

Gavrilo Princip Biography

Gavrilo Princip

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Biography

Gavrilo Princip's assassination of the Archduke of Austria-Hungary was the catalyst for events that ultimately led to World War I. Princip and his cohorts sought autonomy for Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was then part of the Hapsburg empire. He was also one of several members of a terrorist group known as the Black Hand.

On June 28, 1914, Princip and several co-conspirators were in the Bosnian city of Sarajevo, where their goal was to kill Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Armed with grenades and pistols, the terrorists lined the motorcade route of the Archduke and his wife Sophie. Each of the terrorists failed, either through poor aim or poor timing. But Princip was a good shot, and he was the most resourceful of the group as well.

As the motorcade came within yards of Princip, it stopped abruptly; apparently the first car had made a wrong turn. In the moments while the cars were stopped, Princip went up to the Franz Ferdinand's car and fired two shots. One killed the Archduke and one killed the Archduchess.

Princip tried to kill himself but was stopped by police. He was tried and found guilty, but he escaped the death penalty because there was a question about whether his twentieth birthday came just before or just after June 28. (The court decided to give him the benefit of the doubt.) Princip was already suffering from tuberculosis in 1914, and he succumbed to the disease in an Austrian prison in April of 1918.