

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/wwi-divisions-linger-in-balkans-where-wwi-was-triggered-a-942482-druck.html>

## Conflicts Unchanged in Birthplace of WWI

### The Bosnian Knot

By Walter Mayr

1/16/2014

**The 1914 assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo came in the midst of a bitter power struggle among major European powers in the Balkans. One hundred years and three devastating wars later, peace still eludes the multi-ethnic region.**

*In a six-part series, SPIEGEL examines the modern-day consequences of World War I. Bosnia, where the war began with shots fired in Sarajevo, was the scene of the last mass killing on European soil, in a war that began in 1992. Rebel Serbs have ensured that the country remains a trouble spot today.*

Among the rows of apartment buildings in the far eastern section of Sarajevo, near the airport, murderer Gavrilo Princip remains a hero to this day.

Some Bosnian Serbs living in this neighborhood openly venerate their most famous son. On a cloudless Sunday in June 1914, Princip, a student who sported a moustache, shot and killed the heir to the Austro-Hungarian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, with a single bullet to the carotid artery, fired from a 7.65 Browning pistol.

The deadly attack by the young Bosnian Serb on the scion of the Austro-Hungarian double monarchy turned out to be an overture to an unprecedented tragedy. Some 15 million died in

World War I, and when it was all over, the rulers from the Habsburg, Hohenzollern and Romanov royal families had lost their thrones.

Was Princip's bloody attack justified from the Serbian perspective, an act of revenge against the Habsburgs, who had occupied Ottoman Bosnia in 1878 and then annexed it in 1908? In eastern Sarajevo, at any rate, a large portrait of the assassin hangs on the wall of the Soho Café today, a century later. Princip's last words, once scratched into a cell wall in the Bohemian town of Theresienstadt, are also displayed: "Our shadows will be walking through Vienna."

Princip and his fellow conspirators with the pan-Slavic "Young Bosnia" movement were motivated by an explosive mix of ideas: radical nationalism, combined with skepticism toward the Western lifestyle and rage over their own economic backwardness. Encouraged by the demise of the Ottoman Empire, which had controlled the Balkans for centuries, warmongers in the region were already gaining ground before the Sarajevo assassination, especially in the neighboring Kingdom of Serbia, where some dreamed of a nation that would include all regions populated by Serbs in the territory of Austria-Hungary.

Even today, nationalists in the region once held by the defunct multi-ethnic Republic of Yugoslavia pose a threat to stability in the heart of Europe. This is especially apparent in Bosnia-Herzegovina -- a patchwork quilt that is home to Bosnian Muslims, Orthodox Serbs and Catholic Croats.

### **Princip's Great-Nephew**

A white-haired man nicknamed "Bato," or buddy, who is sitting under the 1914 assassin's portrait in the Soho Café on this afternoon, agrees with the assessment that surprisingly few lessons have been learned from the suffering of the last 100 years, brought on by two world wars and the Bosnian war that began in 1992.

The 61-year-old businessman, who holds a degree in economics, is named Gavrilo Princip. He's the great-nephew of the young man who committed the most momentous murder of the 20th century only a few kilometers away. The stories Bato heard from his father, who lived under one roof with the budding assassin, are the first-hand accounts of his famous ancestor.

Princip, the assassin who shaped world history with his gunshots, was apparently a puritanical, ambitious young man from a very poor background. But was he guilty? "I'm no historian," says the great-nephew. "All I know is that he was still very young."

Although the only physical trait Bato has in common with the 1914 assassin is his long, narrow nose, he shares his Serb nationalist pride and his loathing of all forms of foreign control. Bato is irritated that Princip the rebel no longer fits into the modern view of history in independent Bosnia. "When I attended high school in Sarajevo, pictures were still displayed in his honor, and Young Bosnia was venerated as a revolutionary organization," he says in amazement. "And now that Yugoslavia no longer exists, are we suddenly supposed to believe that they were all terrorists?"

This is where post-Yugoslav opinions diverge, especially now that the 100th anniversary of the June 28, 1914 assassination is approaching. Proponents and critics of Princip's legacy are as irreconcilable as they were during the bloody Bosnian war of secession that began in 1992. There are parallels between today's dispute over the historic significance of the assassin of Sarajevo and the events that unfolded 20 years ago.

### **Freedom Fighter or Nationalist Murderer?**

The one camp, predominantly Croats and Muslims, views Princip as a Greater Serbian nationalist and murderer, and believes that there should be no reason to celebrate him in an independent Bosnia-Herzegovina. Those in the other camp are mainly Bosnian Serbs and venerate Princip as a freedom fighter with national and anti-imperialist ideals.

Unlike the Catholic Croats and the Bosnian Muslims, most of whom were loyal to the emperor in 1914, the militant Serbs were viewed with suspicion in the Habsburg empire as Belgrade's fifth column. The divides between ethnic groups and religions in Bosnia are deeper than ever today. In the 1990s war, another 100,000 people, mainly Muslims, died on the region's already blood-soaked soil.

"Yes, Bosnia is a country of hatred," says one of the characters, a doctor of Jewish origin, in the story "Letter from the Year 1920" by the later Yugoslav Nobel laureate Ivo Andric. "This uniquely Bosnian hatred should be studied and eradicated like some pernicious, deeply-rooted disease. Foreign scholars should come to Bosnia to study hatred, recognized as a separate, classified subject of study, as leprosy is."

Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that what Serbs did to their former fellow Yugoslavians in Bosnia near the end of the 20th century has roots in events that occurred at the beginning of the century. Some 550,000 Serb soldiers and civilians, close to a fifth of the entire population, died between 1914 and 1918. In relative terms, no other people suffered comparable losses in World War I.

### **Yugoslavia and the Germ of the Dispute**

The Serb-dominated Kingdom of Yugoslavia, created in 1918 and abbreviated as the Kingdom of SHS, the letters representing its three ethnic groups, the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, was a precursor to the later Yugoslavia and conceived in part as compensation for the horrific death toll of World War I. But the problem was that it united the Serbs with some of those who had fought against them on the other side of the front.

In this respect, the Kingdom of SHS contained the germ of the dispute from the very beginning. The bloodiest battles in World War II and later in the 1990s occurred in precisely the same spots where the winners and losers of World War I continued to live together in close quarters: in the Bosnian Krajina region and along the Drina River.

But Bato has little interest in the many tales of hatred and the Balkan "original sin" his ancestor allegedly committed with the Sarajevo assassination. He prefers to speculate on the dark powers working behind the scenes. Why, he asks, did the Austrians send their Franz Ferdinand, the

future ruler of an empire stretching from Trieste on the Adriatic Sea to Lviv in Galicia, to troubled Bosnia with so few bodyguards?

Bato points out that the archduke was in a morganatic marriage and was not really even tolerated within the royal court in Vienna, and that a condition of his marriage to his wife Sophie was that their children would have no succession rights to the throne. This suggests the possibility, says Bato, that perhaps a few cunning court lackeys associated with the old Emperor Franz Josef may have orchestrated the assassination.

Bato, smiling at his conspiracy theory, takes his VW Golf for a spin around East Sarajevo, an outlying district of the divided Bosnian capital. Since the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement, East Sarajevo has officially not been part of the Muslim-Croat dominated federation, but of the other half of the country, the "Republika Srpska."

Civilian life has now returned to East Sarajevo, where Serb leaders Radovan Karadžić and General Ratko Mladic once ran their ruthless regime. While the two men face charges of genocide before a war crimes tribunal in The Hague, students in Serbian East Sarajevo stroll around the former grounds of the military barracks in Lukavica. There is little left today to suggest that the grounds were once the headquarters of an almost four-year occupation and effort to destroy Sarajevo, the duration of which made it an unprecedented act of barbarism in 20th-century European history.

Gavrilo Princip, his pack of Drina cigarettes constantly within reach and his destination in view, drives briskly across the historically charged grounds. He stops the car at the now-abandoned guardhouse of the former military site, named during the war after Uncle Slobodan Princip, a partisan leader and posthumously decorated national hero of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. He points to the airport, where UN aircraft carrying essential supplies landed during the siege of Sarajevo, and to a few buildings in Dobrinja, the athletes' village during the 1984 Winter Olympics.

During the Bosnian war, Dobrinja became a daily hell for tens of thousands of residents of the front-line zone who were trapped there, and who smoked tea, ate dandelions and buried the victims of Serbian artillery attacks in their front yards. The trapped residents used gallows humor to shrug off the fact that white UN jeeps and armored personnel carriers would drive past their houses without helping them. "As long our gravediggers don't strike oil with their spades here, the world couldn't care less about us," went one local saying.

### **Landscape of Old Wounds**

Bosnia's relationship with the outside world has always been shaped by a significant contradiction between the world's lack of interest in the wild, mountainous Balkan nation during times of peace, on the one hand, and the sad notoriety it has acquired again and again as a scene of bloodshed, on the other.

The region is like a landscape of old wounds covered by poorly healed scar tissue that periodically burst open at unpleasant intervals. Bosnia and Herzegovina is not only an

intersection of East and West, Rome and Byzantium, Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity and Islam, Latin and Cyrillic, but also of traditional regions of interest to the Ottomans, the czars and the Habsburgs. Their bitter struggle for power in the region was the prelude to the tragedy of Sarajevo in 1914.

### **Collision of Interests**

To this day, the interests of major and regional powers, Russians and Turks, Americans, EU Europeans and representatives of the Islamic world collide on Bosnian soil.

It may be somewhat shortsighted to conclude that the 20th century "took place primarily between two bridges in Sarajevo," as Bosnian writer Dževad Karahasan notes. Nevertheless, both the assassination of Franz Ferdinand on the Latin Bridge in 1914 and the murder of two female civilians on the Vrbanja Bridge, at the beginning of the war in April 1992, were events of great importance. The first killing led to the collapse of a painstakingly structured European order, while the second shooting destroyed the hope that the end of the Cold War could result in lasting peace on the continent.

As in 1914, the Serbs, the largest Slavic ethnic group in the Balkans, played a fundamental part in the eruption of violence in 1992. To this day, their self-image as a pillar of the Christian West is based on the Battle of Kosovo against the Ottoman Empire in 1389, which the Serbs lost, but also on the Serb resistance movement against the Germans and the Habsburg dynasty in World War I, as well as the partisan struggle against fascist occupiers in World War II.

One of the things that still makes the war-tested Serbs a critical mass in the Balkans is the fact that Serb populations have been scattered across the various republics since the breakup of Yugoslavia. In addition to Serbia proper, ethnic Serbs live in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and the separatist part of Kosovo, where their status remains unresolved today.

When former Communist leader Marshal Josip Tito, the man Stalin called a "megalomaniacal dwarf," ruled Yugoslavia from 1945 to 1980, he managed to contain the ethnic centrifugal forces. But the dams definitely burst after 1991. In Belgrade the Serbs -- under then President Slobodan Milosevic and with the support of their traditional protectors, the Russians -- pursued their goal of establishing a Greater Serbia. Meanwhile, Karadžić executed his policy of "ethnic cleansing" on Bosnian soil. It was only Washington's intervention and a NATO bombing campaign that put a stop to the bloody fighting -- a painful lesson for Europeans, especially the Germans.

### **Hereditary Enmities**

Already in 1914, they had "slithered," as then British Prime Minister Lloyd George put it, somewhat rashly into the disaster on Austria's side. During World War II, Hitler's troops and his Croat satellites were primarily responsible for the deaths of a million Yugoslavs. And finally, at the beginning of the 1990s, Germany, under the aegis of then Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, by recognizing the secession of Slovenia, Croatia and

Bosnia-Herzegovina at an early juncture, exposed itself to the accusation that it had underestimated precarious alliances and longstanding hereditary enmities in the Balkans.

Bato spent the Bosnian war in Pale, a Serb stronghold outside Sarajevo and the headquarters of the despotic Karadžić's government. He had been offered a job in the Ministry of Tourism and Marketing, because, after spending time in Cambridge and Paris, he was seen as a worldly polyglot among the coarse Bosnians. "The alternative for me was the '*puschka*,' or rifle, and war isn't my thing," says the descendant of the 1914 assassin.

He acquired modest wealth in postwar Bosnia. He is eating a meal of smoked ham and crullers at Motel M3 behind the airport, in which he has an investment. The invisible demarcation line between the Republika Srpska and the Federation of Bosnia, almost identical with the front line at the end of the war in 1995, runs practically outside the door. "But the real border is up here," says Bato, tapping his forehead with his finger, "in our heads."

Major General Dieter Heidecker, the commander of 600 soldiers from 22 countries, agrees. The Austrian is the highest-ranking military official with the EU's Althea mission, whose soldiers must still maintain a presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina more than 21 years after the war began. "This is a beautiful country with extremely nice people, as long as they don't have to deal with each other," the general says with gentle derision.

Heidecker and his troops are training the Bosnians so that they will soon be able to provide their own security. "We now have the first recruits who were born after the war," says the commander of the European Union Force (EUFOR) Althea mission. This offers reason for hope, he adds. "The Bosnian army is currently the only thing that functions at a multiethnic level in this country."

Since the 1995 Dayton Agreement, Bosnia-Herzegovina has not only consisted of two parts and a multinational district, but also of 10 cantons and a total of 180 ministers. Administrative costs consume up to two-thirds of the national budget. Consensus among the different parts of the country and ethnic groups cannot even be achieved on the most fundamental issues, such as the rights of minorities. The EU has persistently -- and unsuccessfully -- threatened to impose sanctions.

### **No Basis for a Functioning State**

It is an irony of history that Austrians are in charge in Sarajevo once again, in both military and civilian matters, a century after the assassination. Under the Dayton Agreement Valentin Inzko, as High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, is the highest-ranking civilian authority in the country. Europe must be judged on how it resolves the Bosnia-Herzegovina problem, says Inzko, "because this is our backyard."

Inzko has abandoned his original dream of maneuvering Bosnia into the EU to mark the 100th anniversary of the assassination. Today he has lowered his expectations to include preparatory steps toward "integration" into the EU and NATO. Why does destroying the Bosnian knot have

to be so painstaking? The Muslims, Croats and Serbs, says Inzko, clearly lack what he calls the basis for a functioning state: "consensus among three ethnic groups."

There could hardly be a more sobering conclusion -- for Sarajevo, a place that played such a fateful role in European history, and for all of Bosnia.

There are few things the various ethnic groups can agree on at all these days. One area where they do not diverge, however, is in their view that armchair decisions made about the region by other countries ultimately led to calamities. This is their view of everything from the Congress of Berlin in 1878, where Austria-Hungary took over Bosnia and Herzegovina; the Treaty of Versailles in 1919, which ordered the creation of the new state of Yugoslavia; the Yalta Conference in 1945, which paved the way for communism under Tito; or the Dayton Agreement in 1995. Each time, it was always the others who were to blame.

In Bosnia, people tend to take a relaxed view of things -- including their belief that their's is actually a peaceful region. At least until something goes wrong again.

### **The Bosnian Killing Fields**

Gavrilo "Bato" Princip spends his Sundays in a place crowded with mass graves from the last war, in eastern Bosnia, not far from the Serbian border. It's where his mother lives. The trip takes him through the Republika Srpska, with a population of roughly 1.5 million ethnic Serbs. Hardliner Milorad Dodik, who berates the construct of Bosnia-Herzegovina as a doomed "devil's state," is the president of this state within a state. Dodik can depend on protection from both Belgrade and Moscow.

One of the most horrific acts of violence to take place on European soil since World War II occurred in 1992 in the Republika Srpska, between Bratunac and Srebrenica. The massacre of more than 8,000 men and boys from Srebrenica shocked the global public. The murderers were members of regular and paramilitary Serb units, compatriots of Bato Princip.

In the middle of the Bosnian killing fields, he is now meeting his mother, who was driven out of her home near Sarajevo. Dragica Princip, 92, has been living as a refugee in Bratunac since 1995. The elderly woman tries to preserve her dignity in a living space crowded with wooden crates of apples, rolls of toilet paper and bottles of homemade plum brandy. She was accustomed to a different lifestyle. In the Yugoslav days, says Dragica, "all doors were open to us; we had privileges." Being related to the famous assassin didn't hurt, she adds.

The town outside Dragica's door is dilapidated. The Hotel Fontana, where Serb General Mladic handed Dutch UN Commander Thomas Karremans a glass of schnapps before the deadly massacre of Muslim men and boys from the protected UN zone unfolded, is now a ruin.

Children are now playing outside the school where hundreds of Muslims were shot dead in 1992. The "Brotherhood and Unity" Stadium, with its freshly mowed lawn, looks deceptively idyllic today, with the local football club, FK Bratstvo, playing its home games there again. But in

1992, according to the final report by a UN expert commission, large numbers of Muslims were held in the stadium, their bodies burned and thrown into the nearby Drina River.

### **'We Must Break Through This Circle of Myths'**

Some 3,337 people, almost a fifth of the population, died in Bratunac. So far 75 mass graves have been found near the city, and 612 people are still listed as missing. The victims are still being dug up, and DNA samples are being taken and body parts identified. The work is an indispensable part of investigating the massacre, says Adam Boys of the International Commission on Missing Persons, "because the fuel for the Bosnian war in the 1990s came from unresolved events during the first and second world wars; we must break through this circle of myths."

But the mayor of Bratunac, where old Dragica Princip lives, is still a Serb from Radovan Karadžić's party. He claims that his former party leader was not responsible for the 8,000 Srebrenica deaths. And as far as Bosnia's future is concerned, the mayor believes that it would be best if each nation "had its own country, even if meant having to change the borders."

Many in Bosnia-Herzegovina, both Serbs and Croats, still talk and think this way.

The town of Bosansko Grahovo in present-day Bosnia-Herzegovina lies in a wild landscape of forests and cliffs seven hours west of Bratunac, near the border with the new EU member state Croatia. It's the birthplace of assassin Gavrilo Princip.

Nothing is left of his childhood home but the outside stone walls. Marauding Croatian troops devastated the building during a campaign to recapture lost settlement zones in 1995 -- after partisans previously smashed it to pieces in 1942, according to an old man with a cane who hobbles over from his neighboring yard.

Miljkan Princip, 81, is a cousin of Bato and the only member of the extended family still living in the town. He has lived through the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, the partisans, Tito's Socialist Republic, the rise of radical Serbs in the early 1990s and the ensuing brutal acts of revenge committed by Croats.

Some 98 percent of the buildings in Bosansko Grahovo were destroyed, riddled with bullets or damaged by fire in 1995. The person mainly responsible for the campaign of destruction, Croatian Major General Ante Gotovina, was convicted of various war crimes in The Hague but was later acquitted. He now has thriving business activities on EU territory and is an honorary citizen of the coastal city of Split.

Meanwhile, in Bosansko Grahovo, between the ruins of the Gavrilo Princip School and the Gavrilo Princip Cultural Center, the Serbs who have returned to the town are doing their best to make ends meet. Their town is now in the Croat-dominated part of the federation, a Serb stronghold in hostile surroundings. Some 70 percent of the population is unemployed, in a town where non-Serbs are given preference for jobs in the public sector. The local police station flies the flag of Croatia and not that of Bosnia-Herzegovina.



"There will be no peace in this area, as long as everyone is not living among his own people," says the Serb mayor. And Bato Princip, the assassin's descendant, warns the rest of Europe against the illusion that everyone has learned his lesson in the place where World War I began, "because in this country, there are always, unfortunately, three different truths: one for Serbs, one for Croats and one for Muslims."