

June 28<sup>th</sup>, 1914

Killing a Duke with a lighter

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### A big target for a young shooter

On 28 June 1914, the day of the 525<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo, in 1389, the city of Sarajevo is commemorating the never-forgotten defeat in which the Serbs were overwhelmed by the Ottomans. Public manifestations are taking place in which the heir apparent to the throne of Austria-Hungary is lionized in a public parade through the streets.

**Austrian Archduke Franz Herdinand Habsburg** and his wife **Sophie Chotek, Duchess of Hohenberg**, know that they run a risk in exposing themselves on a day when various groups want to once again protest against the subjugation of Serbia to foreign powers.

But the handful of young gunmen in the crowd who belong to the well-known secret nationalist association, the Black Hand, never thought they would have it so good.

Gavrilo Princip, one of them, can shoot both royal visitors point blank with a pistol. Both die in the following minutes.

These shots that ring in the city of Bosnia-Herzegovina are very ominous. Something is wrong about them. In a Europe where political tensions are front page in newspapers of all languages, a spark near the powder keg of the Balkans is frightful.

The fire of Princip's lighter will ignite a wick that will burn silently for a few days. Then the Balkan keg will deflagrate. This bang will really shake the whole world.

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●MacMillan, Road to 1914, 548.

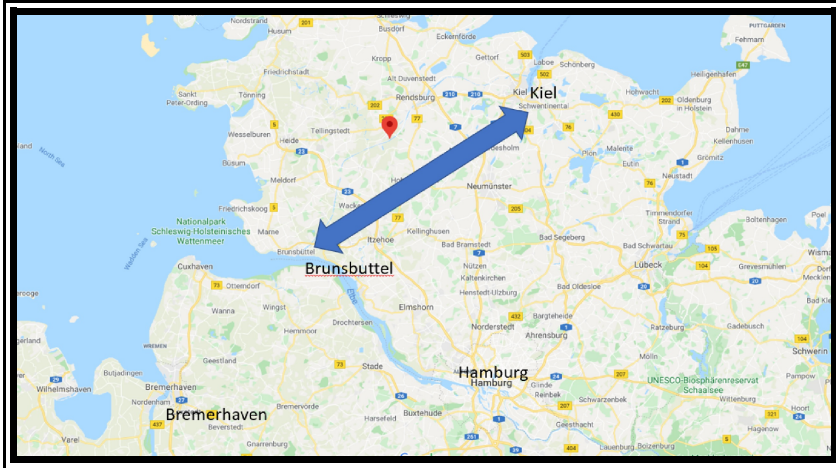


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## June 29, 1914 A Shortcut to Ruin



### The enlargement of the Kiev Kanal

The Kiev Canal, or the Canal of the North-East Sea, was built between 1887 and 1889 by Germany. It crosses the isthmus of Schleswig-Denmark over 98 kilometers, from Brunsbützel to Kiel.

The Kiev Canal joins the North Sea to the Baltic Sea, shortening the way for maritime commerce going from the German ports toward the east, thus avoiding the long way around Denmark.

Cargo leaving from Hamburg or Bremerhaven can thus go to Stockholm or St. Petersburg by a much shorter route.

But the Kiev Kanal was enlarged and deepened considerably in the last few years in a way that is not meant to accommodate only maritime shipping. The large battleships of the German High Seas Navy need that kind of space. The shortcut is well understood by all observers to have now become a strategic avenue for warships to reach the high seas without having to run the gauntlet of the North Seas under the gaze of the British Navy. The German ships can emerge at the north of Denmark, through the narrows of Oslo, the Skagerrak, almost at the 58<sup>th</sup> parallel, facing the north of Scotland. From there they can run for the High Seas through the Norwegian Sea, then toward the North Atlantic Ocean, their door to the world.

Five days ago, Kaiser Wilhelm II officially inaugurated the improved Canal in great pomp. He did not shy from stating clearly that the new exit door would allow his High Seas Fleet to spread its wings.

— Nobody understood, then, that the re-opening of this strategic canal was a harbinger of malediction.

•Cruttwell, A History of the Great War, 1914-1918, 63-4.



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**June 30, 1914**

## **Death in the extended family**

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### **•The German High Seas Fleet ends celebrations**

The re-opening of the Kiel Canal by the Kaiser, on 24 June 1914, has triggered a series of festivities that have involved the German Navy in crossing the Canal with pageantry.

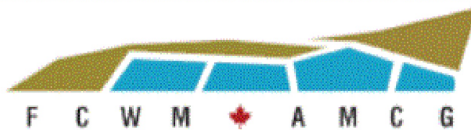
The Super Dreadnought-class ships usually berthed in the German ports of the North Sea ended up in the Baltic seaport of the bay of Kiel for display and parade. The occasion allowed the wielding of power and

wealth for the whole of Europe. Even the British leaders were invited for the feast.

But the rejoicing is mared by the news of the assassination of Sarajevo. Emperor Wilhelm, despite his great pleasure at seeing another important step in the construction and deployment of the great German navy, decrees that the celebrations be interrupted. Wilhelmine Germany will mourn the Habsburg heir as a friend and partner in alliance.

**«There was genuine mourning; but a close observer could not fail to note that wide circles in the Monarchy felt undisguised relief at the death of the man who meant to put through some sort of trialist of federalist reorganisation of the Monarchy favourable to its Slavonic elements. Besides the Germans and Magyars, who had felt their dominating positions threatened by Franz Ferdinand, and besides the emperor Franz Joseph, who had never forgiven his nephew his morganatic marriage, there was also a third group in the Monarchy who welcomed the archduke's death, because they saw in it an opportunity to settle accounts once and for all with Serbia by a war in which Germany would be behind them. The spokesman of this group was Baron Conrad von Hötzendorf, Chief of the Austro-Hungarian General Staff.»**

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•Fritz Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War (1961), p. 51.



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