

# ‘A Terrible Dream’

## A Possible Premonition of the Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and the Consequence of Some Unlikely Coincidences

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On 28 June 1914, at half past 3 o’clock in the morning, I woke up from a terrible dream.

So wrote Bishop Dr. Joseph Lányi of Grosswardein in a letter to his brother. He had once been one of Archduke Franz Ferdinand’s teachers and feared desperately for his future. The letter continued:

I dreamt that I go to my desk in the morning in order to check my post. On top was a letter with a black margin, a black seal and the crest of arms of the Archduke. Immediately, I recognised the handwriting of my unforgettable great lord. I opened the letter and at the top of the letter paper I saw, in sky blue, a picture such as on post cards, depicting an avenue and a narrow lane. Their Highnesses were seated in an automobile; vis-à-vis sat a general, next to the driver, an officer. A crowd on either side of the street. Two young men leap forward and fire on Their Highnesses. The text of the letter is verbally the same as seen in my dream. It says:

“Your Episcopal Grace! Dear Dr. Lányi! I hereby notify you that today I fall, together with my wife in Sarajevo, as a victim of an insidious political murder. We recommend ourselves to your pious prayers and holy masses and ask you to remain as devoted as before in love and fidelity to our children. In Cordial Greeting, Yours, Achd. Franz. Sarajevo, 28 June 1914, half past three in the morning.”

Shaking and in tears I jumped out of the bed, looked at the clock that showed half past three. Hurriedly, I went to my desk, wrote down what I had seen in the dream. Whilst writing I even kept the shape of some letters as they had been written by the Archduke. The same morning at a quarter to six, my servant

entered my studio, saw me pale and praying with my rosary. He asked whether I was ill. I said: “Just call my mother and our guest, in a moment I’ll say mass for Their Highnesses, as I have had a terrible dream.” Mother and our guest arrived at a quarter past six. I told her my dream, our guest and the curious servant being present. Then I went with them to the chapel to celebrate for Their Highnesses. The entire day passed in disquiet and fear until at half past three in the afternoon a telegram from Vienna brought the terrible news that Their Highnesses have been murdered in Sarajevo. R.I.P.

Even though the Ottoman Empire had passed its peak after the second Siege of Vienna in 1683, the following century saw wars and campaigns against the Ottomans, fought for the Habsburgs by Prince Eugene of Savoy and other commanders, and likewise (commencing in 1720) the first diplomatic efforts by establishing embassies. The Crimean War in the middle of the nineteenth century was a major European war with Russia claiming to be the protecting power of (Orthodox) Christianity in the Holy Land (then a province of the Ottoman Empire). Two decades later, the Russo-Turkish war of 1877/78 ended with a Russian victory, however the peace treaty was revised by the Congress of Berlin and conveyed in 1878 by the then German Chancellor, Otto von Bismarck. In order to stabilize the Balkans, Ottoman possessions in Europe were reduced. Serbia, a semi-autonomous principality, got its independence as a sovereign state. Two territories of the decaying Ottoman Empire were detached from it and assigned to other powers for occupation and administration: the island of Cyprus to Britain and the provinces of Bosnia and Hercegovina to Austro-Hungary.

Against expectations, the occupation of Bosnia-Hercegovina was

not an easy task. Bosnia-Hercegovina’s population consisted of three ethnic groups: the Bosnian Serbs (Orthodox Christian), the Bosnian Croats (Roman Catholic), and the so-called Bosniaks (Bosnian Muslims). While the Bosnian Croats cheered the political change from the Muslim Ottoman rule to the Catholic Habsburgs, the Bosniaks offered ardent resistance that was only eventually overcome by Austro-Hungarian forces. The fierce campaign, led by Feldzeugmeister (‘general’) Joseph Philippović von Philippsberg, resulted in the loss of thousands of lives.

Over the next three decades, the Habsburg administration greatly improved the infrastructure of these backward and extremely poor territories by building streets and railway lines, schools and hospitals, etc. In consequence, the attitudes of the various ethnic groups changed. Serbian nationalism – backed by Russian pan-Slavism – rose, whereas the Bosniaks became loyal to a degree that later, during World War I, led them to be considered the most faithful and gallant soldiers of the Emperor.

During the years of Austrian occupation, Bosnia-Hercegovina remained formally a part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1908 Austro-Hungary resolved to annex these provinces, extending the Habsburgs’ sovereignty over them. This caused a major European crisis. However, the diplomatic turmoil was settled again and in 1910 Emperor Franz Joseph I, despite his advanced age of 82, paid a visit to the cities of Mostar and Sarajevo (the provincial capital). Rigorous security measures were instituted and nothing untoward occurred. The one would-be assassin did not carry out his murderous plans. However, shortly afterwards he tried to kill the ‘Landeschef’ (the joint head of the military and civilian administration), but failed and eventually shot himself, by which deed he became a hero in the eyes of

the ultra-nationalist Bosnian Serbian youth.

Two Balkan Wars were fought in 1912 and 1913, during which Serbia, a kingdom since 1882, became a local power, giving rise to pan-Serbian aspirations. Various secret organizations within Serbia as well under the Bosnian Serbs were formed to unite all of the southern Slavs under Serbian predominance.

The Austrian Archduke and heir presumptive, Franz Ferdinand, entertained ideas of strengthening the Slav element within the Habsburg monarchy. Binding the Slavs more closely to the Empire counteracted Serbian aspirations, making Franz Ferdinand their archenemy. In Serbian propaganda campaigns he was deliberately misrepresented as one seeking to wage war on Serbia.

Archduke Franz Ferdinand held the rank of general of the cavalry, admiral of the navy and Inspector General of the Entire Armed Forces of Austro-Hungary. In this capacity he planned to visit the annual manoeuvres of the two army corps stationed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and to take his morganatic wife, Duchess Sophie, along for a visit to Sarajevo.

When the visit of the couple was announced in Austrian newspapers it did not take long for the news spread to Bosnia. A group of ultra-nationalist Bosnian Serb youth, determined to make a political mark since 1908/10, now resolved to grasp the opportunity of the Archduke's visit to Sarajevo to carry out their plans. Most of the conspirators were just under twenty years of age and suffering from tuberculosis. Already expecting a short life ruined by disease, they felt they had nothing to lose. The terrorist acts they plotted carried the death penalty, but this held no fear for them.

Through intermediaries, they made contact with Serbian nationals belonging to the secret society known as 'The Black Hand', headed by the chief of the Serbian Army Intelligence Department. By the end of 28 June 1914, there were seven conspirators equipped with smuggled Browning pistols and 'bombs' (Kragujevac' type hand grenades) from Serbian Army supplies, lining the street the Archduke was supposed to drive along and determined to kill the him and the Landeschef, Feldzeugmeister Oskar Potiorek.

Nikola Pašić, the Serbian Prime Minister, head of the National Party, and politically dependent on the ultra-



A contemporary card commemorating the death of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg.

nationalist group of army officers, saw himself trapped between possible problems either in foreign affairs or domestically. If he warned the Austrian authorities about the assassination plans he would lose political credibility within his party and probably forfeit his position. On the other hand, if he kept silent and it transpired that political circles in Serbia were behind the assassination that would mean a veritable crisis between Serbia and Austro-Hungary. In this dilemma he decided to act 'diplomatically'.

Pašić had the Serbian ambassador in Vienna approach the minister in charge of Bosnia-Herzegovina and make a few vague remarks on ethnic Serb soldiers who might be radical enough to exchange a blank cartridge for a live one at the manoeuvres and that therefore the Archduke's planned visit to Bosnia might be dangerous, remarks that were down-played by the minister. The Serbian

ambassador's appearance at the minister's office was reported in the Viennese newspapers, so it was likely that some sort of warning was given.

Members of the aristocracy also approached the Archduke to try and talk him out of his travel plans. Acknowledging the dangers of the situation, the Archduke was nonetheless adamant that the visit was nothing less than his duty. 'Certainly your warning is justified,' he said, 'yet I will not allow myself to be placed under a bell jar. Our life is always in danger.'

There are some other, albeit less well documented, quotations that convey the possibility that he might have had some presentiments of death. Despite that, as the highest ranking officer after the Emperor and future sovereign, he was apparently convinced that he had to stand firm in the face of danger and that he must not give in to fear or negative presentiments.



The route through Sarajevo along the River Miljacko



Address by the Mayor outside the townhall after the first failed assassination attempt



Motoring down the Appel Quai moments before taking the wrong turn



Cafe Moritz Schiller with a cross marking the fatal spot



Fredo Behr arrested after hitting a policeman in the stomach as a diversion following the shooting

The first leg of his journey to Sarajevo was by railway to Trieste and then by sea. Right at the outset, as he was about to entrain at the railway station with the Duchess who would accompany him until Vienna, a wheel bearing of his carriage had overheated and was smoking heavily as the train pulled into the station. Subsequently, another carriage had to be used. As a chamberlain remembered, Franz Ferdinand remarked to his wife, 'Look, so it starts. Firstly, a carriage overheats, then an assassination in Sarajevo, and if that doesn't help, an explosion on the steamer *Viribus* [*Viribus Unitis* was the name of the Austrian Navy's most modern battleship of the *Dreadnought* class] [...]' While such statements might be viewed as grim presentiments, they are, as transpires from other quotes, rather an expression of the Archduke's sarcasm and black humour.

In Bad Ilidže, a fashionable spa, some twenty minutes' drive away from Sarajevo, the Archduke was re-united with his wife, who had made the entire journey by train. On the late afternoon of their arrival (25 September) they made an unscheduled and informal visit to Sarajevo, sightseeing and shopping in the bazaar, where they were hailed by people in the street who recognized them.

During the next two days, the Archduke inspected the troops during their manoeuvres, while the Duchess, accompanied by her lady-in-waiting, visited schools, nurseries, hospitals, churches, and monasteries. Afterwards, a celebratory dinner was held at their hotel in Bad Ilidže during which the Archduke, already missing his children, suggested cancelling the visit to the capital, Sarajevo, scheduled for the next day. However, Lieutenant Colonel Erich Edler von Merizzi, Aide-de-Camp to Potiorek (since 1911), as well as his close personal friend, remarked that this would be a slight to the Landeschef and would disappoint the populace who were looking forward to the long-awaited visit by their future emperor. The Archduke conceded.

On the morning of 28 September, the Archduke and Duchess attended Mass in the private chapel of their hotel before leaving for Sarajevo. After two days of rainy weather this Sunday was clear and bright. After arriving at the railway station, the Archduke and his entourage mounted the automobiles supplied by the 'Imperial and Royal Voluntary Automobile Corps', members of which – forming a sort of militia – had been called out on duty for the manoeuvres.

The convoy consisted of seven vehicles. Policemen manned the first car, while the mayor of Sarajevo and the commander of the constabulary rode on the second one. The Archduke and Duchess rode in the third, the Gräf & Stift Double Phaeton of Count Franz Harrach, a First Lieutenant in the Landwehr, which had been driven all the way from the Count's castle near Prague in Bohemia. Driven by Corporal Leopold Lojka, the car was equipped with folding seats in the middle row thus providing space for six people. Of course it was a right-hand-drive car as left-hand traffic was in force at that time. The Archduke and Duchess were seated in the rear of the passenger compartment, while Feldzeugmeister Potiorek and Count Harrach occupied the folding seats in front of them.

On the itinerary was a drive past the new barracks, a reception hosted by the mayor at the Town Hall, a visit to the museum in the Old City, and finally a dinner at the Konak, the official residence of the Landeschef. Over the entire three-kilometre route, only some 30 to 40 policemen were posted. This was in stark contrast to the rigorous security measures during the Emperor's visit four years previously.

Feldzeugmeister Potiorek had rejected suggestions to augment the police force by military troops or by constabulary, stating that this was unnecessary as the situation was perfectly safe. Whether he desired to demonstrate how peaceful the provinces had become under his command, compared with the

situation in 1910 under his predecessor (an idea underpinned by the economic revival, e.g., the great number of new and noble buildings in the Art Nouveau style), or whether he simply failed to realise the extent of the danger posed by Serbian nationalism remains unclear. In all probability, both interpretations bear some truth.

The convoy moved off at 10:07 hrs. By 10:15 hrs they had passed the barracks and were driving slowly along the river front of the Miljačka, on the avenue Appel Quai. They stopped at the telegraph office as the Duchess was handed a telegram sent by their children.

The first of the conspirators was positioned a few hundred metres down



Shrapnel hole in the windscreen of the following car.

the road. As the convoy passed, he did not act at all. Two more conspirators were positioned a little further on, one on either side of the Appel Quai. One of them, Čabrinović, asked a policeman standing nearby which of the vehicles carried the Archduke. When the vehicle approached, he unscrewed the security cap of his bomb and armed it by knocking the bolt of the detonator against a lamp post which gave a loud metallic snap, then he hurled the bomb towards the car.

Alerted by the sound, the Archduke shouted 'drive faster'. At the same moment Corporal Lojka accelerated of his own accord. They saw a dark object flying directly towards them, but the Archduke managed to deflect it with his arm. The bomb came to rest on top of the folded canopy for a few seconds before vibrations from the moving car caused it to fall onto the road, where it exploded as the next vehicle approached.

The bomb punched a hole of 30 by 30 centimetres in the tarmac, damaged the car next to it by perforating its oil sump, thus rendering the vehicle unserviceable, and injured a number of people by shrapnel. Shell splinters even hit the back of the Archduke's car, but with no other effect than denting the

coachwork and removing some of the varnish. Riding in the severely affected car, Merizzi and another officer were injured. Merizzi was bleeding heavily from his head, creating the appearance of being seriously injured.

### 'THIS WAS JUST A MADMAN.'

The Archduke stopped his car and asked Count Harrach to run back and assess the situation. The two injured officers were taken to the garrison hospital located near the railway station.

'This was just a madman,' said the Archduke, 'let's continue with our programme' upon which the convoy proceeded – now driving at an accelerated speed – towards the Town Hall. There the mayor and his party were already waiting. They were unperturbed, having mistaken the sound of the explosion for a salute fired by the new artillery battery at the Yellow Bastion on the other side of the river.

All had been set for a solemn reception at the Town Hall: the red carpet, a little girl with a bouquet of flowers almost larger than herself, Muslim dignitaries in their festive local dresses. Once Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Duchess Sophie, Landeschef Feldzeugmeister Potiorek and Count Harrach arrived, the Mayor (whose command of German was poor) started reading his welcome speech: 'Your Imperial and Royal Highness! Your Highness! Full of joy are our hearts.'

The Archduke interrupted him harshly: 'This is nice. One comes to visit this city and gets received with bombs.' Then the Duchess whispered something into his ear, upon which he said to the Mayor: 'Now you may continue'. Following the Mayor's address, the Archduke replied, adding that he was pleased to realise how happily the people reacted to the fact that the assassination attempt had failed. He concluded his speech by saying a few words in Serbo-Croatian.



## The Bomb

A Kragujevac bomb of the type used by Čabrinović.

The gentlemen remained downstairs for their reception, while there was a separate ladies' reception upstairs for the Duchess. The Archduke, who had regained his usual even-tempered mood, made a few sarcastic remarks, such as: 'In our circumstances, the assassin will finally be awarded the golden medal of merit. Certainly he will at least become privy counsellor.' And later: 'I imagine today we'll get a few small bullets more.'

The future course of actions was discussed: should the visit be aborted, should the itinerary be changed, another road to be taken for the way back to the railway station? Feldzeugmeister Potiorek remarked it was unlikely that two assassination attempts would happen on the very same day, moreover, it was all safe, and he added: 'Your Highness, you are safe to continue. I take the responsibility.' Nonetheless, the Archduke wanted his wife to be driven to the railway station directly. The chamberlain was dispatched to the first floor in order to convey this message, to which the Duchess replied: 'As long as the Archduke will expose himself to the public today, I'll not absent myself from his side.'

Eventually, Franz Ferdinand resolved to continue the programme as scheduled, yet with one fatal modification. They were to visit the two injured officers in hospital. Whether this intention came from the Archduke or from Potiorek – one might remember his relation to Merizzi – remains unclear, however, the agenda was changed accordingly. The sequence of vehicles in the convoy was similar to before: the Archduke's car was number three. Count Harrach positioned himself standing on the left-hand-side runningboard, next to the Archduke's seat in order to protect him with his own body.

Of course, responsibility for taking the modified route was with the driver of the first vehicle. Whether the respective order was not given, not understood, or even forgotten, the first car did not drive back all the way along the Appel Quai as intended, but took mistakenly the right turn into Franz Joseph Street towards the museum in the Old City as per the



## The Killer

Gavrilo Princip (1894 - 1918). Two bullets that killed 17 million and wounded another 20 million in the First World War, and created the conditions that led to the Second World War. Too young to be given the death penalty, Princip was sentenced to the maximum term of twenty years imprisonment. He died of tuberculosis aged 23 in the fortress prison of Terezín.



Уједињење или смрт ('Unification or Death') The seal of The Black Hand (Црна Рука), a nationalist secret society linked to the Young Bosnia group of which Princip was a member.

original route. The second car followed and so did the third. Corporal Lojka had no knowledge of the city and just did what he was supposed to do, i.e., drive his vehicle in the trail of the preceding one; so he even cut the corner like the first and second vehicle had done.

This brought the Archduke's car – contrary to the prevailing left hand drive direction – close to the pedestrians' footpath on the right side of the street. The moment the vehicle took the wrong turn, Feldzeugmeister Potiorek shouted 'What's that? Stop it. We are taking the wrong way. We should drive straight ahead!'

Lojka stopped the car, turned around to Count Harrach and asked 'Shall I reverse?' The Count replied 'Yes, reverse!' By chance, the vehicle had come to a full stop next to where another of the conspirators, Gavrilo Princip, was standing. He was outside the cafe Moritz Schiller where he had drunk a mocha and thought about what to do next after witnessing Čabrinović's failure.

It was now 10:50 hrs. Princip did not need to move one single step. His target was standing still right in front of him, moreover, surprisingly close. Yet he hesitated, as he did not expect a lady to be sitting in the car. But then, so he said later, it just crept over him and he pulled out his pistol. A policeman standing next to him saw his move and was about to push Princip's arm down when Simon Pušara, a sympathiser of the Serb national movement, hit the policeman in the side. The policeman was unable to prevent Princip from firing his pistol.

Princip had had but little previous training in firearms: just a few rounds in a Belgrade park under the supervision of a Serb Army officer. Instead of taking proper aim over the iron sights, he turned his head away and fired two rounds. One was intended for the Archduke; the other one for the Landeschef. Both bullets were fatal.

The first bullet punctured the aluminium sheet metal of the coachwork and entered the Duchess's abdomen just above her girdle. She died of internal bleeding within minutes. The second round, fired immediately afterwards, went higher and hit the Archduke in the throat, rupturing a blood vessel, the air tube and finally lodging in the cervical spine. At once, a stream of blood erupted from his mouth, spraying Count Harrach in the face. The

**'STAY ALIVE. THINK OF OUR CHILDREN.'**

Duchess, on seeing it, said 'My God, what has happened to you?' These were her final words before passing out. She fell forward and the Archduke said (with difficulty due to the bleeding): 'Sopherl, Sopherl [an affectionate form of Sophia], stay alive, think of our children!'

When Count Harrach asked 'Your Highness, do you suffer severely?', Franz Ferdinand replied in a low voice 'It is nothing, nothing.' And then he, too, passed out, held upright by Count Harrach, while Feldzeugmeister Potiorek directed the driver to the Konak, his residence, where medical help would be available shortly. On arrival there – a distance of a few hundred metres only – the Duchess was already dead. Both the Archduke and Duchess were carried upstairs and laid down. The Archduke's uniform was cut open in order to find the location where the bullet had entered his body and to subsequently stop the bleeding. It was too late. At 11:00 hrs he drew his last breath.

The possibility of an assassination was imminent. Thus dreaming of an assassination, as such, does not warrant a parapsychological interpretation, it might be based on the fear for the life of the Archduke with whom the Bishop had been very close in earlier years. The question can only be whether the single elements of the dream have the character of precognition.

Firstly, the description of the scenery of the assassination was very general. 'An avenue and a narrow lane' was incorrect. Both the Appel Quai and Franz Joseph Street have almost the same width.

Secondly, the seating vis-à-vis was incorrect. The vehicle was a motorcar and neither a carriage nor a railway compartment where passengers are seated facing one another.

Thirdly, while it is correct that two young men were the assassins, they did not act together as the wording of the dream would have it. It was not one assassination carried out by two men, in fact, it was two separate assassinations carried out by one young man in each case.

Fourthly, no one leapt forward. Both Čabrinović and Princip attacked from the very position where they were standing and waiting.

Finally, they did not both fire. Only Princip did so, whereas Čabrinović threw a bomb.

Summarizing these items strictly one arrives at the result that the details do not depict the true picture. The description of the assassination rendered in the Bishop's dream might well be a product of his imagination how an assassination could likely be carried out. In his dream, caused by fear and anxiety, the contents are pure fantasy.

However, when taking into account the mechanisms of dreams, such as consolidation, displacement, and the like, one might argue that it is not unusual that two events (the two assassinations) were amalgamated into one, and only the successful one came into the foreground, resulting in suppressing the bomb and dreaming only of firearms. While this latter consideration cannot be disputed and there is a certain range of possible interpretations, I find myself rather on the strict side and would not argue that Bishop Lányi's dream provides evidence for precognition.

While it is arguable that security measures were greatly insufficient and, in particular, that the number of police deployed was too small by far, it happened by chance that there was a policeman posted next to each of the two assassins (or they positioned themselves there regardless of the vicinity of the police). Neither of these policemen was able to prevent the assassin from carrying out his plan.

The decision to visit the injured officers in the hospital was the crucial point. Without that modification to the original itinerary, the convoy, having turned into Franz Joseph Street, would have done so moving at normal speed. It would not have presented a stationary target to Princip, and perhaps could even been

too fast for him to level his pistol at all. Otherwise, had the driver of the leading vehicle followed the new route properly, they would not even have passed by the spot where Princip was standing.

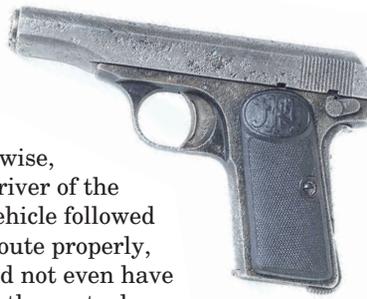
Due to Potiorek's 'Stop!' and Harrach's 'Reverse!', the vehicle carrying the Archduke and his wife came to a full stop right at the very spot where Princip was standing. Furthermore, due to cutting the curb, it ended up on the wrong side of the road and thus very close to Princip.

The policeman positioned next to Princip saw him take his pistol out from his jacket and made a movement to push his arm down. However, he could not stop the course of events as, by chance, Simon Pušara was standing next to him and on realizing the policeman's incipient action hit him in the side, so that his movement missed Princip's arm.

Princip fired only two shots and he did so without aiming at all. He said he turned his head away. This was corroborated by the witnesses in the subsequent trial. Yet both bullets were lethal.

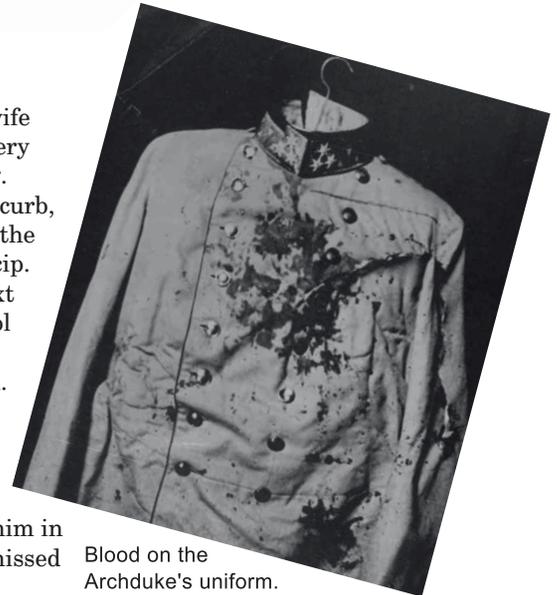
This seems to be an extremely unlikely agglomeration of events that are already very unlikely in themselves. If only one of the last four items had not happened, or had happened in a different manner, the world would probably have spared this catastrophic murder.

All this raises all sorts of philosophical questions on the nature of 'chance' versus 'fate', on 'destiny' and whether one might escape it or not, on the question of whether the



## The Gun

The 9mm Browning Model 1910 used by Gavrilo Princip. It is now in the Heeresgeschichtliches Museum, Vienna, Austria.



Blood on the Archduke's uniform.

future is determined or not, etc. It appears as if all these single events were consequently aligned, leading to the final effect of leaving Franz Ferdinand and Sophie dead. Though that impression might be false, there are people who believe that there is a meaning in history – a question pertaining to the philosophy of history – and given that it might be true, what could the meaning be of an event that four years later caused four empires to collapse and millions of people to perish? Of course, these questions go well beyond the scope of parapsychology, yet it should be permitted to point towards them.

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