

The assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne by a fanatical Serb reveals as by a lightning flash the irrepressible conflict between Teuton and Slav, which is the most significant feature of world politics today. Franz Ferdinand was the head and front of the Pan-Germans of Austria. He was the intimate friend of the Emperor William, who, when in 1908 Austria incorporated in her dominions Bosnia and Herzegovina with their Serb population, stood beside his ally "in shining armor" and bade Russia keep her hands off. The humiliation of the great northern Slav power by the Teutons on that occasion sank deep into the minds of the southern Slavs, and did much to make the Balkan League possible. Bulgaria, Serbia and Montenegro began to see that if the expulsion of the Turk was long delayed his successor would be a Pan-German Empire extending across Europe from the North Sea to the Aegean, and wielding a power so irresistible that the Slavs would be swallowed up in it and their identity lost.

It is fierce and undisciplined blood that flows in the veins of the Southern Slavs. The killing of Franz Ferdinand will be the subject of general rejoicing at Belgrade. He was the greatest and most implacable enemy of Serbia, the one immovable rock against which her ambitions beat in vain. The formation of the Albanian kingdom was due to his determination to bar Serbia from the Adriatic and leave the way open for a Germanic advance toward Salonika. His presence in Bosnia, a part of the great mediaeval Serb Kingdom of Dushan, must have been regarded as a deadly insult by the Serbs, and the outward and visible sign of the intention to Germanize the people. Serbia dare not challenge the might of Austria on the field of battle, but individual Serbs fired with the ardor of their race, were found ready to give up their lives that they might strike a deadly blow at the enemy of their race.

To appreciate the present situation in the Balkans we must remember that though the southern Slavs have been submerged for five centuries beneath a wave of Moslem invasion, they never lost their identity, and by tradition and the manuscripts in their monasteries preserved the history of their glorious past. For hundreds of years before the coming of the Turk they had assailed the Eastern Roman Empire as the Frank and Goth and Lombard had assailed Rome herself. The Balkan Slavs never captured Constantinople, or ruled there as the western barbarians ruled in Rome and Milan, but they held sway from time to time almost to the gates of the Imperial City. Dushan, the last of the great Serb kings, reigned in the middle of the fourteenth century, over the larger part of what is now Serbia, Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia, Herzegovina and Croatia, and was unquestionably the most powerful prince of Eastern Europe. Had he not been poisoned in mid-career he would have substituted Serb for Greek dominion not only in Constantinople, but throughout the entire Balkan peninsula. The memory of the ancient glories of their race stirs the Serbs to frenzy when they see the steady advance of Germanic civilization into Southeastern Europe and nerves them to such deeds of horror as that at Sarajevo on Sunday.