

TYRANNICIDE NOT TERRORISM: TWO INTERESTING ASSASSINATIONS

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These days we have become so appalled at apparently senseless, random political killings and violence that we tend to forget that there is a difference between terrorism--the intentional killing or injury of innocent persons to achieve political ends--and tyrannicide, i.e., the killing or attempted killing of a tyrant. Only last July in West Germany there were official public ceremonies honoring the memory of the brave men who died when they tried to kill Hitler--the ultimate tyrant--with a bomb on July 20, 1944. Moreover, tyrannicide is intrinsically interesting, involving as it does political assassination or attempted assassination. Therefore, I propose to briefly describe two of the more interesting assassination-tyrannicides of this century: the assassinations of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in 1914 and of Reinhard Heydrich in 1942.

The assassination of Franz Ferdinand, heir apparent to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, occurred in Sarajevo in what is now Yugoslavia and was then Bosnia (a province of the Empire annexed in 1908), on June 28, 1914. Sunday, June 28, 1914 was the fourteenth anniversary of the contract of marriage between Franz Ferdinand and his wife, the beautiful Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg. (The marriage had taken place on July 1, 1900.) June 28, St. Vitus's Day, was also a sacred day to the Slavic peoples, who called it Vidov Dan, and so it is not surprising that restive elements of the local populace decided the day would be an appropriate one to slay a man they perceived as a tyrant. Exactly 525 years earlier, on June 28, 1389, the Slavs had suffered a catastrophic military defeat in a battle with the Turks at Kossovo.

Franz Ferdinand and his wife arrived by train at the railway station in Sarajevo around 10:00 a.m. It was a beautiful, warm summer day and after welcoming ceremonies they entered the automobile that was to take them to the Town Hall for a reception. They sat in the back seat of the open touring car, the Archduke on the left side, his wife on the right; sitting opposite and facing them in a jump seat was the military governor of the province. A chauffeur and one bodyguard were in the front seat. They left in a motorcade and began driving down the Appel Quay, a long, wide road running parallel to the Miljacka River. When the car reached a point about a half mile from the Town Hall, one of several young men, members of a group called Young Bosnia who had been armed and trained in Serbia and who intended to attack the Archduke with pistols and bombs, fired a pistol shot at the Archduke, which missed, whereupon another of the young men threw a fizzling bomb at the Archduke's automobile. Franz Ferdinand warded it off with his arm; the bomb rolled backwards and then exploded under the next car in the motorcade, slightly wounding several military officers in that car. The Archduke was unhurt; his wife suffered several minor scratches on her neck from exploding bomb fragments. Franz Ferdinand ordered the chauffeur to stop; saw that the wounded were tended to; and then ordered that the trip be resumed. Stopping his car and exposing himself to possible further attack was unbelievably unwise and hazardous.

At the Town Hall Franz Ferdinand and his entourage debated what to do now; and apparently because they lost their heads in the excitement it was decided to drive back along the Appel

Quay (!) so that the wounded officers could be visited at the hospital. A proposal by one of the Archduke's military adjutants that the streets of Sarajevo be lined with troops and that the Archduke not depart the Town Hall until the new security precautions had been taken was considered but rejected. The decision to drive back along the same road where the bomb attempt had just occurred was an indescribably foolish decision. Franz Ferdinand wanted his wife to leave under armed guard by another route, but she insisted on accompanying him, and he relented. No new or added security precautions had been taken. No thought was given to closing the Archduke's open car or increasing the number of bodyguards in the car. One of the most famous photographs of the 20th century shows the shaken couple descending the steps of the Town Hall and approaching the fatal car. With the bodyguard now standing on the left running board near the Archduke, the automobile containing the royal couple began driving down the Appel Quay toward the site of the previous bomb attack. The bodyguard had taken his position on the left side of the car because the bomb had been thrown from that side when the motorcade was on its way to the Town Hall. The car had driven only a few hundred yards when the chauffeur, who was supposed to drive straight ahead, proceeded (whether intentionally, negligently or accidentally is unknown) to turn onto an adjoining street. The chauffeur, told by the shouting military governor that he had made a wrong turn, then stopped the car, put it into reverse, and began slowly to back up. He had stopped the automobile immediately in front of another Young Bosnia assassin, this one standing on the sidewalk on the right side of the car and armed with a small Browning semiautomatic pistol. The assassin, a 19-year old Bosnian schoolboy named Gavrilo Princip, stepped forward and fired two shots from a distance of about 5 feet while the car was stopped. The lone bodyguard constituted no obstacle, since he was on the left side of the automobile. The first bullet went through the car door and struck the Duchess of Hohenberg in the side, severing a stomach artery; the second bullet struck Franz Ferdinand in the neck, severing an artery.

"As the car quickly reversed," the bodyguard later recounted, "a thin stream of blood spurted out of His Imperial Highness's mouth onto my right cheek. With one hand I got out my handkerchief to wipe the blood from the Archduke's face, and as I did so Her Highness called out [to the Archduke], 'In God's name what has happened to you?' Then she collapsed, her face between the Archduke's knees. I had no idea that she was hit and thought she had fainted with fear. His Imperial Highness then said, 'Sopher! Sopher! Don't die! Live for our children!' I took hold of the collar of his tunic in order to prevent his head sinking forward and asked him, 'Is Your Imperial Highness in great pain?' He answered distinctly, 'It is nothing.' Then he turned his face a little to one side and said six or seven times, more faintly as he began to lose consciousness, 'It is nothing.' There was a very brief pause, then the bleeding made him choke violently."

Within five minutes of being shot the Archduke and his wife were dead. The two lethal gunshots had been fired less than hour after the bomb attempt.

Today in the crypt of an Austrian castle the bodies of the slain Archduke and his wife lie side by side in two marble sarcophagi mounted on a base stone bearing a Latin inscription: "Iuncti Coniugio Fatis Iunguntur Eisdem" (joined in marriage, united by the same fate).

To this day no one knows exactly how many assassins there were in Sarajevo that day. Princip,

now a national hero in Yugoslavia, and fifteen accomplices (including the bomb thrower) were arrested and convicted; some were executed and others imprisoned. (At his trial Princip claimed he regretted shooting the Archduke's wife, asserting that he had intended to shoot the military governor in the jump seat.) Princip died in prison of tuberculosis in 1918.

It has now been conclusively proved that the assassination was funded by and undertaken in behalf of a secret Serbian society known as "Union or Death" and popularly called "The Black Hand," which provided the bombs and pistols. The mastermind of the plot to kill Franz Ferdinand was a mysterious, restless individual nicknamed Apis (Bee), the chief of Serbian military intelligence.

As a direct result of the assassination, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914, and this precipitated other declarations of war and hence World War I. Thus the Sarajevo assassination was perhaps the most influential in modern history. There is a military history museum in Vienna (which I have visited) where you can see the death car as well as the blood-stained blue jacket Franz Ferdinand was wearing. You can even put a finger through the bullet hole in the door, and through the two holes in the rear of the car made by shrapnel from the exploding bomb fended off by the Archduke!

It may be disputed whether Franz Ferdinand really was a tyrant, but there can be no dispute that Reinhard Heydrich was one, or that he deserved to die. Heydrich was one of the bloodiest villains ever to profane the earth with his existence. He was an Obergruppenfuhrer of the Nazi SS, one of the most criminal and murderous organizations in history. He was the head of the Reich Central Security Office (RSHA), which included the Nazi Secret Police (the GESTAPO), the Nazi Criminal Police (the KRIPO), and the Nazi Security Service (SD), the Nazi spy organization. He was the immediate subordinate of the equally infamous SS chief, Heinrich Himmler. Himmler and Heydrich were the foremost architects of the Final Solution, the physical extermination of the Jews and other so-called "inferior" races.

In 1942 Heydrich was the Nazi ruler in charge of occupied Czechoslovakia, then called the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Overconfident, he had adopted the practice, unlike most high-ranking Nazi butchers, of driving around in an open car with no protection except a bodyguard-driver. On the bright spring morning of Wednesday, May 27, 1942, shortly after 10 o'clock, he was on his way from his palatial residence outside of Prague to military headquarters in downtown Prague. From there he was going to head for the airport and take up a new assignment in France. As his open limousine approached a downhill hairpin curve in a Prague suburb and was forced to slow down, two assassins were waiting. Both were Czechs and part of a special operations unit, trained in England, who had been parachuted into Czechoslovakia the previous December. Their assignment: kill Heydrich. One of the assassins leaped in front of Heydrich's car and brandished a submachine gun, which, however, jammed. Instead of telling his driver to speed ahead, Heydrich committed the fatal error of ordering him to stop. As Heydrich and his driver in their stationary limousine pulled out pistols to defend themselves, the other assassin threw a grenade from the rear, which exploded near the right rear wheel of the car. Probably other assassins were in the vicinity. Pistol shots were exchanged, and the assassins escaped. Heydrich did not at first appear to be seriously hurt, but on June 4 he died painfully of his wounds.

Adolf Hitler awarded Heydrich a lavish state funeral and personally delivered a eulogy which concluded: "[Heydrich] was one of the greatest of all Nazis (!).... He was the man with the iron heart (!)."

On June 18 the assassins and other members of their team, hiding in a Prague church, were surrounded by 740 SS troops. Every one of the trapped men was killed or committed suicide to avoid capture. They are all national heroes now in Czechoslovakia. In reprisal for Heydrich's death, the Nazis killed thousands of Czechs, and wiped out the people and village of Lidice.

It was recently disclosed why Heydrich died of wounds that appeared minor at the time. The grenades carried by the assassination team had been specially prepared by Dr. Paul Fildes, a British scientist specializing in germ warfare and working for the British intelligence services. In addition to explosives, the grenades had been filled with deadly botulism toxins. When the grenade thrown at the car exploded, it drove poisons deep into Heydrich's body, and these poisons killed him when they multiplied and spread. The death of Heydrich was perhaps the most triumphant special operation action of British intelligence in World War II. And the secret of their triumph was withheld for nearly 30 years!