further acts of violence against the Habsburg authorities and ultimately a popular revolution in Bosnia that would overthrow their rule. In this narrative, the assassination of the Archduke was part of the Bosnian struggle for liberation from a foreign oppressor, which was linked with rising nationalism in the region. as Dedijer argued: “Prince Ferdinand’s failure to grasp the essential facts was to bring about his own violent death...the relentless drive for self-determination of peoples, spreading across Europe, found no serious obstacles in the feudal institutions of the Habsburgs” (141).<sup>4</sup> Motives of a more personal nature have also been suggested; for example, Princip may have felt he needed to prove himself as a result of his rejection from joining Serbian irregular forces during the Balkan wars, while Cabrinovic may have wanted to dispel the shame he thought his family faced as a result of his father’s work as a police spy. Cabrinovic is also said to have felt humiliated from having been forced out of the city by Sarajevo police (Dedijer 200).

Another possible motive offered has been the conspirators’ fears of the Archduke’s reform plans. This motive is also related to Bosnian nationalism but tends to be discussed in a more sinister tone, as it portrays the conspirators as trying (and ultimately succeeding, although not quite in the way they probably intended) to undermine an empire that could have served as an example of a vibrant multinational community, instead of yet another cautionary tale of the destructive potential of nationalism that so ravaged Europe during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Archduke’s exact intentions for when he became Emperor are themselves the subject of substantial historical discussion, although the full extent of such discussion is not particularly important for the purposes of this essay. Suffice it to say, the Archduke was

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the conspirators’ Bosnian nationalism is often portrayed as separate from the Serb nationalism that animated organizations such as the Black Hand; while the Bosnian nationalists wanted unity among the different ethnic groups, Serbian nationalists wanted Serbia to rule the Balkans.

reportedly considering creating a third kingdom within the empire for Slavs, or even a remodeling of the empire to create a Federal system akin to Switzerland. More importantly than whether or not the Archduke was actually considering such schemes, word had gotten out about such plans, which Serb and Yugoslav nationalists considered a mortal threat since the role of Serbia as a “Piedmont” for South Slavs would be undermined and coopted by their enemy, Austria-Hungary. Supporters of such a motive cite a quote Princip gave at his trial when he contended that “as future sovereign he [Franz Ferdinand] would have prevented our union by carrying out certain reforms” (Clark 49). Albertini used this quote to make such an argument, as did Clark (Albertini Vol II 49) (Clark 49). Zametica, however, disagreed with the assertion that opposition to trialism was behind the Archduke’s assassination and called the evidence for this motive “extremely thin” (Zametica 363).

### **Apis’s Motives**

If Apis was involved in the conspiracy, what was his motive? While Apis is generally agreed to have been animated by Serb nationalism, simple hatred of the Archduke and Austria-Hungary alone would not have been an ample justification for taking part and/or spearheading the conspiracy. One commonly cited motive is that Apis received intelligence of an impending Austrian attack, and therefore decided to authorize the assassination when he had the opportunity to do so. Historians cannot decide what the source of this intelligence was; some assert that it came from the Russians and perhaps concerned the meeting at Konospicht in June 1914.<sup>5, 6</sup> Seton-Watson also suggested that Apis went along with the plot because he viewed the Archduke as the leader of the war party in Vienna and had received intelligence that the Bosnian

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<sup>5</sup> Exactly what happened at the Konospicht meeting has itself been a topic of intense debate in historiography, although the general trend is to view claims that a conspiracy to conquer Europe was hatched at the meeting with suspicion

<sup>6</sup> This claim was made in Stanojevic’s book

maneuvers were a prelude to war (Seton-Watson 142). Durham rejected these claims, arguing that there was too little time for intelligence about the Konospicht meeting on 12-13 June to have reached Apis on the 15<sup>th</sup> (Durham 115). Schmitt similarly analyzed the claims and found the chronology to be impossible, as did Zametica (Schmitt 222) (Zametica 399). However, other potential sources for intelligence regarding a Russian attack have been suggested, such as informers in Bosnia and Austria (Batakovic 347). Mackenzie reported that the source for the intelligence was Rade Malobabic, a Serbian spy operating in Bosnia (Mackenzie 102).

Other accounts have alleged that Apis too viewed the Archduke's supposed advocacy of "trialism" as a threat to Apis's Pan-Serb inclinations (indeed, as Serbian military intelligence chief, Apis would have been better situated to learn of such things than his Bosnian counterparts). Proponents of this motive as a motive for Apis include Remak, and Batakovic suggested a similar possibility (Remak 56-57; Batakovic 349).<sup>7</sup> Mackenzie, in his biography of Apis, rejected such a motive, writing that only Apis's admirers thought he was a "profound political thinker;" and therefore that Apis was unlikely to have engaged in any sort of sophisticated ideological calculus regarding the assassination (126). Instead, Apis "played light-heartedly with fire and helped ignite a world war" (Mackenzie 124). For other historians, Apis's participation in the conspiracy was simply a facet of his broader struggle with the civil government in Serbia. Dedijer speculated that Apis may have approved of the weapons transfers so as to weaken Austro-Hungarian/Serbian relations and undermine Pasic (395).

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<sup>7</sup> Remak also asserted that the Bosnian conspirators (with the possible exception of Princip) were unaware of Apis's true motive and were in effect exploited by Apis to further his Pan-Serb designs, as opposed to the Yugoslav nationalism favored by the Bosnian conspirators

## **Serbian Complicity in the Assassination**

Of course, Apis was not simply any Serbian; he was the head of military intelligence for the Serbian military. Therefore, the question has naturally arisen as to whether his supposed involvement represented the actions of a single, albeit highly placed, individual, or were the product of a conspiracy involving the Black Hand or even the Serbian government itself. Given the continuing debate over which state bore the most responsibility for the outbreak of the conflict, the role of Serbia in the assassination has been a subject of particular interest for historians for the last century. As previously mentioned, the Salonika Trials of 1917 and the pamphlet of Professor Stanojević sparked considerable interest in the role of the Black Hand in the assassination. Historians such as Durahm accepted the Salonika's trial verdict and the charges of Black Hand involvement in the Sarajevo conspiracy, even as they simultaneously debunked and questioned many other claims from the trial and the book.

However, the reliability of the Salonika trial and Stanojević's report have been questioned. The trial's goals were clearly political and designed to eliminate a political opponent of the Serbian government on dubious charges of attempting to overthrow the government, thus casting suspicion on any of the trial's findings (Zametica 396). Similarly, Apis's confession at Salonika, rather than a damning indictment of his culpability, has been instead portrayed as a last-ditch effort by Apis to save his own life by taking credit for an act that had widespread popular support in Serbia (Dedijer 398) (Zametica 400). As for Stanojević's report, the author was an ally of the Pasic government, and the pamphlet served to justify Pasic's execution of Apis; Zametica argued "Stanojević's booklet, without any footnotes or supporting material, was clearly written with political objectives in mind, the main one being to present Apis as the single person responsible for what happened in 1914 as well as to paint him as an incorrigible

conspirator who had even dreamt up the plot to assassinate Crown Prince Alexander in 1917” (403). Of course, historians such as Albertini and Clark have relied on additional primary sources and interviews to assign the Black Hand a formative role in the conspiracy, so the discrediting of the origins of claims of its responsibility do not necessarily absolve it.

Nevertheless, given the rather tainted nature of the origins of claims of the Black Hand’s involvement in the plot, Zametica argued that the Black Hand as served as a “red herring,” and that “the established thesis of Apis and the Black Hand organization as culpable for Sarajevo is shown to be a complete falsehood” (640). Zametica analyzed Apis’s statements claiming responsibility for the matter and found them to be nonsensical and contradictory; Apis, wrote Zametica, was a “braggart and a liar” ( 39).<sup>8</sup> Zametica’s assertion of the complete innocence of the Black Hand makes him the exception in the historiography of the Sarajevo assassination, but he is hardly the first historian to question the extent of its guilt. Seton-Watson argued that Apis and Tankosic were hardly the organizers of the plot and were not even acting for the Black Hand (143). Dedijer, similarly to Seton-Watson, placed the assassination in the context of growing Yugoslav nationalism in Bosnia and portrayed as a primarily Bosnian affair, with limited involvement from Serbia (445). Mackenzie, in his biography of Apis, also portrayed Apis as having played a relatively passive role in the affair, having agreed to provide the Bosnians with weapons when they approached Major Tankosic. “In the Sarajevo affair,” Mackenzie wrote, “Apis revealed uncharacteristic vacillation and indecisiveness” (315).<sup>9</sup>

And what of the Serbian government itself? Earlier anti-Serb historians, although conceding that there was no direct evidence of the government’s involvement, alleged that

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<sup>8</sup> For example, in a conversation with Cedomir Popovic, another Black Hand member, Apis was not able to correctly recount how many assassins had gone from Serbia to Bosnia (Zametica 398).

<sup>9</sup> Zametica, on the other hand, saw Apis’s alleged uncharacteristic passive role as evidence that Apis was probably not involved.

circumstantial evidence made such involvement a significant possibility; such evidence includes the Black Hand's past association with the Serbian government, its alleged failure to investigate the assassination until it received an Austrian request to do so (especially considering the government, at the very least, knew there was some connection to Serbia), and its alleged efforts to obstruct the investigation (by hiding Ciganovic). Especially in the immediate years after the war, when it was reasonable to assume that much evidence had not yet come to light, several historians were suspicious that future revelations would further impute guilt on official Serbia. For example, Durham concluded that "Serbia preferred to risk war rather than risk exposure we could not but conclude that the exposure would have been a very bad one," while Schmitt, after observing the domestic political considerations that may have led Pasic's government to avoid investigating the matter on its own initiative, speculated that this inaction may also have been the product of a guilty conscience" (Durham 13; Schmitt 465). In any event, even without evidence of its direct complicity, the Serbian government was held responsible for having agitated anti-Habsburg feeling in Bosnia through the NO and for having created the smuggling networks which were ultimately used by the assassins. But in the years after the war, evidence would emerge that suggested the Serbian government did know about the plot beforehand, and this evidence would serve as the basis for more substantive allegations, of, if not direct complicity, gross negligence on the part of the Serbian government.

In 1924, Ljuba Jovanovic (Serbian Minister of Education in 1914) revealed in an article that Pasic (Serbia's Prime Minister) had, at a cabinet meeting, informed his ministers that he had learned of a plot to assassinate the Archduke by several Bosnian students who had been studying in Belgrade, and had decided to instruct the border authorities to stop the assassins (Zametica 409). For anti-Serb historians, such evidence was a damning indictment of the Serbian

government's behavior in the period prior to the assassination: if Serbia knew of the assassination but failed to pass on this information to the Austrian authorities, then it by any reasonable metric bore substantial responsibility for the success of the conspiracy and thus the beginning of the war. Seton-Watson, ever the defender of Serbia, argued that Jovanovic likely made up the story so as to ingratiate himself politically with the Bosnian populace (158). But this view seems to be unique to Seton-Watson, and later historians have proven unwilling to accept that Jovanovic's tale was simply fabricated.

The consensus is that Pasic knew something about the assassination, but the source of such intelligence or the extent of it has not been agreed on. If Ciganovic was his source (as suggested by both Durham and Remak), then he would have known intimate details of the plot, which, if passed on to Austria-Hungary, could have allowed them to foil the attack. However, historians are by no means in agreement about this matter. According to Dedjier, Pasic learned of the conspiracy when the Narodna Odbrana (NO, a Serbian nationalist organization which Austria-Hungary accused of being behind the assassination in its ultimatum to Serbia) networks utilized to smuggle the assassins reported such information to their superiors, who passed it off to Pasic, who in turn then began an investigation into the matter (388-389). Although the target of the assassins was not known, Dedjier asserted that Pasic must surely have deduced that the Archduke was the most likely target (390). Consequently, Pasic had an investigation launched by both the civilian and military authorities, although it had little success (Dedjier 391-392). Batakovic reported that it was instead the border authorities who notified Pasic, and that Pasic thus lacked any detailed information on the conspiracy (Batakovic 347-348). In Zametica's analysis, Jovanovic was "embellishing the level of detail concerning the plot available to the Prime Minister" (For example, Jovanovic claimed that Pasic reported the assassins were going to



kill the Archduke on St. Vidovan's Day, when the Archduke's itinerary had not even been published yet!); in reality, Pasic's intelligence (which came from civilian authorities on the border) was vague, and it is not clear Pasic himself took it particularly seriously (Zametica 411-412).

Furthermore, historians have challenged the assertion that Serbia failed to take action to stop the assassination. Although the details are murky, an informal warning appears to have been conveyed to Joint Finance Minister Billinski by the Serbian ambassador to Vienna, Jovanovic (Zametica does not provide the first name). Almost all sources who admit such a warning agree that it was a vague one, although they differ on the exact reason for the ambiguity (Zametica 412). Jovanovic is generally reported as having delivered this warning on the instruction of Pasic or on his own initiative. Zametica, however, argued that Pasic did not order Vienna be warned as "he himself was fundamentally in the dark as to what was going on" (412).

And what of Serbia's reaction to the attack? On one side, Durham, Clark, Albertini, and others have claimed that Serbia made no attempt to launch their own investigation after the assassination, and indeed proceeded to actively obstruct the investigation instead by hiding Ciganovic, who Austria-Hungary wanted arrested. Reasons given for this inaction have included:

- Pasic's fear of the domestic political implications of fighting the Black Hand; after all, his government had recently only narrowly avoided being deposed in a political struggle with the organization (Schmitt 465) (Albertini, *Vol. II*; 98).
- Fear that the investigation would reflect badly on Serbia, considering the involvement of Serbian officials; if Ciganovic was actually a spy for the Serbian government, the investigation would have proved even more disastrous, as the extent of the government's knowledge would have emerged (Clark 390-391; 465).

In summary, various historians have proposed Serbian complicity in the assassination in the following ways:

- By having laid the groundwork for the assassination through the propaganda efforts and the smuggling networks of the NO
- Through the Black Hand, whose members included high-ranking members of the Serbian government. A government inevitably bears some responsibility for the actions of its officials, even if those officials acted improperly without the government's knowledge
- By failing to have taken sufficient action to stop the assassination once it was discovered
- For having failed to launch an investigation on its own initiative following the assassination

### **Did Apis Try to Stop the Attack?**

One final curious strand of the Sarajevo saga is the possibility that Apis himself tried to stop the assassination. According to Seton-Watson, Apis informed the Black Hand's Central Executive Council about his provision of weapons to the Bosnians conspirators; rather than endorse Apis's actions, the Council, suspecting that such attacks would lead to disaster for Serbia, rejected them and instructed Apis to stop the conspirators; Seton-Watson was unsure whether or not Apis actually tried to stop the conspiracy, but asserted that even if Apis had tried, such efforts were unlikely to dissuade Princip and his fellow conspirators from carrying out the attack (Mackenzie expressed similar uncertainty about whether or not Apis had actually followed the CEC's instructions, while Remak reported more definitively that Apis ignored the CEC's instructions) (Seton-Watson 142). Future historians who provided a possible avenue by which Apis might have attempted to abort the conspiracy supported Seton-Watson's sentiment; Dedijer and Zametica reported that Apis sent Djuro Sarac to stop the attack; Sarac and Illic met in the

town of Brod and Sarac passed along his message, but Illic was unsuccessful in convincing Princip to abort (Dedijer 309; Zametica 406-407). But according to Zametica, Apis's attempts to stop the attack did not stop with this first effort. Once he realized that the conspirators could not be kept from leaving Serbia or dissuaded from their homicidal intentions, Apis sent instructions to Serbia's ambassador in Vienna to warn the Austro-Hungarian authorities about the attack. This conclusion was pure conjecture on Zametica's part, but it was based on the logic that if Jovanovic did warn Vienna, but was evasive when questioned by Pasic whether he had given a warning and what his source was, then Jovanovic's source must have been "an important enemy of Pašić (outside the government) who was simultaneously a credible major player in Belgrade's intelligence community; and moreover, one who had access to Jovanović" (Zametica 419). In Zametica's analysis, "this description points unerringly to the head of Serbia's military intelligence: Lieutenant-Colonel Dragutin Dimitrijević Apis" (419).

As for why Apis may have decided to attempt to stop the attack, the following possibilities have been alleged:

- He was ordered to by the Black Hand's Executive Council once Apis informed them of the plot (Seton Watson 142) (Mackenzie 134) (Dedijer 393).
- He decided that the assassination was important enough that it should be executed by professionals (Fromkin 123)
- He never had supported the attack in the first place, and once he discovered the plot he resolved to stop it (Zametica)

## **Conclusion**

If the considerable divergence between two of the most recent accounts of the Sarajevo assassination, Christopher Clark's *Sleepwalkers* and John Zametica's *Folly and Malice*, are

indicative of anything, historians can still not agree on many critical details of the Sarajevo conspiracy, even a century after the Archduke's car made its fateful stop on the intersection of the Appel Quay and Franz Joseph Street. Despite this century of research, debates on the matter still feature many of the same arguments and issues that Seton-Watson and Edith Durham sparred over in 1925. And despite Zametica's ambitious attempt to resolve many of these questions, one suspects that it is only a matter of time before his assertions are challenged in yet another comprehensive study of the whole affair.

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