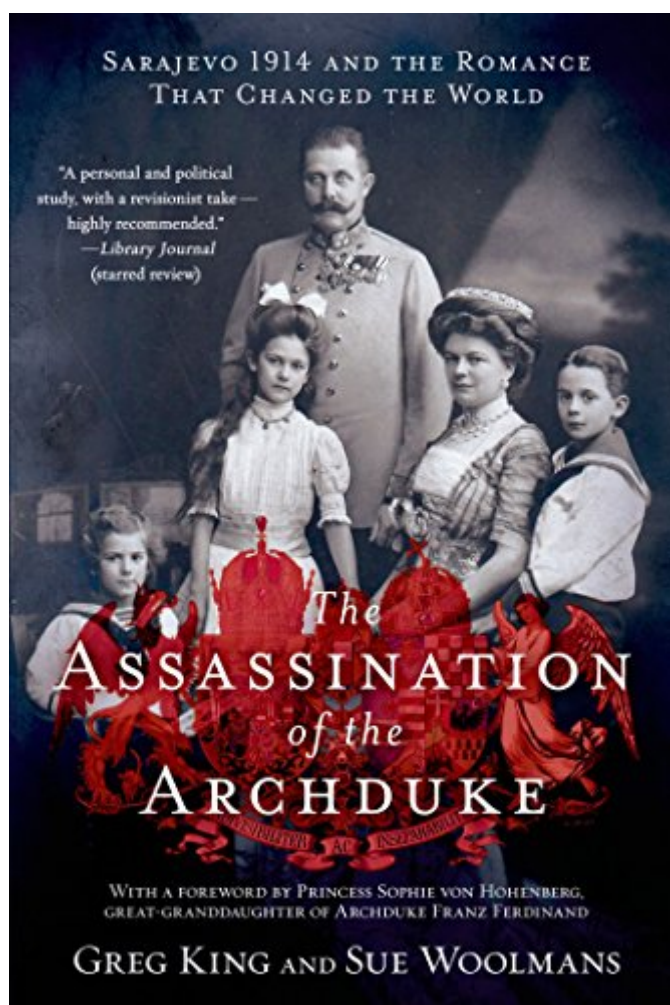


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The Assassination Of The Archduke: Sarajevo 1914 And The Romance That Changed The World



Synopsis

Drawing on unpublished letters and rare primary sources, King and Woolmans tell the true story behind the tragic romance and brutal assassination that sparked World War II in the summer of 1914, three great empires dominated Europe: Germany, Russia, and Austria-Hungary. Four years later all had vanished in the chaos of World War I. One event precipitated the conflict, and at its heart was a tragic love story. When Austrian heir Archduke Franz Ferdinand married for love against the wishes of the emperor, he and his wife Sophie were humiliated and shunned, yet they remained devoted to each other and to their children. The two bullets fired in Sarajevo not only ended their love story, but also led to war and a century of conflict. Set against a backdrop of glittering privilege, The Assassination of the Archduke combines royal history, touching romance, and political murder in a moving portrait of the end of an era. One hundred years after the event, it offers the startling truth behind the Sarajevo assassinations, including Serbian complicity and examines rumors of conspiracy and official negligence. Events in Sarajevo also doomed the couple's children to lives of loss, exile, and the horrors of Nazi concentration camps, their plight echoing the horrors unleashed by their parents' deaths. Challenging a century of myth, The Assassination of the Archduke resonates as a very human story of love destroyed by murder, revolution, and war.

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Customer Reviews

I'm always been fascinated by the what-ifs surrounding the family of the last tsar of Russia... not so much what was going on in Austria-Hungary that helped precipitate the fall of the Romanovs. I decided to read this book on the strength of some of Greg King's other works, and was not disappointed. He paints a very human picture of Franz Ferdinand and Sophie... and, perhaps most movingly, the struggles of their three children. Discussion of the Habsburg court slights and injuries and intrigues do become repetitive. That doesn't outweigh this book's overall excellence.

This is an excellent book that fills a major gap in the story of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Countess Sophie; namely, what happened to their children and grandchildren after they were assassinated. So much of their lives had been spent trying to plan for their future after the Archduke was forced to essentially disinherit their heirs from their imperial entitlements that even they could hardly have imagined how history would inflict even greater hardships and deprivations on their progeny in the decades ahead (largely unrelated to the circumstances of their deaths). I strongly recommend this book to anyone interested in the era or, for that matter, in a too-often overlooked real-life romance that outshines most of the recent legends that rarely live up to their billings.

This is a great snapshot of the life and times of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand and his wife Sophie. Like many people, I knew very little about the Archduke except that his death started WWI. This book provides an in-depth look at the man and woman behind this catalyst event. I didn't know how much Sophie was hated and hounded by the Austrian Royal family and how rigid the King Franz Joseph was - but perhaps most fascinating to me is the background of Bosnia. Having lived in Sarajevo you hear much about the assassination but little about the back story (ethnic tensions, hatred of Austria, ineptitude of local Bosnian government for security). The writing here is tight, though I will say that at times a bit more detail than I needed, nevertheless I had a hard time putting the book down each night, because the story is so fascinating. My only real quibble is that this book paints a very positive picture of Sophie, as if she was perfect, it seemed a bit one-sided. Perhaps she wasn't the villain portrayed by the Austrian Royal family but she wasn't a saint. In light of the 100 year anniversary of the assassination, this is a great book to pick up and read, to familiarize yourself with the event and the cast of players.

This is my first book on Archduke Ferdinand, and I found it incredibly engaging. There are some books you struggle to read through, others you pick up when you have nothing else to do, and still others that remain stuck in the back of your mind so you grab for it whenever you have a free moment. This book fit the third category for me. It was clearly well researched and gave a really interesting look into not just the assassination that changed the world, but who the family was, what personal and professional struggles they endured, and what life was like after. The majority of the book focuses on the before. It does get into the details of the assassination and the aftermath for their children and the world. Though the aftermath, I would say, is the least emphasized part of this book. The reason this is four stars instead of five for me is probably a small detail to most and not something I would say should stop anyone from picking up this book. Several times, and I do mean several, the authors felt the need to criticize other authors who've written about Archduke Ferdinand over the years. They say others have described Archduke Ferdinand as cheap and cold and difficult and his wife Sophie as someone desperate to become queen. The authors then reveal their evidence which contradicts that view. The issue I have is that they quite frequently point out how wrong other authors are and how right they are. Perhaps it's because I've never read a book on this topic before, but for me I found it irritating after running into the criticism the 10th time. It's unnecessary. The authors can present the evidence and draw their conclusions from that without the need to assail other authors. It's unnecessary and I, frankly, don't care what other authors have written. I'm reading your book. Tell me what you know. If the authors needed to, they could have done it once, maybe twice, to get their point across and then let it go. Instead, it followed the book like a shadow. And at times it came across sycophantic to the descendants of Archduke Ferdinand. I imagine what the archduke and his wife were actually like is somewhere between this book and the ones they criticize. All that said, it still did not take away from my enjoyment of the book. I would still recommend the read.

I wanted to learn more about this era, and specifically, what exactly led us into WWI. This is what the book promised, in addition to a detailed look at the Archduke, his wife, Sophie, and their children. Regarding the latter, it was an interesting read and I enjoyed it. It was a tragic story. However, I was disappointed that, after the assassination of the Archduke and Sophie, the authors didn't really explain for the readers the nuisances and events that, because of their deaths, escalated Europe and the world into the war. I wanted more detail regarding the actual beginning of the conflict. We don't learn much more than this line on the book flap: "The two bullets fired in

Sarajevo not only ended their love story, but also led to war and decades of conflict." If you want more facts, as I did, this is not the book for you. If you want a royal love story and the political aspects of it, then this book is excellent. There are quite a lot of photographs, which do enhance the read.

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